

In Defense of the Devil's Despair: An Argument based on Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*

I. Introduction

- Kierkegaard's analysis of demonic despair in the *Sickness unto Death* provides significant new insight into Milton's Satan
- The devil's despair is the highest form of despair

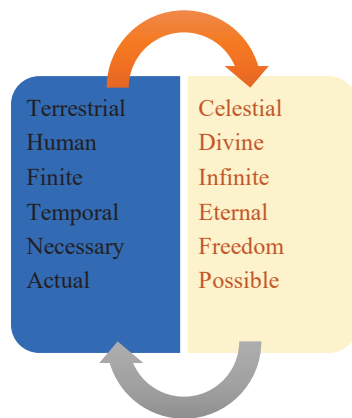
II. *Paradise Lost* (1667)

- Two main narrative arcs:
 - Man's fall from Grace (Genesis)
 - Satan's fall from Grace (Books I-IV)

III. *A Sickness unto Death* (1849)

- Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead
- The failure of the Christian faith which manifests in forms of despair
- Edification, uplifting, awakening for the Christian soul
- Standing before the face of God – **the leap of faith**

IV. 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*

V. Forms of Despair (misrelation/imbalance of the polarities)

- The devil as sheer spirit and pure consciousness
- The despair of wanting in despair to be oneself = **defiance**

VI. Consciousness

- Self in conscious despair: More will to be oneself or to not be oneself
- Awareness of transgressions/despair itself

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- Responsibility to self/God/self-God (eternal) relation

VII. Separation from God

- Despair and Sin
- The Devil in Despair: **“unqualified consciousness and transparency”**
- A “mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time”
- A **“Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n”**

VIII. Satan the Anti-Hero?

- Sympathy for the devil?
- The connection between the Poet and the Devil
- After “the Vain Warr with Heav'n”, of what does the devil despair?

IX. Defiance

- Loss of status in heaven/Replaced by the Son (Christ)
- The power of choice (free will) versus divine (objective) Good
- *And just because it is very close to the truth, it is infinitely far away.*

X. The Power of Creation

- **The Grand Design**
- Poetic despair: creating small worlds as “author, creator, master”, giving the illusion of an elevated self in pure consciousness
- The fantasy of self-creation: Satan's beginning as, in fact, *the Beginning*
- Willing-to-act in actuality

XI. Demonic Despair

- A despair which exceeds knowability
- Demonic rage against all of existence
- Lucifer, the Morning Star/ Taking offense at all existence

XII. Self-Enclosing Despair

- A Vicious Circle
- The existential hell: the will to act but the inability to truly act
- The inability to let go of God

XIII. Conclusion

- *Indesluttethed; Verschlossenheit*: uncommunicativeness, self-enclosure, enclosing reserve, and reticence