

# Assessing the superego and spirit: common characteristics of the self in Kierkegaard and Freud

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*Abstract:* The paper will examine and compare features of the self within selected writings of Kierkegaard and Freud. Granted their objectives cover different perspectives, i.e. man's spiritual qualities vis-à-vis his natural qualities; qualities that indeed call attention to their dissimilarities, I shall nevertheless make an effort to point out similarities. I believe that what would seem as "irreconcilable differences" actually proves to bear overlapping aspects and I will attempt to illustrate them. First and foremost Freud's and Kierkegaard's notions of the superego and spirit respectively, including their emergence within the self. This will be evaluated in regards to the dynamics of the self's identification mechanism in the synthesis of the ego and superego in Freud and the conditions of self-relation in Kierkegaard: possibility, necessity, finitude, infinitude. Furthermore, I shall evaluate the role of anxiety in regards to neurosis and despair and assess how guilt can be interpreted as the focal point in both dialectics of selfhood. Finally as a point of perspective I shall briefly consider some of these factors with respect to the present discussion of disorder classifications.

## *Introduction*

The general question to the title of this paper may be: why compare Kierkegaard's and Freud's concept of the self? Notwithstanding what I believe to be an interesting academic pursuit, this question might be reformulated and asked equally to Kierkegaard and Freud: why is consciousness not identical with the concept of self? Moreover, why is transparent self-identity not the subject's foundation? I believe that Kierkegaard's and Freud's work involves an attempt to answer these questions – if only indirectly – through their common rejection of modernity's confidence in the rational subject. The premise being that these, say, early post-modern understandings of the self represent new although dissimilar conceptions of the complex structure of selfhood. As such, they at least have this endeavour in common amid several later post-modern interpretations of man.

Of course their answers differ greatly. Kierkegaard responds by means of ethical categories borne of his religious beliefs, where the subject of sin is of

utmost importance. Freud on the other hand believed that his response dealt with clinical science, wherein neurosis at the time was viewed as a malady of the nervous system (neurasthenia). I shall not contest whether Freud's undertaking was in fact science, nor uncritically agree to Kierkegaard's religious enterprise. The paper will simply commence by evaluating their meta-psychological thoughts as diverse, but to some extent comparable understandings of the self.<sup>1</sup> Within the breadth of that extent, I believe that their ideas differ less dramatically so far as one concedes that the superego recommends itself as the closest counterpart to Kierkegaard's conception of spirit. That is spirit as a reflective self-relation, in particular when one observes the superego's function as a reflective constituent in Freud's topology – a mirror for the self, so to speak. This will be the objective, which means that the argument will largely originate from a Kierkegaardian perspective. To facilitate the endeavour, I shall therefore steer clear of certain aspects within Freud's considerations regarding his analysis of the id and the unconscious, as well as Kierkegaard's religious or theological assumptions. Even so, there should still be enough structure within their respective meta-psychology in order to argue for overlaps of the superego and spirit in next sections. These structures will be found in *The Concept of Anxiety* (CoA) and *The Sickness unto Death* (SuD) which will be the paper's main point of reference along with Freud's later work, approximately ranging from the 1920's and onward.

The following outline's primary purpose is to establish a general setting for the subsequent comparison. I shall therefore not go into great depths regarding several components of the self in Kierkegaard and Freud.

### *The synthesis of selfhood*

#### 1.

Basically, Kierkegaard's and Freud's comprehensions stem from remote philosophical presuppositions as are subjective dialectics and metaphysical naturalism, correspondingly. Nevertheless, Freud's topology provides a suitable launch for a comparison. To be brief, the structure of the self describes the properties of its components, i.e. the *id* (the unconscious and the relationship to the drives), the *ego* (reason and the relationship to reality), the

*superego* (morality and the relationship to social reality), as well as their respective functions, processes and qualities. The development of those processes and their dynamics, such as the genesis of the ego and superego or their unconscious properties, describe their interrelations.

As expected, Kierkegaard's relational perspective of the self is more attuned to the problems of existence, first and foremost due to his understanding of man as a self-relational progress and hence never done with his existential struggles – there can be no static definition of man, so to speak. Alternatively, Kierkegaard's account of the self discloses a number of dialectical relations. These relations are syntheses of intimately connected heterogeneous parts, such as body and soul or *finitude* (“Endelighed”) and *infinitude* (“Uendelighed”), with the latter synthesis expressing man's self-relational attitudes as will be encountered.

2.

Obviously Freud's portrayals of the different elements of the self are theoretic constructions of diverse qualities within the same subject matter, i.e. a metapsychological account of the individual personality, and should preferably be treated as such. This is revealed by the twin steps contained by the genesis of selfhood – the emergence of the ego and the superego, in that order. The first step finds the ego as merely a converted part of the id through the individual's confrontation with and adaptation to reality. And so, the id and the ego are as much a synthesis of intimately related heterogeneous parts as is the synthesis of body and soul in Kierkegaard. The confrontations are the requirements for survival, that is the id's demands for satisfaction of basic needs, and the adaptations are the ego's realistic course of action, for instance the acquirement of food.

Given the structural logic of Freud's topology, it ought not be controversial to equate the ego with the conscious part of the soul in Kierkegaard's sense. The emergence of the ego would then constitute the unreflective being of infancy's *innocence* (“Uskyldigheden”),<sup>2</sup> which comprises body and soul, on top of the innate, though idle, human determination as spirit. Thus, innocence is conscious, but lacks the self-reflective feature of

spirit. Conversely, there is a more uncertain affinity between the structure and the dynamics of the id when weighed against the synthesis of body and soul. Kierkegaard does not have a concept that equals the id; neither does he explicitly portray what would come to its unconscious psychic nature nor its connection to the bodily drives. Indeed, as regards to Kierkegaard's thought, whatever relation there may be between body and soul is of no particular interest to him – what maintains his attention is the fact that this relation holds the possibility to become spirit.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore possible that he would conceive of the id as included in either part of the synthesis. However, Freud's concept was actually never intended to be used synonymously with either. Its structural properties aside, the id is a dynamic link between the body and the other parts of the soul (i.e. the ego and the superego).<sup>4</sup> Dynamically speaking, this does not disagree with Kierkegaard's notion of man as a relation of body and soul brought about by spirit. Quite the reverse, his conception of a synthesis as not merely encompassing the relation between the parts, but as a relation to that relation, necessitate no link. So, if the dialectics of the self in Kierkegaard can replace the lack of a dynamic link as represented in Freud's id, then the latter may well feature any part of the Kierkegaardian synthesis. In other words, this will not affect our comparison if we evaluate the dynamics of selfhood.

3.

The second step in the genesis of selfhood is the development of the superego. Structurally speaking (with emphasis on *structurally*), it too has no clear counterpart in Kierkegaard's understanding of the self. Again, spirit is not a third element in the synthesis or structure of the self, but the fact that the relation relates itself to itself.<sup>5</sup> Even so, I believe that the genesis of the superego somewhat grasps what Kierkegaard calls the *dreaming spirit* (“drømmende Aand”)<sup>6</sup> – the abovementioned innate part of the self that has yet to become spirit. I shall return to this later on.

The superego emerges as a converted part of the ego, through its confrontation and adaptation to social reality. Hence, the ego and the superego also adjoin in a synthesis of intimately connected heterogeneous

parts. Dynamically, the superego's incorporated socially accepted behaviour (the confrontation), is sustained by self-restraint (the adaptation), i.e. the ego's temporary suppression of the id. Alike the id, the superego is not bound by reason and so the ego finds itself required to compute a course of action that not only satisfies the id and the demands of reality, but the moral obligations of the superego as well. One is not allowed to steal food in order to satisfy hunger, as it were.

With respect to Kierkegaard, the dynamics of the superego is of greater interest to this papers outline since its confrontation and adaptation to social reality compels the individual to some form of ethical behaviour, which is indirectly accounted for in Kierkegaard's analysis of anxiety and spirit. So although the superego does not have a structural counterpart in Kierkegaard's understanding of the self, I consider the dynamics in which it functions as a socially established mirror for the self to be comparable to Kierkegaard's understanding of spirit. Besides similarities between the genesis of spirit (the dreaming spirit) and the superego, I particularly find parallels in regards to Kierkegaard's synthesis of *possibility* ("Mulighed") and *necessity* ("Nødvendighed"), on top aforementioned synthesis of finitude and infinitude. In addition to expressing man's self-relational attitudes, they are also existential conditions of self-relation which require equilibrium. This too will be dealt with in depth latter on.

#### 4.

Considering above opening assessment it would be fair to say that an overall comparison of Kierkegaard and Freud is more beneficial within the relational dynamics of selfhood. Bluntly speaking, Kierkegaard does not provide a fixed account of spirit within the structure of selfhood. What he provides are the genetic and existential conditions of man's determination as spirit, through anxiety and despair. As a consequence, the comparison between the superego and spirit will focus on Freud's genetic and dynamic description in next sections analysis of *Becoming a self*. The focal point here will therefore be the emergence of spirit and its dynamics, the latter being indirectly described by the existential problems that follow in its wake. This will be analysed in

regards to the dialectics of the second synthesis in Freud – the ego and the superego.

*Becoming a self*

1.

The last section presented preliminary similarities between the superego and spirit that I believe call for comparisons of overlapping aspects. In the following sections I will attempt to carry them out.

There are though conceptual difficulties in doing so. Above all, Kierkegaard may well define spirit in various non-static ways but he does not offer an analysis of spirit; he provides us with an analysis of anxiety and an analysis of despair. Both of which disclose spirit by way of negative dialectics, where an understanding of self-relation is principally conditioned by its disorganization. A disorganization in one part of the synthesis will unavoidably affect the other parts, and more so in relation to despair.<sup>7</sup> A prolonged disorganization would namely become despair, seen that it is defined as a misrelationship in a relation that relates itself to itself.<sup>8</sup>

2.

Above I described Kierkegaard's understanding of man as a self-relational progress that is never complete, which is to say that in becoming the self transcends itself. It is always in the process of becoming. Nevertheless, CoA's genetic account of anxiety provides three distinct conditions of anxiety within the process of becoming. These are symbolized by Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Fall of Man, which in turn represents the development of every individual and his anxiety prior to, during and subsequent to the fall.

I shall identify the first two as the natural development and the third as the process through the possibility of freedom. The natural development is the process commonly conceived as the innocence of infancy, followed by the first emergence of self-awareness or subjectivity, as you might say. The process is unreflective and therefore natural; in any case it consists of the innate spirit of the self, or more precisely, the dreaming spirit that brings about the second process. Given that the dreaming spirit is innocent, the self

is not responsible for its own being and therefore still short of being genuinely free. To be exact, responsibility presupposes freedom which implies the ability to address and take care of one's existence. Even so, the existence of innocence somewhat involves freedom, which it experiences as a *sweet anxiousness* ("søde Bængstelse") of what awaits.<sup>9</sup> The dreaming spirit has therefore yet to become something that it is determined to be – but as yet is not – namely true spirit or concrete being.<sup>10</sup> However, to the ignorance of innocence, this something is the anxious nothing following the ambiguous "dizziness" of the fall.

### 3.

When spirit has established itself as the self grows conscious of the difference between good and evil, a difference between which it is free to choose in order to respond to the demands of existence, it simultaneously becomes responsible for its own existence. In a note, Kierkegaard defines the good as freedom: "*Det Gode er Friheden. For Friheden eller i Friheden er først Forskjellen mellem Godt og Ondt, og denne Forskjel er aldrig in abstracto, men kun in concreto.*"<sup>11</sup> Henceforth the process through the possibility of freedom commences after the fall, in truth a lifelong activity that will have our chief interest. However, owing to a potential inability to tolerate the anxious consciousness and ambiguity of the possibility of freedom, the self may choose either to release itself of this burden or even further burden itself, all of which represses anxiety. Protected from anxiety the self positions itself in an unambiguous stance. Unfortunately, this repression is also a suppression of spirit, since anxiety informs the individual of his determinacy as spirit and as free to choose.

The release of burden occurs in what I shall term the negligence of freedom's possibility – i.e. the fall into *spiritless dread*<sup>12</sup> ("Aandløshedens Angst"): "*Aandløshedens Fortabelse derimod er det Forfærdeligste af Alt; thi dette er netop Ulykken, at Aandløsheden har et Forhold til Aand, som intet er.*"<sup>13</sup> Being negligent, spiritless dread finds contentment in becoming as everyone else and thus not choosing for itself. It is therefore the worst type of suppression seeing as it is nothing in itself.

The other possibility for a self incapable of coping with anxiety results ironically in a further burden on itself. At first glance, this choice does not seem to be an additional burden, because the individual steers clear of spiritless dread and yet disposes of his anxiety. Regrettably, he does so by drawing on his given possibility of freedom to become unfree. Dread of evil and dread of good are evidence of the individual's self-developed unfreedom, or misuse of freedom's possibility as I shall term it, although they differ in their manner of unfreedom. Dread of evil is an unfree relation to evil and fear of sinfulness out of which *repentance* ("Anger") binds the individual to unfreedom: "*Den satte Synd er en uberettiget Virkelighed, den er Virkelighed og af Individet sat som Virkelighed i Angeren, men Angeren bliver ikke Individets Frihed.*"<sup>14</sup> Dread of good on the other hand, or the demonic, is an unfree relation to the good or freedom out of which *encapsulation* ("Indesluttethed")<sup>15</sup> binds the individual to unfreedom: "*Det Dæmoniske slutter sig ikke inde med Noget, men slutter sig selv inde, og deri ligger det Dybsindige i Tilværelsen, at Ufriheden netop gør sig selv til en Fange.*"<sup>16</sup> What is important to bear in mind is that the good is a concrete existential possibility as quoted before. However, once the relation to evil or good is unfree, the good becomes abstract or idealized and this ideal is existentially unmanageable. This lack of concreteness explains why the demonic encapsulates him self with nothing. The dialectics in which unfreedom imprisons itself in dread of evil or dread of good as well as their intertwined dialectical relations will be considered in *The loss of selfhood*. Next section will compare above interpretation of becoming with the second synthesis of the ego and the superego.

### *Three stages of becoming*

#### 1.

Now how is this emergence of spirit in above description of becoming a self comparable to becoming a self in Freud's account? Especially concerning the synthesis of the ego and the superego? It has been mentioned that the superego functions as a mirror for the self in a manner which resembles the self-relation of spirit. This mirror is essentially a dynamic function of the superego, i.e. the identification mechanism.<sup>17</sup> Similar to the emergence of

spirit, there are three stages in the course of the materialization of the superego: the object cathexis, the object loss and finally the introjection of the lost object. The first two stages can be described as the infant's identification of a loved object, i.e. its parent, which is eventually lost by the universality of growing pains (the abolishment of the Oedipus conflict). As a consequence of the latter, the final stage, or the introjections, is an imprinted ideal externally derived by the normative function of the parents – predominantly through prohibition. The introjection foretells the emergence of the internal normative mechanism, induced by an ideal from within the mature individual, which enables the genesis of the individual's superego. Yet, Freud emphasizes that:

So wird das Über-Ich des Kindes eigentlich nicht nach dem Vorbild der Eltern, sondern des elterlichen Über-Ich aufgebaut; es erfüllt sich mit dem gleichen Inhalt, es wird zum Träger der Tradition, all der zeitbeständigen Wertungen, die sich auf diesem Wege über Generationen fortgepflanzt haben. (GW XV, p. 73; 1969)

Hence, it is not parental behaviour that is introjected, but parental superego. I therefore perceive the superego as the transcending part of the self in Freud's meta-psychology. As quoted, the same argument goes for the cultural/historical traditions that are handed down through individual superegos. From this perspective, the inheritance of the superego is arguably a less naturalistic part of Freud's theory.

2.

Bearing this in mind, we are now able to compare the materialization of the superego to above depiction of spirit's emergence. Recalling the analysis of the natural development and putting this across to Freud, the introjection would be in agreement with the description of the dreaming spirit as regards its evolving anxiety and tentative notion of freedom. As Freud puts it, the anxiety produced by prohibition changes its object of anxiety subsequent to the introjection: "*Diese Realangst (red. of parental prohibition) ist der Vorläufer der späteren Gewissensangst; solange sie herrscht, braucht man von Über-Ich und von Gewissen nicht zu reden.*"<sup>18</sup> This bears similarity to the difference of anxiety prior and subsequent to the Fall of Man in CoA, since the introjection as quoted alters anxiety of parental prohibition into moral anxiety. However this needs some

interpretative elaboration a propos the tentative notion of freedom and responsibility given that guilt, as we shall see in our later investigation, is the main factor in moral anxiety.

It seems to be a matter of course that innocence cannot be responsible for its own being. As follows, an infant can neither be responsible for the introjection of an ideal, even if it has incorporated this ideal in its actions, simply by doing what it is told. As long as these actions are not identified by the self as self-relating, the individual has not established an internal normative mechanism, or mirror for the self, by the reflection of which it is free to take responsibility. Still, through parental prohibition the infant becomes acquainted to its own freedom, for perhaps it *should not*, but as a matter of implication it also *could*. Just like Adam, the infant entertains this possibility of being able and thus the power to disobey.<sup>19</sup> This acquaintance of course does not embody true freedom for the infant is punished when exercising its possibility to disobey and conversely rewarded when it is obedient. Nevertheless, the infant is neither unfree nor is it guilty in an ethical sense, since it can only draw on its parents as a social ideal for itself, and consequently it does not yet identify this normative ideal as its own. It obeys because of parental dogma, not because it has knowledge of good and evil, or because it is free to choose between the above, least of all because obedience is good in itself.<sup>20</sup> I believe that Kierkegaard and Freud would largely agree upon the infant's lack of inner freedom and responsibility for itself, al the while its own indiscernible ideal unconsciously emerges through the dreaming spirit and the introjection of the superego, respectively.

3.

Be that as it may, it would be appropriate to outline some difficulties in comparing the introjection with the dreaming spirit, before comparing spirit and the superego in the mature individual. The introjection is supposed to explain the transition from parental object loss to the establishment of the mature superego. In other words, the process by which the normative and moral functions of the mature individual are incorporated. However, the explanation offered by Freud would most likely be rejected by Kierkegaard, at

least in regards to its processual transition. The transition in CoA is a *qualitative leap* (“det qualitative Spring”), which can only be described psychologically prior and subsequent to the Fall of Man.<sup>21</sup> Notably because it is a leap, psychology can not explain this transition with respect to Kierkegaard. Now, notwithstanding which consideration may be correct, the main question would be: does Freud provide a solid explanation for this processual transition? To my knowledge at least, the inheritance of the superego is not sufficiently elucidated as a psychological process, and a naturalistic one at that. This is to some extent why I perceived the inheritance of the superego as a transcending feature of Freud’s theory. As mentioned before, it is parental superego and not behaviour that is introjected, which is reaffirmed by the quote below – rough parenting will not necessarily effect into a cruel superego:

Bei der ersten Einsetzung des Über-Ichs ist gewiß zur Ausstattung dieser Instanz jenes Stück Aggression gegen die Eltern verwendet worden, dem das Kind infolge seiner Liebesfixierung wie der äußeren Schwierigkeiten keine Abfuhr nach außen schaffen konnte, und darum braucht die Strenge des Über-Ichs nicht einfach der Härte der Erziehung zu entsprechen. (GW XV, p. 117; 1969)

Granted, it seems fair in a naturalistic psychology to propose that an adaptation to a confronted social reality, say parental punishment or inhibited aggression, is bound to alter the structure of the self. In a word, the self would be confronted by an external social reality and adapt to it. But how does one offer a naturalistic psychological explanation for the inheritance of a mechanism, as it were, that originates from an external psychological structure (parental superego), the confrontation of which (the upbringing) has no direct influence to the alteration of the self? True, biology may play a role, but only by extinguishing any psychological influence of its establishment – the introjection. This begs the question to the explicatory power of the inheritance of the superego. If no further explanation is given, we can only presuppose the psychological fact of introjection, just as the fall of every man presupposes original sin.

4.

As regards the process of becoming through the possibility of freedom, we have described the self's incorporation of responsibility for its existence and the rising awareness of good and evil, which can also be expressed through Freud. However, a brief outline of the superego's mechanisms within the mature individual is necessary.

The superego's mechanisms cover a range of fundamental psychological operations in order to advance the social functions of the individual. It is composed of the operations of self-observation and (dream) censorship, as well as the centres of morality: the ideal ego and conscience (the ego-censor). All of which enables reference to moral norms and simultaneously establishes the inner mechanism of punishment or reward in addition to an influence on the ego's mechanism of repression.<sup>22</sup>

Once the introjection is complete the self develops through the identification mechanism of the matured individual. This is the normative dynamics of the ego and superego synthesis, where the ego mirrors itself on the introjected ideal ego. From thereon the individual overtakes the responsibility for his being through the operations of self-observation, self-punishment and reward and so on. Some of these operations are certainly unconscious; even so, it is now possible for the self to relate to its relation, if allowing for Kierkegaard's vocabulary. On that reckoning the identification mechanism of the matured individual is comparable to the constitution of the possibility of freedom in our account of Kierkegaard. The establishment of the ideal ego and conscience would for instance straightforwardly meet CoA's terms on the rising awareness of good and evil within the self. This awareness provides information on which course of action would be acceptable in regards to the ideal ego. However, due to the above interpretation of the self after the Fall of Man, the self was predominantly personified by the disorganization of spiritless dread, dread of evil and dread of good, which somewhat misconstrues a genuine meta-psychological comparison. After all, Freud's meta-psychology also encompasses well-balanced personalities. I shall therefore revisit some issues that I have previously brought up and return to the disorganized selves in *The loss of selfhood*. What are addressed here are the synthesis of finitude and infinitude, as well as the synthesis of necessity and

possibility form SuD, which in some measure relate the identification mechanism of the mature individual to spirit. This will be examined in next section.

### *The identification mechanism in Kierkegaard*

1.

There is a psychological discourse between CoA and SuD that needs to be addressed and I shall do so before engaging SuD in this investigation. Differing focuses aside, i.e. anxiety and spirit, my main contention is largely in agreement with the observation that CoA and SuD are conjoined by an overall development of selfhood: a negativistic progress of spiritual depth from the former text to the latter. In such a view, CoA describes the psychological genesis and diagnostic development of anxiety as we have seen which is followed, and to some extent amplified by the intensification of despair in SuD. This is highlighted by G. Malantschuck's work "Dialektik og Eksistens hos Søren Kierkegaard" (1968): "*Angsten angives af ham (ed. Kierkegaard/V. Haufniensis) som liggende paa det psykologiske Plan; paa højere Trin, hvor Aanden viser sig, svarer til Angsten Tungsind respektive Fortvivlelse, senere Forargelse.*"<sup>23</sup> The following will largely hold its argument along those lines when conferring with above writings.

2.

It has been mentioned that the synthesis of finitude and infinitude along with necessity and possibility were existential conditions of self-relation, and that these conditions need equilibrium, for if imbalanced they would be positions of despair. As forms of despair, the positions that most accurately convey to the dynamics of the identification mechanism are negatively defined by *infinitude's despair* ("Uendelighedens fortvivlelse") and *possibility's despair* ("Mulighedens fortvivlelse").<sup>24</sup> In a few words, infinitude makes reflection possible by way of *imagination* ("Phantasien"), and possibility makes the process of becoming a true self possible.<sup>2526</sup> In a manner of speaking, infinitude and possibility are the "infiniteizing" instants of selfhood, but because of the unrestrained character in their mode despair, the despairing

individual does not concretise these possibilities of selfhood, and consequently neither does he achieve the possibility of freedom. What these forms of despair lack are the “finitizing” instants of necessity and finitude. This can fruitfully be exemplified by the aesthetic individual’s despair in *Either/Or’s* (E/O) “Diapsalmata”.<sup>27</sup> The reflective introspection of the aesthetic mind posits endless possibilities of being, even though they mean nothing to him, or at least seem meaningless to pursue. He may imagine himself becoming a poet or he may not, the fact of the matter is that his existence consists of an endless string of possibilities, and therefore void of any concrete being. This leaves him in a state of ever inconcrete existence and gloom. The point being that even if these possibilities had some psychological relevance for the infinitized despair, they would not have been acted upon. By itself his imagination functions as a reflection of the self’s infinite possibilities. But to be existentially relevant, that is to say to become one of these possibilities, presupposes necessity and finitude. In Freudian vocabulary, the aesthetic appears to have difficulties materializing his possibilities because reality does not match up to his ideal ego. His idealized possibilities are therefore strained by the operation of self-observation which is disabling him in regards to evaluating his possibilities and realizing them. As such, the dynamics between the finitizing and infinitizing instants bear a resemblance to the internal mechanism of identification in the matured individual. In the aesthetics case, the reflective function of self-observation is of no help in finitizing his possibilities in view of his ideals.

3.

Conversely, the individual who is deprived of the infinitizing moments suffers of *finitude’s despair* (“Endelighedens fortvivelse”) and *necessity’s despair* (“Nødvendighedens fortvivelse”).<sup>28,29</sup> This type of selfhood lacks reflective imagination and the freedom of becoming his true self, namely spirit. Obviously such an individual is not utterly unimaginative seen that these positions are but extreme cases. Still he exemplifies a mode of being, that disavows the personal responsibility of existence, and rests upon the determinacy of a socially accepted way of being. Thusly, he never achieves the

possibility of freedom, but for the opposite reasons than the aesthetic individual. Unlike the aesthetic who lacks the activity required by existence, the despaired of necessity and finitude lacks the imaginative requirements of self-relation and the possibility of becoming anything more than an exemplar in a social machinery. So, even if the aesthetic's despair is more insufferable, he actually is closer to spirit since he displays a superior form of self-relation. To be sure, this type of despair does not preclude a Freudian identification mechanism. Indeed, the more conscious aspects of this mechanism, i.e. self-observation, are clearly at a diminutive level in this individual. This would noticeably be due to his modest ideal ego, which is less functional as a mirror for the ego. But in order to address some of the present lacking aspects of this mechanism's affinity to Kierkegaard's syntheses, I shall attend to the unconscious features within the synthesis of the ego and the superego in the following.

*The finitizing and infinitizing instants of the self in Freud*

1.

Not considering the few analysis of the aesthetic above, I believe that the synthesis of the ego and superego is basically capable of holding an interpretation of the finitizing and infinitizing instants within its dynamics. Taken as a whole, the infinitizing part would be embodied by the ego, whereas the superego is more characterised by its finitizing mechanisms. Imagination<sup>30</sup>, which is a constitutive part of the ego, "infinitizes" the individual's possibilities for action, while the superego's self-observing and ego-censoring operations "finitizes" the ego's execution of these possibilities. The ego-censor's finitizing trait is pretty obvious, less so is the self-observing operation. In view of the fact that self-observation plays a reflective role to the imagination, it was given an infinitizing value in the section above, but this does not alter its delineating purpose. In other words, it is the level of imagination that determines the level of self-observation in the portrayal above. Or again, self-observation reveals the intensity of imagination and strength of the ideal ego. In that case the highly reflective aesthetic would have a strong ideal ego and high capacity for imagination and self-observation.

Keeping his despair in mind, the finitizing element of self-observation is imbalanced in favour of infinitude and possibility. This means that self-observation indirectly finitizes his possibilities, because it stands in the way of concrete existential action. This brings the unconscious features into view; starting with abovementioned mechanism of self-punishment.

2.

The ego-censor informs the ego of right and wrong, which takes to mean the ideal ego and the impulses of the id, respectively, pertaining to good and evil in Kierkegaard.<sup>31</sup> Depending on the outcome of actions or lack thereof that equally would violate the ideal ego; the superego will punish the ego, among others through emotions of guilt; guilt being the tension between the ego and the ideal ego.<sup>32</sup>

We described, for instance, the aesthetic individual's endless reflection, on top of his incapability to pursue his possibilities and as a consequence his gloomy feelings. On this account the aesthetic's experience of being trapped by existence is attributable to a dominant superego. His is a despair of infinitude and possibility, from which his gloom would translate to the superego's punishment of the ego for not being able to match an ideal. Existence demands action, so to speak, the very thing the aesthetic's is short of, which in turn proves his gloom to be a mere symptom of what he lacks in his self-relation. In other words, what is unveiled is that existence will eventually take action, here in the shape of suffering if the individual does not respond to its demands. In Freud, this action is disguised as the unconscious mechanism of self-punishment.

Considering the synthesis of the ego and the superego, there is yet an unconscious mechanism that hasn't been examined, namely the ego's mechanism of repression. Basically the ego is defined as a group of preconscious ideas that have endured the identification mechanism. On this outlook, the repressed ideas cannot pass the identification mechanism because of their disparity with an ideal. Repression therefore represents ideas the ego does not identify itself with, which is heavily influenced by the superego. As such it is a finitizing trait of the ego. This will be more appropriately portrayed

in next section analysis of neurosis, but surely shows a main difference between Freud's and Kierkegaard, namely the explicitness of the Freudian account of the self's unconscious character.

3.

Notably, Freudian unconscious operations are left wanting in the portrayed positions of despair, although they are indirectly represented by the misrelationship of the self. This is illustrated by the lacking counterparts within the aesthetic's self-relation, finitude and necessity, on top of his suffering. However, recalling our portrayal of the finitized despair, the manifestation of this misrelation is less observable, seen as this despair is less reflective thus less conscious. Taking into account that the infinitized despair emphasized the severity of the superego, it would appear as if an individual with a less conscious despair is prone to "feel" freer. Conversely, it is debatable if feeling free is equal to *being* free seeing as Kierkegaard emphasizes that the infinitized despair is closer to spirit and accordingly the possibility of freedom. However, freedom is always achievable for any type of despair, and a balanced self would therefore logically have equilibrium of finitizing and infinitizing instants that would even out the unconsciousness of finitude and necessity. Considering the ego's and the superego's unconscious finitizing regulations, it seems fair to say that the Freudian self is never really free compared to the Kierkegaardian self. More importantly, regarding the possibility of freedom, the form of despair which is closest to a structurally balanced Freudian self, that is to say a self with no dominant features within the topology, seems farthest from being free in Kierkegaard's account. This requires additional explanation, for there is yet another aspect of the identification mechanism to consider as regards the mature individual – the identification to a societal ideal.

4.

I have pointed out that the matured self's inability to tolerate anxiety could deteriorate into a negligence of freedom's possibility (spiritless dread) or to a misuse of freedom's possibility (self-developed unfreedom). In Freud,

negligence may be understood as a matter of accepting the ideal ego through identification, provided that this ideal is an inherent adaptation to a societal ideal. From Kierkegaard's outlook such identification would subsist as *spiritlessness* ("Aandløshed"), because the self does not truly relate to itself, but to the anonymity of the masses as a way of ridding itself of anxiety.<sup>33</sup> Even if such identification relieves the self from anxiety or responsibility, it is not an unproblematic stance to take. In Kierkegaard's teleological understanding of man as spirit, such an individual is far from being a self proper.

A comparatively teleological understanding can also be found in Freud, if only through his general pessimistic view of society: it is arguable if a healthy self would come about the ego's identification with a culturally construed societal ideal, let alone if this ideal is spawned by a neurotic Western society, as Freud seemed to believe.<sup>34</sup> As a consequence, the Freudian self with no dominant features "only" provides freedom from personal neurosis. It may be balanced and *feel* free, yet in a teleological sense it is unhealthy. A balanced self does not equal health as it does in Kierkegaard's synthesis, nor does it equal freedom. Although burden less; negligence and its spiritless outcome is actually the worst type of disorganization in Kierkegaard's view, for as previously quoted, it affects the whole synthesis as a mode of non-being: *spiritlessness has a relation to spirit, which is nothing*. In a strict existential sense, to be spiritless is not to be a self at all, even if there always remains a possibility of becoming a self. And as mentioned before, although the self in its misuse of freedom's possibility must endure the agony of its lost immediacy, it still is closer to freedom than negligence.

5.

In *Becoming a Self* I have outlined some similarities in Freud's and Kierkegaard's understandings of the emergence and the dynamics of the self as regards the superego and spirit. I believe that at this juncture we find the most comparable elements in their thoughts, predominantly on the subject of the mature individual's process of becoming. Here, I attempted to show that Kierkegaard's notion of what I termed the finitizing and infinitizing elements of the self has a likeness to Freud's identification mechanism within the

synthesis of the ego and the superego, and vice versa. Both function as reflective mirrors and as displaying moral course of action. As we saw, the process of becoming is problematic in itself, and due to Kierkegaard's generally negativistic description of the self, we have already touched upon the next section's topic: *The loss of selfhood*. Negligence of freedom's possibility has been described, and we shall now turn our attention to the misuse of freedom's possibility. This will be compared to Freud's concept of neurosis, in particular concerning the superego's importance on this topic.

### *The loss of selfhood*

1.

The individual who rids himself of anxiety by misusing his possibility of freedom would either do so by choosing an unambiguous stance in the good, which is the dread of evil, or an unambiguous stance in evil, which is the dread of good. This has already been brought up. However, it seems apparently absurd to suppose deliverance from anxiety's ambiguity through anxiety of any manner ("dread"). In fact, through dread the individual employs a mistaken approach of relating, which poses further existential problems. The unambiguous stance will eventually result in despair; a far more unhealthy kind of ambiguity because of the assurance it requires. In his work "Kierkegaard as a Psychologist" (1972) K. Nordentoft's analysis on the matter distinguishes between *assurance* ("sikrethed") and *security* ("sikkerhed"), and I shall presuppose this delineation in the remaining sections.<sup>35</sup> Security is the mode of a balanced synthesis, he says, but it is not assured against anxiety, whereas despair demands assurance from anxiety through the unambiguous stance. So in preference to the ambiguity of existence, Nordentoft concludes that the assurance of the unambiguous stance results in the individual's *double-mindedness* ("tvesind").<sup>36</sup> So the price that the individual pays for his flight from anxiety is the double-mindedness of despair. A continuous misuse of freedom's possibility therefore turns dread into the following general positions of despair in SuD, where the individual never finds any comfort in being himself.

2.

There are three levels or stages of despair, but as mentioned we will not include spiritlessness in the following rough draft. The remaining levels are *in despair at not willing to be oneself, despair of weakness* (“Fortvivlet ikke at ville være sig selv, Svaghedens Fortvivlelse”) and *in despair at willing to be oneself, Defiance* (“Fortvivlet at ville være sig selv, Trods”), which will be sketched in brief.<sup>37</sup> In the former, the individual does not want to be himself, for he recognizes a weakness within himself – something evil that necessitates exclusion. This weakness may take any shape. What is important is that the individual is more conscious, though less anxious of his particular weakness, than in dread of evil. In other words, the individual suffering from dread of evil is less conscious of the fact that the object of evil, his fear of sinfulness, is a manifestation of his own weakness. Unfortunately, the consciousness of his own weakness is of no importance, since the despaired cannot free himself of his shaming weakness or insupportably weak self. Yet, his weakness may still develop into defiance. In this form of despair, the individual has realized that if his weakness is produced by himself, it implies that it also is modifiable by himself. He therefore chooses to accept his weakness, not *as* weakness, but on the satisfaction of his prideful acceptance. In spite of his agony he therefore prides himself of the self he has created. This self-righteous pride is more manifest than dread of good, given that the individual willingly stays in the unambiguous stance, even if he understands the severity of his situation.

### *Repression and dread*

1.

I believe that part of Kierkegaard’s analysis of dread and despair bears clear resemblance to Freud’s concept of neurosis. And even if the following are but overall comparisons, their corresponding dialectics of loss should be apparent. First of all there is a progression from anxiety to neurosis which is akin to despair’s presupposition of anxiety. Freud declares that: “*Nicht die Verdrängung schafft die Angst, sondern die Angst ist früher da, die Angst macht die Verdrängung!*”<sup>3839</sup> To be precise; anxiety is produced and experienced by the ego as a result of a conflict between the id’s drives and the superego’s social demands.<sup>40</sup> The

outcome is the unconscious mechanism of repression, which previously has been expressed as the ego's (unconscious) finitizing instant. It is the ego's defence mechanism in order to suppress the id's impulses. This suppression, keep in mind, is on behalf of the superego and in fear of its punishment. However, an excessive "use" of this mechanism as a conflict solving method will eventually generate neurosis, given that neurosis is a symptom of chronic repression.<sup>41</sup> In short, neurosis can be interpreted as a permanent repression of the felt anxiety towards the id, sustained only by fear of punishment. As such, the dynamics of repression match the unambiguous stance of dread, since repression may turn anxiety into chronic anxiety disorders. These anxiety disorders are *neurotic anxiety*, which is fear of the id (such a social phobia, general anxiety disorder (GAD), panic attacks), and *moral anxiety*, which is fear of the superego (seemingly unprovoked experiences of shame and guilt, as well as constant self-observation).<sup>42</sup> They do not exclude one another. In fact they are closely related, for in the end, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety are both driven by a fear of the superego's punishment. The fact of the matter is nevertheless in line with the unambiguous stance. There is a paradox inherent in the defence mechanism of repression: the repressive development that turns anxiety into neurosis, rivals the dread that turns anxiety into despair. With specific regards to dread of evil, of which I find these disorders to be closely related, the unambiguous stance in the good can not rid the self from anxiety, just as repression of anxiety may turn chronic.

2.

Similarly I find a kinship between the unambiguous stance of dread of good and the repression mechanism of a certain type of obsessive-compulsive neurosis (OCN).<sup>43</sup> Freud describes this neurosis in terms of suppressed and unconscious guilt:

Bei der Zwangsneurose (gewissen Formen derselben) ist das Schuldgefühl überlaut, kann sich aber vor dem Ich nicht rechtfertigen. Das Ich des Kranken stäubt sich daher gegen die Zumutung, schuldig zu sein, und verlangt vom Arzt, in seiner Ablehnung dieser Schuldgefühle bestärkt zu werden. (...) Die Analyse zeigt dann, daß das Über-Ich durch Vorgänge beeinflußt wird, welche dem Ich unbekannt geblieben sind. Es lassen sich wirklich die verdrängten Impulse auffinden, welche das

Schuldgefühl begründen. Das Über-Ich hat hier mehr vom unbewußten Es gewußt als das Ich. (GW XIII, p. 280; 1972)

As quoted, there is an insistence within the ego to proclaim its innocence, even if it obviously is drenched in guilt. Nevertheless, the unconscious communiqué to the moral faculties still remain, as well as a persistent need for the practitioner's acknowledgment of the ego's non-guilt. This double-minded "communication" is adequately described by Kierkegaard's dread of good:

(...) thi det Indesluttede er netop det Stumme, og naar dette skal ytre sig, maa det skee mod dets Villie, idet den i Ufriheden til Grund liggende Frihed, ved at komme i Communication med Friheden udenfra, revolterer, og nu forraader Ufriheden, saaledes, at det er Individet, der forraader sig selv mod sin Villie i Angesten. (CoA, p. 137 SKS)<sup>44</sup>

The unconscious communication between freedom and unfreedom betrays the encapsulated individual who wants to remain mute or non-guilty. This refusal of unconscious guilt is also expressed in Kierkegaard's concept of *inwardness* ("Inderligheden"), or lack thereof regarding the demonic's freedom when it is lost pneumatically.<sup>45</sup> Just as the quoted OCN patient, the demonic's rational non-guilty verdict is but a rationalisation of unconscious guilt. As we shall see later on, he is in denial on account of his "communication" with the very guilt he so strongly refuses to bear as his last resort for salvation, i.e. the good.

### 3.

More in tune with despair is Freud's analysis of melancholy, where one finds a close affinity to despair of weakness. If I dare analyze the aesthetic's symptoms, as an example, I presume that melancholy would cover a (Freudian) psychoanalytic diagnosis. Diapsalmata gives us an array of examples on the aesthetics discouraged mindset. Just to mention a couple: "Hvad skal Fremtiden bringe? Jeg veed det ikke, jeg abner Intet(...), hvad der driver mig frem, er en Consequents der ligger bag mig. Dette Liv er bagvendt og rædsomt, ikke til at udholde." Or: "Alle de Planer, jeg udkaster, flyve lige luket tilbage paa mig selv, naar jeg vil spytte, spytter jeg mig selv i Ansigtet."<sup>46</sup> Not only does this despair of weakness seem to share some of the same symptoms as melancholy, the dynamics described by Freud in immediate continuance of above quote also gives us a

correspondence on the level of consciousness. Just as despair of weakness is more conscious than dread of good, so is Freud's description of melancholy in contrast to OCN:

Noch stärker ist der Eindruck, daß das Über-Ich das Bewußtsein an sich gerissen hat, bei der Melancholie. Aber hier wagt das Ich keinen Einspruch, es bekennt sich schuldig und unterwirft sich den Strafen. Wir verstehen diesen Unterschied. Bei der Zwangsneurose handelte es sich um anstößige Regungen, die außerhalb des Ichs geblieben sind; bei der Melancholie aber ist das Objekt, dem der Zorn des Über-Ichs gilt, durch Identifizierung ins Ich aufgenommen worden. (GW XIII, p. 281; 1972)

There is an obvious acceptance of guilt consciousness in melancholy, a guilt consciousness that was neither present in OCN nor dread of good. The superego's punishment of the ego is also apparent in above psychoanalytic diagnosis of the aesthetic. Just the same; the diagnosis does not entirely capture the essence of the aesthetics despair. This will be explained in the next sections.

### *Resistance, epinosic gain and despair*

#### 1.

Perhaps even more significant in comparison to Kierkegaard are the concepts of *resistance* and its *epinosic gain*. Resistance is the cluttering of the patient's more or less conscious motivation for therapeutic disclosure by his own unconscious will. Freud find's that: "*Der Widerstand in der Kur geht von denselben höheren Schichten und Systemen des Seelenlebens aus, die seinerzeit die Verdrängung durchgeführt haben.*"<sup>47</sup> It is as if the repressive mechanism has infiltrated the individual's seemingly incorruptible will. In other words, if repression is the ego's unconscious defence against the id, then resistance would be the patient's unconscious will against his own will to recover. This is apparent in the individual suffering from OCN:

Er tritt als intellektueller Widerstand auf (...) Er ist gern bereit, ein Anhänger der Psychoanalyse zu werden, unter der Bedingung, daß die Analyse ihn persönlich verschont. (...) Dann können wir entdecken, daß der Widerstand sich auf den Zweifel der Zwangsneurose zurückgezogen hat und uns in dieser Position erfolgreich die Spitze bietet. (GW XI, p. 299; 1969)

The samme symptoms are easily noticed in Kierkegaard's portrayal of the dialectical self-contradiction and denial of the demonic mind, which further

elaborates on the will's double-mindedness in the exclusion of inwardness: "*Den, der ligger i den religiøse Anfægtelse, vil derfor hen til det, som Anfægtelsen vil holde ham borte fra, medens den Dæmoniske selv vil bort, efter sin stærkere Villie (Ufrihedens Villie), medens en svag Villie i ham vil hen til det.*"<sup>48</sup> This is tangibly exemplified in his analysis of pride as a deeper form of cowardice in the same paragraph.

2.

Epinosic gain on the other hand seems to accurately expose the aesthetic's despair of weakness. It was mentioned before that the price the individual pays for his flight from anxiety is the double-mindedness of despair. This is very true regarding epinosic gain: the individual trades his confrontational avoidance of anxiety or emotional conflict with neurosis.<sup>49</sup> The ego is aware of whichever gain this non-conflict position entails, but as Freud puts it "*...das Ich ein schlechtes Geschäft gemacht hat, indem es sich auf die Neurose einließ.*" It may well be that the conflict has been avoided, however in replacement of neurotic suffering.<sup>50</sup> The individual would certainly want relief from his suffering, but not even the aesthetic's explicit complaints provide less resistance to withhold his gain. This is also emphasized by Freud, for one would "*...die Erwartung aufgeben, daß diejenigen, die über ihre Krankheit am stärksten jammern und klagen, der Hilfeleistung am bereitwilligsten entgegenkommen und ihr die geringsten Widerstände bereiten werden.*"<sup>51</sup> These complaints simply conceal the gain and the fact that the individual still loves himself enough to endure the pain, as Kierkegaard puts it, since the self of the despaired in weakness is "*... beskæftiget med eller udfyldende Tiden med ikke at ville være sig selv, og dog Selv nok til at elske sig selv.*"<sup>52</sup> He seeks relief while still protecting his epinosic gain, not knowing that it is the presupposition of his suffering. In other words, he wants to do away with his weakness, while still remaining in his unambiguous stance. He "marches" on the spot in double-mindedness.<sup>53</sup>

3.

In all fairness, I do not presume that neurosis and despair are equal in every aspect; in fact spiritlessness is not represented in neurosis. Another obvious absence is defiance. The defiant nature of resistance or epinosic gain has

indirectly been addressed, although they somewhat differ from defiance proper. Defiance portrays the highest form of consciousness in SuD, which rules out the unconscious resistance of OCN. Moreover, the despaired in defiance does not seek to dispose of his anguish, which prohibits the epinosic gain of melancholy. There is no genuine resistance or epinosic gain, and it appears as if defiance is a fully conscious refusal of salvation, because “...*just denne Trøst vilde jo være hans Undergang – som Indvending mod hele Tilværelsen.*” Hence, the defiant remorselessly defends his neurotic sickness as a punishment that declares him guilty as charged.<sup>54</sup> In the following I shall therefore consider what seems to be the grounding factor behind the loss of selfhood, namely guilt.

### *Guilt and the dialectics of disorganization*

#### 1.

As an attempt to engage the primal position of guilt in Kierkegaard's and Freud's understanding of the loss of selfhood, their respective dialectics will be investigated separately in the following sections, starting with Kierkegaard.

Dialectical analyses of Kierkegaard's CoA and SuD have been attempted, and some mention has been given to analyses of the interconnection of the texts. On the basis of these studies I shall argue that guilt is the main foundation within the dialectics of the different positions of dread as well as the connection between CoA and SuD.

Opening with the dialectical examination of the positions of dread, I believe that especially Nordentoft has rightly elevated dread of good as an overall diagnosis subordinating dread of evil and the symptoms of encapsulation, and I shall borrow this interpretation.<sup>55</sup> This means that dread of good and dread of evil do not exclude each other, for all things considered; any object-dependent anxiety (dread) originates from a dread of good. This interpretation I believe originates from the view that when one truthfully chooses between good and evil, one can only choose the good, since a choice presupposes the very freedom that defines the good. In essence it is what Malantschuk reveals, save for a religious tone, when he states that: “...*ved den Enkeltes Møde med den aabenbarede Sandhed, oplyses han konkret om det gode, hvorved*

*Angstens Tvetydighed forsvinder, og Angsten går i to Retninger: enten som "Angest for det Onde" eller som "Angest for det Gode."*<sup>56</sup> It is the good that is revealed and therefore only the good can truthfully be chosen. If one dreads it can ultimately only be before the choice of good and as amply referred to by now, this choice comes with anxiety. Translated into Freud's vocabulary, dread of good and dread of evil are in the end both moral forms of anxiety.

2.

Aside from the primacy of dread of good, the dialectics of guilt is more noticeable in dread of evil. Here we come across a persistent interaction and dependence between guilt and repentance. If guilt is understood as the psychological representation of sin, then guilt (comprehended in its totality, even if derived from a particular incident) would be the result of the individual's unfree relation to evil. A pervasive consciousness of guilt is constitutive to this form of unfree relation and a source from which the individual's constant gaze at evil is dialectically caused by fear of falling out of the good. As such, guilt is not only the effect, but can also be interpreted as the cause of the individual's unfree relation, because it manifests the individual's longing for innocence and discloses his inability to establish himself in the good. This longing for innocence is expressed through repentance and I therefore agree with Malantschuck, when he interprets that: "*I Uskyldigheden var Bevægelsen I Retning af Skyld, nu søger Mennesket ved sig selv at vende tilbage fra Syndens Virkelighed til dens Mulighed.*"<sup>57</sup> Here *the possibility of sin* ("Syndens Mulighed") is understood as innocence. Unfortunately repentance is incapable of accomplishing the regression that would deliver the individual from his unfree relation, provided that his guilty conscience is intact. Consequently repentance relapses into guilt. For this reason repentance entails a state of sin. It expresses an inability to achieve the idealistic perfection of ethics, which presupposes a guilty state of mind. Alike the inconcreteness of dread of good's encapsulation with nothing; the idealization is existentially unmanageable in dread of evil. But relieving oneself of guilt consciousness is a sin as well, that is, if the individual takes his existential responsibility seriously. The dialectics of guilt is therefore a vicious circle and as such comparable to

the tension between the ego and the ideal ego in Freud. As long as a great distance remains between the ego and the ideal ego, repentance does not have the potency to close the gap.

3.

In comparison, the demonic utterly rejects any act of repentance, or rather positions himself in such a way that would deem repentance unjustifiable: *“Fortvivlelsen er, ligesom demonien, den krisebevidstes forgæves forsøg på at udlette krisebevidstheden, i Begrebet Angest nærmere bestemt som hans forsøg på at indrette sig med den, og således afvise helbredelsens mulighed...”*<sup>58</sup> Once again I am indebted to Nordentoft’s analysis. The quote implies that the demonic admits the impossibility of ever realizing the good, for he recognizes that there is no return to innocence and therefore establishes himself within evil. However his dismissal of repentance produces an unfree relation to the good, because dismissal, in itself, presupposes a continuous communication with that which constantly judges him as guilty. Nordentoft states that: *““Angsten for det Gode” må være en “profund” syndeangst, den må rumme en ubevidst skyldfølelse, og denne fortrængt skyldfølelse må være forklaringen på dens modstand mod det gode.”*<sup>59</sup> Ironically, I would add, one might say that the dialectics of it all makes him absolutely guilty, because his remorseless stance is dependent on the compassion by which he refuses to heal. As quoted earlier the demonic’s rejection of the possibility of recovery is a fruitless attempt to erase his consciousness of crisis. So, there is no return to innocence; yet he surprisingly does not see himself as guilty.

In view of this analysis, I shall conclude that the dialectics between dread of good and dread of evil seem to be united by guilt: an unfree relation is always guilty, so to speak. So granted that the diagnoses of the object-dependent anxiety (“dread”) are based in dread of good; through (unconscious) guilt, dread of good is a deeper dread of evil. However, the fact that the demonic does not acknowledge any guilt produces an anxious ambiguity towards repentance. It would seem as if recognition of guilt would simplify matters, but because he knows there is no return to innocence, repentance remains ambiguous. The demonic needs assurance that repentance

would bring him securely before salvation, which is impossible since it is a choice. This chance he will not take, given that an unsuccessful demonic repentance would be the pinnacle of hubris laden humiliation. In his mind, this is probably the greatest of all evils. There is nevertheless the possibility of freedom, for within his denial he still communicates with the good.

On the other hand dread of evil is a deeper dread of good, but as a consequence of a different kind of ambiguity towards repentance. This is noticeable in Kierkegaard's portrayal of "... *hvilken Overtalelsesgave og hvilken Veltalenhed en saadan Anger har til at afvæbne alle Indvendinger, til at overbevise Alle, der komme den nær, for da atter at fortvivle over sig selv, naar denne dens Adspredelse er forbi.*")<sup>60</sup> He is remorseful, but accepts no reparation for his guilt. A successful repentance still preserves the anxious *consequence of sin* ("Syndens Virkelighed") and accordingly the possibility of yet a new disappointment if he chooses to accept reparation. Once more, there is still the possibility of freedom, if he dares chance it.

#### *Guilt and the link between CoA and SuD*

Some of the quotes above hint to the close relationship between dread and despair, and in my opinion this connection is as close as ever in dread of good's freedom lost pneumatically. Here we find the same encapsulation that is a step stone towards despair of weakness, save for the latter's higher consciousness. My hesitation in diagnosing the aesthetic as melancholic is due to this close connection. Obviously he aches and detests himself in the same manner that the melancholic does, but the aesthetic's conscious guilt does not seem to be wholly honest as required by melancholy. This double-mindedness was already clear in the analysis of epinosic gain, but in the aesthetic's case the analysis does not only disclose an unconscious primary gain (the flight from anxiety or emotional conflict); quite the reverse, it also discloses a "conscious primary gain", if you will: a heightened reflection of selfhood.<sup>61</sup> Kierkegaard called attention to an important detail, the fact that the self despaired in weakness is still "...*self enough to love itself*". His melancholy is just for show, so to speak. It is a self-loathing that not only keeps him encapsulated in an existentially disappointing misrelationship; this type of misrelationship also

keeps him encapsulated in a higher form of self-relation that he will not relinquish: “*Men at hjælpes ved Glemsel, kan der dog heller ikke være Tale om, ei heller om ved Hjælp af Glemsel at slippe ind under Bestemmelsen Aandløshed, (...) nei, dertil er Selvet for meget Selv.*”<sup>62</sup> He is anguished though cosily placed within despair, and out of reach from any (psychoanalytic) diagnosis. The manner of his endless reflection on weakness has a likeness to the rationalisation of freedom lost pneumatically, save for conscious guilt, that is. Yet he is still not guilty enough or at least too proud to “humble himself under his weakness”. There seems to be a concealed connection to the resistance of dread of good behind the aesthetic’s epinosic gain. In fact, this is precisely what I interpret in Nordentoft’s dialectical analysis of dread and despair:

Forskellen er relativ, modsætningerne dialektiske, således at trodsen er en “profund” svaghed og svagheden en “profund” trods. Angsten for det gode er en selvhævdelse overfor helbredelsens mulighed. Angsten for det onde er den lidenskabelige selvfornedrelse og selvfordømmelse. Men i selvfornedrelsen er den også selvhævdende, den vil være fordømt. (Nordentoft, p. 370; 1972)<sup>63</sup>

From this quote we may further conclude that the aesthetic’s conscious epinosic gain is also his demonic resistance towards salvation, and it is because of this gain that his weakness is a deeper form of *defiance*. If reflection is heightened from CoA to SuD, it seems that guilt is what is veiled by the endless reflection of misrelationship. The guilt is somewhat dishonest in despair of weakness and proudly misused in defiance.

### *Guilt and the classification of OCN*

#### 1.

I am not aware of any dialectical undertaking on the topic of Freudian neurosis that would rival Nordentoft’s analyses of Kierkegaard’s work. However, it seems appropriate to attempt such an undertaking, if only owing to above considered similarities. There is promising indication though that some topics are suitable for dialectical analysis, especially guilt. On a more metaphysical note for instance, Freud emphasizes that guilt is ultimately an expression of the ambivalent conflict between Eros and the death drives, not unlike the unambiguous stance in either good or evil.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding this ambiguity or ambivalence, attention was drawn to neurotic and moral anxiety as equally driven by a fear of the superego's punishment, even if their objects of anxiety differ. What remains then, is the ego's "choice" of punishment avoidance. The result is either a behaviour commending the superego through moral anxiety, or condemning the id through neurotic anxiety. So even if the source of anxiety is the id, it is dialectically grounded in the policies of the superego. This is what seems to be the essence of dread of evil, where the anguish is dialectically based in the incapability to establish oneself in the good, here the normative functions of the ideal ego. By the same token, it would therefore be fair to say, that it is because of guilt (the tension between the ego and the ideal ego) that all anxiety, in the end, is ultimately moral anxiety.

2.

Guilt was also an issue regarding OCN, even if the ego does not consciously acknowledge it. It was described as corresponding to the demonic's rationalisation of his unconscious double-mindedness. Not counting the dialectics of the demonic resistance, the dynamics of OCN somewhat resembles the "profound" dread of evil in dread of good, since it is clear that the unconsciousness of OCN sees the superego being corrupted by the id into punishing the ego. As quoted above, "... *das Über-Ich durch Vorgänge beeinflusst wird, welche dem Ich unbekannt geblieben sind. (...)Das Über-Ich hat hier mehr vom unbewußten Es gewußt als das Ich.*" Not to put too fine a point on it, but due to this quote it seems likely to interpret the punishment suffered in OCN's repressed guilt as nothing but a cover for the id's aggressive impulses – a deeper dread of evil in Kierkegaard's terms. Then again, this corruption is not unlike the manner in which the superego's cathexis of the id's aggressive impulses punishes the ego in melancholia.<sup>65</sup> So on the one hand OCN operates on the basis of repression, and on the other hand it is a fitting dialectical mirror to melancholia. On all accounts, guilt also appears to be at the bottom of psychoanalytic concepts, for as regards an overall definition of guilt, Freud concludes that guilt as well as repentance is prior to conscience, with repentance solely expressing the ego's reaction to guilt.<sup>66</sup>

This seems particularly clear regarding OCN's repetitive behaviour. In order to reduce distress or a dreaded situation, the individual compulsively repeats certain behaviours (mentally or physically).<sup>67</sup> The sources of these repetitions are unconscious, exaggerated and essentially meaningless to him. However, granted the exaggerated idealistic rigidity and preciseness of the repetition, in fact revealing the manners the superego, it may well be interpreted as a representation of remorse that would serve as a device to repent the unconscious guilt of OCN. One observes the same exaggerated remorseful behaviour in CoA, even though it is categorised under dread of evil. As mentioned before, the paper's analysis of OCN's unconscious guilt is but one type. In fact, guilt in other types of OCN are very much conscious, which would properly measure up to dread of evil. The difference obviously being that repentance in dread of evil is a conscious and meaningful atonement of sin. Nevertheless, it appears as if the unconscious remorseful activity indirectly discloses the unconscious guilt of the present analysis of OCN. This parallels dread of good's unconscious guilt that disclosed its deeper dread of evil as analysed by Nordentoft. Furthermore, resembling the ineffective repentance of dread of evil, the repetition of OCN is a fruitless endeavour in the long run given that "...repentance does not become the individual's freedom". As mentioned before, repentance is a state of sin for mere fact that it presupposes sin. The same goes for OCN's repetitive drive: it presupposes the repressed guilt that is atoned if only for a while.

### 3.

In view of the above, there is a peculiar difficulty in categorising OCN. True, this difficulty may be my own, and above comparisons of OCN with dread of good are possibly a tad too stringent in a dialectical frame; nonetheless, the heterogeneity of OCN symptoms involves a flexibility that is no bar to dread of good. If anything they seem equally difficult to categorise. This is perhaps more evident in OCN's modern account: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). In the current *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (DSM IV), OCD has hitherto been classified as an anxiety disorder.<sup>68</sup> This classification would make it comparable to the categorisation of dread of good

as a form of anxiety on the same level as dread of evil. Interestingly, the current development of DSM V may give it an independent classification integrating its anxiety related symptoms, as already does the *International Classification of Diseases 10* (ICD 10).<sup>6970</sup> This also could be called for, if compared to dread of good, since it would become an independent diagnosis subsuming other symptoms of dread. One could suppose that the difficulty in classifying OCD in terms of its concept emerges from a deeper root of disorder akin to despair. I do not presume that the current DSM considerations of OCD's classification have anything to do with above dialectical reflections; rather, it would put a further historical strain on the dialectical analysis, not to mention its empirical basis. Still, dread of good was no less difficult to classify in the analysis above: an overall diagnosis, a deeper dread of evil, a forecast of despair of weakness'encapsulation, and a less conscious counterpart to defiance – al of which anticipates its spiritual roots. The point being that regardless of which diagnosis one applies to these symptoms or in which manner they are classified; it is a complicated matter when ethical concepts such as guilt are in question. They are susceptible to spiritual analysis.

Be that as it may; in an overall comparison to Freud, one may conclude that above reading of Kierkegaard's notion of guilt presupposes a roughly more conscious guilt. This is exposed by the aesthetic and by defiance, thanks to a conscious type of epinosic gain and an abstract retention of a guilty verdict, in that order. In addition, it (not surprisingly) offers a greater dialectical elasticity than in the analysis of guilt in neurosis. Both of these conclusions I believe are due to the more spiritual or conscious emphasis surrounded by despair, on top of the progression of spiritual dialectics from CoA to SuD. A long-standing misuse of the possibility of freedom transforms anxiety into despair, albeit despair is already (if only unconsciously) present in CoA's depiction of different demonic symptoms.<sup>71</sup> By the same token the dialectics of anxiety are present in despair. One must learn to be anxious, as Kierkegaard emphasizes, if not, despair will eventually emerge. Anxiety, as it were, is still plays a role.<sup>72</sup>

### *Closing remarks*

In this paper I have tried to illustrate the similarities between Kierkegaard's and Freud's concept of selfhood and to show that even clearly disagreeing perspectives may have closely related subject matters. Both in *Becoming a self* and in *The loss of selfhood*, I find these subject matters through an analysis of the superego and spirit. Similarities were illustrated in their emergence and their functions as mirrors for the self, in health as well as in disorder or disorganization. Especially the latter gave way to more elaborate comparisons seeing that guilt plays a key role in the superegos and spirits distortion of the self. I labelled these comparisons as overlapping aspects and not merely perspectives because of their close ethical and reflective relations. I therefore conclude that there is space for a spiritual understanding of the self in Freud's meta-psychology and that Kierkegaard's understanding of the self is just as viable in a secular setting as it was in religious terms. The former due to the importance of the concept of guilt in his theory, and the latter due to the incorporation of universal difficulties within existence; difficulties that are not easily classified as seen by modern nosology.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Freud's meta-psychological division of the self in its structural, dynamical, energetic, genetic and adaptive analysis will be less strictly divided in the following comparison. Economic assumptions, concerning psychological energy will largely be left out. Also, I take it for granted that Kierkegaard's understanding of the constitution of man as universally determined by spirit is susceptible to a meta-psychological scrutiny.

<sup>2</sup> (CoA, p. 98 SKS)

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- <sup>3</sup> (CoA, p. 152 SKS)
- <sup>4</sup> In *Metapsykologi 2* (1983) p. 199 note 13, Olsen, Kjær and Køppe make a note of Freud's dismissal of Groddeck's attempt to synthesize psyche and soma by means of the id. They conclude that Freud preferred a form of dualism of the psyche containing conscious and unconscious features. This dualism I believe emphasizes the understanding of the id as a meta-psychological link.
- <sup>5</sup> (SuD, p. 7 SKS)
- <sup>6</sup> (CoA, p. 98 SKS)
- <sup>7</sup> (CoA, p. 135 SKS)
- <sup>8</sup> (SuD, p. 8 SKS)
- <sup>9</sup> (CoA, p. 39 SKS) I prefer the term *sweet anxiousness* rather than *pleasing anxiousness*, because the former reveals a more tender form of anxiety.
- <sup>10</sup> To be concrete means to be this or that particular individual, but also that one should overtake and manage the responsibility of putting together the self's heterogeneous part: body and soul, finitude and infinitude, possibility and necessity et cetera.
- <sup>11</sup> (CoA, p. 122 SKS – my emphasis) “*The good is freedom. The difference between good and evil is only for freedom and in freedom, and this difference is never in **abstracto** but only in **concreto**.*” (CoA, p. 111; Princeton 1980 – my emphasis)
- <sup>12</sup> Regarding different types of anxiety after the Fall of Man I shall preferably use the term *dread*, so that we later on more clearly can distinguish the different qualities of anxiety. What is important here is the fact that in dread, anxiety has an object. Anxiety is no longer in it self ambiguous, yet as we shall see it is the concrete object of dread that becomes ambiguous.
- <sup>13</sup> (CoA, p. 102 SKS) “*On the other hand, the lostness of spiritlessness is the most terrible of all, because the misfortune is precisely that spiritlessness has a relation to spirit, which is nothing.*” (CoA, p. 94; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>14</sup> (CoA, p. 127 SKS) “*The posited sin is an unwarranted actuality. It is actuality, and it is posited by the individual as actuality in repentance, but repentance does not become the individual's freedom.*” (CoA, p. 115; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>15</sup> I prefer the term *encapsulation* rather than *inclosing reserve* because it is portrays something that is more difficult to open up.
- <sup>16</sup> (CoA, p. 137 SKS) “*The demonic does not close itself up with something, but closes itself up within itself, and in this lies what is profound about existence [**tilværelsen**], precisely that unfreedom makes itself a prisoner.*” (CoA, p. 124; Princeton 1980 – my emphasis)
- <sup>17</sup> (GW XIII, pp. 115-121; 1972)
- <sup>18</sup> (GW XV, p. 68; 1969)
- <sup>19</sup> (CoA, p. 41 SKS)
- <sup>20</sup> Understood in abovementioned definition of good.
- <sup>21</sup> (CoA, p. 61 SKS)
- <sup>22</sup> (GW XV, p. 72; 1969)
- <sup>23</sup> (DESK, p. 249; 1968) My translation: *Anxiety is stated by him (ed. Kierkegaard/V. Haufniensis) as subsisting on a psychological stage; on a higher setting where spirit presents itself, anxiety corresponds to gloom and despair, respectively, later on to resentment.*

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- <sup>24</sup> “Most accurately” because Kierkegaard’s portrayal of these positions has some resemblance to Freud’s analysis of neurosis. Since the latter’s meta-psychology emerged from his clinical investigations, it is not surprising that Kierkegaard’s negative existential description, i.e. the misrelation of selfhood, has a touch of psychoanalytic insight. As we shall see in regards to the synthesis of the ego and the superego, the other positions of despair are just as suitable.
- <sup>25</sup> (SuD, pp. 25-28 SKS)
- <sup>26</sup> (SuD, pp. 31-33 SKS)
- <sup>27</sup> (E/O I, pp. 3-25 SKS)
- <sup>28</sup> (SuD, pp. 28-30 SKS)
- <sup>29</sup> (SuD, pp. 33-37 SKS)
- <sup>30</sup> (GW XI, pp. 95/388; 1969)
- <sup>31</sup> Considering the dreaming Spirit, one appreciates why there is a sweet anxiousness of what awaits, in contrast to the predominantly agonizing anxiety of the matured Spirit: the impulses of Id have not yet been associated with evil.
- <sup>32</sup> (GW XV, p. 67; 1969)
- <sup>33</sup> (SuD, p. 41 SKS) In this paper I shall generally equate spiritless dread (CoA) with Spiritlessness (SuD) because of their unconscious characteristics.
- <sup>34</sup> This is especially hinted to in his “Das Unbehagen in der Kultur” (*Kulturens Byrde*) from 1930 (KB, p. 88).
- <sup>35</sup> (Nordentoft, p. 195; 1972)
- <sup>36</sup> (Nordentoft, p. 194; 1972)
- <sup>37</sup> My translations.
- <sup>38</sup> (GW XV, p. 92; 1969)
- <sup>39</sup> Freud’s latter theory corrects his former assumptions precisely in this respect. He formerly assumed that anxiety was a result of drive repression, but eventually reversed the premises, turning anxiety into the cause for repression. As we shall see, Freud’s correction is in tune with Kierkegaard’s thinking.
- <sup>40</sup> (GW XV, p. 421; 1969)
- <sup>41</sup> Repression is but one of several defence mechanism. I believe that its importance as opposed to, say rationalization, stems from its close connection to anxiety. One may even argue that any other type of defence mechanisms has a repressive function, i.e. presuppose repression.
- <sup>42</sup> (GW XV, p. 84; 1969)
- <sup>43</sup> Freud calls it *zwangsneurose*. Zwangsneurose consists of a ruminative dimension (predominantly obsessional thoughts), and a ritualistic dimension (predominantly compulsive acts). These dimensions may vary in severity and I shall therefore use the term obsessive-compulsive neurosis instead, since Freud used his term on account of the obsessiveness as well as compulsiveness of this neurosis.
- <sup>44</sup> ”... because inclosing reserve is precisely the mute, and when it is to express itself, this must take place contrary to its will, since freedom, which underlies unfreedom or is its ground, by entering into communication with freedom from without, revolts and now betrays unfreedom in such a way that it is the individual who in anxiety betrays himself against his will.”(CoA, p. 123; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>45</sup> (CoA, p. 155 SKS)

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- <sup>46</sup> (E/O I, pp. 9, 11 SKS) “*What will the future bring? I do not know, I have no presentiment (...) I am propelled by a consequence that lies behind me. This life is turned around and dreadful, not to be endured.*” Or: “*All the plans I project fly straight back at me; when I want to spit, I spit in my own face.*” (E/O I, pp. 24, 26; Princeton 1987).
- <sup>47</sup> (GW XIII, p. 17; 1972)
- <sup>48</sup> (CoA, p. 160 notation SKS) “*Whoever is in religious spiritual trial wants to go on to that from which the spiritual trial would keep him away, while the demonic, according to his stronger will (the will of unfreedom), wants to get away from it, while the weaker will in him wants to go on to it.*” (CoA, p. 143 notation; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>49</sup> In the following I shall only refer to primary gain. Secondary gain is an external advantage that provides relief for the individual as a result of his sickness, e.g. special attention by others.
- <sup>50</sup> (GW XI, p. 398 ; 1969)
- <sup>51</sup> (GW XI, p. 398 ; 1969)
- <sup>52</sup> (SuD, p. 61 SKS) “*...preoccupied with or filling up time with not willing to be itself and yet being self enough to love itself.*” (SuD, p. 63; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>53</sup> (SuD, p. 64 SKS)
- <sup>54</sup> (SuD, pp. 72-73 SKS) “*...this very consolation would be his undoing – as a denunciation of all existence.*” (SuD, p. 74; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>55</sup> (Nordentoft, p. 242; 1972)
- <sup>56</sup> (DESK, p. 322; 1968) My translation: *...the individual’s confrontation with the truth of revelation informs him concretely about the good, whereby the ambiguity of anxiety disappears and anxiety goes in separate ways: either as “Anxiety of Evil” or as “Anxiety of Good”.*
- <sup>57</sup> (FPKBA, p. 94; 1971) My translation: *In innocence the movement was towards guilt, but now man seeks to return to the possibility of sin from its consequence by himself.*
- <sup>58</sup> (Nordentoft, p. 294; 1972) My translation: *Despair is, as the demonic, the crisis inflicted consciousness’ ineffective attempt to eradicate its consciousness of crisis, and in the Concept of Anxiety more specifically understood as his attempt to familiarize himself to it, and consequently deny him self the possibility of recovery...*
- <sup>59</sup> (Nordentoft, p. 371; 1972) My translation: “*Anxiety of good” may well be a “profound” anxiety of sin that contains an unconscious emotion of guilt, and this repressed emotion of guilt would be the explanation for its resistance against the good.*
- <sup>60</sup> (CoA, p. 128 SKS) “*...what persuasive powers, what eloquence such repentance possesses to disarm all objections and to convince all who come close to it, only to despair of itself again when this diversion is over.*” (CoA, p. 116; Princeton 1980)
- <sup>61</sup> “Conscious epinosic gain” may sound contradictory, since primary gain is defined by its unconscious feature. If neurosis is to maintain its meaning, the flight from conflict must be unconscious – this is the actual gain. Yet it is no secondary gain, for it is the conflict in itself, the loss of immediacy that produces the higher reflection. This reflection is by no means a relief, for it ruminates on conflict. I shall therefore identify conscious epinosic gain as a conscious though derived reappearance of the original conflict, embodied by despair of weakness. In other words, it was weak of the individual not to confront the original conflict, and although it is lost, the consciousness of conflict is wasted on the weakness it entailed.
- <sup>62</sup> (SuD, p. 67 SKS) “*Nor is there any question of being helped by forgetting or of slipping, by means of forgetting, into the category of the spiritless (...) no, for that the self is too much self*” (SuD, p. 62; 1980)

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<sup>63</sup> My translation: *The difference is relative, and the oppositions are dialectic, such that defiance is a “profound” weakness and weakness a “profound” defiance. Anxiety of good is self-assertion before the possibility of recovery. Anxiety of evil is a compassionate self-degradation and self-condemnation. But this self-degradation is also self-promoting, it wants to be condemned.*

<sup>64</sup> (KB, p. 76)

<sup>65</sup> (GW XV, p. 66; 1969) This punishment is due to the ego’s cathexis of a lost object of love. This could for instance be an individual’s unloving mother, whose deprivation of love towards the individual is internally converted into an identification of the source of deprivation. In this manner it is possible to punish his mother, by punishing himself through the superego’s cathexis of the id’s energy.

<sup>66</sup> (KB, p. 80)

<sup>67</sup> (GW XV, p. 89; 1969)

<sup>68</sup> (DSM IV, TR # 300.3, p. 462)

<sup>69</sup> (Stein et al.; 2010).

<sup>70</sup> (ICD 10, F42.0)

<sup>71</sup> Especially the encapsulation of freedom lost pneumatically.

<sup>72</sup> (CoA, p. 175 SKS).