

FROM THE GARDEN OF THE DEAD:

CLIMACUS on INTERPERSONAL INWARDNESS¹

*What is the essence of night,
if not lack, need, and longing?*

-- Schelling

Climacus reports a scene overheard, seen in a fugitive glance through leaves as he sat on a bench at twilight in ‘the garden of the dead’, a cemetery, most likely Copenhagen’s *Assistens Kirkegård*. The scene is the grief of a grandfather mourning at the grave of his son, and speaking tearfully of the meaning of that death to a ten-year-old boy, his grandson, now fatherless. The ‘garden of the dead’, as it is called, is not at the city’s center, but at some remove, not out in the wooded parklands, but nevertheless sufficiently alive with nature’s leafy shadows and open skies that Climacus can exalt in a kind of minor ecstasy over the coming of night -- as if night were an invitation for a “nocturnal tryst”, a beautiful prelude to the more tearful tableau ahead, where a grandfather’s grief will spill over as an anguished admonition to his barely understanding grandson. But what can the night tell us of mood, yearning, and heartache? Night beckons with promise of a

tryst . . . with the infinite, persuaded by the night’s breeze as in a monotone it repeats itself, breathing through forest and meadow, and sighing as though in search of something, urged by the distant echo in oneself of the stillness as if intimating something, urged by the sublime

¹ This essay is to appear in a collection published by Cambridge University Press, edited by Rick Furtak, to accompany Alastair Hannay’s 2009 Cambridge translation of Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Crumbs*.

calm of the heavens, as if this something had been found, persuaded by the palpable silence of the dew as if this were the explanation and infinitude's refreshment, like the fecundity of a quiet night, only half understood like the night's semi-diaphanous mist. (197)²

Like the coming of night, as Climacus has it, the sublime, for Kant, is only half-understood; but the coming of night would not be Kant's preferred example. For him the sublime is a towering, awesome occasion: the violence of ocean storms, the wonder of starry heavens. In the *Postscript* passage from the garden of the dead, the sublime is a natural but downscaled scene of allure and fear. Death haunts, but the surround is the half-understood breathing, sighing, of a breeze, the "semi-diaphanous mist" of the night, the "palpable silence of the dew."

I.

THE GENTLE SUBLIME OF THE NIGHT

The Kantian sublime opens us to fear and anxiety – storms *threaten death* – inducing a sense of bodily vulnerability, but also of cognitive humility: we can't fix a sublime occasion on our cognitive maps; its brute power or infinite vastness exceeds them. But Kant values self-assertion and dignity, and so declares that the moment of humility or fear will be followed by recuperative uplift. The final posture is captured in the thought, *How vast my consciousness, to be viewing such energy and expanse*, a thought that restores rational dignity.³ In the cemetery sketch, Climacus gives us a relatively low-key, intimate sublime that prizes restless repose (rather than rational dignity). "What is the essence of night", Schelling asks, "if not lack, need,

² Page references to quotes from *CUP* will be to Hannay's Cambridge translation.

³ See my critique of Kant's position in *Lost Intimacy in American Thought: Recovering Personal Philosophy from Thoreau to Cavell*, London, Continuum, 2009, Ch 4 "Death and the Sublime."

and longing?”⁴ An invitation to a nocturnal tryst foretells refreshment, pleasure, troubles stilled -- but also worry about how this amorous encounter will work out. The allure of the promise may be a deflection from -- and hope for an answer to -- deep need and longing. The promise of the night is matched by the night’s “sighing as though in search of something”. Yearning belongs both to the breeze and to Climacus, who hears it sigh.

Let’s call this (with George Pattison) Kierkegaard’s restive, anxious sublime.⁵ A twilight tryst is alluring, but no tryst is without anxiety; it might misfire or fail. The coming of dark is the coming of death, which intimates both fear and “refreshment”, half-seen. Night promises relief from self-torment and wounds – and perhaps delivers nothing. We yearn for an infinite repose as a Christian might yearn for a savior, seen through a glass darkly. But Climacus is a pagan Romantic; he yearns for a comfort sensed in the “silence of the dew”, in a “semi-diaphanous mist.” Nevertheless, his evocations of breeze and dew bear comparison to the Biblical elegies to lilies of the fields and birds of the air in Kierkegaard’s discourses of 1847 and 1849. Here, as Pattison notes, nature “signals a kind of transcendence” that evokes “the anxiety of self-relation”.⁶ The repose of a lily or bird signals contentment humans yearn for but lack.

The romantic motifs of sighing breezes and inviting heavens are paired with an interest in faith and religiosity. Is it mere curiosity that peaks this interest? It’s hard to pin Climacus down. We know independently that he’s a non-Christian humorist whose *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, by full title alone, is a satire of *faux*-Christianity.⁷ But he also artfully

⁴ *The Deities of Samothrace, (Über die Gottheiten von Samothrake, 1815)*, trans. and intro. R.F. Brown, Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977, p. 18.

⁵ See George Pattison “Kierkegaard and the Sublime,” Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Herman Deuser, eds, *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, 1998*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998.

⁶ See “Poor Paris!” *Kierkegaard’s Critique of the Spectacular City*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999, 128f.

⁷ Hannay gives the full title as *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs: a Mimic, Pathetic, Dialectic Compilation: an Existential Contribution*. “Unscholarly” or “Unacademic” could do for “Unscientific”.

immerses himself, affirmatively, in romantic moods. The “anxious sublime” shimmers in nature and correlatively shimmers in the relation of himself to himself. This restless *uneasiness* ensures that sentimental “naïve pastoralism” is avoided.⁸ There is no promise that intimacy will eliminate alienation. This twilight yearning instills “luminous [and] dark expressions of anxiety”.⁹ The night’s anxiety is “urged” on by a restless soul; but it’s also an “echo” in the soul -- as if the *night* were the source of unease.¹⁰ A dark night and soul answer each other in rising and reinforcing attunement.

LYRIC AND DIALECTIC

Our *mise en scène* is barely half-a-dozen pages, a condensed and powerful meditation on death and the inwardness of grief.¹¹ We might start in typical philosophical fashion with Climacus’ dialectical themes, “truth is subjectivity” or “faith is an objective uncertainty”. This would create a framework for interpreting this cemetery passage. But why start with an abstract disquisition one step removed from the atmospheric settings from which things and persons speak? Why start anywhere but with this man broken in grief, this frightened grandson, a fresh grave, an anxious night, this screen of leafy boughs behind which Climacus hides and listens? True, a tryst with the infinite realizes what *Postscript* figures as an “objective uncertainty” held

⁸ “Naïve pastoralism” is Pattison’s term for untroubled hope for restoration of the “lost plenitude of immediacy”.

⁹ Pattison, 129. Marcia Robinson steers me toward a tradition that takes God as luminous darkness: *Gregory of Nyssa* tells us that “Moses’ vision of God began with light; afterwards God spoke to him in a cloud. But when Moses rose higher and became more perfect, he saw God in the darkness.” *Homilies on Song of Songs*, in Andrew Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 83.

¹⁰ In *Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard speak of ‘self’, or ‘spirit’ where my term of choice is often “soul”. “Spirit” is too easily non-individualized, as in Hegel’s “objective spirit”, and “self” has become strongly linked to secular self-realization and self-assertion. Try saying “the autonomous soul”, or “soul-assertion”, or “soul-sufficiency”.

¹¹ The scene appears almost accidentally, with little fanfare or warning, (197-203) It establishes *Stimmung* -- “atmosphere”, “mood” or “attunement” which, as Heidegger has it, establishes our basic being in the world.

in “the most passionate inwardness.”¹² But the flavor and grip of these watchwords is best given by lyrical evocations of restlessness:

the night’s breeze . . . repeats itself, breathing through forest and meadow, and sighing as though in search of something, urged by the distant echo in oneself of the stillness as if intimating something. (197)

The sighing of night reflects a sighing soul, and a sighing soul reflects the night breeze, both yearning for a rest signaled by silent dew. It’s not as though the physiology of anxiety *caused* the skies to spin, or the spin of the sky *caused* the brain to spin. It’s a matter of poetic fit, as breeze portends trembling in the heart, and trembling in the heart portends the night’s breeze.

TAKING UP AND BEING TAKEN

Death disrupts the living, puts the dead under judgment, and warns the living to take heed. It speaks indirectly through breeze and words overheard. The grief-wrought old man does not intend his words for the eavesdropping Climacus, but Climacus is nevertheless *taken* by them as they float by more or less anonymously -- and he takes them up as his *own*. What I call his *taking up* with these words is typically rendered by an existentialist term of art, “appropriation”.

If taking up with a thought existentially is subjective appropriation, we run afoul of the word’s heritage -- the idea of forceful or illicit seizure, as in an (illicit) *appropriation of land or funds*.

Climacus does not seize the words of the old man but is overcome by them. They carry a

¹² CUP, 171. As in *Fear and Trembling* (subtitled “a dialectical lyric”), lyricism sings among philosophical abstractions. If we step beyond the terror of an impending sacrifice on Mt. Moriah, we get a relatively dispassionate account of “a suspension of ethics”. If we step beyond the garden of the dead and its grief-filled outpouring, we get familiar dialectical accounts of “truth is subjectivity”, and “indirect communication.” But abstractions gain whatever life they deserve from their mobile experiential settings. In the present case, that setting is of whispers of night and sobs of grief and words from the dead (for a start), lyrically evoked. *Postscript’s* subtitle, “mimic, pathetic, dialectic compilation”, does not give sole pride of place to dialectic but underlines the lyric and comedy that are within mime, and the tragic that is within “pathos”. *Sickness Unto Death* is perhaps more straightforwardly dialectical, as “self” arrives in austere abstraction: “a relation to a relation that relates to itself”. See *Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Alastair Hannay, Penguin, 1989.

demand that arrives in the grief overheard. In the way love or beauty or truth can sweep over us, he is swept up by them. He does not *steal* a grief overheard but lets a grief, and its lessons of death and life, *steal into his heart* – therein he makes his own what has captured his soul. Compromising the false simplicity of familiar usage, we should say that the subjective thinker *appropriates what first appropriates him*.

The old man grieves at the fresh grave of his son, fears for his soul. He was devoured by the illusion that philosophical or historical speculation or debate *about* faith could be a substitute for *being* of faith, or *taking up* with faith -- *faithfully*. Let grandsons beware!¹³ Erudite scholarly engagements with religion are not works of faith but of objectivity. A spotless analysis of faith brings us not a whit closer to faith; holding a clean analysis can co-exist with living as an atheist or a humorist.

Climacus, a humorist, can upset would-be Christians with a diagnosis of their deathly ills, and he can know his own ills, and yet be miles from adopting for himself the strenuous regime that would cure him of ill; he refuses to step toward becoming a Christian. He responds sympathetically to the old man's worry about his son's fate. He pities the man's loss of a restful old age -- so distraught he is that his son faces the burning Judgment allotted to unbelievers. The urgency of the man's anxiety over his son's unfaithful life is acknowledged, but Climacus will not remedy his own unfaithful life. He only half-heeds the lament. He thinks it a sufficient response to unfaith to unseat the complacency of others -- those who persist in the illusion that devoured the son. But to unseat another's illusion is not to cure one's own.

Climacus refuses the truth that others miss, even as he knows it is perdition to refuse.

¹³ Why does the old man unburden himself *in this way, at this time*? What of his duty to *console* the boy, help him through the trauma of his father's death, especially now that the child has neither parents nor other family to care for him -- only an old man, with limited years? In his anguished felt-need to deliver his chilling warning, the grandfather becomes insensitive to the grandchild's pain. He even demands a solemn oath. The child must vow to resist his father's waywardness. The old man failed his son; perhaps he can save the boy. But can the child comprehend the oath that (under duress) he swears to uphold? Isn't it *cruel* to demand such an oath?

Climacus tells us, “*What happened was quite simple*”. No Heavens rained fire. The writer simply sat on a bench, becoming inadvertently privy to a conversation. Yet by taking in and relaying to us “the most affecting scene I have ever witnessed”, Climacus becomes (at least for the moment) a subjective thinker, affected by grief and death, moved by their lyrical expression.¹⁴ Yet how worthy is this minimal subjectivity?

Graveside weeping awakens Climacus to a need for direction, but *Why?* His self-understanding is farcical: “You are after all” he says to himself, “tired of life’s diversions, you are tired of girls that you love only in passing, you must have something that fully occupies your time. Here it is.” (Ibid.) What makes this comically trite is that hearing or answering a summons to vocation has to be motivated by more than a quip that flirtation has lost its charm. What will his vocation be? He’s unsure, but decides how to find out. The search, he confides, will be “something like an intricate criminal case in which the very complex circumstances [make] pursuit of the truth difficult”. (202) He faces a *detective’s* puzzle – so he thinks. But finding one’s way through the darkness of an *existential quandary* is not to objectively find the solution to a murder mystery.

In spite of himself, Climacus stumbles on important truths – truths *for us*, if not for him. Sharp awareness of death can open souls to a “summons”. Having “a definite track” in one’s life will partially subdue the nothingness of death, for one will have *lived for something*. And despite framing his quandary as a police matter, and despite thinking his problem is that he is “tired of girls”, Climacus nevertheless hits on a way to escape the emptiness that originally drew him there, to sit at twilight in the garden of the dead. He’ll fill the time of his life by exposing the fraud of abstract philosophy. This is his *calling* – so he thinks. He answers a summons to do *something* significant, and answers with a particular and significant *resolve*.

¹⁴ See Hannay’s essay in this volume, p. **aaa**.

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So far, we have uncovered some unexpected, even counter-intuitive truths. Subjectivity is not just a feature of solitary individuals; its sphere can encompass *nature, death, and other persons*. It is not a static quality or essence but a mobile flow, and not just unilaterally outward *from* the self but reciprocal, bi-directional. Incoming flows from nature, death, and other persons awaken Climacus to his own self-relations. Subjectivity appears in natural, embodied, and interpersonal space. As we read on through this brief but endlessly enigmatic tale from the garden of the dead, we hear more and more about interpersonal subjectivity and inwardness.

II.

SHARED SUBJECTIVITIES

The author of a 600 page “postscript” may sometimes *look* like an objective thinker who defends the truth that truth is subjectivity -- he at least puts up a good mimic-pathetic show to that effect.¹⁵ But ever and again, as in this graveside scene, Climacus slips into a confessional mood that places him well within *subjective* space. He’s not just describing a scene from without, from outside, as if he were no one in particular, only an impersonal rational mind. He’s subject to intimations of night mist, to sudden earnestness about life’s orientation, to

¹⁵ In the 1960s Stanley Cavell noted (in “Existentialism and Analytic Philosophy”) something quixotic in what appears to be Climacus’ attempt to *defend* subjectivity. (*Daedalus*, 1964, 93.3, reprinted in *Themes Out of School*, University of Chicago, 1984.) Philosophical defense is an objective project. Nevertheless, is defending subjectivity more quixotic than Kant’s use of reason to limit reason? In any case, Climacus may not be *interested* in philosophical defense: he’s happy with critique, and with conducting thought-experiments, sketches that exemplify features of what must be wrapped up in a way of life, or in living into a life – that’s not trying to *justify* that life. Surely Climacus often uses academics against the academics, is objective about the flaws of objectivity -- which can *look* like a defense of subjectivity (though it may in fact be using ‘subjectivity’ mainly to deflate a reigning ideology, not to establish a new one. In “Christianity and Nonsense” (*Review of Metaphysics*, 20, 3, 1967), Henry Allison held that Climacus gives arguments so *patently* flawed that he must be providing a mimic or parody of philosophy, Hegelian or philosophy in general. See Alastair Hannay on these matters in *Kierkegaard and Philosophy*, Routledge, 2003, ch. 1. That ever-so-many professors think it’s *obvious* Climacus is producing a defense of Christianity would amuse Kierkegaard. After all, a “mimic-pathetic-dialectic compilation” that’s “*unscholarly*” and a monstrous “*footnote to philosophical crumbs*” doesn’t *sound* like a defense of anything.

troubled effusions from a gravesite, to passionate words that address and alter him. He suffers the standpoints of other subjectivities, for a moment, becoming them.

Climacus is the old man who sees the ruse of philosophy, the child asked to disavow his father's life, the fearsome corpse, testament to a life squandered. (200) He inhabits space that is interpersonal and subjective. Chalked with age, the man speaks from a place linking three generations and an invisible listener, a place animated by one newly dead who prompts inwardness (true or false) in all others attending, and a place animated, too, by surrounding night. These several subjectivity-strands, a concatenation of passions, become the full inwardness of Climacus, and of the interlaced inwardness of his world. At first blush this place is lonely and solitary, but it's in fact a listening and speaking ensemble that's fully social. This inwardness and subjectivity Climacus calls a "*natural form of interpersonal association.*"¹⁶ (203) Only a person free from the seductions of an indifferent, third-personal objectivity could find this so promising and threatening a place. Climacus waits "womanlike" for the infinite to enter, half-appear, in "the night's semi-diaphanous mist."¹⁷

HUMOR

We've mentioned that Climacus styles himself a humorist. He maps humor as a life-stage, or a border between stages, just shy of religious faith. Humor is much more than a sophisticate's taste for jokes and good cheer. As a humorist, you see problems of life accurately, and see what existence demands of you, but for all your insight, you fail to fully respond. Climacus

¹⁶ More precisely, inwardness will *correct* an "*unnatural* form of interpersonal association."

¹⁷ Before Climacus sketches much of the graveyard scene, he seems to disown *in advance* the possibility that he will be given a "call" that answers the night. Here is an apparently self-shackling remark: "Even if a call was issued, in following it I myself, however, am without any call". (196) He might mean that even knowing that the grandfather's admonition applies to him, he won't take it as a genuine "call". Or better: "Even if a call was issued [*to the child*], in following [*the child's call*] I myself, however, am without any call" -- a path genuinely my own is one to which I have been called, that *embraces me*. I might follow exactly in the footsteps of someone else who has received a genuine call, but acting in accord with *their* calling is nevertheless not *myself* to have been called. Calls can't be delivered by proxy (and they arrive by something like grace).

sees what commitments are required of a Christian, and sees what blinds would-be Christians to those commitments. He is wiser than the sort of ethicist who sees Christian life as requiring only what is moral-religiously conventional, or who thinks one can confidently attain a moral-religious life that is beyond reproach. Climacus is even wise enough to take up a polemical vocation in order to expose and ridicule the triteness of Christendom -- from a *Christian* vantage. He sees the shallowness of a Judge Wilhelm. He has at least *apparent* existential depth (he talks the talk, and is appropriately moved by the existential suffering of others, which is part of *walking* the talk). He seems to live beyond the urbane complacency of the *faux*-Christian, Wilhelm, insofar as the grandfather's admonition to take life seriously strikes home. But does he respond *fully*?

Perhaps we should *not* be impressed. Does Climacus sentimentalize the weeping overheard? Is his vow to take up the summons merely a new way to pass time? Exposing *faux*-Christians may be better than chasing after girls. *But is it really?* Isn't the point not just to mock *faux*-Christians, but with fearful subjectivity, to set out oneself to become Christian?

Those who take *Postscript* as the pinnacle of Kierkegaard's achievement should beware if they think that attending carefully to what Climacus says will bring them closer to a truly Christian life. Attending to his nimble wit and brilliance may be only indulging a humorist's conceit. Exposing the farce of merely theatrical musicianship does not bring me closer to being a true musician; exposing the errors of ethical emotivism does not bring me closer to an ethical life; exposing the dangers of Abraham on his way to Moriah does not bring me a whit closer to salvation. Why think that I am closer to Christianity because *faux*-Christianity is exposed?

We can be vaguely irritated by this humorist's vagueness -- about what he stands for, if anything. It's unclear whether he takes any affirmative stand apart from affirming that something is false or muddled. And it's also unclear whether he has a *true* summons to the life

of polemics. Polemics might be just another passing fancy, a way to kill time that's a bit more exciting than chasing girls. Perhaps the subject matter – the nature of a true calling or true affirmation – is on *any* account terribly elusive. We can only guess whether the evasiveness in this case is a humorist's pre-emptive self-mocking, a way to cover up dilatory indecision.

Deflationary tasks can puff up his apparent importance, while he remains more or less empty.

Climacus is skittish about commitment.¹⁸ Despite his feint toward a life-summons, he's most comfortable as a brilliant and amused outsider. Why should we heed a hectoring speaker who avoids the commitments he hectors *us* for avoiding? From another angle, can becoming a humorist *be* a vocation? (Perhaps a humorist is the epitome indecisiveness.)¹⁹ From a Christian standpoint it can't be a vocation; from Climacus' standpoint, it might work. Of course, if he realizes his self-mockery and fear of commitment, he may be on the cusp of being Christian – as if he half-sees that his straddling is no good. On the other hand, announcing the illness of the age (and not wanting to cure oneself) may be no better than *not seeing* the illness of the age. Does the humorist live out a meandering kind of tragi-comedy?²⁰

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Setting these enigmas aside, let's return to the graveyard tableau. There are numerous other taunting riddles there. They are fine-grained, particular instances of what elsewhere Climacus calls "the absurd".

¹⁸ Note the parallel with Climacus' revocation of *Postscript* as a whole, enacted at the end of the book; here the 'revocation' (of his being open to calling, if that what it is) occurs before the story gets started. See n17, above.

¹⁹ In *On Soren Kierkegaard* (Ashgate, 2007, ch 2) I give reasons to doubt that the Religiousness-A / Religiousness-B contrast is the be all and end all. As the proposal of a humorist, we should not be too credulous.

²⁰ See Hannay's discussion of revocation and humor in his contribution to this volume, XXX. There is another reason Climacus might muffle his commitment to vocation: he doesn't want to support the idea that *here and now*, *objectively* (as it were), and *directly imparted*, we have something unambiguous to extract for general broadcast.

III.

RIDDLES IN SPEECH

What is the riddle of twilight – or is it two or three riddles?

Evening's leave-taking of the day, and of the one who has lived that day, is a speech in a riddle. Its reminder is like the solicitous mother's admonition to the child to be home in good time. But its invitation, even if the leave-taking is innocent in thus being misunderstood, is an inexplicable beckoning, as though repose were to be found only by staying out for the nocturnal tryst, not with a woman but womanlike, with the infinite . . . (197)

Evening says goodbye to the day; it speaks a riddle of leave-taking; the riddle will be innocently misunderstood; we are invited to seek repose, womanlike, with the infinite. This is not one, but a collection of riddles. Let's begin with the riddle that night speaks yet is silent, says "good-bye" yet is quiet: "the palpable silence of the dew [is] the explanation and infinitude's refreshment" (ibid). This is a riddle known to the Psalmist:

The heavens tell God's glory, and His handiwork sky declares.

Day to day breathes utterance, and night to night pronounces knowledge.

There is no utterance and there are no words, their voice is never heard.²¹

Ps. 19:2-4

There is neither voice, nor hearing, nor words -- yet heavens tell, sky declares, day utters, night pronounces. This Biblical verse is riddling speech. The heavens have inwardness, the capacity to speak expressively from the heart -- yet do not have inwardness or expression.

²¹ This is Robert Alter's translation: *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2007, p. 60. His (helpful?) comment: "The heavens speak, but it is a wordless language." *The New American Standard*: "There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard." *The King James Version* (unhappily) reworks the text: "There is no speech nor language where their voice is *not* heard" (my emphasis). I'm grateful to Marcia Robinson who heard the resonance between Psalm 19 and Climacus' riddle.

Then there is the convolution of farewells. For evening to say anything is worry enough, but to say *farewell to the day* doubles the worry. Climacus assimilates it to the farewell of a mother who bids her child goodbye, while the child innocently misunderstands. She releases the child even as she warns her not to stay out too late. As in a fairytale, she might say, “Beware the woods, where darkness comes early”. But why is this admonition, mother to child, liable to be innocently misunderstood?

A child needs the assurance of a safe return, and also needs the bravery to venture into the dark. The riddling discordance is that the mother both hides and reveals the risk of no return. In any case, for mortals there is always one final *cancellation* of safe return. The child ventures out, *must* venture out, with a mother’s blessing—while a mother partially hides her fear and reservations. The world of the night welcomes and repels. The mother releases and holds. Night offers adventure and delight no child should be denied, and terror and danger no child should suffer. As a mother says “farewell, return in good time”, she delivers innocent good cheer, confident that the child can set out on its own. Yet there is also dread in a whispered, half-understood admonition: *beware*, return in good time.

Is a tryst with night a tryst with death? Night says good-bye to the day. It says “take care” and “come hither” to all who have lived through the day, as if *death* said “take care” and “come hither”. Answering the “come hither” of night (or death) is to gamble one’s vulnerability, as if a vulnerable woman were to answer the beckoning night, alone. One answers night’s invitation “womanlike”. To anticipate a tryst is not a warrior’s anticipation of battle but a warm yielding to an invitation as one would yield to love.

The Climacus of *Philosophical Crumbs*, as well as the authors of *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling*, are preoccupied by themes of leaving and coming home, of coming into existence and perishing. Sarah might bid Isaac to “return in good time” even imagining the

danger that awaits. Haunting riddles cover Abraham's farewell as he sets out toward the mountain. The young man in *Repetition* breaks off from his beloved yet yearns for her return. The child sets out yet we fear that this move will bring evil or accident. Night bids adieu to the day. Job bids happiness adieu. A mother bids her child good night, assuaging her fear (night is also a place for good dreams). This is night bidding farewell to the day.

FINAL FAREWELLS

Leave-takings are exchanged in the confidence that the sun will rise, that the world will return, that our friends will *not* enter the grave in the night – all this as we know that a *final* farewell awaits when there will be *no* tomorrow, when we *won't* awake, when the beloved will *not* return. Jonathan Lear remarks that a therapist must have a lively sense of death.²² In keeping with Climacus' disquieting riddle of a mother fearfully holding yet bravely letting go in bidding her child farewell, the analyst knows that termination, and a respect for it, hangs over developing therapeutic attachments. To "hold" a child's (or analysand's) anxieties is also to anticipate the day when the child (or analysand) will depart in freedom. Good mothering, good mentoring, good therapy thus embody what Heidegger calls a being toward death, an eye on termination that colors all action and thought prior to it. Climacus offers the unending riddle of foreboding farewells and irrepressible hopes of return. He avers that the mother is innocent in bidding her child goodbye with thoughts for her safe return, just as a weather reporter is 'innocent' in saying 'til tomorrow', and the night, 'innocent' in bidding day goodbye.

The night welcomes Climacus to a nocturnal tryst, to be remembered happily on the morrow, yet no such innocent tryst is offered the old man. He lives under an anxious sky, knowing he must die, that his son has just died, that his grandson must live under clouds, first

²²Jonathan Lear, *Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony*, New York, Other Press, 2003, 54-7.

of his father's death, and then of his grandfather's demise. Soon enough he must live alone, only a child. The man knows it's *false* that "the sun also rises" (as the sun now sets, and night bids day adieu) -- *false* that each farewell is a passing separation before the morrow's safe return. Only faith helps him abide the enigmas of farewell.

Evening's leave-taking of the day, and of the one who has lived that day, is a speech in a riddle. Its reminder [of danger] is like the solicitous mother's admonition to the child to be home in good time.

Faith brings hope amidst abiding uncertainties, abiding the half-innocent riddles of taking leave of the day.²³ A "tryst with the infinite" brings love and death in tow, graveside loves unfold under the infinite night. A mother bids her child, "return in good time", yet knows one day she will *not* return. A mother keeps faith through uncertainty (or doesn't).

THE DEAD SPEAK

Climacus has no particular grave to visit. Perhaps he takes himself to be already somewhat dead, and so *does* have a grave close by. Can this be a sort of self-visitation? Can he commune with himself as one communes with the dead?²⁴

There is always in this garden, among the visitors, a beautiful understanding that one does not come out here to see and to be seen, ... Nor does one need company, here where all is eloquence, where the dead greet one with the brief word placed on his grave, not like a clergyman who gives sermons on that word far and wide, but as a silent man does who says no more than this yet says it with a passion as though the dead

²³ Climacus had asked earlier in *Postscript: What is it to die, or to marry, or to pray?* – these are additional candidates, we might say, for existential riddles, or more substantively, for 'the absurd.'

²⁴I discuss the enigma of looking at one's life from the position of having already died in "Transfigurations: The Intimate Agency of Death", *Kierkegaard and Death*, ed. Patrick Stokes and Adam Buben, forthcoming.

would burst open the tomb – or is it not strange to have on his grave “we shall meet again’ and to remain down there? (197)

Climacus takes the cemetery to be a place where we seek *solitary* communion with the dead. We leave behind the “see and be seen” of city streets, carriage paths or social church interiors.²⁵ “[A]n individual vanish[es] among the trees, not happy to meet and avoiding contact, since he sought the dead and not the living.” (197) Yet to be solitary is apparently not to be utterly alone, for it is a place to say goodbye to the dead.

The night speaks without words, and now the dead speak. They “remain down there” – yet are ready to burst up eloquently. The mother pleads, “Return in good time”, hiding the thought that there may be no return. Voicing that thought from the side of no return, the grave declares, “We shall meet again!” Climacus notes that “the visitor’s leave-taking is again made doubly difficult.”(Ibid) And why is the difficulty *double*?

First, there’s the very fact that dead and living *converse*: the dead say “we shall meet again!” The living agree. Second, we don’t know *where these conversants are* – among the living or among the dead? In speaking and listening we typically inhabit shared ontological space. Phones span physical space, but the dead and the living aren’t just separated within physical space. When they speak, do the dead burst into the land of the living or do the living burst into the land of the dead? Or do both make do in a nether world?

The riddle of *spatial* location is matched by a riddle of *temporal* location. Of the words “we shall meet another time”, Climacus writes:

²⁵ A recent (2008) visitor’s guide describes *Assistens Kirkegård* as “. . . a popular place for people to take a stroll, look at the old graves and monuments, and to have a picnic. A flea market operates along its walls every Saturday from May to October. The yellow walls of the cemetery . . . have in recent years become the target of many graffiti painters.” Regine Olsen, Poul Martin Moller, Hans Christian Anderson, Niels Bohr, and the African-American jazz musicians Kenny Drew and Richard Boone are buried there.

it is meaningless to say ‘another time’ because the last time is already past and there is no reason to stop taking leave when the beginning is made after the last time has passed. (197)

Why has “another time” become meaningless? For those dead and buried, time has *stopped*, so that there *cannot be* ‘another time’. Yet if a “beginning is made *after* the last time has passed” we will have undermined the finality of the presumption that “the last time has passed.” If we resume visits (and taking leaves), the finality of the presumed “last time” is suspended. Time stops for the dead -- and doesn’t. All is parting and rebirth, loss and repetition, farewell and “we shall meet again”.²⁶

Each deep enigma marks an anomalous moment to be read in opposing ways, a moment that disrupts stability of expected frames of reference. Our most ordinary linguistic intelligibility frames, whether they be poetic or non-poetic, occupied with the living or the dead, with the purely natural or the purely personal, with things in time or beyond time, become unexpectedly fissured, fluid, elusive, soaked in wonder and anxiety. We have commonplace instances of such elusive doubleness of intelligibility frames. Take the classic duck-rabbit reversible figure. A duck-world shifts incongruously to a rabbit-world, and back again. The riddle is that each world can (yet *can't*) exist simultaneously. The possibility of the world aspecting rabbit, then duck, is the *impossibility* of the world providing an actual rabbit that morphs into an actual duck. The breeze aspects whisperingly, then as pure motion with no voice at all. My dead speak and don’t speak, warn me to heed my life and as quickly retreat, voiceless as dust and bones.

²⁶ “Repetition” should be taken, against Nietzsche and Deleuze, as a revaluing revelation refiguring the past, bringing it alive in new ways, and reanimating the present. See my introduction, *Kierkegaard's Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, Oxford World Classics, 2009, and *On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy and Time*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2007, Ch. 9. Here, visitors speak with their *risen* dead.

IRONIES

A riddle creates two-mindedness that resembles the two-mindedness of irony. What Climacus calls our “existentially essential concepts” pick out what should most matter to us. These are inherently unstable, leaving ample play for irony. If I value music, there’s a gap between passable music and music that meets my highest expectations. If I say to you of a piece of music that *I value it*, I may value it as only passable but keep my reservation to myself, as my other friend, who knows my tastes, hears the irony you don’t.²⁷ If I say to you “I’m not a Christian” I might mean I never go to church and don’t want a Christian burial. On the other hand, I might also mean that although I attend mass regularly and want a Christian burial, I’m not a *good* Christian – not a Christian *at all* -- as measured by my own aspirations. If I revealed that judgment to a friend, she might reasonably think I was being ironic – or perhaps just too hard on myself. Irony reveals and revels in valuative gaps. Although by all ordinary standards, I might be a good professor, I might say in a flippant (or serious) mood that I’m not: which a listener could justly take as an *ironic* remark. Kierkegaard says (perhaps ironically, perhaps not) that there is not a Christian in Christendom. By conventional measures, Denmark is packed with them. But he might hold himself (and others) to such a demanding ideal that it becomes *true* that not a one earns the accolade. One can smile wryly as Sam ventures to say he is or isn’t a Christian, for those words are typically uttered in a social space most hospitable to irony.²⁸ “Are you a Jew?” asks my father, the Rabbi! (Of course, he might be not ironic but accusing or teasing.)

²⁷ Charles Larmore defines irony as two-mindedness in *The Romantic Legacy*, Columbia University Press, 1996. Jonathan Lear refines this, describing Kierkegaardian irony as accentuating the gap between a commonplace status and an ideal never really achieved. I find this revision helpful. See his *Therapeutic Action*.

²⁸ The exception here will be reporting my ‘file identity’: say at tax-time, or in border crossings, where I report most impersonally my job or status. Then my identity has no double, self-reflexive, or existential valence.

Irony's doubleness also attaches to broad evaluations of the world. Something might be "not evil *enough* to be evil", or "*too* evil to be evil", thus evincing evaluative gaps in which irony can play. I might say "that doesn't matter *enough* to matter", or "that matters *so much* that its mattering is beyond words". Shot through as it is with pluralities of evaluation frames, the riddles of irony are ineluctably possible (if not realized) at every turn in subjective life. Our vulnerability to, and opportunities for, irony increase with our modern, urbane, and cosmopolitan to hear and take in simultaneously multiple standpoints, with some seriousness.

** **

Earlier we followed the truths that Nature, Death, Other Persons interweave in a space of subjectivity that awakens Climacus to his self-relations, making *subjectivity a shared natural, embodied, and interpersonal space*; and that in important moments existence can present layer on layer of riddles. These moments of anxious revelation, like Kierkegaard's 'anxious sublime', are essentially unstable, two-sided, and give only conflict-ridden glimpses of a field of significance. They defeat attempts at domestication, and deny single-standpoint uniformity of sense -- yet refuse any fall into utter nonsense.²⁹

By way of review, we can list out this nesting series of riddles, and then return to our opening theme – subjectivity, and its close cousin, "inwardness". We revisit their unexpected interpersonal dimensions, and trace their roots in acculturation. We also note ways that inwardness or subjectivity can be more or less true, more or less deep, enduring, or religious. And we note how inwardness can mark out nearly inaccessible reserves of defining passion.

²⁹What Climacus calls riddles are of a piece with what he elsewhere calls "the absurd." "The absurd" might not be a particular something as much as a sense of the pervasiveness of multiple riddles crisscrossing the most important dimensions of our lives. Here is Kierkegaard in a note from 1850 that starts by particularizing 'the' absurd and ends by making it pluriform. ". . . the concept of the absurd is precisely to grasp the fact that it cannot and must not be grasped. . . . The *absurd*, the *paradox*, is composed in such a way that reason has no power at all to dissolve it in nonsense and prove that it is nonsense; no, it is a symbol, a riddle, a compound riddle, about which reason must say: I cannot solve it But it does not follow thereby that it is nonsense. . . ." J&P 1850 (JP I, 7.)

NESTING RIDDLES

Inter-animating and intertwining riddles reveal ever-deepening labyrinths of opacity and revelation. Inwardness essentially *is* that space of multiple disruptive and revelatory riddles underlying and continuous with a heartfelt mode of interpersonal association. In the graveyard, disruption appears as heavens speak amidst the *silence* of heavens. Mixed in with heavens speaking (and *not*) is a disruptive riddle of *farewells*, issued from nights, mothers, and the dead. They promise good cheer and easy return (and then the *no* of final farewell). Emily Dickinson begins a poem, “My life closed twice before it closed”. She has it end:

Parting is all we know of Heaven
And all we need of Hell³⁰

A third layer of riddle appears as *address from and to the dead*. Partings engage the dead who speak and are mute nullity and dust. A fourth, obtrudes in the *sociality-isolation* of inwardness. Spirit exemplifies solitude, yet is companionable, a doubling, a relation to itself and also to its other(s). A fifth riddle (yet to be explored) depicts teaching as *contact-and-withdrawal*. Such opacities mark tangles we can explore but not completely stop or straighten; they pervade our happy-unhappy fates.

IV.

INWARDNESS AS INTERPERSONAL

Inwardness permeates our speech with the dead and speech from heavens. Of course, inwardness is the wrong English word here, for it concerns, in this case, a manner of speaking with another, a manner of interpersonal address. As Alastair Hannay puts it,

³⁰ “My Life Closed Twice . . . “, # 1732, Dickinson’s *Collected Works*, many editions.

“Inwardness” is by no means a perfect translation of “Inderlighed”. As with Hegel’s Innerlichkeit, the sense is not that of inward-directedness [but of] an inner warmth, sincerity, seriousness and wholeheartedness in one’s concern for what matters, a “heartfeltness” not applied to something but which comes *from* within.³¹

What springs from the heart in expressive saying, feeling, or doing, escapes shallow conventionality or perfunctory mimesis. Adopting what is typically said or done by those of my class, city, or family can drain my relations to others, the world, or myself. If I respond *only* as would “*one in my situation*”, there will be no heart in what I do, say or undergo, and I remain but a clever mimic.³²

When wholeheartedness or heartfeltness is boxed as “inwardness”, psychologists will picture introspection or inner-direction, and philosophers will picture Cartesian divides between consciousness and world.³³ In his graveyard scene, however, Climacus is neither introspective nor Cartesian. He artfully depicts the ways we convey who we are to each other when we express ourselves interpersonally from the heart, say, under the burden of death, and he evokes worlds that expressively intimate unutterable wonder, as in whisper of night or serenity of dew. What can seem like an impervious wall between self and world is porous: I engage in the whisper of night breeze and the muffled tears of a neighbor. Night infiltrates and I respond. Climacus all but enters souls of a grandfather, a dead son, an abandoned child -- as they enter his. Emotions and passions tie us to the world.

³¹ Hannay gives a welcome rendition of Kierkegaard’s existential compilation, marvelously recreating its lively twists and turns. In favor of keeping “inwardness” as a term of art, despite its dangers, Hannay continues in the quoted passage: “[S]ince “inwardness” has become a standard translation for Kierkegaard’s “Inderlighed” and in this sense even finds a place in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it has been retained here.” (XXXIX-X)

³² For Heidegger, “inauthenticity” is a mindless saying or doing that mimics what “*they*”, or “*one*” says or does; thus it is an abdication of one’s personhood (though the latter is not his term of art).

³³ Hannay remarks that Climacus uses “*Indvortshed*” for inner-directedness (as opposed to the outer-directed heartfeltness of “*Inderlighed*”). (XXXVIII). Also, see his comments in *Ethics, Love, and Faith in Kierkegaard: A Philosophical Engagement*, ed. Edward F. Mooney, Indiana University Press, 2008, p. 152.

Earnestness, heartfeltness, courage, or truthfulness are passions that reach out toward others and things. We are earnest *about* something, heartfelt *with regard to* something. So-called “inwardness”, heartfeltness, modulates a turmoil of passion-laden enigmas towards a more or less focused *reciprocal* mode of *transformative* interpersonal relation. The heavens offer heartfelt invitation; we are transformed in accepting or refusing. A grandfather’s grief is a concern for another, who is transformed as he returns a concern. An old man pleads, and Climacus responds, transformed, his ears opened to vocation. The world pours into him; he parcels out a transforming response that pours into the world. Taking in and parceling out presuppose “interpersonal association”. “Inwardness” is taking in and giving back, with heart, and in acknowledgment of the riddling undercurrents of our lives.

Why does Climacus speak “hidden inwardness” – that is, hidden heartfeltness? Well, the heartfeltness at issue is not easily distinguished, in actual life, from its simulacra, and conceptually, it’s not easy to sort out. We become prolix in attempting to make plain what is elusive, “hidden” and rough. The soul is, in many ways, a secret to itself and others. Also, Climacus values reserve in the display of deep passion as a counterweight to “outward bawling” (as he puts it). Hackneyed hysterics, an exaggerated and misplaced “unhiddenness” of passion, too often covers over an *absence* of heartfelt suffering. (220)³⁴ “Hiddenness” signals the *depths* of a soul’s reserve.

What is interpersonal is learned, and we can turn now to Climacus’ insistence that proper teaching of, or initiation into, inwardness or wholeheartedness must respect and not tamper with the natural development of a soul’s reserve.

³⁴ In his review of the literature of his mimicking *doppelganger*, Climacus objects that *Fear and Trembling* has too much “bawling”, turning the Moriah event into a loud ‘shriek’. (220) In present TV culture, the passionate rants and arch indignation of *faux*-news seem little more than attention-gaining shrieks masking despair.

LEARNING, INWARDNESS

Night and grief frame a setting of instruction.³⁵ The teacher of truth-that-matters, of essential truth, teaches to my “self-relation” and to my relation to others and the world. This teacher teaches by *withdrawal and reservation*. Far from a skills trainer or drill instructor, he or she will impart inwardness as heart. Socrates approaches and then disappears, hints at answers, then disowns any. He draws Alcibiades into his net, and then leaves him hanging. At the end of *Postscript*, Climacus takes back what he has said. The grandfather teaches Climacus without talking to him at all. The riddle is that a teacher intervenes, coming face to face with her student; and a teacher teaches by absence, disappearing behind a curtain.

There’s something quixotic about this. When it comes to loves or affections, death or marriage, “essential truths,” then direct address, address without retreat, is ruled out. But why?

Direct address, as Climacus sees it, is liable to overpower a student’s vulnerable “self-activities”, showing insufficient respect for them.(203) An awakening soul awakens from within (even as it opens outwardly). Wisdom, as Socrates laments, can’t be poured into another’s skull.³⁶ The old man pours nothing into *Climacus*’ skull, who is awakened *unintentionally*. The old man is absent with regard to Climacus. He is decidedly *not* reserved with his grandson. The man’s bearing toward the child is a false lead. It is *Climacus* who is the beneficiary of wisdom, indirectly imparted. He grasps the *content* of a plea even as it is addressed elsewhere. Of course this is startling. How can *accidentally* hearing a sentimental address to an uncomprehending boy deliver *him* to a life-altering revelation?

The teacher’s inwardness, Climacus reports, “is a respect for the learner precisely as one having inwardness in himself.” (203) To have respect for the inwardness of another is to have

³⁵ Climacus asserts that a teacher wanting to impart objective results, and nothing more, assumes an “unnatural form of interpersonal association”. The true goal of imparting truths that matter is to impart to the learner a deepening of inwardness, exemplifying a *natural* form of interpersonal association. I return to this below.

³⁶ Socrates laments that wisdom can’t be poured into a head that way in xxx.

reservations about tampering with it. A teacher who meddles assumes an “unnatural form of interpersonal association.” (ibid.) Helping another is *approaching and backing off*, and knowing when to do either. Climacus confesses he has never heard such a moving scene. He learns from it, even as he worries about meddling in *their* business. He learns from *words wafting in the air*. He is closer to being taught than pitiable grandson, who is definitely not seen as “having inwardness in himself”. Respect dictates that the old man forego tampering with the “self-activity” of the child, but alas, he tampers. His address is an inundating flood of pathos. This is a misfire of teaching.

Why expect this to be intergenerational teaching? The old man is hardly fit to be *temperate* or *wise*. The child is assimilating not the need for vocation but primal mourning. This unrehearsed drama initiates the child. Socrates belittles weeping; it’s not a practice he would recommend. But inheritors of a biblical culture will hardly object as a child is led to weep over the deaths of fathers and mothers, sons and neighbors. If we grant that a young child may have no *desire* to be led into this practice, then heavy-handed tampering may be partially excused.

Urgency can trump the value of temperate reserve in true teaching. The grandfather’s overwrought plea is colored by awareness that he is old, running out of time, and addresses a *child*, who will soon be left without familial counsel. Flooding another with pathos would be inexcusable if not for this exceptional circumstance. We have a suspension of the ethics of respect and reserve. More alarming is the man’s demanding an oath. Can the child possibly *understand* the nature of the oath -- or the words he utters in compliance? He is to mourn a father and swear to forsake him. Oppositions between fathers and sons are the stuff of life, but amidst devastation this child is asked to solemnly swear to *disown* the father he mourns.³⁷

³⁷ We often ask children to promise (or apologize) long before they can have any real idea of what they’re asked to do. We initiate children into cultural forms in rather wooden ways, trusting that refinement, and ‘inner’

Perhaps it's excusable, but the grandfather nevertheless tampers with the child, and not at all with Climacus, is whose soul is indirectly awakened by "words in the air". Climacus does not even *exist* for the grandfather, so it's hard to see how a 'natural interpersonal association' obtains between the two. Yet on second thought, a student may learn as he lurks in the back of my class, as if behind a screen. Learners aren't always visible to their teachers, who are often as not are authors long departed, though their books remain. The involutions and indirections of his texts show Kierkegaard continually constructing distance between teacher and learner. In order to offset tampering, Kierkegaard can respect the "self-activity" of his readers, teaching indirectly, intervening and withdrawing, despite lacking face-to-face contact.³⁸

TRUE OR FALSE

We are cultural creatures. Families, neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, offer modes of expression we inherit. Kierkegaard learns the etiquette of the playground or street, of class relations, filial piety, and dissertation presentation. He inherits endless variations of what Climacus calls modes of "interpersonal association". Even the cultivation of solitude can be framed as interpersonal: I learn when it's best to take myself as my sole companion.

In the garden, Climacus talks out the difference between false and true grieving. To mimic outward forms of grief is to be untrue to grief: "inwardness [will be] untrue to the same degree as the outward expression, in mien and countenance, in words and assurance, is there, ready to hand for instant use." (198) Whatever is *there*, "*ready to hand*" (one hears Heidegger) gives the mimic ample material. But to be true to grief will be true to other than "outward expression, in mien and countenance". Mimes don't express their *own* passion, but only a

understanding will come later. Meanwhile, we can be content with more or less rote compliance. The art comes much later -- in degrees for most, and for some, never.

³⁸ In *On Soren Kierkegaard*, I interpret pseudonyms as devices to effect reserve and proper distance between writer and reader. The "revocation" at the finish of *Postscript* also functions to preserve a reader's freedom.

“ready to hand” token.³⁹ That’s only an “everyday understanding of inwardness.” (Ibid.) True inwardness (or heartfelnness) will be true to a source beneath everyday forms of outward expression, making mere outward forms one’s own.

Cultural inheritance of tokens of expression can be used or misused, owned or disowned, by degrees. I become less Danish if I leave the country at age five and am raised in Paris speaking French, or if I withdraw from participation in the State Church, mock the King, and enter a Parisian exile. Being a professor can also be a matter of degree and dispute, and an evaluative affair in which I can tilt the balance. A true professor will be a good professor, and we can argue about what that means. Being inward, too, has an evaluative dimension, and can occur in degrees. We can display the inherited outward signs of inwardness yet not be truly inward, just as we can display the outward signs of membership in the professoriate yet not be truly a professor.

What is true inwardness? What are the degrees of its true realization? Commonplace weeping, gesticulations, and words of deep loss can be true to one’s affect and circumstance. (Of course, it might be all theater, or a calculated diversion.) Yet deep grief will be more than a momentary outburst. True grief is preserved, Climacus observes, “not as an instant’s excitement, but as the eternal which has been won through death.” (198). This means that over time a passion will veer from momentary excitement toward the lasting and timeless, the eternal, and that this transformation toward the eternal is achieved (“won”) insofar as one dies to, becomes immune to, a passion’s initial momentariness, embracing its potential for

³⁹ Heidegger’s terms of art in *Being and Time* are largely borrowed from Kierkegaard. We have in English translation the “every day” and “ready to hand”, “being toward death” and the “they”, “chatter” and “repetition”, living authentically (or in the truth), mood and attunement, individual resolve, and so forth. Climacus’ exploration of living-toward-death in the passage at hand is especially resonant of Heidegger’s discussion.

longevity.⁴⁰ The evaluative premise is that changeable love, changeable grief, are ‘less true’ than their eternal counterparts.

Climacus links momentary passion to forgetfulness, and deep inwardness to long memory. We grieve a dead child well beyond immediate outbursts and recent memory. Some momentary outbursts are fine in their place. “[I]t is not unlovely that a woman gushes over in momentary inwardness nor is it unlovely for her soon to forget it again.” (198) Setting aside the sniff of sexism, the point is that lasting, eternal grief is not an outburst from which we move on. Climacus puts it this way: “Praise be to the one living who relates as a dead man to his inwardness.” The dead do not burst with public gesticulation. *To all the world* I might seem as if dead to my grief, never allowing it animation. But buried grief may still be alive.

RESERVE

A Stoic aim is to diminish or eradicate false emotion, an aim Climacus would endorse. He believes that love or grief can be true, and thus worth *preserving*. It’s the false fuss and bother around these powerful emotions that must be monitored and erased, in his view. We might display grief for a week, or a month, or on a death’s anniversary, but the time for public displays will pass, we suppose. Then we enter a twilight zone where most is at stake. Who would want grief over the loss of a child to cease with the cessation of weeping? Grief’s outward expression can subside while an inner river remains.⁴¹ Out of deep love, one might refuse to erase grief for one departed, wanting to preserve suffering over time. A mother’s grief

⁴⁰ Our recognition of the difference between evident showing and less obvious having of an emotion is caught in this line from a recent novel: “*Although John did not show his emotions, his melancholy was evident.*”

⁴¹ Allowing passion a deep refuge even as one appears Stoical on the surface seems to depart from a “Stoic ideal”. Yet as Rick Furtak argues, the Stoics reject emotions (when they do) on the grounds that what emotions reveal to us is *not true* (see his “*Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity*,” Notre Dame, 2005, 18-19). This opens the possibility that in moments of passionate inwardness a Stoic might see truths; accordingly he might conclude that passion ought to be embraced as giving access to truths: Only through love will I understand that my child is worthy of deep love. And I might attain access to “meta-truths”: “emotions do not just cloud over truth but display it”.

might extend timelessly after the death of a child, becoming a pain so entrenched as to become a very mark of her identity, and hence something she (and we) will honor. As such, it is not to be scorned or dispraised, even as we wish not to observe it. Climacus notes:

It has always stung my shame to witness another person's expression of feeling when he abandons himself to it as one does only in the belief that one is unobserved; for there is an inwardness of emotion which is befittingly hidden and only revealed to God. (198)

If emotion can be “befittingly hidden and only revealed to God”, then reserve in expression of lasting love or grief is only to be expected; that is not treating emotion as an unwanted intruder.

Shunning public demonstration allows inwardness an expression in intimate settings: the old man weeps as he speaks alone to his grandson. He is not utterly mute for the boy or for Climacus, who know the feelings he harbors. An otherwise hidden grief can become unhidden in revelation to God. Daily prayers or meditations can be interpersonal expressions of restful or anxious passion. The limiting case of the truth that inwardness is interpersonal is the occasion when lasting affect is only for God, bypassing one's neighbor, priest, spouse, or friend.

V.

ART AS SHIELD, LABYRINTH, AND REVELATION

With sensitive calibration, a dialectical lens gives us a lively inter-weave of nature, subjectivity, and sociality, as these are animated by vocation, anxiety, and death. A less dialectical, more lyrical Kierkegaard also sings in the text. Image, setting, verse, and script give us a poetic, luminous dark that shields and reveals both truths and those who converse there and listen.

Pausing mid-stride in a book of battles, riddles, and death, Homer describes the marvelous Shield of Achilles on which are engraved the many wonders and worlds of the book,

his poetic art being both shield and revelation.⁴² Midway in his monstrous book of satire, death, riddles, dialectical battles and labyrinths, Climacus pauses to engrave in miniature the many wondrous worlds of the book: the strolling critic of Copenhagen, the false-heaven of intellectualistic disputation, the true hells and redemptions of stricken fathers, the worlds of only briefly innocent sons – the worlds of diaphanous mists and nocturnal trysts, and of the many tensed layers of the heart. Barely half-a-dozen pages, this miniature provides a vivid proof text for all that Climacus tells us elsewhere of truth and subjectivity, double reflection and indirect communication, faith and its revocation, the inward recesses of the heart and their expression, the chatter of streets and classrooms, the mystery of inheritance from star-crossed fathers, of farewells from anxious mothers, of receiving word from the risen dead and knowing the costs of a soul's self-betrayal.

Here in the span of a hand we have the worlds of the *Postscript* engraved. Or, as in Hamlet's *Mousetrap*, have a play within a play to catch our conscience by surprise, and return us to the sufferings and smiles that are the wonder of life.

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⁴² *The Iliad*, Book 18.