In our last lecture at the very end, I began to talk about the life and the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. We went through the major events in his life. And today I’d like to talk about the major influences in his life and in his work and then begin to look at some of the works of Kierkegaard and see some of the themes that played out in his thinking. But before we do that, let’s bow for a word of prayer. Father, again we thank You for the privilege of study. We thank You for those who have gone before us. And even though we may not agree with everything that they have said, we realize that we can learn from them as well. So help us this lecture as we look at the life and the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. May we understand what he is saying. And help us to see the insights that are valuable to us as we live the Christian life. We pray all these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

As we look at Kierkegaard’s life and his works, we find that there were really four major influences that were extremely important to him. And unquestionably, one of those has to be his relationship with his father. Now last lecture when we looked at the events of Kierkegaard’s life, we found that the great earthquake, as he referred to it, was monumentally important for him. And, of course, that involved his relationship to his father. But there are other ways in which Kierkegaard’s father was extremely important to him. As Walter Lowrie in his A Short Life of Kierkegaard tells us, “Kierkegaard seems to have gotten his wit and his outgoing traits from his mother, and yet he doesn’t really say an awful lot about her. The major influence on him, at least psychologically speaking, and in terms of his basic ideas seems to have been his father.”

For one thing, Kierkegaard seems to have imbibed his father’s melancholy disposition. And of course, I’ve also noted for you the revelation of his father’s past sins and even Kierkegaard’s awareness that some sort of curse was probably on the family because of what his father had done as a boy. Now all of these
things were very, very influential in Kierkegaard’s life. In addition to that, we find that in reaction to the sins of his youth, Kierkegaard’s father went the other way in the way he treated his children. Oftentimes this is what one does looking at one’s past, at one’s childhood; one sees ways in which one went astray. And one becomes determined not to let the same thing happen in the lives of one’s children. And that’s essentially the way Kierkegaard’s father handled his children. He stressed godliness and adherence to the moral law tremendously in their home. And of course, Kierkegaard picked up this emphasis, tremendously so, and had a great concern about godliness. He had a great concern for the moral law.

One other item I should mention in regard to Kierkegaard’s father: his father also was deeply pietistic, and he had a deeply subjectivistic bent. And Kierkegaard imbibed these traits as well from his father. And they showed him the importance of subjectivity, the importance of personal commitment, and the importance of personal involvement in religion. You couldn’t just think of religion as a set of beliefs that you could relate to disinterestedly. And of course, you had to reflect upon the person of whom the dogma spoke, namely God, and you had to be passionately involved with God.

Well, the relation then with his father was extremely important for Kierkegaard. But a second major influence on his life was his relationship with Regine Olsen. As the historians tell it, Kierkegaard fell deeply in love with this young lady. And as a matter of fact, he was engaged to her for a period of time but then he broke it off. And this whole affair had a tremendously profound effect upon him. In fact, you see it evidenced even in some of the things that he wrote. His relationship to Regine, his breaking off of the engagement, all of that figures in some of his major works as the underlying theme of what he’s trying to express. Kierkegaard just simply didn’t want to burden Regine with the reasons for his melancholy. And he was also afraid that if they ever were to marry, she would probably suffer all the consequences of the past sins of his own family. Now whether this alone was the complete and total reason that he never married her or whether it’s also that he was just too self-conscious, too introspective as well, ever to be able to give himself to someone else is not entirely clear. However, Kierkegaard felt that he just couldn’t marry her, and he felt as well that he just couldn’t burden her with the exact reasons as to why he couldn’t marry her. So instead of telling her the real reasons for breaking off his engagement, he tried various sorts of
ployed that Lowrie details in his book in order to get her to think that, well he never really loved her to begin with and that she would be much better off without him.

But in spite of all of these attempts to trick her into thinking that he wasn’t ever interested and hopefully that would mean she would lose her interest, despite all of that, he really did love her very deeply. And evidently he retained this love until his dying day as Lowrie shows in his book. Kierkegaard’s feelings for Regine repeatedly affected what he did and what he thought. I should add as well that this whole idea, or this whole theme, of renouncing marriage in view of a higher good, and in this case, he felt that the higher good was to protect Regine from having to undergo all the consequences of his past and his family’s past. But this whole theme of renouncing marriage in view of a higher good proved to be a very important factor in Kierkegaard’s philosophy and theology, as we’re going to see. I think you see it most vividly in his work *Fear and Trembling* which at least overtly focuses on Abraham offering up Isaac. But really the book presupposes his own experiences with Regine.

Well, in addition to his relation to his father and his relation to Regine Olsen, his reaction to Hegelian philosophy was also a major influence in his life. As we have already seen, the philosophy of the day in Denmark where Kierkegaard lived was Hegelianism. But Kierkegaard just didn’t buy into that philosophy in terms of many of its key ideas. In particular, he was especially disturbed with the “Hegelianized” form of Christianity that he saw gripping the church of Denmark. And he felt that what this had basically done was created a church that was filled with dead orthodoxy. Now even though many Hegelian notions were rejected by Kierkegaard, as we’re going to see, there were also some ideas that he also adopted. Now the rejection and the adoption of Hegel, of course as we've already seen in this course, is itself a very Hegelian thing to do. Now I'll explain more on this as we proceed through some of his writings. And we can see how he reacts to Hegel and where he adopts him and where he rejects him. But at this point, let me only note that a number of the titles of Kierkegaard’s work even reflect his reaction to Hegel. For example, one of Kierkegaard’s major works is *Either/Or*. And this title in and of itself is a negative reaction to Hegel. Hegel, of course, would not have it be either or but both and. You always looked at the two sides of any issue. You saw things in their contradictions, but you didn’t exclude one or the other. You tried to come up with some sort of synthesis that gave you both the one and the other and gave it to you in a higher
order reality.

Now for Kierkegaard, the key was not both/and, the key had to be either/or. In addition, Hegel set out to lay out for everyone to see and not only for himself but for his followers this all-comprehensive system. So he was concerned about spinning out the philosophical system that would incorporate everything. Well Kierkegaard, not interested in this sort of system, especially since it left out the most important thing—the individual in the act of existing—writes a book entitled *Philosophical Fragments*. We don’t talk about a system. We talk instead about a fragment. And then Kierkegaard also wrote a book entitled *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. This was supposed to be the postscript to the *Philosophical Fragments*. If you've had a chance to look at this book, you find that even though it’s the postscript to the “Fragments,” it’s considerably longer than Kierkegaard’s work *Philosophical Fragments*. But be that as it may, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the title of that book is also a slap against Hegel. Hegel liked to think that he was giving this system which was demonstratively laid out, and it would cover all of knowledge and it gave you the content of knowledge. It didn’t give you sort of an appendage, it didn’t give you a postscript; it gave you the meat of the system. Well Kierkegaard, in reaction to this, writes a book that he says is concluding. It’s not the beginning of it. It’s not the whole scheme. It’s the concluding, and it’s not scientific. It’s not worked out in a nicely laid out format that tries to demonstrate the necessity of every move. But it’s unscientific, and it’s not the main thing. But it’s a postscript. Well, we’ll see much more as we proceed that Kierkegaard definitely has some very strong reactions to Hegel. But clearly Hegel and his philosophy were extremely important for Kierkegaard. And you really can't understand exactly what Kierkegaard is trying to get at in many of his works if you don’t understand it against the background of Hegel and his philosophy.

Closely related to this influence is Kierkegaard's reaction against the Hegelianized Christianity that he saw in the state church of Denmark. It’s not just that he didn’t like Hegel’s philosophy, but Kierkegaard was very, very troubled with what he saw that it did to the church in Denmark. The state church of Denmark, as I suggested a few moments ago, was really gripped by dead orthodoxy. And this really bothers Kierkegaard tremendously. By the end of Kierkegaard’s life, he decided to attack the state church directly. The church essentially claimed that just by being born in Denmark, you were automatically made a Christian. And
as Kierkegaard saw it, that sort of thing had absolutely nothing to do with what it means to be a Christian. Well, Kierkegaard also complained that clergymen in the church seemed to be much more concerned with insuring that they would have a living, in other words that they’d have financial security for a long period of time. They seemed to be much more concerned with that matter than with really, truly living a Christian life and leading people in the path of Christianity.

Kierkegaard became so disturbed by what he saw in Denmark in the church that as he looked at all of these things, he came to the conclusion that real Christianity as it was described in the New Testament really didn’t exist any longer, especially not in Denmark. And Kierkegaard really felt that God had called him to speak out against this and to call everyone to be a true disciple of Christ. And so in Kierkegaard you find an awful lot of his works talk about what it means to be and to become a Christian. And it talks about his concerns with the state church there in Denmark. In fact, I think when you understand that great concern of his for the deadness of the church, you can look at some of the things that he says in a much different light. I think he felt that in order to stir people out of their lethargy, he had to say things dramatically, maybe use hyperbole or exaggeration even on occasion, to awaken people to what the problems were.

Now as it oftentimes turns out, it’s some of these strong statements, some of these statements that perhaps exaggerate a point to make a point, that we look at. And if we take them out of the context of what was happening in Denmark, they seem much too radical to us. But I think if you try to understand them in the context of the church that was surrounding Kierkegaard, you understand why he is saying something so blatant, something so apparently radical and you see what he was trying to accomplish. Well, that concludes what I want to say about major influences on Kierkegaard’s life. Let me turn, if I may, at this time to begin to look at some of Kierkegaard’s major works and some of his themes.

And what I want to do at the outset is to talk about a couple of his works that are among the group of works that are referred to as his “aesthetic works.” Now there were five specific works that fall into this category, although these works discuss much, much more than just the aesthetic. Let me list those works for you and give you the dates of them. The first work is Either/Or and it was published in 1843. Then a second work was Fear and Trembling.
That was published in 1843. Then *Repetition* published in 1843. *The Concept of Dread* that was published in 1844, and finally his work *Stages on Life’s Way* which was published in 1845. Now I’m not going to look at all of these works with you. But I at least want to focus on several of them. And even though it was the last one of his works in this sequence of aesthetic works that was published, I’d like to look, first of all, at his *Stages on Life’s Way*. Because this particular work lays out very, very nicely for you his basic idea of different stages of life or different stages of lifestyle; and once you understand that in Kierkegaard, you are able to understand what he’s saying in a number of his works. Well as I suggest, this is the last of his aesthetic works that is *Stages on Life’s Way*. But I begin with it because it really shows us all three of the stages of lifestyle that Kierkegaard points out. It really is also a culmination of his earlier works where he was trying to lay out these different stages of life or lifestyle.

These three stages of life are really different spheres of existence in which a person may find oneself. And let me, if I may, just describe generally for you what those three stages are and how they fit together. Kierkegaard believed that there are three basic stages on life’s way. And those stages are referred to as the “aesthetic,” the second one is the “ethical,” and the third one is the “religious.” Each one of these levels has its own description, its own characteristics. Let me look with you first of all at how he understood the aesthetic. Now the aesthetic level of living is the level of pleasure. And Kierkegaard also said if you stay just at this level, it’s also the level that leads to perdition. Now the aesthetic level—someone who’s living at this level of existence—is living at the level of feeling, but they’re not living at the level of deciding. This is the level where you basically follow your instincts in search of some new and pleasurable experiences. Here the focus is on your own sensations, your own immediate needs, your own likes, your dislikes. You may, at this level of existing, make some choices, but they’re not choices of any great significance. You may think for example about whether you’d like to smell one perfume or another, whether you’d like to hear one kind of music or another kind of music, whether you’d prefer to read a play or to read a poem. But none of these things is really a significant issue in terms of what life is really all about. So this is a level clearly where you’re led about by your senses, by your whims, anything that seems to attract you, you follow that out. And you just live life at a level where you’re trying to experience every experience and every sensation that you possibly can.
Well, above the aesthetic level though is the ethical level. And at this stage, the emphasis is on deciding. And the decisions that you’re confronted with and the decisions that you make are decisions about things that really do matter. They do make a difference. This is a level that is controlled not by sensations and by whims but this is a level that is controlled by rules. And on this level, there are some universal norms that are significant. And the individual is faced with the question of whether he’s going to follow those universal norms whether they’re ethical norms or whatever. He is faced with a decision of whether to follow those norms or whether not to follow those norms.

At this level, Kierkegaard believed that the person who was living at this level was in control of life because of the choices that he had to make. On the aesthetic level, basically you followed your whims and your sensations, so life really sort of controlled you. But at the level of the ethical, you were much more in control of life. You were confronting decisions that were significant, and you were making decisions. And as you made these decisions, you were creating a new self. And hopefully that was an authentic self. According to Kierkegaard as well, what moved a person to this level in the first place, this level of existence, was a decision to start deciding about matters of good and evil, matters that really are important. If you make a decision not to move to the ethical level, then indeed you can wind up staying at the aesthetic level and just continue to follow out your passions. But at some point in life, a person may decide no, life is about things that are more significant than what sort of music I like, what sort of perfume I like, what sort of food especially tickles my palate. And I’m going to at least begin to consider serious issues and make decisions.

Well once a person leaves the ethical and goes to the next highest level, he is at the religious level. And according to Kierkegaard, this is the level at which one really exists. He exists most authentically. And the reason for that is that he’s not only deciding in general, but he’s deciding for God. Rather than being rule-centered as you live at this level, you are God-centered. So that the rules may say one thing, even the ethical rules may say one thing; but if God tells you to do something different than the rule, you decide in favor of God. Then you’re truly living at the religious level. Now it might turn out that God tells you that you should follow the ethical rule and if you do follow the ethical rule, you could still be seen as living at the religious level because you followed the ethical rule. But you did it because God had told you to do it, and you obeyed God rather than focusing on the rule.
Now someone who’s living at this level as I said a moment ago is really living the most authentically. And as we’re going to see as we go through Kierkegaard, he also distinguished two levels within the religious sphere of existence. That on the one hand, you might wind up choosing a god in general, but the one who is living most authentically was the person who chose not just any god to follow but chose the Judeo-Christian God.

Now one thing that I should point out as a clarification here is that Kierkegaard is not saying that everybody will in fact at some time live at all three of these levels, not that anyone would live at them simultaneously. But he’s not, in describing these three levels of existence, saying that this is a guarantee that everyone will go through this process. Some people might never in their life leave the aesthetic level. Other people might leave one level, the aesthetic let’s say, and go to the ethical and never get to the point of living at the religious. Some people might be at one level of existence for a long, long time and then go to a second level very quickly and move from that to the religious level let’s say very, very rapidly. So you could never predict how long a person would be at any level. There’s never any guarantee as to whether any given individual will make it all the way to the religious. But he simply wanted to say that there are these three different spheres of existence, and people do in fact live at one or the other of these levels.

Now Kierkegaard portrays each of these levels in his works at their best and also at their worst. We see for example the person who is a very, very refined aesthete. And then on the other hand, he shows us someone who’s rather gross. And yet he wants us to understand that life can be lived on any of these levels and that within each level, you can either do it really well or you can do it in a very, very poor way. Well Kierkegaard with this view of the three levels, also felt that in moving from one level to the next level higher, you didn’t destroy the lower level of existence. You just dethroned its importance in your life. For example, if someone had been living at the aesthetic level for a good bit of time and decided to make the move to the ethical level, that didn’t mean that they thought it was wrong to ever listen to music again, to ever enjoy literature. It’s just that they came to understand that those sorts of things couldn’t be what life was all about. Instead, they had to confront more significant kinds of decisions. So as I said a moment ago, when you move from one level to the next level, you don’t destroy the lower level. You just dethrone it as central in your life.
Well there’s one other thing that I should point out about these different levels. Kierkegaard said that in regard to each of the lower two levels, the aesthetic and the ethical level, even if you lived at one of those two levels to its fullest, the end result for you would be to wind up in despair. Because you’d realize that this isn’t really what existence at its fullest is all about. This doesn’t make for the authentic self. And as a result, Kierkegaard said that as you come to this feeling of despair that should precipitate a leap of faith to the next level. You wouldn’t be satisfied living at one level and so you would make a leap of faith to the next level.

Now by setting forth these three levels as I’ve suggested, Kierkegaard was not saying that everyone had to go through all of them and that they had to do that one right after the other. His point was only that people at one point in their life or another do find themselves at one or another of these stages. And he wanted to characterize these stages as fully as possible. And he wanted to do that in such a way that people as they read his works, would see everything that a given level had to offer. But they would come to the conclusion on their own by the time they finished reading Kierkegaard’s work that that level even lived to its fullest, was not going to be satisfying. There needed to be something else in life that they were after. Kierkegaard then basically teaches this idea of a need to move to the next level indirectly. He doesn’t as we might say, bang his readers over the head with it. But he tries to show them what each level of life is like and then let them draw the conclusion that this kind of existence isn’t really authentic. You need to move on to something else. Well that gives you the basic idea of Kierkegaard’s conception of the different stages of life or lifestyle.

But let me turn more specifically to give you a general description of his work which itself is entitled *Stages on Life’s Way*. There are basically three parts to this work. And the first part of it is Kierkegaard’s depiction of what happens at a banquet. Actually, this banquet is given as sort of a parody to Plato’s symposium where a group of people come together and they take some idea and they discuss it together. Well, Kierkegaard follows up on that kind of theme, and he has five different people who show up at this banquet. And each one of them gives speeches, and we get to see different opinions on the same topic. As a matter of fact, the speeches are—all of them—attempts to give various aesthetic perspectives on love. And I think we could say that the speeches start from a higher level. They have a higher view of what love is, and they go down to a much lower level.
Let me just briefly describe for you the focus of each of the five speeches. Well, there’s one character at this symposium who is a young man. And he, of course, has his thoughts about womanhood and about love. And he symbolizes indecision in view of womanhood that you just don’t know quite what to do with a woman. Then there’s another character by the name of Constantine. In fact Constantine is the one who actually throws this banquet. And he’s the fellow who offers an experience-hardened understanding of womanhood. Then a third character is Victor. And Victor gives the sympathetic irony view that love is a rather ironical experience. Then there’s a fourth participant in the banquet, and he’s a tailor. And he focuses on the theme of the demonic despair of love. And then the fifth fellow who’s at this banquet is known as Johannes, and Kierkegaard portrays him as Johannes the seducer. And this fellow offers a kind of cold-blooded evil approach to the problem of love and the problem of dealing with women. Now the problem with all of these views is that they really avoid the ethical by simply focusing on the aesthetic pleasures of life and of love and of relations with women. Well, that’s the first part of stages on life’s way.

Then the second part of this literary work is known as Judge Williams’s part. After the banquet ends and the speeches are all over, these five participants in this banquet ride out into the country. And they come upon Judge Williams who is seated with his wife at breakfast. And all of this leads to the second section of this particular work which is entitled “Various Observations About Marriage in Reply to Objections.” And basically what you get in this portion of the work is Judge Williams’s positive view toward marriage. And really, this portion of the book is the ethical section of this work. Now Judge Williams gives a strong protest against the banquet speeches. They let him know what they’ve said. And he thinks that that way of looking at love and marriage and women is just really not at all correct. Instead, he exalts marriage as a way of bringing the eternal into the temporal. And he thinks that that’s so because the couple who marry one another pledge their love to one another for all of eternity. Marriage then is also seen by Judge Williams as enriching femininity. In other words, the more marriage comes to fruition for a woman, the lovelier the woman becomes. Love is also portrayed as coming from the divine. But, of course, you can’t fully possess love by any means other than marriage according to Judge Williams.

There’s also a suggestion in what Judge Williams says that there may be certain godly exemptions to the rule of marriage. In other
words, basically what Judge Williams is saying is it would be great if everyone got married (audio fades for a few seconds). He does suggest in this section that maybe there are certain cases where a person shouldn’t get married. Perhaps it’s because they’re living their life so much at the religious level and so much in tune with God that they really don’t have time for the obligations of marriage. Now in a case like this, then a person’s life really transcends the ethical, universal rule which says it’s a good thing to marry. It’s a good thing to enter into this relationship. And the person’s life would then transcend this, and they would be exempt from it. But for most people, marriage should be the rule and the norm. Of course in this particular section, Judge Williams makes it also clear that if you are one of those people who is exempted from marriage and you live more at the religious level and devote yourself to God rather than a wife or a husband, that doesn’t mean that you disrespect marriage. You still have great appreciation for it.

Well then, the third part of *Stages on Life’s Way* is known as “Quidam’s Diary.” And the diary from which we are allowed to read—because Kierkegaard has copied it for us, so to speak—the diary’s entitled *Guilty? Not Guilty?* - A Passion Narrative. And this diary is basically the story of Kierkegaard’s own unhappy love, though he doesn’t name himself in this. Now as you move into this portion of the work, you find that there’s a character who appears by the name of Brother Taciturnus. And Brother Taciturnus supposedly finds this diary that’s written by Quidam. He finds it in a lake, and then he begins to lay out the contents of that diary. The whole section, that is this section of *Stages on Life’s Way*, focuses on whether a soldier who’s likely to be killed in battle should marry and inflict that sorrow on his wife or whether he should avoid marriage. Likewise it raises another question: should somebody who is basically a melancholy person (and here’s where you see the autobiography, if I can put it that way, come in in terms of Kierkegaard), the question is whether somebody who’s basically a melancholy person should marry someone else and inflict that melancholy on that person. Well as you can suggest, all of this is an attempt indirectly of course, for Kierkegaard to explain his own thinking as to why he didn’t marry Regine. Well in this section, the individual who wrote the diary, Quidam, lays out several ways of handling the problem. And as you look at these alternatives that are presented, you can see which one of those Kierkegaard himself decided to choose.

Well, how would you possibly handle this problem? Well for one
thing, you could marry the woman and hope that marriage would somehow or another hide your melancholy. And that would resolve the problem. But that turns out not to be a very good answer, because Quidam recognizes that the marriage wouldn’t solve the problem of melancholy. It would only likely bring out the melancholy of the person who decided to marry and yet was melancholy. Well then, perhaps another approach would be better. Perhaps the person with this problem should share with the woman he’s planning to marry. Perhaps he should share with her the reasons for his melancholy. And maybe she’d then understand what was happening and then they could get married and things would work out. Or maybe they wouldn’t get married, but at least she’d understand why he wasn’t marrying her. Well then, there’s another possible way to handle the situation, and that would be to just simply humiliate yourself before this woman that you love in order to liberate her and make her happy. In other words, you act like you’re just a buffoon. You act like you don’t care for her. You try in one way or another to get her to figure that you’re not worth the time of day. Then what she’ll do is she’ll reject you. And by doing that, she’s freed herself from any possible entanglement with you. And in the process of that, you really will make her happy long-range even though short-range she may be very, very surprised at what’s happening and not understand it. Well as it turned out, it was this third alternative that Kierkegaard himself chose in his relationship to Regine Olsen.

Well, after there is the laying out of this problem of whether you marry someone and inflict your melancholy on them or not and after these alternatives are presented, then the section that is entitled “Quidam’s Diary” goes into a discussion of Christianity as enduring a life of suffering. And it portrays Christianity in such a way that we’re told that the greater the suffering, evidently then the deeper the spirituality of the person who suffers. And yet it’s also stated that suffering is the way that God’s joy comes to us, sort of paradoxical there. True joy, we’re told, arises out of the suffering of the person who’s taken up the cross and who’s followed Christ. In this section we read that the Old Testament is a book in which the question is constantly asked as to why the righteous suffer. But when you get to the New Testament instead, it simply says that we suffer. And what each one of us who is going to be a Christian needs to recognize is that this is what life involves. And we shouldn’t ask why. We should simply be willing to undergo that. Well that completes my summary of Kierkegaard’s *Stages on Life’s Way*. 
Let me move now for a few moments at the end of this lecture to begin talking about another of his aesthetics works entitled Either/or. *Either/Or* as I mentioned a bit ago, was published in 1843. And let me just make a few comments by way of general description about this particular work. In *Either/Or*, the main focus is on the aesthetic and the ethical levels of existence and on a comparison of the two of them. Actually *Either/Or* is a two-volume work, and it's a rather lengthy work. The first volume focuses on the aesthetic level of existence, and the second volume focuses on the ethical level of existence. The title as many have noted, is Kierkegaard's answer to Hegelian philosophy with its emphasis on both/and. The Hegelian synthesis always produces a new concept which includes and somehow reconciles the thesis and the antithesis. In a sense, Hegel would say you could have your cake and you could eat it too. In contrast, Kierkegaard's philosophy is that one must make a decisive choice between practical alternatives. You can't have both/and. You have to have either/or. It's either got to be a choice of the aesthetic or a choice of the ethical.

Now like in his *Stages on Life's Way* and some of his other works, Kierkegaard in *Either/Or* also uses his style of indirect communication, posing a question indirectly and hoping that the reader will answer the question in favor of the ethical. The book overall is said to be found and edited by someone who’s named Victor Eremita. *Victor* of course means “victor.” This is all Latin. *Eremita* means “solitary man.” So here there is someone who finds the book whose name means “a solitary man” who’s a “victor.” This book contains sections attributed to various pseudonymous authors. Volume one, as I mentioned a few moments ago, focuses on the aesthetic level of existence. It contains the papers of an individual who’s simply referred to as A. And “A” is the aestheticist who is a young and sophisticated and yet a melancholy aestheticist. Even though Kierkegaard portrays aesthetic existence at its best, this portion of the book, this first volume shows that the life which is lived solely for pleasure ultimately is going to lead to despair. When we get to the second volume of *Either/Or*, this deals primarily with the ethical. It sets forth moral persuasions that are addressed to A by the sober and yet kindly Judge Williams. And the hope of all of this is that Judge Williams can lead A away from the aesthetic life into the ethical life. Now those who have analyzed the two volumes of this work oftentimes like to point out that the style of the second volume, the volume on the ethical, is much, much more plodding than the style of the first even though the level of existence that it portrays is the one that’s preferred. Now some people think that Kierkegaard just didn’t write things
as well in the second volume as he did in the first. But others say no, that there’s a deliberate change in his style. And that change is deliberate so that one can see that even though the ethical is to be preferred, nonetheless Kierkegaard wants to set forth the aesthetic in the very best light possible. And if you do it in an extremely interesting way, people will not think that you’re trying to denigrate it. But they will realize though still that it’s gonna lead to despair, and you’ve got to move to the ethical.

Well now in our next lecture, I want to continue with a more specific analysis of what Kierkegaard says in *Either/Or*. And then we’re going to move on to *Fear and Trembling*. 