Love And Time In Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

By David Humbert

In order to illustrate the nature of human existence, Kierkegaard compares his notion of striving to the concept of Eros as described in Plato's *Symposium*. The self is not only a composite of the eternal and the temporal, but also a »synthesis« *(Synthesen)* of the infinite and the finite. Because the self is composed of elements which are contradictory, it is not capable of achieving that rest which is indifferent to all becoming and change. The self is linked inextricably to striving, which Kierkegaard equates with the unrest of erotic love:

> This characteristic of existence recalls the Greek conception of Eros, as found in the *Symposium* . . . For Love is here evidently taken as identical with existence, or that, by virtue of which, life is lived in its entirety, the life shich is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite. According to Plato, Wealth and Poverty conceived Eros, whose nature partook of both. But what is existence? Existence is the child that is born of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore a constant striving. This was Socrates' meaning. It is for this reason that Love is constantly striving; or to say the same thing in other words, the thinking subject is an existing individual. It is only systematists and objective philosophers who have ceased to be human beings, and have become speculative philosophy in the abstract, an entity which belongs in the realm of pure being.[1]

It is in this crucial passage from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that we see Kierkegaard's understanding of love and his ontology of the self intersect. Because man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, he is a passionate being. His relationship to the eternal is not one of objective contemplation, but of active appropriation. He is not merely a knower of the truth, but also a lover of the truth.

It is really of no use, however, to define man as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal unless one identifies the content of these elements more precisely. Though Kierkegaard uses Plato's description of Eros to express the relation between the eternal and the temporal, it is clear from his treatment of Plato later on in the *Postscript* that his own

understanding of the nature of the elements themselves, and their relation to one another, is quite different from that of Plato's. Though Kierkegaard is often, and rightly, contrasted with Hegel, it has been overlooked, generally speaking, that his ontological position is most clearly determinable in relation to his interpretation of Plato.[2] It is chiefly by reference to the Platonic conception of Love, and the view of being underlying it, that the modernity of Kierkegaard's own ontology, and, in turn, the uniqueness of his concept of love, can be established.

I Kierkegaard and Plato's Conception of Eros

There can be no doubt that Kierkegaard's early and absorbed reading of Plato had a profound effect upon him. While his statements on Hegel were consistently harsh, he preserved a certain respectful tone in his references to Plato, even though, as will be shown, his differences with him were marked. There are, in addition, some very important and telling analogies between Plato's concept of Eros and Kierkegaard's idea of love. Kierkegaard gives an account, in his pseudonymous works, of the various stages of human existence. These stages can be conceived as a gradual development of the self's capacity for love. Plato also gives an account, which must have exerted a strong attraction on Kierkegaard, of how the lover of wisdom rises to a vision and eventual assimilation of absolute beauty through various »stages« of love. In each of the accounts given by Plato and Kierkegaard there occurs a development, or an education, of the passions.

In Plato's *Symposium* Socrates describes how the lover is first inspired with love for a single beautiful body, and then, having seen the beauty common to all bodies, focusses his love on this common beauty. He then transfers his love from bodies to souls, from souls to laws and »observances«, next to the sciences, and finally to the »main ocean of the beautiful«. It is here that the philosophical lover achieves the vision which, in his uneducated state, he had unconsciously longed for. It is the vision of the beautiful itself, which neither comes to be nor perishes, and which dwells in silence and singularity beyond the world of appearance:

> Beginning from obvious beauties [the philosophical lover] must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observances to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know the very essence of beauty.[3]

There is, of course, an important relationship between Plato's idea of dialectic and his doctrine of love. On the one hand the pursuit of wisdom involves a rational dialectic, in which one rises up through careful

scientific definition through to the knowledge of the ideas themselves. On the other hand, the science of the good is a kind of »existential« dialectic in virtue of which the philosopher is inwardly assimilated to the good and by which the inward eye of the soul is adjusted to the blinding light of the good in itself. The philosopher does not regard the objects of knowledge with indifference, but as determinations, or limited forms, of an eternal order which, by the proper orientation of his love, he must inwardly assimilate. The rational side of the dialectic cannot, therefore, be separated from its passionate side.

Kierkegaard obviously highly prized this emphasis on inward appropriation, and, as a consequence, the Greek thinkers, including Plato, are described in the *Postscript* as »passionate« thinkers.[4] What made the Greek thinker an »existential« thinker, that which gave his love for wisdom the character of a *passion*, is that the assimilation he sought was not realizable in time. While Hegel claimed to have shown the necessity of the manifestation of the eternal order in time in the form of a progressive development, the Greeks concerned themselves with the apparent impossibility of the realization in time of eternal truth. The paradoxes of Zeno, the arguments concerning the »moment« in Plato's *Parmenides*, are examples of this preoccupation with the, apparently impossible, relations between unmoving eternal being and the ever-changing reality perceived by the senses.[5]

The most characteristic example of a philosopher passionately concerned for the inward appropriation of truth, a truth whose realization within the shifting relations of time and experience is problematic, is Socrates. Socrates is the important figure in the *Postscript* who expresses a central definition of truth in the section entitled »Truth is Subjectivity«: »An objective uncertainty held fast in the appropriation of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual.«[6] The »objective uncertainty« should not be understood in the fashion of some contemporary existentialists, according to whom the reality of truth itself is in question. The »uncertainty« derives from the doubt concerning one's existential assimilation to a truth which in itself is real. It is the philosopher's problematic *relation* to this truth which renders truth »paradoxical« in the Socratic sense:

> When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in turn that subjectivity is truth. . . . The paradoxical character of truth is its objective uncertainty; this uncertainty is an expression for the passionate inwardness, and this passion is precisely the truth. So far the Socratic principle. The eternal and essential truth, the truth which has an essential relationship to an individual because it pertains essentially to existence . . . is a paradox. But the eternal essential truth is by no means in itself a paradox; but it becomes paradoxical by virtue of its relationship to an existing individual. The Socratic ignorance

> gives expression to the objective uncertainty attaching to the truth, while his inwardness in existing is the truth.[7]

Socrates' claim to ignorance, that the only thing he know was that he know nothing, is, for Kierkegaard, the acknowledgement of his simultaneous relation to and separation from the eternal order of truth he seeks. On the one hand, it is an indication that one has an inner apprehension of the truth simply because one is seeking it. Passion, to speak in modern terms, has a certain intentional relation to the truth. This truth, however, is not fully possessed or completely understood, because one is still in the process of seeking it. In another work attributed to the author Johannes Climacus, *Philosophical Fragments*, this simultaneous knowing and not-knowing of the truth is said to be a consequence of the fact that all knowledge is recollection.[8] The process of dialectic in which the inner knowledge is acquired and made explicit implies as inner relation to, but at the same time a separation from, the truth.

There is, however, a very important difference between Socratic inwardness and the type of subjectivity which Clicamus in the *Postscript* is trying to put forward. Climacus makes use of a distinction, which appears in other pseudonymous works, between recollection and repetition, the latter of which is the form of appropriation proper to Christian inwardness.

At first it may seem that Climacus adopts the traditional Platonic distinction between being and becoming. Plato distinguished between the changing thing as embodied in becoming and the idea after which is was modelled. While the earthly »copies« of the ideas change and pass away, the ideas themselves really are and therefore do not change. Time, therefore, is a »moving image« of an eternal order and is only significant in so far as time reveals, however imperfectly, an eternal structure of things which is not affected by the passage of time. In this sense, the activity of recollection is that activity by which the circle of ideas, which are eternal and real »ahead of time«, are re-membered and re-collected. Every event in time is only a point of departure for the recollection of that eternal order of forms by which every thing in this world is defined.

Kierkegaard, in response to this conception, makes the same criticism of Plato which he directs toward Hegel. Both thinkers direct their attention to an order of being which is identical to the eternal, »past« being of the logical concept or of the geometrical figure. That is to say, they both understand becoming from the point of view of a finality which excludes all becoming.[9] It is at this juncture that Climacus makes his interesting distinction between Plato and Socrates. For Socrates, as for Plato, it is a question of the acquisition through memory of a knowledge he already possesses, but he, unlike Plato, is passionately concerned with the fact that he »exists«. Socrates has the doctrine of recollection in common with Plato, but »Socrates is always departing from recollection in order to exist.«[10] Socrates would like to take himself, by way of

recollection, »back« into the eternal and out of the manifold temporal relations of »before« and »after«, but, because he »continues« to exist, he is continually perplexed by these relations. It is for this reason that he finds himself between knowing and not knowing, a lover and not a possessor of wisdom.

II Christian Inwardness

Kierkegaard, in the guise of Climacus, makes it clear that Socrates is tied to the special ontological position which is bound up with the idea of recollection. Because eternity or true being for Socrates is ever-present and therefore »past«, the point of departure in time is not »decisive«. The future moment which is yet to be, according to this conception, cannot harm the essential relation of the philosopher to the eternal truth, any more than he can erase, by drawing an infinite number of imperfect triangles, the essentially perfect idea of triangle which he carries in his mind. The »withdrawal« into the world of forms is therefore an ever-present possibility. In the following passage Climacus distinguishes between Socrates and Plato, while at the same time maintaining that for Socrates one's relation to time is not »decisive«:

> Socrates concentrates essentially upon accentuating existence, while Plato forgets this and loses himself in speculation. Socrates' infinite merit is to have been an *existing* thinker, not a speculative philosopher who forgets what it means to exist. For Socrates therefore the principle that all knowledge is a recollection has at the moment of his leave-taking and as the constantly rejected possibility of engaging in speculation, the following two-fold significance: (1) that the knower is essentially integer, and that with respect to the knowledge of the eternal truth he is confronted with no other difficulty, than the circumstance that he exists; which difficulty, however, is so essential and decisive for him that it means that existing, the process of transformation to inwardness in and by existing, is the truth; (2) that existence in time does not have any decisive significance, because the possibility of taking oneself back into eternity through recollection is always there, though this possibility is constantly nullified by utilizing the time, not for speculation, but for the transformation to inwardness in existing.[11]

While the Socratic inwardness has what one might call an inessential, indecisive relation to time, the Christian inwardness, according to Climacus, has an essential, decisive relation to time. The inward self of the Greek philosopher could suffer no essential change of the result of a decision, or an act of will, in time, but the soul of the Christian *can* undergo such a change. The presupposition of the Platonic-Socratic concept of recollection is that the soul was substantial, and therefore possessed of immortality. In Climacus' terms, the philosopher was in

continual possession of the condition enabling him to know the truth despite what he »did« in time. According to Christianity man is capable of altering that condition which was given him at birth to understand the truth. The Greek philosopher's separation from the truth was relative in the sense that it was an ignorance which could be replaced, given time and opportunity, by disciplined discourse and recollection. The Christian, however, finds that he begins at a greater distance from the truth, not because he is separated from it by lack of time and opportunity, but by the fact that he suffers from a defect of *will* to realize this truth.

It is important to note that this defect of will is not considered to be an »eternal« condition of the soul, but a condition of subjectivity which has »come to be« in time. The essential thing is that the loss of the truth by means of a temporally determined act of the will can no longer simply be reversed by another act of the will. For the Greek philosopher, retirement out of the varied relations of temporal life was an ever-present »past« possibility, whereas, for the individual who has »lost« the condition for understanding the truth, this retirement has become an *im*possibility. The condition in which he finds himself is no longer reversible by means of an ascent to an atemporal vision of the ideas themselves, but only by means of a restoration, occurring »in« time, of that condition which was lost.

In light of this situation the significance of time and existence for the individual becomes redoubled. Time and existence acquire those contours which limit and make impossible the realization of the good he inwardly desires. According to Climacus, »existence has stamped itself upon the existing individual a second time«.

> There has taken place so essential an alteration in him that he cannot now possibly take himself back into the eternal by way of recollection. To do this is to speculate; to be able to do this, but to reject the possibility by apprehending the task of life as a realization of inwardness in existing, is the Socratic position. But now the difficulty is that what followed Socrates on his way as a rejected possibility has become an impossibility.[12]

The change in moving from the Socratic to the Christian position, can be understood as an inversion of the order of the relation between will and knowledge. In the Socratic position the separation from the truth was caused by ignorance, which at the same time was a passive »forgetting« of the truth. The darkness which fell over the will in its daily life was a primarily a defect of knowledge. In the Christian position as Climacus describes it, the darkness has its source in the will itself, which, having made an irreversible choice, actively dispossesses the individual of the condition which enabled him to know the truth. This act which has initiated in time an irreversible condition in the self is called »sin«.[13]

Just as there appears a widened abyss between the eternal truth and the existing individual, the truth which he is inwardly seeking also achieves

a new definition. Because the individual has sinned, the truth has become a paradox in the sense that he now finds it »impossible« to realize eternal truth, or to achieve that assimilation by which he is unified with the truth. From the objective, or »dialectical« point of view, the eternal truth, and not merely the individual's subjective relation to that truth, has become paradoxical. In the shape of Christ, the eternal truth itself has come into being in time and »given« the individual the condition for a new, »repeated« assimilation to the good he has lost.

It is important to note, therefore, that the problem of temporality appears, not only in relation to the dilemma of man's sinful lostness, but also in relation to the particular solution which Christianity offers for this lostness. For the Socratic inwardness the eternal truth was paradoxical only in the sense that it was related to an existing individual, not because that truth in itself was paradoxical. But in Christian inwardness the truth to which the individual is related is in itself paradoxical. The individual, through sin, has »become untruth in time« and »bears the stamp of being essentially altered by existence.«[14] The paradox derives now from the fact that God descends into time to re-instate the lost relation to the truth. The paradox is not only that an existing individual is related to an eternal truth, but also that »the eternal truth has come into being in time«.[15] The relative impossibility of assimilating oneself fully to the good is augmented by the »absolute« impossibility involved in the idea that God, an eternal being, has »come into being« in time.[16]

It is now possible to draw certain distinctions between Kierkegaard's and Plato's doctrines of love. In general it can be said, as Climacus does, that for Plato the existing individual was a striving lover in the sense that he found himself suspended between eternity and time, unable to fully acquire that assimilation to which his memory constantly directed him. But this striving, as Climacus points out, is striving directed »backwards«, or out of time, while the striving of paradoxical inwardness is directed to the eternal which comes to be »forwards« or »in« time. While Plato's Eros is a divine »madness« which attunes the soul to the eternal forms shining through the veil of time, the love of the Christian individual has an essential relation to time, and is connected with the expectation of the »moment« of salvation in which the division between the self and the eternal is healed »in« time:

> For as the eternal came into the world at a moment of time, the existing individual does not in the course of time come into relation with the eternal and think about it ... but *in time* it comes into relation with the eternal *in time*; so that the relation is within time, and this relationship conflicts equally with all thinking, whether one reflects upon the individual or upon the Deity.[17]

It is in light of this claim concerning the Christian understanding of time that Climacus' specific conception of passion gains its definitive meaning.

The passion of the Greek philosopher was only temporarily postponed by this continuing to exist. It was not »essentially« impossible to retire into the eternal realm of forms. The sinner has excluded himself from the truth, however, and is no longer capable of that inner assimilation to the good. He can, nevertheless, be restored to the good, not by his own efforts, but as a result of that descent into time of the eternal which itself is »impossible«. At this point where the impossibility is greatest, the passion of inwardness reaches its maximum:

> The difficulty is greater than it was for the Greek, because still greater contradictions are conjoined, existence being accentuated paradoxically as sin, and eternity accentuated paradoxically as God in time . . . As a consequence, the believer's existence is still more passionate than the existence of the Greek philosopher, who needed a high degree of passion even in relation to his *ataraxy*; for existence generates passion but existence paradoxically accentuated generates the maximum of passion.[18]

The distinctive feature of Christian love, for Kierkegaard, is that it is a passion, and, moreover, that it is a passion different in quality than the »passion« of the Greek philosopher for the beautiful. Though he credits the Greek philosopher with deep passion »even in relation to his *ataraxy*«, he still maintains an abstract relation to time and existence, in the sense that he stands in a »backward«, and therefore in an »atemporal«, relation to the eternal. The relation of love obtaining between the eternal and the temporal in Plato is for this reason a relation which functions independently of time. The passion of love points, not forward to a realization of the truth in time, but »backward« to an order of things which is eternally present. The passion of passions, for Kierkegaard, is the passion which leads one forward to the »moment« of salvation »in« time.

III Time

Just as the Platonic interpretation of love stands in essential relationship to the idea that time is a »moving image of the eternal«, so does Kierkegaard's conception of love depend upon his own particular conception of temporality as the »intersection« of the temporal and the eternal. The attack in the *Postscript* on the »abstract eternity« of speculative philosophy depends in large measure on Kierkegaard's profound analysis of time in *The Concept of Anxiety*. In the following section, I intend to show how this analysis bears on the question of the nature of love.

To understand time and the moment in time from the perspective of an eternal presence, according to Kierkegaard, is to understand it in analogy with spatial, rather than temporal, presence. All the parts of space »are« simultaneously, while all the parts of time, its moments, exist

only successively. The Greek »God« was »omnipresent« because the point of departure »in« time was not decisive. The philosopher could withdraw backward into the eternal at any time, because the eternal was an inward, everpresent possession. The object, then, was to assimilate the irreversible »historical« moment of existence, in which the philosopher found himself, to the eternal now, the *total simul*, of eternal being. Such an assimilation, for Kierkegaard, meant a false identification of temporal presence with spatial presence: »for abstract thought, time and space are entirely identical *(nacheinander, nebeneinander)*, and become so for representation, and are truly so in the definition of God as *omnipresent.*«[19]

For Kierkegaard, time cannot be represented or thought adequately at all by reference to the doctrine of being according to which »to be« means participation in an essence or a nature in time present. For Kierkegaard time is not, as it is for Plato, »a moving image of the eternal«, but is »infinite succession«, and therefore entirely devoid of »presence«. As soon as a moment in time is apprehended and designated as a »now«, or associated with a certain »essence«, or integrated into a spatial representation, it has become »past« and has become separated from that flowing actuality of time which is perpetually coming out of the future and disappearing into the past. In fact, no moment of time is ever present and can only be so conceived if that moment is »spatialized«, and thereby connected to a certain state. The tenses attributed to time, i.e. past, present and future, only have significance if a real point of division, i.e. a present, is found in relation to which past and future can be defined. But in the process of time itself no such division is possible:

> If in the infinite succession of time a foothold could be found, i.e. a present, which was the dividing point, the division between past, present and future would be quite correct. However, precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. If it is claimed that this division can be maintained, it is because the moment is *spatialized*, but thereby the infinite succession comes to a halt, it is because representation is introduced that allows time to be represented instead of being thought.[20]

Whereas time perpetually and continually lacks presence, and therefore is defined as »infinite succession«, the eternal, as an »annulled succession«, is pure presence. In the eternal »there is no division into past and future« and for representation the eternal »is the infinitely contentful present«.[21] But when the eternal is conceived abstractly, it is conceived, like time, as something past. If both eternity and time are defined simply by their mere presence, i.e. their having no past or future, then »the moment is precisely not the present, because the intermediary between

the past and the future, purely abstractly conceived, is not at all.« Both eternity and time are conceived »concretely« when they are conceived as »touching«, and this touching according to Kierkegaard »must be in time . . .«[22]

Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of *Anxiety*, claims that time and eternity touch in the Moment *(Øieblikket)* and thereby receive the concrete meaning lacking in the Greek definition of time. Since both eternity and time were identified with the static presence of the idea, or of essence, they were defined abstractly as »past« being. Haufniensis mentions that »what we call the moment, Plato calls *to exaiphnes* [the sudden moment].« As stated, Plato conceived both time and eternity abstractly because they were defined as »past«, and, as Haufniensis significantly adds, »because the concept of temporality was lacking. . .«[23]

When time and eternity touch, they touch in the Moment, which is instantaneous and yet full, and it is in and with the idea of the Moment that the concept of »temporality« is born. Plato, therefore, »possessed a concept of time but not of temporality, »whereby time constantly intersects [*afskærer*] eternity and eternity constantly pervades [*gjennemtrænger*] time.« It is therefore only when the Moment is »posited« that »the above-mentioned division acquires its significance: the present time, the past time, the future time.«[24] Haufniensis says further that, »as soon as the spirit is posited, the Moment is present,« that is to say, that Moment when time and eternity touch and when the division between time past, time present, and time future is actualized.

The Moment is no longer, as it was for Plato, the eternal now which, radiantly still, cast its ordering rays into the turbulent shadows of the cave. The presence of the moment is not be realized by assimilating it to a timeless eternal now, but is to be realized in relation to an »intersection« of time and eternity which comes to be out of the future. This intersection is essentially the same moment as when the »repetition« occurs in light of which the free relationship to the good is realized. It is the moment in which the impossible unity of time and eternity is realized *in* time.

The »presence« of the eternal is not the immediate presence of the material object, of the spatially determined geometrical figure, nor of the abstract concept. The eternal is a presence, but a future-presence, a presence which is known in the tensed »moment« of expectation, the »moment« qualified by the division between past, present and future. The »moment«, as understood by Kierkegaard, still is at least analogous to the Platonic »eternal now«, in the sense that it is a moment which, while occuring in time, is nevertheless independent of time. Passion, as Climacus describes it, also involves a kind of transcendence of time.

For Climacus, this transcendence can occur only momentarily. While the speculative thinker seeks an eternal »now« in which the process of becoming is annulled, the existing individual can only transcend time in the moment of passion: »It is only momentarily that the particular

individual is able to realize existentially a unity of the infinite and the finite which transcends existence. This unity is realized in the moment of passion.«[25] There is an obvious, at least verbal, connection between the moment of passion *(Lidenskabens Øieblik)* and the Moment *(Øieblikket)* in which time and eternity touch.

While the Greek philosopher relates himself to the moment as a non-temporal moment which he passively re-members, the Christian relates himself to the moment as a »decisive« moment, and attends expectantly to that Moment in which his lost relation to the good is restored. It should be recalled that the repetition of the good, nevertheless, is an impossibility for the sinful individual. The whole final section of the *Postscript* is a kind of meditation on this theme: the suffering produced by the fact that man of himself, because of sin, is unable to realize the good which he, in his deepest being, is »interested« in achieving. And this is essentially the reason why the paradox of the God in time is so paradoxical, because it involves a realization of that in the individual which was originally posited as an ethical task. The moment in time, therefore, is not decisive simply because a man-made resolution is involved but is decisive because the resolution takes place in relation to an impossibility, a paradox, the paradox being, that the outcome of the decision, its »saving« character, is dependent entirely on God.

To fully explicate this idea would require a thorough discussion of the relation between the idea of love and Climacus' reflections on suffering. For it is in relation to man's inability to act in accordance with the good, or in relation to his suffering, that the truly saving character of love makes its appearance. To think the suffering of the Christian, for Climacus, is to think the abyss of man's willing in relation to an eternal happiness which is given as a gift, or, to think man's separation from God and his unity with God as occurring »simultaneously«. It is to understand the simultaneity of suffering and joy, and the relation between God and man as love.

IV Conclusion

It is important to note the limitations of the author Johannes Climacus, who quite openly confesses that, though he understands Christianity, he himself is not a Christian. His very name, »climber«, seems to indicate an individual who is on the ladder leading to truth, but as yet has not achieved it. It would be natural, then, to assume that he views the »moment« from the point of view of someone who is yet to attain to it, and not from the point of view of someone who is possessed of it. It may be for this reason that he stresses so strongly the ceaseless striving of passion for its object, rather than love's calm possession of its object. One has to look forward to the *Works of Love*, to get a balanced idea of what Kierkegaard himself understands passion to be.

As Climacus pointed out, the »moment« of passion is only an »anti-

cipation« of the eternal, and, therefore, must be distinguished from the Moment in which time and eternity »intersect«, that moment which Kierkegaard also names »the fullness of time« *(Tidens Fylde)*. Passion therefore requires a further qualification if it is to become a love which »abides«, and no longer a love which is rocked by anxious expectancy. The »idealizing« passion of Climacus must become the love which is at the same time a duty, or the love which is simultaneously an action and a passion. It is only in this way that the soul finds rest in the ceaseless vanishing of time: when love finds an object which is eternal, and yet, within time. Aesthetic passion is exclusively qualified by temporal expectation, as to whether its passing wishes are fulfilled or not. The love qualified by duty moves independently of time, since its object is not to »seek its own«, but simply to go on loving regardless of the outcome. The only transcendence of which the Christian is capable is that abiding love which moves »independently« of time:

> If love's expectation is able to make a man, essentially understood, weak, it must be because his expectation stands in a dependent relationship to time; so that time has the power to decide whether or not the expectation becomes fulfilled or not. That is to say, the expectation is principally a temporal expectation, but such an expectation the love which abides does not have. That an expectation is exclusively temporal makes for unrest in expectation. ... But the lover, who abides, has an eternal expectation, and this eternal gives proportion [*Ligeligheden*] in the unrest which in time swings between fulfillment and non-fulfillment, but independently of time, for the fulfillment is not at all made impossible because time has passed: this lover is not consumed.[26]

The final sentence of this citation reveals the function and role of love. In a sense the very problem posed for the existing individual is that time passes. Time passes and presents him with choices for good or ill, which have a decisive effect on the individual's relation to the good. It is in time that choices which are irreversible occur and which, as in the case of sin, prevent that assimilation of the good which the soul inwardly longs for. It is in the context of the impossibilities, the immoveable contours worked in time by the fleeting moments of a life, that love appears as the unique solution. It is in relation to the »possibility« of love that the unmoving past, the »necessity« in the self, can be brought to new life and a re-newed relation to the good.

But here we have gone far beyond the bounds of what is presented in the *Postscript*. It has been my task to show the inner connection between the concept of love and the concept of time in this work. Plato's Eros was shown to stand in an essential relation to the concept of recollection and to the idea that time is a »moving image« of an unmoving eternity. Though Climacus employs the Platonic metaphor to express his idea of

striving, he changes radically the content of the two elements, time and eternity, which are linked with this metaphor. He re-interprets passion or love in line with his new idea of temporality, which, as he claims, is entirely foreign to Plato. Kierkegaard's conception of the moment as an »intersection« of time and eternity gives the idea of passion in the *Postscript* its characteristic tension, and, finally, shows its alienness to the Platonic idea of Eros.[27]

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 85. *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Vaerker*, eds. A.B. Drachman, J.L. Heiberg, and H.O. Lange (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1901 ff.), Bd. 7, 73. Hereafter cited SV, followed by volume and page numbers.
2. Among the works that treat of Kierkegaard's relationship to Plato, the most outstanding are those of Johannes Sløk, especially *Kierkegaard – humanismens taenker* (København: Hans Reitzel, 1978) and *Die Anthropologie Kierkegaards* (København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1954). My interpretation is highly dependent on Sløk's profound reading of Kierkegaard.
3. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. W.R. Lamb (London: Heinemann, 1983), 211C.
4. »It is impossible to exist without passion, unless we understand the word »exist« in the loose sense of a so-called existence. Every Greek thinker was therefore essentially a passionate thinker.« *Postscript*, p. 276. SV 7, 267.
5. For a closer investigation of this question, see my article, »Kierkegaard's Use of Plato in his Analysis of the Moment in Time«, *Dionysius*, Vol. VII (Halifax: Dalhousie University Press), Dec. 1983, pp. 149-83.
6. *Postscript*, p. 182. SV 7, 170.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 183. SV 7, 171.
8. Cf. SV 4, 179-80.
9. »In spite of all that Hegel says about process, he does not understand history from the point of view of becoming, but with help of the illusion attaching to pastness understands it from the point of view of a finality that excludes all becoming.« This statement applies equally to Plato. *Postscript*, p. 272n. SV 7, 263n.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 184n. SV 7, 172n-73n.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 184. SV 7, 172.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 186. SV 7, 174.
13. For the distinction between Christian and Socratic ideas of sin, see *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), KW 19, 87-96. SV 11, 199-207.
14. *Postscript*, p. 186. SV 7, 174.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 187. SV 7, 175.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 189-90. SV 7, 177-78.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 506. SV 7, 497.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 316. SV 7, 307.
19. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), KW 8, 86n. This translation is volume 8 in the series *Kierkegaard's Writings* and will be henceforth referred to as KW, followed by volume and page number. This form of citation will be used for any other volumes of this series. SV 4, 356.
20. KW 8, 85. SV 4, 355.
21. KW 8, 86. SV 4, 356.
22. KW 8, 87. SV 4, 357.
23. KW 8, 87-88. SV 4, 357-58.
24. KW 8, 89. SV 4, 359.
25. *Postscript*, p. 176. SV 7, 164.
26. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 289-90. SV 9, 297.
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