

Hopkins and Kierkegaard: The Christian Existentialist Method of Selving

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ABSTRACT

The Christian Existentialist method of self-actualization is effective because it maintains a clear view of the relational "other," which is essential to a delineation of the boundaries of the self. Between the Romantic and Modern eras, two poets developed such a successful Christian philosophy of the self: Søren Kierkegaard, the father of Christian Existentialism, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Victorian Jesuit. Although there is no direct link between the two men, a Christian Existentialist basis to Hopkins' poetry is evident throughout, for Hopkins finds God in real life, in his unabstracted, temporal existence. Furthermore, the way in which Hopkins finds God, through the act of "inscaping," is remarkably similar to how Kierkegaard's "religious man" develops the God-relationship, that is, through subjectivity. With specific reference to "Pied Beauty," "Hurrahing in Harvest," "As kingfishers catch fire," and "The Windhover," I illustrate how Hopkins' narrator discovers his self and God in a Christian Existentialist manner; with reference to the "terrible sonnets," I show that even the narrator's experience of God's absence reiterates that he is a faithful self-seeker in the Christian Existentialist sense.

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CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM'S REVOLUTIONARY ANSWER TO THE PROBLEMS OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

In British literature, the exploration of and for the self began in the Romantic era, which produced many subtly different philosophies concerning the individual's relationship to "other," whether that "other" is recognized as nature, or God, or a combination of both; to be sure, the concretion of one's concept of "other" is a natural extension of one's delineation of his "self." For the Romantic, the path taken most often by the self-seeking poet is underlain with an affirmation of the autonomous self, and this self's imaginative abilities to create its own external world (Miller, Disappearance 13-14). From that point, "Romantic subjectivism inevitably turn[s] to a 'god' in or of nature" (Downes, Ignatian 59), and the entire finite world surrounding the Romantic artist is transformed by his imagination, by his own *will*, into a manifestation of a deific power "half-created" by the poet's own self. That is, the individual infinitizes himself via his imagination, and then attributes to nature the divinity he has imaginatively constructed within. In other words, the Romantic natural Deity not only depends upon the individual to reveal its self, but is, in fact, a corollary of the poet's self.

One peculiar characteristic of the Romantic method of discovering the self is that the natural Deity cannot actually exist -- autonomously, and with a separate will -- should the Romantic choose not to "remember"¹ it within himself first. It is as though the God in and of nature lies dormant within the innately fully capable, but not always willing, individual until he decides to project God onto finitude, or as though the poet draws Him out of his

¹I echo here the Platonic view that each individual possesses within himself ultimate and eternal Truth, and that the individual need only strive to "remember" this innate point of contact with the Eternal.

own self (now infinitized, via the imagination) and incorporates Him into nature. What is distinctive about this method of discovering the self, and how it relates to "other," is not only that its impetus lies within the self alone, but also that the process ends here. The "other" (be it natural and/or divine) is so inherently connected to the Romantic himself that it cannot be said to exist as a freely willing and autonomous entity of its own; *ergo*, there is no "other." Or perhaps it is the case that all is "other," a contention that cannot be refuted easily when the boundary created by the presence of "other" disappears, in which case there is no distinguishable self. In the final analysis, Romantic pantheism, in which the self is the "first mover" and last stop, cannot be applied existentially² (because it is undeniable that "other" surrounds every finite self), and is purely idealistic -- the typical Romantic poet attempts to transform all of nature into an inner Byzantium. The result of this abstraction is the artist's loss of self, nature, and God.

The ailment of Modernism is somewhat different from the Romantic tendency towards abstraction. As J. Hillis Miller states, "modern times begin when man confronts his isolation, his separation from everything outside himself" (Miller, Disappearance 7). Whereas the Romantic artist suffers from what Kierkegaard calls the "despair of infinitude," an attempt to live only as an idea as opposed to living as a compilation of flesh and bones and soul, the Modern seeker of self lives in "despair of finitude," which means that he knows all too well that he exists within the limits of the material world. While the Romantic spiritually melds with, or appropriates the natural world and God, the typical Modern poet seems to have lost his infinitizing, imaginative³ capabilities; or, at least, what sense of spirit he has he knows only as his own, and does not propose to connect with anything outside of his immediate self, with God or nature, by way of this *immortal* aspect of himself. The boundary between self and "other" is more accurately dubbed a

²I use this word to refer to real, temporal human existence.

³Also in Kierkegaard's philosophy, "imagination is the infinitizing element in a person, allowing him to break with the natural [and objective] realm" (Mullen 49).

"great wall" in respect to the Modern tradition, and isolation and solipsism are its defining characteristics.

Although the Modern poet inherited from the Romantic the task of discovering the self, and the tool of subjectivity,⁴ his perspective is original by virtue of the sheer concentration of his inward gaze: "in the 19th century, the cultural seedbed of Modernism, the central importance of consciousness was located, only to see it atomized into states of dislocation" (Downes, Achieved 145), each of which states possesses no real relation to any "other," natural or divine. In short, while the Romantic self is interconnected with "other" to the point of the dissolution of both, the Modern isolated self remains concrete, and claims no certain knowledge of anything outside of its own particularity -- the Modern era, as J. Hillis Miller indicates, is the age of God's "disappearance." Thus, the Modern artist's relationship with "other" cannot be realized existentially, and, as he is an existing finite being, it is as though there is no "other." It follows that the self is established as the poet's entire world, and in this respect, the self is infinite. Regarded thus, the Modern self appears to be in precisely the same situation as was the Romantic self before it; and, because of the Modern's similar inability to recognize a proper "other," he, too, loses God, nature, and in a conceptually clear sense, his self as well. Even though the initial diagnoses of the Modern and Romantic sick selves may differ somewhat, the prognoses are essentially the same: both are doomed.

The search for self initiated by the Romantics, and continued by the Moderns, is doomed in both cases because of the self-seeker's unwillingness to tear his gaze away from himself in order to realize the necessary relationship with "other." Unwisely, the Romantic is willing to project his imaginatively created selfhood onto some deific "other" (Downes, Achieved 8) so that all reality becomes a subjective reality created by the poet. On the other hand, the Modern is a self-seeker well-versed in the precarious nature of truth in

⁴In his Sanctifying Imagination, D. A. Downes identifies as Romantic the tendency towards subjectivism (77).

regards to outward, objective reality, yet he is also a devotee of rational and non-intuitive knowledge -- types of objective knowledge which are concerned with the comprehension of the material world. Hence, the Modern attempts to understand only his isolated and particular self (and even that in a limited way, since the self is difficult to objectify) because he can relate to the "other" only with frustration and distrust. In reflection upon the search for self in these two eras, one is led to wonder about the same process in the Victorian period of British literature. Some typically Victorian problems have been identified as being "the identity of the self and the relation of the self to nature" (Smith 173), and, as such, are closely connected to Romantic concerns. To be sure, it was the Victorian's Romantic forefathers who gave him nature as the stable outside point of reference in his subjective discovery of self. Increasingly, though, nature was being transformed by the ravages of industrialization and becoming more of a symbol of transience⁵; furthermore, the Victorian's ever more familiar environment, namely the city, was itself constantly growing and changing. In light of this situation, it is not surprising to see, particularly in the prose literature of that period (Dickens, Butler), that the Victorian artist shared some of the Modern's *distrust* of his environment (which is, essentially, "other"). Indeed, the Victorians were culturally in a position to strike a balance between the extremes of the pure abstractionism of the Romantics and the isolatory particularism of the Moderns, but in reality most of them merely opted for one of the two paths in the search for self.

However, one British Victorian did opt for an existentially feasible method of self-actualization, a way of realizing the self by recognizing equally both man's spiritual (and infinitizing, or imaginative) nature, as well as his physical aspect (that is, his isolatedness, particularity and individuality). The method is effective because it retains ceaselessly a clear, reflective awareness of the relational "other"; in fact, this unique self-actualizing process is inspired by, can only be fulfilled through, and culminates in a relationship with

⁵The 123rd section of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" exemplifies this claim.

"other." The "other" in this case is God, who is the omnipresent source and end of all things, and who is also the transcendent giver of free will. The method of discovering one's relationship with God, and, thereby, delineating self is what is dubbed today "Christian Existentialism." The British Victorian who dramatically illustrated Christian Existentialism in his poetry is the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889).

Of course, Hopkins did not identify his self-actualizing process as "Christian Existentialism," a more recent term that refers to a branch of philosophy introduced by the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855); and, although the two men existed in the same era, one can be reasonably certain that Hopkins had never been exposed to Kierkegaard's then revolutionary philosophy.⁶ Yet, while there are no direct links between Hopkins and Kierkegaard, they do share the influence of Romantic literature: the youthful Kierkegaard was enthralled with German Romanticism (Mullen 14), while the early poetry of Hopkins testifies to his admiration of Keats (e.g. "A Vision of Mermaids"). This common influence is evidenced in both poets'⁷ writing on subjectivity, and on the concept that the existence of a real point of contact between man and God is revealed in the search for self.

One must not assume, however, that Hopkins and Kierkegaard were Romantics, for they pondered the issue of God's immanence with an extremely critical eye, and their view of it is closely tied up with a typically Modern understanding of God's absence from the world and from the individual. As will be explored in fuller detail later, both Hopkins and Kierkegaard posit the possibility that man can have some kind of relationship, some kind of real connection, with God; and as Kierkegaard explains in the opening passage of Philosophical Fragments, there must be an element of the eternal and infinite (and, therefore, different and "other") object that is Truth in humanity (a somewhat Romantic

⁶However, Hopkins was aware of Kierkegaard's nemesis, Hegel, and mentions him in a letter to Robert Bridges dated February 20, 1875: "I have no time to read even the English books about Hegel, much less the original, indeed, I know almost no German" (Phillips 80). To the best of my knowledge, Hopkins does not make reference to the philosopher again in his writings.

⁷Indeed, Kierkegaard applied to himself the term "poet" to the end of his days (Brettall 108).

notion) in order for its finite members to have the capacity even to conceptualize Truth,⁸ much less form a relationship with It as God. Yet, both poets also believe that humans are really in Untruth, and have no innate point of contact with the Infinite⁹ (because humans, as finite beings both in body and soul, have a nature that is *essentially* different from that of infinite God, or "other"). This belief in the possibility of a relationship between God and the fallen human individual is a belief that is rationally ludicrous and contradictory, and that is at the root of Christian Existentialism. The seemingly impossible situation which is the object of this belief can only be made possible by the Incarnation: Christ himself is the element of Truth in humanity. His historical presence affords humankind the possibility, dependent upon the *subjective* movement of faith, to conceptualize God and have a true relationship with Him in Faith.¹⁰

As was pointed out at the beginning of this section, there must be an "other" in order for there to be a self. The Romantics understood that there has to be an element of the "other" in the individual in order for the individual to apprehend, recognize, and have any kind of relationship with the "other."¹¹ But because of their new-found appreciation for the self, and because of the eagerness with which they sought it, the Romantics came to understand "other" only as an extension of the beloved self. The Moderns, by contrast, understood perfectly that "other" is precisely that which is entirely different from self; in fact, they understood this situation so well that they did not posit any kind of relationship, or point of connection, between the two separate entities. Hopkins and Kierkegaard,

⁸Kierkegaard states this situation thus: the Truth is always "something to be learned . . . [and] the object of an inquiry" or search, but what a man "does not [already] know he cannot seek, since he does not even know for what to seek" (11). Indeed, a man blind since birth could never conceive of light.

⁹The helplessness of humans to establish a relationship with God by their own efforts alone is illustrated dramatically in the "terrible sonnets," a discussion of which will follow.

¹⁰In Philosophical Fragments (108), Kierkegaard distinguishes between personal belief/faith that is an act of the individual's own will to accept as Truth a logical uncertainty, and Faith that is a genuine point of contact with, or apprehension of, God, and which can only be granted by Him (and makes the individual Christ-like because it means having within oneself the element in common with the infinite "other" that is essential to the formation of a relationship with "other"). To maintain this distinction, I will use "faith" to refer to the former concept, and "Faith" to refer to the latter of the two.

¹¹See footnote eight for further discussion of this concept.

given their cultural position between the Romantic era and the Modern era, were privy to both perspectives (or, at least, they could glimpse the beginnings of the Modern response to the environmental "other"). These perspectives each man amalgamated to form a perfectly balanced concept of self, and each did so faithfully using the tenets of Christianity.

The existentially irreconcilable difference between the limited and finite self, and the incomprehensible and infinite "other," is reconciled in Christ, Who is both the infinite "other," as well as an objectively comprehensible isolated particular -- or, in other words, a human. He is the perfect *self* because he has the Infinite (which is, to fallen humans, "other") within himself, enabling him to perfectly understand it, but he also has the Infinite without, enabling him to distinguish his particular selfness from the relational "other." Christ is also "proof" that the perfect self can be human, that the Infinite and the finite can exist in a human body (Hannay 48), and, as such, is the model of perfected human selfhood. Furthermore, by having faith in the reality of the "absolute Paradox" (K. Anth 109) that was Jesus Christ, by attempting to extend one's simple understanding of Him as a human to cover His Godliness as well, the individual can have a real relationship and point of connection with God; in this way, he becomes like Christ in that he, too, is enabled to distinguish his particular selfness from the relational "other," which is to say that the individual perfects his own selfhood. Indeed, to Hopkins and Kierkegaard, and to all Christian Existentialists, Christ's self was the height of human selfhood, and all self-seekers must model themselves after Him by forming a relationship with Him.

"DRAW LIKE BREATH/ MORE CHRIST": EARTHLY CHRIST, ACCESSIBLE GOD

The self is a conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God.

Søren Kierkegaard

This quotation from The Sickness Unto Death (162) illustrates clearly the major tenets of Christian Existentialism. First of all, it indicates that the main interest and goal of the philosophy is the human self: to explore what comprises the self, and to set about the "task" of realizing that self. Though seemingly insignificant, the term "task" is also essential because it reminds us not only that an essential part of existing is acting and doing (i.e. performing a task), but also that an individual in his initial natural state is not an achieved self, and must work at becoming a self. Most significantly, the two elements that make up a self are identified in this quotation -- infinitude and finitude -- and we are informed of the vigilance with which the proper self synthesizes these two elements, as the self must always do so "consciously."¹ Finally, this "task . . . can be performed only by means of a relationship to God," and with this clarification the process hitherto described is put into its true light, allowing its essence to shine through. *Christ* is the model of the achieved human self, the perfect combination of infinitude and finitude, and the human individual must strive inwardly to become as aware of his infinite Source as Christ was.² All of these aspects of the Christian Existentialist process of becoming a self are essential,

¹Kierkegaard also refers to this self-reflectiveness as "inwardness" or "subjectivity," and so will I.

²By having faith in Christ's divinity and faith in God's finitude as Christ, one accepts the possibility of having a relationship with God, and in realizing this point of connection with God the individual realizes his own Christliness.

but they are not realized simultaneously; one must begin by confronting an aspect of himself which should be most obvious to him, as, indeed, it is most inescapable -- his finitude. As will be elucidated in this chapter, it is precisely through the means of temporality, the medium of his temporal existence, that man may apprehend God and form a relationship with him.

In speaking of the Christian Existentialist's task to realize the "God-relationship" (Postscript 219), Kierkegaard states simply that "temporality, finitude is what it all turns on" (Fear 78) to emphasize the "consciousness" that is necessary during one's infinitization of himself through inwardness. Indeed, although "inwardness . . . is the determinant of the eternal in man" (Dread 131), he must retain a ceaseless awareness of the temporal reality of his finite existence. One must not allow himself to believe that he can shed his temporality as a butterfly sheds its cocoon, that he can become an abstract "moment in the Absolute Mind" as do the Hegelians, or that he can become a "half-creating" demi-god as do the Romantics. Once the self-seeker has accepted that he has infinitude within himself, being a "soulishly determined" human (Dread 111), he must live up to the tension of being a distinct combination of dichotomous elements³ by constantly relating his spirituality to the unavoidable fact of his materiality. And since particularity and isolatedness are defining characteristics of beings in the material world, while selfhood and individuality are themselves inextricable from particularity (as opposed to Romantic abstraction), the worldly individual must learn to focus on distinctiveness and particularity, especially in himself. It may seem that such spiritual isolation would preclude a relationship with God as the Infinite, the One. However, to have faith in Christ is to believe that God, the Infinite, became this particular finite individual -- and such faith is not simply a matter of imagining infinitude, but is the acceptance that we are given the opportunity to relate to God through temporal means, particularity and all, if the passion of inwardness is present.

³To do so is to live "authentically," to live in "existential paradox," and to live with no little degree of discomfort in constantly trying to reconcile these mutually repellent aspects of himself (Mullen 46).

Although the Christian Existentialist agenda may seem, at times, to tend towards imaginative abstraction in its adherence to the value of "inwardness" in the search for truth, it always affirms the importance of finite particularity, of individualism, not only in its goal of the achievement of distinct selfhood, but also in the Christian basis of the philosophy. As Kierkegaard states the case in Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments, "because the eternal itself has entered time and would constitute there the kinship" (507), the individual must work to re-establish his relationship with God using the tools supplied by the temporal world.

For Gerard Manley Hopkins, utilizing the individuality found in the temporal world, in order to regain a relationship with God, involves focusing on the *multitude* of particulars in nature. This outlook is connected to Hopkins' most powerful inspiration -- that of "the Great Sacrifice"; it was "the private ideal of his own life, and his own special insight into the mind and heart of God" (Devlin 107). It was also the basis of his truly *existential* Christian outlook, as the concept approached Christ's presence on earth in terms of the perceptual limitations of the earthly individual as a finite being. Hopkins himself explains "the Great Sacrifice" in the following way: "Since He was God himself he could not perform an act of inferior nature, so from all eternity He willed to become a creature so as to express that aspect of his love which was impossible to him as God alone" (Devlin 109). In other words, God became human so that he could actually communicate His presence to us in a language that we can hear -- the language of finitude. Nor is Hopkins' understanding of the Incarnation limited in reference to Christ's body only, but encompasses all of nature (Harris 40; Downes, Sanctifying 36; Walhout 81). And while Kierkegaard claims that the actuality of God's relationship to each human can be realized through inwardness, Hopkins implies a similar view in his spiritual writings, which show that such faithful apprehension, called "inscaping" by him, is realized in the "intellectual imagination" (Devlin 136). In Hopkins' philosophy, the "inscape" of a thing is its "especial" ("Binsey Poplars" l. 23) presence in a world of finite particulars that reveals its

unity with all other things when the perceiver, or inscaper, infuses his objective powers of perception with imagination, or subjectivity. In short, inscape is the temporal presence of God (Cotter 20; Downes, Sanctifying 21), and the perceptual act of inscaping is the apprehension of the One in the one. Kierkegaard eloquently sums up the Christian Existentialist belief, and unwittingly echoes Hopkins' concept of Real Presence⁴ when he states,

Nature, the totality of created things, is the work of God.
And yet God is not there; but within the individual man
there is a potentiality (man is potentially spirit) which is
awakened in inwardness to become a God-relationship,
and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere.
(Postscript 221)

Hopkins' curtal sonnet, "Pied Beauty," is a celebration of individuality, the defining characteristic of finitude, as the indicator of the One who unites all various creatures. To emphasize the wonder of such an apparent contradiction, Hopkins opens this existential prayer with a description of those aspects of nature which are "counter" (l. 7). He describes skies of varying colour, probably blue skies with crisp-edged clouds, as appearing like the flank of a "brinded," or brindled, cow. While the individuating colour pattern of each natural phenomenon is within itself contrasting, the real contradiction in this second line lies between the disparate phenomena themselves; that which floats far above us is revealed to be similar to that which is firmly grounded, that which is associated with heaven and man's fondest dreams is compared to a humble cow. The third line includes a similar situation. The rose is reputed to be the most beautiful flower on earth, and is the symbol of love, man's finest emotion. Yet, Hopkins joins (with a hyphen) the word "rose" to "mole," the latter of which refers to a type of blemish, and uses the resulting combination to identify the markings on a lowly trout's skin, which one might

⁴In his Inspirations Unbidden, Harris maintains that Hopkins "transferred to the phenomena of nature the Tractarian doctrine of the Real Presence, the theological concept that the bread and wine of the Eucharist are not emblems or commemorations of Christ, but rather his mystical, and mystically real, substance" (Harris 40). I will use the phrase "Real Presence," as well as "Incarnation," to refer to this concept.

expect to be described only in terms of its slimy texture. Simple or majestic, each thing described is highly individual, with an inevitably differing mottled pattern that would distinguish it even from others of its own kind, and is almost the opposite of that to which it is compared in the poem. The import of these strange metaphors is to echo another apparent contradiction -- that individuality and particularity themselves afford a clearer view of the Absolute.

The next two lines continue the theme of mottled natural phenomena; "finches wings" conjures up an image of speckled-feathers, while the firecoal-red "chestnut[s] fall[en]" on the ground compose a similar mental scene of variegated expanse. It is the fifth line, however, that is particularly revelatory of Hopkins' purpose in the poem, for it introduces the products of man's labour -- in this case a farmer's field -- as an instance of "dappledness." Hopkins continues to only *indicate* man in the sixth line, where he evinces the various "gear and tackle and trim" that bedecks the workers of trades. What is striking about both of these lines is that man himself appears nowhere. Nor is he evident at any other point in the piece; the only slight reference to him is in the phrase "who knows how?" (of the eighth line), but this question, being rhetorical, indicates that the answer is "no one." Still, man *is* indicated through the discussion of the different tools and end-products of "all trades" (which are nothing without the workers), as the implied narrator (who is active in praying), and as the reader himself (who is the ghostly subject of the imperative that ends the poem). Hopkins creates this situation in order to illuminate his real topic, which is not just earthly individuality *per se*, but such particularity as the representation of the One to man. The poet chooses not to discuss the implications of this divine communication for man -- like any good listener his focus is on the speaker and the speaker's "words," and not himself.

J. Hillis Miller explains that "man's only knowledge is through sensation" and comparison, by which he differentiates one being from another -- "piedness is necessary to knowledge of the world, and God cannot be known directly as the pure One"

(Disappearance 304). Thus, Hopkins highlights the pied temporality that surrounds the individual, but does not imply that God can be seen directly there. What he does claim is this: the individual, who is, indeed, bound to sensory perception because of his finitude, has also the infinite element of soul⁵ which houses personal faith, and upon which God bestows Faith; this Faith, though indirect and non-logical, is the real point of "knowing" Him. According to Hopkins, it is through the highly particularized, individual beings in man's earthly surroundings that God reveals His Presence, the inscape of things, to the subjective inscaper's soul. In this way man is absolutely required to live authentically as an amalgamation of infinitude and finitude if he wishes to have a relationship with God. This desire is, by the way, inextricable from the desire to be a self.⁶ It is therefore clear why it is "dappled things" that inspire Hopkins to give God glory in this stanza: it is by their differentiation that the poet sensually perceives them, and by inscaping each particularity that he perceives God.

The second stanza is essentially a recapitulation of particularizing characteristics of temporal beings, but some of the adjectives Hopkins uses to refer to these characteristics emphasize an aspect of the Incarnation that the reader might have missed in the first stanza. Such descriptive words as "spare," "strange," and "fickle" have a deprecatory quality that indicates the lowness, the humility, of natural beings. This realization leads one to notice the lowness of the subjects in the first stanza, as well: cows, fish, chestnuts and finches have unassuming, unpretentious presences, while the practical products of farmers and tradesmen comprise the mere necessities of temporal life. In the spirit of existentialism, Hopkins accents the commonness of these "words" by which God reveals Himself to humans, for such lowly objects are everywhere to be seen in life, and are as

⁵Hence, unlike natural things, man cannot communicate God to the world merely through his finite presence because he is, as a complete self, much more than finitude alone. As it is revealed in Hopkins' "As kingfishers catch fire," man communicates God through finite actions that are inspired by the inner motions of his soul (i.e. moral actions).

⁶See the Introduction for a delineation of the inseparability of these concepts.

accessible to the humblest servant as they are to the most refined aesthete.' In other words, God's presence can be perceived every day by everyone, as it permeates every aspect of life.

This point is, indeed, an important one in Christian Existentialist philosophy. Kierkegaard reiterates that "one who really has an eye for the Deity can see Him everywhere" (Postscript 80), for the inward acceptance of God on earth transforms one's entire existence into the opportunity to develop the God-relationship. Moreover, one does not synthesize his infinitude with only certain aspects of his temporal life because this would be to "inauthentically" ignore much of his own existence. The inward, "imaginative perception of Christ's lowliness and humiliation" (Elrod 227) Kierkegaard calls "contemporaneousness with Christ," and is, according to the philosopher, essential to experiencing Christ as always relevant to each person in the present tense, which is how one's existence happens (K. Anth. 409). In regard to Hopkins' poetry, because of the commonness and omnipresence of Christ throughout *all* of nature,⁸ He, indeed, has universal, timely, and inescapable relevance to the inscaper. Kierkegaard calls it "a blessed thing to be able to satisfy the divine requirement" of developing the God-relationship in life at all times (Postscript 123); Hopkins agrees, and at the end of this prayerful meditation on the subject, exhorts the readers to do the same, and to "Praise him."

"Pied Beauty" is essential to an understanding of the *existential* aspect of Hopkins' Christian philosophy because it stresses that particularity and individuality relay God's presence in the world -- which is, in turn, connected to the importance of one's own individuality, or selfhood, as we finite beings do have such commonalities with the rest of

⁷Unfortunately, it is exceedingly trying to see God at all times, and in places of seemingly little or no significance. Yet, Kierkegaard seems to delight in the implications of this situation when he writes, "though [faith] can be grasped and held by the simplest person, it is all the more difficult for men of culture. O wonderful, inspiring Christian humanity: the highest is the common possession of all men, and the most happily gifted are merely those most strictly taken to task!" (Postscript 261) Kierkegaard probably had the Hegelians in mind for the latter part of the quotation, as he considered them to be pretentious scholars who were educating themselves out of real life.

⁸I refer here to Hopkins' illumination of Real Presence in his works.

nature -- as well as the fact that God is present everywhere in life, in the humblest creatures and in the products of the most menial jobs. Both of these concepts refute idealistic abstraction, which, Kierkegaard agrees, is a dangerous tendency of the imaginative, infinitizing self-seeker. The infinitizing "selver" (as Hopkins would call him) will falsely abstract his objective environment into an amorphous whole if he does not strive always to be aware of how his imaginative and inward types of perception relate to his inescapable finitude. This striving is the *main* task of Kierkegaard's "subjective" thinker. In addition, and also for the sake of comprehensive ease, he tends to idealize his spiritual, infinite nature into being relevant only for a special aspect of his life. Such are the pitfalls threatening the finite selver who attempts to develop the God-relationship in the only way open to him -- by subjectively developing his understanding of the Incarnation.

Although Hopkins concentrates solely on the communicative aspect of the selver's God-relationship in "Pied Beauty," with no indication of how the selver himself is affected by being an attentive "listener," that is, in inward reflection, he, like Kierkegaard, believes "that the ultimate end of reflection is not reflection itself, but the transformation of human life through philosophical reflection" (Elrod 53). One such transformation has already been indicated -- the inwardness involved in, or inscaping ability necessary to, the apprehension of God through the means of one's life, constitutes a transformation. Whereas non-selvers tend to use only their objective powers of perception to think logically about outer stimuli, the perceptually transformed selver is subjective because he believes that through faith and inwardness he will perceive the Truth as it becomes existentially apparent to him. Furthermore, because subjectivity is itself a personally willed mental "action," it fulfills the aforementioned (in the quotation that opens this chapter) "task" of "consciously" synthesizing the two elements that comprise the self, namely infinitude and finitude. Moreover, subjectivity can, in fact, effect a certain degree of selfhood -- "the more consciousness [read "inwardness," or "subjectivity"], the more

self," Kierkegaard claims in The Sickness Unto Death (162). In other words, the inscaper, or subjective exister (both of whom relate their deepest "intuitive" and inward reflections to their finite existences), transforms his life by increasing his "self quotient." Finally, in perceiving God through temporal means because of his faith in the Incarnation, the inscaper opens himself to a relationship with Him, and may be given Faith.⁹ And, according to Kierkegaard, the man who has Faith is a "new man," transformed into a special creature that, unlike unreflective fallen individuals but like Christ, has a relationship to the Truth (Fragments 19).

As in "Pied Beauty," "Hurrahing in Harvest" portrays a vision of Real Presence, God's natural Incarnation. However, here Hopkins does not purposely avoid referring directly to man in his discussion of how God is *revealed* in temporality, but places him in the forefront, for this poem is about how man *perceives* God, and about the implications of this perception. In short, the main theme of the piece is inscape, and Hopkins appropriately presents the Incarnation in terms most relevant to an inscaper, in a way that addresses the greatest concern of the subjective human individual: the actual interpenetration of his own existence with Infinity. In this way, the sonnet is a dramatic representation of inscaping because the narrator, an inscaper himself, reveals not only how he perceives reality, but also reveals his very personal and human motivations in his choice of subject-matter and imagery. So, in a conceptual way, the poem illustrates inscaping as the perception of God's actual and particular presence in finitude, the communicative medium in which all humans must work; a generalized summary of this situation is that the heavenly is married to the earthly, which is shown in the less direct manner of metaphorical comparison, but which more directly applies to the inscaper, who knows himself as just such an earthly being; and, finally, the implications of inscaping for the inscaper himself are not only stated directly in the last line, but are also implied throughout via the heavy use of personification, and other imagery directly related to humanness.

⁹See footnote 10 of the Introduction.

Hence, it becomes apparent that inscaping is not merely reflection upon God in finitude for its own sake, but is a type of philosophical reflection that fulfills the purpose of transforming human life.

That subjective perception is the main focus of "Hurrahing in Harvest" is obvious from the first three words, "Summer ends now." After all, depending on one's personal vantage-point, in regard to preferences, hopes, and past experiences, the poem might just as accurately be introduced with the words, "Fall begins now." The phrase "the stooks rise/ Around" indicates subjective perception in the same way -- the narrator's specific point of view is clearly shown to be on the ground and aimed upwards at the taller surrounding wheat. Furthermore, if one were to insist on making the phrase more grammatically standard, he would add "me" to the end of it, and would simultaneously reiterate the point about perspective that is already implied -- its very *personal* nature. More specifically, this same phrase also shows that the poem's topic is imaginative perception, which is another aspect of subjectivity, as it can be taken to mean that the wheat is floating.

Moreover, the fact that Hopkins illuminates here a very specific type of subjective, imaginative perception, namely inscaping, is undeniably evident in the sixth and ninth lines, in which Christ Himself appears as the natural world. But how does the inscaper come to perceive the Infinite in the finite? The poet explains briefly in the line, "I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes" (l. 5). First of all, the repetition of the pronoun "I" indicates that, although the narrator's gaze is apparently focused outward, the defining factor here is the inscaper himself. Such perception is, indeed, an example of subjectivity, the inscaper's willing appropriation of outer stimulus with no logical, objective guide. It must be emphasized that this is not simply Romantic projection; to Hopkins "an inscape instresses [energetically guides] the mind in accordance with the Creator's will. Thus, Hopkins accepts subjectivity -- the realization that all knowledge exists in subjects -- but rejects subjectivism -- the view that each subject is able to create his own 'truth' with no outside

court of appeal" (Parkinson 50). With the subjective impetus firmly established, the inscaper then uses his "heart" to spiritually translate, or appropriate, what his "eyes" observe in the temporal world, thus executing the fused action of "glean[ing] our Saviour."

In addition to this illustration of inscaping as a concept, Hopkins shows the effect of such subjective perception on human life by metaphorically marrying, in entirely physical terms, the heavenly with the earthly. For example, in imagining the "stooks rise[n]" off the ground, one imagines the massive inert bundles to be heavenly creatures of the air. This upward gaze leads the perceiver to notice the clouds, which, in fact, are air-borne objects, but which are grounded from the perspective of the inscaper, who refers to them as "wind-walks." It is as though the individual could traverse the clouds as he could any earthly road, but, surely, this path would lead him to God in His heavenly abode. The final instance of the marriage of the earthly with the heavenly in this stanza is literally true, and is in the line, "Meal-drift . . . melted across skies." It is perhaps the very wheat that surrounded this inscaper at the beginning of the poem that is being threshed now, and the chaff from which it is separated "drifts" into the sky, air-borne, then "melts" into oneness with its new element. The fact that Hopkins uses all physically real, actual objects in these images emphasizes a vital point about the Incarnation, the Divine in temporal form: He reveals Himself in a way understandable to every human, and neither requires a prospective inscaper to become some alien, abstract creature, nor does he transform the successfully faithful into such a fanciful thing. Hopkins could have filled the heavenly element of these dichotomous images with constant reference to divinity and abstract Being, but he would then fail to imply the relevance of the Incarnation to every human in his present existence.

In the first line of the sestet, we find a truly engaging representation of the heavenly joined to the earthly. In this image, each element remains in its temporally accurate physical space, but is, nevertheless, joined to the other -- and the manner in which they are

joined is powerfully telling. With typical conciseness, Hopkins effects what has been hitherto described with these three simple words: "azurous hung hills." The "azurous" sky above is hooked into the rolling land below, and, instead of being supported by the earth (as the dynamic is more often imagined by us gravity-trained earthlings), the sky itself is the sturdy support by which the hills are suspended. By subjectively perceiving this scene, the inscaper understands also the dynamic between himself and the heavenly. He can apprehend that he is supported in this life on earth by the Divine in heaven, whose presence is apparent to him as the sky is blue when he faithfully inscapes his world.

In his attempt to illustrate that the formation of a relationship with God through the Incarnation is not an ethereal practice with only philosophical ramifications, but is life-transforming and fulfilling, Hopkins does more than emphasize the unwavering temporality of God's revelation. Hopkins strongly implies through the heavy use of personification that God's intended audience is, indeed, mankind himself, and illuminates that the Incarnation's ability to alter one's entire life lies in its appeal to man's most basic, earthly senses. In fact, the first instance of personification in the poem combines both ideas, as the beauty of the stooks is described as "barbarous." Not only is this adjective one usually applied only to people, but is also descriptive of a passionate, rugged, uncivilized kind of beauty. These stooks have a crude, almost base, sensual appeal. However, the silken clouds in this stanza are a little more refined, or, at least, their apparently cultivated "lovely behaviour" effects this impression. Meanwhile, the "Meal-drift . . . melted across skies" has some of both qualities: it possesses the untamed "wild[ness]" of the stooks, as well as the controlled nature of the clouds in its "wilful[ness]." The sestet includes a final example of personification. In the first line, Hopkins reiterates the notion that God wishes to establish a *personal* relationship with mankind through Real Presence by stating unequivocally that the "hills are his [i.e. Christ's] world-wielding shoulder." Hopkins re-emphasizes the somewhat erotic connotations of this line in the next, where he describes

Christ's shoulder as being attractively sturdy and drawly, or stalwart, which is also another personifying adjective.

However, Hopkins actually attaches the adjective, "stalwart," to the noun, "stallion," in a simile that further signifies the erotic nature of these images. The Incarnation is presented in sensual terms for the same reason that it is presented in terms of humanness: we are God's audience as we are, and since the Incarnation satisfies our human need for communication through finite, sensory means, we may conclude that not even our essential sensuality is denied us in the God-relationship. The faithful individual's *entire* being is related to Infinity. In fact, the way Hopkins presents the culmination of inscaping at the end of the octet suggests that Christ fulfills all of our sensual desires; he *must* be a "very-violet-sweet" lover to elicit the narrator's question, "And éyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a/ Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?" The satisfying love-making does not end there, though, but leads to an orgasmic final line.

As has already been indicated, the Christian Existentialist God is not immediately perceptible as immanent in the Stoic, pantheistic sense, nor is He alien to our world in His transcendence. As Kierkegaard expresses the matter, "He is in the creation, and present everywhere in it, but directly He is not there; and only when the individual turns to his inner self, and hence only in the inwardness of self-activity, does he have his attention aroused, and is enabled to see God" (Postscript 218). Hopkins represents this same belief in his philosophy of inscaping, itself a deeply reflective and intuitive apprehension of the temporal world that can result in some knowledge of God. Thus, God's presence in nature does not depend upon man in any way, but the event of the individual's "glean[ing]" of God out of the temporal world does depend on the development of his own subjectivity. Hopkins expresses this matter poetically in the eleventh and twelfth lines of "Hurrahing in Harvest," which read, "These things, these things were here but the beholder/ Wanting." As is signified by the last word, "the 'beholder,' until that moment was 'wanting.' Here 'wanting' carries both the meaning of not being there, and also of not having the proper . . .

[subjectivity] that is man's part to 'catch' as Hopkins so often states it, the inscape of Christ" (Chamberlain 316). However, when the beholder gains what was once lacking, be it called "Faith" or the reception of instress,¹⁰ he also gains a transformed self that is powerfully infused with Infinity. By its own labour of love, the "heart" that interpreted the spiritual meaning of what the "eyes" observed (in the first stanza) now "rears" truly infinitizing "wings bold." Hence, Real Presence, that is, the interpenetration of the temporal world with Infinity in the "now" (a tense that is doubly affirmed in the first line), has become a reality for this particular temporal being as well. The building rhythm of the last few lines, the passionate impulse of the sensual imagery, and the subjective, infinitizing perceptual effort of the inscaper throughout the poem all reach a glorious culmination in the last line; here the narrator's inscaping effort effects for him what it did for the stooks, and "half hurls earth for him off under his feet." Because of his subjective perception, the inscaper's existence is actually altered, and is now fully interpenetrated with Infinity.

Both "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest" are vital to an understanding of Hopkins' philosophy of inscaping. The former poem illustrates his belief in Real Presence, and hence puts Hopkins' concern for nature and the temporal world, with its inherent quality of particularity, into its proper sacramental light; meanwhile, the latter sonnet shows that an apprehension of Real Presence, the perception of God in nature, can transform the individual's life. Thus, while the God-relationship is the underlying, and very

¹⁰Since Hopkins never formally defines the differences between his coinages "instress" and "inscape," there exists in critical commentary on the concepts much confusion, and many conflicting statements. For example, in his book, entitled Inscape, James Finn Cotter explains that inscape is the "One" that shapes (note the action implied here) each particular finite being, and "it is also man's intuition of the One" (18). On the other hand, it is instress that Bell Chevigny claims "is an energy determining and sustaining [note the action, once again] unique form," and she also compares instress to faith (itself an "intuition of the One") (142). I have chosen to adhere to J. Hillis Miller's definition of these concepts, a definition which is concisely summarized in the memorable statement, "Intuition ends in union, inscape in instress" (Disappearance 343). I use "inscape" in reference to the presence of God in temporal things, and "inscaping" to refer to the faithful individual's attempt to perceive subjectively this presence. The individual's desire to relate to God in this way may only be fulfilled by God's gift of instress, which is the real point of contact with the divine; in short, instress is Faith, which is the interpenetration of the individual's personal infinite element (i.e. his soul, from whence faith springs, and with which he inscapes) with the Infinite.

Christian, theme in both of these works, Hopkins also emphasizes the existential (i.e. having to do with real human existence) aspect of his recurrent theme of inscaping. The poems make apparent Hopkins' Christian Existentialism. Moreover, because of the similarities between inscaping and Kierkegaard's signature "subjectivity," Hopkins seems to be a Christian Existentialist of the Kierkegaardian kind. But can we say that Hopkins, who searched nature (and God in it) so thoroughly, also sought selfhood, as did Kierkegaard? Because he did so with subjective reflection, one could safely venture a positive reply to this query, but Hopkins himself removes all doubt when he states, "searching nature I taste self but at one tankard, that of my own" (Devlin 123).

**"NEW SELF AND NOBLER ME": THE PERSONALLY TRANSFORMATIVE
GOD-RELATIONSHIP**

Indeed, in regard to Hopkins' philosophical basis, self is key.

Hopkins was convinced that the truth of things lay in singular existence, and that through their concrete and unique presence to the mind, an intuitive knowledge elevates the awareness of a singular existent to some discernment of total and thus Absolute Being. (Downes, Victorian 97)

By positing such a relationship with Infinity using his personal infinitude, or soul, the inscaper automatically increases his own "self-quotient" and individuality. Thus, Hopkins' "inscaper" possesses all the characteristics of Kierkegaard's "self," as delineated in the quotation that opens Chapter One. Indeed, the inscaper has also "infinitude and finitude" "consciously synthesi[zed]" "by means of a relationship to God." But what of the action involved in *selving*, the manifest "doing" implied by the words "task" and "becoming" in Kierkegaard's definition of the self? The conclusion of "Hurrahing in Harvest" shows that the inscaper's entire being is transformed, and that this transformation has required the "beholder" to perform some kind of energetic action. That is, in order for the Incarnation and the "beholder" to "meet," there must occur reciprocal movement, even if purely energetic and not bodily, towards unification -- and it is the *movement* toward Infinity, the directing of one's self toward Christ in his environment, by which the inscaper is transformed into a realized self.

James Finn Cotter develops this Hopkinsian concept by stating that, for man, "the highest identity with Christ . . . remains the pitch!¹ God wills for him as an individual," and

¹Hopkins uses the word "pitch" to denote the height of "I-ness" (Devlin 151).

that, "alone of all creatures man can determine, every moment of his existence, the direction his life will take" (125). Man differs from other natural beings in that the expression of his individuality, his *active* identification with Christ, involves an act of his will and a choice, while other beings inevitably express the Infinite in their individuality; in short, man must *choose* to recognize and actively manifest the individuality, the selving energy, and the divine stress² that courses through all finite things and which is automatically manifested in action by natural things.

The fact that Hopkins does "see the universe predominantly in terms of energy and activity" (Parkinson 47) indicates a perceptual standpoint that is not only typically Victorian, but is also connected to what has been called his "protoexistentialist" (Ong, Self 94) philosophy, for acting and doing partly comprise the transformation of human life that removes existentialism, such as Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialism, from the realm of abstract philosophical reflection. Unlike Kierkegaard, though, Hopkins does not restrict his perception of "'absolute' actions" (Hannay 48) to the human realm only, but, in keeping with his concept of Real Presence,³ Hopkins holds that *every* natural thing manifests its divine inspiration through action. In "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest" it is evident that the inscaper's entire being is transformed and subjectified, is itself individuated, by apprehending God's presence in natural individuality; in "As kingfishers catch fire," Hopkins indicates that God expresses Himself in another existentially vital manner -- through action -- and He thereby offers a more completely transformative selving fulfillment to His imitators.

Because Hopkins is concerned with a different form of worldly manifestation of the Divine in the first stanza of "Kingfishers," that is, *active* instead of *actual* presence, the

²The Holy Spirit, as energy and divine stress, is closely related to Hopkins' notion of instress, but it seems inappropriate to speak of instress in non-perceptual terms. That is, because "Kingfishers" is concerned with the expression of this divine energy, but not so much with the reception of its message, and because instress involves how the "beholder meets" this stress of God, I avoid using the term in the poetic discussion at hand.

³See footnote four of the first chapter for an explanation of this term.

Trinity. To Hopkins, God's action, energy, and stress in the world are all representations of the Holy Spirit (Devlin 154), while His finite presence is the Incarnation, Christ's actual being. Yet, this difference in Godly manifestation does not indicate an essential disparity, as both the Holy Spirit and Christ are manifestations of Him; and since "the truth of things [still lies] in singular existence" (Downes, Victorian 97), the essential particular individuality of each being also retains its revelatory value in the process of selving. In these terms of stress and energy, though, the individual being's *acting out* of its own selfhood can only indistinctly express its divine source, as opposed to directly representing it in actuality. To illustrate the indirectness of active divine manifestation, Hopkins only implies divinity in the octet of this poem, where selving action of each natural phenomenon eloquently, and subtly, reveals itself to be an individualistic manifestation of the divine energy that is the Holy Spirit.

Hopkins effects this "energetic" echo of Real Presence through symbolism; the "one thing" that each "mortal thing does" to express its selfhood in the first four lines of the sonnet also connects it to the Holy Spirit, which is symbolized by fire, water and a bell. For example, "kingfishers catch fire [and] dragonflies draw flame," each in an individualized expression of selfhood through worldly action (i.e. "catch" and "draw") that concurrently manifests the Holy Spirit, which is traditionally symbolized by fire. Whether this fire takes the form of a candle-flame in a church service, or a burning bush of Mt. Sinai, this non-tactile (and in that way, boundless) element is appreciated for what it *does*, like giving heat and light, and, hence, is a perfect symbol for action and energy. Furthermore, while fire can also be regenerative, like divine inspiration, its destructiveness evinces its symbolic appropriateness best: fire's ability to engulf indiscriminately and relentlessly entire worlds, be they homes or forests, establishes it as a powerful symbol of the boundlessness and uncontrollability of God's energy.

This enveloping quality also characterizes the next symbol of the Holy Spirit to which Hopkins alludes indirectly in the first line, but slightly more obviously in the second. The symbol is water, and it plays an important part in the kingfisher's most spectacular action - - diving for fish -- while it also provides a popular hunting ground for the healthiest and most fiery-coloured of dragonflies. Moreover, water is the entire reason for the existence of "roundy wells," the rim of which stones tumble over. And it is when they reach water that "stones ring," in completion of their individualizing action. As indicated by all of these images, water is an enveloping home where some things, like tumbling stones, realize the culmination of their selving action, while other things, like kingfishers and dragonflies, gain life-energy, or, as in the case of the well itself, even new being. This nourishing and primal characteristic of water is what posits it as a perfect symbol of the illimitable and inspirational Holy Spirit in "Kingfishers," and explains why water has traditionally symbolized God's spiritual presence in baptismal rites.

Lastly, the enveloping quality of God's energetic, spiritual presence is emphasized in the line, "each hung bell's/ Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name." The image of the bell's "tongue" as its instrument of self and divine expression is a reference to the Holy Spirit, by the *inspiration* of which Jesus' apostles were able to "speak in tongues" to *all nations* after His death, in their task of verbally spreading an awareness of the Incarnation (Acts 2: 3-5; 10: 46; 11; 19:6). And, just as fire and water have an almost infinite quality in their enveloping natures, so, too, does sound; although all three phenomena are no less temporal for their illimitable qualities, such illimitability does, nevertheless, establish their appropriateness as symbols of the Holy Spirit, a non-finite divine energy. Indeed, as is the case in the phenomena that precede it, it is the Holy Spirit that inspires, and is expressed by, the audible selving action of "each hung bell," as well. Yet, Hopkins leaves no doubt in these lines that this individual symbol of the Holy Spirit, though inspired by Being itself, expresses precisely *itself* in this action; he even imagines it to have its own will, so boldly does it "fling out broad" that which signifies its specific

presence in the world. However, it is clearly not only the particularized content or this annunciation of finite presence that affirms the worldliness of this act, but the very act itself, for, as Kierkegaard categorically declares, "it is impossible to conceive of existence without movement" (Postscript 273).

Similarly, it is impossible to conceive of existence without particularity and individuality which is why, when each "mortal thing" actively "deals out that being indoors each one dwells," it "goes," "Selves," before all else. Hopkins' choice of this final word reveals the existential concerns which comprise his topic in "Kingfishers," namely action and individuality, because "selves" is a verb which refers to the act of expressing and developing the distinguishing elements of the self. He finishes the stanza with a paraphrase, a translation, of such individualistic action, and in so doing emphasizes another important point: although the impetus of this selving action lies only within each temporal thing's "being indoors," because the action is perceptibly manifest, it also communicates a declaration comprehensible to other finite beings, which is, in this case translated by the narrator as, "Myself" and "What I do is me: for that I came." Such a declaration is identified as a certain type of communication, as that which each object "speaks," "spells," "tells," "cries," and "flings out" with found tongue in similar manner. What each type of communication, listed here, has in common with all the others is not only that each is wilfully assertive, but also that each is simply a direct statement that seems to exist only for its own sake, and is not formed solely in terms of how it is received by the perceiver. Different types of communication, like "imploring," "explaining," and "pleading," involve the recipient of the message to such a high degree that the core statement, and corresponding original inward impetus, is modified and twisted to fit the demands of the listener. In this way, the listener, with his characteristic needs, becomes as much a part of the content of the message as is the communicator who expresses it.

However, each selving phenomenon in "Kingfishers" proves that it is not such a confused communicator, as it "deals out" only "one thing and the same" -- "itself."⁴

Indeed, the assertive way in which each thing expresses its selfhood is highly individualistic, as it is a response only to what moves within itself. But, since this selving energy that moves within each object is also the Holy Spirit, which is infinite, the particularized selvers with their concise self-expression also illustrate, most profoundly, their unity. Certainly, the selvers in question are all united poetically as symbols of the Holy Spirit; as well, each one has in common with the others the trait of being tied by alliteration to the poetic phrase that describes it. However, Hopkins indicates unification in "Kingfishers" most profoundly by the interrelatedness of the selvers themselves, and their environments. In short, kingfishers and dragonflies are unified by the common environment of water. This element, in turn, unites them with the selving stones in "roundy wells." Finally, these ringing stones are united with "hung bells," which also ring. What J. Hillis Miller says of the perceptual act of instress likewise has implications for this scene, since the unifying divine stress in this stanza, though not presented in perceptual terms, is perceived by the poet himself: "the instress of being, though it is everywhere the same, has a mysterious tendency to express itself differently" (Disappearance 290). With regard to "Pied Beauty," it is apparent that it is the very diverse presence of particular beings that reveals the presence of God, the One; analogously, it is apparent from the first stanza of "Kingfishers" that the individualizing, selving action of things is also the movement of His Holy Spirit.

In the sestet, Hopkins continues his theme of divinely inspired action executed by temporal selvers. He emphasizes still the individualized nature of such movements, while

⁴This is not to say that the selving message is incomprehensible to the perceiver, for the fact that the poet "translates" the message in a paraphrase is proof of its comprehensibility; furthermore, "Hurrahing in Harvest" shows that such natural messages are quite relevant to the realm of human understanding. However, unlike in the autumnal sonnet, the first stanza of "Kingfishers" is not specifically concerned with the perception of divine communication through nature but the active expression of such communication by natural "selves."

dwelling, nonetheless, on their unison. However, this stanza inverts the pattern of the octet, in a way, because it shows directly what was only implied in its predecessor, and implies what was heretofore impossible to miss; in short, the divinity of natural actions is, here, most lucid, instead of existing merely tacitly, while the inherent self-expressiveness of the movements can only be inferred by the reader. Hopkins makes the task of this inference somewhat easier for the reader by supplying conspicuously the means for its execution in the first three, bold words of the second stanza, as well as by providing a building string of specific signifiers that culminates in these very three words, thereby drawing attention to the vital phrase: "I say more." First of all, it is the word "say" that inextricably connects this phrase to the string of signifiers that come before it, these signifiers being all the references to individualistic communication that appear in the octet, such as "speaks," "spells," "crying," and "tells." "I say more" is established as the culmination of the previous references to speech not only because "more" than all else is being communicated here, but also because the heretofore ghostly recipient of the selving messages appears now directly and assertively, instead of appearing merely by implication. Thus, for the first time in the sonnet, the communicative act is complete. Although each selving message of the first stanza may not have been intended, necessarily, for the speaker, and was not formed specifically to suit his comprehensive abilities, he has perceived the message anyway; he has appropriated it, and he now asserts his own expression of selving action that he believes to be even "more" profoundly individualistic. Just as the selver's message in the first stanza could be paraphrased for comprehensive ease, so, too, can this selver's words be restated to indicate their essential significance; basically, the speaker claims, "I, as another 'mortal thing,' also say selving words like these, but, in addition, I say the following richer message of self."

Moreover, the word "I" in this phrase does more than merely identify the speaker, although "I" is important in this respect because it is the first direct reference to him. Hopkins indicates the pronoun's special significance by using it to introduce the entire

stanza, and by marking it with a metrical accent, in the first instance of this peculiar practice in "Kingfishers." The word "I" has significance, here, for the same reason that it does in "Hurrahing in Harvest" ("I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes") -- it illustrates the vital importance of *subjectivity*, of inwardness. It is this subjectivity that allows the speaker to translate the selving messages he apprehends in nature into having significance for himself, and it is this subjectivity that permits him to "say [even] more" than what he objectively understands to have been expressed in nature. The subjective man says "more" than what natural selves express because he can perceive the selving cries around him, and inwardly reflect upon the divinity therein; that is, his response to his own "being indoors . . . dwell[ing]" within is enhanced by his subjective understanding that the infinite Holy Spirit inspires all worldly selving action. Furthermore, the way he expresses his self is in consideration of the recipients of his message, and not merely a heedless "fling[ing] out broad[ly]" of his "name." The subjective human individual can say "more" than all other selves because of his consciousness, his awareness, his self-reflectiveness. In short, by virtue of his *free will*, man makes a deliberate choice when he selves, forming his self-expression to fit his understanding of how it will be received by his audience, to fit his subjective understanding of the One he has apprehended in objective cries of self, and, finally, to reflect his resultant heightened understanding of own selfhood. Once again, the case is succinctly explicated by J. Hillis Miller, who maintains that, to Hopkins, everything is created to give God glory, and that nature has no choice but to manifest in action the Holy Spirit's movement through it; however, "man was created with self-consciousness and freedom . . . [and] if man can mean to give God glory he can also mean not to" (Disappearance 328).

Indeed, it is man's free will, innately separate from God's will, that establishes his heightened autonomy and individuality, which is synonymous with his heightened likeness to Christ, who also, being human, had free will. And although Hopkins focuses on man's actions more as an illustration of his Christliness, than of their synonymity with movement

of the Holy Spirit, the latter Being in the Trinity is still implied, for Hopkins asserts in prose that it is none other than "the Holy Ghost [that] makes of every Christian another Christ, an AfterChrist; lives a million lives in every age" (Devlin 100). However, Hopkins differentiates between the significance of nature's actions and of man's actions in order to emphasize the great import of subjectivity and reflectiveness in regard to free will, which, in turn, characterize the superlative individuality and heightened autonomy of mankind. Basically, nature's actions are synonymous with the movement of the Holy Spirit, and both are simply and inevitably the active correlatives of another equitable pair: the same "mortal thing's" *actual* presence and a single instance of the Incarnation -- thus the double meaning of the sixth line, "Deals out that being indoors each one dwells," in which "being" refers to the essential presence of the single phenomenon, as well as to Being, or God. On the other hand, because *man can* choose not to respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit within himself, being autonomous, he can thereby choose not to fulfill his highest *potentiality* of selfhood, his Christ-being. When man does choose to act in accordance with God's will as it is revealed to him subjectively, what is most directly revealed is his new being as an *AfterChrist*, with a will freely aligned to God's will, like his divine predecessor. In his written meditation, "On Personality, Grace and Free Will," Hopkins states, "it is as if a man said: That is Christ playing me and me playing at Christ, only that is no play but truth; That is Christ *being me* and me being Christ" (Devlin 154). In this passage, Hopkins further underscores the notion that action, or "playing," is inseparable from actuality and being. There is agreement here with Kierkegaard, who said, "truth exists for the particular individual only as he himself produces it in action" (Dread 123), in a similar identification of one's relationship to truth with both "being" and "playing," or action. In short, the faithful individual chooses to be like Christ by acting out his Christliness.

Hence, the individual realizes truth not only by approaching it subjectively, where it reveals itself to the inner man, but by effecting the transformation of his life in his

performance of the movement or response to these inner feelings (Fear / F). In other words, to Kierkegaard, one perfects his selfhood by trying to develop a relationship with God, and he does this by becoming more subjective, or more self-reflective, and finding truth there; meanwhile, Kierkegaard also maintains that such "certitude, [or] inwardness . . . can only be attained by and exist in action" (Sickness 123-4). One thus realizes a relationship to God through action that is correlated to inward truth, or subjectivity; and the realization of this God-relationship is identical with becoming a self. This selving, subjectively-inspired action appears to the world as moral action, which Kierkegaard calls "the ethical," and which many people understand to be an end in itself that imposes impersonal restraints on human action; however, it must be stressed that the type of ethical action promulgated by Kierkegaard and Hopkins ends and is inspired from within the seler himself, who only actualizes in movement personal, subjective truths,⁵ and not objective laws. "The ethical is [therefore] . . . a correlative to individuality, and that to such a degree that each individual apprehends the ethical essentially only in himself, *because the ethical is his complicity with God*" (Postscript 138).

Indeed, the ethical is not a response to an outer law but is the expression of the height of the individual's selfhood, his Christliness -- and his attempt to achieve perfect human selfhood is, itself, inextricable from his choice to act morally, in accordance with God's will as it is revealed to him in subjectivity. Hence, "the just man justices" because he behaves in accordance with his inner nature, and he is how he acts; Kierkegaard would say such a man has successfully "become heterogeneous with his ethical duty" (Postscript 239). Of course, "justice" is a notion that can only be correctly understood in terms of relationships between people and moral action that acknowledges others, so this acting of his selfhood is also a response to the selves to whom he relates in his environment. But, nevertheless, his response is the result of a choice made in inwardness and reflectiveness, and, viewed thus, is an expression of his subjective selfhood. By either account, this

⁵The words "ethical" and "moral" will, hereafter, only be used in this sense.

selving action appears to be deliberate and reflective, and not merely a needless ~~ringing~~
out" of his "name." The same can be said of the moral action in the next line, although
this action also connotes divine manifestation as it appears in the first stanza, as "grace"
denotes "divine regenerating and inspiring influence" (Oxford Dictionary 375), and is thus
indentifiable with the Holy Spirit. However, the ethical man described in this line is not
himself defined by or identified with the Holy Spirit, as were such inspired natural beings
in the first stanza. Rather this ethical man consciously and deliberately "keeps gráce,"
tending it within himself, and constantly choosing to recognize and foster its influence
over him. "Thát" chosen state of morality, Hopkins tells us emphatically with a metrical
mark, "keeps all his goings [or actions] graces"; indeed, man, too, can manifest the Holy
Spirit in his actions, but he does so deliberately -- with choice. It is this aspect of *choice*
in man's actions, the chosen alignment of his free will with God's will, that posits any
discussion of the divinity of his movements as indicative more of his correlative Christly
nature, which is characterized by free will, than of the Holy inspirational energy within that
predisposes him toward moral action. By this choice to act morally to "Act[] in God's
eye," to move within the range of His ken and specific spiritual movements in the world,
the ethical man realizes his relationship to the Truth existentially and becomes "Christ . . .
in God's eye."

Indeed,

Hopkins' mature self-image included his wish for as full as possible
'identification' with Christ. All Christians . . . through responding to
divine grace in faith and hope and love . . . undertake to unite themselves
with him and perfect their own individuality . . . [but] the ideal of
realizing oneself in Christ and Christ in oneself . . . is particularly highlighted in
Jesuit spirituality." (Ong, Self 25)

Hopkins illustrates his specific spiritual background in the last three lines of "Kingfishers"
because these lines show clearly the selver's highest goal and "pitch" *to be Christ himself*.
Put in such direct terms, this process of self-actualization may sound almost heretical in its
presumption; yet, along with Hopkins' Jesuit contemporaries, there were still other

Christians in that time who took their task of emulating Christ so literally -- for instance, Kierkegaard also insisted, "the more concentration of Christ, the more self. A self is qualitatively what its measure is. That Christ is the measure is on God's part attested as the expression for the immense reality a self possesses; for it is true for the first time in Christ that God is man's goal and measure" (Sickness 245). In short, the individual makes himself more "real" by becoming more like Christ, that is, by fulfilling his personal inscape, or his "Christscape," to use a word aptly coined by D. A. Downes in Hopkins' Sanctifying Imagination. The seler fulfills his goal not just by becoming more subjective, or infinite,⁶ like Christ, but by constantly translating this subjectivity into worldly actions, as Christ always did, thereby transforming his entire outward life into an inward matter before God (Postscript 452). Put simply, "this self-consciousness therefore is a deed, and this deed in turn is inwardness" (Dread 128), and the individual for whom this situation is a truth is an AfterChrist.

Although every fully selved Christian Existentialist is, indeed, an *AfterChrist*, Hopkins asserts in the last four lines of "Kingfishers" that, *to God*, the ethical man is none other than *Christ himself*. But why, one may wonder, is this individual's complete Christhood only recognized by God only, and not by men? The answer to this query lies, once again, in the notion of subjectivity. Because the moral man's actions are not responses to an outer human law, but are correlated to his inner nature as a "just man," or as one who "keeps gráce" within by way of his subjective God-relationship, the existential realization of this nature through action can only be assessed by the inspirer of the action, by the other player in the relationship, namely God. Since no man can even glimpse another's subjective relationship with God, or guess the precise way in which God chooses to manifest His energy through any individual's "limbs," no one can judge the divinity of

⁶Kierkegaard asserts in The Concept of Dread that subjectivity, or "inwardness[,] is . . . eternity, or the determination of the eternal in man" (131); the case may also be stated thus: "imagination is the infinitizing element in a person, allowing him to break with the natural realm" (Mullen 49).

anyone else's actions.⁷ As the case is simply stated by Kierkegaard, "in an ethical mode or existence," we must "learn that the individual stands alone" (Postscript 287); he cannot judge or be judged by others, nor can he understand his ethical or selving duty as others may attempt to delineate it for him.⁸

The choice to act morally is not a choice to behave in accordance with others' wishes, and it is not a choice to become like everyone else, "For Christ plays in ten thousand places . . . To the Father through the features of men's faces." That is, God relates to each subjective actor in a very specific way, and since action is a form of worldly manifestation, it even appears objectively that the ethical person is highly individualistic, and that he is one in "ten thousand," or a "million" (Devlin 100), which is to imply that the ethical seler is one of a kind.⁹ These lines from "Kingfishers" also indicate, once again, that the only true audience of our actions is God, convoluted as the statement may sound superficially. The thirteenth line confuses the matter somewhat by eliciting the possible summary, "Christ plays in . . . eyes not his/ To the father," or the paraphrase, "Christ acts in eyes that God recognizes to be not Christ's own eyes." This paraphrase is certainly true in a strictly historical sense, but it is inaccurate in the terms of Faith, which is the sense in which Hopkins speaks here. His intended message in these last two lines is a recapitulation of the assertion inherent in the eleventh and twelfth lines, the assertion that the moral actor is, "in God's eye," "Christ."

There is always a tension in affirming one's innermost self through action, in translating objective facts into subjective truths, and in identifying one's deepest self as one's likeness

⁷However, each person is free to observe another person's actions as he may observe natural actions, reflect in subjectivity upon the personal significance of such actions for himself, and accordingly manifest in action his chosen response.

⁸This notion is the basis for Kierkegaard's famous "teleological suspension of the ethical," which is delineated in his work, Fear and Trembling. In this work, Kierkegaard explores the ethico-religious ramifications of the Abraham and Isaac story of the Old Testament, and maintains that Abraham illustrates the pinnacle of human faith by sacrificing his "universal," or ethical, duty in order to fulfill his religious, subjective duty to God.

⁹Compare the individuating aspect of Christly manifestation with unification, which is distinctively characteristic of the Holy Spirit in the world; see the first paragraph of page 28 for a delineation of the latter situation.

to Christ. This tension is illustrated in "Kingfishers" and personally felt by the reader of the sonnet because of the garbled syntax of the last lines. Furthermore, the inverse relationship between the images of each stanza, with their respective manners of representation, also reveals a tension in unification. That is, the divinity of worldly action is represented indirectly in the octet, and the selving aspect is shown directly, while the selving issue is only tacitly present in the sestet, and the temporal being's divine characteristics are in the foreground. Such tension is an echo and reiteration of the tension that exists on all levels of the Christian Existentialist savior's life, for this individual constantly "live[s] up to the tension of . . . being both infinite and finite," and "the tension of bringing the self together is great" (Mullen 46). Indeed, the manner in which the individual brings the self together, and by which he refines his Christscape, reflects the contradictory qualities of its goal -- Kierkegaard's subjectivity is precisely the assertion as the Truth that which is an objective uncertainty, while the Hopkinsian corollary to subjectivity, the act of inscaping, is the imaginative/intuitive (and, thus, uncertain) apprehension of True Being in transitory temporal being. Nor may the savior's thoughts slip into unconscious, Romantic abstraction in an attempt to avoid the tension created by his reflective awareness of the unavoidable facts of his existential predicament. In light of this situation, it is easier to imagine the mental anguish of the "religious man [who] lies fettered in the finite with the absolute conception of God present to him in human frailty" (Postscript 432), for he must devote himself wholly to the Abstract while he exists passionately in the temporal world. Finally, two types of tension exist for the Christian devotee: he knows illimitable freedom by being bound entirely to an omnipotent Deity, and he powerfully affirms his selfhood and will by sacrificing both in his duty to God.

While the tension of Christscaping is only implicitly present in "As kingfishers catch fire," such tension comprises the entire underlying motif of Hopkins' masterpiece, "The Windhover." And the realm in which the most gruelling tension appears, namely the realm of action, is the basis of the most evident connection between the two poems. The latter

sonnet is "the most explicated poem of its length in the language" (Bump in Fine Delight, 61), and not surprisingly so, for its density is astounding. In fact, in terms of Christian Existentialism alone, Hopkins explores several significant issues -- principally *action*, but also inscaping, or subjectivity, earthliness and divinity, self-affirmation and self-sacrifice, new life -- and all appear in regard to Hopkins' underlying theme of the tension and pain inherent to the achievement of Christscape. Just as Hopkins appropriately links moral action with Christscaping in "Kingfishers" because being like Christ involves acting like Christ, he evinces tension and pain in "The Windhover" because these circumstances are inevitably linked to an active identification with Christ, or as Hopkins put it, "the acceptance and assumption of the victim of sacrifice" (Devlin 158).

Given that the tension in this sonnet is directly linked to its main concern, the exploration of Christscaping, it is surprising that, unlike the three sonnets hitherto explored, "The Windhover" contains no overt reference to God or Christ within the body of the poem; the only mention of the divine appears in the dedication, "To Christ our Lord," which was added two years after the completion of the piece, and which does not imply that He is the subject matter, but only the intended recipient of this poetic prayer. Nevertheless, the physical world, which is the poem's evident focus, is definitely viewed from the spiritual realm. Subjectivity, or inscaping, is the narrator's mode of perception, and hence, he reports on the divine significance of the natural subject matter. The characterization of the narrator as an inscaper, i.e. one who perceives the objective scene in an intuitive and imaginative way with the goal of apprehending Being, is indicated by the very first two words of the first line, "I caught." Once again, the great import of the pronoun "I" is evinced by its prominent placement in the sonnet and indicates the presence of an oft-repeated Hopkinsian theme -- subjectivity. Indeed, although the narrator is obviously concerned with the temporal scene before him, its significance lies not within itself, but within the perceiver, who is posited as the locus of action. Yet, this situation is evident not only from the primary presence of the subjective "I," but also from the word

indicating this subject's own action -- the verb "caught." In short, Hopkins reveals from the outset of "The Windhover" that whatever transpires after this vital first short phrase has greatest significance for the narrator himself, who has appropriated,¹⁰ and thus "owns" the "caught" active scene before him. It is as though the inscaper has a spiritual "piece" of the bird to which he holds fast. Given the very personal nature of this perceived scene, then, the reader must remain mindful of the fact that all of the details provided about it illustrate just as much about the subjective perceiver as they do about the objective view itself; thus, the implied divinity of the bird and the "gleaned" cosmic meaning of its actions represent the temporal inscaper's own comprehension that the finite is infused with the infinite, and this, of course, has relevance for him as well, for every finite inscaper is a potential AfterChrist.

The verb "caught" also refers to an aspect of subjectivity that, as has already been mentioned, is the basic link between "Kingfishers" and "The Windhover." That is, "caught" refers to a type of *action*, which is an essential part of existence, but the action in this sonnet is inward and spiritual, rather than ethically expressed. Such "catching," or inscaping, is the first step towards the fulfillment of instress, which, "in Gerard Manley Hopkins's spiritual writings has the special meaning of the soul's spiritual energy caused by and co-operating with God's creative activity" (Devlin 125). Hence, to inscape is "to posit oneself in an act of choice" (Devlin 125); it is the action of choosing to align one's spiritual energy with God's energy. One might simply call inscaping the act of praying, and would also imply agreement with Kierkegaard, who identified his similar notion of subjectivity with prayer by referring to both as "deeds" (Dread 128, Postscript 145). In "The Windhover," Hopkins' "inscaping" is no different in this regard, as it is linked, again, with motion the next and last time it appears in the poem. At the end of the first stanza, Hopkins writes, "My heart in hiding/ Stirred for a bird," which indicates that the inscaper's

¹⁰"Subjectivity as truth, according to Kierkegaard, means appropriation in the inwardness of Faith" (Fragments, Thulstrup xcii).

imaginative and subjective tool, namely his heart, "is roused with a kind of desirous motion "for" the object of inscaping, presumably in the same type of "catching" motion that appears at the sonnet's outset.

But the characteristics of the windhover that reportedly "stir" the narrator's heart, rousing him to prayerful action, the characteristics that elicit a desirous response "for" the bird, moving him to "catch" it in his way, are also the characteristics that posit tension in the inscaper/inscaped relationship. The dash in the last line signifies that it is "the achievement of, the mastery of" the windhover that rouses the narrator to desire appropriation of it; but it is precisely because of the bird's willful success, or "achievement," and superlative control, or "mastery," that tension arises in this inscaping attempt. The subjective perceiver is driven to "own" the bird because of its admirable domineering qualities, but his heart, "hiding" in its timidity, is simultaneously "mastered." Beyond this line, as long as the inscaping exercise persists, as long as there exists in the inscaper the subjective desire to appropriate that which also remains objectively constituted, the resultant tension persists as well. D. A. Downes reiterates that, in his prose writings,

Hopkins is insistent on the preservation of the objectivity of this appropriating process [i.e. inscaping], but at the same time, he noted that, in such appropriations, there is often what he called a 'prepossession' of the Other, that is a subjective response anticipatory of the 'inscaping.' (Achieved 8)

The mention of "Other" in this quotation puts the inscaping process in "The Windhover," as well as the tension therein, in its proper sacramental light -- the inscaper means to infuse his being with Infinitude by appropriating Being (i.e. "other," God) as it is found in the falcon; however, his finitude prevents him from completing the process entirely. Analogously, Kierkegaard's "subjective exister" turns inward in order to apprehend God, Who is always incomprehensible to him, thereby eluding this searcher for Being as well.

¹¹In "Hurrahing in Harvest," it is clear that the inscaper uses his "heart" to inform the scene that is objectively apprehended by his "eyes" to "glean our Saviour" out of the landscape.

Kierkegaard suggests the tension and frustration of this situation by asking rhetorically, "But what is this unknown something with which the Reason collides when inspired by the paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's knowledge of himself? It is the Unknown . . . [it is not] any . . . known thing. So let us call this unknown something: the God" (Fragments 49).

Although the subjective individual, or the inscaper, can never succeed fully in his infinitizing process, he does increase his infinity simply by becoming more subjective, and, thus, he does achieve more selfhood. Yet, this degree of success does not lessen the tension and pain linked to the incomplete nature of the inscaping process, but, according to Kierkegaard, intensifies it (Sickness 245) because the individual possesses a greater understanding of his true distance from the Unknown. The same holds true for Hopkins' "inscaper," whose highest achievement of selfhood is his Christscape, but who can never recognize accurately even his own Christliness,¹² even though the Infinity he does gain in subjectivity transforms his entire being. In short, while he is partly freed from his temporal bonds, gaining a broader vision of infinite Truth, he simultaneously becomes more painfully aware of the facts of his earthliness, the shackles that will bind him as long as he is alive; his "heart," the instrument of his subjectivity, only "*half* hurls earth for him off under his feet" ("Hurrahing" l. 14; my emphasis). In a similar manner, the inscaping selver of "The Windhover" desires to appropriate the Infinity and the individualistic freedom he gleans out of the falcon, but the "heart" that "hides" within his mortal breast must endure the tension of merely "stirring" in longing for completion.

Given that the narrator is, indeed, an inscaper, it also follows that the object of his intuitive perception, the windhover, "selves" in these lines in a perfectly temporal manner. That is, an inscaper does not fancifully abstract the object of his meditation into a representation of pure Divinity, for that would be to deny the relevance of the Incarnation

¹²I.e. the moral man "Acts in *God's* eye what in *God's* eye he is -- /Christ" (my emphasis), as the Godly aspect of his new being retains its position as the Unknown.

to humans as finite beings, and would posit the inscaper as nothing more than a dreaming Romantic. Rather, the true inscaper concentrates faithfully, with an intuitive eye, on the very temporality of the selves around him, because, as Kierkegaard says, "the eternal itself has entered time and would constitute there the kinship" (*Postscript* 507). Hence, Hopkins' windhover displays its finitude in several ways. To begin with, the physical appearance of the falcon is described with two key words that refer to essential aspects of temporality. One of these is the word "brute" of the phrase, "brute beauty," descriptive of the falcon. In the same way that "barbarous . . . beauty" strongly indicates the basely sensual attractiveness of the stooks in "Hurrahing in Harvest," "brute beauty" suggests the unrefined, basic, even lowly beauty of this bird of prey. The other word in "The Windhover" that undeniably indicates temporality Hopkins considered to be so characteristic and indicative of finite beings that he composed an entire sonnet on the matter to which it refers. The word is "dapple," and the very next sonnet in the Hopkins canon, "Pied Beauty," is devoted to exploring the import of "dappledness" in regard to Real Presence.¹³ In this regard, the phrase, "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon" establishes the bird as possessing a particularity and individuality as poignant as any "brinded cow" or "rose-mole[] . . . stipple[d] . . . trout." In fact, this descriptive phrase even indicates that the bird is artistically "drawn," or sketched, by the "dappled dawn," which is itself highly particular, and, thus, undeniably finite; as such, it appears that the bird is so qualitatively temporal that it can only be compared to, nay, seems created by, that which we typically appreciate for its very particularity (rather than its boundlessness and unifying qualities, such as God as He is typically understood).

In the same vein, the bird's "qualitative temporality," that is, its inextricability from its proper home in finitude, is represented by the contradictory-sounding third line. The line tells of the bird's "riding/ Of the rolling level underneath him steady air," which may,

¹³The first line, it will be recalled, reads, "Glory be to God for dappled things." This sentiment implies that variousness itself is so related to our salvation, to mending our broken relationship with God, that we should all be moved to praise and thank Him for providing us with dappledness.

initially, elicit the query, "how can the air supporting the bird be at once 'rolling,' as well as 'level,' and even 'steady'?" The answer to this question is also a beautiful affirmation of the bird's synchrony with its natural environment. The essential meaning of the line is this: the windhover "rides" his windy ground, or "level," in such an efficient and skillful manner that the wind's rolling nature might just as well be taken as its "levelness"; "underneath him," the turbulent air is "steady" because he coasts along it, he "rides" with the wind, as opposed to smashing into its bumpy currents. He "strid[es]/ High there" in the sky, confident and comfortable in what any casual onlooker would perceive to be a "rolling" and formidable breeze. Truly, this bird seems not to be born only of the "morning," the "daylight," and the "dawn," but also of the "wind" itself, so familiar it seems with its temporal environment in its selving action.

As an aside, because it is the various fine, multiple details that distinguish one particular being from another, it is worth noting, here, a special feature, particular to this type of falcon, to which Hopkins refers in the fourth line. The phrase "wimpling wing," taken in its direct, rather than metaphorical, context, signifies the rippling motion of the feathers on the falcon's wing, and the scene is notable for the incredible number of feathers that do so. The windhover, having earned its name for its special talent of hovering in an almost perfectly stationary manner on windy days, is able to perform this individuating task by virtue of the roughly 7,000 feathers that cover its wings. In this respect, the windhover is a perfect symbol of earthly particularity.¹⁴

Finally, there appear two subtle references to the bird's temporal nature, and one other reference to his element, the wind, to which he seems inherently connected. The first reference to the falcon's situation as a natural beast appears in the last line of the first stanza. The same animal which the narrator has hitherto inscaped as having the grand and honourable qualities of a prince, a ruler, and a member of a religious order, he dubs, here,

¹⁴These feathers layer each wing in a step-like pattern, like a nun's "wimple," so this reference also functions as Hopkins' suggestion of the bird's "holiness," its sacramental value, since it is a reference to a member of a religious order; see footnote 18 and the text to which it refers.

"a bird," as opposed to referring to it with the more predictable article *the*, and thereby generalizes the reference. This particular windhover is not unnaturally special, or superior to any other living thing; as this non-specific article indicates, it is just any single, simple bird. To echo the point made about the bird's simplicity, in the same line Hopkins calls the object of his inscaping exercise "the thing," thereby not only reiterating its anonymity, but also indicating its "createdness" (Warner 128). In the same spirit, the element of which the bird seems to have been born Hopkins refers to as "the big wind," and by so doing infuses the entire scene with a primitive aura that emphasizes the characteristic rawness, the base reality, of temporality. Although the bird does reveal something about the Infinite through its inscape, it is not above nature in any way, but is only an example of a self within it.

However, it must not be understood that the windhover's simple temporality negates its prominence for the inscaper, because "from the Christian point of view everything, absolutely everything should serve for edification" (*Sickness* 142). And, indeed, this inscaper is improved by apprehending the Divine, and by learning something about His relationship with humans, via the windhover and its actions. In "The Windhover" -- as in "Kingfishers" -- action is a prominent subject, but Hopkins does not draw a distinction between human and other natural selving action in the former, though he does in the latter.¹⁵ This is the reason why he does not need to identify the falcon's actions specifically as unconscious manifestations of the Holy Spirit; rather, because he is concerned with the falcon's presence as well as its actions, Hopkins recognizes the falcon itself as a manifestation of Christ, and the falcon's actions as exhibiting how Divine energy and the will of temporal beings work together when they are in alliance.

¹⁵It will be remembered that Hopkins distinguishes between these kinds of actions in "Kingfishers" in order to illustrate that man's selving action, that is, ethical action, is more individuating than the selving action of other natural beings, and, consequently, man is more highly "pitched" than anything else in the world (Devlin 122).

The fact that the narrator of the poem is an inscaper does not only suggest that the object of his imaginative perception selves, but also that the natural object manifests God. That the windhover does just this is implied by the capitalization of the word "Falcon" in the second line of the sonnet, which posits the bird as representing something greater than only itself; in consideration of the poem's dedication, it becomes apparent that the falcon represents also Christ, and, thus, manifests God. Given this, it no longer seems strange that Hopkins personifies this beast with the pronoun "he" throughout the sonnet. But it is in exploring the energetic relationship between the Christed being (now understood in terms of its being Christ, i.e. with a will/energy of its own to express) and God, Whose energy is represented by the elements of the bird's environment, that Hopkins illustrates something new about how God is manifested in the world, for it is in this exploration that he illustrates the role of *tension* in the selver's energetic relationship with God. Hopkins elucidates this energetic relationship in terms not included in any earlier sonnet. The selving action of the windhover, which is interpreted into the human realm through an inscaping of the Christliness therein, the inscaper comprehends as completely fulfilling the bird's very particular, inwardly-driven need for self-satisfaction¹⁶ -- it seems to be personally driven from within the falcon. The individuating nature of this selving action is especially emphasized in this sonnet, above all others, because the lone bird cries "myself," unaccompanied by the usual chorus of other selving creatures. The individuating implications of such solitude also reiterate the relevance of this selving scene to human selving because it echoes the point made in "Kingfishers" about the heightened autonomy of the ethical man.¹⁷ However, this autonomous will of the "Falcon" is not unaffected by God's will, but in order to achieve selfhood, the two energies must work in alliance. While

¹⁶That is, as opposed to the bird's actions being an "unintentional" expression of self, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Although Hopkins describes, for instance, the clouds in "Hurrahing in Harvest" as "wilful," and the bell in "Kingfishers" as assertively "fling[ing] out" its name, the inwardly driven aspect of this selving is not dwelt upon in such detail, and does not register with the narrator, outside of "The Windhover."

¹⁷See discussion of the line, "Christ plays in ten thousand places," on page 35.

it may seem that the inward drive to refine one's innermost self would be warped by an alliance with God's energy, the energy of the divine "other," in terms of Christian Existentialism there can be no true selving action that is not guided by God's will, for He is "that Power which constituted the whole relation" of self in the first place (Sickness 147); He is the self's Source. And the very reason Christian Existentialists recognize *Christ* as the perfect model of a perfected human self is that He "freely align[ed] his reluctant human will with the divine," His Source (Ong 146), which is to say that He was the perfect amalgamation of Infinity and temporality. In the poem, the apparently autonomous selving action of the bird is synchronized with the environmental energies that guide it, energies that are also its implied source, which is why the falcon is a profound representation of Christ.

Certainly, the "Falcon" is the symbol of Christ, and the bird's metaphorical source, already identified as being its natural environment, the dawn and the wind, is correspondingly, a symbol of God. Because falcons naturally manifest God's will and Christ did the same, but by choice, this scene of the interplay between God and His obedient, but autonomous, creature dually represents the *ideal* of the God-relationship. Throughout the sonnet, the Christed bird has a will of its own, and so, it is free and a ruler in that respect, but its power is always related to its source. Thus, the first, and perhaps subtlest, portrayal of this relationship appears in the first line of "The Windhover," in which the bird is described as "morning's minion," its darling. This phrase suggests a certain kind of relationship, such as one between a parent and a child; the presumably more powerful, or greater in some respect, "morning" beholds the bird as a prize, a well-kept dependent, a favorite "pet." The bird seems special, and by his "striding" gait, it seems that he is aware of his prominence in the morning's realm. But what prominence the falcon has exists only in relation to the greater morning, his implicit parent, or source. The next phrase presents the bird in an analogous relation to his source. In the same way that Hopkins personifies "morning," imagining it to possess a pet, or "minion," he also

personities "daylight," "or" whom, or within whose reign, is the kingdom to which Hopkins refers here. The poet calls the windhover "king-/ dom of daylight's dauphin," establishing him as a prince, son of king "daylight," provisional heir to that throne; in short, the bird "has power, but it is circumscribed power" (Warner 128). Yet, as undeniable as the secondary nature of a prince's power is, Hopkins does not intend to emphasize the Christed being's lack of power over his true might, and he illustrates this by separating the word "kingdom" from line one to line two. This odd (and, thus, obvious and emphatic) division of the word has a two-fold effect. By leaving off the first line after "king," Hopkins emphasizes the falcon's royalty, for if one were to quit the poem after perusing only this line, one would understand "morning's minion" to be a "king." The other effect of the division of "kingdom" is this: the superiority of the daylight is reiterated, for the abbreviation "dom," short for the Latin word "dominus," which means "master" (Oxford Dictionary 250),¹⁸ appears to refer to the personified "daylight," in the context of the second line alone.

The last reference to the falcon's actual, as opposed to active, position as a dependent ruler completes the sonnet's second line, and reads, "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding." As it has already been noted, the hyphenated combination that describes the Falcon implies that the dawn sketches, or creates, the bird, or, at least, it implies that the more powerful "dawn" "draws," or pulls, the obedient creature to itself. Contrastingly again, though, the *falcon's* power is signified by the last three words, "in his riding," which suggest that the bird is a political ruler, and is present in the geographic division over which he has authority. Indeed, Hopkins emphasizes equally the "lordly yet servile, free yet bound qualities" of the windhover (Warner 128).

¹⁸It is also significant that "Dom" is a "title prefixed to names of some Roman Catholic dignitaries" (Oxford), for the bird is compared to members of the Catholic clergy at other points in the sonnet, such as the previously noted comparison to nuns by the word "wimple," as well as a thematic comparison to Jesuits, which will be explored momentarily in this thesis.

Analogously, one motif of this sonnet illustrates the same kind of relationship that is evoked in the above source/creature images; the motif is also an illustration of subjectivity. Just as Hopkins implies the relevance of Real Presence to all humans through personification, both here and in other sonnets, he indicates in this motif how personally relevant, and, thus, powerfully moving, this particular inscaping scene is for him by representing the windhover as a particular kind of person -- a soldier. Indeed, since the Jesuit order of priests was founded by a Spanish ex-soldier, Ignatius Loyola, and the Jesuits are accordingly known as the "soldiers of Christ," it is not surprising that this poetic example of how to relate properly to God is an echo of how Hopkins relates to God. And appropriately subjective though this choice of thematic comparison is, its general aptness is undeniable to all who consider, from a Christian Existentialist perspective, the ideal energetic relationship to which it refers. "The soldier is noted for his endurance and spirit of self-sacrifice" (Egudu 10), his personal power and willfullness, which he dedicates to a more prominent guiding power.

Thus, the image of the falcon "riding . . . the rolling level" evokes a scene of a valiant horseman galloping over hills, while the phrase "rung upon the rein" suggests that he fiercely "wrings" or pulls back on the bridle. But the second stanza, which is vital because it is the fulcrum of the piece, includes the most allusions to soldiers, and indicates that Hopkins envisions a certain kind of soldier in this motif. The word "valour" refers to courage, particularly in battle (Oxford Dictionary 1006), "plume" connotes victory, as well as the traditional feather in a knight's helmet, "buckle" can refer to the clasp on a suit of armour, and, finally, "chevalier" denotes a knight. These references to knights elicit the mental image of a powerful and enduring figure, who is also dedicated and obedient to a greater power. All of these paradoxical situations echo the relationship between God and the constituted self, between God and one who chooses to base his own life on "the secure, unbounded, unbridled self-surrender of devotion" (Fear 128).

The inherent tension of such a relationship is obvious, for on the most basic level this relationship demands the devotee to be heroically brave and courageous enough to plunge headlong into his existence (Fear 65), performing the movements of temporality with the utmost of enthusiasm (Postscript 452), while remaining dedicated entirely to an unknown power, to what is not apparent in this lifetime -- the Infinite. Indeed, "he transforms his outward activity into an inward matter, inwardly before God he labours to the limit of his powers; and this precisely is enthusiasm" (Postscript 452). Moreover, the "religious man"¹⁹ must strive to interpenetrate his life with the knowledge about himself that he has gained through subjectivity and isolated reflection, and this is a life which would seem to result in self-absorption. But it is also a lifestyle that gives strength, as "the constituted self is in control of itself and is thus free" (Mullen 58). Paradoxically, though, this same mighty constituted self must accept the "humiliation of having to accept help unconditionally and in any way, the humiliation of becoming nothing in the hand of the Helper, for whom all things are possible" (Postscript 369). For the individual, there is an undeniable tension in dedicating himself to perfecting his own innermost being by apprehending subjectively that which is usually only objectively sensed, and that which is also "absolutely unlike him" (Fragments 57), or infinite "other," namely God; in addition, there is an undeniable tension in devoting himself entirely to an omnipotent power in order to be free (Fragments 19). In this respect, then, Hopkins' representation in "The Windhover" of a strong being whose power is both afforded and circumscribed by a force or source greater than himself is highly relevant to the paradoxical God-relationship as it is outlined by Kierkegaard. And, of course, both poets indicate Christ as the prototype of an individual who actualizes such a relationship, Hopkins by symbolic implication, and Kierkegaard by reiterating the tension of the God-relationship thus: "he who now has to tread the stage of life is pretty much in the same fix as the man who went down to Jericho and fell among thieves. He then who does not wish to sink in the wretchedness of the

¹⁹Kierkegaard refers to subjective individuals, or "selvers," also by this term.

finite is constrained, in the deepest sense, to assault the infinite" (Dread 144) while remaining enthusiastically involved with his finite existence.

Thus, the contradictory, paradoxical tension inherent to the action that occurs in "The Windhover" is an inevitable characteristic of the equally inevitable existential expression of the God-relationship, that is, action itself. An instance of such a paradox is the following: the bird's steady "riding/ Of the rolling level" would seem to be a trying task that would demand labourious concentration and great cautiousness. Yet, the next phrase reveals that the bird is not shakily balancing himself, but is "striding/ High there." "There," in that very precarious place, the bird's flight in mid-air is more like a "striding" gait on solid ground -- and it is one of confidence, as though this feat is no trial at all for him, indeed, as though this logically constraining situation means for him only freedom. This suggestion of his felt freedom is also indicated by the fact that he is "high" in the sky, as a less confident flyer would maintain a close proximity to the ground, not only because an accidental fall would be less disastrous then, but also because the wind is less fierce there. This courageous bird's actions are not curbed by his perilous environment; rather, he enthusiastically explores its outer reaches.

Such positive tension is perfectly illustrated in Hopkins' next description of the windhover's action in relation to the wind. He writes, awestruck, "how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing/ In his ecstasy!" Having already established the bird's boldness and suggested his freedom, Hopkins contrasts both with a practice in falconing to emphasize that the windhover's freedom is circumscribed. In reading the word "rein," and because the bird appears to be struggling against this leash, the reader imagines that the falcon is not wild, but is undergoing the process of taming; that is, because of Hopkins' choice of words in this line (although not because of the grammar) the reader may imagine that the windhover tugs wilfully at the end of a taut leash held by his master, who is a falconer training his possession to circle around him and return. Certainly, the reader is aware of the tension of this situation simply by its very nature, but there also exists a

tension in the discrepancy between the contrasting elements of this image, for the windhover in this seemingly miserable situation is actually "in his ecstasy!" The third description of the bird's action in this stanza includes a similar discrepancy. Beginning in the fifth line appears an image that illustrates the truly graceful fluidity of the bird's flight, which is compared to a "swing," in the sense of the word as both a noun and a verb. The implicit graceful waving motion reappears in the next metaphor, in which the bird in flight is "as a skate's heel sweep[ing] smooth on a bow-bend." The scene is a frozen river curve, and the reader envisions a skilled figure skater rounding it expertly, both because the word "sweep" indicates the ease of the described motion, and because such ease and liquidity are reduplicated in pronouncing these words -- the alliterative "s" sound unifies the description through repetition, and it also allows a smooth progression in articulating the line. One's impression of the silkiness of the bird's movement is reiterated after the colon, where Hopkins further depicts his flight as a "gliding." But this word also plays part in a contrast and tension in this description, as we are told that this "gliding/ Rebuffed the big wind" easily, it seems, and in opposition to what one might anticipate. Once again the falcon meets his formidable environment with grace, moving with actions that flow in situations that one would expect to be met with abruptness. In summary, all of these scenes of action recall how the religious individual is most comfortable and freest in his devotion to God, for it is by virtue of the God-relationship that he may be an authentic self and escape the prison of temporality.

Indeed, these images describing the windhover's grace and his confidence in his power, coupled with his courage to submit to the wind's "mastery of" him are all part of the intensity of an existence lived in authenticity, and, so, they illustrate well Kierkegaard's "God-relationship." But as Hopkins intends to immediately represent an ideal relationship to the Source, he has had to skip over certain steps in the formation of the God-relationship, such as the annihilation of the will. That is, the reason that the Christed being accepts so graciously the inevitable tension that characterizes the alliance of his will with

God's will is that he has already submitted his entire self to the Divine, in faith, and by remaining passionately, actively involved with his finite existence, he has won his self back, including his autonomous will with its personal desires," on the strength of the absurd" (Fear 75). It is precisely this paradoxical nature of faith, its incomprehensible and inherently contrasting nature, that is the source of the tension that characterizes so many aspects of "The Windhover," and that helps to elucidate the meaning of the sonnet's second stanza. As has been indicated, the word "Buckle!" is the fulcrum of the piece, the essential point around which all other elements work, and its importance is linked to the fact that the contrasting nature of its many meanings establishes its connection to the paradox of faith. In short, in the line that precedes it, Hopkins lists the features of the Christed being that indicate its autonomy, willfullness and individuality, and then he illustrates both the cohesion of these elements *and* the disintegration of them in the integral word "buckle." Indeed, "brute beauty" and "act" refer strongly to the falcon's temporality, as the former connotes the bird's very basic sensuality, while the latter is inseparable from finite existence. Furthermore, the autonomous willfullness of the apparently "pride[ful]" bird is emphasized by the suggestion that he puts on "air[s]," is vainly "plume[d]," and is also undauntedly "valour[ous]." Because (temporal) autonomy, or subjectivity, is part of being a constituted self, it is appropriate that all of these individualizing elements are "buckle[d]," or bound together in the bird's selving action. Yet, because "the existing individual is both infinite and finite . . . finite satisfactions are volitionally relegated to the status of what may have to be renounced in favour of an eternal happiness" (Dread 131), and, ultimately, these very temporal elements "Buckle" under the real Power that is their source, guide and end. This reference to self-annihilation is not the original instance of such an event in the being's existence, however, for it is apparent that the Christed being's will is already synchronized in an appropriately tense manner, with God's will; the situation explored here indicates more accurately the later

stage of selving that is characterized by the paradoxical movement of faith, because it is simultaneously self-affirming *and* self-sacrificing.

However, the instantaneous nature of this "buckling" of the bird's selfhood does seem to indicate a turning point, rather than any one of many moments in the life of a faithful man. And since "the subjective existing thinker who has the infinite in his soul has it always" (Postscript 78), it would seem that such momentous occasions as this one in "The Windhover" would occur only once in the religious life, that is, when he first becomes faithful. Moreover, a sense of the continuity of living faithfully *is* implied by the familiarity and ease with which the selved creature seems to move in relation to his controlling Source, which indicates that he has already chosen to live in faith. Yet, the individual's choice to live in that manner is one that must be made *continually*, for such "certainty can be had only in the infinite, where he cannot as an existing subject remain, but only repeatedly arrive" in full awareness (Postscript 75). That is, "it is only momentarily that the particular existing individual is able to realize existentially a unity of the infinite and the finite which transcends existence. This unity is realized at the moment of passion," at which time he is also "most definitely himself" (Postscript 176). It appears, in this respect, that the momentous occasion Hopkins describes in the tenth line of "The Windhover" is one such instant of unity. Just "as kingfishers catch fire, [and] dragonflies draw flame" in their conspicuous active expression of self, "the fire that breaks from" the windhover when its finite selving action corresponds to a height of "certainty" in regard to the Infinite is, at that point, most intense; in fact, the bird's selving expression is, then "a billion/ Times told lovelier" because it is loudest and most refined, and this fire is "more dangerous" than ever before because, since the self is, here, so "certain[ly] . . . infinite," or faithful, the annihilation of the self in a subsumation of God's power is wholly inescapable.²⁰ Finally,

²⁰In these images of the bird's sacrifice of its will, it is also appropriate that Hopkins refers to the Holy Spirit, and he does so through the symbols of fire (l. 10) and the ringing of a bell ("a billion/ Times told [i.e. tolled] lovelier"). The notion of choice and free will characterizes most of the action in this sonnet, which is why Christ is the most prominent figure of the Trinity that Hopkins suggests here; yet, once the Christed being *chooses to sacrifice* its will (thereby asserting its Christliness in two ways), the resulting

to reiterate this event of perfect cohesion of the bird's self-sacrificial and personally powerful aspects, Hopkins refers to him again as a type of soldier, and a heroic one, when he calls out in adulation to the Christed being, "O my chevalier!"

Thus, the epiphanic revelation that is directly stated in the last three lines of the sonnet is foreshadowed by all of the tensely contradictory images hitherto explored, so the revelation is prefaced with the comfortably certain, "No wonder of it"; in this revelation, the narrator indicates that the spiritual conclusion he has reached by inscaping the windhover is borne out by other natural occurrences, which are both as equally earthly and as equally divine as the Christed bird in flight. First, the words "shéer plód makes plough down sillion/ Shine" refer specifically to man's finitude, because they "remind us that fallen man must work by the sweat of his brow through with the hope of redemption from his faith and his works" (Warner 133), since original sin first established finitude as the realm within which man moves most comfortably. However, this poetic phrase does not focus on man's sin so much as it focuses on the way in which the religious man works with his inescapable predicament in order to re-establish his connection to Eternity -- he must devote himself wholly to existing, to acting in the here-and-now, just as the falcon dives headlong into its particularizing temporal element. By further analogy, such earthly "shéer plód" is also the religious man's declaration of self, for, indeed, "it is the humblest [and, thus, most accurate] expression for his God-relationship to admit his humanity," and "essentially it is the God-relationship that makes a man a man," or a self (Postscript 440, 219). In other words, it is by concerning himself entirely with the drudgery of temporality that the faithful selver develops his infinity, a result which is reflected in the image of mere "sillion," or dirt, "shin[ing]" like diamonds simply because of the farmer's "shéer plód." Finally, this phrase connotes Christ "plod[ding]" heavily along the dirty ground of Calvary in His Passion, and connotes the conclusion of this humble self-sacrifice, which was

action in the transcendent moment is directly indicative of the movement of the Holy Spirit, of God's spiritual energy unquestioningly manifested.

marked by His glorious, His "shin[ing]" ascension into heaven. Certainly, Hopkins' theme of "creation of one's true self by self-sacrifice" is reiterated in this image, for "Christ was most Christ when he thus sacrificed himself, just as the windhover is most windhover when it renounces its sovereignty of the air and dives earthward" (Miller, Self 312).

Hopkins continues this natural "proof" of his inevitable spiritual conclusions in the beautiful concluding lines, "blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,/ Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion." Once again, this scene is connected to the one described in the octet by its earthliness and its Christliness. But, in the aside, "ah my dear" (which sounds to the reader, who is the addressee, like "I'll explain it to you, child") Hopkins appears to concede that the conclusion he draws from both really is a "wonder," given the incongruity between the elements of the inscaped scenes, yet he also seems to chide the reader for not apprehending the Truth in this "wonder." However, an inscaper could achieve such spiritual certitude. As the scene opens, the realm of the Eternal seems antithetical to this deathly, dreary display of "blue-bleak embers." Furthermore, it cannot be readily recognized as sacred, for to posit immediately this connection would be to suggest the waning of the Holy Spirit, the symbol of which, namely fire, is noticeably weak in this initial phrase; and the image is not of the traditional candle at a religious service, but of a simple, homely log. Particularly base though this natural phenomenon of burning embers is, it, too, achieves greatness by its very temporality, as in the case of the previous images. That is, only by doing what burning logs do, and "only after submitting to its lowly function of providing heat" (Warner 133), can the log burst forth in radiant light, and "gash gold-vermilion." Truly, "the firecoal perfectly images the self spending itself in the very process of self expression" (Goldsmith 68), and it is this paradoxical movement of self-annihilation and self-affirmation that also establishes the image's Infinite connection, as its Christliness is thereby suggested.

Hopkins also profoundly indicates Christ's presence in this selving scene by his word choice. Just as the previous image connotes Christ trudging up Calvary, three words in

this last line also refer to the Passion. First, the "ail" or the embers is a reference to

Christ's own painful falls; secondly, "gall" connotes the cruel and humiliating torture the crucified Christ endured in being forced to drink the foul liquid; finally, the word "gash" suggests Christ's lacerated side, gouged to assure his executioners of his death. Indeed, on the line's literal level, it is through the "gash" of the embers that their glorious selving "fire . . . breaks," and this situation echoes loudly on the metaphorical level, for it is through just such a "gash," formed by Christ's final "buckl[ing]" of self, that His inscape shines most radiantly. Befitting is the fact that this sacrificial self-expression appears "gold-vermillion" on this metaphorical level, because Christ, as King, does have inherent connections to "gold," while the "vermillion" hue of his blood posits the purity and preciousness, the *richness* of His essence.

To be sure, the heavy tension that characterizes all of the selving images in this sonnet displays aptly several points about the selving process. Such tension is initially and unavoidably felt by the selver, by him who realizes that "the self is composed of infinity and finiteness" (Sickness 162), for he can never bring together these opposing elements without some strain and discomfort. The tension of this mental awareness extends to the way in which he must actively selve, for the practice involves being both self-affirming and self-sacrificing. In this way, living most fully, which is represented often by Hopkins as a brightly burning flame, is also a form of self-sacrifice; and the more intensely a flame burns, the closer it is to burning out -- so, too, in regard to the self. Thus, strangely, pain and tension are indicative to Christian Existentialists not of a path to be avoided, but of a way of living that is desirable. Hopkins affirms that God's loving "grace is any action, activity, on God's part by which, in creating or aftercreating, he carries the creature to or towards the end of its being, which is its self-sacrifice to God and its salvation" (Devlin 154); this statement suggests not only the synonymity of death and life, but also the appropriateness of the flame image as a symbol for such a realized life, as the Holy Spirit is indicated in both the signifier and the signified. Finally, the pain that resounds

throughout the process of selving action reaches a peak when the creature reaches full selfhood, when he is both fully alive and annihilated, or, in other words, when he is timeless, when Infinity is approached, when he is neither flourishing nor floundering, and when he also both flourishes and flounders -- when his self "buckles." In keeping with its paradoxical nature, this state is characterized by intense pain and orgasmic relief simultaneously, for the tension of which this state is born is at this transcendent moment relieved.

However to an uncomprehending observer, i.e. to one who is not an inscaper, tension remains due to the baffling contradictions between elements of this state, although it must not be understood that the timeless being itself is the only being that is relieved of tension at this instant. The successful inscaper, who has "caught" or appropriated the bird's being, and who has thereby "caught" the inherent tension of its selving action, also "catches" the relief of this tension. That is, the tension that exists between the Christed being's will and God's will, between the being's self-affirming and self-sacrificing tendencies, is appropriated by the inscaper in the first stanza. He seeks both to fulfill the energy of his own self and to clarify it by "catching" the bird, and he also seeks to deny, or sacrifice, the energy of his self's presence in "hiding . . . [his] heart" and becoming subsumed by the falcon's "mastery," by the Godliness that establishes this finite creature's Christhood. But when the falcon, Christ's symbol, reaches the timeless and paradoxical moment in the second stanza, during which tension is relieved because contradictions become interchangeable, so, too, is the inscaper relieved, and he sighs "O my chevalier!" in satisfaction. The "O"²¹ in this address is important because it is a kind of inarticulate utterance that, along with the "ah" of the third stanza's similar phrase, "Ah my dear," is linked to orgasmic or other kinds of immense relief. Coupled with the words "my chevalier," the similarity between the narrator's relieved state and the Christed bird's state

²¹I recognize that this exclamatory word can indicate surprise, but I venture the suggestion, here, that Hopkins assigns the differently spelled "oh" of the ninth line to this denotative function, and reserves this "O" to express the narrator's ease, rather than a stunned state.

becomes apparent, for the inscaper's state also retains its paradoxical elements -- the possessive pronoun shows that the "bird . . . for" which his "heart . . . stirred" now belongs to him in some way, but the falcon's power, his "achieve" and "mastery," is no less constant, as he is still a strong knight, a "chevalier." In other words, the subjective inscaper's situation echoes that of the selving being which he apprehends; the inherent contradictions and pain remain, which are the source of tension, but, since the inscaper reaches infinity momentarily, along with the object of his perception, and since, in this realm, boundaries dissolve so, too, must the tension that arises from the dichotomy.

"Man becomes a new vessel and a new creature! But this becoming, what labours will attend the change, how convulsed with birth pangs" (Fragments 43); in this manner, Kierkegaard describes becoming faithful, becoming a self, and reiterates that pain and tension accompany the development of the God-relationship at every turn. Furthermore, the mention of the word "becoming" in this quotation reminds one that the philosopher viewed all human existence in terms of action and forward movement, for each finite thing, he asserted often, transcends itself as soon as it *is* because of its temporality, its life in the moment, and, so, is in a continual state of becoming. Hopkins illustrates his similar Christian Existentialist beliefs in "As kingfishers catch fire," in which the main theme is that of the action of becoming a self. He continues this theme in "The Windhover," and also expands the discussion into an exploration of the pain and tension inherent to the action of selving, thereby further underlining the similarities between his own Christian philosophy and that of Kierkegaard. And since "The Windhover" has been identified as being "the most concentrated poetic statement of the existential predicament of the Romantic Christian consciousness" (Downes, Sanctifying 61), it is not surprising that many other issues relevant to Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialism appear in the sonnet; what is to be noted is that Hopkins elucidates these issues with such complete insight, and comprehensively in terms of action and tension. Indeed, in these two sonnets, and particularly in the latter of the two, Hopkins elucidates some essential aspects of the God-

relationship as it is delineated by Kierkegaard, and, by so doing, the Jesuit responds appropriately, by the *act* of writing poetry, to Kierkegaard's query, "love, after all, has its priests in the poets, and occasionally one hears a voice that knows how to keep it in shape; but about faith one hears not a word, who speaks in *this* passion's praises?" (Fear 62).

**"FATHER AND FONDLER OF HEART THOU HAST WRUNG: HAST THY DARK
DESCENDING AND MOST ART MERCIFUL THEN"**

In terms of the spiritual interests of Kierkegaard's faithful individual, "the edifying is something outside the individual, the individual does not find edification by finding the God-relationship within himself, but relates himself to something outside himself to find edification" (Postscript 498). Kierkegaard refers specifically to Christ, to the Incarnation, by the phrase "something outside the individual," and by so doing underscores his persistent claim that the God-relationship exists in finitude, between one worldly man and a temporal, anti-immanential God. Moreover, the formation of the God-relationship is synonymous with the clarification of the self, for the Incarnate God to which the Christian Existentialist relates himself is exactly "other" (i.e. not "self"), not only in regard to His spiritual quality of being infinite, but also because of His temporal separateness, His particularity.¹ The delineation of "self" afforded by the presence of "other" is effected in both the spiritual and the temporal realm. Furthermore, while the religious man does infinitize himself by apprehending imaginatively the incomprehensible divinity of Christ, he also reiterates his temporal nature in the act of becoming² a new creature with a relationship to God, and by focusing his energy outside of his limited self and onto this anti-immanential God in order to move forward in the selving process. Whether the dynamic is viewed in terms of relating one's self spiritually to a temporal "other," or moving ahead into an unknown state, it is clear that a "leap" of faith (Hannay 98) is a

¹Kierkegaard affirms God's difference from man in no uncertain terms: "if man is to receive any true knowledge about the Unknown (the God) he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him" (Fragments 57).

²See explanation of the link between the concepts of becoming and existence on the last page of Chapter Two.

necessary feature of the continuous selving process: the selver is required to renounce the familiar, and throw himself headlong into the inscrutable God-relationship.

Similarly, in Hopkins' inscaping, "the creature's achievement [of self] is its movement forward, its 'perpetual motion' toward Christ, the prize and goal who remains transcendently himself, the author of all self-being" (Cotter 47). Indeed, the inscaper "move[s] forward" energetically in *becoming* related to the Christ-being of other natural phenomena, the inscape of each being, and achieves a new self through this faithful exercise. The inscaper must, like Kierkegaard's faithful man, "leap" from his familiar solipsistic world of self to the world of self of the natural other. By energetically appropriating the divinely-inspired selving dynamic of this "other" (Ong, Self 17), by apprehending the Incarnation therein, the inscaper "relates himself to something outside himself to find edification," as opposed to "finding the God-relationship within himself" (Postscript 498). Thus, the inscaper is essentially Kierkegaard's "religious man" for he, too, relates himself to God in the temporal world; he actively delineates his particular selfhood in relation to an anti-immanential "other," and through this finite selving expression, becomes a new creature that is related to the Infinite. Kierkegaard reiterates, in more specific terms, that the essence of the self is synonymous with its environmental relationships: "the self is composed of infinity and finiteness. But the synthesis is a relationship, and it is a relationship which, though it is derived, relates itself to itself, which means freedom. *The self is freedom*" (my emphasis; Sickness 162). And, certainly, the successful inscaper/selver³ in Hopkins' poetry, for whom "earth . . . [is] half hurl[ed] . . . off under his feet" ("Hurrahing" l. 14), achieves freedom, as well.⁴ It is in this context of freedom that Hopkins' frequent use of images of flight gains an enveloping significance,

³The inscaper selves by appropriating the *selving* expression of the object of his perception. Also, in regard to the above quotation from The Sickness Unto Death, because he relates his subjective, infinite element to finitude in "gleaning" God imaginatively out of nature, then relates that "synthesis" to his self, changing his humble "blue bleak" nature to a proud "gold-vermillion," the inscaper is, undeniably, a selver.

⁴Furthermore, the inscaper achieves freedom in the same manner as does Kierkegaard's existing individual, for his very subjectivity demands that he relate himself only to himself.

for the ability to fly is connected to faithfulness in that both involve some kind of release from the heavy shackles of earthly existence, whether the release is from gravity or the isolation of finitude. Indeed, the images of "finches' wings" ("Pied" l. 4), "kingfishers" and "dragonflies" ("Kingfishers" l. 1), "The heart rear[ing] wings" ("Hurrahing" l. 13), and the flight of the magnificent windhover show clearly the role of freedom in the inscaping/selving process.

The inscaper also has in common with the "religious man" an inevitable human reaction to freedom -- dread. Dread, or anxiety, is defined by Kierkegaard as "the dizziness of freedom which occurs when the spirit would posit the synthesis [of the self], and freedom then gazes down into its own possibility, grasping at finitude to sustain itself. In this dizziness, freedom succumbs" (Dread 55). The difference between this concept and that which Kierkegaard calls "despair" is significant. Although both dread and despair are types of a distance from the Infinite (Postscript 240), the former exists within the realm of self-knowledge and self-reflectiveness (Dread 55), while the latter is a stubborn ignorance (Sickness 147); that is, dread is a natural occurrence in the existence of the "spirit-ful man" and is "oriented towards freedom" (Dread 142, 55), but despair is a destructive and wilful lack of knowledge of self and God, a lack of subjectivity. Despair can never occur to the individual who has already resolved to believe in religious truth, and who has already leapt out of the logical realm into the subjective and paradoxical God-relationship (Postscript 337). Dread signifies a *pause* in the dynamic interplay between the "religious man" and God, and thus seems antithetical to becoming a realized self. However, dread is, in fact, not only a mark of the "spirit-ful" life (Dread 141), but also spiritually edifying for the individual: "dread is the possibility of freedom. Only this dread is by the aid of faith absolutely educative, consuming as it does all finite aims and discovering their deceptions" (Dread 139). Yet, positive in tone as the outcome of dread is for the spirit-ful man, this process of being educated by Infinity (Dread 139) is ultimately the most painful ordeal of all, while the "characteristic of spiritlessness is recognizable precisely by the spiritless

sense of security," or comfort (Sickness 177). The sufferer of dread comes to understand all too well that, in "grasping at finiteness to sustain [him]self" in the face of boundless freedom, he distances himself from infinite God, Whose presence he recognizes as necessary to his existence. In short, the individual in dread rejects freedom by halting the selving process that has led him to encounter freedom because of his corresponding feelings of being exposed or fatally unsafe, yet he soon learns that the true danger of death looms in not *becoming* a self, in not existing, in not participating in the God-relationship; he believes that he protects himself by "leaping" back into finitude from the Unknown, only to find himself in the deadly abyss of Godlessness.

Significantly, all of the aspects of dread that are encountered by Kierkegaard's "religious man" are also evidenced in the experiences of the narrator in Hopkins' "terrible sonnets." There are those readers of Hopkins' poetry, however, who understand the "terrible sonnets" to indicate religious doubt (Downes, Sanctifying 74), or despair, in Kierkegaard's terminology, and those critics who "have been [so] scandalized by the authenticity of Hopkins' grief and anxiety . . . [that they have denied] the mystery of the real nature of suffering" (Cotter 221). Yet, upon close inspection it becomes apparent that Hopkins' "terrible sonnets" -- identified by Harris, for instance, in his Inspirations Unbidden as including "Carrian Comfort," "No worst, there is none," "To seem the stranger," "I wake and feel," "Patience," and "My own heart" (3) -- reveal the immense suffering that is *dread* in the spirit-ful man. This assessment of the impetus behind the sonnets is supported by the fact that they have in common a heartfelt lament over God's absence, as this lament suggests that the narrator has already taken the "leap" of faith -- he has made the irreversible choice to believe that his self, when properly constituted, is related to Infinity, which is why he regrets so sorely that this is presently not the case for him. Thus, these six sonnets illustrate dread, which is a pause in the God-relationship and in the selving process, as opposed to representing despair, which is an ignorance of the Infinite altogether, and precludes a prior choice to be in faith.

The distinguishing feature and most prominent aspect of these sonnets is the fact that nowhere in them does the narrator relate himself to his natural environment.⁵ This characteristic is so striking because Hopkins' main focus in the preceding sonnets is inscaping, which is, by definition, an intuitively-informed "sense perception of *things in the world* [by which] he [can] know God directly as the 'instress' that up[holds] each thing" (my emphasis; Miller, Self 301). Contrastingly, the "terrible sonnets" involve a solipsistic perception that does not extend to the narrator's environment at all; thus, inscaping is noticeably absent, as are the divine revelations reached by this process. To begin with, in "Carrion Comfort," the narrator indicates his lack of concern for his actual environment from the first line, in which he addresses only a personified state of his inner emotional being, namely "Despair." He continues to address "Despair" in the fourth line, but here he discusses its power over him, as opposed to his having "Despair" himself. This recognition of the "terrible," "lion"-like power of "Despair" leads into the narrator's

⁵This is true but for the last image in the last sonnet, "Patience," a discussion of which will follow in regard to its atypicality.

ruminations in the sestet where "he realizes that this same 'Despair' is being used by God to give him a chance to . . . turn to Himself. And so, at one and the same time, Hopkins [or the narrator] is wrestling with 'Despair' and with God" (Villarubia 73).⁶ Although God is present in this sense, He never appears through the physical world, and is never "gleaned" out of the narrator's environment; the narrator wrestles with Him, Jacob-like (Cotter 83), only in his *heart*. Even the purifying effect that this encounter has on the narrator is purely spiritual, and, thus, imaginative -- Hopkins translates a spiritual reality into physical terms (i.e. "my chaff might fly; my grain lie sheer and clear"), in opposition to the hitherto established inscaping dynamic, by which the individual translates, or "gleans" with his heart a spiritual meaning out of a physical reality. Indeed, although references to finitude and physicality appear in the sestet of "Carrian Comfort," thereby positing the narrator as a former, or potential, inscaper, he does not presently relate himself to the finitude in his environment -- and God is either completely removed from him or appears as a cruel foe. In any case, the absence of inscaping is linked to the narrator's misaligned relationship with God.

God's absence is implied in two ways in the sestet of "Carrian Comfort." First, the narrator's confusion as to whether or not he does, indeed, perceive God indicates that God is not directly perceptible. This dread-filled individual effects a great distance between himself and God in trying to relate to Him only within himself, and, bewildered about his isolation, must ask "whom" it is that he "cheer[s]," but can never conclusively answer this question. He merely continues to wonder, "O which one? is it each one?" The fault in this narrator's relation to God is also evidenced in the final line of the sonnet and the four words that precede it. The four words, "That night, that year," show that his current realization of God's presence is inspired by an event far-removed chronologically, and is only a derivation or interpretation of his memories. Further, he reiterates God's absence

⁶Because Hopkins links God and "Despair" in this manner, I do not equate this poet's and Kierkegaard's concepts of "despair."

by noting that the "darkness" in which God did appear to interact directly with His subject is "now done." By contrast, God's presence is undeniable and direct to the successful inscaper, who can say confidently that "the azurous hung hills are his [i.e. Christ's] world-wielding shoulder" ("Hurrahing" l. 9), and who can connect directly God with "dappled things" ("Pied" l. 1). Even though it may seem that "Carrian Comfort" shows such a strong presence of God, since He is palpable enough to the narrator for the two to "wrestle," He is, in truth, absent.

Similarly, in "No worst, there is none," the dread-filled narrator indicates powerfully, by wailing loudly at its absence, his understanding that his properly constituted existence includes his relationship to Infinity. He cries to the "Comforter," who is, undoubtedly, God, "where is your comforting?" He also addresses Christ's mother, who gives relief by bringing God's "comfort" to mankind, asking her to explain the lack of consolation in his own life: "Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?" In addition to these direct attestations to God's absence, Hopkins also indicates this situation indirectly by revealing a general emptiness through images of negation, sterility and death. For instance, the word "no" and other negating words like it appear an inordinate number of times in the sonnet; it is definitely noteworthy that, in such a relatively short poem, "no" appears three times, while each of "none," "ne'er," and "nor" are present, as well. Moreover, the sonnet seems totally circumscribed by death: the closing line includes the word "death" and its verb form, "dies," while black, the colour that symbolizes death, is compounded upon itself in the phrase "Pitched past pitch" of the sonnet's opening line. Lastly, the geographical elements in the images suggest sterility. As in "Carrian Comfort," these references to nature are merely metaphorical, a finitization of a psychological state -- they are the "mountains" only of the "mind," and thus do not offer a means of inscaping, of relating to God. Such spiritual barrenness is implied by the cold, hard rock of which "mountains" are composed, and also by the "sheer" "fall/ Frightful" of the psychological "cliffs" in the next image, for, indeed, the more vertical land is, the less easily can vegetation grow there.

Immediately following these powerful images of rock formations are the words, "Here! creep./ Wretch, under a comfort serves in whirlwind," which elicit the idea of a stone cave as a place of solace from this spiritually desolate terrain. Does Hopkins suggest that "comfort"⁷ can be found in this wind-swept, sterile terrain of the mind? A consideration of the Biblical reference in this line leads one to conclude, rather, that the divine "comforter" continues to be a torturer, as He is in the previous sonnet, and that this dread-filled individual continues to flee from Him by preferring to cling to paltry, but certain, aspects of temporality. The Biblical reference is to Job 38:1, in which God appears to the tormented Job out of a whirlwind, and this narrator responds to God's presence in the dangerous wind by continuing to cling to finitude, which has such known limitations and certitudes as the inevitable fact of death. Instead of exposing himself to an uncertain future, "whirl[ing]" with possibilities, this individual chooses a sorry, but constant and comprehensible, fact of temporality: "all/ Life death does end and each day dies with sleep."

In continuation of his dreadful theme, Hopkins further explices the "religious man's" refusal to relate himself to "something outside himself," which is the reverse of the inscaping process. In "Patience," he reiterates, "We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills/ To bruise them dearer," to illustrate that the warped inscaping process is spiritually fatal, for the faithful man must focus his energy outward in order to move forward in the selving process. In short, the properly directed process is a combination of the "eyes" and "heart" working together to "glean" Christ intuitively out of physical reality ("Hurrahing" l. 6-7); but if the "eyes" are not used, the poor "heart" tries to extract the divine "other" out of itself, and is doomed to failure, "grat[ing]" like a misaligned cog in a machine. Indeed, the man in dread uses his heart, but in reverse, and soon finds that, by clinging to his own isolated, finite particularity, he "kills" this same, imaginative "tool." In similar manner, the *personal will* that the inscaper in "Kingfishers" learns to use correctly, by

⁷See footnote nine of this chapter.

comparing it to the divine will he perceives in his natural environment,⁸ appears in this sonnet as "rebellious." Understandably, this dread-filled individual fears that he may not use his free will to make choices that are in alignment with the will of God, so he attempts to renounce his free will, which he "bid[s] God bend to him [i.e. God]." It is clear that he understands the dire necessity of having a will in alignment with God's will, but "rebellious[ness]" will continue to characterize his will as long as his "heart grate[s]" on itself, uninformed by the evidence of God's will as it appears in his physical environment.

Hopkins goes on to show that the manifestation of the will, namely action, is also perverted when the inscaper does not relate himself to "other" Incarnate, to Christ, Who appears in temporality. While the will of the successful inscaper blossomed into Christly action in "Kingfishers," it becomes apparent in the next terrible sonnet, "My own heart," that the dread-filled man is doomed to stagnancy. Just as the "heart[] grate[s] on" itself, effecting nothing for all its hard work, the action which naturally reflects the heart is equally fruitless and ineffectual. The first stanza of this sonnet shows that the narrator knows that his heart is in a "pitiful" state, and that his manner of "liv[ing]," or actively developing his life, is inextricable from his responses to his heart; he does not merely "pity" his "own heart" in thought alone, as may be understood from the first line, but, as a semi-colon always prefaces the further development of an idea inherently connected to that which precedes it, it becomes clear that, to him, pitying his heart must be effected in "liv[ing]" "kind[ly]" to his "sad self."⁹ By responding to his heart with "pity" he hopes to quit the way in which he has responded to his heart hitherto; he hopes "not [to] live [his] tormented mind/ With [his] tormented mind tormenting yet." Indeed, since he is restrained to "liv[ing] his] mind" (which is the same as "living to" his heart, or "sad self," as all are

⁸In "Kingfishers," the pervasive symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit in the octet seems to be connected to the narrator's realization of his Christliness in the sestet.

⁹This identification of the self with the heart further evidences the narrator's position as a faithful person in dread, for it shows that he knows himself as more than a finite being alone; significantly, he also knows that one's actions are a direct reflection of his heart's movements, just as the inscaper in "Kingfishers" knows that "the just man [naturally] justices," and that when one "Keeps gráce" within himself, "thát keeps all his goings graces" (l. 9, 10).

active worldly manifestations, or responses, to an inner impetus), and since his mind turns in painful and ineffectual circles, ever "tormenting" and grating on itself, the corresponding act of living is equally fruitless. If the narrator could respond to an outer impetus, an "other," and if he could align his personal will with God's will, he might "make[] plough down sillion/ Shine," or triumphantly "gash gold-vermillion," as do the divinely-inspired actors in "The Windhover." However, this individual grasps his own isolated finitude, and is, consequently, fated not to become a new and glorious creature, as is the inscaper, but is condemned to repeat living a deathly state that is void of the *possibility* offered by the Infinite (Dread 55).

The second stanza of "My own heart" illustrates clearly that the spiritually-inclined individual can never find the "comfort of" the God-relationship within himself,¹⁰ and that the pain of dread lies precisely in his knowledge of the fact that a complete existence relies on his relationship to Infinity, which can be formed only if he relates himself "to something outside himself" (Postscript 498). Because he spiritually "cast[s] for comfort" only within his own solipsistic "comfortless" inner self, his action is doomed to be frustrated, leaving him "groping round" in circles, ineffectually; he knows for what he searches, and frantically "grop[es] [a]round" to find it, but is limited to search for that "comfort" only within himself, where it does not exist. He then compares this frustrated search for spiritual comfort to the search for "day" by "blind/ Eyes" condemned to "their dark" world. The mention of "eyes" reminds one that it is by the visual perception of his natural environment that the inscaper provides his "heart" with the material it needs to intuit God's presence¹¹; however, these "eyes" are "blind," and can perceive nothing but "their [own]

¹⁰I use Hopkins' word "comfort" here loosely, as the faithful man always experiences a great deal of *tension* in devoting himself to the illogical, and aligning his stubborn human will with that of God. This situation is aptly illustrated in "The Windhover," but so is the joyful aspect of this tension, and it is in a consideration of such joy that I associate "comfort" with the properly posited God-relationship.

¹¹In Hopkins' nature sonnets, inscapes are "caught" in the new "daylight" of "morning" ("Windhover" l. 1, 2), bright "skies of couple-colour" ("Pied" l. 2), and the white "silk-sack clouds" ("Hurrahing" l. 3) of, perhaps, mid-afternoon. All of these images show that Hopkins continues in the traditional association of God with light.

dark," regardless of how diligently they try to "get . . . day." Finally, the notion of a frustrated search is reiterated in the last image of the second stanza, in which "thirst" looks for "Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet," but to no avail. In consideration of the fact that "thirst" is surrounded by precisely that which can satiate it, it becomes clear that the problem here lies with the searcher, which is, in this case, "thirst." Similarly, the implied searcher -- the dread-filled man -- searches unsuccessfully only his personal infinity, or heart, for God; thus, he is left thirsting for God's presence while a "world of" satiation lies around him, literally, for in Hopkins' inscaping, God is to be found everywhere in his environment. As Kierkegaard maintains in Philosophical Fragments, the strongest chains imaginable are those imposed by ourselves (19), so the man who condemns himself to searching only inwardly to satisfy his spiritual thirst may do so forever in vain. Hopkins indicates the futility of the inwardly directed act of searching by suggesting circularity through repetition, in echo of the closing image of the first stanza; the words "all-in-all in all" are so mundanely staccato and repetitive that the frustration of the limited searcher is duplicated in the reader¹² when he encounters these words. In summary, the narrator feels *incomplete* and "comfortless," without that for which he frantically "cast[s]." And just as this situation can be compared to lacking an essential sense, namely sight, it can also be compared to lacking an essential element in the body, namely water. This searcher knows so well that he needs Infinity to complete himself that he can only compare his feeling of want without God to a dire and undismissible physical lack. This situation seems dreadful, indeed, for the narrator is condemned to live only with his isolated self, and he finds his self grossly incomplete.

The incomplete nature of the self in the "terrible sonnets" is linked to both its lack of "God-consciousness" (Dread 111), and its related inability to manifest itself actively in the world, for, as Kierkegaard maintains, the synthesized self, the complete self, always

¹²I recognize that Hopkins never intended to share the "terrible sonnets" with anyone, and thus any reference in this chapter to the interplay between the reader and the text should not be assumed to extend to the poet's communication to the reader.

translates its subjective experience of God into worldly *action* in order to truly exist (Postscript 84). Thus, the individual who exists only in his heart, or mind, not only neglects to infuse his personal infinity, or soulish element, with the infinite "other," thereby neglecting the God-relationship in his existence, but also neglects to fulfill the *active* aspect of existence -- therefore, he cannot be said to properly *exist* at all. Regarded thus, the link between stagnancy and death in, for example, "No worst, there is none," seems a natural and appropriate one, and further illustrates the narrator's misrelation to God. He laments, "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall/ Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed," and also says that he "hangs" from the rocky face of this Godless psychological terrain. To be sure, the image of "hanging" connotes stagnancy and the inability to move forward. Even though fast "fury" "shriek[s]" at him not to "linger" so, it is apparent from the image of hanging, and suggested by the fact that the word "linger" sluggishly carries over from line seven to eight, that this individual is, alas, motionless. Such ineffectual action is an aspect of the incomplete existence of the dread-filled individual, who clings only to his own finite particularity, thereby becoming trapped in his isolated psychological microcosm (which is so private that it can be "fathomed" by "no" other "man" (l. 10)). Stagnancy is also implied in these lines by circularity and repetitiveness, as is the case in "My own heart"; here, the initial word in the ninth line, "O," implies circularity by its physical appearance on the page, and this round shape is reduplicated by the mouth of the speaker who pronounces it. Furthermore, Hopkins repeats the word "mind," which stalls the progression of the poetic line, and suggests the narrator's inability to advance. Because this individual is not properly related to God, Who exists not in his own "mind," but "outside of himself," this individual does not truly exist; his inability to partake in effective action adds to, and is a consequence of, his faulty existence.

To be sure, Kierkegaard asserts that to be in such a state of dread, to grasp at one's isolated finitude and reject Infinity in this manner, is to reject true existence (Postscript 273). So much is evident, for if one does not act, one does not "become," and "becoming"

is synonymous with existing. Thus, in "No worst, there is none," Hopkins progression from a rumination on inaction to one on death seems perfectly appropriate. And the fact that he calls death "a comfort" is not surprising either, for the "life [he hopes] death does end" soon (l. 14) is characterized by the "most painful possible distance from the truth" -- dread (Postscript 240). Furthermore, such a familiar, even loving, consideration of death is natural to the dread-filled man, whose very life is like a constant death-state, being motionless and void of any of the hope that is offered by the possibility of Infinity.¹³ The individual who exists in such a state is, as Hopkins declares in the thirteenth line, a "wretch," a lowly creature that does not live a proud human existence, but "creep[s]" like an insect, a snake, or a dying man.¹⁴

Both "Carrian Comfort" and "I wake and feel" also show how an existence warped by the absence of Infinity is simultaneously marked by a lack of effective action, and the significance of *action* in Hopkins' philosophy is clear, for it is shown throughout the nature sonnets to be essential to the God-relationship. It is evidenced in "The Windhover" that the faithful individual, one in whose life is realized the ideal God-relationship, acts "master[fully]" and "achiev[es]" much by aligning his will with God's will. However, such a free and noble alignment is absent in dread. Because the dread-filled man hides from Infinity, his will is separated from that of God, and he is, consequently, left to a life of meaningless, fruitless effort and inaction. He insists that he can act, but is pitifully directionless and helpless, crying, "I can; Can something, hope, wish day come"; he "hope[s]" only in the same way that he "wish[es]," that is, impotently. He does not himself effect any positive change, but can only wait in anticipation for change to come about. His will is so weak that it can barely sustain itself and the life to which it is connected -- because it is the will by which choices are made, it seems inaccurate to this

¹³It will be remembered that , in dread, "freedom gazes down into its own possibility [and] succumbs," "grasping at finitude to sustain itself" (Dread 55).

¹⁴Kierkegaard's bold words, previously quoted on page 53, should be recalled here: "essentially it is the God-relationship that makes a man a man" (Postscript 219).

weakling to assert that he can positively *choose* to live, so minimal is his will. Instead, he can only, pathetically, "not choose not to be." In a manner similar to how the narrator in "No worst, there is none" lives, this individual barely exists at all, and he, too, appears to be hardly human: in the last line of the second stanza he describes himself as "heaped there" like a lifeless pile of bones, or like senseless dirt. Significantly, this sorry individual is, in another way, like the "Wretch" in the "whirlwind" of "Carrian Comfort": he tries to "avoid" God, Who comes to him "in turns of tempest."

Indeed, such avoidance of God also appears in "Carrian Comfort," in which the narrator tries to keep his will separate from God's will. Even though God makes His will quite obvious by "wring[ing]," "wrestl[ing]," and forcefully "lay[ing] a lionlimb against" the narrator, this dread-filled man continues to "flee," unacknowledging. Unlike the windhover, who is "in his ecstacy" in response to the pressure of God's will, this individual is upset, is "frantic," and feels the intrusion of God's will upon his own to be "rude." And also unlike the windhover, who experiences "his ecstacy" precisely when the *tension* between his will and God's will is great (i.e. when "he rung upon the rein"), this agonized, man does not know the joyful *tension* of asserting his will in alignment with God's will. Correlatively, instead of evoking the image of a "taut rein," Hopkins evokes, here, a loosely woven rope in the line "Not untwist -- slack they may be -- these last strands of man/ In me." Hopkins thereby also reiterates that the God-relationship is correlated to the *self*, in whom all elements of temporal being, such as "Brute beauty and valour and act," as well as air, pride, [and] plume" can all "Buckle!" in one Faithful selving action that is simultaneously annihilative and Infinity-infusing. However, the self who has no relationship to God is not tightly "buckle[d]" together, but only "slack[ly]" held together. Indeed, among other things, "Carrian Comfort" illustrates the interplay between the existence of the God-relationship in the self, the self's mode of existing, namely action, and the impetus of action, namely the will.

appear in the "darkness" ("Carrian" l. 14) that is dread. The weakness of the narrator's will and the subsequent dearth of action in his existence are prominent, as they appear at the poem's outset. In the first line of the sonnet, which also doubles as its title, the narrator reveals how inactive he is, and how eventless is his life in the same way as does the narrator of "Carrian Comfort." Instead of talking about the grand actions within their lives, such as "justic[ing]" ("Kingfishers" l. 9), or even valiantly "plod[ding]" through life's hard work ("Windhover" l. 12), both of these dread-filled narrators are left to comment on the most basic aspects of their lives, such as the mere fact that their lives happen ("I can/ . . . not choose not to be"), or that they are conscious ("I wake and feel"). And, indeed, not even the verb "feel" indicates wilful action on the part of the narrator, for this sensory event occurs not by his choice, but because "dark" has fallen on him. He continues this description of his existence by commenting further only on the dreary "hōurs" he has "spent" in consciousness; moreover, the pronunciation mark („) over the word "hōurs" indicates that it should be articulated slowly, as though with two syllables ("ow-wers"), and, thus, this word alone also suggests that his life "lingers" ("No worst" l. 7-8) with eventlessness.

Although the next line seems to imply that he has travelled some amazing "ways" and encountered some fantastic "sights," it becomes clear by a consideration of the addressee that, in actuality, he has not participated in such events. That is, he speaks to his "heart" alone, so it appears that he has not been actively involved with existence, but has only been the solipsistic explorer of his own isolated psychological terrain; moreover, the awful "black[ness]" and "dark[ness]" that characterize his paltry life is inextricably connected to the fact that he concerns himself only with his personal, limited infinitude, his "heart," and does not relate himself to "something outside himself" to develop a relationship with Infinity. To be sure, this individual is in dread, and, as Kierkegaard indicates, dread is directly linked to a limitation of the will; he states, "dread is a womanish *debility* in which

freedom swoons (my emphasis; Dread 55). The idea of limitation is elicited by this passage in two ways, as the limited quality of the dread-filled individual's will results in, and is also the result of, the limitation of his possibilities, his freedom. Hopkins indicates such limitation in the last line of the first stanza of "I wake and feel," in which it appears that the "sights" and "ways" that his heart mercilessly forced itself to endure "must . . . more" (my emphasis) be endured in the lingering, eventless "delay" of "yet longer light[]"; because his "heart" searches narrowly only itself, the agony of such solipsism cannot be escaped -- it is self-perpetuating, being void of new possibility. Indeed, this weak and solipsistic individual does not dive headlong into existence, "striding/ High there" ("Windhover" l. 3-4) in the groundless and boundless realm of possibility. Rather, he hides pathetically from true existence by clinging to his finite particularity, he refuses to will himself into true selfhood, and soon finds that such limitation really characterizes his life, which is now stagnant and claustrophobic.

In regard to the role of action in inscaping, which is the relation to God as something outside the selver, a relation to the infinite "other," "I wake and feel" also shows how the act of *self-expression* is warped when an individual reverses the inscaping process in his return to finitude. As Hopkins points out in "Kingfishers," *all* divinely-inspired beings actively manifest their selfhoods in temporality, and this active presence of Being can be described as a communication, for the inscaper learns of God, that is, his Holy Spirit,¹⁵ through each particular, natural self-expression. Whether the expression takes the form of a "tell[ing]," a "speak[ing]," a "spell[ing]," a "Crying," or through the "find[ing]" of tongue to fling out broad [the being's] name," each natural phenomenon expresses powerfully and heedlessly its message of self. The human selver also "say[s]" his self, but he does so in a more profound, reflective and considerate way because he is linked to the community of other humans through his self-expression, as it is through moral action that he realizes his self. Moreover, his self-expression also indicates his understanding of and willed response

¹⁵See the first several pages of the second chapter for an explication of this concept.

to the divine messages that he apprehends subjectively through the imaginative act of inscaping. In "Hurrahing in Harvest," Hopkins describes the response to God through inscaping as a kind of *communication* in his rhetorical question, "And éyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a/ Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?" (l. 7-8). Thus, it follows that if the individual ceases to be related to the Divine, successful communication halts correspondingly. Nowhere in the "terrible sonnets" does Hopkins elucidate more clearly both the absence of God in the dread-experience and the role of communication in the God-relationship than in the second stanza of "I wake and feel." The theme of communication is emphasized in the first line of this stanza, in which the verbs "speak" and "say" both appear; hitherto, Hopkins has used these same verbs to describe the successful self-expression of beings that exhibit the proper way of relating to God ("Kingfishers" l. 7, 9), but he uses these words in the present context to signify the inversion of the selving process. As though on trial, the narrator states, "With witness I speak this," thereby indicating that the veracity of his words is questionable -- having already anticipated his listener's doubt, the narrator has prepared for a "witness" to vouch for his words. And because this "witness" is none other than his own heart (the addressee and other of the "we" in the first stanza), which is limited and inevitably biased, its claims are not reliable either. Even on the surface, the narrator's credibility seems minimal because he is not related to "something outside himself," but is only concerned with the "sights" and "ways" of his innermost world. As Kierkegaard maintains, the individual must relate himself to God, the Truth, and infinite "other," precisely by means of relating himself in both spiritual and finite terms to the "Teacher," Christ, who is also a temporal "other" (Fragments 137). Hence, the solipsistic man who remains only concerned with his own particularity can never know the Truth.

Furthermore, the fact that the narrator has a ready "witness" to confirm the accuracy of his statements suggests that he, himself, is aware of the impotence of his message. In the poem, the next sentence also suggests this awareness of the narrator because, in it, he

clarifies the meaning of his words in the poem's second line, thereby revealing his belief that his power of verbal expression is limited, that his communication is ambiguous, or even inaccurate. And the "lament" to which he refers next is described as being "cries countless"; they are expressions so ineffectual that he must repeat himself ceaselessly. The narrator's last description of his "lament" is further evidence of his understanding that he communicates poorly: he compares his "cries" to "dead letters," which are letters that never leave the post office, messages that are aborted before they are even expressed and that never reach their intended recipient, thus implying that his message is imperceptible. Additionally, verbal expression has retrograded, here, into written communication, which is removed from the communicator, and, in that sense, abstracted and even less complete. Unlike each natural self in "Kingfishers," which, being directly inspired by the Divine, "Deals out [confidently] that being indoors each one dwells" (l. 6) in its communication, this dread-filled individual abstracts and objectifies -- distances himself from -- his pithy communication. Finally, the narrator says that his message's intended recipient, Who is "dearest" to him, "lives alas! away." Understood in regard to the God-relationship, this statement is the most direct declaration of God's absence from the narrator anywhere in the "terrible sonnets," and it most clearly indicates that he undergoes the experience of dread. As he posits the God-relationship in attempting to communicate with "dearest [H]im," he is evidently not in despair, which precludes the desire to relate to the Infinite. Yet, his cries are "dead," "witness[ed]" only by his own heart; his self-expression touches only his own particular self, instead of being a realization of his relationship to the Infinite "other," and are, therefore, the sobs of an individual in dread.

Another instance in the "terrible sonnets" in which the speaker reverses a step in the development of the God-relationship by returning to the isolation of finitude appears in "To seem the stranger." In this sonnet, the narrator's concern is, again, with communication, that is, his *inability* to express himself effectively, but here the intended recipient of his message is his fellow man. The individual who is properly related to God

expresses this relationship through a responsive communication to his fellow man which is divinely-inspired, being formed in subjectivity. By observing the selves around him, and concerning himself with such social concerns as "justice," the human selper can "say [even] more" ("Kingfishers" l. 9) than can natural selves, for his expression of the inward God-relationship is interfused with social, or ethical, considerations. Yet, in Christian Existentialism, "the ethical life no longer has its goal within itself, but is subservient as a whole to some other end, or *telos*" (Fear 16),¹⁶ that end being a fulfillment of the demands of the subjective God-relationship. The reception by society of the moral man's self-expression is not his concern, for he is beholden only to God. According to Kierkegaard, "faith's paradox [is] that the single individual . . . determines his relationship to the universal [i.e. his fellow man] through his relationship to the absolute [i.e. God]" (Fear 97), and as long as he responds to God properly (which includes his response to society formed through faithful reflection), he can be sure that his communication is complete, and need not be concerned with how his subjective expression is apprehended by others.

Thus, in Hopkins' nature sonnets, the directness and didactic tone of the inscaper's message seems appropriate -- he expresses merely that which has been revealed to him in subjectivity, and does not mince his words for the sake of his listener, the reader. He declares unapologetically, "I say more," even though the content of what he says may even be construed as blasphemous ("man . . . is Christ") ("Kingfishers" l. 9-12); "Glory be to God for dappled things," the narrator commands ("Pied" l. 1), unconcerned with whether or not the reader believes his unconventional "proof" of God's grace that is meant to elicit the reader's prayerful response; "No wonder of it" ("Windhover" l. 12), he chides the reader for needing an interpretation of that which he feels to be self-explanatory and evidenced everywhere in the temporal world. In an almost condescending manner, the inscaper teaches, in "The Windhover," a lesson that echoes throughout the nature sonnets:

¹⁶Kierkegaard uses this word throughout Fear and Trembling; the concept of a "*teleological suspension of the ethical*" is based on the notion that the *telos*, or end, of all of the individual's ethical duties, of all of his universal relationships, lies in his God-relationship.

all temporal things, including humans, are most themselves when the distinction between their selves and God's self is least pronounced. For most people, this incredible spiritual truth is difficult to apprehend. However, since the narrator is an inscaper, who is informed subjectively of the Truth, he expresses this fact of Faith confidently, unreservedly, and without concern for his audience's judgements about it. He knows that his only concern -- his duty to God -- has been fulfilled simply by expressing this truth and manifesting it temporally in words. By contrast, the narrator of "To seem the stranger" is terribly anxious about how his audience receives his communication. Pathetically, he seeks temporal assurance and response because he cannot connect his communication to a divine impetus, since he is in dread.

Indeed, that the narrator of this sonnet concerns himself with a temporal audience is evidenced in the first nine lines, in which he laments the fact that he is separated from the people most familiar to him, and that he is an outcast, or "stranger" to those people who do surround him. He continues his lament of his worldly isolation in the third stanza, stating, "I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third/ Remove." In addition to showing that the narrator is most concerned with his physical placement in the world and his relation to other people in it, this line stands out from the body of Hopkins' poetry because of its literal, unimaginative nature, which underscores its secular theme. In this context, the words that follow, "Not but in all removes I can/ Kind love both give and get," appear to refer to the ultimate physical removal -- death. Meanwhile, the word "can" in this passage suggests that the "giv[ing]" and "get[ting]" of "Kind love" is only theoretical. This characteristic posits the statement as being small consolation for one who feels his temporal isolation so acutely. He asserts that he might connect to his fellow man through communication, "Only what word/ Wisest . . . [his] heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban/ Bars or hell's spell thwarts"; to him, "heaven" seems to be "dark," or sinister, even to be confused with "hell," so sorely does he regret its "ban" on the success of his communication to other men. Yet, this notion of antagonism between the narrator and

heaven, as well as the statement that the narrator's "heart breeds" "Wise[J]" words of its own, suggest that his real problem lies with himself: he is misaligned with the Divine, and concerns himself with expressing movements within his "heart" that are not inspired by God. And precisely because his communication consequently does not reach culmination in the fulfillment of his duty to the Divine, the narrator seeks to fulfill his communicative act in temporality, through the recognition of his fellow man. However, the reception of his words *should* not be a concern to him; that this "hoard [of words is] unheard" or "Heard unheeded" would not bother him if he properly related his interpersonal communication, as well as all worldly action, back to God, Who should be the impetus of all such action in the first place. Certainly, communication is a kind of action, and just as action stagnates in dread, becoming repetitive and cyclical, verbal expression is also thwarted thus. The cyclical nature of the isolated narrator's unsuccessful communication in "To seem the stranger" is strongly indicated by the last line, in which he complains that because of the lack of mortal audience for his words, he is "le[ft with] . . . a lonely began," instead of "say[ing] more" ("Kingfishers" l. 9) than what has already been expressed.

To be sure, the faithful man relates himself ultimately to God, in his communication and in other action. Although he is passionately involved with every aspect of worldly life, including his relationships to other people, the end, or *telos*, of all his efforts lies in his relationship with God. And since God reveals Himself through subjectivity, the faithful man can learn nothing about God or the way He relates to individuals from other men, for no part of the content of subjectivity can be shared. Kierkegaard reiterates, "he who walks the narrow path of faith no one can advise, no one can understand," and adds, "the one knight of faith simply cannot help the other" (*Fear* 95, 99). It is for this reason that Hopkins emphasizes in "Kingfishers" that "Christ plays in ten thousand places" (l. 12); in this line, the poet suggests that although each faithful, moral man is similar to each other faithful man in regard to their common Christliness, each individual still retains perfectly his autonomous nature and particularity. That is, his *individuality* is not only maintained,

but is even perfected because his Christ-nature is realized through *subjectivity*. With respect to finitude, the solitary nature of the faithful individual's life is clearly evidenced throughout Hopkins' nature poetry, for his main focus, inscaping, is an action that occurs in isolation -- nowhere in the sonnets which illustrate inscaping is the inscaper accompanied by another person, nor does the inscaper ever choose another person as the object of his perception (Greenberg 116).¹⁷ Hopkins also states unequivocally in his journals that "inscape and instress can be experienced only by the individual, solitarily," and adds, "with a companion the eye and ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come" (House 221). Thus, another indication in the "terrible sonnets" that the narrator is in dread is his identification of his relationship to God with the way in which other people subjectively experience His presence. While the true inscaper feels no need to even attempt such an association, being comforted by his apprehension of the Divine in his existential isolation, this dread-filled man warps yet another aspect of inscaping because of his lack of guidance from Infinity and his consequent inability to "endure isolation" (Mullen 87).

Certainly, "To seem the stranger" exemplifies the narrator's agonized reaction to his isolation. Although he puts on a courageous air at the poem's outset by insisting that he does not "plead" to be heard (l. 7) and knows "peace" through Christ (l. 4), the fact that he questions "heaven's baffling ban" on his successful communication, and that he reconsiders Christ's role in his life,¹⁸ and ends up calling Him his "parting, sword, and strife," shows that the narrator does not bravely accept or obediently endure his existential isolation. To be sure, he is in dread. If he were properly related to God, however, he would not be left with a "*lonely began*" (my emphasis) in trying to relate to the world, but,

¹⁷For a faithful individual to inscape another human being would be for him to attempt an appropriation of the other person's subjectivity, or God-relationship. Such an appropriation is an impossibility, and the attempt to effect this situation would negate the inscaper's characterization as one who is properly related to God.

¹⁸The pause indicated by the slash in the fourth line suggests a reconsideration of the narrator's previous words.

finding God everywhere in it, and thereby finding fulfillment, he would know a constant becoming in God's company (Postscript 218), and feel the "ecstasy" of divine pressure ("Windhover" l. 5). This sonnet illustrates the plight of the dread-filled man who realizes (although not with obedient acceptance) the futility of attempting to identify the movements of faith that occur within himself with the faithful, subjective experience of other men -- all people, he finds, "are in Christ not near" (l. 3), as, indeed, every person relates to Him in isolation.

In the preceding sonnet, "No worst, there is none," the narrator does not achieve such a realization; in an effort to find company in his misery, however, he still identifies his subjective experience of the God-relationship, or of God's sorely lamented absence from him, with the subjective experience of others. He claims, "My cries heave herds-long; huddle in a main," in an image of beasts "huddl[ing]" together for comfort from the cold. This choice of imagery reveals powerfully the narrator's dreadful state, as it negates two inherently connected characteristics of the individual who properly relates himself to God. According to Kierkegaard, those who feel that they are "God-forsaken . . . cluster together *en masse* in order to feel that they amount to something" (Postscript 318); they need to identify themselves with other human beings in order to feel supported, or comforted, as they do not share in the strength of the Infinite. Yet, if they were to have a proper God-relationship, they would "amount to something" individually, for each man would be a constituted self, a fully-developed human being. Given that it is through the subjectivity of the God-relationship by which each man refines his individuality and particularity, the individual is doomed to become "a cipher in the crowd" (Sickness 167) by failing to relate himself properly to God. Kierkegaard further asserts that "being a man is not like being an animal, where the specimen is always less than the species. Man is distinguished from animals . . . qualitatively by the fact that the individual is more than the species" (Sickness, note 251). Thus, in the fifth line of "No worst, there is none," Hopkins underscores the fact that the narrator is in dread, as it is he who is spiritually isolated from

God that is doomed to "cast for comfort" ("My own heart" l. 5) amongst others in a beastly fashion, in a "herd[]" of beings like himself. Such an individual reveals not only his lack of support from the Divine, but also, or simultaneously, his loss of selfhood, his lack of respectable human individuality. In the phrase that follows Hopkins calls this separation from God "a chief-/ woe, world-sorrow," thereby further illustrating that if the properly posited God-relationship individualizes (as we see that it does by the inscaper's isolation in the nature sonnets), the warped inscaping process has a levelling effect.

In a similar manner, the narrator of "I wake and feel" looks to the God-relationship of others to comfort himself in his spiritual isolation. However, he does not so much identify with others to find consolation, as *compares* his situation with theirs. This practice is particularly warped in regard to the proper method of relating to God, for not only does this narrator suggest that he can know anything about the content of another person's subjectivity, he seems to be selfishly consoled by the notion that there are those who are even further from the Divine than he. He ruminates, "I see/ The lost are like this, and their scourge to be/ As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse." Although the syntax is rather garbled, it becomes clear upon close inspection of the line that the word "worse" refers to the state of "the lost." Before the semi-colon, all of the descriptive elements of the sentence refer to "the lost": these people are "like" what he has described hitherto, and the "scourge" he mentions is "their[s]," as are the "sweating selves"; the narrator appears only as the simple subject of the sentence, and in the brief interjection. It follows, then, that the adjective after the semi-colon also refers to "the lost," and the sentiment expressed therein evidences the narrator's separation from God, his dread. He warps the subjectivity of inscaping by proposing to understand other people's subjective relationships with God, or the lack thereof.

Indeed, if dread is the individual's fearful reaction to the Infinity he apprehends through inscaping, and it involves his halting of this God-relationship by returning to his particular finitude, the dynamic of dread appears to be a reversal, a deconstruction of the process by

which the individual had initially perceived Intinity. It follows, then, that the *revelations* which accompany certain steps in the properly executed selving process are also warped when the process is reversed. Thus, while the inscaper realizes his Christliness¹⁹ by "finding the God-relationship . . . [in] relat[ing] himself to something outside himself" (Postscript 498), the individual in dread comes to understand himself as oppositional to Christ.²⁰ He perverts and deconstructs the concept that the inscaper is an AfterChrist by his reversal of the inscaping process. The warped Eucharistic imagery of "I wake and feel" is a perfect illustration of this aspect of dread. In the ninth line, the first three words, "I am gall," posit the narrator directly as an instrument of torture to the crucified Christ, which signifies his opposition to Him, or, at least, his discordance with the Divine. Yet, in a less direct way, this image also implies his *likeness* to Christ, for in being consumed by Him, he not only becomes Christ by existing in His body, he partakes in an echo of the Eucharistic process, during which Christ, Who is present in the Eucharistic wine, is consumed by His disciples. Hopkins continues this Eucharistic theme in the following images, but presents an even further warping of it: the dread-filled speaker is not only the Eucharistic wine, but also the unleavened bread, and the exchange is not between Christ and the narrator, for he consumes *himself*. "My taste was me," he claims, and continues, "flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse" of solipsism, drunk out of the chalice of dread. As is illustrated in "The Windhover," the fully-selved, faithful man echoes Christ properly when he annihilates himself in alignment with the will of the divine "other," in response to God's energy. Only then may he "fall, gall" himself gloriously, *like Christ*, and "shine" with perfect selfhood. However, the individual's Eucharistic annihilation of himself in isolation is only self-torture, and, being cyclical and void of possibility, can never result in new being. The lack of progression connected to the solipsism of dread is also evinced by

¹⁹He "Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is -- Christ" ("Kingfishers" l. 11-12).

²⁰Indeed, Kierkegaard maintains that in becoming subjective, one turns toward God (Dread 96), and also says that "dread in the existing individual is the greatest possible and most painful distance from the truth, when the truth is subjectivity" (Postscript 240).

the twelfth line, "Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours." Here, the narrator suggests that he is the "dull dough" or *unleavened* bread, of the Eucharist, and is, thus, Christlike; or, at least, he indicates that he would be so, were it not for his solipsism, his "spirit[ual]" isolation. This isolation is like undesirable "yeast," which is not an ingredient in the inscaping formula, and which "sours" his chances of *rising* to meet Infinity. Once again, he shows that he realizes his potential Christliness, which, in turn, shows that he has been privy to the Truth of Faith. In dread now, however, he turns from the Infinite and hides in his finite isolation. By attempting improperly to relate to God, that is, by solipsistically grasping at his own particularity while using the infinitizing "tool" that is his heart, he introduces ruinous "yeast" into the properly dull, unleavened "dough" that represents the melding of man's nature with God's on earth. In short, he warps the highest form of selving realization: Christscape.

Indeed, the pain of dread lies precisely in the fact that the individual is fully aware of his separation from the Infinite, for he has been and remains aware of the Infinite -- but, alarmed by Its incomprehensibility and resistance to appropriation, since It is "other," he now grasps at familiar finitude. And this return to finitude involves a reversal of the steps and realizations, such as of his Christly nature, that led him to his initial arrival at Infinity. As such, he still uses his heart, which is the inscaper's imaginative, intuitive "translator" of the deeper meaning in temporality, but which is also, in this dreadful state, the very source of his torment. His heart continues its task of probing and scrutiny, but because this individual does not turn outward for edification, his heart can only explore ceaselessly its own "sights" and "ways," its own "mountains" ("I wake" l. 3; "No worst" l. 9); thus, his heart "grate[s] on" itself destructively ("Patience" l. 9). As evidenced in "I wake and feel," one's chances of realizing his Christscape, which is the goal of the inscaping/selving process, are "sour[ed]" by the "Selfyeast of spirit" -- by the heart turning in upon itself -- for man is helpless to realize his selfhood without God, Who is found outside of each self. Given the hopelessness and cyclical nature of dread, it seems strange for Kierkegaard to

assert that "dread is constantly to be understood as oriented towards freedom" (Dread 59). Rather, it would appear that the individual is doomed to torture himself until his "small/ Durance [can no longer] deal with that steep" ("No worst" l. 12) downward spiral called "dread." But by confronting his dread the individual can "float up from the depth of the abyss" (Dread 141), more faithful than ever. First, however, he must experience fully his own "Bitter . . . taste," and drink of the cup "brimmed [with] the curse" that is his incomplete self without God ("I wake" l. 10-11). Using imagery surprisingly reminiscent of "I wake and feel," Kierkegaard maintains that, faced with dread, the spirit-ful man "does not recoil, . . . but he bids it welcome, he hails it solemnly, as Socrates solemnly flourished the poisoned goblet, he shuts himself up with it" (Dread 142). What the individual learns from this experience is his need of "other" in order to stop his "tormented mind/ With [his] . . . tormented mind tormenting yet" ("My own heart" l. 4), as well as his need of God in order to *become* a properly constituted self. Perhaps most significantly of all, however, he learns a great humility from dread, which reveals that there is no possibility, no becoming, no *existing* without God. He learns that he is, truly, "grounded transparently in God," and this realization is, according to Kierkegaard, not only an element of being a self, but is also the very definition of Faith (Sickness 163, 213).

In consideration of this aspect of dread, the last image of the final sonnet, "My own heart," gains a most profound significance, for it includes not only an indication that the period of dread is ended, but also the reconstituted self's humble realization; as such, the reader comes to understand that these agonized poems really are "oriented towards freedom" (Dread 59). At the stanza's outset, the phrase, "God knows when to God knows what," is the narrator's humble admission of his impotence and ignorance, and the colloquial nature of the phrase emphasizes further his lowness. He continues by saying that God's "smile/ 's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather," thereby reiterating his realization that man is powerless in the God-relationship, and that His Grace, or "smile," is only offered by Him, not "wrung," or found, by the individual. Here, the narrator also

shows his realization that the human heart knows nothing of God in and of itself, regardless of how much experience the individual has previously had in the God-relationship.²¹ Thus, God always surprises the individual, "unforeseen," so one must be open to receive Him along unfamiliar avenues -- and, certainly, anything that lies outside the individual is unfamiliar to him, as it lies outside his self. After "groping round [the] . . . comfortless" isolation of dread, and becoming "jaded" from shutting himself up with his "tormenting" "thoughts" for so long (l. 6, 10, 4), this narrator realizes, at last, that he cannot find "the God-relationship within himself, but [must] relate[] himself to something outside himself to find edification" (Postscript 498), and, finally, inscapes again. "[S]kies/Betweenpie mountains -- lights a lovely mile," he notices, looking into nature and finding, stretched out before him, the "lovely" future and possibility offered by the God-relationship.

²¹It has already been established that, innately, the individual knows nothing of God because of His "other-ness"; yet, not even he who has been privy to the revelations of Faith can know anything of God through memories of past interactions with Him. As Kierkegaard asserts, "in relation to the absolute there is only one tense: the present" (K. Anth. 409).

To be transparent to oneself, to eschew self-deception even in the face of dread, requires courage. To despair is to be a coward. The concepts of courage and cowardice . . . are essential to any account which recognizes human freedom. (Mullen 76)

Because it is only the Christian Existentialist method of selving, as outlined by Kierkegaard, that entails the terrifying "leap" into the Unknown, which, in turn, leads the faithful man to the agonizing experience of dread, such selving is differentiated from the same process in the Romantic and Modern traditions by the pain and discomfort therein, and especially by the necessary presence of courage and humility in the Christian Existentialist. In short, painful dread is a fearful reaction to the mysterious Unknown, but the risk in relating to this "other" is not connected only to the inevitable experience of dread; bravery is required of Kierkegaard's religious man from the outset of his spiritual journey, for even his initial resolution to devote himself to that which is completely unfamiliar has an element of risk, as it is a self-denial, a type of "self-slaughter" (Dread 142). By contrast, the deplorable "characteristic of spiritlessness is recognizable precisely by the spiritless sense of security" (Sickness 177) -- and the Romantic and Modern processes of self-seeking certainly do engender feelings of security, since they do not entail devotion to the unfamiliar, and, consequently, also exclude dread. The Romantic imaginatively transforms all that is "other" into an extension of his beloved self (Miller, Disappearance 13),¹ and since all is "self" to him, all is familiar and comfortably approached, that is, without a terrifying "leap" into the Unknown. The Modern, however, rejects this melding into an undifferentiated One by rejecting the infinitizing power of the imagination; with his tendency to appreciate objective knowledge above that of the

¹See the first two pages of the introduction for an explanation of how the Romantic natural Deity is only a corollary of the poet's self.

intuition, the Modern explores only that which he can logically be certain of. the facts of his own finite, isolated existence. Thus, the Modern also avoids the terrifying "leap" into a relationship with the ever-unfamiliar "other," and although he is miserable in his isolation, he is secure and unthreatened. The Modern and the Romantic thus mirror one another in regard to the formation of the self, despite the fact that their sensibilities differ so greatly, the former being a strict adherent to logic and rationality, and the latter being a devotee of the imagination. Yet, the two secure self-seekers share not only an avoidance of fear and discomfort. They also have in common the loss of their selves and God.

However, Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialist *selver* *does* "leap" courageously into the Unknown territory of faith, and by so doing, he not only faces the inevitable experience of dread, but also constantly experiences discomfort and confusion because he relates himself to the Absolute Paradox (K. Anth. 109), to something incomprehensible and unassimilable; he bravely "believes [in the truth of this 'other'] in spite of the external, in spite of appearances, in spite of what it may cost him in physical or mental anguish" (K. Anth. 372). And, indeed, the "leap" into the God-relationship requires great courage, for there can be no return to simple ignorance, the state of spiritlessness: "the conclusion of belief is not so much a conclusion as a resolution, and it is for this reason that belief excludes doubt [or despair]" (Fragments 104). The faithful man does not "conclude" that the facts of faith are true by deduction, or by comprehending them in any way, for they always remain paradoxical to him. Rather, the faithful man "resolves" to "be[] certain in spite of the objective uncertainty" (Hannay 127); his "belief is not a form of knowledge [, abstract or rational], but a free act, an expression of [his] will" (Fragments 103). By choosing to "leap" into a relationship completely "unnatural" to him and ungovernable by his own will, the Christian Existentialist actively participates in the paradoxical motion of faith in two ways: he humbly annihilates himself in order to gain a true self that is differentiated by a relationship to "other," and courageously sacrifices himself so that he may be strengthened by God's gift of Faith.

As the Infinite incarnate, Christ is the Absolute Paradox, and since He is the focus and goal of the Christian Existentialist method of selving, it is appropriate that every aspect of the formation of the seler's relationship to Him has an inherent element of paradox as well. Kierkegaard proclaims the basic paradox of faith in the following words:

the paradoxical religiousness [of Christian Existentialism] breaks with immanence and makes the fact of existing the absolute contradiction, not within immanence but against immanence. There is no longer any immanent fundamental kinship between the temporal and the eternal,

yet

precisely by means of the *historical*, [or the temporal, Christianity] has intended itself to be for the single individual the point of departure for his [i.e. the religious man's] *eternal* consciousness. (my emphasis; Postscript 263; Fragments 137)

In the vital period between the Romantic era and the Modern era, Kierkegaard introduced a method of selving that swings perpetually between Romantic abstraction, or infinitization, and Modern isolation, and called this unstable situation "coming into existence" -- the only true way of developing a self; he maintains in The Sickness Unto Death that "the development [of the self, of one's true existence,] consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself it is in despair" (162-3).

Also between the Romantic and Modern eras, Hopkins, who was totally unaware of Kierkegaard's philosophy, discovered such a precarious balance between abstractionism and isolation. To Hopkins "the more a thing was isolated by its particularity, the more it would strive to share in the infinite," and on this paradoxical philosophical basis Hopkins created his poetry, which includes his "startling, sustained double vision: he saw God in particulars, particulars in God" (Ellsburg 91, 73). In terms of inscaping, that characteristic which positively defines finitude -- namely particularity, or individuation -- reveals itself to be the very thing that can lead the earth-bound religious man to a realization of its

opposite, namely Infinitude. "Pied Beauty" illustrates this notion clearly. In this sonnet, Hopkins suggests that it is precisely "dappled," highly individuated "things" in the world that should remind us of the Infinite, which is not limited thus. Hopkins shows that the One, the limitless, can be gleaned out of the one, the singular. By way of "proving" this mystery, Hopkins lists a multitude of natural particularities, describing each "thing" only in terms of its earthly density, and *without* imaginatively transforming any object in an effort to show a direct link between its nature and that of the Divine. Yet, Hopkins concludes the poem with the exhortation, "Praise him," as though the necessity of thanking God is a matter of course in consideration of the preceding poetic discussion. On what basis does Hopkins' discursive reasoning seem sound? On the "unreasonable," illogical basis of paradox, the inherent truth of which only the inscaper can resolve, not conclude, to believe. Indeed, only an inscaper can intuit the Infinite out of unabstrated finitude, and only an inscaper can successfully discover the Eternal, the *unchangeable*, in the transient; only an inscaper can resolutely claim, as the narrator does in the tenth line of "Pied Beauty," "He fathers-forth [all that is changeable] whose beauty is past change."

Hopkins continues his elucidation of inscaping and paradox in "Hurrahing in Harvest." Here, the narrator intuitively "gleans" the Infinite out of the finite, again without imaginatively abstracting the external world or himself in it. In reference to the spiritual truths he finds, the narrator proclaims in the eleventh line that "these things were here and but for the beholder wanting," which emphasizes the true "otherness" of his environment, and negates the possibility that the inscaper may become one with it in essence. In effect, the narrator marries the contrasting visions of the Romantic and the Modern: he uses his imagination to perceive what is not objectively present, believing in the truth of this subjective knowledge as confidently as a scientist believes his rational data, yet he also firmly maintains an understanding of the "otherness" of the infinite object of his perception, and of his limitations as a human in his relationship to it. Paradoxically, the inscaper gains an understanding of "other" by listening to the revelations of his innermost

self. And strange as it may seem, it is through the inscaper's receptivity to the *inner* motions of his *present* self that he may "leap" into a new state: the state of "contemporaneousness with Christ" (*Postscript* 131); as a man existing alongside the Saviour, the subjective man can say truthfully that "the azurous hung hills" that surround him in his present, finite existence are Christ's own "world-wielding shoulder" (l. 9). Lastly, there lies yet another paradox within subjectivity: subjectivity involves the notion that the message of Infinity is afforded to the individual only through inward reflection, and its applicability is so limited that it cannot be communicated from one individual to another. Being infinite, God's message is boundless and potentially accessible to all -- but because God's presence is revealed to the individual in subjectivity, it is highly personalized and even intimate. In reflection upon the exclusively personal relevance of God's message, on its "tailored" and completely fulfilling quality, the narrator of "Hurrahing in Harvest" asks his heart, "what looks, what lips yet gave you a/ Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?" (l. 7-8)

The highly personalized and incommunicable nature of the God-relationship is connected to another paradox, one that is elucidated by Hopkins in "As kingfishers catch fire." In the second stanza of this sonnet, Hopkins shows that man fulfills his ethical duty, his duty to other people, by fulfilling his duty to God as it is revealed to him in isolation, in subjectivity -- not as his duty is revealed to him by observing the moral actions of other people; the narrator points out that the "just man" fulfills his outward social duty by acting in accordance with the "grâce" of God, which he "keeps" inside himself. In this way, one's ethical duty is personalized. And the incommunicable aspect of such ethics is implied by the movement from the poem's first stanza to the second, through which it becomes apparent that the narrator realizes the truth of worldly ethical duty not from any other person, but in isolation, by subjectively inscaping God, or the Holy Spirit, out of nature. The inscaper perceives subjectively that the world is interfused with God, Whose energy is manifest in action all around him, and Whose actual being may become manifest in the

inscaper himself, for if he "Acts in God's eye," according to God's will as it is perceived by him in subjectivity, "he is," "in God's eye," "Christ." But the inscaper's realization that he has potentially an element of the Divine within himself is not a conclusion arrived at by simple analogy, by deducing that what is without must also be within. With regard to action, the inscaper learns the paradox of being the same as, yet different from, that which he inscapes in his environment. In short, although he, too, expresses the Infinite by acting in accordance with God's will, he alone *chooses* to respond to God's will; he expresses in moral action his *Christly* nature, instead of a Holy Spiritual one, for the former is distinguished by the aspect of free will and choice, while the movements of the latter *directly* reflect the Divine. Finally, the inscaper's acceptance of this paradoxical situation leads him to a realization of yet another paradox: by becoming more like another man, namely Christ, he becomes more individuated, more fully selved.

In regard to will alone, "The Windhover" also illustrates this paradox of the God-relationship. All of the elements of the self "Buckle" (l. 10) together and form a unified whole when the selver's will "Buckle[s]" under the pressure of God's will, when he annihilates himself, along with his personal goals, to be an instrument of God. Truly, only when the pithy, finite selver is destroyed thus can he be reconstituted as an actualized self in which the divine element "Shine[s]" forth with the permanence of diamonds, and through which his Christly nature "gash[es] gold-vermilion." Moreover, the faithful individual's realization of his self in "The Windhover" is connected to another paradox in Christian Existentialism: it is by serving God that one becomes most free, as, indeed, "the constituted self [which is characterized by its dependence upon the Infinite] is in control of itself and is thus free" (Mullen 58). In "The Windhover," Hopkins illustrates this concept through the following dynamic: the bird, which represents the selver in the God-relationship, has the freedom and power of a ruler, such as a "dauphin" (l. 2), a prince; yet, this selver's freedom and his power are circumscribed by his master, the King . . . God. Finally, the selver's very resolution to believe in the properness and truth of what is so

paradoxical and incomprehensible requires a courageous annihilation of himself, for he will never appropriate or happily accept the "unnatural," illogical God-relationship. In this way, too, the faithful man is like the Lamb of God, because, as Kierkegaard states, "to believe against the understanding is martyrdom" (Postscript 209).

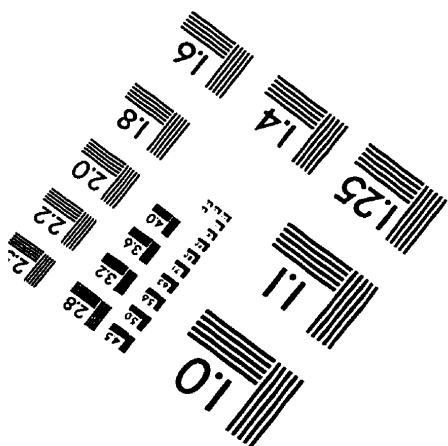
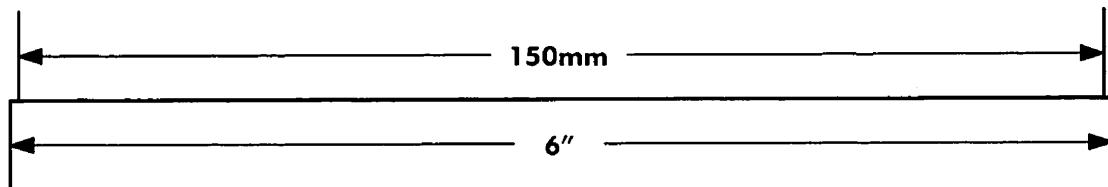
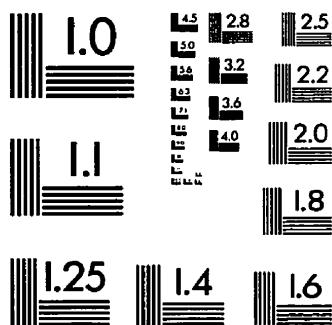
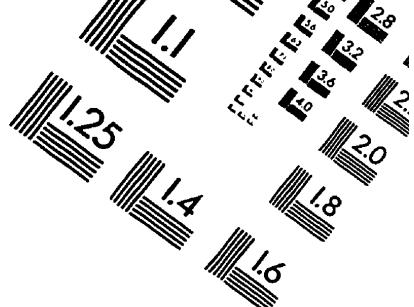
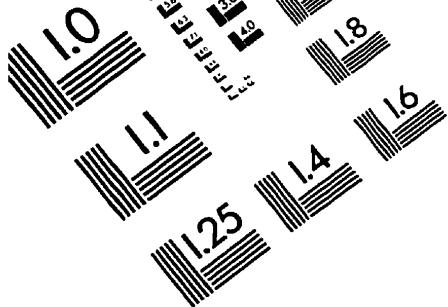
In summary, the development of the God-relationship requires a "leap," not only because its object, as "other," is not accessible from within the self, but also because the process is correspondingly foreign. The courageous faithful man, who is a self because he attempts to realize a relationship with "other," must renounce any ideas about the existence of a systematic way to approach God, for every aspect of the true selving process is paradoxical, incomprehensible, and unpredictable. Yet, the "leap" into faith, which is the willed resolution to be a believer, is not the last "leap" that may occur in the religious man's life. An even more profound arrival at a new mode of existence may be in store for him, but this "leap" into the Unknown is not effected by his own free will and choice; rather, the faithful individual suspends his will in this instance, and is really more carried than "leaps" into a new state of being. The individual's suspension of his will is "the annihilation by which the individual puts himself out of the way in order to find God," Who gives him a "condition" that is not an inherent part of his nature: Faith (Postscript 497; Fragments 19). Having been given Faith, the individual has become a "man of a different quality," "a new creature" who has a real relationship to the Truth to "other" (Fragments 23, 19). Although he is born into Untruth, or fallenness, the individual who is given Faith has within himself an element of Infinity and is "transformed into likeness with God" (K. Anth. 409) -- and he thus represents the height of selving in Christian Existentialism, for he is truly an AfterChrist.

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