

# Some Aspects of Time in Aristotle and Kierkegaard

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Kierkegaard's exposition of time and his philosophy of history represent a reckoning with a tradition that had begun with the Presocratics and which reached its culminating point in Hegel. The view of time passed down to Hegel via Medieval philosophy, Descartes, Spinoza and Kant is essentially rooted in the development it received at the hands of Aristotle. It might therefore be interesting to confront these two thinkers.

In dealing with Aristotle, we shall be interested primarily in the structure of the 'now' (*τὸ νῦν*) and in its relation to time and motion. We are fortunate enough to have at our disposal two excellent works by Jacques Marcel Dubois, O. P., upon which the immediately following will be leaning heavily.<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting that motion implies an interval, a magnitude (*μέγεθος*) and that magnitude is continuous, Aristotle concludes that also motion must be continuous, and since time is dependent upon motion, it too will be continuous (*Phys.* 219a10–13). He continues the analogy, arguing that as in extension we have a posterior-anterior,<sup>2</sup> so this must logically also hold true for motion, and if for motion, then for time (219a11–19). This analogy is in fact demonstrated by our very perception, for we indeed perceive movement and time together (219a3–4). But at this point a dichotomy arises: "Motion, then, is the objective seat [*ὁ ποτε ὄν*] of before-and-afterness both in movement and in time; but in essence [*τὸ μέντοι εἶναι αὐτῶ*] the before-and-afterness is distinguishable from movement."<sup>3</sup> As Dubois has pointed out,<sup>4</sup> this distinction is of vital

<sup>1</sup> *Le temps et l'instant selon Aristote*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967, and "Signification ontologique de la définition aristotélicienne du temps," *Revue thomiste*, 60, 1960; I, pp. 38–79, II, pp. 234–48.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Cat.*, 14a26–b24 on the five different uses of the term 'prior'. As to the equality of relationship between beings belonging to two different spheres (i. e. by analogy), see *Met.*, 1093b18.

<sup>3</sup> 219a19–22. Translations of Aristotle are by P. H. Wicksteed (Loeb Classical Library) unless otherwise indicated. The above translation has been modified by replacing "conceptually" by "in essence". Cf. Henri Carteron's translation in *Aristote. Physique*, I–II, Paris: "Les belles lettres," 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Le temps et l'instant*, pp. 169 ff.

importance to Aristotle's understanding of time and the 'now,' and it is one to which we shall be returning. He is here discriminating between the movement comprising potential anteriority-posteriority and a mental conception and determination of these constituents, quite in keeping with his own logical principles.<sup>5</sup>

This being so, we now require the middle term which will enable us to make that determination, thus using the mobile as an indicator of motion and hence of time, for only by determining a posterior-anterior can we be aware of a lapse of time. This intermediary would seem to consist in the determination by perception of an anterior-posterior in the movement, i. e. by a mental act performed by pronouncing the existence of two 'nows,' one antecedent and one subsequent (219a22–29; cf. 218b27–29): "for that which is determined either way by a 'now' seems to be what we mean by time" (219a29). Thus we obtain a dichotomy between the flux of the movement underlying the anterior-posterior and the essence of the anterior-posterior, which latter derive from their mental determination and differ from the movement.

At this point we shall direct our attention to the 'now' itself in its correlation with time, motion and the mobile. The first problem to be tackled concerns the structure of the 'now' itself and its identity.<sup>6</sup> The 'now' remains the same as to its object, i. e. with respect of its substratum, but in another sense, in essence or as definable, it is variable (219b10–34). Aristotle once more resorts to analogy, this time between point, mobile and 'now' and their functions in their respective areas. One must first correlate the point to the line, the mobile to movement and the 'now' to time,<sup>7</sup> from which relationships an analogy of dependence may be elicited. The mobile may be regarded as a pointer or indicator of motion (it alone being actual), and as such – i. e. as the self-same moving subject – it retains its identity as that one being, whereas in its process of change it differs.<sup>8</sup> The 'now' is related to time as the mobile to movement.

<sup>5</sup> "Moreover universal demonstration is intelligible, whereas particular demonstration terminates in sense perception." *An. Post.*, 86a29–30; cf. *Pap V C 11*<sub>3</sub>, SV VII (2 ed.), 31; *Phys.*, 254a20–30.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 218a8–10, where he poses the question but leaves it unanswered.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Dubois' schema, *Le temps et l'instant*, p. 178, bottom.

<sup>8</sup> "... as the Sophists distinguish between Coriscus in the Lyceum and Coriscus in the market-place" (219b21–22).

It is through the moving object, which is actual, that we are able to perceive an anterior-posterior in the movement, and it is by means of the countableness of these anteriors and posteriors that we are able to arrive at the 'now'.

Now time is a measure of motion (*κινήσεως*) and of the present actuality of that motion, of its actually taking place (*κινεῖσθαι*). A *κίνησις* is here<sup>9</sup> regarded in the general or universal sense of movement. This *κίνησις* itself abides in its own *κινεῖσθαι*, i. e. in the actual exercise of its motion. The essence of a movement can only exist in its actualization, which is simply the fact of its transpiring. In measuring motion it is accordingly the act of moving that is primarily measured, for it is first and foremost this fluid act or phenomenal motion that furnishes a point of departure for perception and permits measurement. Thus while the mobile is of course essentially distinct from its-being-in-motion, yet this *κινεῖσθαι* is the intermediary term linking the *κίνησις* and the measurer. Hence it is by means of the *κινεῖσθαι* that the motion may be numbered and the mind is able to seize upon the motion itself, and via the motion the being in its motion. It is therefore at this point that being and essence converge and, by extrapolation, that we may form our categories.

Further, this will imply that to be in time (221a8; *τὸ ἐν χρόνῳ εἶναι*) means that a thing is (in the act of) existing (cf. 221a9–26) – whereby it is measured by time.

The actual mobile therefore provides a basis for cognition. Moreover, it is in view of the attributes of the 'now' or the predications that can be made of it that it is incessantly changing and different, which aspects must be considered as accidental in respect of its being. However, in its function of marking or numbering by always constituting the present from which a point of departure may be made, it remains the same. As in motion the mobile alone is a real thing, so the 'now' is the only actuality of time, even though substantial being of course cannot be ascribed to it.

Conversely, the 'now' is grounded in the actuality of the mobile by the

<sup>9</sup> 220b32–221a9. Cf. Carteron's translation of this difficult passage. Kierkegaard was familiar with this entire dialectic via Trendelenburg as well as from Hegel. Cf. Pap. V C 1; VII<sup>2</sup> C 1, and Kierkegaard's references to Trendelenburg's *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*, Berlin, 1846 (Ktl. 848); Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, I–III, tr. E. S. Haldane, New York: The Humanities Press, 1963, II, pp. 163 ff. See Hermann Diem's *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence*, tr. Harold Knight, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959, pp. 34 ff.

latter's very presence in a 'now.' "For the number of the locomotion is time, while the 'now' corresponds to the moving body and is like the unit of number [*μὴνὰς ἀριθμοῦ*]." <sup>10</sup> So, "les divers présents du mobile divisent le temps, et le mobile en tant qu'il se trouve en l'un de ces présents peut servir d'unité pour la mesure du temps, nombre du mouvement." <sup>11</sup> And, given this interrelationship of movement and time and of their numerators, then "neither would time be if there were no 'now,' nor would 'now' be if there were no time." (219b33–220a1).

To complete the analogy, as our perception of change proceeds from the mobile, so the actual 'now,' by providing a point of reference, furnishes a starting-point for the apprehension of time. This occurs when the mind applies the 'now' of the mobile to the flux of time. The mobile and the 'now' are, each in its own way, principles of determination.

The next *aporia* to be considered is time and its function of measurement. Here Aristotle employs the unit or number as an analogical means of explication, for it is only by measuring or calculating motion by distinguishing between before and after that there can be talk of time. Hence the well known definition: time is the "number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after'." <sup>12</sup> Time is the scale or number by which we estimate motion. Here, it becomes necessary to distinguish between concrete and abstract numbers. In this connection, time is the concrete, counted aspect which measures motion by means of a defined expanse. This aspect emerges upon application to the flux of a 'now' employed as an abstract number that will enumerate, thereby yielding a definite expanse of time (219b4–9; 220b8–10). <sup>13</sup> In the case of an abstract number (a unit of number having of itself no relation to a thing or things) there exists a self-identity in that here we are dealing with a universal. <sup>14</sup> Therefore the 'now' is indivisible, whereas time is potentially divisible without end (220a27–32).

<sup>10</sup> 220a3–4; translation by Ross.

<sup>11</sup> A. J. Festugière, O. P.; "Le temps et l'âme selon Aristote," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 23, 1934, pp. 21–22. Cf. H. Carteron; »Remarques sur la notion de temps d'après Aristote," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 98, 1924, 70–71, 77–78, and Dubois, "Signification ontologique," pp. 242 f. See *Met.*, 1052b15 sqq. on measure (*μέτρον*) and unit.

<sup>12</sup> 219b2–3; translation by Ross.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Carteron, *op. cit.*, pp. 68 f.

<sup>14</sup> 219b6; cf. *Met.*, 1088a6; 1052b15 ff.

"So, too, time owes its continuity to the 'now' and yet is divided by reference to it" (220a5). The aporia in these two parallel passages (220a5–24 and 222a10–20) turns on preserving the continuity of time without losing sight of the reality of the 'now' in its various functions. Aristotle proceeds by analyzing the structure of the 'now' at two different levels. Like the point it unites and divides, though with the difference that the point may be arrested so as to give it a double aspect; for the point and the segments of a line are static, whereas the flux of time is not. The point is communal to two actual coexisting parts while dividing these parts in act. As mentioned above, the 'now' is in one respect self-identical in virtue of its foundation upon the identical, uniform motion of a mobile, while yet differing by marking perpetually differing positions (220a14). Its identity as a number or as a term in a synthesis, two of whose moments are non-existent (the anterior and posterior), is retained at the mental or potential level, thereby assuring the continuity of time. "Il [the 'now'] est unique de sujet et d'essence (222a17; cf. 431a22–23), en tant qu'il est la commune et indivisible limite du passé et de l'avenir, communauté qui fait la continuité de l'un à l'autre."<sup>15</sup> At the substantial level the functions of unification (*ἔνωσις*) and division (*διαίρεσις*) merge (222a19–20). Thus considered as a *term* or link, as the "coincident end-term and beginning-term of past and future time" (222a19–20; cf. 234a3–24), it assures the reality of time. While not a *part* of time, it nevertheless may be considered as being *in* time.

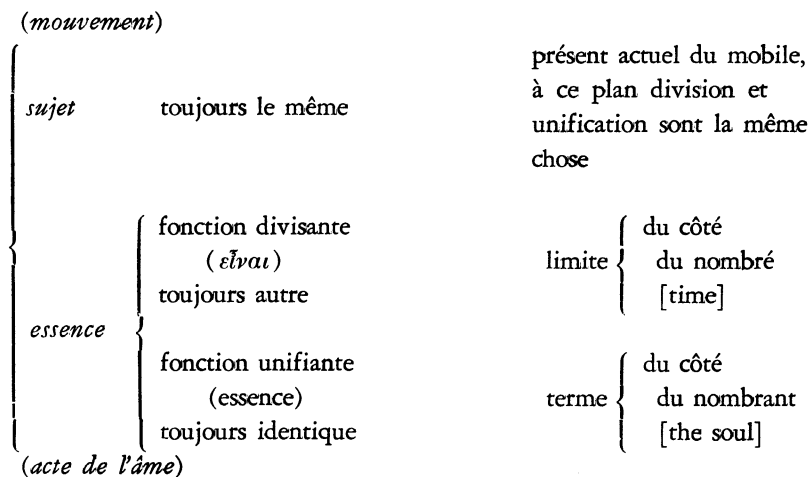
While, as observed above, the point divides in act (220a15–17; 222a15–18), the 'now' does so only potentially, the anterior and posterior having no actual existence; the one has been, the other is not yet. Consequently, at this level, the mental or essential, there emerges a definite disjunction between the two functions. In representation the 'now' assumes a dual aspect as the end of the past and the beginning of the future, but since this is a mental reconstruction or totalization,<sup>16</sup> the division of time so ensuing from this application of the 'now' as unit of number to the flux of time (222a14) is potential. The past and future are present to the mind only, in representation; only the present 'now' has actuality. The anterior-posterior is at this niveau absorbed into

<sup>15</sup> Carteron, *op. cit.*, p. 72; cf. p. 73.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

the present 'now'; accordingly, "at is through the 'now' that time is continuous [*συνέχεια*]" (222a10; cf. 222a21–24).

The 'now' is thus the third term of a synthesis in which it both posits and unites the other two contrasting moments.<sup>17</sup> Aristotle then concludes: »So the 'now' also is in one way a potential dividing of time [*χρόνον διαίρεισις κατὰ δύναμιν*], in another the termination [or limit, *πέρας*] of both parts, and their unity. And the dividing and the uniting are in the same thing and in the same reference."<sup>18</sup> We can perhaps summarize the structural characteristics of the 'now' by borrowing Dubois' excellent diagram.<sup>19</sup>



This brings us to the relation of mind to time, in which connection Aristotle once again resorts to numbers. If there were nothing to count (*ἀριθμήσοντος*), nothing could be counted (*ἀριθμητόν*); for a number is what has been counted (*ἀριθμημένον* or what is countable (*ἀριθμητόν*). "But if nothing but soul [*ψυχή*], or in soul reason [*νοῦς*], is qualified to count, there would be no time unless there were soul, but only that of which time were an attribute, i. e. if *mouvement* can exist without soul, and the before and after are attributes

<sup>17</sup> Cf. SV IV, 391.

<sup>18</sup> 222a18–20; translation by Ross.

<sup>19</sup> *Le Temps et l'instant*, p. 241. On the 'now' as "limite et terme" see pp. 185–97, 235–43 and 311–13, and the same author's article cited above, pp. 234–48. Compare this diagram with Arild Christensen's in "Om Søren Kierkegaards Inddelingsprincip," *Kierkegaardiana*, III, 1959, p. 34. What the author designates as "(Uegentligt Øjeblik)" is in Kierkegaard's terminology "Momentet".

of movement, and time is these *qua* numerable.”<sup>20</sup> If time is considered as numbered motion, then it will depend upon an agent capable of performing this function; this agent is the soul (or consciousness), and time is in this case the outcome of the application of the ‘now’ by the soul. Time, then, must in some manner exist independently of the soul in a potentiality of being numbered, i. e. of being enumerated so as to discern past and future (223a28). In its potency, the measurement of motion depends upon the soul’s possibility of measuring; in its being as determined, i. e. as time, the numbered motion depends on the act of the enumerating soul.

Let us now turn our attention to Kierkegaard. In his *Parmenides*,<sup>21</sup> Plato had encountered difficulty in determining the point at which a transition occurs between, e. g., ‘was’ and ‘will be,’ and plurality and unity. Between past and future he posited a ‘now’ which, though not a part of time, yet is temporally determined. It “is a singular nature, which we call the moment, placed between rest and motion, and which is not in any time, and into this and out of this that which is in motion changes into rest, and that which is at rest into motion.”<sup>22</sup> At this point, what suffers change suddenly *is* in its subsequent state. Plato is unable to determine this ‘now’ more closely (cf. SV IV, 390 note), but it provides a point of departure for Kierkegaard’s reflections, whose aim is to furnish the interconnections lacking in Plato’s thought.

As usual, Kierkegaard proceeds from his conception of a human being, this time as a trilogy composed of three moments, the temporal, the eternal and a third still to be determined (SV IV, 391).

He then considers time itself as consisting of an infinite succession of progressive moments. In tackling the problem of the division of time into past, present and future, he first eliminates some untenable positions:<sup>23</sup> the abstraction of a moment whereby it is “spatialized” and time brought to a standstill; the present as the concept of time, where as an abstraction the past, present and

<sup>20</sup> 223a25–29; translation by Ross.

<sup>21</sup> Esp. 151E–157C; cf. SV IV, 388 ff. (references to Kierkegaard’s works are to the second edition of the collected works in Danish; all translations are my own).

<sup>22</sup> *Parm.*, 156C–D; translation by Jowett.

<sup>23</sup> SV IV, 392; there being no italicized letters in the Gothic script of Kierkegaard’s time, emphasis was made by literally spacing the letters, which in the present instance serves as an excellent illustration.

future are identical; the eternal as the present pure and simple, i. e. as **thought**, in which case there is no time at all, "because the present is posited as the abrogated succession" (ib., 393).

Yet the eternal is the present. If the instant (*øjeblikket*) as the eternal is to be employed to determine time, it will not suffice that the eternal *be*, for then the distinction between past and present would – as abstract – disappear. On the other hand the instant cannot determine time if it is itself merely a determinant of time, since it then would be unable to grasp the future until it was already past. But if the eternal is considered as concretely present in a point of time, then we have the instant, where time "is constantly cutting off [*afskærer*] eternity," thus giving us the division of past present and future; and where "eternity is constantly permeating time," so that the present receives its significance. Only the present is actual, as it constitutes the subject's (the "mobile's") actuality; the past and future are present as possibles to be actualized. Thus in the synthesis past – present – future the intermediate and binding term will be the present as the moment (*momentet*) or the instant (*øjeblikket*), all depending upon in which sphere application is made.

In both instances another trilogy will have been posited, that of the individual as consisting of temporality and eternity, but there is a radical difference here between the moment and the instant. If the latter fails of appearance the individual will be left stuck in the moment. In the instant, when by a self-relating directed toward the eternal within him the individual "chooses himself," the eternal is present (*er til, nær-værende*) concretely, and the self is posited. If, by contrast, the eternal merely *is*, or is not (for the individual), then we have a life in the moment. With the instant begin internal time and history; the moment corresponds to exterior time and history, and may be justified as an expression or manifestation of interior time, but of itself it is unessential and merely a quantitative factor.<sup>24</sup> Nature is also in the moment, its history being spacially determined. And since philosophy has to do only with the exterior, it

<sup>24</sup> SV II, 145, 187 f. Examples abound in the autorship, but the following is perhaps the best (SV I, 180): "One would have to regard these pictures [a series of pictures depicting sorrow] just as one does the second-hand of a clock; one does not see the works, but the inner movement is constantly manifesting itself by the fact that the exterior is constantly being changed." Such would be the case if outer and inner were absolutely commensurate. However, the moment may indeed be permitted to absent itself.



too appertains to the moment. For the individual in the moment, the eternal and his self represent possibilities that have not been actualized; strictly speaking, he has no actuality.

But let us see how Aristotle's measure and end may be applied to Kierkegaard, and where continuity plays its part.

It must first of all be recollected that the 'mobile' is here the individual, and that the motion consists in an act of will culminating in a leap whereby something qualitatively new emerges, or should emerge. "Now motion is not just dialectical in the direction of space . . . but it is also dialectical in the direction of time. The dialectic is the same in both directions, for the point and the instant correspond to each other" (Pap. IV B 117, p. 289). Climacus writes in the *Postscript* (SV VII, 69 f.) that reality (*tilværelsen*), existence (*eksistens*), is always involved in a becoming, that it is always in motion. Thus, as long as one is in existence he will be in motion and consequently in time.

But what is constantly in motion cannot in itself be a point of departure for cognition, for the very process of change which it is undergoing will prevent sure knowledge. Only the eternal – which is in the subject and thereby in existence (*tilværelsen*) – can yield certainty. Further, he notes that: "The immovable belongs to movement as the end [*Maal*] of movement, in the sense both of *τέλος* and *μέτρον*; otherwise the fact that everything is in motion, if one were also to eliminate time and say that everything is always in motion, is *eo ipso* a state of rest." He thereupon adds that Aristotle says "that God, Himself unmoved, moves all." (SV VII, 299; cf. 422 note).

If the individual elects to remain in the moment, thereby "relating himself absolutely to relative ends," then evidently his end will be something external. But everything relative is always undergoing some change, and because there must be a fixed point if there is to be essential knowledge, the only measurement which will be available to him will be fraught with arbitrariness and uncertainty. Viewed essentially, anyone living in the aesthetic has neither end nor measure. However, there will nevertheless be a sort of end or measure. The aesthete is of course capable of experiencing and of employing this as a measure and goal. At the most, the individual whose values are temporal has only an experience of these self-same values as a guide. Using this experience, he measures out (*udmaaler*) the particularities of life, determining the length

of the way and time, and the effort and perseverance required to achieve his end (SV IV, 165 f.). The gradations of the standards applied in life are poetically depicted by Anti-Climacus (SV XI, 215 f.): "A herdsman who (if this were possible) is a self directly opposite cows is a very low self; a ruler who is a self directly opposite slaves, likewise, and strictly speaking he is no self – for in both cases the measure is lacking. The child who heretofore has merely had its parents' measure, as a man becomes a self by obtaining the state as a measure." He then gives a definition of measure (*Maalestokken*): "The measure for the self is always: that directly opposite which it is a self." (Ibid.) "Qualitatively, the self is what its measure is." (ib., 253).

It will readily be perceived that in the case of the moment there exists a definite parallel to Aristotle's 'now.' In essence it is forever changing, because the relativities the aesthete selects are themselves in process of change, and hence the ends and measures are forever changing. Viewed essentially in its qualitative difference from the instant, it of course always remains the same.

If the choice made has been the self in its concretion, which means that the instant has come to be and the eternal has paradoxically come into existence, the measure and end will have taken on another aspect; for they will consist in the ethical ideal. In this case the individual's teleology resides within him, which means, first, that both *τέλος* and *μέτρον* inhere in the repetition and decision (SV VII, 300) whereby the individual "relates himself to himself," using his knowledge of himself (his essence) and of the ethical as a point of departure and measure for that self-relation. This is his ethical contemporaneity with himself in the present. But that self must be "transparent" (SV XI, 145), i. e. the power which has created it as a possibility (the coming-into-existence within a coming-into-existence) must be present concretely in the eternal consciousness. For this there is required passion. Passion is an act of will; the highest expression or manifestation of the will (*en Villiens-Yttring*) occurs in the instant when the new quality, faith, makes its appearance. The measure applied will now be the eternal, and he will be partaking of "absolute time." An end entails movement in oneself, an act of freedom which has its own teleology, for the self is its own end (SV II, 296); "the highest *telos* must be willed for its own sake" (SV VII, 383).

Kierkegaard distinguishes sharply between two aspects of the eternal (Pap.

VII<sup>1</sup> A 139):<sup>25</sup> "Immanently (in the fantastic medium of abstraction), God is not *present* [er ... ikke *til*], He is – only for an existing individual is God present, i. e. He can be *present* [*være til*] in faith." At this stage, the individual acquires an entirely new measure, God Himself. "This self is no longer a mere human self, but is what I would call, hoping not to be misunderstood, the theological self. And what an infinite reality [*Realitet*] does this self not acquire by being conscious of being present [*være til*] before God, by becoming a human self whose measure [*Målestok*] is God!" (SV XI, 215). However, if the end and measure applicable in the world of spirit were entirely attainable in temporal existence, we would no longer be concerned with a human being, but pure spirit. Since we measure by something that is qualitatively homogeneous to what we are measuring, the measure used will define the motion and the object, and consequently the time. In the ethical sphere, the measure (*målestokken*) is the end (*målet*) of that motion. But in the world of freedom (spirit) there subsists a qualitative difference between the measure and the subject, which "disqualification" indicates that the individual is himself guilty (by sin) of having posited that disproportion. The measure and end remain constant; it is the individual who must undergo change, and this striving continues as long as he exists.<sup>26</sup>

As terms of a synthesis both the moment and the instant also afford continuity. Kierkegaard considers continuity in much the same manner as Aristotle, i. e. as a succession wherein the parts of the continuum coincide in a third term, thus in contrast to contiguity where the parts are merely adjacent.<sup>27</sup> In the continuity the whole becomes one. For there to be a true continuity, the separate terms must of course be homologous. The most perfect continuity is accordingly

<sup>25</sup> In *Søren Kierkegaards Historiefilosofi* (Copenhagen, 1952) Søren Holm has likened Søren Kierkegaard's concept of the eternal to Plato's (pp. 21, 27, 29), maintaining that according to Kierkegaard the eternal simply *is*. He has not taken into account the fact that for the individual as well as in that historic event of 1970 years ago it also obtains that God *er til*. Kierkegaard's history of philosophy is based on the individual's relation to time. A whole series of parallels appear in his dialectic. To mention but a few, the individual's history as a natural being and his outer and inner histories (SV II, 146 f.) correspond respectively to the history of nature and history to the first and second powers (SV IV, 278 f.); the trilogies body – soul and spirit, and temporality – eternity and the instant, are more concrete examples of actuality as composed of possibility and necessity.

<sup>26</sup> SV XI, 216 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Phys.*, esp. 227a9–18. Kierkegaard was also acquainted with Leibnitz' *enchainement* (Pap. IV C 29).

the eternal viewed from the vantage-point of eternity, where everything is. Even though there does exist a dialectical leap, the "*Sammenkædning*" of ideas within a conceptually constructed system nevertheless affords a continuity. There can also be continuity in motion, but this immediately brings us into difficulties.

Since the individual is himself existing and situated in existence, he will never be able to attain an absolute continuity, existence being the factor that separates thought and being (cf., e. g., SV VII, 250 f.). Here the elements present are not of the same nature, and no existing individual can exist "*sub specie aeternitatis*." Once more it will be the eternal as concretely present in the instant that provides continuity, i. e. in the maximum of passion, in the transition or act of will underlying the 'sudden' break-through of the new quality in the leap.<sup>28</sup> But this, "passion's anticipation of the eternal," is merely "the possibility of the only true [continuity]" the existing individual can entertain (SV VII, 300). Life, Kierkegaard insists, advances "piecemeal," "by moments." "The first expression of coming-into-existence is precisely the interruption of continuity." (SV IV, 275). An unbroken continuity throughout life would signify that no qualitative change had ever occurred in the individual. In Kierkegaard's dialectic, a transcendence lies between the posterior-anterior, at which point one is absolutely isolated and heterogeneous from the environment.

In the moment as the third term holding past and future together, one has possibilities of establishing a continuity, all depending upon one's relation to the content of the three terms. Temporally, the individual's life subsists in a continuous succession of moments, all of which possess the same relative, quantitative significance. Past, future and present lose all qualitative import (SV II, 154; IV, 397; X, 121 f.); or, there may remain merely an invalid continuity of idea-association (SV I, 122). Since aesthetics consists basically of moods, which cannot be incorporated into a continuity (SV II, 248), he is in time only in a figurative sense — but this is precisely to succumb to temporality. Viewed essentially, the aesthete does not act and knows nothing of a transcendence; consequently he is in a quantitative continuity with his environment, whereby he turns the content of his life into a series of "abrogated [*ophævede*]

<sup>28</sup> Cf. SV VII, 299 sqq.; SV IV 275 f.

moments,' and life into an empty fuss [*Ophævelse*]" (SV X, 69). The aesthete or philosopher is living in a "discursive moment" which may be subjected to mediation<sup>29</sup> and directly assimilated into world-history, it being a moment left behind which has no essential significance for life (SV II, 140). The aesthete is in fact "killing time" (SV II, 151), since his life is compressed into moments of enjoyment; to the aesthete only the moment has validity. In so acting, he loses his essential continuity, as he conceals himself in the moment. All aesthetic enjoyment takes place in the moment.<sup>30</sup>

The continuity possible to the ethical individual inheres in his resolve (*Beslutning*) and resolution (*Forsæt*) expressed in repetition, whereby in virtue of the eternal concretely present in him in the form of the ethical ideal he determines himself in continuity with finitude (SV II, 259 f.). This continuity can be preserved only by reduplication. At the same time he is in continuity with himself according to his content or essence (ib., 271 ff.), for a continuity always proceeds from a determined a priori, in this case the self that he has posited. Ethical continuity is a metamorphosis leading toward a "direct perfectibility" (SV X, 389).

But in Religion B the individual must break off all continuity in order to establish another based on faith. "The god" has entered into existence in a moment of time (*et Tidsmoment*), whereby the instant has come to be. The relationship of faith to this event requires the renunciation of every immanent determinant of the eternal and the intervention of a miracle (the occasion whereby he becomes a new creature). From this point on he can establish a new continuity, that of spirit or of faith (cf. SV VII, 561 sqq.). Now it is that the repetition is of faith where "each change is made dialectical in relation to the

<sup>29</sup> SV II, 187 f. The 'moment' plays another important rôle in Kierkegaard's dialectic, i. e. as a factor or term in a trilogy. But these trilogies are not simply static syntheses; the terms are *forces*. He is apparently considering the word 'moment' by reference to its Latin etymology, as deriving from *movere* (SV IV, 394). Kierkegaard may well have this usage from Hegel's *Science of Logic* (tr. by Johnston and Struthers, New York: Macmillan, 1961, Vol. I, pp. 72, 120). Hegel has in turn appropriated the word from mechanics, and in his method uses it in the sense of a momentum. See *The Philosophy of History*, tr. by J. Sibree, New York: Dover Publications, 1956, pp. iv-v, and Vernard Eller, *Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. SV II, 140-54, 180-88, 248 f., 261 ff.; VI, 93, 443; XIII, 325, 335 - to mention but a few examples of this use of the moment.

preceding one" (Pap. VII<sup>2</sup> B 235, p. 175). This is spiritual continuity, the highest possible for an existing subject.

Where Aristotle resorts to numbers and quantities in his exposition, Kierkegaard – who reproaches Trendelenburg for this same manner of proceeding<sup>31</sup> – is interested only in the values produced by the dynamics of subjective, qualitative changes. Kierkegaard's *Nu* as the *Øjeblik*, an indivisible atom of eternity in time, divides in act since in this case the anterior-posterior, though being a possible, is given the status of actuality by being appropriated as constituting an actual obligation. In this way, the 'now' does not simply measure quantitatively or furnish a pure continuity. Rather, it assigns a definite set of measures and ends which are to be applied, and consequently it qualifies both time and motion, and therefore existence. The moment, on the other hand, would be more in keeping with Aristotle's 'now.' Indeed, Kierkegaard would agree that in this case time is simply destructive,<sup>32</sup> since merely to be "killing time" can only signify spiritual death.

The instant, then, embodies paradoxical elements foreign and unacceptable to Greek thought. It contains a duplicity in combining two mutually incommensurate times: absolute and historic time, an expression of the circumstance that the eternal *is* and yet is present.<sup>33</sup> The act of Christian faith therefore represents a movement from one sphere to another.<sup>34</sup>

As to Dubois' question of whether Aristotle's concept of time represents "une saisie existentielle,"<sup>35</sup> it must be admitted that indeed some of the requisite elements certainly are present. But the important ones (even from a pagan standpoint), the sharp distinction between the objective and the subjective in terms of a voluntary act, are lacking to Aristotle. The will<sup>36</sup> is objective in that

<sup>31</sup> Pap. V C 12.

<sup>32</sup> 221b2–3: "for we regard time in itself as destroying rather than producing."

<sup>33</sup> Cf. 218a23–30 and 223b2 ff. where Aristotle denies the possibility of there being two times.

<sup>34</sup> SV XII, 44 f.; *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. Cf. *Prior Analytics*, 75b38–39.

<sup>35</sup> *Le temps et l'instant*, p. 337. The author gives an affirmative reply, but by referring to Jean-Paul Sartre's "conscience (de) soi." This we shall leave out of account here, for it is certainly not existential in Kierkegaard's understanding of the word.

<sup>36</sup> *Βέλησις* or *προαίρεσις*. Cf. P. M. Møller, *Poul Martin Møllers Efterladte Skrifter*, 2. ed., 3 vols., Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1848, (Ktl. 1574–76), II<sup>4</sup>, pp. 236 f. A proper commentary on this aspect would involve an analysis of Aristotle's psychology, which lies beyond the scope of the present essay.

to Aristotle a 'subjective' act is the act of intellection without regard to the thinking subject: i. e., it is objective by Kierkegaard's standards. Aristotle's 'now' does seem to assume a forward orientation (*Phys.*, 263b9sq.), but unfortunately this interesting aspect is not placed into relation to the structure of the 'now,' let alone to the individual. Thus we would have to agree with Haufniensis when he maintains that: "If the instant is not posited the eternal emerges from behind as the past" (SV IV, 396). It is worth noting that history does not play any rôle in Greek thought, either as regards the individual or the race (apart from mythology).

Kierkegaard's reckoning is not primarily with Aristotle's concept of time (whom he never mentions in this connection), but with an entire tradition, and principally with its modern spokesman, Hegel. His knowledge of Aristotle's concept of time would – on the face of it – seem to be indirect, even though it does seem improbable that he would have depended solely upon secondary sources for material concerning concepts of such importance to him as time and motion.<sup>37</sup> He owned Aristotle's *Opera* plus a long list<sup>38</sup> of single works by Aristotle and various commentaries, but nowhere in the *Journals and Papers* or in the works does he mention the *Physics*.

<sup>37</sup> Cf., e. g.: Gregor Malantschuk, *Dialektik og Eksistens hos Søren Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1968, 46 f., 72, 129 ff., and Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaards Forhold til Hegel*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1967, p. 244.

<sup>38</sup> See *Søren Kierkegaards Bibliotek*, ed. by Søren Kierkegaard Selskabet with Introduction by Niels Thulstrup, Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957, the following catalogue numbers: 1056–97, 815–26, 913–14.

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