

Fear and Trembling: Abraham and the subjective character.

*Preface,
Exordiums I-III,
Eulogy on Abraham*

Indirect Communication

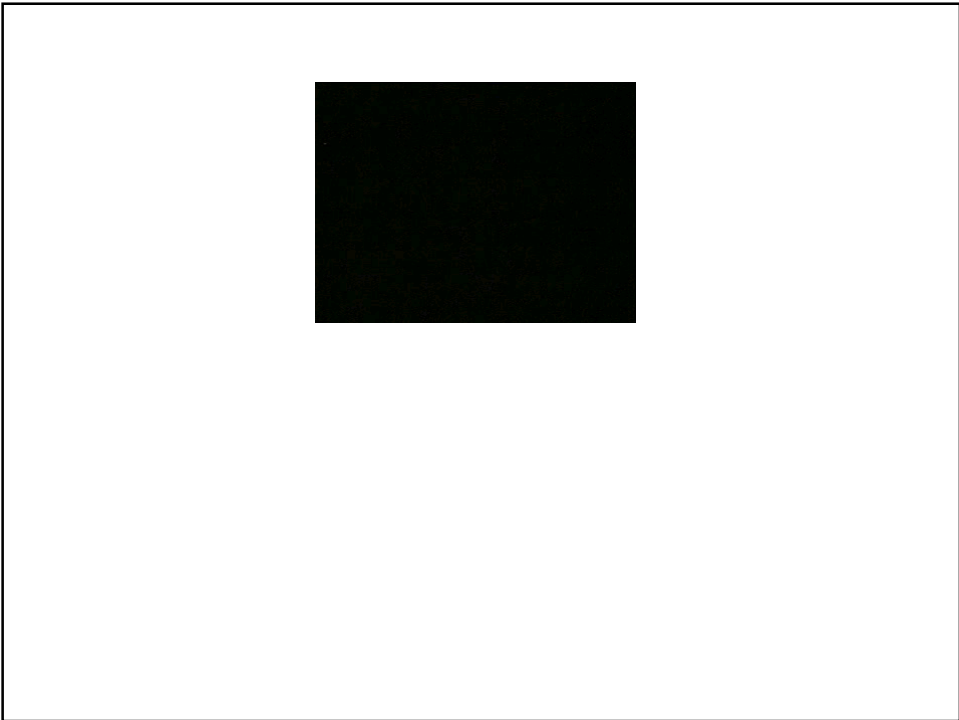
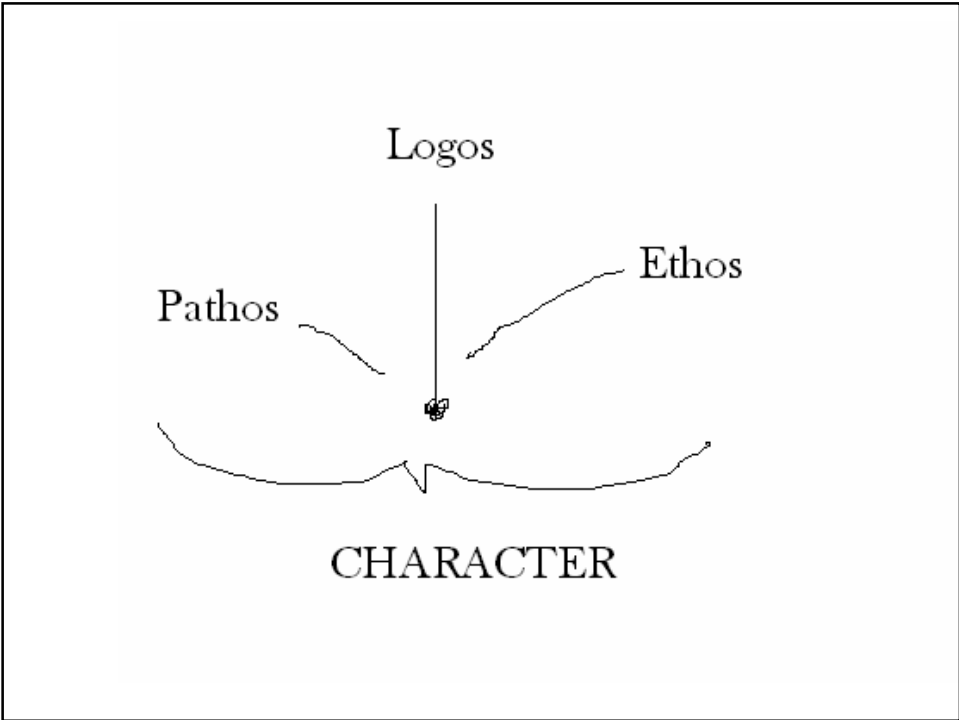
- The epigram: town destroyed, son sends messenger to father, father gives a coded gesture as an answer (communication *via* another means – both gesture and messenger) : the message? Cut of the tallest heads (those in charge? The elders of the conquered town?)
- Indirect communication as a strategy to promote *reduplication* – a form of pedagogy, a method to achieve results.
- Principal means throughout Kierkegaard's work is through the use of *characters*, various authors (see handout from Croxall on Kierkegaard's 'marionette theatre').
- Deleuze talks of Kierkegaard – a new form of philosophical expression related to *theatre* – 'immediate acts' and 'direct signs'

find the immediate identity of the eternal return and the Overman.

We are not suggesting any resemblance whatsoever between Nietzsche's Dionysus and Kierkegaard's God. On the contrary, we believe that the difference is insurmountable. But this is all the more reason to ask why their coincidence concerning this fundamental objective, the theme of repetition, even though they understand this objective differently? Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are among those who bring to philosophy new means of expression. In relation to them we speak readily of an overcoming of philosophy. Furthermore, in all their work, *movement* is at issue. Their objection to Hegel is that he does not go beyond false movement – in other words, the abstract logical movement of 'mediation'. They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. This is the idea of a man of the theatre, the idea of a director before his time. In this sense, something completely new begins with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They no longer reflect on the theatre in the Hegelian manner. Neither do they set up a philosophical theatre. They invent an incredible equivalent of theatre within philosophy, thereby founding simultaneously this theatre of the future and a new philosophy. It will be said that, at least from the point of view of theatre, there was no production: neither the profession of priest and Copenhagen around 1840, nor the break with Wagner and Bayreuth, was a favourable condition. One thing, however, is certain: when Kierkegaard speaks of ancient theatre and

Indirect communication

- Direct signs – but indirect communication?
 - Immediate acts – but an indirect act?
 - Affective – emotion (not simply *emotive*) added to reason – a rounded communication (remember – the *heart*)
 - PASSION – communicate a passion and do so with (*via*, by *means of*) passion
 - Against – why not be clear and distinct (clarity) – clear propositions...
 - In favour – in fact a *better* form of communication since not *mediated by language* by (as Deleuze suggests) 'direct signs' and 'immediate acts'
 - The text intends to *do things with words* via *imagery*, *irony*, '*pathos*' (*passion*) but also '*ethos*' (*character*)
1. Pathos – sentimentality, passion - ie adverts that appeal to emotion
 2. Ethos – character of author, company etc – ie adverts which appeal to the 'quality' of the company
 3. Logos – traditional use of 'objective' reason (the logos is both the root of 'logic' but also 'discourse', talk, reasonable conversation etc)



Reading the text - Preface

- The epigram (already noted)
- Preface: Doubt and Faith – Descartes, doubt but *reliance on God* as honest (having faith in) – Greeks: a whole lifetime to learn “*proficiency in doubting*” – we all nowadays begin as if we’ve got enough doubt, we’re sceptical of faith, of superstition – but Kierkegaard (Johannes De Silentio) wants to maintain a critical attitude *and* not throw out faith (**doubt our doubt**). Balance (hence the whole lifetime...)
- *Trope* – “*with that everyone begins in our age*” – begin with the doubt, as though easy
- **BUT** point of doubt was to secure firm foundations of belief – the problem is not having enough doubt but establishing a “*proficiency in believing*”
- Goes on to make a point about how to read him – not being a system but not to just ‘cut him up’ (extract sayings, epigrams – the movement of the whole is vital – imagine scenes cut out of plays and the problem)

Reading the text - Exordium

- Exordium – def. beginning/intro, of a speech (rhetoric)
- The fact of the story (facts/story) – “*Once upon a time...*” – Hans Christian Anderson contemporary (‘Princess and Pea’ 1835 – ‘F&T’ and ‘Repetition’, 1843).
- Story of Abraham – from Genesis, 21/22

Chapter Twenty-Two

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I.

- 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.
- 3 And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.
- 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.
- 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you.
- 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together.
- 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?
- 8 And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son: so they went both of them together.
- 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.
- 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
- 11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.
- 12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.
- 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.
- 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.
- 15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven,
- 16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:
- 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;
- 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice.

NOTE: shortness of story in Bible, minimal facts – the *extrapolation* made by Kierkegaard as a *poetic re/construction*

Reading the text - Exordium

- Key quote: “His wish was *to be present* in that hour when Abraham raised his eyes and saw Mount Moriah in the distance, the hour when he left the asses behind and went up the mountain alone with Isaac – for what occupied him was *not the beautiful tapestry of imagination but the shudder of an idea*”
- The act is still only an idea for Abraham (in that hour) – but the idea can live first in the imagination (ideal) before becoming part of actuality (in that hour) – at which point it gathers the its power – ability to cause the ‘shudder’
- Can’t be in the same place...but can share an idea...yet the *shuddering idea* needs *more than* mere imagination (ideality) it also needs experience (actuality) – ethos/pathos/logos – who / shudder / idea – *repeat the idea means repeating not just the logos but reduplicating the ethos/pathos/logos*

Reading the text - Exordium

- 'He' not 'I' - an author's story, authorial presence – allow character through, not opinion of character – child hearing story, story next (Ex.I, II, III) and 'you' hearing it with the pathos of the child, getting into it, empathic shift
- Exordium 1 – clearer – the 'Outline' uses the phrase 'I imagine...' which is then replaced by factual authorial objectivity – 'It was early in the morning...' – Kierkegaard imaginatively constructs the scene, first to himself and then shifts this construction in the final draft towards a less 'personal' perspective.
- Imaginary construction – *experiment a character* – note; no *on* or *with* – more later.
- RECAP: The Exordiums, introduction of the character that is to be the focus...Abraham...for the philosophical issue of doubt and faith (preface)

Reading the text - Eulogy

- Preface – introduce ideas (logos), Exordium – Introduce character (ethos)
- Eulogy - Introduce Passion (pathos) – the Hero, the Poet – note: a eulogy, a memorial, tribute
- The Poet tells stories of the Hero to glorify not in a negative sycophantic way but to *reduplicate*
- Use of greater rhetorical flourish – polemical tone from the preface now in full flow (see paragraph two and the 'greatest of all' trope)
- Memory – the poet *memorialises* and through so doing *saves the Hero for history*

Experiment a character

- Make them (actual, real, alive)
- John Ruskin – “*A poet, or creator, is therefore a person who puts things together, not as a watchmaker steel, or a shoemaker leather, but **who puts life into them.***”
- Reason – puts hypotheses – builds evidence (empirical or rational) – but the evidence is for or against – the hypothesis is still a hypothesis (just believed or not)
- Ideal actuality rather than ‘idle hypothesis’ in poet’s work – a character is a possible, like the hypothesis, but a possibility with ‘flesh’ (alive)
- Makes the hypothesis into a possible *experience* – *making experiences* – *having an effect* –
- **Character is a difference that makes a difference**

Recap

- Character – ethos/logos/pathos
- Indirect communication – direct signs (affect)
- ‘Experiment a character’