



# The Quest for Genuine Freedom

IN DEFENSE OF KIERKEGAARD'S  
UPBUILDING OF FAITH AND THE  
UNITY OF TEMPORALITY AND  
ETERNITY

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# Welcome Back to Class!

# Overview for Today

❖ INTRODUCTION?

❖ BRIEF REVIEW OF LAST WEDNESDAY'S SLIDES

❖ SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖ KIERKEGAARDIAN ETHICS

❖ THE INWARD JOURNEY TO GOD AND THE "LEAP OF FAITH"

❖ LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖ A CHALLENGE TO KIERKEGAARD'S ORIGINAL SYNTHESIS AND THE INWARD JOURNEY TO GOD: SARTRE, DE BEAUVOIR, AND THE FREEDOM OF THE FOR-ITSELF

❖ LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

❖ SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S APPROACH TO FREEDOM

❖ KIERKEGAARD'S FREEDOM IN FAITH

❖ LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# Introductions

- TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF!
- TELL ME YOUR NAME AND WHY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS CLASS IN PARTICULAR?
- ANY EXPERIENCE READING KIERKEGAARD OR FAMILIARITY WITH HIS PHILOSOPHY?
- INTEREST IN OR FAMILIARITY WITH THE SUB-DISCIPLINE OF EXISTENTIALISM IN PHILOSOPHY?
- FAVORITE PASTIMES, HOBBIES, INTERESTS IN LIFE?
- FINALLY, HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE OLLI PROGRAM, AND ARE YOU TAKING OTHER COURSES HERE AS WELL THIS SEMESTER? WHICH ONES?
- JUST ANYTHING YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, BRIEF OR A BIT MORE DETAILED... THE FLOOR IS YOURS!



# Kierkegaard's Original Synthesis

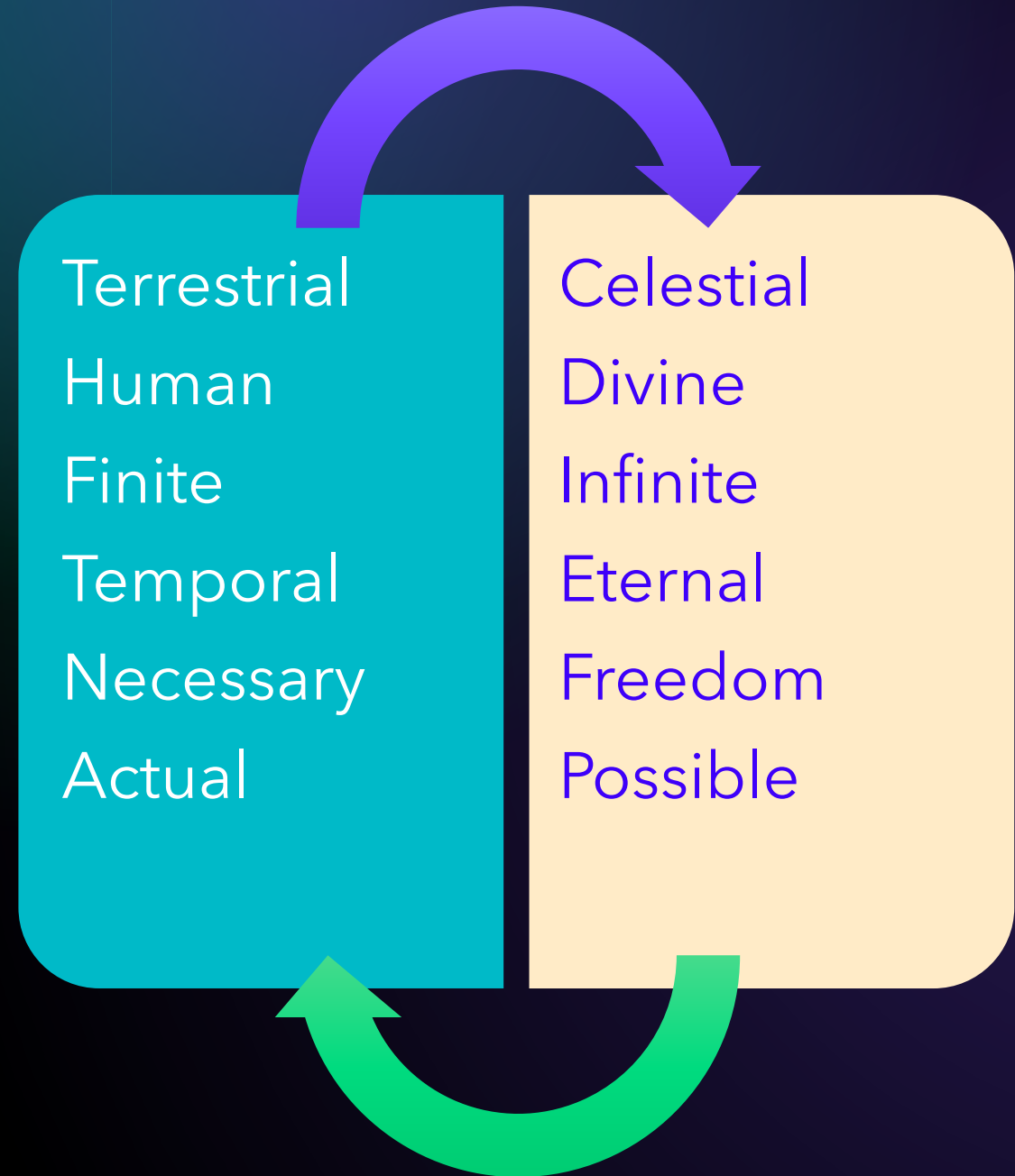
# Selfhood

Self is a spirit – the spirited component of life.

The self [is a] synthesis

The self is a conjoining, [it is] activity driven, a creative act whereby we are making ourselves what we are and what we are to become.

As a fusion of these polarities, the self is a relation which relates to itself, or that in the relation which is its relating to itself. *Not the relation but the relation's relating to itself.*



# Small Group Discussion Questions

- ❖ Do you think of your “self” as a spirit, the spirited component of the life you have lived so far?
- ❖ Is the “self” a conjoining of these binary opposites, activity driven, a creative act whereby we are making ourselves what we are and what we are to become?
- ❖ Which of the binary opposites do you relate to the most, and how does the misrelation between the two cause you despair, or does it?
- ❖ Recall the binary opposites: Terrestrial/Celestial; Human/Divine; Finite/Infinite; Temporal/Eternal; Necessary/Freedom; and Actual/Possible.
- ❖ Refer to the handout as well if you need a reminder of the diagram.

# Kierkegaardian Ethics: A Concrete Example

- **TRANSFORMATION OF THE PASSIONS: ROMANTIC LOVE TO MARRIAGE**
  - Marriage as ethical, lends to ethical openness (versus aesthetic concealment)
- The importance of choice for an **AUTHENTIC LIFE** (existentialism)
- **For Kierkegaard, choosing aesthetically is not choosing at all! (This is the first of the three ethical stages: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.**
  - There arises the need to choose choice itself, taking responsibility for the person he has become.
- Self-acceptance (**facticity in the world**) versus self-alienation; The **"I" CHOOSES ITSELF.**
- Seeking a balance between Possibility (too much choice, paralysis of the Will)/Necessity (complete absence of choice).
- **Voluntary self-limitation:** Devotion to work, his wife, his children **less a sacrifice** than the source of joy and satisfaction (God) (**RELIGIOUS PHASE**)
- The ethical only **appears** to be grounded in social requirements and expectations for Kierkegaard, but.... The religious life also comes into play (and Kierkegaard is highly critical of organized religion!). So, we are moving toward a more personal relationship with God.

# The Inward Journey to God

- **Despair as a misrelation of the synthesis, a sickness of the spirit**
- ***The Sickness Unto Death***
- **Knowing oneself in relation to God**
- **Standing before God from within**
- **The “leap of faith” towards the Kingdom of God**
- **The inward journey of despair into hope  Genuine freedom**

# Discussion Questions

- ❖ How does one **"stand before God" from within**? What does one say to God or one's Higher Power; Universal Truth, or Intelligent Designer?
- ❖ If one knows oneself in relation to God (the higher self-God relationship relating to the self-self relationship, which is a constant oscillation relating itself to the relation's relation), how does one move from **possibility** to **actuality** when taking "the leap of faith" to **repair the misrelation** of the aspect of the synthesis which is producing despair in the concrete world ("Here")?
- ❖ When taking **"the leap of faith"**, how does one let go of all the attachments to despair that arise in the often-longstanding misrelation that has been plaguing the individual without their knowledge?

# A Challenge to Kierkegaard's Original Synthesis and the Inward Journey to God

**SARTRE, DE BEAUVOIR,  
AND THE FREEDOM OF THE  
FOR-ITSELF**



# Discussion Questions

- ❖ What is the most significant aspect of Sartre and De Beauvoir's challenge to Kierkegaard's "Original Synthesis"?
- ❖ What is the most significant aspect of their challenge to Kierkegaard's Inward Journey to God?
- ❖ Does their idea of the Synthesis work without God?
- ❖ Can the Being-for-Itself make meaning out of life without God in the movement of the transcendent ego? Why or why not?
- ❖ Which approach are you most attracted to and WHY?

# SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S APPROACH TO FREEDOM



- ❖ *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947)
- ❖ De Beauvoir sets herself apart from Sartre
- ❖ The journey from Sartrean absurdity (meaninglessness/no meaning at all) to ambiguity (no *fixed* meaning)
- ❖ "To make myself a "lack of being is indeed to make *something out of nothing*"
- ❖ **FOCUS:** The exercise of freedom is *always* an ethical act
- ❖ "Freedom wills itself only by destining itself to an open future, by seeking to extend itself by means of the freedom of others"
- ❖ We move **AWAY/TOWARD** subjectivity through **SEVEN ARCHETYPES**

## AWAY FROM SUBJECTIVITY

- ❖ THE "SUB-MAN"
- ❖ THE SERIOUS MAN
- ❖ THE NIHILIST

## TOWARD SUBJECTIVITY

- ❖ THE ADVENTURER
- ❖ THE PASSIONATE MAN
- ❖ THE INDEPENDENT MAN
- ❖ THE CREATOR

# Kierkegaard's Freedom in Faith

- **Freedom is anchored in the objectivity of the Incarnation at the intersection of Eternity and Time**
- **Freedom is choosing in accordance with essence: self as spirit**
- **Christ is the object of Kierkegaardian ethics; the Theology of Grace**
- **"To work out your own salvation through fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you"  
(Philippians 2:12)**
- **The spirit of true Christian charity**
- **Social responsibility to others**

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- HOW DO KIERKEGAARDIAN ETHICS (THE THREE ETHICAL STAGES: AESTHETIC, ETHICAL, AND RELIGIOUS) LEAD TO THE INWARD JOURNEY TO GOD?
- IS SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S APPROACH TO ETHICS IN *THE ETHICS OF AMBIGUITY* CLOSER TO KIERKEGAARDIAN ETHICS THAN THOSE OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S, OR IS THERE NO ROOM FOR AN ATHEISTIC EXISTENTIALIST POSITION IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF KIERKEGAARDIAN ETHICS?
- CAN KIERKEGAARD'S CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM IN FAITH BE EXTENDED TO OTHER RELIGIONS? HOW SO, OR HOW NOT SO?
- CAN AN ATHEIST/AGNOSTIC/SECULAR HUMANIST BENEFIT FROM KIERKEGAARD'S FREEDOM IN FAITH?

# LOOKING FORWARD: WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2025 (CONCLUSION OF THIS COURSE)

- ❖ OVERVIEW AND BRIEF REVIEW OF TODAY'S SLIDES
- ❖ LARGE DISCUSSION GROUP QUESTIONS (FROM TODAY)
- ❖ TIME AND THE UNITY OF TEMPORALITY AND ETERNITY
- ❖ TIME AND ETERNITY
- ❖ SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
- ❖ THE UNITY OF TEMPORALITY AND ETERNITY: KIERKEGAARD'S "LEAP OF FAITH" AND THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIANITY
- ❖ SHORT VIDEO CLIP: [JESUS GIVES THE BEATITUDES TO MATTHEW \(THE CHOSEN SCENE\)](#)
- ❖ CONCLUSION: KIERKEGAARD'S GENUINE FREEDOM
- ❖ FINAL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
- ❖ CLOSING REMARKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH