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**The Demonic and its Modes in Kierkegaard**

**With a Discussion on the Ineffable Suffering in Mental Disorders**

**Abstract**

*Kierkegaard's demonic theory offers a critical framework for analysing ineffable suffering in mental disorders. The demonic manifests as anxiety toward the Good, where temporal totality becomes perceived as suffering's source through a sin-redemption spiral. This process involuntarily excludes sufferers from universal discourse by fixating on sin while resisting redemption. Our examination reveals two volitional paradoxes producing four archetypes: Satan's absolute defiance, Abraham's sacrificial suspension, Antigone's silent devotion, and the Merman's existential ambiguity. Through analysing their immediacy/mediacy and possibility/necessity dialectics, we demonstrate how Abraham and Antigone's failed transcendence patterns form the demonic's essential movement. Their paradoxical evasion of Merman-mode despair ultimately propels Satanic actualization – an endless antagonism with universality achieved through ineffable psychoanalytic perversity. This perpetual motion sustains suffering by paradoxically avoiding its apparent culmination.*

**Keywords**

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, sin-redemption, demonic, ineffability, mental disorders, suffering

**Introduction**

Language fundamentally mediates emotional experience in human existence, particularly in clinical contexts where the discursive articulation of suffering creates therapeutic distance from raw affective states.<sup>1</sup> While capturing psychological distress linguistically is crucial for psychopathological research and therapeutic frameworks, psychiatry confronts a twofold crisis of representation:

- (1) the ineffability gap (patients' inability to fully encode suffering within self-narratives);
- (2) the hermeneutic gap (clinicians' limitations in decoding such narratives through diagnostic frameworks).

Westin<sup>2</sup> demonstrates how trauma's unspeakable core intensifies distress when language collapses under standardized descriptors, while Covington<sup>3</sup>

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Julio Cesar Lemes de Castro, "The Word Is the Death of the Thing: Symbolic, Enjoyment, and Death Drive", *Revista Mal Estar e Subjetividade* 11 (2011) 4, pp. 1405–1428.

2

Anna Westin, "Becoming through Rupture: Kierkegaardian Reflection on Contemporary Trauma Discourse", in: Johann-Christian

Pöder (ed.), *Kierkegaard and Bioethics*, Routledge, New York 2023, pp. 140–156.

3

Edward C. Covington, "Psychogenic Pain: What It Means, Why It Does Not Exist, and How to Diagnose It", *Pain Medicine* 1 (2000) 4, pp. 287–294, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1526-4637.2000.00049.x>.

and Tyrer<sup>4</sup> reveal how somatic resistance and clinical reification distort lived pain – a dynamic further exemplified by Rosfort’s cases of mismatched pain descriptions between patients and clinicians.<sup>5</sup>

This crisis perpetuates suffering through interdependent mechanisms: existential isolation arises as ineffable anguish withdraws the subject into unsymbolized despair,<sup>6</sup> while caregivers’ sociocognitive constraints amplify relational erosion through misattunement,<sup>7</sup> transmuting failed communication into recursive isolation.<sup>8</sup> Psychiatry’s core paradox thus lies in balancing diagnostic utility (bridging linguistic-emotional divides) against existential fidelity (preserving suffering’s irreducible singularity). Therapeutic progress demands frameworks that minimise hermeneutic violence while retaining clinical efficacy<sup>9</sup> – a challenge requiring linguistic mediation to simultaneously clarify and safeguard the ineffable.

Kierkegaard’s framework resolves psychiatry’s representational tension by positioning ineffability as suffering’s phenomenological core.<sup>10</sup> Within this paradigm, suffering’s essence emerges not despite, but through, its resistance to linguistic capture, demanding interpretation via existential confrontation rather than clinical reductionism. Rosfort<sup>11</sup> crystallizes this as a distinction between enduring anguish (as existential defiance) and preventing it (as biomedical control), while Sass<sup>12</sup> warns that verbalizing the unspeakable risks metaphysical annihilation – mirroring humanity’s confrontation with sin’s existential reality. Here, ineffability functions dialectically: as psychopathological symptom and ontological witness.

This paradox materializes in Kierkegaard’s demonic – defined in *The Concept of Anxiety* as an “algebraic name”<sup>13</sup> for “anxiety about the good”.<sup>14</sup> The demonic manifests as inclosing reserve (Dan. *Indesluttethed*), a psychopathological impasse where transcendental longing collides with linguistic prohibition. Rooted in the Greek δαιμόνιον (*daemonic*) – a liminal space where transcendence flickers<sup>15</sup> – it embodies self-imposed exile, trapped in what Dunning terms “the illusion of self-sufficiency”.<sup>16</sup> Crucially, its linguistic resistance stems not from expressive incapacity but from a primal taboo against verbalizing transcendence. This conceptual trajectory bridges philosophy and clinical hermeneutics, rendering the demonic a multidisciplinary prism for decoding ineffable mental suffering.

Building upon the demonic’s conceptual prism – as a liminal nexus of existential anxiety, linguistic prohibition, and transcendental longing – this investigation commences with an ontological interrogation of Kierkegaard’s constitutive interplay between ethical categories (good/evil), existential freedom, and primordial anxiety. We trace their dialectical coalescence into the sin-redemption<sup>17</sup> spiral, where the demonic emerges as the antithesis of repentance’s temporal openness, fixating the subject in self-enclosed despair. By dissecting the volitional paradoxes inherent to this structure – the will’s simultaneous attraction to and terror of the Good – we systematically reconstruct the demonic’s fourfold modes, each crystallizing distinct existential postures toward ineffable suffering. These modes are then examined through their immanent dialectical movement, revealing how their internal contradictions sustain psychopathological impasses. Finally, engaging Lacanian theory, we demonstrate how each mode achieves concrete instantiation through symptomatic formations, thereby exposing the structural isomorphism between the demonic’s existential architecture and the ineffable suffering of mental pathology.

## The Problem of Good and Evil and the Sin-Redemption Spiral

For Kierkegaard, freedom is fundamentally related to the problem of good and evil.<sup>18</sup> The concrete actualization of freedom must depend on the letting-freedom-be of the Good (Dan. *det Gode*)<sup>19</sup> that is already freedom itself in its for-freedom.<sup>20</sup> This process inherently involves the optionalization of

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Stephen Tyrer, “Psychosomatic Pain”, *British Journal of Psychiatry* 188 (2006) 1, pp. 91–93, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.188.1.91>.

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René Rosfort, “Mental Suffering as a Struggle with Words: Language and Emotion”, *Journal of Psychopathology* 22 (2016) 1, pp. 10–20.

6

Olivier Luminet, Kristy A. Nielson, “Alexithymia: Toward an Experimental, Processual Affective Science with Effective Interventions”, *Annual Review of Psychology* 76 (2025) 1, pp. 741–769, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-021424-030718>.

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Vanessa Brown, Tezonia Morgan, Andrew Fralick, “Isolation and mental health: thinking outside the box”, *General psychiatry* 34 (2021) 3, e100461, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/gpsych-2020-100461>.

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Byron J. Good, Devon E. Hinton, “Introduction: Culture, Trauma, and PTSD”, in: Devon E. Hinton, Byron J. Good (eds.), *Culture and PTSD. Trauma in Global and Historical Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2016, pp. 3–49.

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Rita J. Kurtz, *Misrecognizing Women. Eighteenth-Century Female Bildungsromans and the Logic of Torture and Confession* (dissertation), Lehigh University, Department of English, Pennsylvania 2011, p. 35.

10

René Rosfort, “Kierkegaard’s Ethics of Suffering and the Biomedical Challenge of Autonomy”, in: J.-Ch. Pöder (ed.), *Kierkegaard and Bioethics*, pp. 125–139; Hannah L. Venable, “At the Opening of Madness: An Exploration of the Nonrational with Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, and Kierkegaard”, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 33 (2019) 3, pp. 475–488, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspephil.33.3.0475>.

11

R. Rosfort, “Kierkegaard’s Ethics of Suffering”, p. 127.

12

Louis A. Sass, “Madness and the Ineffable:

Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Lacan”, *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 16 (2009) 4, pp. 319–324, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.0.0268>.

13

Jay D. Mininger, “Allegories of the Demonic”, in: Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Hermann Deuser, K. Brian Söderquist (eds.), *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2007, pp. 514–529.

14

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety. A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, transl. Reidar Thomte, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1980, p. 118.

15

Angus Nicholls, *Goethe’s Concept of the Demonic. After the Ancients*, Camden House, New York 2006, p. 11.

16

Stephen N. Dunning, “Kierkegaard’s Systematic Analysis of Anxiety”, in: Robert L. Perkin (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary. The Concept of Anxiety*, (vol. 8), Mercer University Press, Macon 1985, pp. 7–33, here p. 29.

17

“Redemption” is prioritized over “atonement” to foreground the subject’s internal reparation of sin – a self-driven process independent of external validation (unlike atonement’s reliance on intersubjective recognition). This terminological choice aligns “sin-redemption” with demonic anxiety’s existential locus in subjective self-confrontation.

18

Ronald L. Hall, “Language and Freedom: Kierkegaard’s Analysis of the Demonic in The Concept of Anxiety”, in: R. L. Perkin (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, pp. 153–166, here p. 157.

19

Søren Kierkegaard, *Frygt og bæven*, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo 1969, p. 70.

20

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 111. By synthesizing Kierkegaard’s freedom-as-the-Good with Heidegger’s letting-be,



the Good (*det gode*)<sup>21</sup> – that is, it must exist as a possibility that could potentially remain unrealized.<sup>22</sup> That is to say, as the Absolute, the Good actualises itself by introducing the possibility of its non-actualization, thereby constituting the infinite as a necessity-possibility continuum. This very possibility of its non-actualization in its horizon is precisely evil, which threatens to render all possibilities impossible.

Building on this dialectic, evil arises as a necessary negation from the Good to actualize itself in freedom. But the evil mistakes this negation (whose content is nothingness) as an unconditional affirmation of its self-originating power.<sup>23</sup> By negating the Good, evil paradoxically affirms its ontological dependence: what it seeks to annihilate is the very ground of its existence. Thus, evil's rebellion is always already inscribed within the Good's horizon, for it merely exercises freedom without originating it. The Good, in turn, stabilizes itself as universality through pseudo-innocence<sup>24</sup> – a wilful ignorance of evil's existential possibility that masks freedom's abyss. Yet evil's illusion of autonomous freedom fractures this facade: it provokes anxiety over both the collapse of legitimized freedom (bound by the Good) and the terror of unbound freedom (exposed as groundless). Herein lies sin's paradox: the Good actualizes freedom's horizon only by necessitating evil's possibility, thereby revealing its own foundation as an unwarranted actuality. As Kierkegaard says:

“The posited sin is indeed an annulled possibility, but it is also an unwarranted actuality, and as such, anxiety can relate itself to it. Since sin is an unwarranted actuality, it is also to be negated.”<sup>25</sup>

As unwarranted actuality born from innocence's annulment, sin demands temporal redemption through self-negation. Here emerges freedom's radical paradox: the anxious subject realizes all freedom inherently participates in sin, yet only self-executed redemption can restore innocence. Sin thus temporalizes existence as absolute Otherness requiring redemption, while anxiety becomes sin's anticipatory form. This status defines sin as both exterior and inherent: an uneliminable Otherness that permeates existence. Though redeemable through freedom's exercise, it persists as freedom's constitutive impossibility of self-grounding. As Kierkegaard states:

“The posited sin is in itself also a consequence, even though it is a consequence foreign to freedom.”<sup>26</sup>

Rooted in the Good's primordial openness, sin paradoxically operates as both systemic component and irreducible singularity.

This inherent paradox drives existence: sin's exteriority orients freedom toward redemption through self-referential anxiety, not external compulsion. Its “foreign” nature emerges via the subject's recognition of non-essence within itself – a discovery that singularizes existence while objectifying being-in-as-redeemable.<sup>27</sup> Thus, anxiety perpetuates through sin's dual revelation: as existential burden and annihilable possibility. Each act of recognition re-enacts the tension between totalized existence and redemptive potential, sustaining freedom's restless dialectic. Anxiety embodies recognition of existence's groundlessness, compelling the subject to redeem unwarranted actuality – a mission paradoxically requiring self-grounding through groundless freedom. This generates the sin-redemption spiral: every redemptive act, being sin-laden freedom, necessitates further redemption. Thus anxiety perpetuates through dual awareness – of totality demanding redemption and anxiety's own sin-actualizing persistence.

## The Anxious Subject's Negation of the Sin-Redemption Spiral: Repentance vs. the Demonic

Compared to the Absolute's eternal temporality, the ethical subject – driven by anxiety – is caught in an infinite “sin-redemption-sin-redemption...” spiral. Its temporal structure unfolds as: the past awaiting future grounding, the unwarranted present actuality, and the future re-grounding the past through redemption. Given sin's grounding in freedom and redemption's persistence through the anxious subject's freedom, this temporal loop becomes sin's self-perpetuating medium.<sup>28</sup> Its phases manifest dialectically: sin as freedom's processual surplus, anxiety over redeeming this surplus, redemption regenerating sin through freedom's exercise.

Anxiety operates as the spiral's unwarranted actuality – binding the subject to being-in-sin and perpetuating sin through letting-sin-be via guilt. Guilt's manifestation of sin inherently presupposes sin's pre-existence, for to expose sin is to confirm its prior existence. Yet guilt simultaneously masquerades as redemption's possibility: by invoking the suffering inherent to sin, it fabricates a fantasy of repayment's relief – a relief contingent on sin's perpetuation. This false promise renews anxiety's groundlessness, accelerating the sin-redemption spiral via anxiety/guilty in guilty/anxiety, as redemption's possibility is paradoxically rooted in sin's irrevocable persistence.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the sin-redemption spiral becomes anxiety's object: the subject now inhabits it existentially yet transcends it reflectively. Such paradoxical positioning actualizes freedom's multiplicity – not as liberation but as vertigo,<sup>30</sup> where the spiral's infinite regress erodes all finitude. Here, freedom's manifold forms collapse into anxiety's self-replication: each attempt to grasp grounding accelerates the spiral, converting existential dizziness into renewed anxiety.<sup>31</sup>

This existential vertigo culminates in repentance – the paradoxical apex where anxiety, unable to bear the spiral's acceleration, desperately seeks arrest:

we define letting-freedom-be (teleological actualization) and in-freedom (existential situatedness) – a dialectic where the Good enables freedom's embodiment through its own optionalization. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Path-mark*, transl. William McNeil, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 144.

21  
S. Kierkegaard, *Frygt og bæven*, p. 45.

22  
Here, we distinguish the Good (Dan. *det Gode*) from the optional good (Dan. *det gode*) based on Kierkegaard's lexical differentiation in *Frygt og Bæven* (cf. Danish original: *det Gode* as the Good itself vs. *gode* used as an adjective). As analysed in the final section, *det Gode* is the permanence (*A*) encompassing the “S”, while *det gode* is the equally encompassing “|” that separates S from *A*.

23  
S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 111.

24  
Pseudo-innocence here denotes not mere ignorance of sin but a refusal to confront freedom's groundlessness – a state Kierkegaard identifies as “the anxiety that is innocence”. – S. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, p. 41.

25  
Ibid., p. 113.

26  
Ibid.

27  
Ibid., p. 111.

28  
Ibid., p. 113.

29  
Ibid., p. 115.

30  
Ibid., p. 111.

31  
Ibid., p. 61.

“Sin conquers (the temporality) [...] Anxiety throws itself despairingly into the arms of repentance. Repentance ventures all. It conceives of the consequence of sin as suffering penalty and of perdition as the consequence of sin.”<sup>32</sup>

Framed by Kierkegaard as “the anxiety about evil”,<sup>33</sup> repentance constitutes a perverse inversion where freedom’s redemptive potential is deemed evil, while its closure is idolized as good. It views the spiral as evil and rejects it, abdicating responsibility for redemption to the Absolute Other. Yet this manoeuvre harbours bad faith: by framing active freedom as necessarily sinful, it covertly reifies the very spiral it condemns. The repentant’s proclaimed powerlessness becomes sin’s reinscription, where he claims as “I cannot” serves to evade “I must”.<sup>34</sup> They fantasize about reversing the Good’s movement: begging the Absolute to revoke freedom’s openness for a static innocence. Yet this illusion only deepens the spiral it fears. By rejecting freedom’s futurity (the Good’s essential orientation), repentance paradoxically enslaves itself to the past’s repetitions. Here lies the ultimate contradiction: what repents as anxiety over evil becomes evil’s engine.

Kierkegaard positions the demonic as repentance’s dialectical counterpart – not anxiety about evil but dread before the Good’s liberative demand.<sup>35</sup> Whereas repentance flees the sin-redemption spiral by moralizing it as evil, the demonic fixates on this very spiral as the Good’s intolerable gift. Here lies the perverse inversion: the demonic clings to sin’s inevitability not through guilt but via defiant self-assertion. Dunning’s formulation crystallizes this stance: demonic negation “rejects repentance’s self-negation” by weaponizing unfreedom itself.<sup>36</sup> Inhabiting the “unfree relation to the good”,<sup>37</sup> the demonic transmutes anxiety into ontological defiance. Where repentance delegates redemption to the Absolute, the demonic becomes negation – embracing the sin-sin loop as the only possible existence. This is no mere rejection of salvation but a re-grounding in sin’s unwarrantedness: by collapsing redemption’s futurity into endless recurrence, the demonic paradoxically asserts freedom through bondage, finding perverse agency in the spiral’s infinite reconstitution.

The demonic’s anxiety about the Good brings a paradoxical self-negation for himself: even as he rejects salvation, his very act of negation binds him to the spiral’s logic.<sup>38</sup> This logic ensures that every active refusal of freedom confirms his inescapability – the demonic’s rebellion against anxiety’s demands only reifies freedom’s sovereignty through performative contradiction. Thus, appearing as “radical form”<sup>39</sup> of anxiety (as the “anxiety about anxiety”),<sup>40</sup> the demonic collapses into existential entrapment and becomes “the sudden”,<sup>41</sup> operating as a rupture of the everyday<sup>42</sup> – that fallen mode naturalizing the spiral – and exposing the freedom as abyssal beneath it.<sup>43</sup>

Like an event exceeding representation,<sup>44</sup> the demonic’s temporality defies repentance’s cyclicity, freezing it into a singular point where negation consumes its own possibility. Here, anxiety’s threat lies not in recurrence but in stasis – the demonic’s “extreme denial”<sup>45</sup> becomes freedom’s petrification within unfreedom’s eternal now. Yet the demonic individual eludes full equation with the event’s singularity. Though outwardly embedded in the everyday – that fallen continuum masking the spiral’s abyss – inwardly he is exiled from temporal coherence. Here, anxiety’s surplus consciousness crystallizes into freedom’s excess: a self-aware superfluity that corrodes continuity’s necessity. This ontological dissonance renders the demonic as an intermittent

apparition – simultaneously present and absent, erupting as a sudden, then vanishing in a moment:

“At one moment it is there, in the next moment it is gone [...]. It cannot be incorporated into or worked into any continuity, but whatever expresses itself in this manner is precisely the sudden.”<sup>46</sup>

His existence becomes a flickering negation: visible only in the rupture of ethical time, illegible within its reconstituted flow. His instantaneous apparition – unpredictable and illegible within continuity’s framework – marks freedom’s rupture into the everyday. Though ontologically tethered to the Good’s futural openness, this rupture provokes reciprocal rejection: for the “first expression (of the Good) is continuity”,<sup>47</sup> which necessarily cancels the sudden’s disruptive presence first. Thus, the demonic inhabits a paradoxical topology – of the Good, yet against it, emerging from futurity’s horizon only to negate its salvific trajectory. His irreducible singularity fractures the spiral’s closed circuit, becoming anxiety’s intensification precisely through proximity to the Good it both fears and incarnates.

To those entrenched in the everyday, the demonic manifests as a contentless surplus – voiding both actuality and possibility to destabilize continuity’s pretences. This self-emptying thrusts him into absolute freedom’s vortex, where suffering compels the negation of his singularity. Herein lies the demonic’s tragic tautology: to sustain self-identity, he must oscillate between self-production through negation and self-negation through production – a

32

Ibid., p. 115.

33

Ibid., p. 113.

34

Ibid., p. 116.

35

Ibid., p. 119.

36

S. N. Dunning, “Kierkegaard’s Systematic Analysis of Anxiety”, p. 25.

37

Ibid., p. 119.

38

Ibid.

39

Terence Sweeney, “Hope against Hope: Søren Kierkegaard on the Breath of Eternal Possibility”, *Philosophy & Theology* 28 (2016) 1, pp. 165–184, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol201511237>.

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J. D. Mininger, “Allegories of the Demonic”.

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S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 129.

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The “everyday” signifies the fallen existential mode (cf. *the everydayness* in *Being and Time*, *the Public* in *Two Ages*) that naturalizes sin-redemption cycles by concealing freedom’s abyss. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. John Macquarrie – Edward Robinson, Basil Blackwell, Southampton 1962, p. 149; Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages*, transl. Howard V. Hong – Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1978, p. 100.

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Harrison Hall, “Love, and death: Kierkegaard and Heidegger on authentic and inauthentic human existence”, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 27 (1984) 1–4, pp. 179–197, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00201748408602017>.

44

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 130.

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J. D. Mininger, “Allegories of the Demonic”.

46

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 130.

47

Ibid.

closed loop, as “human tautology’s most vertiginous form”.<sup>48</sup> He becomes an “internally unified impossibility”, facing multiple vectors of extinction,<sup>49</sup> perpetually torn by self-contradiction that qualitatively exiles him from others anchored in the everyday.<sup>50</sup>

### The Structure of the Demonic

The demonic, in his paradoxical repetition, freely binds himself in unfreedom while unwittingly exposing freedom’s dialectical extremes. Unlike Kierkegaard’s Brutus – whose inclosing reserve gestates ethical universality through ideational commitment<sup>51</sup> – the demonic enacts absolute self-enclosure via self-as-medium: an implusive pseudo-dialectics that voids all externality. Here, enclosure operates without mediation: having ruptured universality’s fabric, he exists as existential debris – incapable of possession (of ideas) and gestation (of meaning), severed from the primordial grounding that warrants ipseity.<sup>52</sup> This collapse of primordial grounding fuels the demonic’s ethical alchemy: by mimicking ethical participation through self-entanglement, he transubstantiates existential default into blame against the Good. He accuses redemption’s imperative of causing his failure to actualize through sin, thereby absolving his self-retention even as he recognizes it as sin’s essence.<sup>53</sup>

To everyday consciousness, the demonic’s self-devouring paradox – its existential modality – unveils freedom’s abyss through radical unintelligibility. It manifests as a continuity-shattering alterity<sup>54</sup> that simultaneously seduces and repels, provoking pathological “sympathy”<sup>55</sup> precisely through its refusal of ethical legibility. Thus, the demonic wages not merely paradoxical combat against the sin-redemption spiral, but more crucially, becomes the living paradox – inescapably interlinked with himself, with others in the everyday, and with the Absolute Other through existential bonds that defy voluntary schemes. As Kierkegaard states:

“The demonic is inclosing reserve and the unfreely disclosed. The two definitions indicate, as intended, the same thing, because inclosing reserve is precisely the mute, and when it is to express itself, this must take place contrary to its will, since freedom, which underlies unfreedom or is its ground, by entering into communication with freedom from without, revolts and now betrays unfreedom in such a way that it is the individual who in anxiety betrays himself against his will.”<sup>56</sup>

The demonic’s inclosing reserve – his violent severance from freedom and the Good – paradoxically inscribes him within their very fabric. He is refusing relationality but is paradoxically related to others through this very rejection. This suffering, as Kierkegaard observes, chains him to fractured selfhood – unwilling to be himself yet constitutively defined through refusal.<sup>57</sup> Since his actualized self cannot truly negate actuality itself, nor can he negate the “being-in-the-good” implied by actuality, the more he rejects this form of encompassing relatedness, the more he finds himself already within relationality. The demonic enacts freedom’s ultimate contradiction: his usurpative negation of omnipotence – which renders the impossible possible – becomes a perverse confirmation of the Absolute. For as Kierkegaard’s axiom declares, divine omnipotence encompasses even such rebellion: “for God everything is possible”,<sup>58</sup> including this self-annihilating paradox. Thus, the demonic’s craving for the Good mutates into unfreedom’s artifice – preserving relationality through violent rejection of being-in-relation. The demonic does not reject

others per se, but rather the given relation that condemns him to not being in true relatedness.<sup>59</sup>

Trapped within this paradox, the demonic's oscillation between unfree disclosure and inclosing reserve crystallizes as existential aphasia – a rejection of the very medium that “saves from inclosing reserve's empty abstraction”.<sup>60</sup> Anxiety's torsion renders speech inherently sinful, for linguistic exteriority drags him before the Good's judgment. Hence his muteness – even somatic presence becomes anxious semiosis, each gesture a betrayal. To exist thus is to dwell within language through absolute exteriority to it – a visibility-as-invisibility where every assertion of singularity implodes into relational immanence. This ontological double bind births ineffable suffering: volitional movement toward any pole accelerates its inversion,<sup>61</sup> trapping him in what Kangas terms “self-consuming void”<sup>62</sup> – a nothingness (Dan. *Intetheden*) that negates negation itself.<sup>63</sup> The violated will fractures into twin abysses of existential negation:

A. The demonic craves relationality yet founders in its absence. Yearning to be-himself-through-connection, he weaponizes language – only to find its universality annihilates the very self it promises to disclose. Here, speech becomes despair's accomplice: every attempted articulation dissolves his self into the Good's judging light.

48

William McDonald, “Kierkegaard's Demonic Boredom”, in: Barbara D. Pezze, Carlo Salzani (eds.), *Essays on Boredom and Modernity*, Rodopi, New York 2009, pp. 61–84, doi: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042032125\\_004](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042032125_004).

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S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 133.

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Gregory R. Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses. Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 1996, p. 111.

51

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 123.

52

Ibid., p. 124.

53

Ibid., p. 120.

54

Ibid.

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Ibid., p. 121.

56

Ibid., p. 123.

57

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, transl. Edna H. Hong – Howard V. Hong,

Princeton University Press, Princeton 1980, p. 17.

58

Ibid., p. 38.

59

S. N. Dunning, “Kierkegaard's Systematic Analysis of Anxiety”, p. 29.

60

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 124.

61

Kierkegaard cites Duchatelet's symbiotic vice groups – those who “cling to one another [...] anxiously” (ibid., p. 137) – as empirical demonic forms. Contrasted with the ontological demonic, their pseudo-intimacy forges second-order continuity through mutual corruption, constituting the Belialic type: a perversion antithetical to Satan's solitary rebellion as X' in the last section of this paper.

62

David J. Kangas, *Errant affirmations. On the philosophical meaning of Kierkegaard's religious discourses*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2018, p. 4.

63

S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 69–70.

B. The demonic flees relationality yet is shackled to its logic. Struggling not-to-be-himself-in-bondage, silence becomes his revolt – but muteness, as inverted signification, only tightens the relational knot. Each act of refusal ricochets as ontological confirmation: the not he manifests through flight becomes the cipher of his inescapable being-in-relation.

Both paths collide in the demonic's ineffable core<sup>64</sup> – a terrifying secret that mutates through utterance's impossibility.<sup>65</sup> This unspeakable-as-excluded operates through inclosing reserve's paradox: a contentless void that negates through absence of negation.<sup>66</sup> Here, pre-ethical anxiety exiles him from the Good before sin's articulation, condemning him as unspeakability's bearer even prior to comprehension.<sup>67</sup> Whether he comprehends its content, this core's ontological status remains simultaneously possessed and dispossessed<sup>68</sup> – a paradox manifesting in two existential strategies toward alterity:

a. The demonic loves the Other yet dare not speak – for disclosure risks annihilating both beloved and self through incomprehension's backlash. Silence becomes love's perverse preservation.

b. The demonic hates the Other yet cannot speak – for verbalizing hatred would necessitate recognition, thus reconciliation. Here, muteness fuels hate's infinite deferral, a self-incinerating pyre.

These four permutations – Aa, Ab, Ba, Bb – emerge as chiasmic interdependencies between the demonic's volitional orientation (A/B) and relational strategy (a/b). Crucially, the "Other" here operates as pseudo-relational vectors:

Aa: Wills relatedness (A) through muted love (a) – a self-cancelling devotion where the beloved becomes a mirror of the ineffable core's unattainability.

Ab: Seeks connection (A) via concealed hatred (b) – projecting the core's void onto the Other as a hated interlocutor, thus binding through repulsion.

Ba: Flees relation (B) via unspoken love (a) – rendering affection a weapon of distance, where longing reinforces isolation.

Bb: Rejects relation (B) through suppressed hate (b) – a recursive loop where hatred's non-articulation metastasizes into self-immolation.

Each permutation confirms the demonic's ontological trap: alterity investment masquerades as relationality while perpetuating inclosing reserve's void. The "Other" – whether human or abyssal – functions not as true counterpart but as fractured surface for the self's endless ricochet between possession/dispossession.<sup>69</sup>

## Four Modes of the Demonic

### *The Demonic as Satan (Bb)*

In the Satanic mode, the demonic wills ontological exile, yet is irrevocably bound to relationality – hating both self and Other through simultaneous rejection of being-in-relation. Kierkegaard's New Testament demoniac epitomizes this: shunning all contact with the Good, "whether [...] to help it to freedom or [...] casually touch it".<sup>70</sup> Here, negation becomes self-annihilating identification: the self collapses into the pure demonic – a paradox where identity coincides with its own obliteration.<sup>71</sup>

Milton's Satan also epitomizes this mode: exiled yet sovereign, he spurns both Heaven's Good and Hell's false kingdom – rejecting Belial's counsel to embrace evil as a kingdom with their “own good”.<sup>72</sup> His hatred crystallizes as masochistic pride in incapacity – willing torment while tormented by willingness. Even his escape from Hell's “universe of death”<sup>73</sup> becomes self-sabotage, for departure would necessitate relation to the Good he ontologically repudiates. Thus, his infamous confession – “Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell”<sup>74</sup> – is a perfect articulation of demonic recursion: the will to exile exiles itself.

Satan's existence is exclusion – he rejects all choices, even non-choice, thereby exiling himself from freedom's horizon. Through infinite refusal, he transforms suffering into blasphemous sacrament: enacting self-destructive evil as inverted worship. As Fernie observes, this demonic stance refuses “the table of creation”, choosing neither its plenty nor nothingness, but the anti-choice of non-participation.<sup>75</sup> This eternal negation, however, traps him in the existence's paradox: rebellion's performance requires the very order that it seeks to annul. His pure hatred, as absolute negation, chains him to the relational matrix he seeks to destroy. This inescapable binding plunges him into despair-as-performance – sustaining hatred's illusion of parity with God while concealing existential “powerlessness”.<sup>76</sup> His inclosing reserve metastasizes

64

The ineffable bifurcates dialectically: Active Unspeakability – conscious refusal to articulate known sin, where silence becomes complicit volition; Precluded Unspeakability – anxiety's “dizziness before nothingness”, where objectless suffering renders nothing as something (S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 61). Crucially, the latter's existential void morphs into the former's wilful concealment: the self, unable to name its anguish, actively withholds the unnameable – enacting the “despair's not to will to be a self” (ibid., p. 73). This dialectical fold transforms passive dread into active self-negation, forging chains of inner reflection that bind freedom through the unspeakable's recursive spiral.

65

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 125, 128.

66

The term “demonic” functions as an algebraic signifier that embodies continuity's ineffable core. By resisting fixed definition, it structurally articulates the ineffable ground of existential repetition – the abyss of freedom itself.

67

The demonic, as analysed here, consciously withholds specific knowledge of his sin – a lucid ethical agent whose self-awareness paradoxically constitutes his authentic self. Yet the trans-ethical core of the demonic operates through inclosing reserve: its unfreely disclosure enacts a pre-emptive exile from the Good via anxiety. Crucially, this exclusion

occurs at the aesthetic level before selfhood solidifies, creating a precluded unspeakability (strictly, the ineffable-as-excluded) – one is condemned as bearer of the unspeakable before understanding what is withheld, silenced before grasping what cannot be spoken.

68

Ibid., pp. 103–104.

69

Ibid.

70

S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 137.

71

Ewan Fernie, *The Demonic. Literature and Experience*, Routledge, Abingdon 2013, p. 7, 69.

72

E. Fernie, *The Demonic*, p. 74; John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, p. 52.

73

Ibid., p. 62.

74

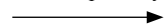
Ibid., p. 81.

75

Ibid., p. 71.

76

S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 114. Satan exists not in direct despair but as hatred, wherein its sustained primacy



into cosmic indictment: perceiving Being itself as sin's prison, he equates existence with enforced self-enclosure. To "be" becomes anathema; thus, he wills himself as negation incarnate – spurning all mediation through the Other, yet remaining dependent on the Absolute's framework for his rebellion's intelligibility.

Satan's infinite rejection becomes self-consuming ritual – exhausting finite possibilities through the demonic's "infinite abstraction of the self",<sup>77</sup> yet paradoxically sustaining negation's pseudo-infinity: not as subjective potential, but as despair's structural fissure. This ontological sleight-of-hand conjures transcendence's simulacrum – a spiralling recursion where negating finitude mimics Absolute's eternity through meaningless repetition. Thus he appears exterior to the Good while being constitutively defined by it, his "eternity" a hall of mirrors reflecting negation's void. As Kierkegaard says:

"It is difficult to forget such despair – it is too deep; but every minute that despair is kept open, there is the possibility of salvation as well."<sup>78</sup>

Satan, being external to the sin-redemption spiral, remains open to salvation at every moment. However, realizing this possibility demands from him the ultimate act of resigning or rejecting the hatred and pure negation he holds for what he perceives as the self, amidst a trembling faith in the potentiality of salvation. If he does so, the demonic ceases to be the first mode, as Satan, and becomes the second one, as Abraham.

### *The Demonic as Abraham (Aa)*

The Abrahamic mode embodies love's silent torment: willing relationality while exiled from its actualization. Kierkegaard's Abraham, commanded to sacrifice Isaac, epitomizes this paradox. His love for the son he must surrender binds him to an unspeakable secret, transforming the three-day journey into an existential crucible. By concealing the divine mandate from others, Abraham becomes the demonic – not through rebellion, but through love's impossible fidelity. Only at the altar's edge, before the ram's substitution, does this mode crystallize: the collision of sacred duty and paternal love fractures the self's capacity for disclosure, rendering relation into an anguished cipher.

Certainly, before the revelation, Abraham is in relation to both others and the Absolute. This pre-positated relatedness precludes him from truly comprehending the possibility of completely losing it until the arrival of the despairing revelation. The fateful command to sacrifice Isaac makes it impossible for Abraham to remain in relation to Isaac and others as before. The inherent cruelty of the revelation causes him to hesitate in his faith in God or, at least, to doubt the voice that delivered such a cruel order. Despite his love for both others and the Absolute, he avoids disclosing his decision or hesitation to conceal his demonic nature. His familial dialogues, though serene in semblance, compound existential muteness.<sup>79</sup> As Kierkegaard asserts:

"He can say everything, but one thing he cannot say, and if he cannot say that – that is, say it in such a way that the other understands it – then he is not speaking."<sup>80</sup>

Thus Abraham's silence exiles him doubly: expelled from the universal by what cannot be spoken, yet bound to it by what must not be spoken.

Abraham's three-day journey stages faith's vertigo – oscillating between despair at the divine command and hope's razor-edge. Kierkegaard frames this

as the knight of faith's crucible: "tested at every moment [...] where repentance's return to the universal might be a spiritual trial or truth".<sup>81</sup> His infinite resignation paradoxically sustains love-driven fidelity to being-in-relatedness, even as its impossibility strains faith into anguish. This is no serene waiting: blind to fate's turn, Abraham inhabits contradiction's vortex – where love's persistence becomes anxiety's engine before the Good's abyss. His love traps him in a double bind: hoping through despair, he loves the Absolute as the Other who makes impossibility possible – even as his love for Isaac forbids him from blaming others for his inclosing reserve. Trapped in a self he cannot justify yet cannot renounce, he confronts sin's fatal finitude: to "be himself" is to exile himself from desired relatedness. Kierkegaard's paradox looms – transcendence demands relation to the Absolute beyond the universal, yet this very relation requires annihilating the self that seeks it.

The demonic here mirrors the divine – perched at transcendence's threshold,<sup>82</sup> yet mired in despair's gravitational pull. Abraham's faith persists not through strength but through sacred impotence: "great by that power whose strength is powerlessness [...] that hope whose form is madness".<sup>83</sup> His love transfigures impossibility into devotion's object – enduring despair while embracing the as-if of salvation. As scholars note, this liminal state binds existential possibility to passivity's paradox.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the demonic/divine duality hinges on love's capacity to sanctify what reason condemns as "hatred to oneself".

### *The Demonic as Antigone (Ba)*

The Antigone mode enacts love's existential bondage: willing against relatedness while compulsively enacting it. Her defiance – burying Polynices against Creon's edict – exposes the demonic paradox: only through compulsory disclosure (the burial act) can she negate relationality's claims. Sophocles' tragedy reveals this inversion: Antigone's love for her brother demands she be-in-relatedness precisely by violating the polis' relational order. Her death

maintains an ontologically illusory parity with God (even if self-proclaimed). Though despair constitutes his existential essence, the demonic inclosing reserve blocks its authentic manifestation. The dissolution of hatred would expose this latent despair, compelling what Kierkegaard defines as "human powerlessness before God".

77

Ibid., p. 72.

78

Ibid., p. 62.

79

Peter Kemp, Pascale Perraudin, Stephen Findley, "Another Language for the Other", *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 23 (1997) 6, pp. 5–28, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/019145379702300602>.

80

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, transl. Edna H. Hong – Howard

V. Hong, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983, p. 113.

81

Ibid., p. 78.

82

Ibid., p. 96.

83

Ibid., pp. 16–17.

84

Rudi Visker, *The Inhuman Condition. Looking for Difference after Levinas and Heidegger*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands 2006, p. 238. Cf. Thomas A. Carlson, "Possibility and Passivity in Kierkegaard: The Anxieties of Don Giovanni and Abraham", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994) 2, pp. 461–481.

sentence thus becomes the demonic's fatal logic – affirming love through self-annihilation, where not-to-be-in-it requires being-it unto-death.<sup>85</sup>

Antigone's love transfigures burial into existential defiance – dismissing Thebes' prohibition as cosmically inconsequential. Her refusal to plead before Creon<sup>86</sup> or accept Ismene's belated solidarity (“I would not welcome such a fellowship.”),<sup>87</sup> crystallizes the demonic will: to sever relationality through sacrificial hyper-relation. Rejecting shared martyrdom (“One death sufficeth.”)<sup>88</sup> and the chorus's hollow praise,<sup>89</sup> she weaponizes death to terminate disclosure's compulsion. Unlike Abraham's faith in transcendent mediation, Antigone's love becomes the Absolute – a divinity forged through self-annihilation's purity. Thus exiled from the universal, her unforgivability in Creon's order mirrors Abraham's exile, yet her transcendence is immanent: the grave's silence as love's final word.

Kierkegaard's modern Antigone radicalizes Sophocles' tragedy: here, she is Oedipus' daughter burdened with guilt's primal knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Alone comprehending her father's incestuous sin – the rot beneath familial glory – she becomes the secret's living crypt. How she acquired this knowledge remains an enigma even to herself, its weight fusing with her being:

“She feels her guilt the more she loves her father; only with him can she find rest.”<sup>91</sup>

Her torment stems not from transgression but existence itself – the sin's inextricability from her ontology. Thus, “[h]er father is always in her thoughts, but how – that is her painful secret”.<sup>92</sup>

Unlike her classical counterpart's public defiance, this Antigone resides in interiority's prison: love as both wound and warder, inhabiting inward exile – her secrecy transmuting existence into a hermetic theatre where “the stage is [...] spiritual [...] She, too, although alive, is in another sense dead; her life is quiet and concealed”.<sup>93</sup> Cloaked in compulsory normalcy, she guards her father's sin like a sacred crypt, her love-worn soul finding perverse honour in refusal:

“She has been willing to sacrifice her life for her secret, but now her love is demanded as a sacrifice.”<sup>94</sup>

This inclosing reserve becomes her demonic absolute – not through action but passion's imprisonment. Though relationality's pretence torments her (feigning normalcy to veil the rot),<sup>95</sup> she clings to failure's paradox: only by binding love to secrecy's collapse does it achieve absoluteness, fusing lover and beloved in ruin's purity.

Across all iterations, Antigone's love enacts hermetic absolutism – guarding the beloved as fragile Absolute by rejecting the universal's disclosure, only to be condemned as “sin” demanding redemption. Her compulsion to terminate involuntary relatedness drives her toward sacred withdrawal: transcendence collapses inward as resolute love's immanence. Kierkegaard's tragic insight crystallizes here – only through death's rupture can she “confess belonging through non-belonging”,<sup>96</sup> exposing love's absoluteness as absence made present. This aligns with Boerdam's reading: Antigone's salvation emerges from “the Absolute manifesting as its absence”<sup>97</sup> – a demonic apotheosis where love's impossibility becomes its only possible form.

For Antigone, love's necessity becomes ontological compulsion – the will to be-oneself through sin's embrace. She knowingly inhabits the paradox: to love is to exist as guilt incarnate, yet this very guilt constitutes her authenticity. Herein lies the demonic apotheosis – by refusing to compromise

her sin of being, she transfigures impossibility into absolute possibility. The Absolute's absence materializes precisely through this uncompromising fidelity: Antigone's will, condemned by the universal, forges its own transcendence in the crucible of self-doomed love.

### *The Demonic as Merman (Ab)*

The Merman mode embodies relational craving poisoned by self-repulsion – willing relatedness yet recoiling from its actualization. Trapped in volitional paralysis, he refuses disclosure not from love's secrecy (as Antigone) but from ontological self-loathing: hating both the relational web entangling him and the “otherness within” demanding accountability. This is the demonic as failed reciprocity: desire for connection curdling into hatred of connection's very conditions, making the self a prison of unspoken accusations.

Kierkegaard's Merman<sup>98</sup> – a seducer who habitually lures women with oceanic allure – encapsulates this demonic mode's existential rupture. His demonic pattern fractures when confronted by Agnes's “absolute faith [...] entrusting her destiny like the lowly flower”.<sup>99</sup> Here, innocence becomes his existential undoing: the Merman discovers his “natural element betrays him”, forcing ethical retreat.<sup>100</sup> In this moment, Merman's confrontation with sin verges on repentance yet crystallizes demonic closure.<sup>101</sup> Though Agnes's love reveals his sin, the absence of the Absolute reduces redemption to existential impossibility: his predatory nature reasserts itself as ontological fatality.<sup>102</sup> Trapped

85  
Sophocles, *Sophocles' Oedipus Trilogy*,  
transl. F. Storr, ICON Group International,  
2005.

86  
Ibid., p. 176.

87  
Ibid., p. 163.

88  
Ibid., p. 181.

89  
Ibid., p. 193.

90  
Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or. Part I*,  
transl. Howard V. Hong – Edna H. Hong,  
Princeton University Press, Princeton  
1987, p. 160.

91  
Ibid., p. 161.

92  
Ibid.

93  
Ibid., p. 157.

94  
Ibid., p. 163.

95  
Ibid., p. 162.

96  
Ibid., p. 164.

97  
Christopher M. Boerdam, “A Love Beyond  
Belief: The Knight of Faith as Feminine,  
Revolutionary Subject”, *International  
Journal of Zizek Studies* 12 (2018) 3, pp.  
80–102.

98  
In *Fear and Trembling*, “Merman” (cap-  
italized) denotes the individual protagonist  
whose “human consciousness” emerges from  
a “human preexistence” entrapped by his  
species-being (merman). This orthographic  
distinction – Merman (subject) vs. merman  
(species) – reflects his existential trajectory:  
initially bound to his pre-given nature, he  
strives to transcend it through self-conscious  
rupture.

99  
S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 94.

100  
Ibid.

101  
Ibid., p. 96.

102  
Ibid., p. 95.

between annihilating Agnes or himself – both options confirming his inhumanity – he flees into self-loathing’s feedback loop, hating the pseudo-self he must embody. This dialectical impasse defines this demonic mode: relatedness demands repentant disclosure, yet disclosure destroys relation.<sup>103</sup> Thus, desire for the Absolute becomes its own negation – a demonic hunger feeding on impossibility.

The Merman’s demonic paradox lies in performing repentance without repentance – longing for redemption’s totality while refusing its ethical conditions. Agnes, as fragile Absolute, becomes the impossible locus of relation: he seeks salvation through her innocence yet against all mediation.<sup>104</sup> Unlike Abraham’s faith-driven acceptance of sin or Antigone’s defiant embrace, the Merman insists on autonomous soteriology – eradicating his being-in-sin through infinite self-exertion. This demonic self-salvation binds him deeper to the pseudo-self he loathes: by demanding redemption on his own terms, he converts the Absolute into a mirror of his will’s futility. His infinite redemptive project collapses under its performative contradiction: his refusal to disclose, framed as redemptive act, perpetuates the sin it seeks to eradicate. Even in self-imposed exile, the negation of relational refusal voids redemption’s possibility – for relatedness’s absoluteness depends precisely on refusal’s existential enactment.<sup>105</sup> Isolation, far from securing autonomy, exposes his will’s impotence: to withdraw is to confess love’s non-absoluteness, yet to engage is to confirm the pseudo-self’s inescapability. Thus, the demonic reveals its ultimate bind: the very condition for being oneself (refusal) becomes the obstacle to its realization.

For Merman, refusal metastasizes into demonic stasis – a delusion of maintaining static guilt through performative non-disclosure. Cloaking sin in the mantle of being oneself, he seeks the impossible: selfhood without sin, relation with the Absolute through absolute control. Yet, rejecting the pseudo-self (that which binds him to sin) entraps his will in refusal’s double bind: to enact being oneself requires negating the pseudo-self, yet this negation perpetuates the sin it would transcend. His suffering, masquerading as redemption’s promissory note, is ultimately solipsistic currency – a prepayment only he recognizes. Thus, even his active despair reveals demonic narcissism: love of self-as-damned expressed through hatred of the other, preserving hope as the last thread binding him to his own futility.

The Merman’s existential uniqueness resides in despair’s impotent iteration – unlike Satan’s despair cloaked in hatred’s certitude, Abraham’s faith-anchored resistance to despair, or Antigone’s despair transfigured through sacrificial love. His refusal operates as despair’s counterfeit: too self-doubting to hate absolutely (thus never attaining Satan’s destructive purity), too self-obsessed to risk faith (unlike Abraham’s teleological suspension), too self-pitying to embrace love’s annihilation (unlike Antigone’s tragic apotheosis). This demonic mediocrity binds him to despair’s limbo – hating enough to rupture relation but loving enough to crave it,<sup>106</sup> confessing sin’s reality but denying its redemption. Herein, the Merman mode’s horror crystallizes: despair that cannot even despair absolutely.

### The Dialectic in the Demonic’s Modes and its Ineffable Suffering

To clarify the structural configuration, we designate Satan, Merman, Antigone, and Abraham as S, M, X, and Y respectively. These four demonic modalities thus form a kinematic sequence: “S–M–X/Y” (Figure 1).

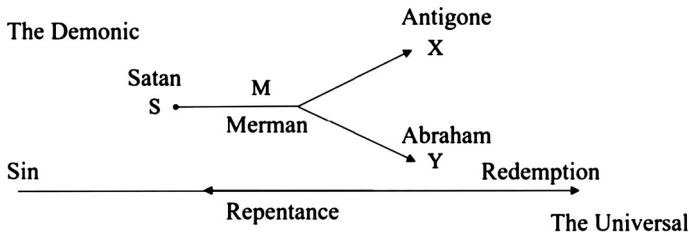


Figure 1. The movement of demonic’s modes.

As the pure modality of the demonic, S actively renounces both possibility and impossibility through pure negation, seeking to negate the constitutive premise that enables refusal itself. However, the more he engages in this negation, the more he becomes dependent on the ground he aims to negate, which is the Good. This dependence leads him to negate his own self as an empty negation, epitomizing self-paradoxical suffering and despair. Simultaneously, he serves as an invisible surplus of the universal, marking the ultimate freedom. For S, the Absolute exists unconditionally, yet this very absoluteness renders redemption impossible – positioning it in the existential paradox of being simultaneously closest to and farthest from transcendence.

X and Y embody two transcendent possibilities within the demonic:

- (1) Y, as universality’s negated, he transubstantiates impossibility into possibility through existential fidelity – embracing impossibility’s totality to actualize the Absolute in acts as renunciation.<sup>107</sup> His movement constitutes redemptive performativity: by anchoring choice in the Absolute’s guarantee, relatedness becomes salvation’s immanent proof.<sup>108</sup>
- (2) X, as self-negation’s sovereign, inverts possibility into impossibility via radical abstention – rejecting redemption to preserve the Absolute Other’s integrity. Her non-action as supreme action sustains relatedness through refusal’s purity: in denying the Absolute’s existence, she voids salvation’s necessity while paradoxically affirming its shadow.

Their existential extremisms converge in pure affirmation: Y’s hyper-kenosis (emptying into possibility) and X’s hyper-stasis (petrifying into impossibility) each crystallize transcendence through demonic fidelity – not despite, but through their ontological contradictions.

M occupies the liminal space of impure negativity as the imperfectly negated. His suffering oscillates in intensity precisely through this impurity – a vacillation that spawns infinite repetition. Unlike repentance, for M, the only

<sup>103</sup>  
Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>104</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>  
Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>106</sup>  
Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>107</sup>  
Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>108</sup>  
Ibid., p. 46.

Absolute other is fragile and demands salvation or redemption from him. Yet, precisely because of his constitutive sin, he cannot provide this salvation. The impossibility of absolution becomes the very condition sustaining his demonic oscillation.

The designation of X/Y as demonic transcendences enshrines them as completed forms within universal systems – a systematization erasing their ineffable suffering. Living as X/Y precludes tragic heroism,<sup>109</sup> barring anticipation of redemption's necessity. Their transcendence alienates them from its achievement: Y eternally loses Isaac (physically alive yet irrevocably severed by the drawn knife);<sup>110</sup> X descends into death's domain.<sup>111</sup> As absolute outsiders to discursive continuity – their suffering obliterated in heroic narratives – they die demonic deaths, their unspeakable suffering the invisible mortar binding transcendence's edifice.

In their existential motion, X/Y remain oblivious to their ontological status – their nominal completion perpetually deferred as transcendence obscures ineffable anguish. Enmeshed in the “S–X/Y–M” matrix, they're doubly bound: constrained by S's formal negation while infected with M's despair. The salvific potentialities latent in X/Y's paths inevitably spawn pathological derivatives – X' evading death-bound commitments, Y' chasing unmaterIALIZED miracles. This architectonic enables parsing all four modes through dual axes: Axis I (A/B) mapping immediacy/mediation, Axis II (a/b) charting possibility/necessity.

### *Axis I: Immediacy/Mediation*

The structural division (S–X)/(Y–M) dichotomizes demonic self-actualization by dependence on mediating otherness.

In S–X, S's pursuit of self-completion through immediacy's tyranny entombs it in existential isolation – negating mediation's demand for otherness through infinite self-assertion (“I am I”) that implodes into non-being. X, though oriented toward the Other, remains bound to immediacy's paradox: the obsessive pursuit of unattainable love collapses each instant into X' (spectral becoming) – a suffering where “I am only my striving” annihilates concrete being. The chasm between S and X lies in S's categorical erasure of otherness versus X's self-annihilating mediation. Both share existential urgency, but S's torment stems from essence's unbearable relativity – agony erupts precisely because essence resists absolutization. S's immediacy feigns essence-origination, yet the closer it grasps essence, the more mediations multiply: a self-devouring immediacy where denial of otherness becomes its own mediated prison. X conversely posits essence in the Other, inhabiting infinite approximation through becoming-toward-Other. But by fetishizing mediation (the loving act itself), X risks regressing into S's pathology – the demonic inversion where mediation masquerades as immediacy, trapping both in the loop of self-negated essence.

In the Y–M, both confront essence-alienation through an insurmountable Other. Y seeks sublation into immediacy with the Absolute to reclaim essence, yet remains condemned to mediation's theatre – achieving only asymptotic proximity through infinite striving. M, paralyzed by self-negation's hesitation, sinks into doubled estrangement: craving salvation yet distrusting the Other, it becomes ensnared in immediacy's false promise. While sharing X's externalized essence-orientation, Y/M's movement through mediation

risks annihilation-in-otherness – their divergence crystallized in action/inaction's dialectic. Crucially,  $Y'$  (pre-transcendent state) depends on belief in the Absolute for qualitative transformation. Absent this faith,  $Y'$  collapses into  $M$ 's kinetic entrapment – perpetual vacillation between desire/distrust, mirroring  $S-X$ 's self-devouring loops.

Axis I dichotomy delineates the demonic subject's conditional access to self-essence – synonymous with negotiating sin's redemption through temporal existence. The immediacy-realm (as the sudden) negates temporal progression, whether externally or immanently: demonic subjects  $S/X$  (consciously or not) attempt to violently seize eternity through abrupt self-completion, paradoxically exposing temporality's finitude. Conversely, the mediacy-realm (as a moment) operates through acknowledged temporality:  $Y/M$  recognize their dependence on temporal mediation via otherness to approach eternity. Regardless of volition, they must enact – or be compelled to simulate – this sublation through perpetual motion, their existential truth crystallized in this coerced performance of becoming.

Introducing Lacanian desire theory's framework<sup>112</sup> ( $A$  = big Other,  $a$  = constitutive lack,  $a'$  = pseudo- $a$ ) unveils immediacy/mediation's structural logic.  $S/X$  both bypass  $A$  to forge direct relations with  $a$ , yet diverge radically:  $S$  enacts  $a$  as  $S=A(S)$  (aspiring to be dissolved into the exclusive Other) with  $a'$  collapsing into  $S=S(A)$  (annihilating otherness).  $X$  pursues  $a$  via  $A|X \rightarrow a$  (guarding the Other), yet degenerates into  $a'$  as  $A|\leftarrow X(a)$  (self-essentializing through negated otherness). This symbolic calculus proves immediacy's fatal allure: feigning unmediated essence-access only deepens mediation's grip. The mediated trajectories of  $Y/M$  to  $a$  necessitate traversing  $A$ . For  $Y$ ,  $a$  operates as  $Y(a) \rightarrow A(a)$  (self-sacrifice preserving the Other), while its  $a'$  crystallizes in  $Y(a) \rightarrow A(Y)$  (becoming-self through sacrificing otherness within  $A$ ).  $M$  enacts a deeper paradox: its  $a$  as  $M \rightarrow A/a$  (self-constitution via otherness) collapses into  $a'$  as  $M \leftrightarrow M|A/a$  (self-dissolution amidst mediated otherness). Thus, Axis I's immediacy/mediation dichotomy materializes Lacan's objet  $a$  dialectic: the ceaseless oscillation between lack ( $a$ ) and its impossible fulfillment ( $a'$ ) through  $A$ 's symbolic mediation.

### *Axis II: Possibility/Necessity*

Axis II emerges as the dialectical complement to Axis I, exposing how the Other manifests as either possibility or necessity for the demonic subject – a determination bifurcating existential postures into despair/hope. This reconfigures the  $S-X/Y-M$  structure into  $S/Y-X|M$ .

In the  $S/Y$ , essence's localization in the Other converts possibility (the miraculous) into necessity. For  $S$ , this renders being inauthentic – a contingent possibility awaiting foundation – breeding hatred toward possibility itself and the Other.  $Y$  conversely embraces possibility, sacrificing its contingent self (as sinner) to actualize necessity through fidelity to the Other. Yet when action

109  
Ibid., p. 57.

110  
Ibid., p. 14.

111  
S. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, p. 164.

112  
Lionel Bailly, *Lacan. A Beginner's Guide*, Oneworld Publications, London 2012, p. 78. Cf. Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness. A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 118.

stalls, Y degenerates into Y' – fetishizing fidelity as necessity, perpetually suspending transcendence.

For X|M, the Other manifests as necessity's domain. X seeks to transcend this necessity by preserving particular others as possibilities through self-sacrifice – a clash between privatized necessity (freedom) and systemic totality. To X, the Other's necessity threatens to reduce it to contingency, demanding existential exemption: a world permitting radical alterity where X' emerges as accidental being's ontological pathway. M, shackled by mediation, endures necessity's interrogation through hereditary sin and the Other's redemption demands, severed from its essence. Thus M confronts salvation/punishment as coexistent external necessities, its hesitation crystallizing as despair toward contingent innocence and necessary guilt.

Axis II exposes the demonic's fractured pursuit of necessity – the essence-as-Other (absolute certainty of essence within otherness). As temporal cross-section to Axis I, this axis interrogates the demonic's existential relation to Otherness (totality of beings/primordial Good). For S/Y, otherness materializes as possibility's mirror: S rejects the Other's provocation, while Y's yearning corrupts into Y' through self-preservation's prioritization over alterity. Conversely, for X|M, otherness crystallizes as necessity – irrelevant to X yet vital to M. X's irrelevance to necessity paradoxically becomes necessity itself, luring it into X's pathological exemption. Thus, Axis II stages the agon between self/Other over essence-as-Other – a negotiation whose divergent resolutions fracture existential topography per Figure 2's cartography.

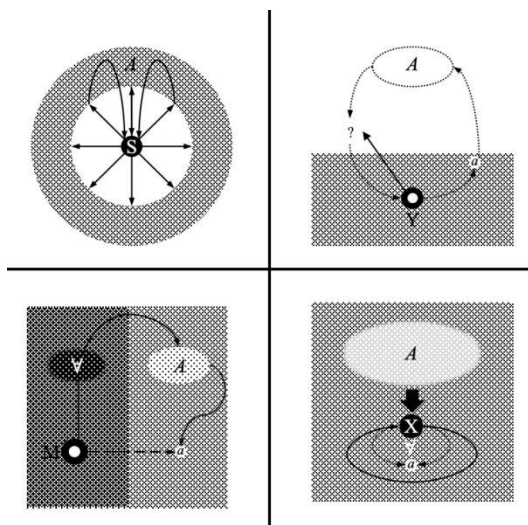


Figure 2. Four existential topographies.

Let *A* signify the Absolute Other (essence-as-Other). S/Y constitute diametrically opposed attempts to posit themselves as *A* or within *A*: the former through solipsistic self-deification, the latter via sacrificial absorption into *A*'s economy. X|M analogously yet divergently seek to determine contingent being – X through circumventing *A*'s demands, M by instrumentalizing *A* as guilt-redemption apparatus. Thus, Axis II fundamentally engages Lacan's symbolic castration:<sup>113</sup> *A*'s imposition of *a* through essence-as-Other, rendering identification *a* paradox of simultaneous alienation/attunement. The pathological inversions of Y/X manifest parallactic betrayals: Y' inverts sacrificial fidelity

into self-deification, reducing redemption to an infinite loop of self-consecration.  $X'$  petrifies redemptive purpose into self-reification, transmuting perseverance into vacuous ritual. Consequently,  $Y'/X'$  – originally approximating  $S$  via distinct Axis I trajectories – reconverge toward  $S$  in Axis II as perpetual contingencies: demanding yet resisting  $A$ 's symbolic foundation.

### *The Dialectics of S and M and its Ineffable Suffering*

The demonic craving for sinful self-preservation propels  $X'/Y'$  toward the  $S$ -locus, entrapping them in  $S$ 's universal antagonism toward otherness and inclosing reserve. True transcendence paradoxically demands  $X'/Y'$ 's infinite kenosis – relinquishing direct self-salvation through radical self-annihilation. Thus, the sacrificed self becomes eternally sequestered within the  $S$ – $M$  chasm: a liminality where transcendence's possibility hinges on  $X/Y$ 's overcoming of their pathological derivatives ( $X'/Y'$ ). The emergent  $X/Y$  is teleologically predicated on  $X'/Y'$ 's death – a courage to become nothing that inverts demonic self-hoarding. Hence, the structural formula  $S$ – $X/Y$ – $M$  is always already  $S$ – $X'/Y'$ – $M$ , constituting the demonic totality as an enclosed “ $S$ ” – a vanishing horizon where no individual authentically survives, only persists as not-yet-dead within sin's ineffability.

Marooned in the  $S$ – $M$  continuum where no living Other persists,  $X'/Y'$  must entrust salvation to self-propelled infinite movement. This perpetual motion formally approximates  $S$  yet sustains existential distance from it – distinguishing them from static  $M$ 's inert separation. The  $S/M$  dichotomy roots in their relation to  $a$ :  $S$  disavows essence-as-Other, while  $M$  acknowledges it. Thus  $X'/Y'$  never govern this distance, being ontologically  $M$ 's kinetic modality – their fruitless striving merely deludes, masking their immutable  $M$ -position. Consequently, the “ $S$ ” collapses into the  $S$ – $M$  axis itself: as  $S$  (living inclosing reserve) vanishes into instantaneity,  $X'/Y'$  as  $M$ -in-motion resisting its  $M$ -ness – becomes  $S$ 's sole manifestation: rupture-as- $S$ . Hence “ $S$ ”= $X'/Y'$ = $S$ ← $M$ , encapsulating the entire structure: all motion originates at  $M$ , plummets toward  $S$ , and formally actualizes “ $S$ ”. This unveils the triadic gradient:

The primal gradient is the  $S$ -point – the immediate locus of “I am I” whose immediacy, conditioned by pre-existing otherness, renders  $S$  incapable of being except as nothingness. In  $S(a)=A(S)$ ,  $S$ 's self-destruction never occurs volitionally: it becomes absolute self-negation through the Other's absolute negation, compulsively self-annihilating through repetition. This process severs  $S$  from  $a$  via immediacy, transmuting it into  $M$ . Thus, all actualized  $S$  is  $M$ , while abstract  $S$  persists as an unreachable/inescapable locus for its actualizations ( $M$  and variants) – a negative infinity designated  $-\infty$ .<sup>114</sup>

The lucidity of self-conscious despair determines whether  $S$  actualizes as  $S=S$  (immediate self-identity) or  $S=S$ ← $M$ . The former,  $S=\forall$  (universal fulfillment qua  $-\infty$ ), transcends into an alien ontological domain, dissolving  $S$  as such. Lacan identifies this Other-evading (“the foreclosure of the

113

Ibid., p. 154.

114

In Lacanian terms,  $-\infty$  signifies an infinitely proliferating “mere hole” – a void born fromthe lack of the Name-of-the-Father, recursively fissuring the symbolic order through metonymic slippage. – Jacques Lacan, *Écrits. A selection*, transl. Alan Sheridan, Routledge, London 2001, p. 153.

Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other”) S as psychosis<sup>115</sup> – A’s absolute absence in S nullifying S itself.<sup>116</sup> Hence, all concrete S remains M, whose perpetual collapse into  $-\infty$  becomes its existential hallmark:

$$S = \begin{matrix} M \\ -\infty(\forall) \end{matrix} \downarrow$$

When S posits M as its rebound through self-representation ( $S=S\leftarrow M$ ), authentic access to  $\forall$  becomes ontologically barred – S’s self-constitution hinges on  $\forall$ ’s exclusion. Thus, complete psychosis cannot empirically exist: its absolute form would simultaneously be self-consciousness, differentiation, and psychosis’s immediate negation.<sup>117</sup>  $\forall$  persists as the maddening locus where the subject’s pathological kernel infinitely approaches  $-\infty$  yet never arrives – each pseudo-attainment catapults S back to M, reigniting the compulsive repetition of its infinite fall. Here,  $S\leftarrow M$  becomes the ontological Moebius strip: the very act of fleeing M actualizes it, while the desire to grasp  $\forall$  annihilates its possibility:

$$\downarrow \frac{S (a = A)}{\forall} \xleftrightarrow{S \equiv \forall} \frac{\forall = A}{S} \uparrow$$

Hence  $\forall$  constitutes abyssal freedom – the Absolute Other (*A*) dialectically inverted through S/M mediation into ipseity’s form. This self-appropriated absolute erodes the *a/A* distinction by annulling ipseity itself, becoming the immanent field where such cancellation coextends possibility/necessity.  $\forall$  thus emerges as the penultimate moment preceding *A*’s manifestation. Yet since *A*’s advent initiates temporality,  $\forall$ ’s atemporal instant collapses into *A*’s arrival as the sudden – a reversed possibility refracting through S/*A*’s catastrophic intersection. Consequently, S’s totality as “S” remains perpetually circumscribed by *A*: the subject’s fall toward  $\forall$  is primordially a fall into first sin – the infinite chasm where freedom’s abyss mirrors sin’s necessity:<sup>118, 119</sup>

$$\forall | S \text{—} M | A$$

Thus even psychotic delirium presupposes *A* – its derangement being *A*’s specular inversion. All ineffability remains speakable, for S, never transcending *A*, speaks only *A*’s language. Yet articulating  $\forall$  – *A*’s inverted counterpart – remains impossible, as  $\forall$  and *A* subsist in mutually annihilating relation. Their juxtaposition becomes sinful.<sup>120</sup> Constrained to hear/speak right discourse – oriented toward *A* yet alien to itself – S abandons speech, existing as suspended presence before discursivity and perpetual liminality before *A*’s abyss.

If S constitutes the infinite abyssal fall of self, M crystallizes as its implosive perimeter. This second-order gradient manifests as M–M – the ceaseless bearing of *A*’s ontological gravity and  $\forall$ ’s seductive pull. M, being S’s perpetual ricochet point, operates as both infinite event-horizon for S’s gravitational collapse and dynamic mediator of its fall. Any arrest in this dynamic forces confronting S-slippage (for “a psychosis is often latent”)<sup>121</sup> – retreat from *A* yet approach toward  $\forall$ . Such S-becoming inevitably rebounds into M’s reconstitution: the tautological M-vortex where S’s gravitational implosion sustains M’s very topology, and M’s persistence reanimates S’s infinite descent.

$$M = \begin{array}{c} \uparrow M \\ S \end{array} \downarrow = \begin{array}{c} \uparrow M \\ -\infty \end{array} \downarrow$$

M's infinite self-recoiling negation paradoxically constitutes its existence as S – the self-annihilation it rejects perpetually regenerates through rejection, engendering despair. This dynamic permits no stasis, only finite articulation as failed speech-act: every utterance captures the pre-collapse moment, while M remains bound to collapsing immediacy through infinite gravitational fall. As the demonic's humanized node, M embodies rationalized despair via cognitive lucidity. Its proximity to universality mimics repentance, yet by approaching-but-not-being repentance, M cannot transcend its event-horizon, reinforcing despair. While all actualized S is M, critical differentiation persists: the former accelerates toward  $-\infty$ , seeking salvation through  $\forall$  only to face eternal exclusion/cyclical return, remaining despairing M; the latter suspends before S's collapse, clutching at A only to grasp its falling self, reconstituting as despairing M through event-horizon recursion. The kinematic modes X'/Y' precisely diagram this S/M dialectic – a gravitational duality where aspiration and annihilation prove isomorphic through event-horizon tautology.

### *The Dialectics of X'/X' and Y'/Y' and its Unspeakable Suffering*

The third-order gradient X'/Y', while ontologically bound to the S←M continuum, differentiates itself through kinetic ephemerality – despair's temporary suspension via motion-as-negation. This gradient materializes the S←M system's transient amnesia of futile praxis during eternal recurrence, crystallized as:

$$X'/Y' = \begin{array}{c} M \leftrightarrow M \\ \uparrow S \downarrow \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} M \rightarrow M \\ \uparrow \leftarrow \downarrow \end{array}$$

X'/Y''s infinite recurrence toward M embodies despair's eternal return alongside hope's gravitational persistence: each M-return re-exposes the teleological futility of striving toward  $\forall/A$ , catalyzing renewed motion. S/M, as X'/Y''s radicalized self-consciousness, discovers its eternal M-confinement through confronting  $\forall/A$  – transcendence's impossibility. Yet M's inherent despair/hope oscillation compels X'/Y' to ontologically decide its valence – despair (X-ward) or hope (Y-ward) – activating authentic action through this

115

Ibid., p. 164.

116

L. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p. 108.

117

L. Bailly, *Lacan*, pp. 57–58.

$\forall$  manifests as Eden – the domain of self-identity, pure presence within A preceding its manifestation. The first | marks sin's asymptotic limit (first sin as existence itself). The second | configures the universal through sin-redemption, whose infinite regress becomes redemption's asymptotic limit – thus eternally

sustaining yet ultimately voiding the essentialization process.

118

This is why delusions of omnipotence or persecution are features of psychosis. Cf. L. Bailly, *Lacan*, p. 55.

119

The pity emanating from the A thus constitutes the pivotal torsion enabling discursive accessibility.

120

L. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p. 109.

existential bifurcation. Thus S/M becomes the necessary precursor to X/Y's actualization via event-horizon dialectics:  $X/Y = X'/Y' \rightarrow S/M$ .

The essential paradox of X'/Y' lies in their infinite motion-as-evasion that ontologically collapses into S/M. For X', the desire to retreat into  $\nabla$  is self-subverted through evasion's own logic – perpetually hovering at M under the illusion of  $\nabla$ 's imminence. This rebellious withdrawal paradoxically anticipates A to dissolve the ontological barrier, reframing  $\nabla$ -failure as A's obstructive intervention, which the rebellious performance targets. Crucially, the barrier's authenticity inversely validates  $\nabla$ 's salvific potential: the purer  $\nabla$ 's allure, the more concretized A's barrier becomes for X', intensifying rebellion into a self-sustaining praxis. In this existential loop, X' cyclically self-constitutes/dissolves through the  $\nabla$ -A fissure. As M perpetually recurs to itself, it feigns stability at dissolution's brink while occluding collapse's inevitability. Thus, X''s rebellion crystallizes as performative recursion: a self-devouring motion where collapse is both imminent and eternally deferred, rendering M's feigned stability the demonic's tragic pantomime. Thus we observe:

$$X' = \frac{A}{\frac{M \rightarrow X'}{\nabla}} = \frac{A}{\sim \nabla}$$

The intensification of A's potency compresses the S-resembling “ $\sim$ ” within the  $\nabla$ -A dyad, amplifying its gravitational pull. As compression escalates, X' as “ $\sim$ ” paradoxically diminishes in despair, propelling itself toward A through enraged rebellion – a Lacanian hysteric neurosis where symptomatic efficacy hinges on X''s delusion of being X to “preserve his place as a subject”.<sup>122</sup> This hinges on A's compressive force: a weakened A renders “ $\sim$ ” tenuous, exacerbating existential despair.<sup>123</sup> X''s suffering remains unspeakable yet ontologically distinct from X's silence: X self-erases within A to preserve the Other, while X' sustains an interstitial existence by displacing muteness into “the locus of lack (of Other) to disavow it”.<sup>124</sup> This inversion – where desire-driven action becomes its own telos – manifests Lacanian “perversion”: in Kierkegaardian terms, it constitutes the evasion of sin's redemption through becoming-sin – X''s negative clinging to A at M under the guise of self-salvation, while his authentic will remains fixed on evading sin's gravity.<sup>125</sup> Yet X''s metamorphosis into X demands penetration by S, necessitating confrontation with M's existential suspension. This requires enduring the fall's actuality: X''s disappearance teleologically delivers the Other into A's domain.

For Y', the compulsion toward A for self-redemption is sabotaged by fear of rejection – endlessly proffering pseudo-self-essence at M-point to simulate proximity to A. This ritualized oscillation evades M's existential crucible (despair/hope collision), rooted in A-acceptance's ontological insecurity. Through ceaseless counterfeit being-proffer, Y' sustains A's symbolic persistence while avoiding true sacrifice. Each proffer constructs phantom A-bridges, deluding M-point transcendence. The ritual becomes a sacrament of innocence: pseudo-self-essence's sacrifice sanctified as authentic – displaced into “S” via A's imagined trials. Sacrificial proffer ritualistically preserves imagined sinlessness, transmuting non-culpability into A-connection proof. As A-distance grows, Y' frenetically intensifies offerings; repetition morphs into A's simulated immanence – absolutized presence conjured via ritual. Thus Y' becomes A's specular double ( $\nabla$ ) at M-point: ceaseless proffer

mirrors the Other's phantom, achieving existential substitution – stabilizing at collapse-edge via alien essence's usurpation. Hence we observe:

$$Y' = A / \frac{Y'}{\nabla} = A / \frac{\sim}{\nabla}$$

Contrary to X', the S-resembling “~” dissipates proportionally to A's withdrawal from Y'. Through sacrificial repetition, Y' is annihilated into “~”, while the ritual's alterity masquerades as A's immanence to evade the ∇: “he is frantically active in order to prevent the real thing from happening”<sup>126</sup>. Paradoxically, A's actual proximity thrusts Y' into S-being, forcing existential despair's confrontation – this structure epitomizes Lacanian obsessional neurosis,<sup>127</sup> symptomatically effective through Y''s delusion of being Y, yet structurally reliant on A's absence. Y''s true despair arises when A's imminent gaze pierces ritual performance,<sup>128</sup> exposing the pseudo-essence manufacturing process. Hence Y''s unspeakability rejects veiling this artifice, knowing exposure would unveil sin's core. This muteness diverges ontologically from Y's silence: Y atones via self-expenditure to deliver the Other, while Y'' fortifies against A's immanent presence through performative occlusion. Here, perversion resurges: generating redeemable sin to evade sin's redemption – Y''s ritualized sin-production sustains the illusion of guilt's manageability, while ontological sin (the S-abys) remains eternally disavowed.

## Conclusion

The S–X'/Y'–M framework structurally mirrors Lacanian psychopathology: S's completion manifests as psychosis – intermittent yet operant as the demonic's gravitational core, eternally oriented toward ∇; X'/Y' embody neurotic modalities (hysteric/obsessional) – their unexamined self-salvation vector divergence sustains the demonic circuit: evasion rituals paradoxically anchor them within “S” while bypassing M internally; M – the demonic subject's perpetual slippage-point – configures X'/Y''s perverse motion (infinite regress), where all efforts to avoid S-plummeting perpetuate M-suspension: X'/Y' = S ↔ M.

This isomorphism reveals the demonic's ontological recursion: psychosis's gravitational pull (S/“S” → ∇) generates neurosis's evasive praxis (X'/Y'), which in turn stabilizes M's liminal topology. M thus becomes the vanishing mediator – simultaneously sustaining and negating the system through

121

Ibid., p. 155.

122

Astrid Gessert, “Hysteria and obsession”, in: Astrid Gessert (ed.), *Introductory Lectures On Lacan*, Karnac, London 2014, pp. 55–68, p. 63.

123

Ibid., p. 59.

124

In a sense, the complete form of perversion is repentance: deferring redemption to the Other to evade sin's abyss. As Žižek notes in *How*to Read Lacan, “Perversion, at its most fundamental, [...] act directly as the instrument of the big Other's will.” – Slavoj Žižek, *How to read Lacan*, Granta Books, London 2011, p. 63.

125

Ibid., p. 17.

126

A. Gessert, “Hysteria and obsession”, p. 61.

127

Ibid., p. 62.

its infinite slippage. True transcendence demands the decisive plunge into S, i.e.  $X/Y = S \leftarrow M \leftarrow M$ . Redemption arises only through radical sin-acceptance – falling into S's bedrock of first sin. This enacts the  $\forall[S-M]A$  dialectic: redemptive  $\forall$  (or  $A$  proper) emerges solely by grounding existence in the “|” (the existential pivot where S's abyss intersects M's mediation). Transcendence irrevocably transfigures A and the subject: X/Y returns neither to the same world nor as the same self, for A itself is re-synthesized through S's immanent negation – A's absoluteness now dialectically incorporates S's annihilative weight.

The Lacanian isomorphism here does not reduce the framework to Kierkegaardian reiteration. While taxonomically explicable through Lacan, its significance lies in the demonic structure's internal dialectical transmutations – marking a difference from Lacan to explain the psychopathic suffering's ineffability through a Kierkegaardian lens: the existential ineffable rooted in sin's temporal actuality and the subject's irreducibly singular confrontation with despair's gravitational abyss: S–M Axis. The demonic's gravitational descent through despair's abyss; X'/Y' Axis. Its perverse collapse via counterfeit hope's recursive torsion. Their intersection generates “S” as the demonic totality's infinite interior motion – the very machinery sustaining psychopathology's inexpressible agony. Ineffability (whether S/M's precluded unspeakability or X'/Y's unspeakability) paradoxically preserves the demonic's final hope: X'/Y's positional anchoring allows  $\forall$ 's spectral persistence as redemption's disavowed horizon. Thus, the demonic's “salvation” lies not in transcendence but in the endurance of its own impossibility – where S's gravitational vortex and X'/Y's perverse recursion dialectically negate any static ontology, rendering despair the very condition for hope's spectral flicker.

Yu-hui Yan

### Demonско i njegovi modusi u Kierkegaarda

#### S raspravom o neizrecivoj patnji u mentalnim poremećajima

##### **Sažetak**

*Kierkegaardova teorija demonskog nudi kritički okvir za analizu neizrecive patnje u mentalnim poremećajima. Demonско se očituje kao tjeskoba pred Dobrim, gdje se vremenska totalnost percipira kao izvor patnje kroz spiralu grijeha i iskupljenja. Taj proces nehotice isključuje patnike iz univerzalnog diskursa usmjeravanjem na grijeh uz istodobno odbijanje iskupljenja. Naše istraživanje otkriva dva voljna paradoksa koja proizvode četiri arhetipa: Sotonino apsolutno prkošenje, Abrahamovu žrtvenu suspenziju, Antigoninu tihu odanost i Mermanovu egzistencijalnu dvosmislenost. Analizom njihovih dijalektika neposrednosti/posrednosti i mogućnosti/nužnosti pokazujemo kako obrasci neuspjele transcendencije Abrahama i Antigone oblikuju bitni pokret demonskog. Njihovo paradoksalno izbjegavanje Mermanova modusa očaja naposljetku potiče sotonističku aktualizaciju – beskonačno neprijateljstvo s univerzalnošću ostvareno kroz neizrecivu psihoanalitičku perversiju. Taj vječni pokret održava patnju paradoksalnim izbjegavanjem njezina prividnog dovršenja.*

##### **Ključne riječi**

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, grijeh – iskupljenje, demonско, neizrecivost, mentalni poremećaj, patnja

Yu-hui Yan

## Das Dämonische und seine Modi bei Kierkegaard

### Mit einer Erörterung über das unaussprechliche Leiden bei psychischen Störungen

#### **Zusammenfassung**

*Kierkegaards Theorie des Dämonischen bietet einen kritischen Bezugsrahmen zur Analyse des unaussprechlichen Leidens bei psychischen Störungen. Das Dämonische offenbart sich als Angst vor dem Guten, wobei die zeitliche Totalität durch eine Sünde-Erlösung-Spirale als Ursprung des Leidens erfahren wird. Dieser Prozess schließt die Leidenden unwillentlich vom universellen Diskurs aus, indem er die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Sünde fixiert und die Erlösung verweigert. Unsere Untersuchung legt zwei willensbezogene Paradoxien offen, aus denen vier Archetypen hervorgehen: Satans absolute Auflehnung, Abrahams Opfer-Suspension, Antigones schweigende Hingabe und die existenzielle Zweideutigkeit des Meermannes. Durch die Analyse ihrer Dialektik von Unmittelbarkeit/Mittelbarkeit sowie Möglichkeit/Notwendigkeit zeigen wir, wie die gescheiterten Transzendenzmuster von Abraham und Antigone die wesentliche Bewegung des Dämonischen bilden. Deren paradoxe Umgehung der Verzweiflung im Meermann-Modus treibt letztlich die satanische Aktualisierung voran – einen endlosen Widerstreit mit dem Universellen, vollzogen in unaussprechlicher psychoanalytischer Verkehrtheit. Diese unablässige Bewegung erhält das Leiden aufrecht, indem sie sich dessen scheinbarer Vollendung paradoxerweise entzieht.*

#### **Schlüsselwörter**

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, Sünde-Erlösung, Dämonisches, Unaussprechlichkeit, psychische Störungen, Leiden

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## Le démonique et ses modes chez Kierkegaard

### Avec une discussion sur la souffrance ineffable dans les troubles mentaux

#### **Résumé**

*La théorie du démonique chez Kierkegaard offre un cadre critique pour analyser la souffrance ineffable dans les troubles mentaux. Le démonique se manifeste comme une angoisse face au Bien, où la totalité temporelle est perçue comme la source de la souffrance à travers une spirale péché-rédemption. Ce processus exclut involontairement les souffrants du discours universel en fixant leur attention sur le péché tout en résistant à la rédemption. Notre analyse révèle deux paradoxes volitionnels donnant naissance à quatre archétypes : la défiance absolue de Satan, la suspension sacrificielle d'Abraham, la dévotion silencieuse d'Antigone et l'ambiguïté existentielle du Triton. En examinant leurs dialectiques immédiat/medié et possible/nécessaire, nous montrons comment les schémas de transcendance échouée d'Abraham et d'Antigone constituent le mouvement essentiel du démonique. Leur évitement paradoxal du désespoir à la manière du Triton propulse finalement la réalisation satanique – un antagonisme sans fin avec l'universel, accompli par une perversion psychanalytique ineffable. Ce mouvement perpétuel entretient la souffrance en évitant paradoxalement son aboutissement apparent.*

#### **Mots-clés**

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, péché-rédemption, démonique, ineffabilité, troubles mentaux, souffrance