

Situating Melancholy in Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*



I. Introduction

- a. Brother Grimm: "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Anxiety Was."
- b. "... [I]s not melancholy [*Tungsind*] the defect of our age? ... is it not melancholy which has deprived us of courage to command, of courage to obey, of power to act, of the confidence necessary to hope?"¹

II. The Concept of Melancholy

- a. Danish terms: *Melancholi* and *Tungsind*.
 - i. *Melancholi*: from the Greek word, *melancholi* (black bile)
 - ii. *Tungsind*: from Danish root words: *Tung* (heavy) and *sind* (mind or spirit)

III. Situating Melancholy in the Framework of Anxiety

a. Objective Anxiety and Melancholy

- i. Subjective Anxiety: consequence of the individual's own sin
- ii. Objective Anxiety: "reflection of the sinfulness of the generation in the whole world." It is the "guilt of the whole world."²
- iii. "Anxiety has here the same meaning as melancholy [*Tungsind*] at a much later point, when freedom, having passed through the imperfect forms of its history, in the profoundest sense will come to itself."³

b. The Teaching-Quality of Anxiety

- i. "Therefore he who in relation to guilt is educated by anxiety will rest only in the Atonement."⁴
- ii. "But the persons whose souls do not know this melancholy [*Tungsind*] are those whose souls have no presentiment of a metamorphosis."⁵
- iii. "Truth has always had many loud proclaimers, but the question is whether a person will in the deepest sense acknowledge the truth, will allow it to permeate his whole being, will accept all its consequences, and not have an emergency hiding place for himself and a Judas kiss for the consequence."⁶
- iv. "The only one who sorrowed innocently over sinfulness was Christ, but he did not sorrow over it as a fate he had to put up with. He sorrowed as the one who freely chose to carry all the sin of the world and to suffer its punishment ... Christ was more than an individual."⁷

¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), II 22: 23-24. (I am translating *Tungsind* as melancholy.)

² Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and trans. Reider Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 57, 109.

³ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, II 172: 190.

⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 138.

⁷ *Ibid.*