# The Leaden Echo

## Albert Camus & Søren Kierkegaard

## On Despair

By Erin Michelle Julian

Gutenberg College

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Advisor: Timothy McIntosh

How to kéep—is there any ány, is there none such, nowhere known
some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce, latch or catch or
key to keep
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, … from vanishing
away?
Ó is there no frowning of these wrinkles, rankéd wrinkles deep,
Dówn? no waving off of these most mournful messengers, still
messengers, sad and stealing messengers of grey?—
No there's none, there's none, O no there's none,
Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair,
Do what you may do, what, do what you may,
And wisdom is early to despair:
Be beginning; since, no, nothing can be done
To keep at bay
Age and age's evils, hoar hair,
Ruck and wrinkle, drooping, dying, death's worst, winding sheets,
tombs and worms and tumbling to decay;
So be beginning, be beginning to despair.
O there's none; no no no there's none:
Be beginning to despair, to despair,
Despair, despair, despair, despair.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
"The Leaden Echo"

# Introduction

I first concluded that despair is a reasonable response to human existence on the flight two years ago to my grandmother's funeral. Death was already hovering in the wings of my mind, but when I decided to read first *Ecclesiastes* and then *Real Simple* Magazine I found myself in the midst of a full-blown crisis. Never before had the futility of furnishing a home you will eventually die and leave impressed itself upon me so fully. On that flight, I realized that the only two responses I could have to this life were to believe in God or to throw up my hands in complete and utter despair.

Some people seem to be fated to have the inevitability of death never stray far from their minds—I am one of those people. I have always dwelt regularly on death and destruction; when it came to a head on this particular flight, I asked myself again: How can I live in this world where one's parents or friends or spouse or children can be taken away at any moment? How can I continue working and creating in a world where there is no guarantee that anything any of us works toward or creates will last? The answer I have always come to and that I came to again is that I could continue living and loving and creating only because I believed that God had created my life with purpose and that any calamity he brought into my story would not be futile. Above all, I decided I could keep living because God had promised us something better than this life—he had promised us escape from the exact horrors I feared so much in this existence. "O death, where is thy sting?" I believed in God because my soul cried out to Him; my soul cried out to Him because I believed.

Albert Camus, French novelist and witness of both World Wars, struggled similarly with the meaning of life. What I called "despair" he simply calls "suicide," and he wrote an essay asking whether or not one ought to take one's life. He, too, concludes that one ought not, but not for the same reason I did; instead, he says, a man ought to fight to find meaning in the face of futility without resorting to putting a patch like belief in God over the problem.

Søren Kierkegaard, born 100 years before Camus in Copenhagen, Denmark, a town he barely strayed from, has a different take on the issue of despair. In his view, despair is not a *response* of hopelessness but a *state* of hopelessness—the state of separation from God.

Kierkegaard and Camus were both men of insight, both wrote lyrically and compellingly, and were both unusually attuned to the vicissitudes of life and their effect on the human psyche. And in the end, one of them emerged from his personal darkness willing to press on in a world where he saw ultimate meaning, and the other decided to do the same in a world where he saw none.

# Part I
# Albert Camus: The Absurd

"An act like [suicide] is prepared within the silence of the heart," wrote Albert Camus, "as is a great work of art. The man himself is ignorant of it. One evening he pulls the trigger or jumps" (*The Myth of Sisyphus* 4). Camus was born in 1913 in French Algeria. His father died fighting in World War I when Camus was a year old. Raised on the failure of the Enlightenment, Camus felt acutely the estrangement and disillusionment that led many in his generation to the edge. He wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus*, an essay he began when he was twenty-six and published when he was thirty, to answer the question: Ought man commit suicide? This, he says, is the "fundamental question of philosophy," because if a philosopher dutifully practices what he preaches, his answer will literally be a matter of life or death (3). According to Camus, life leads every man to a precipice—the only question is whether or not he should jump.

## The Precipice of the Absurd

You may not think death is a problem—you may be too young to believe that it exists, or too busy to notice it, or too happy to care. You may say to yourself, if you happen to think of it at all, "When I am dead I will not care that I am not living." But even supposing that you will not care when *you* are dead, how can you ignore the threat of your *loved one's* deaths? Think of everything in this life that brings you happiness—all of it is marked by time. Ultimately, all of it is marked by death. Even if you take death out of the picture, your problems do not end. You find love, but the object of your love scorns you. You reach for

goals you do not attain. You are frustrated at every turn in your desire to change your situation. You see little meaning in the day-to-day shuffle from bed to work to bed. Life, it seems, is also a problem.

These problems were painfully obvious to Camus, and he makes of them his foundational principle in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: “the absurd.” The absurd is that which Camus is certain he cannot escape or deny—the essential tension of being human. Camus calls it the “divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints” (37). If a man decides to leap to his death, the absurd has pushed him to the precipice. Thus, it is the perfect starting point for the “absurd reasoning” Camus wishes to conduct.

The absurd is not merely ‘dissatisfaction’ or ‘futility’. Camus has something more specific in mind. Nothing is absurd, Camus points out, unless it is a contradiction. One thing or another can be silly or depressing or frustrating all by itself; but a thing is not *absurd* until it is set next to something with which it has no business being. A dolphin is not absurd until it is in the middle of a wheat field or a train depot. The tips for efficiency, organization, and home decor I found in *Real Simple* were not absurd until brought into conjunction with *Ecclesiastes*’ forceful reminder that from dust we came and to dust we will return.

Just like all absurdities, then, *the* absurd of which Camus speaks is a contradiction produced between two otherwise innocuous constituents: what man wants (order, success, immortality) and what the world offers (chaos, frustration, death). Either one of these elements alone would not be enough to drive any man to the edge; but because the two exist together and resist each other like magnets with matching poles pressed together, men “prepare works within the silence of their hearts.” Camus observes about the story of Pandora’s box in his essay *Summer in Algiers*: in some versions of the story, ‘hope’ was the last and most terrible horror to emerge because without it all the others would have been bearable—without the longing for a better world, the one we have would satisfy us.

For example, man feels he ought to be immortal, but is bound by time, and absurdity overwhelms him whenever he realizes it:

> … He takes place in [time]. He admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time,

> and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. That revolt of the flesh is the absurd. (*Sisyphus* 10-11)

This is the problem of death; we spend our lives pressing forward toward (often trivial) temporal goals, not thinking about the fact that every passing day brings us closer to this life's end. Camus reflects how strange it is that "everyone lives as if no one 'knew'" about death (12). Indeed.

The absurd tension with which Camus is most interested, however, is not death. Camus writes, "at the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman" and "that denseness and that strangeness of the world is the absurd" (11). More than by anything, Camus is bothered by this "strangeness" of the world. To Camus (and, doubtless, many of his generation), the world feels cold, distant, and incomprehensible. Because man longs for the universe to make sense, he and the universe contradict each other and the resulting experience is absurd. Camus observes that "man's unconscious feeling in the face of his universe" is "an insistence upon familiarity, an appetite for clarity" (13). But when Camus looks up at the night sky, he sees nothing familiar or clear to satiate him. Instead he sees a universe unwilling to part with the secrets he so desperately wants from it.

This tension between the mind that wants to know and the world that refuses to reveal itself is incredibly frustrating to Camus. It seems fair to call Camus a truth-seeker—his writings speak to the fact that he wants to *know*. In one passage, he describes the bated breath with which he waited for science's answers to fundamental questions, hoping that they might finally pull the cold, mysterious mask off of the world:

> At the final stage you teach me that this wondrous and multi-colored universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know. … I have returned to my beginning. I realize that if through science I can seize phenomena and

enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world. (15)

He shall never know; and that, for him, is the ultimate heartbreak.

The absurd is all of the above: it is the feeling of alienation from the world in spite of man's desire to be connected to it; it is the inevitability of death in spite of man's will to live. But always, the absurd is a contradiction between two parts: man and the world.

**The Two Ways Down**

Now that absurdity has pushed a man to the precipice, should he jump or shouldn't he? Camus seeks to answer this question as logically and dispassionately as he can, working his way from the "absurd" foundation he began with. "My reasoning wants to be faithful to the evidence that aroused it," he writes, and "that evidence is the absurd" (37).

Should man jump? Camus' answer is no (which, taking into consideration the fact that he lived for years after *The Myth of Sisyphus*, should be obvious). A man ought not jump. Not because there is a God who forbids it, not simply because of the pain it might cause friends or family, but because in order to preserve the tenuous balance of the absurd, man must keep living. Because man is one of the two constituents of the absurd, the absurd does not exist without him. "If I judge that a thing is true," Camus says to explain his reasoning, "I must preserve it. If I attempt to solve a problem, at least I must not by that very solution conjure away one of the terms of the problem. For me the sole datum is the absurd" (23). And so, because "like everything else, the absurd ends with death" (23), a man ought not end his own life; to do so would be to willfully negate the absurd.

This may seem a painfully unsatisfying answer to the question. "You just did not want to die," one could say to Camus, "so you came up with an arbitrary reason to justify that decision." I cannot entirely shield Camus from this critique. I will say, however, that when Camus writes in the preface that he must resolve the problem of suicide "without the aid of eternal values which, temporarily perhaps, are absent or distorted in contemporary Europe," he is quite serious (v). World War I, to which I have already alluded as the death of the Enlightenment, was also the catalyst for a morality and meaning vacuum in Europe. Camus wishes to give himself and his contemporaries a reason to keep going—he wants to inspire

men to “live and create, in the very midst of the desert” (v). At the time and place (both in history and in his own journey) that he writes *Sisyphus*, he does not feel that he can rely on God’s existence, so he searches for another basis. He says that his basis is the “absurd,” but really his starting point is a desire for intellectual integrity. He may claim that “eternal values” are missing for him, but at least one eternal value (the value of living and reasoning with honesty and integrity) seems to have remained—though Camus never explains or even notes its presence.

Physical suicide is not the only way to violate the intellectual integrity of the absurd, however. There is another way to leap—an easier and more insidious one. Most men have too strong a sense of self-preservation to jump off of a bridge; but they do not have a similar resistance to finding hope where there is none. This is *philosophical* suicide, or the manufacturing of hope in order to elude the pain of the absurd:

> Eluding is the invariable game. The typical act of eluding, the fatal evasion that constitutes the third theme of this essay, is hope. Hope of another life one must “deserve” or trickery of those who live not for life itself but for some idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it a meaning, and betray it. (7)

Camus briefly discusses a number of authors who had at least an inkling of the absurdity in life; and he marvels that one and all of them chose to pacify themselves—usually with a belief in God, but always with some kind of hope—rather than to face the tension:

> … I see that all of them without exception suggest escape. Through an odd reasoning, starting out from the absurd over the ruins of reason[1], in a closed universe limited to the human, they deify what crushes them and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them. (24)

When the man who commits philosophical suicide starts with “the absurd over the

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[1] Clearly Camus does not think any and all reason is in ruins—his entire project is one of reason. Think of the ‘reason’ whose failure Camus is reporting as ‘Reason’ with a capital ‘R’—it is, essentially, the Enlightenment’s enthusiastic Reason for the sake of Reason. It is (among other things) the science that, although certain it could dissect all of reality through its method, was reduced to poetry at its final stage.

ruins of reason" and "deifies what crushes him," he has recognized the failure of Reason to provide ultimate answers and has "deified" that failure. In a sense, he makes irrationality and unreasonableness his God. Thus, by replacing his desire for understanding with a blind faith, the philosophically suicidal man has destroyed one side of the equilibrium and negated the absurd. This is certainly the crime of which Camus accuses Kierkegaard; he says quite clearly that Kierkegaard calls for "the sacrifice of the intellect" (28) and thus leaps to his philosophical death.

Camus' real problem with all of these thinkers is not, fundamentally, the fact that they believe in God—it is the fact that, in his view, they do not have sufficient reason to. As he says at one point in a footnote, "it is not the affirmation of God that is questioned here, but rather the logic leading to that affirmation" (31). Again, Camus asks of the authors he examines intellectual integrity in the face of the absurd; and, because he does not see God as logically following from the absurd, he thinks they have seriously mis-stepped.

**The Third Way**

In Camus' novel *The Stranger*, his protagonist is a man named Mersault. Through most of the book, Mersault quite literally 'wanders' through his life; events come and go like waves on a beach, but he is unmoved. His mother's death does not affect him. Neither does the love of a woman who comes into his life. Neither, apparently, does the murder he accidentally commits "because of the sun." But after spending the last days of his life in jail, Mersault reaches an epiphany just before his execution: "…I felt ready to live it all again too. As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world" (*The Stranger* 122).

Mersault woke the next day to his execution, so we do not have the benefit of seeing him live past the point of his revelatory experience; but it seems Mersault, had he lived on was poised to follow Camus' example in choosing neither suicide nor philosophical suicide but a third way: embracing and honoring the absurd.

Think again of the constituents of the absurd—without either of which the absurd is

not the absurd—as two magnets with matching poles facing inwards. On one side, man's longing; on the other side, the world's refusal. Try to hold them together, and, as we saw, they will resist each other. It would be so much easier to change the equation by flipping one of the magnets around, or by letting it slip away from the other and breaking the tension between them—and this, according to Camus, is exactly what the suicidal man has done. By killing himself or manufacturing hope, he has given up the fight to live with intellectual integrity even in the face of absurdity and has found a way to get out. This, Camus says, he must not do. Life is to live with the tension that is life, and the tension must be lived with.

This stance is not immediately easy to understand (and neither does it seem easy to live out). In one passage, Camus says that "the first and, after all, the only condition of my inquiry is to preserve the very thing that crushes me, consequently to respect what I consider essential in it" (23). The "thing that crushes him," as we know, is the absurd. And so, what exactly will it look like for him to respect what he considers essential in the absurd?

> I have just defined it as a confrontation and an unceasing struggle. And carrying this absurd logic to its conclusion, I must admit that that struggle implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest).

The picture is becoming clearer—the "absurd man," the embodiment of Camus' wish for himself and every man, is beginning to take form. The absurd man has lost hope in the meaning of this world (perhaps the kind of hope that Camus wishes had never escaped Pandora's box) but does not despair. He continually rejects the comfort of religion but not simply as a rebellion against religion itself. Finally, he is fully aware of his incurable dissatisfaction with this life but does not as a result live restlessly or destructively. In short, this man is willing to look the absurd in the face, without the slightest consolation, and choose to live with purpose anyway.

Camus concludes the main argument of *The Myth of Sisyphus* by retelling its title story. Camus calls Sisyphus, condemned in Greek mythology to push the same boulder up a steep

hill over and over again for eternity, the "absurd hero" (89). Sisyphus is admirable because, despite the fact that he knows he will never succeed in his task, he continues to push his boulder with determination day after eternal day. In fact, Camus paints Sisyphus as finding a certain kind of peace in his dissatisfaction and futility. This picture may not be immanently hopeful, (and in some ways he did not intend it to be) but there is undeniable nobility and courage in the stance Camus seeks to take. In the end, though he is unable to rely on or provide "eternal values" to give life meaning, he still means to encourage life with purpose. As he says near the end of the work: "The preceding merely defines a way of thinking. But the point is to live" (48).

# Part II
# Søren Kierkegaard: The Sickness

> "This sickness is not unto death" (John 11:4). And yet Lazarus did die; when the disciples misunderstood what Christ added later, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him out of sleep" (11:11), he told them flatly "Lazarus is dead." (11:14) So Lazarus is dead, and yet this sickness was not unto death; he was dead, and yet this sickness is not unto death.

So begins Søren Kierkegaard's introduction to *The Sickness Unto Death*, a work he wrote at a significant and transitional point in his life—a time when he once thought he would already be dead.

Kierkegaard was born in 1813 and died in 1854. By all reports odd, socially awkward, and physically weak his entire short life, Kierkegaard was no stranger to adversity. Famously, he fell in love with and was betrothed to a woman with whom he later broke off his engagement, feeling that he could not impose himself and his idiosyncrasies on her. And as the baby of his family, he had also seen five (all but one) of his siblings die before he was 15. All of them had weak constitutions similar to Søren's, and none of them survived past thirty-three, so he assumed that he would not either. In *A Short Life*, Walter Lowrie describes the astonishment with which Kierkegaard passed his siblings in age: "In a letter which he wrote to his brother on this date he expressed his amazement. He was inclined to suspect that his

birth had been incorrectly registered and that he might still have time to die before he was thirty-four years old" (188).[2]

In short, when Kierkegaard writes (though pseudonymously[3]) in *The Sickness Unto Death* that he has "had some intimate acquaintance" with "human distress and wretchedness" (26), we can be sure that he is not merely using his imagination. He, too, knows the absurd. And he, too, warns against despair. Because, just like Camus, Kierkegaard thinks that despair is an escape from an uncomfortable reality. The difference is, from Kierkegaard's perspective, this escape has eternal consequences. It is, in fact, "The Sickness Unto Death."

"A human being is spirit." These are the words with which Kierkegaard begins part one of *The Sickness Unto Death*, and though they may not at first seem germane to the issue

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[2] This is part of the reason for the "Concluding" in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. He thought his work was finished with this book; he did not imagine that some of his most "upbuilding" works were still ahead of him.

[3] Volumes have been published dedicated to the analysis of why Kierkegaard wrote primarily pseudonymously and which pseudonyms indicate what about the works he wrote under them. Clearly, the purpose of this paper is not to conduct such an analysis, but I will mention briefly my reasons for interpreting the works quoted as I do. My own reading, the discussions of our class, the introduction by the Hongs to *The Sickness Unto Death*, and Walter Lowrie's *A Short Life* have led me to embrace the simple interpretation below of Johannes Climacus (author of *Postscript*) and Johannes Anti-Climacus (author of *The Sickness Unto Death*). Because Kierkegaard refers to Anti-Climacus as "higher" than himself and because he also vacillated between publishing *Sickness* and *Practice in Christianity* under his own name or publishing them under Anti-Climacus' name (which they both ultimately were), I have chosen to interpret all of Anti-Climacus' arguments and proscriptions as being ones with which Kierkegaard agrees but to which he may not believe he has fully attained (or does not want to flaunt if he has). Climacus, on the other hand, who goes out of his way *not* to proclaim himself as a Christian, adds another layer of murkiness to *Postscript*, and, therefore, I do not assume that all direct assertions in *Postscript* are ones with which Kierkegaard would agree; although, since *Postscript* is written both about and using indirect communication, direct assertions are not so easy to come by. Climacus also carries a jesting tone from beginning to end, adding yet another layer of complication. Perhaps, if a reader successfully works his way through these layers to what it is Climacus really wants him to take away from the book, Kierkegaard does indeed agree with that message. But either way, based on my understanding of Kierkegaard's work and thinking as a whole, I believe Kierkegaard did agree with the point I extrapolate from *Postscript* later in this paper.

of despair, it later becomes clear that they are crucial. He goes on to say that a "spirit" is a "self," and then that a human being is a "synthesis," but considered merely as a synthesis is still not "self," or "spirit." We will examine each of these two qualifications of humanity separately: a human as a synthesis and a human as a self. Finally, we will explore what it means to be in despair in terms of the self and its relationship to God.[4]

**A Self**

Because Kierkegaard is both poetic and precise, his meaning is often difficult to decipher. For example, he begins *The Sickness Unto Death* by saying that "a human being is spirit" and "spirit is the self." This simple A=B and B=C should clearly indicate that A=C: a human being is a self.  But in other passages, Kierkegaard talks about the essential work of a human being as "*becoming* a self," and describes the "loss" of the self: "The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss—an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc.—is sure to be noticed" (32-33). So a human being is a self, but must also become a self, implying that he is at first a human being but not a self; or, he can lose his self, implying that he would then be a human being but not a self. Though it seems these concepts are contradictory, Kierkegaard does not see them so.

Every human being is a self, inasmuch as he is a human being. A self is what makes a human a human; it is the distinguishing factor between an animal or a rock and a human being. "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself" (13). When you encounter a rock, you relate it to yourself. When you encounter another person, you relate him to yourself. And when you encounter yourself, you relate yourself to yourself. This awareness of you as yourself is your "self." But it is also more than that, because simple self-awareness is something that even an animal could have. As Kierkegaard puts it, "such a relation… must

[4] Worth considering as we move forward: Kierkegaard almost never talks in terms of 'humanity' or 'mankind'. Though he clearly sees what he is talking about as applying universally, he always talks in terms of the individual human being. This is indicative of Kierkegaard's view of man's relationship to God: it is wholly individual.

either have established itself or have been established by another." A human being, he says, falls into the latter category: the self has been established by God, and because it has, another relation is created between the human self and God. This relation, between the relation of the self and the one who established that relation, is crucial to Kierkegaard's picture of despair—without it, there is no despair, or at least, despair is not a sin. Without God in the picture, despair would merely be an unwillingness to be the way you are; with God in the picture, despair is an unwillingness to be the way you were created to be—a much more serious issue.

In simple terms, it is probably best to think of Kierkegaard's self as we tend to think of a 'soul'. It is the spirit part of man: the *more-than*. One could say it is the eternal within the temporal—it is God's stamp of craftsmanship. One could even say it is His image.

This view of a 'self' makes it possible for Kierkegaard to talk both in terms of every human being as a self and of the need to "become" a self. Every human being has a soul because that is how God created him. But every human being has important work to do on that soul in this lifetime; it is the *most* important work that a man has to do (as Socrates and the Bible agree). This is where the poetic side of Kierkegaard comes in; for in his talk of "becoming" a self and "losing" one's self, he does not mean to imply that one is literally becoming a human being or ceasing to be a human being. Instead, "becoming a self" seems to mean the awakening of a person's spirit and the discovery and acceptance of God's role for him—as well as the recognition of the fact that a person has a soul that is different from his body. Conversely, "losing one's self" seems to mean the dimming of a man's awareness that he is spirit, the fundamental (even if not realized) rejection of God and God's role for him, and ultimately, the "loss" of his soul. Kierkegaard poignantly describes the man who has lost his soul as a man who can get along all the better in "the world" because of it. "For a self is the last thing the world cares about and the most dangerous thing of all for a person to show signs of having" (32). [5]

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[5] This is just one of many places in which Kierkegaard observes that the world at large has its priorities all wrong—an observation that is tangential to the issue at hand but is, nonetheless, quite true.

And so, in the end, perhaps the lack of "self," either because one has not yet become a self or has, tragically, lost his self, is not so far from not being human. Of course, the person in question would still be literally human—physiologically, anatomically, emotionally, etc.—but if one considers, as Kierkegaard does, a human being as a creature with a purpose (a *telos*, if you will) then has not the man who has rejected that *telos* ceased in some essential way to be human? Perhaps not. Nevertheless, considered in this light, it is easy to see why Kierkegaard would—poetically *or* literally—connect the two.

### A Synthesis

In addition to having a self, according to Kierkegaard, a human is a "synthesis": "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis" (13). Kierkegaard pictures a man as a divided creature. A man feels everlasting, but he lives in the constraints of time. His imagination and desires can reach to infinity, and yet he is, inherently, a finite creature—he cannot comprehend everything, experience everything, or control everything.

Perhaps the most significant thing about a human being as a synthesis is that, whether or not he has developed or recognized his 'self', every human being is automatically a synthesis from the moment he comes into existence; being a synthesis is a fundamental, inescapable part of being human. As long as a person exists in this world, he will be, in some ways, a living contradiction.

If this language of a man divided sounds familiar, it should; we have heard it from Camus: "The absurd is a divorce"—a split between a "man who yearns" and the world which disappoints. Looked at through Kierkegaard's eyes, however, the split is between a man who is bound by time and his heart, which cannot help yearning for eternity. Their parallel language indicates that Camus and Kierkegaard, observant men both, were indeed looking at the same human race. The main difference in their diagnosis is that from Camus' perspective, man's longing for the eternal is some kind of cruel joke which will never be fulfilled, whereas from Kierkegaard's, it is the evidence of God's mark on man and His eternal intention for him.

**The Sickness Unto Death**

Before we delve into Kierkegaard's definition of despair, or "the sickness unto death," let us pause here to examine the baggage we may be carrying with the word 'despair'. I, for one, previously held what Kierkegaard calls the "common" (read: "wrong") conception of despair. My journey to understanding it differently began with the experience I described in the introduction to this paper. At first my realization that the only options available to me were despair or belief in God did not challenge my picture of despair—one of depression, anxiety, hopelessness, defeat—because it was easy for me to imagine that if I did not believe in God I would spend the rest of my life decaying slowly into the cushions of my couch. But when I shared this realization with my brother (with the bold addition that I thought these were the only two options for *every* human being), he said something that gave me pause: "That could be, but I think there are people who don't believe in God but are still happy—at least, they seem like they are." This was a huge hole in my hypothesis. Some people did not believe in God, and they seemed to go on living just fine. Barely knowing what I was saying, and mostly to save face, I replied: "Well, I think those people are in despair too. They just don't know it yet."

That, although I did not know it at the time, is the exact difference between Kierkegaard's picture of despair and the common view. "The common view that despair is a rarity is entirely wrong; on the contrary, it is universal" (26). Furthermore, "Not to be in despair can in fact signify precisely to be in despair, and it can signify having been rescued from despair. A sense of security and tranquility can be the despair, and yet it can signify having conquered despair and having won peace" (24). This is startling news. Suddenly, there is no correlation between happiness and despair. Suddenly, happiness itself can even be a signal of despair: "even that which is utterly beautiful and lovable, womanly youthfulness, is still despair, is happiness" (26). How can this be? Clearly we are dealing with a different kind of despair.

One way in which the common view of despair gets it wrong, according to Kierkegaard, is that it assumes despair must be "over something." Instead, Kierkegaard says

“to despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself—this is the formula for all despair” (20). We say that a woman despairs because she didn’t get a promotion; we say that a man despairs because he has lost his wife. But both of these people, Kierkegaard would say, despair not over the magical “something” that has failed to materialize or has been taken from them; they despair over themselves. It is not the woman’s failure to get the job over which she despairs; it is over the “self” she wished to become by getting it—or probably, more truthfully, the self she no longer wished to be. The man does not despair over the loss of his wife; he despairs over the self he saw himself as when he was with her, or the self he was before he was with her and does not want to return to.

Because a person is a self and a synthesis, a person in despair is one who has forgotten or refused to be his “self,” or one whose constituent parts have fallen out of balance. Kierkegaard gives many categories of despair. Some of the categories are based entirely on the mis-relation between parts of the human synthesis; for example, someone lost in infinitude (given over to the fantastic) and someone lost in finitude (given over to the mundane) are both in despair. Some categories are based on the despairing person’s consciousness of his or her own despair; for example, one who is conscious of being in despair but does not seek to be cured is in the worst situation of all—worse than the person who is in despair but has no idea of it.

This view of despair is not intuitively obvious to us, but it does include and explain our common conception of despair. Take the man and woman we just looked at, both of whom would fit into our usual idea of despair. They may think they are in despair, and in a sense they are right, but they do not know it. They do not know it because they think despair is a response to a misfortune that has happened to them, but that is not the real despair; they are right inadvertently because the real despair, the rebellion against how God has written them and their story, is also present, whether or not they have noticed it.

Why are most men so blind to their universal state of despair? Because despair is a spiritual condition, and most men are not even aware that they are spiritual beings: “Despair is a qualification of the spirit, is related to the eternal…” (24). And what is more, “The physician of souls will certainly agree with me that, on the whole, most men live without

ever becoming conscious of being destined as spirit—hence all the so-called security, contentment with life, etc., which is simply despair" (26).

I wrote above that for Kierkegaard, despair was the rejection of an uncomfortable reality. The uncomfortable reality I had in mind was the fact that we are not the dictators of our own existence—that we are creatures answerable to a Creator, and we have a lot to answer for. Despair is, essentially, the unwillingness to recognize this. Kierkegaard says of the man in despair, "the self that he despairingly wants to be is the self that he is not (for to will to be the self that he is in truth is the very opposite of despair), that is, he wants to tear his self away from the power that established it" (20). In this light, it makes all the sense in the world that, as Kierkegaard reveals with the title of *The Sickness Unto Death*'s second section, "Despair is Sin." (I remind you not to read the common view of despair into this statement; the condition in question is spiritual, not emotional.) This, the ignorance or rejection of one's existence as spirit or the spirit one is created to be, is the real danger of despair. Because ultimately, one who rejects his 'self' is rejecting the role God has given him; in a sense, he is rejecting God Himself. And, unfortunately for the man in despair, no matter how well he hides it from himself, "eternity nevertheless will make it manifest that his condition was despair and will nail him to himself so that his torment will still be that he cannot rid himself of his self" (21).

**Resting Transparently**

But despair is not the only option. Kierkegaard is not so nihilistic as to paint a picture of the universality of despair and then tell us that is all there is. On the contrary, he holds up great hope in opposition to despair; but before he can give us this hope, he must make sure we are aware of the danger at hand, and this, more than anything, is his project in *The Sickness Unto Death*.

As he says in the introduction, where he warns against the "sickness unto death," "Christianly understood, there is infinitely much more hope in death than there is in life" and "not even death is 'the sickness unto death'; even less so is everything that goes under the name of earthly and temporal suffering: need, illness, misery, hardship, adversities,

torments, mental sufferings, cares, grief" (8). Here again, Kierkegaard is standing right beside Camus, looking at the same pain and futility that haunted both of them, but recognizing that there is something better to be hoped for—and something worse to be feared: "This is the way a person always gains courage: when he fears a greater danger, he always has the courage to face a lesser one… but the most appalling danger that the Christian has learned to know is 'the sickness unto death'" (9).

"The sickness unto death" is despair. Separation from, rebellion from God: this is the worst fate a man can imagine; it—rather than illness or want or even death—should be the stuff of his nightmares. But who among us has shut out the worries of this life and replaced them entirely with worries for his or her soul? Who among us can read the words "do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4) without the slightest tremor? Perhaps none of us; but perhaps those who are farther along their path toward God are closer to this goal.

Despair, after all, is universal. Every one of us is in despair to some degree or another. But Kierkegaard also says that to be "cured" of despair is "the Christian's blessedness" (15). These two statements seem hopelessly contradictory, but if we remember that despair is sin and that Kierkegaard sees sin as continuing even in the life of a believer (which he talks about in the second half of *Sickness*), they are reconcilable. Martin Luther said that "this life is not being but becoming," and Kierkegaard seems to share that view. He says that becoming a self (a soul) is the most important work a man can do with his life, but he never implies it will be finished in this lifetime. It seems the completion of the "cure" that Kierkegaard is looking to lies not in this existence but the one to come.

And what will it mean to be cured? Kierkegaard says the following: "The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it" (14). Kierkegaard equates this "resting transparently" to faith. It is the right relation of one's self to God, and the acceptance of one's self as the creature and God as the Creator. Willing to be one's self—being, in the hand of one's Creator, exactly what one was created to be. On the one hand, it is the simplest task a creature could ask; on the other, it is the

task against which every human being fights hardest. Ever since the garden we have been hiding from God—to rest "transparently" in His hand, to be seen through and through, is more terrifying to us than anything else. And yet, it is our salvation; it is the only cure to our sickness.

# PART III
# THE MOVEMENT OF FAITH

Now that Camus and Kierkegaard have both spoken to us about despair, it is time to let them speak to each other. Both of them thought that one ought not despair in response to this life; both of them held up reasons for living, though their reasons were very different. The essential difference between them is that one of them made the movement of faith, and the other looked on in confusion, unable to understand the dance. We will begin with Camus' complaint.

**The Suicidal Leap**

Camus had a love/hate relationship with Kierkegaard. On the one hand, Camus could not help but be attracted to the mournful tone he found in some of Kierkegaard's works—he could not help but appreciate the fact that Kierkegaard, too, felt the stranglehold of the absurd. He talks about several philosophers in *The Myth of Sisyphus* but says Kierkegaard is "perhaps the most engaging." He also says:

> For a part of his existence at least, [Kierkegaard] does more than discover the absurd, he lives it. … He refuses consolations, ethics, reliable principles. As for that thorn he feels in his heart, he is careful not to quiet its pain. On the contrary, he awakens it and, in the desperate joy of a man crucified and happy to be so, he builds up piece by piece—lucidity, refusal, make-believe—a category of the man possessed. (20)

But as soon as Kierkegaard's ultimate trajectory becomes clear to Camus, he can no longer sympathize with him. Camus explains where he sees Kierkegaard finally going:

> To be sure, it is hard to outline clear propositions in so elusive a writer. But, despite apparently opposed writings, beyond the pseudonyms, the tricks, and the smiles, can be felt throughout the works, as it were, the presentiment (at the same time as the apprehension) of a truth which eventually bursts forth in the last works: Kierkegaard likewise takes the leap. (*Sisyphus* 28)

Camus has already outlined the contradiction that makes up the absurd: the longing of man for meaning, and the world that affords none. Kierkegaard, Camus contends, wanted so badly to be "cured" that he was not willing to live with this tension. The absurd man, the man of true courage and integrity, manages to carve meaning for himself out of a life that is ever lived in the tension of the absurd; Kierkegaard, less brave, had to believe that there exists meaning outside of himself. Camus says, after a mention of Kierkegaard's leap of faith:

> The leap does not represent an extreme danger as Kierkegaard would like it to do. The danger, on the contrary, lies in the subtle instant that precedes the leap. Being able to remain on that dizzying crest—that is integrity and the rest is subterfuge. (37)

And so, as soon as it becomes clear that Kierkegaard has chosen Christianity, Camus must part ways with him. From Camus' perspective, to believe with Kierkegaard that there is more to this life than meets the eye, he would have to bully his reason into submission. He would have to admit, "No, it doesn't make sense, but I just need to believe it anyway." Camus accuses Kierkegaard of calling for "the sacrifice of the intellect," and this is a sacrifice Camus is completely unwilling to make. Camus quotes the following passage, originally from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*:

> "If man had no eternal consciousness, if, at the bottom of everything, there were merely a wild, seething force producing everything, both large and trifling, in the storm of dark passions, if the bottomless void that nothing can fill underlay all things, what would life be but despair?" (*Sisyphus*, 30-31)

Camus' forceful reply?

> Seeking what is true is not seeking what is desirable. If in order to elude the anxious question: "What would life be?" one must, like the donkey, feed on the roses of illusion, then the absurd mind, rather than resigning itself to falsehood, prefers to adopt fearlessly Kierkegaard's reply: "despair." (31)

Camus does not think that the absurd man ought despair; but if it is the only alternative to believing in falsehood, he would rather despair.

In order to fully understand why Camus is so reticent to accept Christianity, it is helpful to think of him once again in his historical and cultural context. World War I has left Camus, along with the rest of Europe, with very little plausibility structure for God. Enlightenment Positivism has done all it can to undermine God, and even though it has largely crashed and burned, it has left in its stead a very bleak picture of the world. Camus' articulated reason for not believing in God is simply that he does not see a reason to; and, especially given his time and place in history, it is easy to see why.

**The Subjective Issue**

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, had a thriving plausibility structure for God in nineteenth century Denmark. It has been said that at that time, to be a Dane was to be a Christian—and Kierkegaard's family was no exception. Søren grew up with the expectation that he would one day preside over his own parish. But to infer from the fact that Kierkegaard lived steeped in cultural Christianity that he was himself only a cultural Christian—that believing in God was too *easy* in that time for us to take him seriously—is to gravely misunderstand Kierkegaard's entire body of work.

For this very reason, that Kierkegaard's Danish audience is made up almost entirely of professed believers, his project is not primarily an apologetic one—not in *The Sickness Unto Death*, nor really in any of his writings. Therefore, if we limit ourselves to his writings, we cannot expect him to reply to Camus with a resounding defense of God's existence. Kierkegaard's audience does not need help finding their way *into* Christianity; if anything, he is more interested in finding ways to scare those who are not serious about it *out* of Christianity.

But this does not mean Kierkegaard cannot speak to Camus. Camus' primary issue with Christianity is that he does not see enough evidence in his day and age to allow him to believe in it. Kierkegaard speaks directly to this issue in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, a complex and lengthy work Kierkegaard wrote under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus (see footnote three above). In *Postscript*, Climacus makes it clear that he has not yet decided to be a Christian but that he has "infinite interest" in his "eternal happiness," which is forcing him to consider Christianity as a possible option to fulfill that eternal happiness. He says of Christianity that "although an outsider, I have at least understood this much, that the only unforgivable high treason against Christianity is the single individual's taking his relation to it for granted" (*Postscript* 16). This sets the stage for the rest of the book, in which he first talks about "The Objective Issue of the Truth of Christianity" (Part I) and then "The Subjective Issue, the Subjective Individual's Relation to the Truth of Christianity, or Becoming a Christian" (Part II), and throughout all of which the issue is the individual's relationship to God.

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of "objective" as "that which is trustworthy" and "subjective" as "that which is not." This may have been partly at the root of Camus' misunderstanding of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard does not use the terms in this way, but if someone enters a work such as *Postscript* assuming that he does, it will be easy for that person to see where Camus could get the idea that Kierkegaard is calling for a "sacrifice of the intellect" because, as the work goes on, Kierkegaard increasingly paints subjectivity in a much more favorable light than objectivity. Taken at (extreme) face value, it could seem that Kierkegaard is indeed advocating the abandonment of certainty and the embrace of uncertainty. But this is not the case.

It is helpful to return once more to the importance Kierkegaard places on the individual. We have already seen, in *The Sickness Unto Death*, how a mis-relation between an individual and God can manifest itself in that individual's life as despair. Kierkegaard emphasizes the individual in most of his works because, in his view, the individual's relationship to God is of paramount importance. He has observed the way that members of "Christendom" assume their salvation via membership in the church, and he is justifiably

appalled at this assumption. At one point in *Postscript*, Kierkegaard describes God as a shopkeeper who only lets one individual in at a time; in this way, each person must face God alone, away from the crowd in which he felt so comfortable. If there is anything Kierkegaard repeatedly wishes to impress upon his readers, it is this: Christendom will do nothing for you; in the end, you will face God alone.

This helps explain Kierkegaard's emphasis on "subjectivity"; he talks about the nature of Christianity being an issue of the "individual subject" relating to God. Hence, Kierkegaard uses "subjectivity" to mean not one's fallible personal judgment, but rather one's individual relationship to God. Exploring this issue, as he says in his introduction, is the entire point of *Postscript*:

> In order, however, to avoid confusion, it should immediately be borne in mind that the issue is not about the truth of Christianity but about the individual's relation to Christianity, consequently not about the indifferent individual's systematic eagerness to arrange the truths of Christianity in paragraphs but rather about the concern of the infinitely interested individual with regard to his own relation to such a doctrine. To state it as simply as possible… : "I, Johannes Climacus, born and bred in this city and now thirty years old, an ordinary human being like most folk, assume that a highest good, called an eternal happiness, awaits me just as it awaits a housemaid and a professor. I have heard that Christianity is one's prerequisite for this good. I now ask how I may enter into relation to this doctrine." (15-16)

Why does Kierkegaard focus on the subjective and not the objective? Is it because he thinks Christianity is not logically defensible? On the contrary, his discussion of "the historical issue" makes clear that he thinks there is plenty of evidence for Christianity's truth. Rather, the point Kierkegaard wants to get across is that true faith cannot be built *only* on evidence. Even though there is evidence for God's existence, no one can "prove" His existence or the truth of His promises because belief in Him and His promises is not a mere matter of being logically convinced; it is a matter of an individual, spiritual, subjective

embrace of the truth. To put it another way, the difference between belief and unbelief is not quantitative, it is qualitative.

Kierkegaard explores this difference between quantitative and qualitative faith in *Postscript* in the famous context of "the leap"—particularly interesting to us because Kierkegaard borrows the idea of the leap from Lessing, a German writer who is not perhaps so very far from Camus in his hesitation with regard to Christianity. Lessing, too, searched for a path of logical evidence that would lead him into faith; and when he could not find it, he said of the distance between the end of logic's path and belief in God, "That, that, is the ugly broad ditch that I cannot cross, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap" (as quoted in *Postscript*, 98). Kierkegaard, being Kierkegaard, runs with this imagery and says of Lessing's quote:

> Perhaps that word "leap" is only a stylistic turn. Perhaps that is why the metaphor is expanded for the imagination by adding the preceding *breit* [broad], as if even the smallest leap did not possess the quality of making the ditch infinitely broad, as if it would not be equally difficult for the one who *cannot* leap *at all*, whether the ditch is broad or narrow, as if it were not the dialectically passionate loathing of a leap that makes the ditch infinitely broad, just as Lady Macbeth's passion makes the blood spot so immensely large that the ocean cannot wash it away. (98-99)

In true Kierkegaardian fashion, Kierkegaard has stolen Lessing's metaphor—originally intended by Lessing as a brief, witty description of the fact that he does not think Christianity is reachable by reason—and has used it instead to illustrate *why* Lessing is unable to reach the truth. Kierkegaard makes the point that the width of the "ditch" is not the issue—that is, it is not a matter of the quantity of evidence. Indeed, Kierkegaard makes the point here and elsewhere that *no matter how much* evidence is stacked up in favor of Christianity, the person who does not believe will continue to not believe—or, as he says in the quote above, it is "equally difficult" for "the one who *cannot* leap *at all* … whether the ditch is broad or narrow."

So, to Camus' complaint that he does not have "enough evidence" to believe in Christianity, Kierkegaard would likely warn him (as he warned Lessing) that it might not be because the ditch is too broad, but because Camus "loathes" the leap. In addition, Kierkegaard would not necessarily see Camus' time and place in history as a disadvantage. Kierkegaard makes it quite clear that all the cultural Christianity in the world will not save the individual who is a part of it unless he has come to terms with God as an individual; conversely, then, Camus' lack of cultural Christianity should not prevent him, if he in fact does not loathe the leap, from making it.

Finally, as if to hammer home the point that he did not merely choose the easy way out, almost as if he has heard Camus' rebuttal of him from across the hundred years separating them and has prepared his own reply, Kierkegaard writes the following in his journal not long after publishing *The Sickness Unto Death*:

> Official preaching has untruthfully represented the religious, Christianity, as sheer consolation, happiness, etc. Doubt has thereby won the advantage by being able to say loftily: I do not care to be made happy by an illusion. If Christianity were truthfully represented as suffering, greater as one advances in faith, then doubt would be disarmed… . (*Journals and Papers* Vol I 360)

These words serve as a final reminder to Camus that Christianity was not a balm against absurdity, that the "cure" Kierkegaard looked for was not in this life, and that the belief he held was not a construction designed to quiet the ache of this existence. On the contrary, in some ways his belief only made his life worse.

**Two Men on the Edge**

In the end, as Camus and Kierkegaard stand side by side on the edge of the absurd, Camus is, perhaps, not so far from Kierkegaard as he thinks he is. For in the same breath that he means to proclaim the absurdity of life, he opens the door—almost imperceptibly—to the eternal. For one thing, he upholds the value of integrity without explaining where he has gotten it or why he has kept it—but even the very language he uses to describe the

absurd leaves one wondering. He describes, as quoted above, the “revolt of the flesh” at its own mortality but does not ask why man wishes to be immortal. He talks freely of the “wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart” (*Sisyphus* 16) but does not ask from whence this longing comes. He even says that once he has realized the absurd, “man feels an alien, a stranger” in the world but concludes, poignantly, that “his exile is without remedy since he is deprived of a lost home or the hope of a promised land” (5). If Camus has no hope of a promised land, it is because he has deprived himself of it. But even though he refused to look the eternal in the eye, his poetry betrayed him and led him to its threshold anyway. In a way, Camus came so close—up to the very edge, in fact.

Camus and Kierkegaard have important things in common. They both think that the right path is *not* the path of least resistance; if it looks like it will be hard work, it is probably the right thing to do. For Camus, that work is embracing the absurd. For Kierkegaard, that work is “becoming a self.” For both of them it is facing a reality that is other than we wish it were. But Kierkegaard took the leap, and Camus could not. The distance was too far; too likely to result in the death of either his body or his philosophy. Camus chose instead to find meaning in meaninglessness, and there, I think, he made a mistake. Camus’ picture of the absurd man’s endless journey up the hill is beautiful, but it is an empty shell when compared with Kierkegaard’s picture of the self who rests transparently in the hand of his Creator. I do agree with Camus that I would rather despair than believe something that was not true, and if I did not believe in God I hope I would be as brave as he. But I do not think despair and belief in falsehood are the only two options presented to us in this life. Instead, I agree with Kierkegaard that hope in a life to come is not the death of reason, but the recognition of a truly hopeful reality. I believe, with him, that the pain of this life is not “absurdity” but tragedy—not the divorce between ourselves and a heartless world, but the ache of a creature designed for the eternal who is sojourning in the temporal.

# Epilogue

In 2000, American minister Howard Mumma published a memoir of the summers he spent preaching in Paris. He recounts the surprise with which he discovered that Albert Camus, after visiting his church to hear a famous organist, had come again on several subsequent Sundays just to hear him teach. Mumma and Camus struck up an unlikely friendship, meeting for lunch or dinner many times over the years that they knew each other. They talked primarily about God and the Bible. Camus admitted that he did not feel satisfied by the position he had struck boldly for himself in works like *The Myth of Sisyphus*—the position that had caused his fellow Frenchmen to rally behind him. He found himself looking, still, for deeper meaning, and wondering if there were any way he could find it in God. Camus' thirst for truth, evident in even *The Myth of Sisyphus*, shines through Mumma's story of their conversations. He was a searcher—a man hungry and thirsty for food that would not fade away. In fact, as Mumma tells it, Camus came to the point where he voiced his willingness to follow God—a willingness Mumma called into question when Camus was unwilling to join a church. Mumma left at the end of the summer, and he and Camus did not have time to settle the question of Camus' church membership before Camus died in a car accident. Mumma's story is fascinating. We cannot know for sure, of course, whether what he says is true; but I believe the picture given to us in the Bible, that a man who calls out to his creator for mercy will be answered, even if it is in his final moments. And if God could find the thief on the cross at his end, how much more could he have found Albert Camus, a life-long searcher?

Spare!

There ís one, yes I have one (Hush there!);

Only not within seeing of the sun.

Not within the singeing of the strong sun,

Tall sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the earth's air,

Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,

Oné. Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,

Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and swiftly away with, done away with, undone,

Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and dangerously sweet

Of us, the wimpledwater-dimpled, not-by-morning-matchèd face,

The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet,

Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth

To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an everlastingness of, O it is an all youth!

Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maidengear, gallantry and gaiety and grace,

Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks, loose locks, long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant, girlgrace—

Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them with breath,

And with sighs soaring, soaring síghs, deliver

Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before death

Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God beauty's self and beauty's giver.

See: not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair

Is, hair of the head, numbered.

Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the wind
what while we slept,
This side, that side hurling a heavy-headed hundredfold
What while we, while we slumbered.
O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so haggard
at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged, so fashed, so
cogged, so cumbered,
When the thing we freely fórfeit is kept with fonder a care,
Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer, fonder
A care kept.—Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where.—
Yonder.—What high as that! We follow, now we follow.—Yonder,
yes yonder, yonder,
Yonder.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
"The Golden Echo"

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