

Chapter One



Metaphysics of Motion

The task of becoming a Christian” is the problem and the purpose of Kierkegaard’s whole authorship, and the “becoming” in question here is not incidental or external to its “task” of Christianity, but rather essential to it. A Christian is after all an existing individual, and to exist means to be inescapably in a process of becoming. Kierkegaard’s concern is about *how* this human becoming is to be channeled toward Christianity: what does it mean to become a Christian, and how is this possible?

Questions about the significance and possibility of becoming have a history as old as philosophy itself. The concept of becoming that has been discussed and developed throughout this history has its roots in the Greek *kinesis*, which translates into English as both movement and change. The experience of becoming, of the emergence and passing away of things, was to ancient minds a source of the wonder that led them to seek insight into the powers at work in the world. The philosophical tradition has since remained preoccupied with comprehending and articulating the unfolding, *kinetic* nature of existence. Kierkegaard’s enquiry into becoming from the perspective of the task of Christianity is, of course, positioned rather differently from the Greeks’ attempts to make sense of the *cosmos*—but the revival of these earliest debates about the possibility of motion is integral to his project of creating an ‘existentialist’ philosophy. In particular, Aristotle’s theories and categories, which were developed above all in order to account for *kinesis*, provided Kierkegaard with a conceptual framework that could be adapted to his own analysis of religious becoming. If we want to understand the significance of movement both for philosophy in general

and for Kierkegaard in particular, the ancient Greek metaphysics of motion is the best place to begin.

Heraclitus taught that everything is constantly in motion, at once coming into being and passing away, flowing like “an ever-living fire.” This philosophy of flux means that the appearance of solid, individual things is an illusion and leads to the conclusion that knowledge is impossible. This tension between movement and knowledge proved to be the greatest problem (*aporia*: literally, difficulty of passage) in Greek thought: although we see things moving around and changing, how are we to conceive of this logically? If something is now one way and then another, is there a moment when it is neither? Or when it is both? And how can something come into being when it is preceded by nothing? If something changes, in what sense is it still the same thing?

One solution to the *aporia* of becoming, favored by the Eleatic school of philosophers, was to claim that change is impossible and thus unreal. Parmenides's poem *Way of Truth* argues that “what is” is one and indivisible, subject neither to coming to be nor to destruction. Here the pursuit of knowledge and its requirement of intelligibility override the evidence of sense perception. Indeed, both Heraclitus and Parmenides approach the question of motion by suggesting that things are not as they appear to be: one denies the reality of enduring individual things, and the other denies the reality of their movement. The mystery of becoming provides an impulse to metaphysics by making appearances questionable.

Plato's more sophisticated ontology in a way combines the views of Heraclitus and the Eleatics. Plato agrees with the former that the physical world is a flowing stream of becoming that cannot yield knowledge of the truth, but he avoids Heraclitus's skeptical conclusions by positing, like Parmenides, a superior reality that is eternal, unchanging, and intelligible. For Plato, the realm of Forms or Ideas is “really real,” whereas apparent, particular things, “tossed about” between being and not-being, are like mere shadows of what properly exists. This view of becoming as a lesser kind of being means that a philosopher's priority is to contemplate the Forms rather than to investigate kinesis. Plato does provide some discussion of movement: notably, in the *Laws* he distinguishes ten kinds of motion, ending with “life” that moves both itself and other things. This concept of life as the source of motion is used to argue that the soul, as the giver of life, is immortal; and in the *Timaeus* God is portrayed as the “best soul,” the self-moved mover of the best motions. However, throughout Plato's works the movements of souls are subordinated to the Form of the Good, and he does not offer what we, since Aristotle, would recognize as a full account of motion.

Aristotle is the first philosopher to be committed equally to the intelligibility of the world and to the reality of movement. In all fields of enquiry, his investigations aim as far as possible to explain the *phenomena* (not only the appearances of things, but also common opinions about them) that present themselves to experience, and he is dismissive of the Eleatics' attempt to refute the self-evident fact of motion:

The first of those who studied philosophy were misled in their search for the truth and the nature of things by their inexperience, which as it were thrust them into another path. So they say that none of the things that are either comes to be or passes out of existence, because what comes to be must do so either from what is or from what is not, both of which are impossible.¹

Aristotle addresses more seriously the materialist theories of change that had been proposed as an alternative to Parmenides's denial of movement: he argues that viewing all kinesis as a rearrangement of atoms fails to account for qualitative change. Above all, though, Aristotle's investigations of the cosmos under the titles of *Physics* and *Metaphysics* are concerned to show that the dualistic ontology offered by Plato's doctrine of the Forms cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of becoming.



For Aristotle, wisdom consists in “knowledge of primary causes and principles”: while Plato's philosophical enquiry aims to establish the definitions or essences of beings, through reference to transcendent Forms, Aristotle is committed also to explaining how things operate. He is interested in the processes of nature, and particularly in causation; by distinguishing between different kinds of causes, and between different categories of being, he attempts to articulate and to analyze the powers of becoming. In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle offers many objections to Platonic Forms, but suggests that their most serious weakness is their failure to account for kinesis: “Above all we might examine the question of what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things . . . for they are not the cause of any motion or change in them.”² This criticism of Platonic idealism helps to illuminate the significance of Aristotle's philosophy for Kierkegaard, because it provides a parallel to his existentialist critique of Hegelian thought. In 1841 Kierkegaard recorded this quotation from the *Metaphysics* in his notes on Schelling's lectures, adding that “Aristotle . . . censures those who want to grasp actuality *en tois logois*. He censures

Plato's doctrine of the participation of things in the ideas and calls this *kenologein* [using empty words]."³ Kierkegaard, like Aristotle, argues that Ideas alone cannot cause movement and cannot account for actuality; both thinkers counteract idealism by searching for a source of motion *within* existing things.

Aristotle begins his treatise on *Physics* by identifying things that "exist by nature," or "have a nature," as those beings that have in themselves a principle of motion and rest. Nature (*phusis*) is "a cause that operates for a purpose"; a process of development toward a *telos*. Aristotle emphasizes that "nature is always in a subject (*hypokeimenon*)," which means that this autonomous sort of motion takes place on the basis of an underlying, relatively enduring thing. Unlike previous philosophers, he views movement as the inner activity of things, as their "innate impulse to change." For Plato, this inner power is flighty: the winged soul for a while sacrifices its freedom in order to animate a body, but always leaves this behind again in its pursuit of higher things. Aristotle is more inclined to accept finitude, and this allows him to achieve a deeper analysis of worldly beings.

Having defined nature in terms of teleological movement and change, Aristotle goes on to offer a more precise account of kinesis. He introduces some clarity into the debates over the aporia of becoming by emphasizing the distinction between "potentiality," *dunamis*, and "actuality," *energeia*. The Greek *dunamis* can mean power, capacity, or even faculty (Aristotle refers to the *dunameis* of the soul), and *energeia* signifies activity, fulfillment—but here these terms are used to crystallize aspects of the process of natural development. For example, a seed is 'potentially' what the mature plant is 'actually'; bronze and the sculptor's craft together provide the potentiality of a statue, which is actualized during the formation of the figure. There is some correspondence between potentiality and actuality, and matter and form, but the former opposition makes explicit the dynamic quality of beings. Actualities, or forms, are not transcendent and separate entities, as conceived by Plato, but rather are gradually brought into being during a process of change. Aristotle suggests that his predecessors' difficulties in making sense of kinesis were due to the fact that it can be classified as neither potentiality nor actuality: movement must be understood as the passage from one to the other. "Motion is an incomplete fulfillment of the movable"; "motion occurs just when the fulfillment itself occurs, and neither before nor after." Kinesis is, then, a category of transition, and it signifies a process of actualization.

In a sense, Aristotle's entire philosophy can be viewed as responsive to the question of movement. The concepts integral to his ontology each

provide a kind of anchor for his vision of becoming: not only his analysis of causation and his distinction between potentiality and actuality, but also his doctrines of substance and soul, his principles of logic, and his notion of God function to make intelligible the processes of the cosmos. Aristotle's categories of being—substance, quality, quantity, relation, position, and so on—are used to distinguish different kinds of change and to prevent confusion between them: ruling out the possibility of transition from nothing to something in the category of substance (so that the cosmos as a whole cannot have come into being, and must therefore be eternal) does not mean that we have to deny qualitative becoming, growth, or locomotion.

Aristotle makes use of his concepts of potentiality and actuality to define both God and the soul. He describes the soul, rather obscurely, as “an actuality of the first kind of a natural body having life potentially in it.” A human soul can be identified with its various *dunamis* such as growth, sensation, locomotion, desire, and reason, and these constitute the life force of the individual. Aristotle's doctrine of the soul provides the link between his physics and his theology, for the motions of the soul tend purposefully toward God as the sustaining principle of the cosmos as a whole.

For Aristotle, God occupies a necessary role as the ultimate source of motion—not because the cosmos requires a creator but, on the contrary, because its processes can only be conceived as eternal: “since there must be motion without intermission, there must necessarily be something eternal . . . that first imparts motion, and this first mover must be unmoved.” Aristotle's insistence in the *Metaphysics* that God is himself unmoved aims to provide an explanatory first cause that will prevent further questions as to the source of *his* movement, but this argument is also supported by the distinction between potentiality and actuality. The primary source of motion in the cosmos must be actual, for something that merely has a potential need not exercise it, and this is inconsistent with the eternity of movement. Because God must be fully actual, he must also be unmoved given that motion implies potentiality; something undergoes change *insofar* as it possesses the potential to do so.

How can something move without being moved? Aristotle suggests that “the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way”: these are “final causes” of movement by virtue of their goodness (apparently good in the case of desire, and really good in the case of thought). An example of an unmoved mover, or final cause, is a big cream cake in the window of a baker's shop: motionless, it moves a passer-by into the shop to buy herself a cake. Of course, this is merely an apparent good, whereas the final cause of all motion in the universe must be a real good from every point of view.

This objective good is, for Aristotle, the perfect order and proper functioning of the cosmos. God is himself this order (*logos*); he is an eternal mind or rather an eternal act of thinking that comprehends the order of everything. Aristotle posits at the heart of the cosmos a full, unending activity that secures its intelligibility by causing things consistently to behave, to *become*, in the way they do. Typically keen to ground philosophical knowledge on sense experience, Aristotle finds evidence of this God in the visible circular motions of “the heavens”—the planets, the stars, and the sun.

Aristotle's God is not a personal being that moves things around at will, directing events in the world, but rather the cosmos moves as a response to God. Individual things respond to God by realizing themselves; a desire for realization is built into the soul as an aspect of its essential nature. The actualizing movements of beings are ‘toward God’ not in the sense of a religious relationship, but in the sense that the repeated becoming of particular individuals perpetuates the species, so that each finite thing contributes to a reflection of eternity. We can see how it is natural for Aristotle to see rational thought as the highest activity of human life: our self-realization involves grasping the eternal laws or principles of the dynamic being that God sustains. (This idea echoes throughout the history of philosophy, becoming particularly resonant in Spinoza's *Ethics* and then in Hegel's speculative thought.)

In Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle sets out those principles that, as the laws of both nature and thought, must ground the science of “being as being.” The most certain of all principles is, he suggests, that “the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.” This rule has become known as the principle of contradiction, and for Aristotle it secures the possibility of intelligible discourse: he argues that no one can deny its validity, since as soon as we say anything at all we refer to something that cannot at the same time be something else. Without such a principle, meaning would always remain uncertain. (Of course, in the past few decades several philosophers have affirmed this insecurity of meaning and seem to be quite happy about it. This wasn't an option for Aristotle, though, because his task was to create concepts that could make some sense of a mysterious world. Only because the rational order that he helped to articulate has now become entrenched have more recent writers desired to overcome it.) Aristotle states his principle of contradiction in order to establish that the terms “to be” and “not to be” have a definite meaning—and this is essential to his account of movement, for he is here opposing views such as those of Heraclitus, which “do away with substance and essence.”

Aristotle insists that there must be an underlying thing that persists through change, and that kinesis is the transition between two states that are meaningfully distinct from one another.

So for Aristotle, the intelligibility of movement as well as of substance relies on the logical principle of contradiction. This philosophical issue provides one important starting point of our enquiry, for it establishes a trajectory leading directly to Hegel, and on to Kierkegaard. To anticipate: when Hegel developed his dialectical method, he was attempting to formalize a kind of reasoning more dynamic than the traditional, Aristotelian laws of logic allow, which could more adequately express the dynamic truth of becoming. While Aristotle's logic is based on contradiction (thesis and antithesis), Hegel introduces a triadic form wherein contradiction is mediated by a third, synthetic term. Aristotle, Hegel, and Kierkegaard all agree that contradiction is a condition of movement. However, they have different interpretations of the significance of contradiction: for Aristotle, it *identifies* the thing that moves and the stages of its progress; for Hegel, it leads to a *mediation* of concepts that propels the process of reasoning—and also, ultimately, the development of consciousness itself; for Kierkegaard, it grounds *choice* in the sphere of ethical freedom. As we shall see, Kierkegaard's argument against Hegel returns to Aristotle's insistence that contradiction is final and irreconcilable: he claims that Hegel dissolves differences and oppositions through his dialectical conflation of becoming and rationality, so that only a semblance of motion is possible within his speculative philosophy.



Kierkegaard began to study Aristotle seriously in 1841, when at the age of twenty-eight he went to Berlin after breaking off his engagement to Regine Olsen. While living in Berlin, attending lectures on philosophy and writing *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard further distracted himself from Regine by working his way through W. G. Tenneman's weighty *Geschichte der Philosophie*. This contained a thorough exposition of Aristotle's philosophy, and after Kierkegaard's return to Copenhagen in March 1842 his journal entries begin to reflect his increasing interest in Aristotle—and especially in the concept of kinesis. Kierkegaard was intrigued by Aristotle's view of movement and change as the fulfillment of that which exists potentially. He notes that

the transition from potentiality to actuality is a change [Danish: *forandring*, German *veränderung*]—thus Tenneman translates *kinesis*; if this is correct, this sentence is of the utmost importance. *Kinesis* is difficult to

define, because it belongs neither to possibility nor to actuality, is more than possibility and less than actuality.

A little later he adds that "Hegel has never done justice to the category of transition. It would be significant to compare it with the Aristotelian teaching about *kinesis*." Aristotle became an influential force in Kierkegaard's developing thought because he offered a philosophical discussion of motion that helped to illuminate Kierkegaard's intuition that Hegel's system could not fully accommodate the process of becoming that characterizes existence. No doubt Kierkegaard was acutely aware at this time of the changes going on in his own life, as he grieved for Regine and for his father, and wrestled with questions about his religious and literary vocation.

As Kierkegaard continued his study of Aristotle (often under the guidance of the German logician Trendelenburg, whose work he discovered in 1844), he came to appreciate the importance of the whole conceptual structure of *kinesis*. As we have seen, Aristotle uses the term 'potentiality,' *dunamis*, to express a capacity for movement. *Kinesis*, as the transition from potentiality to actuality, signifies a process of actualization. The accomplishment of Hegelian logic is to mediate this process of actualization, to explicate becoming according to necessary formal laws. Kierkegaard argues, however, that because mediation operates necessarily and immanently—"within reason, within history, within the Hegelian system"—it is not really a *process* at all. More specifically, it is an illusory process, because although it expresses a progression in thought it lacks any power of becoming: *it lacks freedom*. It is this freedom, says Kierkegaard, which makes the transition from potentiality to actuality a real event, a genuine movement, a qualitative change. And this brings us back to Aristotle's definition of *kinesis*. Kierkegaard's understanding of human freedom draws on this concept of *kinesis* as expressing an actualizing power, a kind of capability of becoming. This is illustrated very concisely by his remark, recorded in his journal, that "freedom means to be capable."

This is not to suggest that Kierkegaard simply opposes Aristotle's account of motion to Hegel's. In order to juxtapose, to compare, or to oppose to one another different philosophers' interpretations of movement, we must take into account the basic *position* or locality of each particular account of becoming. That is, we have to ask first of all, *what kind of movement is in question here?*—and even more simply, *what moves? where to?*—before we can raise the question of *how* this motion occurs. In thus describing movements we tend to find ourselves using spatial metaphors: we might say that for Aristotle *the sphere within which* the power of move-

ment operates is the cosmos, the totality of beings made intelligible through an ontology of substance and a logic of contradiction. We could call this 'position' a sphere, realm, region, locale, plane, or even theater of motion. 'Plane of motion' is perhaps the most neutral metaphor, although we must remain aware that its spatiality is indeed metaphorical—at least in the case of certain 'planes.'

'Plane of motion' is a useful expression for several reasons. It helps to clarify comparisons between different accounts of motion: some may operate on the same plane, while others may involve certain fundamental modifications, or even the emergence of a new plane. This will enable us to explore within the context of the philosophical tradition Kierkegaard's thematization of movement *on the plane of existential inwardness*. Transferring certain concepts from Aristotle's metaphysics onto this subjective plane does not make Kierkegaard an Aristotelian, just as occupying a plane that overlaps with Hegel's does not make him Hegelian, and only by understanding this can we begin to make sense of his philosophical position in relation to Aristotle, to Hegel, and to other thinkers. Speaking of a plane of motion may also help us to *visualize* a particular philosophy in its entirety, in its coherence (if it has one). Most importantly, the concept of a plane of motion invokes the question of ground, of truth—to every plane of motion belongs a process of articulation, something like a 'logic' of power expressed—without imposing a single, generalizing logical standard. Our plane of motion owes something to Heidegger's notion of a "clearing" (*lichtung*) or "region" of Being, and also to Deleuze's "plane of immanence," elucidated in *What Is Philosophy?*—though these provide inspiration rather than any kind of precise conceptual grounding. Indeed, this is integral to the spirit of both Heidegger and Deleuze, for each seeks a way of speaking about philosophy that avoids such methodological presuppositions. The meaning and significance of the plane of motion will become increasingly clear through its application, from time to time, as we consider the diverse interpretations of movement offered by Kierkegaard, Hegel, Aristotle, and others.

The plane of motion changes radically during the history of philosophy from Aristotle through to Hegel. Aristotle's enquiry into kinesis seeks to understand the natural world and the order of its processes. On this plane, motions are envisaged as circular, like the heavens, and the relative dimensions of 'external' and 'internal' correspond to physical, sensible beings and their inner principles, potencies, or causes of change. In contrast to Aristotle's scientific and naturalistic position, Kierkegaard inherits from Hegel a spiritual plane of motion, formed by temporality,

subjectivity, and reflexivity, and of course profoundly affected by Christianity. However, Kierkegaard departs crucially from Hegel in locating this plane *within* each existing individual, which alters the perspective entirely. The dynamic self-consciousness that Hegel investigates so thoroughly in its logical and world-historical proportions becomes identified with individuality as *inwardness*. Kierkegaard wants to bring Aristotle's concept of a real transition *into* the realm of inwardness, of the heart's potency, in order to secure its freedom. "Both in his critique of Hegel and in his search for a concept that could serve as the basis for his dynamic, projective conception of human existence, Kierkegaard seized on Aristotle's concept of kinesis, applying it, characteristically, exclusively to man's becoming."⁴ Kierkegaard's task is to transfer the Aristotelian concept of kinesis to a plane of motion that has become synonymous with selfhood; to recreate this actualizing movement according to a 'position' constituted by existential subjectivity and by a Christian consciousness.



The commentaries on Kierkegaard's first pseudonymous publications presented in part 2 will uncover this aspect of his authorship. Because Aristotle, like Hegel, is not discussed explicitly and extensively by the pseudonyms until Johannes Climacus's *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), it is worth looking to these texts for illustrations of Kierkegaard's use and adaptation of Aristotelian ideas. This will help to clarify in a preliminary way the significance of kinesis for the 1843 publications, and so for the development of Kierkegaard's religious existentialism.

As we have seen, Aristotle's philosophy aims to render intelligible movement and change. By insisting on an underlying subject that persists through change, and an "unmoved mover" to which all finite motions can be referred, Aristotle grounds the possibility of a change that is both qualitative and real, securing the distinct power of individual movements. This distinctiveness and individuality is in turn consolidated by the logical principle of contradiction. Aristotle uses the concept of something that is itself unchangeable and static to give coherence to the movements of particular things—and this seems essential because Heraclitus's view that everything is in motion leads to an *aporia* in making sense of change. Johannes Climacus echoes this in an important passage in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

In so far as existence consists in movement there must be something which can give continuity to the movement and hold it together, for otherwise there is no movement. Just as the assertion that everything is

true means that nothing is true, so the assertion that everything is in motion means that there is no motion. The unmoved is therefore a constituent of motion as its measure and its end. Otherwise the assertion that everything is in motion, is *ipso facto* an assertion of a state of rest. Aristotle, who emphasises movement in so many ways, therefore says that God, himself unmoved, moves all.⁵

Although Climacus here agrees with Aristotle that motion requires some factor of constancy, he does not want to locate this constancy in an unchanging God. Aristotelian movement takes place on a cosmological plane, and God at the center of this cosmos provides the eternal element of stability. Climacus, however, wants to find a source of movement within a human being—but he cannot posit the stability of eternity here: “the difficulty facing an existing individual is how to give his existence the continuity without which everything simply vanishes . . . the very existence of the existing individual is sufficient to prevent his continuity from having essential stability.” Lacking the eternal being of God, the individual has to anchor and empower the movement of his consciousness in some other way. The *intensity* of passion, pushed to its maximum by Christian faith (which, Climacus emphasizes, concerns the believer’s *eternal* happiness), functions as a kind of finite approximation to eternity:

Passion gives [the individual] a momentary continuity, a continuity which at one and the same time is a restraining influence and a moving impulse. The goal of movement for an existing individual is to arrive at a decision, and to renew it. The eternal is the factor of continuity; but an abstract eternity is extraneous to the movement of life, and a concrete eternity within the existing individual is the maximum degree of his passion. All idealizing passion is an anticipation of the eternal in existence, functioning so as to help the individual to exist.⁶

Climacus’s criticism of the notion of “an abstract eternity” here is directed at Hegelian philosophy. Passion, he argues, is concrete and actual insofar as it has real power. Because its continuity is “momentary,” passion is preserved only through renewal: a relationship to a loved one (whether human or divine) is not achieved ‘once and for all,’ but at every moment. Throughout his authorship, Kierkegaard emphasizes that faith is always a task, always a movement, not a state one attains in order to find repose.

For Kierkegaard, the Greeks’ philosophical question about the possibility of motion becomes a religious question of *how* the task of Christianity is to be undertaken. Whereas Aristotle insists that kinesis requires

a substance that endures the process of becoming, Johannes Climacus claims in *Philosophical Fragments* that a qualitative transition occurs only “if that which comes into existence *does not in itself remain unchanged* in the process of coming into existence.” This indicates that Kierkegaard’s perspective of existential subjectivity involves the rejection of Aristotle’s substantialist ontology. But if Aristotle needed a concept of substance to ground the coherence of kinesis, how can Kierkegaard account for movement without lapsing back into Heraclitus’s denial of individuality? Or to put it another way, what is the basis of individuality if existence is, without exception, becoming? This question takes us to the heart of the matter, for in order to address it we must consider the Christian consciousness that underpins Kierkegaard’s exploration of these philosophical issues.

Climacus contends that, in the individual’s transition to Christianity, the basis of the self does *not* remain unchanged. He pushes the concept of qualitative movement further than Aristotle, so that *kinesis* becomes the “double movement” of Christianity. The individual’s leap of faith requires a complete transformation of existence; it is the basis of existence itself that is transformed, so that everything upon this basis is renewed. In becoming truly religious the individual gives up the worldly basis of his consciousness, and instead grounds his entire existence in his relationship to God. Human life, suggests Kierkegaard, is not characterized by substantiality: we do not exist independently; we cannot understand ourselves on our own terms; and if we attempt to do so, we are committing an error which, according to Christian doctrine, amounts to sin. Becoming a Christian involves the realization that one owes one’s *actual, becoming* existence to God, and that this truth can only be expressed through a life of faith and thankfulness towards Him.

From his Christian perspective, Kierkegaard transforms Aristotle’s account of kinesis as grounded in substance, while retaining his understanding of movement in terms of a process of actualization (particular ‘hearts’ or ‘souls’ are empowered with the *dunamis* of existential becoming). Something similar happens to Aristotle’s concept of God as the “unmoved mover”: although it finds some sort of approximation in human passion, this pagan deity can have no place in a theology of transcendence and incarnation. Just as the significance of eternity is concentrated within the existing individual as passion, so the power of God is concentrated, particularized, into a human form: the transformation of the individual—the task of becoming religious—is conditioned by the transformation of God. According to Christian teaching this happened once in history, when God incarnated Himself in the life of Jesus. (Though according to

Nietzsche, a subsequent transformation had to follow, for a living God must eventually die.) For Kierkegaard, the miraculous, paradoxical logic of the Christian incarnation eclipses Aristotle's understanding of God as an eternal unmoved mover. In the *Postscript* Climacus suggests (in what seems like a rather Hegelian fashion) that the pagan relationship to God was too ideal—too objective, too external, too *aesthetic*—to facilitate the existential movement that Jesus calls upon his followers to make. Climacus draws our attention to the difference between Aristotle's God, and the God who in becoming a man changes His own being:

The existential sphere of paganism is essentially the aesthetic, and hence it is quite in order for the pagan consciousness to be reflected in the conception of God which holds that He, Himself unchanged, changes all. This is the expression for outwardly directed action. The religious lies in the dialectic of inwardness, and hence it is sympathetic with the conception of God that He is Himself moved, changed.⁷

This does not mean that Kierkegaard rejects the idea of an eternal, constant, unchanging God—indeed, several of his “Edifying Discourses” meditate on “The Unchangeableness of God.” Instead, Kierkegaard repeatedly emphasizes that God's eternity and His historical coming into existence occur alongside one another. This intersection of eternity and temporality is precisely the contradiction, the paradox, which makes the Christian incarnation miraculous, and which requires the individual to make a leap of faith in order to relate to God. Unlike the accounts of self-realization offered by most philosophers—and notably by Hegel and Aristotle—Kierkegaard's “task of becoming a Christian” is not an intellectual act. Christ is encountered as a paradoxical revelation which excites passionate, decisive commitment: a movement of *intensification* in which the individual's consciousness is “raised to the second power,” and her life takes on a higher significance through its direct, personal relationship to God. The freedom of this movement is encountered existentially as a repeated renewal of the moment of choice, and as a repeated transformation of the self.

Kierkegaard found in Aristotle's philosophy a conceptual structure that anchors movement in reality. Aristotle is always concerned to make human experience intelligible and rational. This may appear to be antithetical to Kierkegaard's approach insofar as he challenges the supremacy of reason—and as we have seen, Aristotle's account of motion undergoes significant modification through its relocation to the plane of existential subjectivity. However, it is also true to say that Kierkegaard sought to

make intelligible, both to himself and others, some of his most personal experiences (such as his sense of impotence with regard to committing to Christianity or to marriage), and to articulate the inward processes involved in these existential movements. Aristotle's solutions to the problem of kinesis provided for Kierkegaard a philosophical framework within which to clarify the nature of transitions within the realm of subjective, religious becoming—and also, more intimately, to explore the movements going on within his own troubled soul.