# For Idea and Reality.

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# Personal Grounds.

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*[585]* Anyone who knows a little about himself and the world will surely have had the experience that there is a conviction that is hard to put forward and justify to others, and this not from a lack of grounds, no, on the contrary, from an excess of grounds. It holds in most cases of womanly conviction. A young girl, for example, may in a matter of the highest importance be quite clear in her own mind, perfectly certain of her cause, and yet, when she is to explain herself, it is as if she sank in a torrent of grounds; she falls silent. She cannot appeal exclusively to any single ground, and were she to try to enumerate all her grounds, she might just as well, she feels, begin to count the leaves in the forest or the drops in the sea. That her grounds are personal, not scientific, is surely a superfluous remark. One would, however, be greatly mistaken if one imagined that a conviction from subjective, personal grounds were suited only to women, not to men. Absolutely personal grounds hold everywhere where it is a question of an absolutely personal matter.

*[586]* In Oehlenschläger's Axel and Valborg it is, as is well known, Black Friar Knud who, in the circumstance that bride and bridegroom are "baptismal siblings," shrewdly discovers a ground, fully valid by the law of the Church, for preventing the marriage; that the ground is objective, a ground that admits no objections, Axel learns when he, who "can also read," sees with his own eyes that it stands in the church register. The objective ground does not convince Axel that his love for Valborg is sinful — in that case the prohibition would have to be conceived from the religious side, thus subjectively — no, it does not convince him, but it shows him a hostile resistance, a barrier, hard as fate, inflexible as necessity; it shows him the impossibility of reaching the goal of his longing, his Eden, "his blessed Valhalla." Thus a single objective ground can press like the hand of Death on the breast of the living and subdue all the grounds of the heart, however heartfelt, however strong these may be. The tragic element in the catastrophe is an expression of the fact that subjective and objective grounds are dissimilar.

But such an expression can be had in another way as well. We may well imagine that Axel's friend Vilhelm, by one of the many wonderful coincidences that always stand at the disposal of the poet's imagination, had in good time got wind of the secret, had come to Rome a few days after Axel's departure, and had then in all quiet worked to have the overlooked impediment removed. Just as Knud has opened the church

register, and Axel throws himself at Valborg's feet with the cry of despair: "Valborg! Valborg! it is over," Vilhelm steps forward, takes up Valborg's reply: No, no! and goes on: Hadrianus Episcopus, servus servorum Dei,… to be brief: His Holiness has by special grace permitted that Axel Thordsøn may marry Valborg Immer's daughter, *[587]* notwithstanding that they are godsiblings, yet on the condition that the said Axel Thordsøn first show with clear, irrefutable grounds why he loves Valborg precisely and will never be able to love any other woman. — The message is a joyful surprise to the couple so lately unhappy; Axel asks in rapture: Is that all, does the Pope demand nothing else? Vilhelm. No, nothing else. And yet the matter is curious enough. It was a Cardinal who interceded for you, a fine mind, a subtle Scholastic. Now you must know, what you surely have not noticed, that among the learned there is carried on a heated dispute about the relation of the will to motives, about the relation of human freedom to necessity, some maintaining that true freedom at bottom is nothing other than a kind of psychic natural necessity, while others hold that there is a profound difference between necessity and freedom, that the free will is determined by grounds only insofar as it determines itself. The Cardinal now represented to the Pope that it would greatly contribute to clarifying the matter if some among the many lovers who yearly besiege the Holy Father with petitions for dispensation were called upon to express themselves more closely about their grounds. For lovers often speak an equivocal language when they speak of grounds. At one moment they say that they love from necessity, that they cannot do otherwise; then it is a matter of life and death, and one must see to helping the unfortunates as best one can. But then again they say that they love with freedom, that love is a free matter, that with full resolution they have chosen the chosen one, picked the picked one, that they cannot do otherwise *[588]* because they do not *will* otherwise; but when the choice thus depends on the will and happens with freedom, the suppliant could just as well choose another, and there is no pressing ground to grant him dispensation. By collecting and comparing the many statements His Holiness could then learn whether the will in this important point is moved by "the dark, the egoistic and instinctive," which "hangs together with the unopened unity of individual natural being," or by "the universal of knowing, the determination of the universality of essence, which expresses itself in the being-for-itself in the form of liberated universality, which belongs to self-consciousness," in other words, whether they really love from necessity or from freedom, or partly from necessity partly from freedom, or… Axel. Do stop with this long string of learned phrases; you know I am no cleric. I go straight to the point; I have a ground, a single

simple one; my ground the Pope will not reject, it is my Valborg herself — "fir-grown Valborg, rose of all flowers"! Vilhelm. Yes, my friend, that is a lyrical ground; that ground you cannot offer His Holiness; nor was it that kind of grounds of which the Cardinal spoke, for he meant objective, scientific grounds. Axel. Then you must help me to mint the ground with the proper stamp; for I will tell you, it is with my ground as with Draupner, Odin's ring: it is only one and yet becomes many. If the Pope does not accept the one ground, then he must accept the other. I have many grounds, Vilhelm, when I think it over, many; "The sea does not have so many animals in its waves, never did the night see so many stars in the vault of heaven, not so many
*[589]* birds dwell in the forest, not so many blades of grass has field and meadow," as my heart has grounds why I love Valborg. — So the deliberation begins. The wedding is postponed, Axel ponders, Valborg waits — she will have long to wait.

So much is surely clear from this, that a subjective personal ground can never become impersonal, any more than the reverse. If the dissimilar grounds could in the scientific sense melt together into one, then the thinking consciousness would also be able to convert the one into the other, to transform the one by means of the other. But how impossible such a transformation is can be seen from the examples cited. The objective ground, that godsiblings, by the Church's prohibition, may not marry one another, can, when it works in all its objectivity, at most bring about only that the lovers bow beneath Providence, that in quiet patience they renounce the happiness of life. It is a power of humility in the woman's soul that she can bow more inwardly beneath the inevitable than the man; we hear Valborg speak for quiet resignation. "Quietly shall I sit thus in a little cell, work gold in silk, live out gently and sorrowfully my time, like the turtledove"… As she consoles herself, so she will also console her friend, that he shall be patient, quiet. "You shall travel to your farm, up to your sister, the good Helfred. Time heals all things in the world, may it heal your wounds. Nature in her noble, quiet grandeur, a loving sister's company soothe the heart more than merry company." The subjective has hereby by no means become objective, but the personal ground has, by collision with fate, been transformed in itself.

*[590]* It is surely not Valborg's meaning, when she speaks of, that Time heals all wounds, that she will in time forget Axel, or that he should forget her. What changes with time is properly only the outward, not the inward. Outwardly, in the eyes of the world, she must be parted from the beloved, but she does not lose him; she knows a place where he always is, a sacred place in the inner life. In there, where he always is, there she builds the church — with old graves for dear memories — there she lives,

there she keeps vigil and holds daily divine service: wreathes the pillar, greets the pilgrim, weeps at his breast, follows him to the altar, to the altar of sorrow, to the wedding, the wedding that no Black Knud interrupts. It is only subjective, all of it subjective, but it is personal. Were the subjective, on the contrary, transformed into the objective, the personal into the impersonal: then the matter would have to take another turn. It would then have to be that Axel suddenly, through the blow of fate, had become an objective thinker, had come to see that the original thing in man's personal being is not heart and will, but thinking and knowing; he would then have to explain himself to Valborg. Understand me, Valborg, the hard blow that strikes us we have deserved ourselves; we have committed a great sin, not against God in heaven — that is a subjective matter — but against the eternal laws of thinking and being, against metaphysics. You see, we began in our youthfulness with our own being, with "being in the form of individuality," we regarded the contingency of this our restricted subjectivity as a reliable expression of "individual being in general," we have unfortunately taken the concept of existence in "an arbitrary double meaning": *[591]* that is an unclarity in thought, "a surreptitious assumption," which avenges itself now that we awake to consciousness. Understand me: "all being in the form of individuality is existence; there can thus be such an existence as is not consciousness, not theoretically. But when *consciousness* becomes the subject of existence, then existence includes the theory, "for consciousness exists only as being theoretical." — You stare at me, you do not understand me; give it time! You will surely come to understand me. That a youth loves a girl can be defended on objective grounds; it is a manifestation of the universal of nature; it is the life of the species, continuing itself through the individuals, whose existence insofar must be said to fall under individual being in general; but that two people in love should have the right to deify one another to such a degree that she despairs and will go into a convent if she cannot have him, precisely him, although there are other young men of equally lovable qualities who offer themselves; and that he becomes desperate and will go to war and absolutely get himself killed, when he cannot have her, precisely her, the chosen one: you see, Valborg, such a choosing cannot be defended on objective grounds, it is to put "being in the form of individuality" for "individual being in general," it is to violate "the theory." Prove now in deed that you have grasped the objective, that your consciousness has at last become your existence's subject," and that this your subject really includes the theory: then you will become Hakon's bride — to the honor of the objective! Queen of Norway — to the good fortune and glory of the universal! Then I

am consoled; you will be too. Farewell!

*[592]* How Valborg will take the explanation, whether she will take herself or the speaker to be insane, whether in raging anger she will rise against the faithless one, or whether giddily she will sink down in faintness, about that opinions may differ; but this much is certain: she will not understand the explanation, will not grasp the objective of the theory. She gave him her heart, her faith; this one thing she understands, this subjective thing; but the objective? how should she understand "the objective of the theory": she is after all — only a woman!

"Love," says S. Kierkegaard, "has after all its priests in the poets, and now and then one hears a voice that knows how to keep it in honor; but of faith nothing is heard, who speaks to the honor of this passion? Philosophy goes further. Theology sits painted at the window and courts its favor, offers its beauty for sale to philosophy. It is said to be difficult to understand Hegel, that is a work of wonder, but to get beyond Abraham, that is a small matter. To go beyond Hegel, that is a work of wonder, but to get beyond Abraham is the easiest thing of all." Whether Kierkegaard is just right when he calls faith a passion is a question in itself; but there is one thing in which he is unconditionally right, namely this, that faith, just as much as love, is a personal matter. To wish in this chapter to overtake such an author with school criticism on a couple of pages and to give it the appearance that one goes further, goes beyond Kierkegaard, while one in reality goes back not merely to Hegel, but even behind Hegel, is not to the advancement of truth. It is not for nothing that Kierkegaard in all
*[593]* his writings, not merely in the aesthetic and philosophical, but also in the religious, edifying ones, points to the erotic and takes examples from natural relations of love. He wishes hereby to make it quite conspicuous how sharp the opposition between the personal and the impersonal is. For what for life and personality is the most important, the most essential of all: *this* human being, *this* soul, this heart, must for the consciousness "that exists only as being theoretical" necessarily become something wholly inessential, something vanishing and therefore insignificant. Theory reaches only *a* soul, never *this* soul, only *a* heart in general, the concept of the heart, never *this* heart. What the heart in and for itself, the objective heart, desires and by virtue of the concept must desire, is the main thing; what a single heart, this soul, *this* subjective heart longs for, is indifferent. If a single heart breaks of sorrow — a single fly drowns in a cream pot — what power lies in that? There are hearts enough in the concept of the heart, for the concept of the heart, the universal heart, embraces all possible hearts.

In this spirit Hegel speaks when in the second part of his Aesthetics he characterizes the chivalry of the Middle Ages and romantic love. The choice of subjectivity appears to him as a wilfulness, a "stubbornness of particularity." "The collisions of love," he says, "especially when they are set fighting against substantial interests, always retain a touch of contingency and incalculability; it is subjectivity as such which, with its claims not valid in and for themselves, sets itself up against that which for the sake of its own essentiality has a claim to recognition. The individuals in the *[594]* high tragedy of the ancients, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, Oedipus, Creon, etc., have indeed likewise individual ends, but the substantial, the pathos which in the content of the action is the moving force, has absolute justification and is in itself of universal interest… When Clytemnestra's crime is not punished in this concrete case, when the injury Antigone must suffer as sister is not avenged, then this is a wrong in and for itself. But" — here he aims at chivalry — "these sufferings of love, these shipwrecked hopes, this infatuation in general, these infinite pains which a lover feels, this infinite bliss and blessedness which he imagines, have no interest in themselves universal, it is something that concerns only himself. Every human being certainly has a heart for love and a right to become happy through it, but when he here, in just this case, under these and these circumstances, precisely with regard to this girl, does not reach his goal, then no wrong is thereby done. For it is not in and for itself necessary — dass er sich gerade auf dieses Mädchen kapricionire, and then we should take an interest in the highest contingency, in the arbitrariness of subjectivity, which is without all extension and universality."

This conception of romantic love, somewhat Hieronymite, as it might perhaps seem, is objective, strictly scientific. How genuinely scientific it is we can easily prove. For the solution of a geometrical problem, e.g., a point must be marked off or a line drawn. But every time a point is marked off, it becomes *this* point; the line *[595]* that is drawn becomes each time a *this* line. He who on behalf of universality has a mind to tease the mathematician may with a certain ground raise an objection. You are to mark off a point, that is necessary; but you mark off *this* point, that is surely contingent; you want to draw a line, but why precisely this line? You promise us the universal and offer us only the particular, you aim at the necessary and hit only the contingent: that is a strange method. The mathematician will, however, easily extricate himself from the embarrassment. He must indeed concede that every determinate point, wherever he may mark it off, never becomes the general point, and that the same must be said of the line; but the contingency that thus runs along

in the choice of the single point and the single line is so far from weakening necessity that it is, on the contrary, itself necessary in order to give the universal existence. Since now the one point in this respect can be as good as the other, the one line as satisfactory as the other: so the arbitrary, insofar contingent, point and the arbitrary, insofar contingent, line may very well be regarded as fully valid representatives of point and line in general.

According to the theory it should now, strictly speaking, stand with the lover and his possible choice as with the mathematician and his possible points; but that is impossible. Among all lovers famed from poetry, the one who most seems to approach "the determination of the universality of essence" with the corresponding "being-for-
*[596]* itself in the form of liberated universality," is beyond comparison Don Juan. And yet even a Don Juan, with his free choice, his almost unsurveyable wealth of blooming possibilities, despite the ease with which he chooses and the speed with which he changes, can impossibly relate himself to "baronesses and countesses, peasant girls and princesses" as a mathematician relates himself to points, surfaces and curved lines. That he, every time he steps from possibility into reality, to understand, when on the way of existence he erotically choosing executes, must be content with one at a time, a single one, a This, is not the difficulty; for the same can literally be said of the mathematician, who must be content with this point, this line. Don Juan will concede to Hegel that every human being has a heart for love and a right to become happy through it, and also that a lover is not for life and death unconditionally to bind himself to a single one as to the only one in the world, since it is surely not in and for itself necessary "dass er sich gerade auf dieses Mädchen kapricionire"; and yet Don Juan agrees as little with Hegel as with Hieronymus: he satisfies only the subjective, not the objective; instead of bringing the contingent to merge into the necessary, he leaps over "the concept" as lightly as he leaps over the churchyard wall; he parodies the theory and brings every moment the necessary to merge into the contingent, and this although "the arbitrariness of subjectivity" has in him precisely what Hegel demands, "extension and universality."

The erotic choice, whereby inclination and passion often gain such a preponderance over cold reason that the heart runs away with the understanding, is surely
*[597]* — one says — of so subjective, individual a nature that the personal here in many respects collides with the pure concept, for which reason the universal of the theory, as concerns this delicate chapter, prefers to confine itself to being delimiting without being grounding. But as we come higher up into the moral regions, the objective

will come into its own; the voice of duty will rise and impress "the universality of individual being." One need only think, e.g., of the duty to love one's kind, one's people, one's fatherland. — Here we meet again the old error of the theory.

The theory demands that true personality shall bow to the universal of existence and take its point of departure in the objective, the necessary. That personality will not do, it protests; its highest law is not objective, but subjective: it has its point of departure in itself. Only with this point of departure, by virtue of this law, the law of self-determination, of the will, of self-development, of freedom, does it recognize the objective and satisfy the universal. The law of gravity is objective, but the law of duty is subjective, the former is impersonal, the latter personal. It is duty to give up one's wilfulness and to master the self-loving inclinations of one's heart; it is duty to love one's kind, one's people; it is duty to sacrifice oneself for one's fatherland. But however different the duties may be, the law of duty is still one and the same, it is an inner law of personality, an inviolable law of the self. Personality gives itself up; why? Because in self-surrender it feels that it does not lose, but gains — itself! Personality sacrifices itself; why? Because in the moment of sacrifice it recognizes that it is just now satisfying its original drive, its innermost, truest, deepest need. When an Arnold *[598]* Winkelried in the press of battle seizes the hostile spears all around, gathers them in his breast and presses forward: then it happens not from scientifically objective, no, but from subjective, unconditionally subjective, personal grounds. That the hero has breathed in the objective and is moved by the universal, in that he is moved by the Idea, anyone can understand; but the moving ground is subjective: it is in the will, for it is in the heart, there where no theory reaches. Were the theory to make it comprehensible on objective grounds why precisely this single individual, this one, in the extremity of danger sacrifices himself for all the others: it would become a long-winded deliberation. He loves freedom, he loves the fatherland, he loves those dear to him at home; but the ground, the objective ground? It is just as impossible to state the universal ground why a Winkelried has come to love his free Switzerland so exclusively, so deeply and inwardly, as it is impossible to find out the universal ground why Romeo can love only his Juliet, or Axel his Valborg.

That the ideas belonging to so-called objective ethics stir just as originally in mind and heart as the mutual feeling of love of the loving individuals, of that our cited tragedy affords precisely a telling example. A way opens to circumvent the objective prohibition; Axel's friend has prepared everything for flight; at parting the lovers kneel on Harald Gille's grave: then notes of a horn are heard far off. Axel knows

these notes; it is "a warrior's lur." To Vilhelm's exhortation: "follow where your good Norn beckons," he answers: "my good Norn beckons me to duty." Now the movement
[599] of the idea begins personally from a new point of departure; but Axel is instantly at one with himself: here there is no strife at all between objective and subjective; only an inner transformation, an ethical conversion of personal grounds. "Now I cannot travel; it is impossible, flatly impossible, Valborg! Vilhelm. You will? Axel. Defend Hakon Broad-shoulders. Vilhelm. Your enemy? Axel. What enemy? Him I have defiantly turned my back on; now my King is beset in distress, to him I owe my life. Vilhelm. You owe your life to the welfare of the fatherland, not to Hakon. Do you mean to benefit Norway by defending him, the young fool, who transgresses all duties for his passion? Who scorns virtue and the subject's right? Who forgets wholly the whole for his own advantage. No, Axel! who would be king, it behooves him to think, act kingly. Come! Erling is a renowned and valiant chieftain, noble. Do not delay his victory; he will not misuse it. Let Norway's scepter gleam from the hero's hand; it rusts in a nithing's." — It is a peculiar turn the matter has now taken. So long as the hindrance lay in the canonical prohibition, it might seem as if the conflict between the personal and the impersonal arose from this, that inclination strove against duty, as if it were only subjective passion that wanted the objective away, because universal, in themselves valid grounds stood hostile against the heart's dearest wish. Here the relation is now precisely the reverse; now it is precisely the objective that is on the side of inclination and favors the wish. In and for itself, that is to say: in the objective sense, there are no compelling grounds why Axel should stay and take part in the battle. Why should he do so, indeed? It cannot be for Hakon's
[600] sake, for in and for itself Hakon has great faults, and Erling great merits. It cannot be for the fatherland's sake, for if it may be presupposed that Erling will possibly become a better king than Hakon, then the fatherland has in and for itself not lost but gained, if Erling is victorious. But if it is possible, indeed even probable, that Axel would rather harm than benefit Norway by staying and fighting for Hakon: then neither can he be obligated to it for honor's sake, for to harm one's fatherland in the imagination that one benefits it is in and for itself no honor. The matter is at all events so politically questionable that Vilhelm, at least for the time being, must seem to have the whole right on his side; with a small change we may apply his words: "When all has succeeded, when the high Schwarzburg with its ring wall safely protects us; when Father Erland has in the castle chapel, where Leonora was forced to Rudolf, laid your hands in one another, there will be time enough" — for deliberation. Where,

then, is the truly decisive ground for Axel? It is in his own self, his strong sense of honor, his chivalrous cast of mind; the knight recognizes his duty: the ground of the obligation is personal.

If we now set the patriotic against the erotic, so that the former denotes the extreme objective, the latter the extreme subjective, then both extremes must necessarily proceed from the moral self; both have their center in the idea of morality, and the idea of morality in personality. In sharp opposition to the arbitrariness of individuals, their contingent desires and whims, the idea of morality certainly has its inviolable laws of duty, and in the universal validity of the laws of duty its objective; but it must be impressed in the most emphatic way that these laws of duty all without exception *[601]* are laws of the self, thus in the strictest sense laws of freedom, that the obligation comes from within, from the heart's ground, from the will; for the will is in the heart, and as the heart is, so is the will. Kant has rightly emphasized that respect for the command of duty is inseparable from respect for oneself, that the moral law in man's breast must, like the starry heaven above his head, awaken his highest admiration.

Could it now rightly be said that man's self is its own principle, that it, as atheistic ethics presupposes, forms itself exclusively through itself, develops itself, sustains itself, etc., then it would undeniably follow that our duties to our neighbor without more ado merged into duties to ourselves; and the reckoning would surely show that everyone is nearest to himself. But it is precisely a fundamental contradiction to want to assert the human self by excluding the divine. "The idea of the good is the idea of the will: to the absolute good corresponds the absolute will, the absolute self. The absolute self is the holy God. Over against the absolute self stands then, with the world as intermediary, man, the relative self, the self that is not good, but obligated to the good, the relative will, which is not holy, but sinful"[1)]. Here is the turning point where morality points back to religion as to its original foundation: the principle of morality stands and falls with religion. That religion must bear morality can be pointed out, but not proved; here is the fact which science can illuminate, but not *[602]* ground; and why not? Because the principle is personal.

Were an objective demonstration with corresponding grounding to be possible, then the principle of contradiction, well known from logic, would have to provide the guideline. But anyone who knows a little of cultural history must be able to tell himself that matters by no means stand with views of life as with scientific theories: the concepts of spirit always bend easily to the view of life once chosen, but never

[1)] On Obstacles to and Conditions for Spiritual Life. P. 101.

the reverse. Voices are heard crying: "We have no place for a willing God, we feel no need of personal immortality, we pay no heed to subjective grounds, we do not like the inverted science," etc. That is to say, in other words, that there are thinking individuals whose ethical self-feeling is so extremely weak that in the midst of the objective world they cannot perceive the independence of subjectivity, but regard the laws of freedom in the spirit as a theoretical reflection of the laws of necessity in nature. Against this there is from the standpoint of knowledge nothing to object. He who absolutely will derive his self from the selfless and bow personally beneath the impersonal, let him bow, let him derive, that is his own affair. To reject religion everyone in knowledge should be free to do; but when someone in his self-deception goes so far as to want, in the name of science, to make the world believe that he really can refute the principle of religion, then protest must be made; for to reject is not the same as to refute.

The harshest opposition and yet most immediate confusion of subjective and
*[603]* objective, personal and impersonal grounds we find in the controversies about the historically existing religions. A Muhammadan, a Jew, a Christian would readily agree that there can be only one single true, saving faith, that the truth of religion is the universal truth, valid in and for itself, that all human beings without respect of persons must unconditionally bow before the one truth, revealed by God himself and therefore undeceiving: the decisive weight falls insofar on the universally valid, the objective. But when it is then asked which revelation, which faith, is then in and for itself the unconditionally true, then agreement dissolves into disagreement. Each of the three has his religion and his faith; the one is just as certain of having the truth on his side as the other. The zealous professors of religions may contend with one another; they may in seething passion murder one another, but convince one another on objective grounds they cannot.

If it is forgotten in the heat of the struggle that the personal truth of faith must begin with the self, the subjective, and be appropriated with freedom, then passion at once thrusts itself in under the objective, the impersonal, then the one will compel the other by objective proofs, by objective power, and then we have *fanaticism*[1)].

[1)] "The fanaticism of faith is known well enough; its mark is that the self-seeking subjectivity in passionate blindness will transform the subjective truth into an objective power, a law of existence, before which all other subjectivities shall unconditionally bow. The fanaticism of knowledge is less known; but not therefore less characteristic. It naturally has not its origin in science, but in a selfish distortion of science. Instead of taking the cognition of the personal for what it is, a subjective practical cognition, the knower makes self-knowledge without more ado objective theoretical. That is a great psychological self-deception. The knower imagines that the subjectivity from which he proceeds

If, on the other hand, the individual, the subjective is held fast with so one-sided a *[604]* freedom that the universally valid content of personal truth falls away, then the difference between the positive religions is inessential, and then we have indifferentism.

The scholastic orthodoxy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave Protestant fanaticism of faith a theological foundation; to undermine this foundation was a task for rationalism, but the solution of the task led to indifferentism. The most spirited representative of rationalism in the last century is beyond comparison G. E. Lessing.

The work in which Lessing has combated fanaticism and the orthodox narrow- *[605]* mindedness with the greatest effect is surely his "*Nathan der Weise*." The fable is set in the time of the Crusades. Saladin has conquered Jerusalem; a young Templar, who is in love with Nathan's adopted daughter Recha, turns to the Patriarch for counsel. As an embodiment of the Church's authority, exalted above all reason, the Patriarch demands that his counsel be followed in blind faith, and therefore comes into some embarrassment, since he cannot get to know whether the case before him: that a Jew has with fatherly tenderness brought up a Christian child in love of all that is good, is a fact or merely "a problem." The Templar, who only wished to hear the reverend man's opinion in a general way, thinks that it might be the same thing. "The same thing"? exclaims the Patriarch; "there you see, sir, how the proud human reason can go astray in spiritual matters! — By no means!" The Patriarch has neither time nor inclination to concern himself with problems of thought — the pro et contra of investigations of reason he refers to the theater — he scents a palpable fact and in holy zeal wants at once to lay hold of the Jew. "Papal and imperial law determines, does it not, that a Jew who seduces a Christian to apostasy shall go to the stake. All the more then a Jew who has done violence to a Christian child." But, remarks the Templar,

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is an objective universally valid being, an undeceiving metaphysics-consciousness, a true normal subjectivity, whereas in reality it is only an abstraction of his own individual subjectivity's contingent state. Far from being freed from 'egoism,' the knower becomes by this self-deception on the contrary beguiled by egoism; for to make one's own subjectivity's contingent inclination the objective standard for all other subjectivities is egoism. What normal subjectivity, 'by virtue of the objective principle of existence,' has need of, that every human subjectivity shall now essentially have need of, namely to become metaphysical; what normal subjectivity feels no need of, a personal God, a comfort in prayer, an eternal life, etc., such dreams and subjective old-wives' fancies no true — objectively true — human subjectivity may in future feel need of. To feel need of such things is to deviate from the normal, to deviate from the normal is to deviate from the universal, to deviate from the universal is to deviate from the truth: the standard is objective. With his objective standard the normal subjectivity now needs merely — in all impersonality to get a little attack of personal zeal for truth, and the smouldering fanaticism of knowledge will betray itself in attacks on faith." — Mr. Professor Brøchner's Philosophical Criticism Reviewed by R. N. P. 18—19.

when the Jew has now out of compassion taken the child in, which otherwise must have perished in misery? — "Say nothing! The Jew shall be burned. Better that it had perished in misery than that it was thus saved to its eternal ruin. Besides, what right has the Jew to anticipate God? God can, when he wills, save without him." —
*[606]* Also in spite of him, I should think, make blessed. — "Say nothing! The Jew shall be burned." — It goes to my heart, continues the young man, especially as it is said that the girl was not brought up in any definite faith, but has only heard of God what reason teaches. — "Say nothing! The Jew shall be burned." Since the Templar will not make a confession and say outright who the person concerned is, the Patriarch wants to go straight to the Sultan; for Saladin has, according to the capitulation, sworn to protect the Catholic religion with all its holy rights.

In a few but lively strokes Lessing has here sketched a picture of a genuine fanatic; whether the fanatic happens to be Patriarch in Jerusalem or perhaps "Hauptpastor in Hamburg" makes no difference to the matter, so long as the drawing is correct. — Blind authority, blind faith, and blind zeal are so intimately connected that from any two of these marks one can always infer the third. When the Church with its infallible dogmas is set up as the object of unconditional submission in faith, the subjective dwindles away immediately into the objective, the personal into the impersonal. Whoever does not believe in the infallibility of the Church is eternally damned. Now the dread of an eternal damnation can surely be said to be a subjective ground; but what is it that awakens this dread? The authoritative word of the Church, a word more objective than the sun in the heavens. So self-development comes to a halt at the first step; for the first step of faith is that a human being give the Church his eternal soul, his innermost self, his conscience. Every closer explanation, every ground, every determining Why is to be sought in the doctrine of the Church, its promises,
*[607]* commandments and prescriptions: the believer retains nothing for himself except blind devotion, unconditional obedience. But precisely through this self-surrender, or rather self-abandonment, religious subjectivity becomes an organ, a will-less and yet strong-willed instrument of the divine in itself, the objective. The believer's cause is now without more ado made God's cause, his will God's will, his friends God's friends, his enemies God's enemies. Then passion is kindled, and the raving of faith begins; for what punishment can well be too hard when it concerns God's enemies? They must be persecuted with fire and sword, flayed with whips, crucified, burned: every means for their extermination is pleasing to God. The Patriarch in Jerusalem would have nothing against it if Sultan Saladin, though he himself is an unbeliever

who has hundreds of times deserved the stake, would lend the holy Church his strong arm and be of assistance to it in burning all Jews.

Religious fanaticism is an unbridled egoism of faith. In the same degree as self-understanding is lacking and the personal grounds are lost in blind submission to a pretended, external divine authority, the selfish passion rises. The natural self catches fire. The phenomenon of fire is a sign of a psychic combustion in which the impersonal and the personal mutually inflame and consume one another. The excited self-will imagines that it does God's will and fights a personal fight for the personal God. A terrible self-deception! The fanatic's God, the objective and yet groundless ruler, is in his blind arbitrariness a selfless self, a pitiless power that annihilates freedom, a poisonous spirit that infects personality. This fanatical nature, this principle hostile to civilization and humanity, equally dangerous and to the nobler self-esteem equally *[608]* revolting, whether it, as in the time of the Crusades, breaks out in wild, consuming flames, or under the mask of Protestant state-church orthodoxy is blown up as a smouldering ember by dogmatic inquisitions and vents itself in civil vexations, this monster of dogmatism, against which Lessing surely, skillfully in many a contest had swung the blade of criticism, is what he with aesthetic weapons wants to get at in his *Nathan* the *Wise*.

The conversation between Nathan and Saladin concerning the relation among the three religions, the Muhammadan, the Jewish and the Christian, is highly ingenious; we think of the parable of the three rings. Nathan relates. In days of old, in the gray antiquity, there lived a man in the East who from a beloved hand possessed a ring of invaluable worth. The stone was an opal that played in a hundred beautiful colors, and had the secret power of making everyone who wore it with full confidence pleasing to God and men. No wonder that this man in the East never let it come off his finger, and made the arrangement that it should be preserved in the family forever. Namely thus: He destined the ring for that one of his sons whom he loved most; and determined that he in turn should leave it to that one of his sons who, without regard to birth, was dearest to him. The son who had the ring was the head of the family. So this ring came from son to son, at last to a father who had three sons, who were all three equally obedient to him and consequently equally dear to his heart. It happened then that from time to time, as he talked alone with each of the sons severally, and *[609]* each time found that the one with whom he talked confidentially stood nearest his father's heart, he came to promise the ring to all three. When he now on his deathbed had only one ring, but three sons, and could not bring himself to disappoint any of his

dear ones, he sent secret word to an artist and had him make two other rings, which in every particular perfectly resembled the genuine one.

Saladin, who has listened somewhat impatiently to this "fairy tale," is taken aback when Nathan declares to him that the right faith is just as unrecognizable as the genuine ring. — What, says the Sultan, is that to be an answer to my question? Do not make a fool of me; I should have thought that the religions I have named to you are surely distinguishable, that the difference even extends to dress, food and drink. — But, replies Nathan, as regards the grounds there is no difference. For do they not all ground themselves on history, oral or written? But history must surely be accepted on faith and trust? Whose word and faith does one then least call in doubt? Surely one's own people? surely theirs, whose blood we are? theirs, who from our childhood on have given us proofs of their love? who have never deceived us, except in cases in which it was serviceable to us to be deceived? How can I believe my fathers less than you yours? Or conversely. Can I demand of you that you declare your forefathers liars, in order not to contradict mine? Or conversely. The same holds of the Christians. Is it not so? — This argumentation makes a strong impression on Saladin; he exclaims: By the living God, the man is right. I must be silent.

*[610]* The question of the objective foundation of religion thus coincides with the question of the credibility of historical facts and then particularly with the relation between religious and historical faith. In a little treatise: *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, Lessing had already set forth the proposition so characteristic of his point of view, that contingent truths of history can never become proof of necessary truths of reason. It is now remarkable to see the confusion of impersonal and personal grounds.

Historical events are externally objective and belong to the past; their credibility can, especially when it is a matter of phenomena of the supernatural, of signs and wondrous works, easily become doubtful. The highest to which one can attain by this road is only a certain degree of probability. But mere probability never gives full certainty; to this is added that the miracle, what deviates from the order of nature, always must show itself as the improbable. The judgment on the objective becomes in this way dependent on feeling, on mood, thus on subjectivity. And when then the subjectivity, uncertain in itself, reaches out for the objective, what is more natural than that everyone, as Nathan says, holds to what is handed down from the fathers and preferably believes his own people? What is historically objective is that one is born, if not just into, then yet toward a definite religion: the born Muhammadan

believes in Muhammad, the born Jew in the law of Jehovah, the born Christian in Christ.

On these terms individuals of different confession of faith have nothing to say to one another. If it is not possible to prove from historically objective grounds which *[611]* religion is in and for itself the true one, then the one may, so far, be just as good as the other. The objective has given way and bent beneath the subjective. Religion has become a matter of piety, a matter of the heart, and the choice is free. Instead of laying stress on the dogmas, one now lays stress exclusively on the pious disposition, on virtue and good works. "Well"! so speaks the judge in Nathan's tale to the three brothers who quarrel over the genuine ring — "so let each strive to bring to light his incorruptible, unprejudiced love, that the stone in his ring may show its power; let him come to the aid of this power with gentleness, with heartfelt forbearance, with beneficence, with inward devotion to God: I invite you then to appear here again when thousands of years have passed; a man who is wiser than I will then sit on this chair and pronounce judgment." Saladin, continues Nathan, if you feel yourself to be this wise man, the promised one… This address makes so mighty an impression on "the Ruler of the Believers" that he rushes up to the Jew, seizes his hand and exclaims, moved: "I dust? I nothing? O God"! — With such a self-confession the law of forbearance is signed; the pyre of fanaticism is extinguished: humanity has triumphed.

But with this turn of the matter we have come to an opposite extreme: in compensation for fanaticism we have now got indifferentism and with this the sickness of doubt, skepticism. If it is once generally conceded that none of the positive religions, which give themselves out as revealed, is in a position to furnish a historically irrefutable proof of the authenticity of its revelation: then it follows quite rightly *[612]* from this that professors of the different communions of faith must make concessions to one another. A professor, for example of the Christian religion, must then say to himself: The ground why I am a Christian is, if I am to be sincere, properly this, that I was born in a Christian society of Christian parents; had I been born in a Jewish society, I would naturally have become a Jew, and if I had been born in the middle of Turkey, why, then I would have become a Turk. From such a confession there follows not merely leniency toward those who believe otherwise, thus tolerance, but also indifference toward the mutual difference of the positive religions.

The result of the last century's spiritual struggles was a decisive break with blind authority, an emancipation from what is externally handed down in history. One

should now think that such an emancipation from the external must have led to a deep, penetrating cognition of the internal, the personal; but that did not happen. Something else happened. Just as subjectivity, fluttering away from its old dogmatic cage, began to soar high above all fixed edifices of doctrine and, in the enjoyment of the fresh air with the free prospect, gave itself over to all manner of religious notions, relying on this, that everyone is saved by his faith, reason asserted its divine right and set the objective once more in force, if under a quite peculiar form. We shall not dwell here on a detailed characterization of the so-called religion of reason, but merely single out one point to show how rationalism, near to hitting the right thing,
*[613]* missed the truth, in that aiming at freedom it hit only necessity, and steering toward the personal ran aground on the impersonal.[1)] The basic point at which the objective meets the subjective is the self. The human self bears in itself a double principle, a double predisposition, a predisposition for knowledge and a predisposition for faith. When then the awakening reason sets self-thinking in motion, it depends on whether the gaze is originally directed toward the objective or toward the subjective.

If the gaze is directed toward the objective, then not only the things in the world, but also the interior of the soul, the essence of the self, become an object of knowledge. No one who speaks naturally will say: I believe that I exist, that I feel, see, hear, think, etc.; he will say with immediate assurance: I know it. The same holds when it is a matter of the consciousness of others. No one will say: I believe that these people who here surround me are really living, that they too feel, see, hear, think just as well as I; but he will, provided that he has not a metaphysical screw loose, say straight out: I know it. There is a system of general determinations that belong just as necessarily to the concept of self-consciousness as sides and angles belong to the triangle.

If the development of concepts is now laid out so that the question is not at all about your feelings and mine, your thoughts and mine, your will and mine, your self and mine, but about human feelings and thoughts in general, about the universal will, the universal self, then the psychological concepts assume an objective, scientific
*[614]* stamp, so the light of reason shines in consciousness. In this illumination the laws of morality too would present themselves as pure laws of necessity; insofar as there is here talk of faith in God as moral lawgiver, this faith of reason will be of so universally valid a character that it looks to the life as though its content could with almost mathematical exactness be grounded and demonstrated by the understanding.

Rationalism has quite rightly seen that what in all religion and morality essentially

[1)] Cf. Philosophy of Religion pp. 28—35; pp. 88—97.

matters is a clear cognition of the human self, its origin from God, its eternal destination, its infinite perfectibility; rationalism has seen that true faith must be something other than simple acceptance of the incomprehensible on blind authority; it has seen that the truths of religion ought, like other truths, to be tested by the principle of self-thinking and confirmed by insight, by conviction. But the fundamental error is conspicuous.

The mistake of rationalism is that it takes the shadow for reality, the self's thought-being for the living self in flesh and blood. Through this mistake all self-thinking becomes scientific thinking, and the laws of thought coincide with the laws of the natural world. However much the old rationalists strove to hold fast to God, to virtue and immortality, it did not help. God, virtue and immortality are categories of personality, which point back to the independence of subjectivity; but the independence of subjectivity that rationalism reached for was washed away by the current of objective knowledge: only necessity itself, the form of the eternal, the cold universal, remained. *[615]* It is, with regard to the doctrine of spirit, no accident, but scientific consistency, that rationalism dissolved into speculative philosophy, and speculative philosophy into atheism.

If atheism is to be overcome, it must happen through the self; but then the self must be conceived, not as a general abstract being, but as a living existence, not as a concept of knowledge, but, as regards personality, as a concept of faith.

To conceive the self as a concept of knowledge is, we repeat it, to look away from one's own existing consciousness, one's own feelings, the thoughts of one's own heart, and to grasp the essence of consciousness in its pure generality, thus impersonally. From the essence of consciousness in its generality it is impossible for thought to reach your and my real consciousness, impossible to reach from the impersonal to the personal.

It is otherwise when the human being is conceived from the standpoint of faith. Here everyone begins with himself. The task is to cognize one's original destination, to discover the eternal in one's own self and to assure oneself of the eternity of the self: the task is to begin personally. That this is a task of faith can easily be seen.

Is the soul of man mortal or immortal? To get this question answered, we must first of all make clear to ourselves where it belongs, of what character it is, and what grounds they are on whose validity the answer depends. The question is personal; that is to say: here one cannot begin with the essence of the soul in general; such a beginning is false, for it is impersonal. From a false beginning a true conclusion is *[616]*

never derived; an impersonal premise can not possibly yield a personal consequence. In order to begin personally, everyone must begin with his own consciousness and ask himself: is my soul immortal? Three answers are possible; the questioner can answer himself *affirmatively*, he can answer *negatively* and he can comport himself *doubtingly*. That the three answers, if they are to have personal significance, must proceed from three individuals, three different human beings, needs no proof; for he who in one moment assumes that the soul is mortal, in the next that it is immortal, is surely uncertain of himself, thus doubting. It is, moreover, clear that while no necessary transition can be made from the universal to the individual, a free, personal transition can on the other hand be made from the individual to the universal. For this stands firm: as the single, real human being conceives his original self, his own human essence, so he must necessarily conceive the essence of the human race; he does not make his contingent individuality the standard for other individuals, it is the essence of the self that he makes the standard; but the essence of the self he cognizes in his own self: the rays of light from the universal are refracted in the prism of individuality, gather in the focal point of personality.

If we turn to the two individuals with the two decisive answers and test to what extent the one by objective grounds is able to convince the other, we come at once to a negative result. He who feels himself absolutely assured of the immortality of the soul, in other words, of the eternity of the self, has the ground of this assurance
*[617]* in himself and can not possibly fetch it from elsewhere. What has influenced him from without, what dispensations he has experienced, what he has lived through in himself, what struggle he has fought, what crises he has passed through before he attained the assurance, of that the question is not; the question is of the peculiar kind and nature of the assurance attained. When this standpoint is held fast, then it is indisputable that the certainty is self-certainty, a certainty about the self, which only the self gives, and all corresponding grounds personal.

But he who, in contrast to this, holds himself assured that the soul is mortal, that it is formed with the body, develops with the body, dissolves and perishes with the body, that the human self, even if it is bearer and point of passage for eternal ideas, is not itself eternal, should he perhaps not be able to build on science and justify his view of life by objective grounds? Impossible! All his proofs, however acutely he may separate them, and however profoundly he may gather them, unite into one single great proof, the proof that he finds himself in a great psychological self-deception. The deception does not show itself directly in this, that he assumes the soul to be

mortal; no, psychologically seen, the original self-deception consists in this, that the deceived imagines himself able to justify his view scientifically.

He who is to judge of the laws of nature must look away from his own self, in order to judge scientifically; he who judges of the triangle must look at the triangle, not at the self, for the triangle is surely not the self; he who judges of the elements must look at the elements, not at the self, for the self is no element; likewise when judgment is *[618]* passed on the development of the earth, on the phenomena of the primeval world, etc.: all such judgments are objective in that the judging person looks away from himself in order to look at the object.

But when the object of the judgment is the judging person's own self, then the standpoint must be changed.

The judgment of an object must always conform to the nature of the object and every irrelevant consideration be kept away. To investigate an element such as sulphur the chemist must indeed bring it into manifold interaction with other substances and regard it in many combinations, but through all this it is still the peculiarity of sulphur, its physical and chemical properties, that he has uninterruptedly before his eyes. If we now put the self in place of sulphur, then it is surely evident that he who will judge of the self must uninterruptedly have his eye fixed, not on the pure metaphysical self — for when existence is in question, the metaphysical self is a phantom, — but on the real self, its powers and essence, its spiritual demands. But the only real self the observer can really investigate is, without contradiction, his own. The real self that is the object of the judgment is also the judging subject.

The self judges itself either to life or to death! thus the psychological deception is lifted; the judgment is subjective: the grounds are personal.

The psychological error of rationalism and of speculative philosophy now lies clear to the day. One wanted, quite rightly, to begin with self-thinking and go back to *[619]* the self; but confusing the general concept of the self with the real self, one grasped knowledge and meant faith, and the consequence was that the immortality of the soul dwindled away into the eternity of reason, and the right of personality was lost in the impersonal.

Those who acknowledge, and those who deny, the immortality of the soul can not convince one another psychologically, since their self-cognition is so fundamentally different that they, with regard to the question of immortality, must be said to have each his own psychology; but the opposition becomes far sharper still when the talk is of religion and morality.

In order to know oneself in the moral sense, a human being must will himself; in order to will himself, he must choose himself. The judgment on the reality of the self is in the strictest sense a judgment of will. He who acknowledges the immortality of his soul has chosen himself in the eternal sense, has by this choice not merely found the eternal in the self, but even, literally speaking, discovered the eternity of the self. Conversely, he who declares the soul mortal, provided that he does so with full assurance, has attained this assurance by an inner, original self-determination, an act of will, a choice. Then only the doubter remains; but the doubter, who gropes between objective and subjective grounds, is no personality; he is a loose, enfeebled subjectivity that runs astray in itself.

If one will now only grant us that life in itself is not merely something different, but absolutely different from death, then one will surely also be compelled to grant
*[620]* that the judgment that makes the self immortal, and the judgment that makes it mortal, are absolutely different judgments, and that the difference rests on this, that the judging subjectivities have submitted to absolutely dissimilar principles.

All cognitions that concern knowledge and science belong without exception under the principle that transposes the existing self into the general essence of thinking, and which we therefore call the *principle of reason*; all cognitions that concern religion and morality belong, on the contrary, under the principle that puts the universal into the existing self and makes the living human being's own soul the unswerving center, and which we therefore, when eternal life is in question, call the *principle of faith*.

That these two principles are not merely dissimilar, but absolutely dissimilar, can be seen from the corresponding grounds; for all grounds of reason are in their general validity objective, impersonal, and hold by virtue of necessity; but the grounds of faith are in their individual validity subjective, personal and correspond to freedom. He who still will hold that there is only a relative, not an absolute difference between the two principles, let him try to derive freedom from necessity, the personal from the impersonal, and he shall surely founder in the attempt.[1)]

Faith in the eternity of the self presupposes faith in the existence of God; for if the human self did not have its origin from the divine; if eternity, omnipotence,
*[621]* omniscience, holiness, blessedness did not belong to the being who is the author of all that exists; if the human soul were only an organic natural product: how then

[1)] If one is to patch together a personal view of life for oneself by borrowing a little from faith and a little from knowledge, a little from the objective and a little from the subjective, a little from the impersonal and a little from the personal: then the view of life will be accordingly.

should the soul withstand decay, and the self outlive death? But the conviction of the existence of a personal God is in the deepest sense personal.

Just as surely as the cause of personality, so long as there is a remnant of seriousness left in the race, can never become an indifferent cause, just so surely must the principle of personality be said to contain an antidote to religious indifferentism; for everyone must work for his own, and the reckoning concerns the conscience. But however many clashes may arise between individuals with different self-cognition at different stages of development, in that each in his own way is zealous for the solution of personal tasks, still it will for the future not be possible to forget that the law of personality is the law of freedom, its life a life of freedom, and the principle itself will in this respect contain an antidote to religious fanaticism.

True faith and true personality are inseparable. All that concerns faith concerns personality; what does not belong to the grounding of the personal life has nothing to do with faith. By holding fast to this principle professors of the different religions will work their way forward to one and the same confession of faith; for the personal stages of life are different, but the eternal life of personality is in essence the same.

Exalted above all soul-darkening strife there rises in the light of faith the Revealer of truth, the Transfigured One of love, the eternal prototype of personality. To know the ground of the self by knowing this prototype, to believe in the eternity of the *[622]* self by believing in this prototype is, according to the parable in Nathan, to have the genuine ring. When then the Judge comes — even if he tarry a thousand years — then he will surely not judge by external signs, by blind authority according to objective dogmas; but he will "reveal the counsels of the hearts" and judge in such a way that everyone under the judgment must judge himself and give him right: he will judge personally, by virtue of personal grounds.

R. *Nielsen.*