CONTINGENCY, NECESSITY, AND CAUSATION IN KIERKEGAARD’S THEORY OF CHANGE

Shannon Nason

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the mysteries shrouding Kierkegaard’s theory of change is the question of its philosophical breadth. The small list of secondary writings on Kierkegaard’s philosophy of change correctly emphasizes its existentialist value for explaining the free and qualitative transition of the coming into existence of the self.¹ One may ask, however, to what extent Kierkegaard’s theory extends beyond this to considerations of pressing concern in metaphysics. Metaphysical questions of motion and change are legion, and textual evidence indicates he asked about them on some level.² Kierkegaard wrote, both pseudonymously and not, on broad questions about the world’s coming to be, its continued existence, and its natural changes, and on more specific problems in our metaphysical dealings with these questions—namely, whether the world’s coming into existence was necessary or contingent, and whether events in the world are

¹ Claire Carlisle’s Kierkegaard’s Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005) is a recent study of Kierkegaard’s category of motion. Carlisle maneuvers through Kierkegaard’s 1843 texts and picks out the significance of the nature of the movement of existential inwardness for his pseudonymous writings. She limits her investigation to clarifying the self’s journey through the dialectical levels of inwardness and so does not focus on Kierkegaard’s broader metaphysical commitments about movement. Indeed, Carlisle states that Kierkegaard’s shift from the cosmos to the inner sphere of religious becoming denotes a significant movement away from the Greek (and Medieval, and early-Modern) program of coming to terms with the nature of motion and change (9). I concede Carlisle’s point to an extent, but I believe that her strict focus on the 1843 pseudonymous texts, which all belong to what Kierkegaard in his Journals and Papers, translated by Howard and Edna Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) 6461 (Henceforth JP) calls the aesthetic or ‘lower’ authorship, is too limited. Attention to the writings of his dialectical or ‘middle’ texts as well as his religious or ‘second’ authorship reveals a far more complex picture of the role of change and motion in his thought.

² Kierkegaard is not known for having produced a metaphysic, but this does not entail that he didn’t have one, nor does it entail that his theories of rhetoric, morality, and religion don’t require the coherence that a metaphysic might provide. More, that Kierkegaard held quite specific Christian beliefs is evidence alone that he must have held quite specific, although perhaps not clearly articulated, metaphysical beliefs. As C. Stephen Evans argues, if Kierkegaard is doing or has a metaphysics of any kind, it is one that attempts to find some kind of holistic understanding of ourselves in relation to the beliefs we hold about the world and God (See his Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006) 49). This holistic understanding should be distinguished from the claims of completeness and finality that his German Idealist foes sought. If Kierkegaard is doing metaphysics at all, he is not aiming at completeness but, rather, at the coherency and systematic implications of belief.
free or necessary.³ Kierkegaard did not develop detailed individual answers to these questions. However, when one considers his fragments on these issues together with his more developed existential critique of Hegelianism, a metaphysical picture slowly emerges.

Kierkegaard’s philosophy of change expands beyond the existential-religious project that defines his authorship. In a journal entry from 1842 or 1843, he writes that ‘[t]he category to which I intend to trace everything…is motion (kinēsis), which is perhaps one of the most difficult problems in philosophy.’⁴ A year later, he claimed in his Philosophical Fragments that kinēsis is a ‘change of coming into existence.’⁵ Kierkegaard defines a change of coming into existence as a ‘transition [Overgangen] from possibility to actuality.’⁶ Quite in line with the Aristotelian tradition, he elaborates that ‘such a being that nevertheless is a non-being is possibility, and a being that is indeed being is actual being or actuality.’⁷ Kierkegaard’s definition of kinēsis is predominately placed in the ‘Interlude’ of Philosophical Fragments.⁸ Topics in the ‘Interlude’ range from de re modality⁹ to some logical and metaphysical problems associated with the necessity of the past and the contingency of the future along with issues of causal necessity and the outcomes of events in the natural world.

While Philosophical Fragments takes up the problem of historical knowledge and its relation to religious self-transformation, it is curious that Kierkegaard packages his definition

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³ This, of course, is not an exhaustive list of the metaphysical questions Kierkegaard posed.
⁴ JP, 5601.
⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 73. Henceforth PF.
⁶ PF, 74.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ For the sake of flow, I will refer to Kierkegaard as the author of Philosophical Fragments. This has its interpretive dangers; however, unlike some claims that his pseudonym Johannes Climacus makes, I believe that the conclusion I draw from my treatment of the ‘Interlude’ is one Kierkegaard himself endorses in his signed authorship. This is because the author offers a theory of human and divine freedom in line with a broadly Christian metaphysic.
⁹ Kierkegaard is an essentialist in the ‘Interlude.’ His discussion of possibility and necessity does not carry merely de dicto significance. I agree with C. Stephen Evans (in opposition to H. A. Nielsen) that Kierkegaard is providing an account of the possibility and necessity of things and not merely about our statements about things. For Evans’ discussion, see his Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992) 121-123. Henceforth Passionate Reason.
and subsequent discussion of *kinēsis* in terms that go beyond this religious-existential theme, and compares the change of coming into existence of and in the natural world with the decisive coming into existence of future-aiming human projects. Kierkegaard writes,

> Everything that has come into existence is *eo ipso* historical…But the historical is the past (for the present on the border with the future has not as yet become historical); how, then can nature, although immediately present, be said to be historical?…Nature’s imperfection is that it does not have a history in another sense, and its perfection is that it nevertheless has an intimation of it (namely, that it has come into existence, which is in the past; that it exists, which is in the present)…Yet coming into existence can contain within itself a redoubling [*Fordobling*], that is, a possibility of a coming into existence within its own coming into existence. Here, in the stricter sense, is the historical…The coming into existence that is here shared with the coming into existence of nature is a possibility, a possibility that for nature is its whole actuality.¹⁰

For Kierkegaard, human beings, like the natural world, have come into existence; we have undergone a transition from possibility to actuality, from not existing to existing. By having come into existence, we become historical. Our coming into existence points to our having a past, a past that cannot be taken back. What distinguishes us from the natural world, however, is that we are capable of deliberating about possible ways of existing; we are able to self-consciously actualize possibilities that have historical and personal significance. Our initial coming into existence contains additional possibilities for existing. So, unlike the natural world, our initial coming into existence does not confine us to a natural necessity. Our future is not determined by our physical constitution or the laws of nature that govern it. So, as Kierkegaard presses upon us, unlike the natural world, our first coming into existence is not our only possibility.

On the whole, however, Kierkegaard defines the change of coming into existence of nature in the same way he defines the change of coming into existence of decisive human possibilities (even though, as we’ve seen, these turn out to be qualitatively different sorts of

¹⁰ *PF*, 76.
changes for Kierkegaard). So, for Kierkegaard’s Kierkegaard, any and every change of coming into existence is a transition from X existing as a possibility to X existing actually.

A curious thing about the universality of this definition of motion is Kierkegaard’s claim that every change of coming into existence refers back to a free cause of some divine or human sort. As he states, historical events, especially momentous decisions that impact one’s selfhood, come ‘into existence by way of a relatively freely acting cause.’ And the unique series of human events, as a member of the series of all events (including natural ones) taken together, ‘definitively points to an absolutely freely acting cause.’ Likewise, Kierkegaard claims that all changes of coming into existence ‘occur in freedom, not by way of necessity.’ Elsewhere he remarks, ‘The past has indeed come into existence; coming into existence is the change, in freedom, of becoming actuality.’ While we should not be surprised that Kierkegaard, the great defender of existential self-transformation, thinks the change of coming into existence of the self is free in some way, we should wonder about his saying the same about physical change. Just what kind of freedom and necessity is Kierkegaard referring to and how do they fare in relation to each other?

My argument in this paper is that when Kierkegaard says all instances of kinēsis ‘occur in freedom, not by way of necessity’ he is pointing to the contingent nature of change and its exclusion of absolute necessity. I show that Kierkegaard’s main target is absolute necessitarianism, the view that everything is absolutely necessary. Moreover, I argue that his remarks about the relationship between freedom and necessity leave open the possibility that he was a compatibilist, not about freedom and absolute necessity, but about freedom and some other kind of necessity.

11 PF, 75-76.
12 Ibid.
13 PF, 77.
In what follows, I first analyze the notion of absolute necessity that Kierkegaard juxtaposes with the change of coming into existence. Second, I consider the Hegelian backdrop to Kierkegaard’s ‘Interlude.’ I focus on Kierkegaard’s distinction between a cause and a ground of existence, and show that Hegel’s favor for the latter points to an absolute necessitarianism. Third, I argue that Kierkegaard’s notion of free causality is ambiguous. I attempt to provide a coherent interpretation of his view of causality that is consistent with both human choice and physical change. I conclude by suggesting a certain compatibilist interpretation of Kierkegaard’s philosophy.

2. POSSIBILITY, ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, AND CONTINGENCY IN THE ‘INTERLUDE’

The nature of necessity is indeed complex. Problems analyzing the term abound, due in part to the fact that there are many kinds of necessity. I focus on the absolutely necessary in this section, and later work out how it is distinct from other kinds of necessity. Kierkegaard has a fairly ordinary understanding of absolute necessity. By saying that the change of coming into existence does not happen necessarily, he is highlighting the widely accepted philosophical position (at least among contemporary philosophers) that historical (including natural) events are not absolutely or logically necessary. This doesn’t tell us much about the nature of absolute necessity, though. Why the divide between contingent events and the absolutely necessary?

Unlike other kinds of necessity, the absolutely necessary is exclusive of (but does not by definition obviate) contingency. According to Kierkegaard, the distinctive mark of the absolutely

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14 Of course, much has been written on the nature of necessity. See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) (Henceforth Plantinga) for an insightful elucidation of the term. It may not be far off the mark to say that what Kierkegaard has in mind with the term ‘necessity’ is something like what Plantinga calls ‘broadly logical necessity’ (pp. 1-8). This is because, while absolute necessity includes the rules of first-order logic, and thus modus ponens, it is something much broader than ‘strict logical necessity.’ Yet, it does not involve anything like causal or physical necessity but does include geometrical and mathematical truths, and the existence of God.
necessary is eternal changelessness, and he contrasts the absolutely necessary with the contingency of change, defined as the transition from possibility to actuality. The absolutely necessary does not come into existence.

Kierkegaard’s own remarks about necessity and the contingency of change are instructive: (1) ‘Nothing whatever exists [er til] because it is necessary, but the necessary exists because it is necessary or because the necessary is.’\(^\text{15}\) (2) ‘Coming into existence is a change, but since the necessary is always related to itself and is related to itself in the same way, it cannot be changed at all.’\(^\text{16}\) Finally, (3) ‘Everything that has come into existence is eo ipso historical, for even if no further historical predicate can be applied to it, the crucial predicate of the historical can still be predicated—namely, that it has come into existence.’\(^\text{17}\) The distinction between the change of coming into existence and what is absolutely necessary is marked most forcefully by the wedge between the timelessness of the necessary and the historical character of what comes into existence. So, for Kierkegaard, whatever exists and is timeless is necessary. There was no time in which what is necessary could have failed or not failed to come into existence, since it does not come into existence. It just is.

Despite the strange use of his modal notions, these passages reveal Kierkegaard’s penchant for thinking that something is absolutely necessary if and only if it cannot fail to be actual. More formally, the passages suggest that X is absolutely necessary if and only if X’s being actual is X’s only possibility. It follows from this that whatever is absolutely necessary could not have come into existence, because the only possible state of affairs for something that is absolutely necessary is an actual state of affairs.

\(^{15}\) PF, 75.
\(^{16}\) PF, 74.
\(^{17}\) PF, 75.
However, at this juncture Kierkegaard’s view appears to waver. He says that ‘[t]he actual is no more necessary than the possible, for the necessary is absolutely different from both.’ Here Kierkegaard sharply divides the necessary from both the possible and the actual. One can’t help but ask: If what is necessary isn’t possible or actual, then what is it? Has Kierkegaard contradicted himself, saying both that the necessary is and that the necessary is neither possible nor actual? If what is necessary is not possible, then it is impossible; if it is impossible then it is neither necessary nor could it exist; if it is not actual, then even if it were possible, it would not exist. But Kierkegaard says that the necessary is something that cannot fail to exist. It doesn’t come into existence and it doesn’t go out of existence, it simply is.

We may be able to sidestep these problems with a simple reading of this passage. On closer inspection, we see that Kierkegaard in fact is not stating that the necessary is neither possible nor actual. Rather, he means that the possible and the actual - in the sense in which he has defined them for his purposes of explaining change - are not necessary. That is, if he uses the term ‘possibility’ to mean that which both may be and may fail to be, then he is right that the possible is not necessary, since the necessary is something that cannot fail to be. Furthermore, if by the term ‘actual’ he means that which has come into existence, has a past, and is present, then it too is not necessary, given his definition. This lends insight to Kierkegaard’s remark that ‘[t]he change of coming into existence is actuality.’ For this reason, he continues, ‘[n]o coming into existence is necessary—not before it came into existence, for then it cannot come into existence, and not after it has come into existence, for then it has not come into existence.’ On a first look, this seems to work. The possible and the actual, as such, are not necessary. Indeed, there are

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18 Ibid.
19 This is why Aristotle held that the necessary is possible. As Kierkegaard was aware (see PF, p. 75), Aristotle (in On Interpretation 21b-23; also see PF, 299 fn 13) argued that there are different senses of the possible—that which is not impossible and that which may or may not be actual.
20 PF, 75.
many possibilities that are not absolutely necessary. For example, my sitting at a café writing this is not, on most interpretations, absolutely necessary. Perhaps, then, Kierkegaard is not stating that the necessary is neither possible nor actual. Instead he is just pointing out what logically follows from his manner of employing these notions in his definition of change.

However, while he is right that the possible and the actual are not necessary as such, he then asserts that ‘the possible cannot be predicated of the necessary.’\(^1\) And now the previous problems re-emerge; Kierkegaard has bluntly refused to consider different senses of the possible. He writes that this was precisely Aristotle’s mistake, ‘to begin with the thesis that everything necessary is possible,’ and that ‘he [Aristotle] makes shift of formulating two kinds of the possible instead of discovering’ that the possible cannot be said of the necessary.\(^2\) This is a mistake. But as long as we pay attention to the context of the passage, I believe some reasonable interpretive headway can be made, in spite of the problems surrounding Kierkegaard’s notion of possibility.

First, the Aristotelian doctrine of possibility that Kierkegaard finds problematic is based on the distinction between the impossible and the possible. Something that is impossible is that which cannot be. There are no impossible states of affairs. There are two helpful ways to think of impossibility that are relevant to this discussion. There are (1) absolute impossibilities and (2) natural or physical impossibilities.\(^3\) The absolutely impossible is, quite simply, that which by definition cannot be made actual. For example, my squaring a circle or adding 2 and 2 to make 5 are absolutely impossible. However, natural or physical impossibilities are not absolutely impossible. Thus, natural impossibilities are not by definition impossible. Rather, given some set of antecedent conditions and causes along with the laws of nature, some things are physically

\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^2\) \textit{PF}, 75.
\(^3\) My discussion of the two senses of impossibility is drawn from Plantinga, 10-15.
impossible for us to do. Like cows, I cannot jump over the moon, and, unlike Superman, I cannot run faster than a speeding bullet. Why not call these amazing physical feats absolutely impossible? The simple answer is we can imagine them to be possible, which we can’t do with square circles. The absolutely impossible, then, is a stronger form of impossibility than the naturally impossible. The naturally impossible is so contingently, whereas the absolutely impossible is so by definition.

Unsurprisingly, the opposite of the impossible is the possible. The possible is something that can be. This is the general way Kierkegaard employs the notion of possibility. For something to become actual it must be able to be actual. Let us consider, as Aristotle did, two broad senses of possibility: (1) the contingent and (2) the absolutely necessary. These are two ways of being possible because what is contingent and what is absolutely necessary both can be actual. The contingent is distinguished from the absolutely necessary in that it may fail to be, whereas the absolutely necessary cannot fail to be.

Kierkegaard sharply distinguishes between the contingent and the absolutely necessary, but he does not follow Aristotle by attributing a different sense of possibility to the absolutely necessary. From the Aristotelian point of view, both the contingent and the absolutely necessary are not impossible: things, events, propositions, states of affairs that are one or the other of these can be. Quite simply what is possible is not impossible. But we see, again, the apparent mistake Kierkegaard makes by not allowing the possible to be predicated of the absolutely necessary: since something is either possible or impossible, it follows that the absolutely necessary is impossible.

We might ask Kierkegaard whether he’d be willing to say that the necessary is impossible. At a glance, this seems to be what follows from his remarks. But he simply cannot
mean this and must be employing possibility in a very specific way that excludes absolute
necessity. That is, he must mean that the sub-genus of possibility—the contingent—cannot be
predicated of the absolutely necessary. If we keep in mind his division between the absolutely
necessary and the contingency of change, a coherent picture of what he’s saying about how
necessity and possibility are related appears. Let’s look at what he says.

These passages pinpoint Kierkegaard’s distinction between the absolutely necessary and
the possible and actual as terms that define the nature of change. Recall that change is a
transition from possibility to actuality, ‘from not existing to existing.’ As I’ve mentioned, he
thinks of the possible and actual in a fairly Aristotelian way: ‘[t]he possible is a being that is
nevertheless non-being, and a being that is indeed being is actual being.’ Change is from a state
of non-being to an actual state of being. For example, one kind of change may involve God’s
actualizing an idea, say the idea of a series of natural events. The series of events exists in the
mind of God, but the ideal series’ mode of being is as a non-being. God’s realization of the idea
brings it into actuality.

The definition of change as the transition from possible to actual is further outlined with a
key remark: change ‘is not in essence [Væsen] but in being [Væren].’ The significance of
Kierkegaard’s remark requires some unpacking. It’s important to see that changes are events in
or of existence and not in some realm of essences. Change is from one mode of existence (not
existing) to another mode of existence (existing) of a single thing; not from one kind of thing to a
different kind of thing. Take, for example, the change of some possible series of events that
exists in God’s mind. The change is from a possible series to an actual series. The possible
series, say the one that contains me writing this now at a café has been put into actuality.

24 PF, 73.
25 PF, 74.
26 Ibid.
However, this change from possible series to actual series is the change of the existence of one and the same series in God’s mind. That is, by becoming actual the possible series is not ‘intrinsically changed.’ The content of the idea in God’s mind remains the same through its coming into existence. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be the particular idea in God’s mind, but another idea that comes into existence. In other words, what is possible does not become something absolutely different from itself when it is actualized but rather becomes something relatively different, in that its *mode of existence* is changed. Change, in other words, is the transference of one mode of existence (not-existing) to another mode of existence (actually existing). This is why, then, Kierkegaard argues that change is *of the existence or being* of a thing.

On the other hand, what is Kierkegaard ruling out by saying that the change of coming into existence is not in essence? I believe he is claiming that change does not happen among, in, or between ‘essences’ like redness, horseness, humanness, or triangleness. The essence of red does not become more or less red. A perfect isosceles triangle cannot become a square. Such change would involve a transition *from* one kind to another, from one essence to another. The realm of essences is unchanging. Possibilities whose mode of being is non-being, on the other hand, do change; they can become actual.

In addition, then, to the possible being something that may be or fail to be, the mode of existence of the possible is also ‘non-being’ or ‘not-existing.’ For this reason it seems strange to say that the necessary can be predicated of the possible. How can the absolutely necessary, something that cannot fail to be actual, also be a non-being? This is a self-contradiction. On this reading, Kierkegaard is right: the necessary is not possible. It remains controversial, though, that he refuses to expand the notion of the possible to include what is not impossible, as Aristotle did.

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
This adumbration of absolute necessity limits the kinds of necessity Kierkegaard juxtaposes with the contingent change of coming into existence. What is immediately clear is that the features he ascribes to necessity are not reducible to those shared by physical or natural necessity. The absolutely necessary cannot fail to be, whereas what is possible can be or fail to be. There is, then, a deep rift between absolute necessity and the possible and the actual. However, the same is not the case with natural necessity. Again, one significant difference between absolute necessity and natural necessity is that not only could the laws of nature have been different, the actual series of events governed by those laws could have been different. This is not true of the absolutely necessary. The transition from its being possible to its being actual is impossible. If it were possible, the absolutely necessary wouldn’t be absolutely necessary: a self-contradiction.

Kierkegaard’s argument for the changelessness of absolute necessity further illuminates its relation to essences. He claims that ‘Necessity…pertains to essence and in such a way that the qualification of essence specifically excludes coming into existence.’ In other words, essences don’t come into existence, nor do they change to something different. Kierkegaard doesn’t reveal what these necessary essences are, but his argument for the separation of absolute necessity and the contingent character of change does not require him to. It is enough to highlight the difference between the changelessness of the absolutely necessary and the contingency of change.

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30 *Riddles*, 190.  
31 *PF*, 86.
Kierkegaard has argued for a sharp distinction between contingency and absolute necessity in the ‘Interlude.’ What’s important to see is that the absolutely necessary, while distinct from contingency, does not obviate it. That is, it does not render contingency impossible. So, Kierkegaard is in line with the majority of philosophers by distinguishing between contingency and absolute necessity. Change is contingent and not absolutely necessary, so nothing comes into existence necessarily. Why should we highlight Kierkegaard’s agreement with such an uncontroversial philosophical distinction? The 19th-century philosophical climate was decidedly Hegelian, and Hegel was interpreted by some to have canceled the distinction between contingency and absolute necessity. Kierkegaard was one such interpreter. He could not see how something’s coming into existence could be absolutely necessary. The main protagonist in the ‘Interlude’ then, appears to ascribe absolute necessity to everything. This is absolute necessitarianism, a strong form of determinism. On this view, there is nothing that is not absolutely necessary in the aforementioned logical sense; there is nothing that is actual that could have been otherwise than it is.

This kind of absolute necessitarianism is characterized by Frederick Beiser as an absolute idealist version of panlogicism. Panlogicism is the view that everything (including changes of coming into existence) happens of necessity, according to the governance of reason. As Beiser explains panlogicism, the actual world is absolutely necessary because it follows with necessity from the divine nature. In this way, changes of the coming into existence of nature and of the self are necessary because they could not have been otherwise. The panlogicist does not endorse a weaker determinism where events are necessary on the condition that certain antecedent factors obtain. Rather, much more strongly, historical events are necessary in the sense that their

occurrence could not have been otherwise. The actual series of events that occurs is the only possible series.

I’d like to turn then to Hegel’s absolute necessitarianism.33 While his position is a species of absolute necessity, it is far stronger than broad logical necessity. There are fairly intuitive philosophical views about absolute necessity that do not obviate contingency or free will. Kierkegaard saw absolute necessitarianism as counter-intuitive, philosophically incoherent, and existentially insidious. He believed it disposes of the contingency required for free and responsible action. While I don’t have space here to develop his existentialist worries with necessitarianism, it does happen to be a key concern in his aesthetic and religious writings.34

As we have seen, Kierkegaard argues that coming into existence is the result of some act of freedom. Each change points back to some free cause. So, not only is contingency a necessary condition for change, change must also be freely caused, at least at the origin of a series of events.35 This explains why Kierkegaard asserts that ‘[n]othing coming into existence comes into existence by way of a ground, but everything by way of a cause.’36 Kierkegaard did not regularly illuminate issues with references. He hints, though, that his position is to be juxtaposed with a broadly speculative philosophical account of coming to be.37 This we can see by his somewhat

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33 Calling Hegel an absolute necessitarian is controversial, and defending or critiquing Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Hegel is far beyond the purpose of this paper. There is some convincing evidence that Kierkegaard did not have much first-hand knowledge of Hegel, gaining his understanding from Danish contemporaries, F. A. Trendelenburg, and Schelling. For an excellent, yet controversial, work on Kierkegaard’s familiarity with Hegel and Hegelianism, see Jon Stewart, Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Stewart argues that much of Kierkegaard’s criticism normally thought to be aimed at Hegel is targeted at Copenhagen Hegelians. That said, if Kierkegaard indeed believed Hegel to be an absolute necessitarian, then I think he has interesting philosophical grounds to reject Hegel’s view of necessity.


35 I will explain Kierkegaard’s theory of free causation in more detail later in the paper.

36 PF, 75.

37 This interpretation may ring controversial to some. See, for example, Arnold B. Come, Trendelenburg’s Influence on Kierkegaard’s Modal Categories (Montreal, Canada: Inter Editions, 1991), 53.
confusing distinction between ‘grounds’ and ‘causes’ of coming into existence. While Kierkegaard does not name Hegel as the holder of the view that all coming into existence happens by way of a ground, we can reasonably assume that Hegel is in the background here.\textsuperscript{38} The notion of ‘ground’ can be traced back to the 	extit{Encyclopaedia Logic}, where, in the second subdivision of the logic—’The Doctrine of Essence’—Hegel argues that existence emerges from the ground.\textsuperscript{39} In Hegel’s absolute idealism, ground provides an absolute and sufficient reason for the coming into existence of things. Roughly, for Hegel, everything has a sufficient reason for its existence, which is the ground of that thing’s existence. This is Hegel’s version of the principle of sufficient reason.

Hegel’s notion of the ground of existence is at odds with Kierkegaard’s emphasis on the contingency of the change of coming into existence. This is evident in Kierkegaard’s approving reference to Leibniz’s idea of possible worlds. Leibniz’s theory of possible worlds involves God’s choosing to actualize a world from multiple ones. On this basis, Kierkegaard argues that neither divine foreknowledge nor the fact that the past is irrevocable makes the future absolutely necessary.

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\textit{[F]oreknowledge of the future does not confer necessity upon it (Boethius)…[and]…the basis of the certainty of the past is the uncertainty regarding it in the same sense as there is uncertainty regarding the future, the possibility (Leibniz—possible worlds), out of which it could not possibly come forth with necessity, \textit{nam necessarium se ipso prius sit}, \textit{necessee est} [for it is necessary that necessity precede itself]}\textsuperscript{40}
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\textsuperscript{38} In addition, Kierkegaard’s analysis of the nature of possibility, actuality, and necessity in the ‘Interlude’ is directed at Hegel’s argument that necessity is the negation of the negation of possibility, that is, the unity of possibility and actuality. Cf. \textit{PF}, 74; G. W. F. Hegel, \textit{The Encyclopaedia Logic}, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991) § 147 (henceforth \textit{Encyclopaedia}); also cf. G. W. F. Hegel, \textit{The Science of Logic}, translated by A. V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999) 546-553 (henceforth \textit{Science of Logic}). Moreover, in an endnote to the passage in question, the Hongs point out that Kierkegaard was familiar with Hegel’s doctrine of essence (\textit{PF}, 301).

\textsuperscript{39} Cf., for example, \textit{Encyclopaedia}, § 121 and \textit{Science of Logic}, 444-478.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{PF}, 80.
On the one hand, divine foreknowledge does not take away future contingency. God’s knowing that some event will occur does not entail that the event is absolutely necessary. As Kierkegaard suggests, future contingents are events that are among many in a possible world that God chooses to actualize. If God chooses to actualize one world over another, then the world God actualizes is just as possible as the one he doesn’t. Both may be or may fail to be, and so neither is absolutely necessary.

A series of past and future events is contingent, this in spite of the fact that the past is ‘certain.’ The certainty of the past, the fact that it came into existence and cannot be revoked, is based on its ‘uncertain’ character—its contingency—which it has in virtue of having come into existence. The future shares this uncertainty with the past, since future events are members of the possible world that God actualizes.

There are two central ideas to the theory of possible worlds at odds with Hegel’s notion of the ground of existence. First, all possible worlds are possible in the sense that they are contingent. Each world God deliberates about may be or may fail to be. Second, in the Leibnizian view of possible worlds (and Kierkegaard endorses this view in key respects) God transcends the causal series he actualizes. God is not a member of the series, but is the absolute cause of the series.

This is not the case with Hegel’s theory of coming into existence. The ground, for Hegel, is purely immanent and necessary to coming into existence. The ground of coming into existence is the immanent unfolding of Spirit or God marking its course through history. In this way, God is not separate from the world, but is the immanent ground of the world’s coming to be, the sole reason for the coming into existence of the world, including both nature and the human world.
What makes the immanent self-unfolding of Spirit necessary? Why does this view entail that all coming into existence (in short, everything that happens) is absolutely necessarily? This particular view of necessity naturally follows from two premises that are central to Hegel’s metaphysics. Frederick Beiser details these two premises as follows:

1. The Absolute, or God, or Spirit, exists from the necessity of its own nature.
2. The Absolute, or God, or Spirit is all reality.41

As Beiser explains, attributing both of these premises to Hegel is unproblematic, since they ground his metaphysics. Premise (1) asserts that God is *causa sui*; God, for Hegel, is a necessary being. Premise (2) expresses Hegel’s monism. It argues that God is the only thing there is. There is nothing outside of God’s reach. If God is all reality, then there is ‘nothing outside itself to limit it.’42

These two premises undergird the view that coming into existence is absolutely and logically necessary. Let’s consider the contours of the argument: if God exists from the necessity of its own nature, then God is a necessary being and so is not contingent. This is uncontroversial. The controversial premise, however, is that God is *all* reality. The argument concludes that all of reality is necessary.43

If all of reality is necessary, then we must ask whether contingency is found in Hegel’s system. The problem is that if there is real contingency for Hegel, then it would have to exist *outside* of the Absolute. But if it is outside of the Absolute, then the Absolute is limited; in this way the Absolute is not all reality.

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41 Cf. Beiser, 76.
42 Ibid.
In Hegel’s system, everything that exists necessarily exists and every event necessarily occurs; otherwise, Spirit’s self-development wouldn’t be necessary. Furthermore, for Kierkegaard, Hegel’s doctrine of ground is committed to the view that everything that exists or every event that occurs happens of necessity according to reason. If everything happens of necessity according to reason, then everything that exists is logically necessary.\textsuperscript{44} This is, \textit{prima facie}, a hard position to accept, especially since it contradicts our basic intuitions about freedom and denies the existence of natural and historical contingency altogether. Indeed, the classical distinction between contingent and necessary truths is blurred. We’ve seen that Hegel’s God/Spirit is \textit{causa sui}, that it exists from the necessity of its own nature. Minimally, this means that Spirit is absolutely necessary. We’ve also noticed Hegel argue that God is all reality. Yet, as Spirit unfolds through history, particularity and contingency—existence itself—emerge from Spirit. But as Beiser points out, it is difficult to explain how what is in itself absolutely necessary can become contingent.\textsuperscript{45} It is, on the face of it, contradictory to say that something can be both absolutely necessary and contingent, this because, as Kierkegaard shows, what is absolutely necessary cannot be otherwise than itself, whereas what is contingent can.

In the context of Hegelianism, the coming-to-be of anything is logically, and thus, absolutely necessary. We would, or course, be wrong to identify what is here being termed ‘logically necessary’ with what we normally understand by logical necessity, this because it is difficult to see how a historical event, say, that I ate multi-grain Cheerios this morning, is logically necessary. Philosophers understand something to be logically necessary when its denial is impossible, like a necessary truth. For example, ‘If all humans are mortal, and Socrates is a


\textsuperscript{45} Beiser, 77.
human, then Socrates is mortal,’ and ‘A triangle has three sides’ are necessary truths. One feature that necessary truths share is that they are true regardless of any actual or imagined circumstance.

Yet, historical events that have come into existence do not seem to share this feature with necessary truths. Most would agree that they are contingent, and that past events are only contingently true. But, Hegel’s rationalism conceives historical events as rationally unfolding and necessarily connected to each other—not just causally connected, but logically connected.

4. FREE CAUSALITY, NATURAL NECESSITY, AND THE SCOPE OF CONTINGENCY

We have looked at the notions of absolute necessity and contingency and have considered a broad picture of absolute necessitarianism in Hegel’s metaphysics. The discussion of Hegel was spawned by Kierkegaard’s statement that changes of coming into existence are not absolutely necessary. I’ve also alluded to Kierkegaard’s claim that all changes of coming into existence occur in freedom and that change is an effect of a cause. If all coming into existence occurs in freedom and is an effect of a cause, then all coming into existence is an effect of a freely acting cause.46

The question to ask is whether Kierkegaard is right that all change refers back to a freely acting cause, or at least whether his position is coherent. We may want to reject Hegel’s view of absolute necessity as enumerated, but should we be so inclined to accept Kierkegaard’s view about free causality just as quickly? The view that our important endeavors are freely caused is intuitively appealing. Kierkegaard is happy to appeal to this intuition.

However, Kierkegaard argues that all changes of coming into existence refer back to a free cause of some divine or human sort. Given that his definition of change is broadened to

46 Cf. PF, 75.
include natural changes, what view of free causality could he be endorsing? Events that occur in nature, like the coming to be of plants and animals, or the mere movement of bodies, involve a complex system of cause and effect governed by natural laws.

Kierkegaard may find that our question invokes a false dichotomy between freedom and necessity. He might say, ‘One can affirm both that all coming into existence happens by way of a freely acting cause, and that some events are necessary in some way. So, freedom and necessity as such are not absolutely different from each other.’ I think this is something like Kierkegaard’s understanding of the relationship between freedom and necessity. Let’s consider the following argument from the ‘Interlude’ to see the details of his view:

Every cause ends in a freely acting cause. The intervening causes are misleading in that the coming into existence appears to be necessary; the truth about them is that they, as having themselves come into existence, definitively point to a freely acting cause. As soon as coming into existence is definitively reflected upon, even an inference from natural law is not evidence of the necessity of any coming into existence. So also with manifestations of freedom, as soon as one refuses to be deceived by its manifestations but reflects on its coming into existence.47

The question before us is how Kierkegaard can argue that all changes of coming into existence point to a freely acting cause. Does this rule out the view that there are some events that are necessary? The simple answer is no. However, his account is far from simple. By arguing that coming into existence refers back to a free cause, Kierkegaard underscores the idea that coming into existence is not absolutely necessary; but the jury is still out on how free causality and other kinds of necessity fare together. Kierkegaard is appealing to two senses of necessity in the above passage, although he does not fully develop them. On the one hand, the notion of absolute necessity is juxtaposed with the change of coming into existence. Nothing, he argues, comes into existence necessarily, and if coming into existence is not absolutely necessary, then it must be an effect of a free cause.

47 PF, 75.
On the other hand, Kierkegaard introduces—albeit ambiguously—the notion of causal or natural necessity; this is evident from his remark about a causal series of events in the world coupled with laws of nature that govern it. He further maintains that this causal series contains intervening causes, and that the coming into existence of these and their effects is a sign that they point back to a free cause. I take this to mean that the series of causes is not absolutely determined to come into existence, even though some intervening causes in the series are causally necessary. This is due to his earlier argument that whatever comes into existence is contingent. If it is not contingent, then it would be absolutely necessary. But if it were absolutely necessary, then it could not have come into existence in the first place.

The foregoing interpretation of the passage makes sense of Kierkegaard’s stronger claim that, while they appear to, these intervening causes do not offer proof that their coming into existence was absolutely necessary. Why might we think that a chain of causes and their effects proves that they are absolutely necessary? One reasonable response is that these events are necessary. They appear to come into existence necessarily because their coming into existence is in fact necessary. Of course, appearances can be misleading. Even if a sequence of events appears necessary to us, for Kierkegaard the reality of the situation is that they are contingent. If they are contingent, then they can’t be proven to be absolutely necessary. Thus, C. Stephan Evans remarks that ‘If an event is in itself not necessary, it is impossible to demonstrate its necessity.’ Like others before him (e.g. Leibniz and Lessing), Kierkegaard concludes that what is contingent cannot be the basis for a logical demonstration of what is absolutely necessary.

48 Evans, 261.
That the sequence of causes and their effects came into existence (which even Hegel wouldn’t deny) precludes the possibility of its being shown to be absolutely necessary.

Kierkegaard’s argument, then, is that natural causes and their effects are contingent and thus cannot be shown to be absolutely necessary. So, whereas what is absolutely necessary is absolutely different from contingency, natural necessity is not by definition at odds with contingency. To further elucidate my argument, let’s look at the difference between absolute and causal necessity. Just as absolute impossibility and natural impossibility prove to be distinct, absolute necessity is different from natural necessity. Consider the following example: In a fit of rage, a man throws his television out of the second story window of his home. We see it fall quickly toward the ground. And we expect it to do so. Indeed, it will fall to the ground provided there is nothing obstructing its fall as it speeds downwards. Given actual laws of nature, the television is, when let go, determined to fall. However, it is not absolutely necessary that the television will fall; that is, it is not absolutely necessary that televisions, when thrown out second story windows, fall toward the ground. This is because laws of nature and the actual series of causes that lead to a television being thrown out of a window could have been different. So, while it is necessary that heavy things like televisions fall when dropped, it is only necessary given the laws of nature and the antecedent causal series leading to the event. But the laws of nature and the causal series are themselves contingent; the world and its laws, at its start, could have gone differently. Therefore, changes that are governed by laws of nature, while necessary, are not absolutely necessary.  

This brief gloss on the difference between natural and absolute necessity is illuminating because it shows how the contingency of coming into existence is related to different forms of

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50 Kierkegaard’s distinction between natural and absolute necessity more or less follows Leibniz’s distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity. We will see that this difference gains significant purchase in my suggestion that Kierkegaard is a compatibilist of some kind.
necessity. It is at first curious that Kierkegaard would say that both human choices and natural changes are free, when changes in nature are part of a causal chain. However, this is less mysterious if we think of Kierkegaard as pitting the contingency of change against absolute necessity. Contingency excludes absolute necessity, not necessity as such. Therefore, changes, events, states of affairs, etc. can be both necessary and contingent.

We see that contingency and necessity as such do not exclude each other. How, though, is this related to free causality? What does Kierkegaard’s view of causation have to do with these conclusions I’ve drawn about the relationship between contingency and necessity?

It seems at first that even if a series of necessary causes is contingent, their being contingent does not get Kierkegaard what he wants, namely, to show that all coming into existence is freely caused. Of course something being contingent is necessary for its being freely caused. If it could not be otherwise then one cannot speak of an agent choosing it. However, not all contingent events are caused freely.

Let’s assume, to continue our example, that the man in a fit of rage freely threw his television out of his window. This does not mean that he was the free cause of the television’s falling to the ground. That is, even if he was the free cause with respect to throwing the television, this does not entail that he was the free cause of its falling downwards. Why not? We can imagine that, if the laws of nature had turned out differently, televisions and things of similar weight when thrown out of windows fly at a horizontally straight line until obstructed by some object. In his rage, the man can do nothing about where or how the television goes once it leaves his hand. The laws of nature are not up to him. Such things are, as Peter van Inwagen calls them, ‘untouchable facts.’ Van Inwagen elucidates untouchable facts in this way: ‘[n]o knowledge, and no fantastic stroke of luck, would render you able to do anything about the shape of the
earth, the physical properties of iron, the distant past, or the arithmetical properties of a number.\footnote{Peter van Inwagen, \textit{Metaphysics}, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009) 260.} Not only are absolutely necessary things untouchable (like the properties of numbers), but human agents cannot do anything about naturally necessary things (like the shape of the earth) as well. Try as hard as he might, the man, even if he were a physicist and had adequate knowledge of such things, cannot freely make it so that the television falls speedily toward the ground once he decides to throw it.

It is clear, then, that even some contingent events are untouchable and so cannot be freely caused. What to make, then, of Kierkegaard’s insistence that necessary causes and their effects refer back to a free cause? Given the above analysis, it seems that Kierkegaard is committed to an apparent contradiction. He has claimed that all coming into existence refers to a freely acting cause, but that there are some changes of coming into existence (the intervening causes and their effects) that are necessary. While the series of cause and effect along with the laws of nature are not absolutely necessary, they are still necessary as my example of the falling television showed. It seems, then, that Kierkegaard, as with his insistence that the absolutely necessary is not possible, is mistaken.

Perhaps sense can be made of what he’s claiming. I propose that Kierkegaard is making a distinction between an absolute and ultimate free source of the coming into existence of a series and the relative and necessary causes and events within that series. That is, he is offering a proof for both why the world could not have come about necessarily, and for how the series of events in the world, regardless of their contingency, are, nonetheless, necessary.

For Kierkegaard, every chain of events that comes into existence ultimately points to some intelligent and free cause that is not bound by any level of necessity to create. We could call this cause God, and, indeed, it would certainly be something like God that would have the
kind of absolute, intelligent, and personal agency to freely bring about the kind of action Kierkegaard is here describing.\textsuperscript{52} I think we are entitled to, \textit{at least}, envision Kierkegaard’s first cause as some personal agent which may or may not have a personal investment in what it has made.

Kierkegaard, moreover, argues that no reference to laws of nature will dispel his thesis. ‘As soon as coming into existence is definitively reflected upon, even an inference from natural law is not evidence of the necessity of any coming into existence.’\textsuperscript{53} Laws of nature of themselves do not explain the source of every chain of events. So, while laws of nature explain, say, the causal connection between events \textit{within} nature (that A causes B, and B causes C), they, as Robert C. Roberts explains, only pick out the ‘necessity of this or that event relative to other events inside nature.’\textsuperscript{54} Laws of nature explain the \textit{immanent} necessity of causes between events, and do not explain why the immanent chain of causes came into existence in the first place.

As Kierkegaard argues, each series of events points to a free cause. How so, if Kierkegaard is open to the possibility that any given event in a series is causally connected to an antecedent event? This dilemma can be solved if we go back to his notion of possibility. For Kierkegaard, any series of events that \textit{has become} actual is equally as possible as the infinitely large sum of series of events that are not actualized. So, Kierkegaard does not argue in favor of one possibility over another; each may be or may fail to be. By extension, \textit{all} series of events, no matter how many, is also equally possible and, thus, equally actualizable. Roberts helps elucidate:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Kierkegaard’s Climacus, the pseudonym of \textit{Philosophical Fragments}, does not call his free cause God, however, as C. Stephen Evans has argued, the position drafted by Kierkegaard is congenial to a broadly theistic or Christian metaphysic. See \textit{Passionate Reason}, 123-124.
\item \textsuperscript{53} PF, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Robert C. Roberts, \textit{Faith, Reason, and History: Rethinking Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments} (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986) 106. Henceforth Roberts.
\end{itemize}
Even if we can explain the actualization of possibility \( a \) by reference to the actualizations of other possibilities (which are the causal antecedents to \( a \)) still this string of possibilities is only one among an indefinitely large set of strings. Even if we believe that there is no gratuitous fiddling with the string once it is initiated, still we can ask why this string, rather than any one of the others, got actualized.\(^{55}\)

To ask why this particular string and not another is to ask about what initiated the string of events in the first place. For Kierkegaard, when one definitively reflects on this initiation, then one will find that the string came into existence by means of a free cause, transcendent from the immanently causal nexus of the series. Why? Because if this possible string was not actualized freely, then it isn’t clear why this string came into existence instead of another. Kierkegaard’s point is that when we really think about it, we’ll have to postulate the existence of some freely acting cause, since only this explains why the actual series of events has come into existence.

One will notice what this entails: the freely efficient cause to which every series of events points back to has multiple possibilities available to it to deliberate about and to actualize. Thus, as Robert C. Roberts argues, ‘even if everything that happens within the creation happens by causal necessity, still every event is non-necessary [not absolutely necessary] in the sense that God could have actualized other creations—other chains of events—than the one he did actualize.’\(^{56}\) Ultimately, Kierkegaard’s point piggybacks on an influential Leibnizian theme: God had available to him an infinite amount of possible worlds about which he deliberated and from which he freely brought into existence one of them. Thus, this world, and every chain of events that has come into existence subsequent to its inception, is not absolutely necessary.

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\(^{55}\) Ibid.

\(^{56}\) Roberts, 107.
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS: COMPATIBILISM

To close, allow me to briefly broach the promised topic of compatibilism in Kierkegaard. My discussion of Kierkegaard’s on the nature of contingency and necessity, suggests a compatibilism between human freedom and divine determinism. While he is a libertarian about human freedom with respect to causal necessity, I suggest that he may be read as compatibilist about human freedom and the role God plays in human life.

We’ve seen Kierkegaard argue that a necessary condition for a free action (in this case a change of coming into existence—a free transition from possibility to actuality) is contingency and that changes of coming into existence are not absolutely necessary. The freedom of an action rests on the availability of at least two possible courses of action that may be or may fail to be. This, I believe, makes sense of Kierkegaard’s understanding of kinēsis to include both the change of the coming into existence of the world (and the causal series of change that follows) and human choice. The initial coming into existence of the world and the series of causes that follow are contingent because God had available many possible worlds to choose to actualize. Likewise, human choice, as it mirrors divine choice, is grounded in a contingent state of affairs whereby the agent has available really possible courses of action from which to choose. Both cases—a contingent world and a contingent course of action—exclude absolute necessity.

However, contingency and necessity as such are not incompatible. That is, while contingency and absolute necessity are incompatible, the scope of contingency is broadened to include natural necessity and the overall series that God initiates. How, then, does freedom bear in relation to other forms of necessity?

Kierkegaard is often called a libertarian about human freedom. In important respects this is true. Kierkegaard thinks causal necessity is incompatible with freedom. It seems clear from
statements throughout his authorship that he does not think that a causal series of events is itself a sufficient condition for important ethical-religious decisions. The inwardness of ethical and religious choice is unique. The individual remains the subject of his or her choice. For example, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard states that the temporal passage of Christian history over two thousand years cannot determine a single individual to become a Christian. The individual who chooses to enter into Christianity does so ‘whether he has eighteen centuries for him or against him.’\textsuperscript{57} That is, the series itself does not determine the change of becoming a Christian. While a libertarian about human freedom with respect to causal necessity, there is a sense in which Kierkegaard may be read as compatibilist about human freedom and God’s causal role in the world. Allow me to draft the picture I have in mind based on the claims we’ve seen him make about contingency, necessity, and possible worlds. Human freedom is compatible with a causal series determined and initiated by free divine causal activity, a series (among many possible) that God foreknows prior to actualizing it. In saying that human freedom is compatible with some kind of determining divine act, I have a fairly standard view of determinism in mind. Robert Kane succinctly outlines the standard view of determinism in this way:

> An event (such as a choice or action) is *determined* when there are conditions obtaining earlier (such as the decrees of fate or the foreordaining acts of God or antecedent causes plus laws of nature) whose occurrence is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the event. In other words, it *must* be the case that, if these earlier determining conditions obtain, then the determined event will occur.\textsuperscript{58}

An event is determined when some antecedent cause, act, or decree occurs and its occurrence guarantees the occurrence of some subsequent event, like a choice. So, if God chooses to realize possible world x, then everything contained in x will come to fruition.

\textsuperscript{57} *CUP*, 49.

In the context of Kierkegaard’s thought, God plays a causal role in the single individual’s ethical-religious life, at least in the way God freely chooses to actualize a series of events of which the individual’s life is a part. God’s causal role is determining in the sense in which Kane delineates the idea of determinism. God’s choosing to actualize a known possible series of events is a sufficient condition for an event within that series to occur. Thus, a momentous human decision (say, the decision to become a Christian) will occur on the condition that God chooses to actualize the series in which that event is a part.59

This does not mean God causes the momentous decision, nor does it entail that the decision is absolutely necessary. Rather, the momentous decision will happen on the condition that God chooses to actualize the world in which the decision is made. This does not contradict Kierkegaard’s advisory that changes of coming into existence do not come about by way of necessity, since it seems clear that something being absolutely necessary excludes its being freely actualized. Rather, the foregoing outline suggests the necessity of the consequence that if God actualizes the world that contained the series of events that contains the decision, then the decision will occur.60 This is consistent with Kierkegaard’s view of contingency.61

Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA

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59 See PF, 75

60 So, Kierkegaard distinguishes between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent. He appears to think that it is true that (1) necessarily, if God knows at time t₁ that x will do y at time t₂, then x will do y at time t₂. However, it is false that (2) if God knows at time t₁ that x will do y at time t₂, then it is necessary that x will do y at time t₂: (1) expresses the necessity of the consequence and is consistent with contingency. (2), which is an example of the necessity of the consequent, expresses absolute determinism. Another way to interpret (2) is that it says something essential about the subject of the consequent. For example, we could read it as saying that God knows at t₁ that x will do y at t₂ because doing y at t₂ is an essential property of x. This and the previous reading of (2) both make the consequent—‘x will do y at t₂’—absolutely necessary, and thus not contingent. For a helpful discussion of the difference between the necessity of the consequence and the necessity of the consequent and their relation to the topics of contingency and necessity, see Plantinga, 8-13 and his article ‘On Ockham’s Way Out,’ The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader, edited by James F. Sennett (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998) 258-292 (particularly, pp. 258-267).

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