A night view of a city, likely Jerusalem, with a large stone cross in the foreground. The city is illuminated by streetlights and building lights, with a prominent dome visible in the distance. The sky is dark with a hint of twilight.

The Authenticity of Faith in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

Edited by Tamar Aylat-Yaguri
and Jon Stewart

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

The existential challenge of attaining and preserving faith is as difficult today as ever before, and perhaps even more so in a rational, scientifically-oriented culture. Yet the means by which faith can turn into inauthenticity have not changed much since Kierkegaard's era. This book aims to present Kierkegaardian notions of a believer's answers to the existentially haunting questions of faith and authenticity.

I.

When he heard the voice that ordered him to sacrifice his son, should Abraham have been concerned that he might be mad? How does a believer handle the possibility that he might err? How does one tackle self-doubt, the possibility that one's faith is merely a form of self-deception? The quest for authentic faith is explicitly expressed in Kierkegaard's writing delivered under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. It is there that the clear connection between authentic faith and Christianity is formed. For Climacus, living in truth, that is, being authentic, is being concerned with one's religiousness.

The papers in the present volume follow his explorations, raising questions that focus on when and how authentic faith is achieved, and when and how inauthentic faith occurs. An inauthentic believer deceives himself, for example, through presuming, without internal questioning or pathos, a direct, unmediated experience of a divine revelation. Climacus warns that a would-be believer, swept up in what seems to be a genuine, immediate revelation, is like someone swept up in a party atmosphere, immersed in an unquestioned aura of lasting happiness. Faith should be a matter of arduous struggle and self-doubt, but the partygoer wants the experience to be easy, immediate and elevating. He is like someone who expects to fall in love at first sight. Climacus makes the point with humor:

if God had taken the form, for example, of a rare, enormously large green bird, with a red beak, that perched in a tree on the embankment and perhaps even whistled in an unprecedented manner—then our partygoing man would surely have his eyes opened; for the first time in his life he would have been able to be the first.¹

When one falls in love, he has the immediate sense of being “the first” to have had the experience. The man encountering God-as-a-large-bird is likewise sure he is “the first” to have had this experience. But Climacus portrays him as ridiculous. We imagine the partygoer and think: *Really!* God *can't* appear as a bird! The partygoer is inauthentic. He does not take his relation to love or God seriously—there is no self-doubt or pathos. Climacus knows that faith and intimacy with God are difficult. The man who claims to have seen God as clearly as if God appeared in the shape of a bird, like the casual partygoer who thinks he is surely in love, deceives himself. Self-deception

occurs when the person unknowingly or blindly omits the possibility of misunderstanding, thinking that matters of utmost difficulty—knowing one has encountered *God* or knowing one is in fact in *love*—are easy. For Climacus, wanting difficult things to be simple is a mark of inauthenticity. Knowing God, or being in love, cannot be as mindless as the dunce's report that he has encountered God in the form of a spectacular bird.

In a different book, *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's pseudonym imagines a man rushing from church having heard the parson praise Abraham. Ridiculously, he becomes bent on sacrificing his own son, in imitation of Abraham.² He is as thoughtless as the imbecile who believed he had seen God in the shape of a green bird. The biblical Abraham, we learn from the author of *Fear and Trembling*, is not at all like this thoughtless churchgoer. We are to imagine the *terror* of Abraham, to imagine his "fear and trembling." He is marked by *more* than tragic pathos, as he journeys three long days in arduous struggle. Abraham could *not* have *rushed* up the mountain.³ His authentic struggle with self-understanding and self-doubt secures him from self-deception.

II.

Kierkegaard's view on faith can be approached from many angles. In this introduction, we will take up the general orientation provided by S.U. Zuidema, a Dutch philosopher and theologian.⁴ Although one might want to argue with some parts of his account, it affirms the interplay of the existential and the theological dimensions in Kierkegaard's work. This orientation provides a useful context for considering the papers that follow.

Kierkegaard grew up under the influence of the Danish Lutheran State Church, and so it is natural to think that he should be read as a Christian writer. But Kierkegaard was also a scholar of Greek and modern philosophy. He endorses the Socratic emphasis on individual existence—on pursuing self-knowledge, dialogical critique, and leading an authentic existential life. So it might be just as natural to read Kierkegaard without religion. Zuidema situates Kierkegaard as a spiritual thinker, who can be viewed theologically, provided that the idea of personal existence is incorporated, and who can be viewed existentially, provided that the choice to become a person of faith is included.

Faith, in the sense of believing in the divine, demands both a human existence, someone concerned to find meaning, and a divine revelation, addressed to that person's concern. Kierkegaard (or his pseudonym, Johannes Climacus) aims to become a Christian, and his question, how to become one, is formulated in two ways. First, how can one gain the *self-consciousness* or inwardness needed for eternal happiness (or faith)? Second, how can one gain eternal happiness in *Christ*?

Whether or not one is concerned with faith, the idea of self-consciousness presupposes a quality of personal existence. From Climacus' point of view, the idea of eternal happiness in Christ presupposes the idea of "the absolute paradox"—the paradoxical idea that the divine can enter time as a

person. The believer is both self-conscious (*in charge* of his inner life) and dependent on something external to inner life—on a God who *grants* eternal happiness. Attaining faith as a Christian is formulated by a subsequent Kierkegaardian pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, author of *The Sickness unto Death*, as follows: “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it.”⁵ Faith is tied to being one’s self (an existential idea), and simultaneously, to being grounded in God (a theological idea).

A believer who aspires to faith, to live in Christ, or under the sign of the absolute paradox, faces an arduous task. In words from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the believer must be alert

to watch for and at every moment to make the discovery of improbability, the paradox, in order then to hold it fast with the passion of inwardness. The improbable, the paradox, is ordinarily conceived of as something to which faith is related only passively; one will have to be satisfied temporarily with this situation, but little by little things will improve—indeed, this is probable.⁶

The believer’s inwardness is continuously engaged in appropriating this ultimate paradox into her own existence, where “faith, self-active, relates itself to the improbable and the paradox, [and] is self-active in discovering it and in holding it fast at every moment—in order to be able to believe.”⁷ This inward process, a matter of self-consciousness, nevertheless is not characterized as entirely subjective, for its aim is to grasp something outside itself, relate to something, objective—an *objective* uncertainty:

Faith is the objective uncertainty with the repulsion of the absurd, held fast in the passion of inwardness, which is the relation of inwardness intensified to its highest. This formula fits only the one who has faith, no one else, not even a lover, or an enthusiast, or a thinker, but solely and only the one who has faith, who relates himself to the absolute paradox.⁸

A faithful believer struggles to attain understanding of the absolute paradox. This amounts to a struggle to transcend a relative time frame. Faith transcends a merely momentary grasp or a solution that *ends* the struggle to comprehend: “Faith... cannot be some temporary function.... Faith *must not be satisfied* with incomprehensibility.”⁹

Kierkegaard’s portrait of faith brings to light the existential self’s pathos or passion, joined to a revelation of the absolute paradox. The two are reciprocally entwined. Existential pathos is heightened by the revelation, “because of... [the absolute paradox’s] objective uncertainty, its offence, its foolishness, and its hiddenness.”¹⁰ When existential passion comes into contact with the paradox of divine revelation, the passion of faith is intensified to the highest imaginable inwardness.

God Himself brings the believer to faith by providing an encounter with the historical figure of Christ. Whether one is of faith cannot remain entirely under a believer’s control. Nevertheless, the believer has control in

the capacity to affirm (or deny) his need of a saving encounter and to accept (or reject) an offered encounter with Christ. In contrast,

Unbelievers reject [divine authority] as an offense and retain their sovereignty. Believers accept it, denying themselves. They seek their salvation [eternal happiness], the truth of their “being” outside of themselves. In their faith they recognize the falsity in themselves, their sin and sinful state.¹¹

The situation requires that existentially (and before God), the believer will decide, at least tacitly, that he is not the be all and end all of existence; he denies all inflated versions of himself. And the believer will affirm or decide, at least tacitly, that help will come from the *outside*, and that receiving it means relinquishing his old self and moving outside the (former) self, into new territory. To receive help (a new self) is also a decision in the sense that one might reject the revelation of God in Christ or the offering of a new self. Zuidema sums up the situation this way:

The attitude of faith contains, therefore, both a conception of the essence of the man of faith and [also] embodies a Christological [along with] an anthropological aspect. The former is concerned with God-in-Christ, and the latter with the question, What is man? Both tendencies unite to ask: What really happens when a man believes in Christ and becomes a Christian? Kierkegaard’s entire thought and writings center around his philosophy of faith.¹²

Kierkegaard’s writings evoke a personal relation between God and man, and the existential experience in which the believer is alone before God. He moves within the polarities of his Christian existentialism and his humanistic, non-theological existentialism. For him, becoming a believer culminates in Christian faith, and faith is the highest and most intense mode of human existence.

Although Kierkegaard wants to *live* a full existence (rather than merely define it), Zuidema emphasizes that Kierkegaard in fact characterizes becoming as a complex process that eludes systematic logical exposition:

Becoming cannot be controlled, systematized, or known by means of logical thought....Being can be conceived of in logical categories, but becoming defies every logical analysis. A logical system of becoming is impossible. And since human existence is pre-eminently a process of becoming, it cannot be systematized logically. It is not possible to acquire logical insight and rational knowledge of becoming, change, and motion. Consequently, human existence is irrational.¹³

Perhaps Zuidema goes too far in saying that existence is “irrational”—or if it is, this would be to ask Heraclitus’ question: How can one understand becoming? How can one step into the same river twice? A Pre-Socratic tradition takes logic to be incapable of grasping the unruly flow of becoming (or existence). Later philosophers take brute existence or becoming to

precede thought or arguments *about* becoming. The view is, “I exist... *then* I think.” From Kierkegaard’s point of view, for change and movement to occur in life, a transition from potentiality to reality is required. Kierkegaard sees this as a free transition, the result, in the case of human unfolding, of a free human decision. Change in self is empowered and exemplified by freedom. Let us quote Zuidema again: “Man exists and becomes because he freely chooses between his many possibilities and realizes his choice. The continuity of human existence is, therefore, not a continuous development from one reality to another. It is rather a new product, the result of a new voluntary decision of the will.”¹⁴ Change in human becoming is a transition from a possible to a real act that issues from free acts of choice. The inner act of decision, eludes any strictly *scientific* approach. Science accurately predicts. If human choice is real, one cannot understand the outcome of a person’s choice as already determined and thus subject to accurate prediction. For there to be choice, one must consider one’s future to be open in the moment before choice. An open future is one not yet determinate, not open to accurate prediction. Kierkegaard makes this point by saying that the terms of a necessary logical system—in our language, a predictive science—cannot grasp the decisive transition enacted in voluntary choice. Such a transition is not just a quantitative alteration in a state of affairs but is a *qualitative leap*, made by someone whose future is not yet determined.

Faith depends on a decision. As Zuidema puts it, faith “is not the result of a conclusion but of a *resolution*.”¹⁵ Faith grasps a possibility and effects its actualization: “Faith is able to recognize...the process of becoming, prior to its becoming, prior to its reality, prior to its factuality.”¹⁶ In the process of becoming, man is in a relation to himself; he is his own project. He is preoccupied with himself in a two-fold sense. His inner existence is a self-realization, a spontaneous free act, conducted through self-reflection. He is occupied with himself as he reflects upon himself. He is a unity of spontaneity and reflection, of act and self-reflection, of becoming a self and of becoming conscious of himself. Hence, “The first ‘law’ of human existence is, therefore: Be what you become! Do not be what you are!”¹⁷

Referring to Kierkegaard’s *The Sickness unto Death*, Zuidema writes, “Human freedom, as the director of self-realization, has within itself its own typical existential pathos, its own *existential passion*.”¹⁸ By this passion, man is simultaneously finite and infinite, temporal and eternal, real and ideal, relative and absolute, physical and psychical. Man is a tension of opposites held together in a unity. The task of the finite believer, as a finite existence, is to realize oneself through holding on to one’s infinitude, transcending finitude in a relation to God. Denial of one’s self as finite is simultaneously choosing one’s self as infinite. This existential pathos drives the believer further towards self-realization, self-reflection, and self-consciousness.

Continual abnegation of his finite self enables the passionate believer to dialectically evolve in the direction of his infinite self. The calling of the believer is to seek his infinite self in the conflict between the finite and the infinite self. If maintained correctly, an absolute relationship to the absolute is attained. This is the fullest reward possible for existential pathos.

The inner being of human existence is important anthropologically and existentially. The inwardness of a person is hidden for others and escapes the grasp of *objectivity*. In this sense, Zuidema holds that “Man is a mystery. He does not possess a mystery, he *is* a mystery.”¹⁹ His inwardness is the seat of his freedom. There is no objective grip on his freedom. If freedom is the truth he must live by, then his *subjectivity* is truth. Zuidema explains,

This thesis is the conclusion of Kierkegaard’s theory of human existence. The truth of man is not a truth *about* man; it is the true-being of man. Truth consists of passionately being one’s self. It consists of man’s freedom, and of his being freedom. A logical truth concerning man is a lie. What can be *discursively* distinguished in man, the eternal [essence] and the *objective*, is not the authentic man, it is not what is truly human. Man is a mystery, a hiddenness. He is innerness.²⁰

This view of human existence has many variations in Kierkegaard’s writings. It is famously linked with Climacus’ definition of Christianity: “Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity; subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personally interested passion for one’s eternal happiness.”²¹ According to Zuidema, the view of human beings as spirit is in tension with Kierkegaard’s theory of the absolute paradox, and his account of Biblical revelation. Human existence is juxtaposed with faith. Thus Kierkegaard’s “romantic view of man is dependent upon the dogma of human freedom, radicalized to an idea of self-determination and self-realization. As such it is in principle atheistic.”²² Of course, this follows only if we see a contradiction between a) the “self-determination and self-realization” in the self’s relation to its inwardness, and b) the fact, that the self is simultaneously “transparently in the power that established it.”²³

A number of the essays that follow will contest, at least implicitly, Zuidema’s radical analysis of Kierkegaard, but it is worth discussing because it highlights the tension between an existentialist and a theological reading of Kierkegaard quite dramatically. Zuidema believes that Kierkegaard’s stress on existential inwardness and choice grounds a humanistic world-view that does not entail faith. However, Kierkegaard’s stress on the absolute paradox is not a necessary part of that humanistic world-view and in fact conflicts with it. In Zuidema’s view, to speak of the paradox, or the Incarnation, is to reject humanistic existentialism. The papers that follow will negotiate, in one way or another, the purported tension between human self-determination and a Christian transcendental power. In our view, this tension is not destructive but creative.

Let us summarize at this point. Kierkegaard connects his version of Christianity, with its emphasis on the paradox of the Incarnation, and philosophy, with a powerful emphasis on bare human existence. He finds them inseparable. Zuidema stresses these opposed and interdependent strands of thought:

In an unprecedented manner he [Kierkegaard] related the concept of the “essence” of man to the idea of human *existence* and oriented our conception of the character of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ to the idea of *Absolute Paradox*. In Kierkegaard the idea of human existence was increasingly dependent upon the idea of Absolute Paradox and vice versa. Both conceptions are correlative and interdependent.²⁴

Kierkegaard develops an idea of the meaning of human existence in order to answer questions raised in his struggle to become a Christian. But the meaning of existence can be pursued without thinking that the Christian doctrine is a necessary part of that meaning. Zuidema goes so far as to hold that Kierkegaard “must do violence to his idea of [humanistic] existence in order to unite it with the idea of Absolute Paradox.”²⁵

For right or wrong Zuidema’s critique offers a useful challenge for understanding what might be conceived as tensions between Kierkegaard’s religious thinking and his reflections on human existence, between the task of becoming authentically human and becoming authentically Christian.

III.

What is involved in the quest for authentic faith? For Kierkegaard, this is not just an intellectual puzzle or question but the central ingredient in a personal aspiration. The question is an *existential* challenge for him. The first four articles in this collection explore whether Kierkegaard’s existential quest can escape self-deception. If the quest is vulnerable to self-deception, the authenticity of faith is at risk.

In the opening piece, Jacob Golomb, offers an original, sober and realistic answer to Kierkegaard’s confession of insufficient faith. Kierkegaard confesses that if he had had *enough* faith, he would have married Regine Olsen. He could not manage to live simultaneously ethically (in the mundane and universal, in marriage) and religiously (in an absolute and particular transcendence toward God). His inability to live loyally both to Regine and to God is the reverse of Abraham’s *ability* to live loyally to Isaac and to God. Thus Kierkegaard substantiates his own self-criticism: Abraham’s faith is higher than his own.

There is a dilemma contained in Climacus’ exposition of truth. Shai Frogel brings this out in the second article. He notes that Climacus calls perception of God a kind of acoustical illusion. But if there is awareness of something that is an illusion, then it must be rejected since it cannot be truth. And if, in spite of the recognition of the illusion it is nevertheless still held as truth—then this is a case of self-deception. Frogel leaves us wondering if an awareness of God can ever be more than self-deceptive and inauthentic.

Roi Benbassat sees faith as a struggle against specifically *ethical* self-deception. Authenticity can be an issue for someone in any one of Kierkegaard’s life-spheres. One can be inauthentic in aesthetic, ethical, or religious life. Benbassat suggests that authenticity (or its lack) connects the stages or spheres around a single ideal. But it also is the movement from

one stage to the next. Successfully facing one's inauthenticity at a lower stage brings one to a higher stage. More specifically, Benbassat shows how Kierkegaard's wrestling with authenticity at the ethical stage leads to a subtle and original perception of the religious stage. There may be a gap to leap between the ethical and the religious, but the motivation for a leap is found as ethical inauthenticity begins to surface.

Is it possible to consider authentic faith *without* taking belief in God, explicitly religious practice, or the absolute paradox, to be indisputably central? Edward F. Mooney claims that faith is not susceptible to self-deception—given the account in *Fear and Trembling*. On the contrary, faith *eliminates* any possibility of self-deception. He proposes, given *Fear and Trembling's* tax collector, for instance, that an open and undeceived *trust in the world* lies at the heart of faith. It is a trust that *embraces* rather than suppresses the world's manifold confusions and contradictions. Abraham, Job, or Kierkegaard may not share a common creed or religious institution, but they share a struggle for authenticity and consider themselves persons of faith. Among other things, their faith is an open trust enabling living among ineradicable contradictions. Far from dogmatism, faith is the most worthy way of life.

Moving away from considering Kierkegaard's quest for authentic faith on its own terms, the last five articles consider how Kierkegaard's conceptions of faith and self-deception are related to historical understanding, selfhood, Judaism, and the importance of specifically Christian content.

In "Faith and the Uncertainty of Historical Experience," Darío González poses the problem of understanding the Incarnation. How can one avoid deception, or self-deception, in taking up a belief in something that is not a phase in the evolution of a substantial reality, yet is not a purely mythical rendering of a historical existence, either? A central challenge for a believer is to specify what the *reality* of the Incarnation amounts to.

Without willing faith existentially, there would be no faith. Yet, as we have seen, whether one has faith is not entirely under one's control. A believer is dependent on God's grace to present him with the God he can choose to affirm. Jerome (Yehuda) Gellman claims that there is no contradiction between the idea that the believer chooses a position of faith and that faith is given apart from his choice. Gellman proceeds by distinguishing two occasions where the will is at work. First, a person might will to accept the *assignment of a task*, and second he might will to *complete a task*. Humans leap in accepting an assigned task, in the case at hand the task of attaining faith. Whether a person *achieves* the goal—completes the task—is *not* in his hands. To presume that one can complete becoming a self entirely without help is to fall into sin. To presume that one can take up the task of becoming a self is to be righteous. The outcome of taking it up will be in God's hands.

Peter Šajda asks, "Does Anti-Climacus' Ethical-Religious Theory of Selfhood Imply a Discontinuity of the Self?" He points out that if authentic faith is possible, we must assume continuity and persistence in the believer's self-awareness. We must assume that it is the *same person* who exists before and after any change in his being. In many respects, however, the believer

does change, often in deep and meaningful ways. If continuity in self is broken, how can the self be authentic? To answer this question, Sajda claims that the *reflexive dimensions* of a self secure the possibility of continuity in a self and the possibility of faith's authenticity.

For Kierkegaard, a believer's authenticity is dependent on a specific perception of Christianity and the ways of life it supports. In "Being in Truth and Being a Jew: Kierkegaard's View of Judaism," Tamar Aylat-Yaguri shows that Judaism is essential to the task of becoming a Christian, even if only by presenting what to avoid or negate. Kierkegaard identifies the defects of Judaism as the defects of the so-called Christianity that surrounds him, the defects that provoke his polemical attacks. The Jewishness he asks his reader to transcend is no less than Danish Christendom, Golden Age Christendom.

Jon Stewart addresses the apparent lack of content in Kierkegaard's picture of belief. In the *Postscript*, Climacus suggests that if only one prays in the right manner, even if one worships an idol, one can attain a faith that is truer and more authentic than that of one who prays to the true god, but in a false manner. In "Kierkegaard and Hegel on Faith and Knowledge," Stewart raises the question of how one can properly distinguish correct from incorrect belief if there is no difference in content. From a Hegelian point of view everything cannot rest on the *how* rather than the *what* of belief. Some concrete content is required to distinguish Christianity from other religions, pagan or otherwise.

Our desire is that this collection will make a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions about authenticity and faith in Kierkegaard. We hope that this volume will serve to stimulate further research and critical debate on this important issue.

Tamar Aylat-Yaguri (Tel Aviv)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Danish Abbreviations

- Pap.* *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, vols. I to XI-3, ed. by Peter Andreas Heiberg, Victor Kuhr and Einer Torsting, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909-48; second, expanded ed., vols. I to XI-3, by Niels Thulstrup, vols. XII to XIII supplementary volumes, ed. by Niels Thulstrup, vols. XIV to XVI index by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1968-78.
- SKS* *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vols. 1-28, vols. K1-K28, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, Alastair McKinnon and Finn Hauberg Mortensen, Copenhagen: Gads Forlag 1997-2013.

English Abbreviations

- BA* *The Book on Adler*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.
- CA* *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. by Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980.
- CD* *Christian Discourses*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.
- CUPI* *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982.
- EO2* *Either/Or*, Part Two, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987.
- FT* *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1983.
- FTP* *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1985.
- JC* *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985.

- JP* *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vols. 1–6, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (vol. 7, Index and Composite Collation), Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press 1967–78.
- KJN* *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vols. 1–11, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2007ff.
- M* *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.
- PC* *Practice in Christianity*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991.
- PF* *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985.
- PV* *The Point of View* including *On My Work as an Author*, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, and *Armed Neutrality*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.
- R* *Repetition*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1983.
- SUD* *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980.
- UD* *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.

CHAPTER ONE

WAS KIERKEGAARD AN AUTHENTIC BELIEVER?

JACOB GOLOMB

I want to introduce a certain revision of what I once thought was Kierkegaard's stance on authentic faith.¹ I will present this revision by dwelling upon his rather puzzling statement found in one of his journal entries: "If I had had faith I would have stayed with Regine."² We can read this confession as virtually admitting that "If I were a true believer like Abraham—I would marry Regine." And indeed what were his biographical reasons for acknowledging himself as not being a genuine Christian? He was not actually an arch-sinner any more than other people. He never committed heinous crimes for his or some other profits. He actually was more pious than his father who sinned before God—if we take the mysterious stories about him seriously enough.³ So why did Kierkegaard think that he would never attain the stance of authentic belief? And even more pertinent is the question: why did he think that his marriage with Regine would testify that he is a true believer? I believe that on the present account, the answer will appear quite obvious. Kierkegaard was well aware that the utmost authentic belief is impossible for us to attain. He also believed that we have to live a life that attests to the fact that, despite this awareness, we still are trying our best, and we still are committed to live the greatest paradox of all: to believe in the *what* and the *how* and to try and walk toward the kingdom of heaven despite our realization that such a kingdom is unattainable for us. This is Kierkegaard's existential version of the *credo quia absurdum est*.

In what follows I will speculate about the *philosophical reasons* for this confession using Kierkegaard's portrait of an authentic believer. I will emphasize the *philosophical reasons* since I am not interested here in what many of Kierkegaard's fans are interested in, namely, his rather flamboyant life, all kinds of gossip, etc., etc.⁴ I will not deal with the real Regine and their bizarre love affair, but will regard marriage as Kierkegaard had regarded it: as the highest expression of the ethical sphere of existence. Being myself married—I will not dare argue such a viewpoint.

I. Authentic Faith is Sincerity of Intention along with Passion Directed at One Object

As is now well known, the search for authenticity in modern Western thought begins with the desperate journal entry, dated August 1, 1835, of a twenty-two year old Dane: "the thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*."⁵

Kierkegaard was not talking here about objective cognitive truth; nor was he referring to the intellectual act of rationally grounding some kind of philosophical system. He wanted to create a pattern of life that would be *true for him* and would enable him to be true to himself. The creation of authentic life is an existential vocation; it is not relevant to various theoretical speculations. Kierkegaard asked himself in his journal: “What is truth other than living for an idea?”⁶ Here we encounter the insight that authentic life has less to do with a specific content, a *what*, and more to do with some particular existential walk of life, with a *how*. This is the background for his rather “scandalous” utterance, in his more philosophical book—the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, that “Truth is Subjectivity.”⁷ When I say “scandalous” I refer here to the many fans of the positivist, scientific or linguistic philosophy who could not stomach such an anti-scientific and anti-logical attitude, though one of their most eminent representatives and enlightened philosophers, Ludwig Wittgenstein, admired Kierkegaard, as is evident from his remarks that refer to Kierkegaard: “An honest religious thinker is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as though he were walking on nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it really is possible to walk on it.”⁸ How do we know that this is a reference to Kierkegaard? Simply because Kierkegaard had used the very same description of an authentic believer whose back is like a “tightrope dancer’s.”⁹

But what is exactly an authentic faith in Kierkegaard’s eyes? The clue to the answer is to be found in his eloquent maxim presented under his own name in his *Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits* from 1847: “Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing.”¹⁰ Thus, authenticity is sincerity of intention (“purity of heart”) along with passion (“to will”) directed at “one” object. This “thing,” according to Kierkegaard, is “God,” but especially, one’s own self. That is, authenticity consists in acts of willing passionately and sincerely to become a genuinely authentic individual, despite one’s awareness that becoming authentic requires a perpetual movement without definite results: “and where if there is indeed any truth in his willing one thing, this also assists him to the good.”¹¹

At the beginning of his torturous search for personal authenticity, Kierkegaard held the rather anti-Kantian view, based on his popular adoption of Kantian ethics, namely, that in the ethical sphere of life alone one cannot become an authentic moral agent. Because of its reflective and abstract nature, the ethical object, though preserving the sincerity of intent (sincerity being in itself an ethical category) cannot enlist the optimal intensity of passion required for authentic acts. Hence, Kierkegaard used to assert that it was only in the religious sphere that the *what* does not destroy the *how*. Appearing as an infinite being, it incites the most intense passion, and vice versa: a certain manner of willing and intending—like the absolute and unconditional passion—gives the *what* of faith.

However, Kierkegaard could not point to any concrete individual who has manifested the extremely subjective pathos of an authentic belief and hence he had recourse to the semi-fictive portrait of Abraham of the Bible.¹² The impossibility of being able to point to concrete living or dead

individuals as authentic figures¹³ does not stem *solely* from the fact that authenticity “begins precisely where thought stops,”¹⁴ thereby making the ethos of objectivity and rationality quite irrelevant to the personal quest for authentic existence. This existential concern cannot rely any more on all public criteria of judgment. Kierkegaard believed that it also has to do with the intrinsic nature of authenticity that revolves around one’s innermost self and the subjective “inwardness” of passion. Outwardly, the authentic hero may even look like a “tax collector,”¹⁵ like any philistine exercising his conventional and ethical modes of living. But inwardly, it is a different story altogether. Abraham’s self, tested and forged by the dreadful encounter with the Absolute, acquired a qualitatively new nature. Kierkegaard uses this point to reject the familiar philosophical maxim of Hegelian philosophy, that “the outer is higher than the inner.”¹⁶ Thus, in the ethical sphere, the moral agent’s rational duty (namely, in the Kantian version) has to “become revealed” and to express one’s subjectivity. While the ethic of honesty and sincerity is objective, public, and transparently manifested, the pathos of authenticity is concealed, radically subjective, and is externalized only rarely, in momentous acts of existential “truthfulness” rather than in the cognitive acts that, at most, help us to attain certain truths that are mostly irrelevant to our happiness and well-being.¹⁷

Furthermore, the individual always finds it difficult to be sure of his or her authenticity. In diametrical opposition to Hegel’s image of man, the “knight of faith,” renouncing the universal language of reflective thought, cannot become intelligible even to himself. “Abraham,” the paradigmatic “knight of faith,” “remains silent—but he *cannot* speak.”¹⁸ His immediate, faithful and private relation to God makes it impossible for him to speak to Isaac or to anyone else. I believe that this description stood before Wittgenstein’s eyes when he uttered the rather mystical sentence at the end of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.”¹⁹

In any case, Kierkegaard interprets the Biblical story as Abraham’s attempt to test his religious commitment by an extraordinary act of sacrifice. Only such an act can attest to the authenticity of the believer. In other words, by his determined act to sacrifice his dearest for the sake of God, Abraham proves to be an authentic believer. This explains why, in an essay on authenticity in the sense of *auctoritas* (i.e., possessing original or inherent authority), Kierkegaard answers as follows the question of how an Apostle can prove he has authority: “An apostle has no other evidence than his own statement, and at the most his willingness to suffer everything joyfully for the sake of that statement.”²⁰ In other words, one cannot prove that one is authentic, but one can feel in one’s innermost self the need for authenticity and thus seek it for one’s life.

Abraham cannot analyze himself or immerse in endless reflection. Because of his great passion, he is not paralyzed at the moment of truth or rather of truthfulness. For Kierkegaard, the ideas of passion and uncertainty are interrelated; it is the most uncertain thing that excites our most burning passion. Thus Abraham has to risk the possibility that it is not God who summons him to sacrifice Isaac, but Satan, or an unconscious urge, or a

delusion. After all, Abraham's decision to sacrifice Isaac might be a horrible ordeal, a "*temptation*"²¹ (what Kierkegaard calls "*Fristelse*" or in German *Anfechtung*.) This is the "anxiety" which faces Abraham in his ordeal on Mount Moriah. This is an anxiety he freely has chosen to take upon himself:

The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac—but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is.²²

Even when the "knife gleamed," Abraham, by virtue of his absurd faith, still believed that "God would not require Isaac."²³

According to ethical standards the universal always takes precedence over the particular. Yet the paradox of faith is that the particular becomes higher than the universal by virtue of its passionate relation to the Absolute.²⁴ Even the murder of one's son can be a holy act if done at the behest of God. Faith is a passion that begins at the point where reason ceases to operate; it means believing the absurd, contrary to all rational, earthly calculations. Because it is a relationship between the finite and the infinite, between the ephemeral and the absolute, it supersedes all else. The "absolute duty" to God renders all other ethical obligations relative. But are we ready, for the sake of our authenticity, to perform the "teleological suspension of the ethical" and behave like Abraham, who "by his act...transgressed the ethical altogether?"²⁵

Thus it seems that at the beginning of his pseudonymous authorship, the first modern philosopher of authenticity was willing to involve us in a serious clash between this authenticity and ethics. His version of the story of Abraham seems to suggest that the road to authenticity may even pass beyond rational communication and everyday ethics. But to attain authentic life we should not hesitate to enter this twilight zone even at the terrible price of "crucifying" our understanding.

Here it is possible to argue against Kierkegaard that if the crucial factor in authenticity is the *how* of passion, does it not follow that on his view it is better to be a zealous Nazi than a lukewarm Christian? Is Abraham a highly esteemed "knight of faith" or just a zealous murderer? If an authentic mode of living requires an individual's total and passionate commitment and uncompromising rejection of anything that is alien or contradictory to it—could it be that a passionate Nazi or religious fanatic is to be regarded as an authentic subject deserving our highest esteem? Such questions were directed to Kierkegaard by various unsympathetic critics. According to my first version of his position,²⁶ I thought that a partial defense against such attacks could be easily raised.

As we saw, Kierkegaard held that authenticity is formed by a kind of correlation between the *what* of commitment and the *how* of committing oneself. Kierkegaard seems to think that any *idée fixe* or ideology directed toward a finite and limited object, even such as "the thousand-year Reich," cannot in principle incite the "endless passion" required for acting

authentically. Only an infinite and absolute object or paradox, can evoke the required absolute passion. Our authenticity may emerge only through the “suspension” of reason and logic. But for this we need an object, like that of a religious faith, which will demand that we do exactly that, namely, bracket out our morality codes.

However, one may object and argue that psychologically at least, it is still plausible that even a finite object, such as my love for a woman, can incite me to such a degree of passion that I may sacrifice everything to preserve my absolute commitment to her. And indeed Kierkegaard describes love in terms similar to those he uses for faith, saying, “To love is plain and simple pathos.”²⁷ It seems that there is no obstacle to becoming passionately committed to a contingent and finite object, whom I may love just as authentically as I may believe in the Absolute. Why then is my faith in the Absolute God the exclusively genuine expression of an authentic commitment?

To “rescue” Kierkegaard from any criminal charges, I once provided a possible answer to this question, which might be regarded as scandalous by believers in any version of a transcendent God, namely, this kind of faith is actually an expression of the ultimate paradox and requires man’s most sustained creativity. To “create” God requires the utmost passion possible of man. I do not refer here, of course, to an actual creation but to *the intentional constitution* of the relation to an object which, by this very relation, becomes the Absolute. In his version of the story of Abraham, Kierkegaard implies that the existential experience, which makes the “knight of faith” affirm the command subjectively and regard it as coming from God, grants this God the status of being an absolute entity *for* Abraham. In order for the Absolute to become an Absolute for me and to demand of me “an absolute duty,” this Absolute is dependent upon my subjective interpretation of Him as *the Absolute*. Here we reach the climax of the paradox: despite Abraham’s awareness that the Absolute is dependent upon his decision to make Him so, a fact that may destroy the “immediate” or unmediated relation towards Him, Abraham acts as if this Absolute has an objective authority to be the Absolute! Though the Absolute depends upon one’s subjective decision, one has to accept Him, as does Abraham, as if he is the objective Absolute *per se*. Thus, God is intentionally created in our hearts, though we obey Him as ontologically aloof in heaven.

Furthermore, I even claimed that Kierkegaard maximized and sharpened the distinction between man and God in order to make religious faith the most authentic and authoritative thing imaginable. The gap between God and man is infinite because it is man who made it so, creating religions of transcendence. We should remember that both Abraham and Jesus were founders and originators of specific faiths, and since originality is part of the meaning of the notion of authenticity, both may legitimately be regarded, as indeed they were, as authentic “knights of faith.” Whereas the most passionate lover only forms passion in his inwardness and directs it to an *already existing* individual, the “knight of faith” creates, first the object of his faith, and then the passion involved in the faithful commitment to this object. Thus, the intimate correlation between the *how* of faith and its *what*

is entirely of his making. Therefore, only this formative relation can create the self's authenticity. To create one's own self, one must first overcome one's sensual nature (aesthetics), then the universal (Kantian-ethical) Reason; only then can one become the genuine knight of Faith: the sole creator of one's self and God.

For this, the utmost passion, commitment and self-overcoming are needed. One must be deeply immersed in the search for authenticity. In ethics, we have a similar *what/how* correlation, but because of the abstractness of its objects, and the amount of rational reflection involved, passion evaporates and the subject cannot become truly committed to the object of his creation. In his understanding of the ethical sphere, Kierkegaard was dependent on Kant's popular version of moral philosophy. Hence he believed that the ethical domain lacked the passion required for authenticity, that duty swallowed up love.

II. A Viable Co-Existence of Authentic Faith with Morality

This romantic and rather immature view was held by the young Kierkegaard and by his no older present commentator. But this view is far from explaining Kierkegaard's sincere confession that he could not believe like Abraham. Why? Had he not renounced his most beloved Regine to exist alone vis-à-vis God? Had he not the passionate commitment Abraham had? The scenario portrayed above could not explain exactly what was wrong with Kierkegaard that he could not become the "knight of faith" like his sublime model, Abraham. Hence I reread certain passages in Kierkegaard's writings and realized that I (with many other commentators) did not take seriously Kierkegaard's insistence about the necessarily required viable *co-existence* of the religiousness with ethics.

In this context it became clear to me that the most important decisive claim of Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* is the following: "it is great to give up one's desire, but it is greater to hold fast to it after having given it up; it is great to lay hold of the eternal, but it is greater to hold fast to the temporal after having given it up."²⁸ Hence, what is really at stake here is not exactly the double-movement, about which so much was written, but actually the *double co-existence* of the infinite *and* the finite, of the transcendent and the empirically given, of love for God and love for other human beings.

This is further substantiated by Kierkegaard's revealing statement in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* to the effect that "the ethical and the religious stages have an essential relation to each other."²⁹ To understand this claim, we have to realize that Kantian and Hegelian ethics of sincerity and honesty, which constitutes a social and bourgeois way of life, actually paved the way for Kierkegaard's authentic faith since sincerity is the *sine qua non* condition (but not the only one) of every authentic stance. Thus it appears that the mature, post-romantic Kierkegaard maintains now that it is almost impossible to be an authentic believer without being a moral agent. Abraham was such an example that Kierkegaard could not imitate.

He could not become Abraham—“knight of faith,” and because he did not have enough passion to be able to live a *viable synthesis* of the ethical and the religious, his mental and spiritual resources were humanly lower than those of his religious “knight of faith,” i.e., the sublime Abraham.

Furthermore, if our faith in God is of our own intentional making—so is our love for another person, and from the point of intentionality there is really no difference between these cases. Thus, Abraham could love his God and have an absolute relation to Him, but he also could love Sarah and be able to return to her tent after the ordeal on Mount Moriah. Moreover, when one ceased to love one’s God, one’s God no more intentionally exists for that one because, according to Kierkegaard, “Truth is Subjectivity.”³⁰ However, the same is true of one’s love for another significant person like, for example, Kierkegaard’s Regine. When one stops loving her she virtually becomes nonexistent, and one slowly becomes indifferent, from that moment on, to her very well-being. So, from the subjective point of view, both cases, the love for God and the love for Regine, entail the same intentional acts. But when one lacks enough spiritual stamina and utmost sincere passion for *both* of these intentional objects—the inner equilibrium is shattered and one is left either with one’s God or with one’s earthly love or with none at all.

This is what I think has happened to Kierkegaard, and hence his confession that I quoted at the beginning of my paper. And then I realized that the crux of the Abraham story, as presented by Kierkegaard, a part rather too hastily omitted by his once immature commentator (namely, myself), is the motive of a *return*. By “return” I mean here, one’s ability to *co-exist* with the infinite Absolute and *also* with the finite and earthly relations, such that might bestow upon us, mortals, that mundane, everyday happiness.

This motive is gastronomically portrayed in *Fear and Trembling* by Kierkegaard describing the believer as a kind of a “postman” or tax collector who, upon returning from the Mount Moriah,

thinks that his wife surely will have a special hot meal for him when he comes home—for example, roast lamb’s head with vegetables....In the evening, he smokes his pipe...he knows the blessedness of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything, the most precious thing in the world, and yet the finite tastes just as good to him as to one who never knew anything higher.... He resigned everything infinitely, and then grasped everything again by virtue of the absurd.³¹

All in all, the young Kierkegaard had deceived himself about the analogy he had drawn in his life and thought: thus as Abraham renounced his earthly life and happiness (and his son Isaac and his mundane status as father of many nations), so Kierkegaard will renounce Regine and his possibility for ethical and earthly happiness and love. However, the mature Kierkegaard caught his self-deception and realized that actually Abraham renounced nothing! On the contrary, he gained the status of *sub specie aeternitatis* simultaneously with the earthly fulfillment. Abraham believed that he would be able to live with the eternal transcendent *alongside* the temporal

and the empirical. This attitude Kierkegaard could not adopt in his life. He felt that he could not live the normal ethical life after the encounter with the Absolute. It was not in his power to live a mundane ethical life alongside the unmediated relation with the Absolute.

To have eternity in one's heart and to hold dear earthly values of marriage and family—this is the real story and moral of the *Akedah* as poetically presented by Kierkegaard. Not the drama of the *Akedah* proper but the ability to live prosaic everyday life—for example to enjoy Sarah's dishes—and at the same time to dwell in the transcendental lofty domain is what made Abraham what he was: an authentic “knight of faith.” This is the tension and the real ordeal that Abraham passed with flying colors but Kierkegaard could not embrace.

Abraham could carry on the dialogue with the Absolute and, at the same time, with a significant other. He could do it because he strongly and passionately believed that his dialogue with God would not disrupt, or come at the expense of, his other earthly commitments. Kierkegaard did not believe that, and henceforth he would not become the “knight of faith.” To put it more precisely, the real problem is not the intentional creativity of different objects of worship and/or of love, the eternal and the mundane, but the problem is how to *co-exist* with these objects simultaneously without losing the ethical or the religious and how to maintain intensively passionate relations with both of them.

Kierkegaard was not sure that he would be able to contain and withstand the possible clash between the authentic belief and ethical-communal life, namely, to believe in God and to love Regine unconditionally at the same time. In other words, he did not feel that he had enough passion to be able to love his God unconditionally and to co-exist in an earthly relation and express an earthly love toward Regine. But if Kierkegaard could not—could we, mortals, climb the lofty and sublime peaks of an authentic faith? In any case, it became clear to me that if Kierkegaard would authentically believe, that is, had an unmediated and absolute faith, he would be sure that all other relations, being only relative and finite, would not be able to stand in his way toward the authentic belief.

Thus I think that Kierkegaard would gladly adopt Nietzsche's famous saying, to the effect that “in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross.”³² The fact is that Kierkegaard never spoke about how one is a Christian or a believer but only of the excruciating process of *becoming* a Christian or a believer. The truth is the way and never dwells on the final steps of our existential ladder.

Vis-à-vis the Nietzschean secular authentic hero of the fictive Zarathustra whose book is “For Everyone and No One”³³—also Kierkegaard's authentic “knight of faith” Abraham is a sheer fictive imagination of a truly committed believer, who finally became a citizen in both sublime human worlds: the transcendental and the mundane; the world of earthly ethics and the lofty world of transcendence and the infinite faith and infinite sacrifice. Nietzsche thought that nobody can in reality attain the genuine stance of an authentic atheist who optimally manifests in his life the “patterns of positive power,”³⁴ namely, that of the fictive Zarathustra. Whereas, Kierkegaard, fifty years

before him, thought that nobody, with the exception of the fictive Abraham and Jesus, could attain the religious and ethical patterns of an authentic belief. I hope and believe that he was quite wrong—otherwise we really will find ourselves in a big mess and deep troubles when the zealous religious fanatics (of all creeds) commit numerous acts of bloodshed and sheer terror.

Only God could act within the finite empirical sphere and, simultaneously, within the sublime eternal realm. Those among us who, out of various religious and messianic reasons, tried to become new and militant “Abrahams” by claiming, for example, some finite earthly territory for their own “salvation” and “salvation” of their people, will not only bring havoc upon themselves but will vainly sacrifice other “Isaacs” who will perish because nobody can believe like Abraham did and like Kierkegaard could not.

The important lesson for us all is that Kierkegaard did not think that a zealous and fanatical believer can sacrifice other human beings on the altars of his uncompromising belief. Genuine and authentic belief can only be realized within the sphere of the ethical and within a society of humans. Without a society there can be no meaning for authentic faith, and, Kierkegaard, by withdrawing from society and by breaking his relations with Regine, could not become a “knight of faith” as could Abraham, his sublime model for authentic religiousness.

III. Epilogue: “And all three of them would be together in the hereafter, Fritz and Søren and Regine”

In an apathetic age, devoid of passion and genuinely Christian sentiments, an unchristian age that “recoils and gets lost in an endless and fruitless reflexion,”³⁵ Kierkegaard tried to instill within us the thirst for an authentic faith. He did so, in order for us to try our best to at least approximate, as far as we can, the committed individual who rejects the seductions of shallow Christianity or Judaism, for something more sublime and more invigorating than the daily business of paying our taxes and gaining material profits at the cost of spiritual exaltation. In contradiction to the Kantian ethical view that “you ought because you can,” we can hear Kierkegaard’s whisper in our ears, “you ought to try hard because you cannot.” This, in my view, is the ultimate paradox, or rather absurdity, of his religious attitude which is religious and sublime precisely because we are exerting our best efforts to obtain what, in principle, is not given to us humans: to become genuine Christians or Jews or Moslems, the true “knights of faith.”

However, we still can attempt to attain the unattainable. This requires the optimal faith in ourselves and in our God and the most powerful passion that can withstand even the possibility of an impossibility and can live a full and earthly life, including the marriage with Regine, despite our full awareness that we shall never enter the eternal kingdom of Heaven. In other words, we had to do the utmost in order to make our mundane existence into a kind of heaven on Earth. This quite unexpected conclusion turns Kierkegaard’s attitude into the most humanistic one, possible for us humans.

By the end of his stormy romantic rebellion against Kant and Hegel, Kierkegaard came to think in Kantian terms not only of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, but of the authentic faith within the limits of ethics alone. Abraham could dwell and prosper within these limits alone but not Kierkegaard. Hence he could become neither an authentic believer nor an authentic moral agent. He is thwarted from entering either of these kingdoms—hence his disparate confession I quoted at the beginning of this paper.

Kierkegaard wanted us to adopt a genuine believe in the Absolute, not because of the Church’s enticement that in this way we will gain eternal life and resurrection after death, but on the contrary, despite the painful awareness that the gates of eternity and heaven are closed before us, we will still try to do the utmost and believe in the possibility of salvation without renouncing our finite and earthly happiness and ethics. To be an ethical person without any theological rationalization for ethics is for Kierkegaard—as for Kant, the ultimate bravura of morality. Specifically, to become a moral person—without needing any recourse to the belief in the transcendent, is to be a genuinely moral person. However, to be able to adopt a religious faith and to hold firmly to the ethical one no matter what—is to become a genuine knight of faith. And if Regine is a necessary part of it—so much the better.

Thus, one may speculate, that by this stance Kierkegaard wanted to help attain the lofty morality of Kant, without using any pathological (from *pathos*, feeling) or non-moral means. He shifted the unattainable Kantian ethics to the domain of faith and consigned the humanly possible ethics (without using the religious enticement within the “domain of reason alone”) to reign on earth. The Kantian “kingdom of telos” as portrayed in his abstract ethical compositions became in Kierkegaard’s humanistic approach an earthly domain of morality.

The crucial point Kierkegaard was trying to make is how one can return from the “Heart of Darkness” (to use Joseph Conrad’s famous title³⁶) to live the civilized life despite one’s knowledge of the human abyss and one’s ability to do evil. By the same token the real test of the authentic believer is not to face the test that Abraham was confronted with but to *return* from this test and to live a trivial ethical civilized life with the bliss of faith in one’s heart. The more powerful the passion of one’s faith is, the better are the chances of one’s return to the normal. Kierkegaard did not feel such a passion, which he attributed only to Abraham, and thus he felt that he was not an authentic believer. Who are we to argue against his own condemnation and perhaps also his self-inflicted damnation?

Thus the answer to the question implied by the discussion so far—was Kierkegaard an authentic believer?—is, like most answers in philosophy generally, that we cannot know for sure. The extremely subjective pathos of authenticity prevents any attempt of an outsider to know if one is an authentic believer or not.³⁷ The lack of any rational and objective criteria to judge or justify one’s authenticity, makes any such attempt a sheer speculative enterprise. But by the same token, Kierkegaard himself could not know whether he was or was not an authentic believer—only actions, sacrifices and existential tests can attest to one’s authenticity or the lack of

it. By not marrying Regine and by abstaining from any resolute and positive action, Kierkegaard realized, quite correctly one must add, that he was not an authentic believer like his idealized model, Abraham, who managed to live spontaneously in two spheres of life, the ethical and the religious, by finding a viable *modus vivendi* and a living synthesis between the two. Not marrying is not doing and not daring to live the ethical life with the religious ones. Thus Kierkegaard was right about himself and also about the other humans struggling to make the leap of faith and the leap of love simultaneously.

Kierkegaard could renounce his relation with Regine, like Abraham renounced his standing as the future father of nations (of *Goiim*), and the husband and father of his family (Sarah and Isaac). This was the easier task, and the fact is that indeed Kierkegaard renounced his marriage with Regine. But to return from his confrontation with the Absolute and return to Regine, like Abraham to the tent of Sarah after his ordeal on Moriah, was beyond Kierkegaard's power. For this one needs the absolute faith which was that of Abraham, the epitome of authentic faith. Kierkegaard knew it, or more precisely *felt* it—hence his confession that he had fallen short from the religiousness of Abraham. He was, of course, right since being right or wrong on the matters of faith is not part of a cognitive judgment, but of an arational, existential faith, that only Abraham could achieve—but Kierkegaard in his own life could not.

Let me end this piece with a fascinating description by Kierkegaard's biographer, Joakim Garff who, after informing his readers that Kierkegaard was buried not far from his Regine's husband, presents his exciting speculation:

When Regine left her apartment . . . to visit her spouse's grave—since she was in the memorial park *anyway*—might she not have walked over, quietly and unobserved, to Kierkegaard's grave? ...And *him*, the man down there, it was he, after all, who had once told her that since in Heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, all three of them would be together in the hereafter, Fritz and Søren and Regine.³⁸

CHAPTER TWO

ACOUSTICAL ILLUSION AS SELF-DECEPTION

SHAI FROGEL

I'm neither a Kierkegaard scholar nor a believer. As a matter of fact, I think that (religious) faith necessarily involves self-deception since faith means accepting something as true even though one does not really know whether it is true or not. Yet philosophical thinking has a special interest precisely in this process of self-deception. Socrates was the first to claim this when he defined the goal of philosophy as a struggle against our inherent tendency to imagine we know what we do not know. Kierkegaard continues Socrates' legacy and makes every effort not to fall into self-deception, which, for him, means sinking into a mistaken mode of existence. His discussion of "An Acoustical Illusion" in *Philosophical Fragments* is very stimulating in this respect and will be the focus of my paper.¹

Since, as I confessed at the outset, I'm not a Kierkegaard scholar, I limit myself to this text alone without claiming that my interpretation is compatible with other texts by Kierkegaard. Nevertheless, I don't believe the same philosopher can have different faces, not even when he escapes into symbolic pseudonyms. If all the pseudonyms do indeed refer to the same person, I think that common traces can be found in all of them. This issue, however, belongs to a different discussion. My point is that from a philosophical perspective, it is the truth that matters, not the historical reference. If a certain text serves to advance our philosophical thinking, it really does not matter whether it is by Climacus, Kierkegaard or some unknown writer. For this reason, I don't find much philosophical value in arguments such as "but this is Climacus and not Kierkegaard," or "but Kierkegaard argues differently in other texts," or "but Kierkegaard has no consistent or constant view."² It is obviously possible that my interpretation is defective, and it is most certainly not comprehensive, but it does attempt to follow a close reading of the text. The goal of my analysis is to examine the idea of "acoustical illusion" as a form of self-deception.

What is "acoustical illusion"? "Thus, although the offense, however it expresses itself, sounds from somewhere else—indeed, from the opposite corner—nevertheless it is the paradox that resounds in it, and this indeed is an acoustical illusion."³ Climacus' description of acoustical illusion evokes the prisoners in Plato's cave, who wrongly associate the echo they hear with the shadows on the wall. Climacus, however, is not speaking here about sensual illusion, but rather about existential illusion (actually, Plato refers to existential illusion as well). An "acoustical illusion" might cause one to reject the paradox and thus to miss the truth of faith. How does Climacus arrive at the problem of acoustical illusion? And how can it be interpreted as a form of self-deception?

One finds the first clue for Climacus' motivation in this "pamphlet" (to use his term) in the motto he quotes from William Shakespeare: "*better well-hanged than ill-wed*."⁴ Let's adopt a working assumption that *well-hanged* means living with true and disturbing doubts, and *ill-wed* means living in sweet illusion. C. Stephen Evans, for example, suggests that the motto can be understood to claim that it is better to reject Christianity than to save it by false philosophy.⁵ I believe our interpretations are close, yet my interest lies not in Christianity but in philosophy. If one accepts such an interpretation, then by quoting this motto, Climacus presents the philosophical attitude that prefers despair to illusion (through Christian eyes, this motto may have different connotations: suffering is better than sin). In this view, the main target of philosophical criticism is our own truths. The first sentence of this pamphlet expresses this very suspicious nature of philosophical thinking: "Can the truth be learned?"⁶

Climacus follows Socrates in his search to understand the possibility of knowing. He adopts Socrates' view that learning can only be an active process undertaken by the learner, and not a passive process of accepting or absorbing knowledge from external authorities. "In the Socratic view," he claims, "every human being is himself the midpoint, and the whole world focuses only on him because his self-knowledge is God-knowledge."⁷ Socrates claims that each individual carries within himself the truth, which can be known only through a process of self-knowledge. This idea, Climacus argues, distinguishes Socrates from the philosophers of nature. Since the truth is internal as well as eternal, the moment in which it is learned is accidental and does not depend on external evidence or an encounter with a specific person.

Climacus attempts to go beyond Socrates by establishing a different conception of the moment of learning, turning it into a moment of revelation rather than recollection. He sees this moment as a significant one, in which the eternal appears in history. This, for Climacus, is the paradox of knowledge or, more precisely, of religious knowledge: the paradox of faith.

Socrates solves the paradox of knowledge—how does one recognize the truth one does not know?—by means of the theory of recollection. This theory postulates that the truth is already within us and to "know" means, in fact, to recollect. Yet Socrates does not discuss the questions *why* and *how* the moment of learning comes into existence precisely at one specific moment rather than another. For him, this event is accidental or occasional; one may say it is in the hands of a blind and unknown destiny. But if one assumes that the moment is significant rather than accidental, then the whole picture changes. If the moment is significant, it cannot be the mere accidental realization of something the learner already carried within himself; it must be reconceived as a moment in which he receives something that he could not have received on any other occasion. At this significant moment, the learner is saved from the deluded certitudes of his own self-thinking, and opens himself up to the truth. This can happen only if he encounters someone ultimately different from himself, someone who is able to reveal to him that he has been living in error (untruth).

It makes no difference for my discussion whether or not Climacus speaks about something that actually occurred; he himself conducts his own discussion under the *if* of his assumption, i.e., *if* the moment is significant.⁸ My point is that he adopts the philosophical view that the learning of truth must begin by getting rid of deluded certitudes. Socrates believed this could be done through philosophical interrogation; René Descartes, to give another example, suggested hyperbolic doubt for this purpose.⁹ In contrast, Climacus claims that only divine intervention can truly cause this to happen. This distinguishes him from the philosophers and makes him a theologian. Indeed, Climacus brings to his discussion Christian terms for describing this moment: “Let us call this transition *rebirth*.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, it is very important for Climacus to keep close to the realm of philosophy. Hence, when he comes to discuss the *Absolute Paradox*, he does so by referring to the paradox which troubled Socrates in the *Phaedrus*: “whether he was a more curious monster than Typhon or a friendlier and simpler being, by nature sharing something divine.”¹¹ Climacus suggests that a paradox is not the enemy of thought but rather its motive, its passion, that true thinking is driven by the paradox.¹² Yet he adds that every passion inherently wills its own downfall, and that this holds true for the passion of understanding as well. This move allows him to define the ultimate paradox of thought: “...to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think.”¹³

Climacus names this the “unthinkable,” the “unknown,” the “totally different,” “god”—as if the idea is important and not the name (when he names it god, he adds “it is only a name we give to it”¹⁴). This “unknown” (or “god”) puts understanding into a state of confusion:

The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown, which certainly does exist but is also unknown and to that extent does not exist. The understanding does not go beyond this; yet in its paradoxicality, the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it, because wanting to express its relation to it by saying that this unknown does not exist will not do, since just saying that involves a relation.¹⁵

This dialectical relation between understanding and the unknown which, on the one hand, keeps understanding vital but, on the other hand, threatens its consistency, is fertile ground for self-deception. And, indeed, Climacus argues, this is the very process in which one who seeks understanding is inevitably involved: “Adhering to the understanding, the difference [between the understanding and the unknown] has so confused the understanding that it does not know itself and quite consistently confuses itself with the difference.”¹⁶

The way out of this self-deception of understanding is to be found, Climacus claims, in an encounter with the ultimate difference, with the unknown (or god). When understanding remains within itself, it cannot escape—precisely at its highest levels—self-deception: it considers the difference as if it relates to it, yet if it relates to it, it is not the difference.

The only true way to encounter the difference, Climacus argues, is by means of sin. Socrates lacked the consciousness of sin and therefore could not transform the paradox of knowledge into the truth of faith. The consciousness of sin is the meeting point between man and god, and leads to the rebirth of man as a believer and to truth. Climacus is aware that this existential move goes against understanding, but he insists:

The understanding certainly cannot think it, cannot hit upon it on its own, and if it is proclaimed, the understanding cannot understand it and merely detects that it will likely be its downfall. To that extent, the understanding has strong objections to it; and yet, on the other hand, in its paradoxical passion, the understanding does indeed will its own downfall. But the paradox, too, wills this downfall of understanding, and thus the two have a mutual understanding, but this understanding is present only in the moment of passion.¹⁷

Climacus' attempt to give this unique passion a name brings him to discuss the problem of acoustical illusion. He speaks of two possible encounters between understanding and the paradox: the happy and the unhappy. He focuses on the unhappy one, since this is the one that can potentially cause us to miss the truth of faith. The offense involved in such unhappy encounters should not, he argues, confuse us: it does not indicate the falsity of the paradox but just the contrary: it is a sign of its truth. The unhappiness is precisely the distress of the man of reason who faces something beyond the limits of his understanding.

Climacus employs Spinoza's idea that truth is the sign of itself as well as of the false in order to argue that "offense does not understand itself but is understood by the paradox."¹⁸ That is to say, Climacus claims that the paradox is the criterion of truth—surely not of understanding, but of faith. This criterion, he suggests, like the truth in Spinoza's philosophy of understanding, must not and cannot find justification outside itself because it is itself the sign of what is true and what is false. And yet, Climacus rightly assumes that men of reason consider offense to be a sign of falsity, not of truth, especially when it is evoked by the paradox. In this context he introduces the idea of an acoustical illusion: "Thus, although the offense, however it expresses itself, sounds from somewhere else—indeed, from the opposite corner—nevertheless it is the paradox that resounds in it, and this indeed is an acoustical illusion."¹⁹

An acoustical illusion, if so, is to take wrongly the offense as coming from understanding and not from the paradox, as an obstacle in the way towards understanding, and hence as a sign of error. It is an illusion since it is a misperception of the moment: the philosopher rejects the offense as a failure of understanding, while it is in fact an indication of our encounter with the unknown, our sole chance of discovering the truth. It is acoustical since the philosopher hears the sound (the sound of the illogical) rather than the voice (the voice of truth). In other words, the philosopher cannot hear the truth of faith since philosophers reject the unthinkable as untrue. This move can be interpreted as self-deception because philosophers actively reject the

paradox in order to preserve the coherence of their understanding. Thus, in stark contrast to philosophy's definition of self-deception as one's denial of understanding for the sake of staying within the safe domain of irrationality, faith conceives of self-deception as one's denial of the irrational (the paradox) for the sake of staying within the safe domain of rationality (understanding). Climacus struggles hard against his philosophical tendencies in order not to miss this truth of faith.²⁰ This is how he formulates the essential point (the choice between philosophy (understanding) and faith (the paradox)):

If we do not assume the moment, then we go back to Socrates, and it was precisely from him that we wanted to take leave in order to discover something. If the moment is posited, the paradox is there, for in its most abbreviated form the paradox can be called the moment. Through the moment, the learner becomes untruth; the person who knew himself become confused about himself and instead of self-knowledge he acquires the consciousness of sin etc., for just as soon as we assume the moment, everything goes by itself.²¹

The key question regarding the choice between philosophy and faith, between understanding and the paradox, is the question of the moment. If we assume the moment to be meaningless, we are in philosophy. If, however, we assume it to be significant, we move into the realm of faith. Climacus does not present these two alternatives objectively for detached intellectual reflection, but rather in order to persuade himself that the philosophical alternative is wrong. The unthinkable has no meaning or existence in philosophy until it becomes thinkable; but then, of course, it is no longer the unthinkable. Furthermore, the touchstone for truth in philosophy, as Climacus himself argues at the beginning of the pamphlet, is the understanding within each individual. From this point of view, what Climacus names "an acoustical illusion" is not an illusion at all, but a proper response of philosophical thinking to the unthinkable. Philosophy demands that one take understanding as far as one can, refusing to accept the unthinkable or the unknown as either true *or* false. Climacus is very aware of this but is nevertheless unable to resist his passion for faith. As Friedrich Nietzsche puts it: "For this is how man is: An article of faith could be refuted before him a thousand times—if he needed it, he would consider it 'true' again and again, in accordance with that famous 'proof of strength' of which the Bible speaks."²²

Climacus, like Johannes de silentio in *Fear and Trembling*, is well aware that faith demands a leap that philosophy forbids. Both, each in his own way, attempt to persuade themselves that this need not stop them since faith is superior to philosophy, not inferior to it. De silentio attempts to justify the leap of faith by engaging in a careful analysis of Abraham's mode of existence in the binding of Isaac; but he fails. Even at the end of his book, he still asks himself whether Abraham was a murderer or a believer. Climacus also seems, as Pojman claims, not to reach his goal. He explains the difficulty entailed in becoming a Christian but does not succeed in adhering to the absurd.²³

The philosopher's thinking and mode of existence—as Socrates, Spinoza and Nietzsche demonstrate well—is fundamentally different from the believer's thinking and mode of existence. Kierkegaard agrees with this position, but in opposition to these philosophers, he does not assume that philosophy is superior to faith. The enormous effort he puts into demonstrating the superiority of faith over philosophy could indicate either that he fails to be a true believer, or that he cannot help but be a believer. I cannot judge whether Kierkegaard was a true believer or an unbeliever who tries hard to become one. One thing, however, seems clear from the reading of his *Philosophical Fragments*: he was a philosopher who was well aware of the threat posed to thinking by self-deception. Since in this text he speaks from the perspective of faith, he draws our attention to one of the most common self-deceptions in philosophy: when a philosopher rejects something as untrue just because the philosopher cannot think it.

Climacus attempts to persuade, mainly himself, that it is precisely this conflict within understanding that characterizes the moment of revelation of the truth. From a philosophical point of view, this sounds like a self-deception: Climacus (or Kierkegaard) transforms a moment of false understanding into a moment of truth. The paradox is indeed a crucial moment for thinking from a philosophical perspective as well (see Socrates' dialectical dialogues, Kant's antinomies or Hegel's dialectics), but cannot be accepted in philosophy as a moment of truth. It seems that Kierkegaard would agree with this last statement, since Climacus, like *de silentio*, finally claims that one must choose between philosophy and faith.

CHAPTER THREE

FAITH AS A STRUGGLE AGAINST ETHICAL SELF-DECEPTION

ROI BENBASSAT

The question regarding the authenticity of faith in Kierkegaard's thought is vital and meaningful. A harsher way of posing the question would be: can faith, in Kierkegaard's terms, be self-deceptive? However, in order to approach this question, it is crucial to see, beforehand, how the religious sphere is set in Kierkegaard's thought to resolve the problem of authenticity in the *ethical* sphere. I would even suggest that the problem of ethical self-deception is the main problem from which Kierkegaard develops his original concept of religiousness and faith, so that, without considering his treatment of this problem, we are likely to misinterpret his religious conception.

The problem of authenticity is the problem that drives Kierkegaard's entire thought. Authenticity, in existentialist thought, is equivalent to the traditional term of truth in philosophy, the absolute truth scrutinized by philosophers, but applied to the existing individual person. It is truthfulness, the truth of the self and for the self, the expression of the individual human being in its wholeness. The search for authenticity passes through all the stages of existence discussed by Kierkegaard throughout his work and connects them with one another. It forms, in my view, the original succession, or the derivation of one sphere of existence from its predecessor, which is neither logical nor necessary but an expression of the absolute freedom of a human being.

Even Kierkegaard's aesthete expresses the anxious search for authenticity, precisely by infinitely avoiding any decisive choice of existence. For him, any such choice is the annulment of the vital force of immediate desire that expresses, no doubt, a fundamental truth of the individual's life. This may be a melancholic manner of existing, but which still aims at maintaining authenticity. In the ethical sphere authenticity is redefined. The person in the aesthetic sphere, if he arrived at the point of total despair, will now turn to what he had so far escaped from—the decisive choice in relation to the universal, a choice that will give his life a fixed and stable form. This choice, however, as authenticity requires, will not annul the aesthetic aspect of personal life but is aimed at expressing the wonderful unity of the individual with the universal. But soon enough the quest for authenticity will raise new doubts, and terrible thoughts will come to trouble the anxious person. At this point, the religious sphere will be opened and authenticity will have to be redefined, again.

This article will focus on Kierkegaard's passing from the ethical to the religious sphere, through his dealing with the problem of authenticity or, as

stated above, the problem of self-deception in ethics. First, I will present the problem of ethical self-deception, to which I believe Kierkegaard wishes to propose an alternative treatment. For this aim I will look briefly into Kant's ethical thought, in which this problem is emphasized and seems irresolvable. Then, I will examine Kierkegaard's original treatment of the problem, which opens up the way to a religious sphere beyond the boundaries of ethics. Finally, I will give a short account of the possibility of self-deception in the religious sphere.

I. The Problem of Ethical Self-Deception

Kierkegaard is one of many thinkers whose religious thought cannot be separated from ethical thought. In general, separating these two realms often leads to misunderstanding and underestimating religion. Separated from the domain of ethics, religion might be considered as a set of beliefs and opinions with regard to the nature and origin of the world and man. This is a source of a widespread confusion through which religion is presented as a rival to the natural sciences and historical research. However, to repeat an observation stressed by Yeshayahu Leibowitz—the Israeli scientist and religious thinker—religion belongs to the separate domain of *values and practical duties*,¹ which is the domain of ethics. Religion is not in search of mere knowledge. It is, as Kierkegaard stated, an *existence-issue*.² It is essentially concerned with the two major ethical questions: “What ought a human being to *do* in his existence?” and “What is the ultimate *end* of his existence, the end to which his life is dedicated and which grants life with absolute meaning?”

The point where Kierkegaard takes a different path from that of most of the philosophers and religious thinkers who stress the essential connection between religion and ethics, is his well-known opinion that religion implies duties that go beyond ethical duties; duties that may be sometimes even contrary to ethical ones. Nevertheless, as I see it, the ethical and the religious do not represent two separate perspectives that come into collision in Kierkegaard's thought. Here, there is one line of thought in which the ethical is *developed* into the religious.

I understand Kierkegaard as a profound ethical thinker—one who arrives at a point where the ethical must exceed its own limits, go beyond itself, and become religious. But this passing to the religious sphere is aimed at fulfilling the same demand, the same end that was posited by the ethical, as Kierkegaard conceived of it. This passing to the religious sphere stems from the difficulty of achieving authenticity within the limits of the ethical *per se*, and occurs as a resolution of the problem of self-deception in ethics.

Kierkegaard confronts the problem of ethical self-deception as it arises in *objective* ethical doctrines, or, as they came to be called, *deontological* doctrines. These are ethical conceptions that establish duties in a form of defined maxims, laws, or imperatives—imperatives that are regarded in and by themselves as having *objective validity*, i.e., as being absolutely valid independently of the subject's dispositions and ends. Immanuel Kant's

doctrine of ethics is a classic example of such an *objective* doctrine since it establishes duty on the basis of pure reason, on the categorical imperative that is conceived of as valid *a priori*, regardless of the subject's inclinations, goals and ends.

Although Hegelian ethics may be considered as a more obvious target for Kierkegaard's ethical deliberations, let us take the example of Kantian ethics in order to present the problem of ethical self-deception as it arises in this kind of ethical doctrine. Looking into Kantian ethics would be more appropriate for our purpose here since Kant highlights the problem of self-deception in ethics. I am also convinced that Kierkegaard himself, although referring to Kant only rarely, develops his ethical-religious thought with Kant's doctrine of ethics and its problems in mind.³

Kant stressed the ethical as an inward quality of a person, as a quality that cannot be fully expressed in externality. He famously distinguished between *legality* of actions and the *moral worth* of actions. While *legality* relates to mere conformity of human behavior with duty, *moral worth* is the quality that applies to the person's intentions. Morally legal actions are those which are objectively and externally in accordance with duty—duty as determined by the categorical imperative—while actions of genuine *moral worth* are those which, in addition to being legal, are performed with a distinctive intention, with what Kant names *respect* for the moral law. To take an example, one repeated by Kant, a person keeping a promise that he made to another certainly acts in a morally *legal* manner, but his action would have ultimate *moral worth* only if he does it out of pure respect for the moral law and were not being determined to act by a different end, such as getting some personal gain as a reward for this action.⁴

In this context, the problem of ethical self-deception would arise in the realm of *legal* actions. An *illegal* action (such as the breaking of a promise) would necessarily be considered by Kant, I believe, as an immoral action. It is unlikely that Kant would allow the possibility that one would break his promise with a moral intention. However, noticeably, there is always a question whether a certain *legal* action is *moral* as well. We do not know if a person keeping his promise does it with a moral intention, and we may not be certain, even with regard to ourselves, that our legal actions are purely moral. Performing a legal action (which is what we do most of the time), I might deceive myself that I am conducting myself in a moral manner, while actually I am motivated by natural inclinations such as fear, desire, or social pressure—all of which, in Kant's view, stand for immoral intentions.

This is, very briefly stated, the way in which the problem of self-deception arises in Kant's ethical thought. However, we might wonder whether this problem can be resolved within Kant's doctrine? In his *Groundwork*, Kant says that *respect* for the moral law "is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love."⁵ From this it is clear that *morality* involves the consciousness of the collision, of the conflict between the principle of morals and that of our natural self-love motivation. The same idea is repeated in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, when Kant stresses that *respect* essentially involves the awareness that the moral law *opposes*, *weakens* and *humiliates* our sensible being, our natural aspirations for

happiness.⁶ Therefore, we might claim, we can be *sure* of our moral quality, without fearing self-deception, *whenever our legal actions are involved with the effort of self-overcoming*—overcoming our natural inclinations. Does this resolve the problem of ethical self-deception? I would say *no*, and I believe that Kant himself did not think so.

The problem of ethical self-deception still prevails for two reasons. The first is that we may make an effort to overcome our immediate desires not only with a moral intention but also for the sake of other natural ends. The soldier in the battlefield, for example, overcomes his fears in order to fight, but he might do that not only by the will to fulfill his *moral* duty but also because of the social pressure exerted on him, which is not a moral motivation (nor an expression of freedom) according to Kant. The second reason why the problem of ethical self-deception still prevails—and this is more relevant to our discussion—is because the opposition between natural self-love and morality simply does not always take place in actual life. In Kant's view, this opposition is, *in principle*, essential to any action of moral worth, but in *actuality* it is not always present. Actually, as I implied earlier, in most cases legal actions do not require the moral effort of self-overcoming since they correspond to our natural inclinations anyway. We may say that our sociable nature normally determines our actions in conformity with moral duties, but this is precisely an obstacle to morality as an authentic quality.

Kant was very much aware of the problem of ethical self-deception. In his *Groundwork*, he notes that a person might not even know the depths of his own intentions,⁷ and in his *Religion* he counts *impurity*—confusion of moral and immoral motivations—as the second degree of the Radical Evil in mankind.⁸ Therefore, even the most moral person is guilty to some degree, a sinner (in religious terms), since no one can completely avoid the involvement of natural selfish motivations in his actions. In this respect, Kant's concept of radical evil is an acknowledgment that the problem of ethical self-deception is, in fact, irresolvable. A person must *always* behave in a morally legal way while accepting that, in many cases, he is unable to accord his actions with a genuine moral worth. In Kant's view, the lack of actual self-overcoming does not change anything in the understanding of *what* duty is. Duty cannot be altered whenever the subject feels unable to cope with the problem of self-deception, because duty, in Kantian ethics, is *objectively* determined.

II. Kierkegaard Facing the Problem of Ethical Self-Deception

Let us now address Kierkegaard's approach to the problem of ethical self-deception. Kierkegaard refuses to accept that the problem cannot be better handled. In general, I believe that he rejects Kant's *objective* doctrine of ethics and religion, and the notion of radical evil in particular. This does not mean that Kierkegaard necessarily dismisses the possibility of an ethical existence based on Kant's ethical doctrine, but, as will be shown later, that

due to the crucial importance of retaining authenticity, the objective validity of this ethical doctrine is not absolute validity.

Although Kierkegaard agrees with Kant regarding the ethical as an inner quality that cannot be reduced to external behavior, he goes much further in this respect than did Kant. From Kierkegaard's *existential* point of view, the ethical cannot remain absolutely within the limits of objective imperatives but may be even expressed, paradoxically, by the breaking of these limits, through repentance. *Repentance* is a key term in Kierkegaard's ethical and religious thought. By this term Kierkegaard expresses his dangerous view, according to which an act of *exception*—that must be regarded in Kant's doctrine necessarily as an expression of *evil*—may be motivated by ethical-religious intentions.⁹ This possibility suggests a new solution for the problem of ethical self-deception. Let us explore this notion.

To make this as clear and concrete as possible, let us take the famous biographical fact, Kierkegaard's breaking off his engagement with his beloved Regine. There is no doubt that marriage was something that Kierkegaard considered as a typical manifestation of the ethical. Marriage can be understood as a restraint of natural inclination, through the devotion and loyalty toward a one and only person, forever and in all circumstances, as they say. This ethical duty may require a great deal of renunciation and self-overcoming. Nevertheless, the choice of marriage in particular poses the problem of self-deception in the same form that I depicted earlier when discussing Kantian ethics. The problem arises here, as the ethical choice of marriage may express, at the same time, a natural inclination of the agent, an *immediate* motivation. Thus, Kierkegaard is passionately in love with Regine, and to marry her would provide him with continuous satisfaction for his immediate desire; whereas, at the same time, it ought to be an expression of *the ethical*. So this is the common situation in which a *legal* action, an action in accordance with duty, is at the same time in accordance to what we naturally and immediately desire to do.

In *Either/Or*, at the very beginning of Judge William's second letter, Kierkegaard stresses that ethical choice is important, not only—"when truth, justice, and sanctity appear on one side, and lust, natural inclinations, dark passions and perdition on the other side"—but "even in matters that in and by themselves are innocent."¹⁰ Thus Kierkegaard's ethical account enters directly into the zone in which Kantian ethics would not go deeper—he explores the area where ethical duty and selfish desire are manifested by the same choice, by the same action. That is of course, as I mentioned above, also the place of self-deception. But here it appears that Kierkegaard's approach to ethics is essentially different from that of Kant, as well as of any other *objective* ethical doctrine. Kierkegaard states, "what is important in choosing is not so much to choose the right thing, as the energy, the earnestness, and the pathos with which one chooses."¹¹

This is a radical statement. It implies what will be expressed explicitly later—that in certain cases, the call of duty goes beyond and even against the ethical. Kierkegaard himself demonstrated this view in his life story, breaking off his engagement with Regine. This does not mean that to marry Regine had ceased to be "the right thing" for him, objectively speaking,

but that he could not choose and perform this action as an expression of the ethical or as a religious expression, without falling into self-deception.

Kierkegaard's personal choice was not to carry out the ethical within its objective limits, but to break off his ethical engagement. As is well known, we can find several accounts of this choice in *Either/Or*, as well as in *Fear and Trembling* and other writings around that time. In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard describes a person that encounters difficulties in fulfilling his ethical task, the task that is defined in Judge William's words: "to express the universally human in individual life."¹² The difficulty that he encounters is that his ethical duty becomes a *triviality* for him,¹³ when it happens to correspond to his immediate desire. When duty thus becomes a trivial matter, the person who wants to fulfill it cannot be sure of his own intentions. In this context, Kierkegaard points out that "laziness and cowardliness can delude a person about such things,"¹⁴ and what he proposes is a more active approach: people should be "more enterprising about becoming conscious of themselves."¹⁵ This person would now act in a radical way that will allow him to examine himself.

The problem that drives this move, I believe, is that of self-deception, the struggle for authenticity. It is unclear for this person how to relate genuinely to the universal and accomplish the ethical duty with true ethical intention, when it corresponds to his immediate desires anyway. The ethical suddenly appears as a temptation; it is suspected of being actually the aesthetic, in ethical disguise. The person confronting these difficulties now tries an "experiment," Kierkegaard tells us, an experiment which is, incidentally, equivalent to that of Abraham in the binding of Isaac. He is going to act in an *enterprising* manner that will allow him to know his own true intentions: "He will calmly go to meet the pain."¹⁶ What pain is Kierkegaard referring to? I do not doubt that it is the pain of total renunciation, of *infinite resignation* (his expression in *Fear and Trembling*). But here the person renounces both his immediate desires and his ethical duty, which are now represented by one and the same choice—as in the choice of marriage. The person (or Kierkegaard himself) is going then against both his natural inclinations and his ethical duty, in order to find the genuine feeling of the ethical that was lost in triviality:

At this point, then, he has emancipated himself from the universal. At no time will the meaning of such a step be unclear to him, because it was indeed actually he himself who made the defeat total and gave it meaning, for he knew where and how he was vulnerable, and he inflicted on himself the wound that the particular as such was unable to inflict.¹⁷

What Kierkegaard is describing here is most probably what he himself experienced when he broke off his engagement with Regine. He chose to refuse the universal, to go against the ethical in its objective manifestation, in order to accomplish the ethical in *inwardness*, in order to connect with the universal in an authentic manner. He achieved this through the feeling of horrible pain over this personal and ethical failure, precisely the pain of the *separation* from the universal, which is caused, as quoted above, by the

wound that the particular was unable to inflict. From this we may understand that only in this way, by a kind of suspension of the ethical (to borrow again an expression from *Fear and Trembling*) was Kierkegaard able to assure himself that he was relating to the universal in an authentic manner. This is of course a paradoxical expression of the ethical, as this action, objectively viewed, is clearly unethical:

I have placed myself outside the universal; I have deprived myself of all the guidance, the security, and the reassurance that the universal gives; I stand alone, without fellow-feeling, for I am the exception. But he will not become craven and disconsolate; he will confidently go his solitary way; indeed, he has demonstrated the correctness of what he did—he has his pain.¹⁸

Thus, as Kierkegaard's ethical speaker tells us, this person who chooses to be *the exception* gets over the problem of ethical self-deception and finds his reassurance in his unique pain. This pain is later called by its proper name—*repentance*. *Repentance* is the highest expression of the ethical in Kierkegaard's thought, and this paradoxical ethical view is established as early as in *Either/Or*. This does not mean that the ethical should always be accomplished through breaking the law and feeling the pain of regret over it later, but it does mean that the pain of repentance is something essential to the ethical. It means that this pain should always be present within the ethical person, even when he actually accomplishes the ethical ideal in externality, even when he marries, for example, as Judge William does.

Note that also the judge, the ethical married man, maintains that the proper expression for the struggle of ethical choice is *repentance*.¹⁹ "Only when I choose myself as guilty," says the judge, "do I absolutely choose myself."²⁰ From this we are to understand that, even in fulfilling the ethical duty, the pain of *repentance*, the consciousness of the separation—the consciousness that it is impossible for the individual to connect directly and totally with the universal—must always be present within the person, for it is the mark of authenticity. The same idea is highlighted by the closing text of *Either/Or*, the "Ultimatum," a priest's sermon on the idea that "in relation to God we are always in the wrong."²¹ Judge William notes that this religious sermon expresses "what I have said and what I would like to have said to you."²²

III. The Problem of Authenticity in the Religious Sphere

Up to now, I have discussed the problem of authenticity as it appears within the ethical sphere in Kierkegaard's thought. However, I am sure that the reader who is familiar with Kierkegaard's work was wondering whether what I have just presented as Kierkegaard's proposed solution for the problem of ethical self-deception is actually his passing to the religious sphere. I would say that it is indeed so. Judge William's position should be regarded as an *ethical-religious* position. As I have expressed elsewhere, the character of the Judge represents for Kierkegaard the opinion that an ethical position cannot

be complete without going beyond itself to the religious sphere. This means that the ethical, as a sphere of existence in the framework of Kierkegaard's thought, must contain the possibility of *exceptions* in order to maintain authenticity. These exceptions are not throwbacks to the aesthetic sphere; they do not express submission to immediate desires but are paradoxical expressions of the person's intention to fulfill his ethical duty in an authentic manner. These uncommon expressions signify that the ethical person has gone beyond the objective limits of ethical duty, admitting a higher duty. Hence, even though the ethical sphere and the religious sphere are often defined by Kierkegaard in confrontation with one another, they form an area of overlap which Kierkegaard calls the *ethical-religious*, or, to use another term used in the *Postscript*, *Religiousness A*.

Therefore, what I have presented above as Judge William's ethical position developed in *Either/Or*, as well as an account of Kierkegaard's personal choice with Regine, may be regarded as the first form of religiousness defined by Kierkegaard, taken as a proposed solution for the problem of ethical self-deception. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this form of religiousness is still not *faith* in the strict sense of the term. Kierkegaard famously distinguishes in the *Postscript* between two types of religiousness: *A* and *B*, *immanent religiousness* and *paradoxical religiousness*.²³ Only the second form of religiousness is to be called *faith*.

This distinction between two types of religiousness is already implied in Kierkegaard's earlier writings. *Religiousness A* is compatible with the position of Johannes de silentio, Kierkegaard's pseudonym in *Fear and Trembling*, who declares that he himself can only accomplish the first movement of faith—the movement of *infinite resignation*—but not the second which is accomplished by Abraham, *the knight of faith*.²⁴ In order to come closer to the question of authenticity in the religious sphere, let us look briefly at this distinction.

Religiousness A is a philosophical form of religiousness.²⁵ It addresses the idea of the absolute, of God, as formed in and by human beings' rational thought, and it is always in relation with ethical duty—hence, *immanent* religiousness. Here, the individual person relates to God only through his relation to the universal as ethical duty. However, we have seen that, for Kierkegaard, this does not entail a reduction of the religious to the ethical. The relation of the individual to the universal is paradoxically best expressed through *repentance*, which implies the possibility of exceptions, or, in other words, of an ethical suspension. In this specific form of religiousness, the ultimate mark of authenticity is *infinite resignation*—the willingness of the person to renounce *everything*, even the security introduced by enclosing oneself within the objective boundaries of an ethics.

The second type of religiousness (*Religiousness B*) is *faith*. This is the form of religiousness that involves Kierkegaard's famous concept of *the absurd*. It addresses an irrational concept of God: the assumption that the absolute, the eternal, has become embodied in something finite, mortal, and historical, in existence.²⁶ My discussion above did not touch upon this type of religiousness. However, Kierkegaard stresses that *faith* must include, in some way, the first type of religiousness.²⁷ Therefore, faith must carry the

whole pathos-filled struggle against self-deception that was described above, but *faith* is not typically expressed through *repentance*. In faith, what is found impossible for the individual person in *Religiousness A*—to be totally united with the universal as well as with his immediate desires—becomes possible. This is what Kierkegaard describes in *Fear and Trembling* as the *double movement of faith*, which constitutes *the absurd*.²⁸ It is the position in which the person, who is willing to give up everything he has and can have in relation to other finite things in the world, at the same time believes that he will get everything back from God, just as Abraham got Isaac back.

The person who has *faith* is, for Kierkegaard, the ideal person whose existence is whole and complete. His religious life lacks neither aesthetic joys nor ethical fulfillments. He accomplishes in the most harmonious manner the perfect balance between the ethical and the aesthetic. He is not the suffering religious hero who paradoxically accomplishes this balance through *repentance*—a person who lives in the world but is accompanied by a constant dissonance, a sign for his disconnection with the world—but one who miraculously belongs to the worldly existence, and miraculously remains within the cozy space of the ethical. This hero is not seen as an *exception*. On the contrary, he seems to be a boring conformist. He may be the tax collector who enjoys thinking of what he will have for dinner when he gets back home to his wife depicted by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*. But this seemingly simple man may do the most admirable thing, provided that his life is an expression of *faith*. He does what Kierkegaard himself could not do—“If I had had faith,” Kierkegaard wrote in his journal, “I would have stayed with Regine.”²⁹ But why could he not stay with her, we may wonder—because, I assume, he could not overcome the feeling of self-deception that would accompany such an act.

Faith was unquestionably an idea of the highest mode of existence for Kierkegaard, but the fulfillment of this idea in actual existence involved, for Kierkegaard himself, self-deception; and *that* he would not tolerate. This assumption already implies the answer to the question of whether Kierkegaardian faith can be self-deceptive. My answer to this question would be—yes, quite definitely, just as the ethical, *per se*, may be self-deceptive, as we have seen. *Religiousness A* may also be self-deceptive since, just like actions in accordance with ethical duty, behind any exceptional act may lie a hidden immediate desire as well, even alongside *repentance*. The whole point of Kierkegaard’s evasive existential philosophy is that no one can tell anyone else what to choose and what to do in his life. A person may not tell even himself what he would choose to do in later times, because all possibilities are absorbed in self-deception:

The subjective religious thinker, who has comprehended the duplexity of existence in order to be such a thinker, readily perceives that direct communication is a fraud toward God...a fraud toward himself...a fraud toward another human being...a fraud that brings him into contradiction with his entire thought.³⁰

CHAPTER FOUR

A FAITH THAT DEFIES SELF-DECEPTION

EDWARD F. MOONEY

It is quite common, if erroneous, to assume that a person of faith must be a person in self-deception. From the outside, it can seem that faith is a kind of protective shield against harsh realities. Given our exposure to cruelty and suffering, what would be more natural than to adopt a belief that would act as a shield? If my self-esteem suffers at the thought that I cheated my neighbor, I can shield myself from this hurt by working up the belief (self-deceptively) that I did *not* really cheat him. If the span of history seems to flaunt one evil after another, I shield myself from the agony of these occasions by working up the belief that God did *not* really cheat us, that He will make things right, or they've been right all along, that the world *isn't* rotten to the core.

There is a surface plausibility to this view that the genesis of faith lies in self-deception, and so cannot be authentic. Despite appearances, however, it can't be the whole story. I'll argue that in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* we have a dramatic reversal of this position. Within the covers of that startling book, we discover that faith is designed so that it *can't* be self-deceptive. On the contrary, we discover that the trust and openness of faith is an inoculation *against* self-deception. The *openness* guarantees that harsh or rotten realities are *not* covered up, and that faith's *trust* is a *stance*, not a *belief*. If it's not a belief, I can't be deceived about it. This is faith's two-pronged defiance of self-deception.

The pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de silentio, does not linger discussing what beliefs or tenets about God are essential to faith. The book's "dialectical" sections pit ethics (which includes many beliefs), against God's command to Abraham, that he offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. But even here, the issue seems to be less about *belief* than about how one can *trust* ethics, and *trust* God, when these trusts collide (as they seem to in God's demand). If Abraham suffers a collision of trusts, the question is how he weathers that collision, how he proceeds without revolt against one or the other, against God or against ethics. The question is not about propositions but whether he can *live from a stance* that *mitigates or displaces despair*. Can he live from open trust, from a steady faith? A love toward, or trust in, the world or the divine or one's neighbor is not a tenet or belief. It is not a bundle of affirmed propositions but a constellation of affirmative passions and dispositions that are one's poise in the face of unaccommodating harsh, sometimes brutally unspeakable, realities.

Keeping faith in the face of unmistakable desolation is compatible with being quite *agnostic* about what propositions might (or might not) *ground* one's steady assurance. The bottom line in the conduct of life may be

primitive assurances rather than foundational tenets.¹ Of course, a faithful stance is not beyond critique. It may be ill advised, foolish, infantile or self-destructive. But a stance is not shattered or defeated in the way an assertion is. A person does not fall apart the way a proposition does. A stance is *there*; it either works to inform my living with grace, or doesn't. Snow is *there*; it either works to grace the limbs of my trees or it doesn't. Snow can't deceive itself as it falls with grace, nor can a stance deceive itself as it informs my living with grace. I live from faith or I don't. Only if I attempt to *ground* my faith in a tenet do I ponder beliefs about which I could deceive myself (or not). And (so I'd argue) there is no requirement that I ground every stance from which I live in an explicit propositional belief. Life would stop dead in its tracks if that requirement were in force.

I. Once There Was a Man

Faith sprawls throughout Kierkegaard's *corpus*, early to late. I stick to *Fear and Trembling*, a text that is lyrical and dialectical, full of polemics and improvisations. There we find three inhabitants to reckon with: Abraham, the *father* of faith; an anonymous *mother* of faith smuggled in as Abraham's counterpart; and an utterly worldly chap as unlikely and unassuming as a tax-collector or a shopkeeper would be.² The figure who might be a shop man is a domesticated, citified Abraham, a father without fangs. The mother is Abraham as maternal, a soft source of nurture, meditative, tender, and private, not whistling jauntily down the street.

The mother and "shopkeeper" exemplify a miniature sublime on the scale of an everyday roast lamb, green peas, and a baby's soft coo. De silentio speaks of the knight of faith finding "the sublime in the pedestrian."³ Thus the sublime is the wondrously unexpected and tremulous but found in the everyday, not only high in the heavens or in raging seas. Both mother and shopkeeper play *simple* virtue against Abraham's heroics. This says that it's a *mistake* to model faith on the *outwardness* of grand heroics. When the matter is not wondrous but monstrous or heroic but wondrous or simple, the fear is scaled down; only minor tremors of disquietude speak out. Terror ceases to be the preferred vehicle of instruction. Nursing mothers and burghers on the way home teach, by embodying the trusting openness of faith.

In the persons of the mother, "shopkeeper," and Abraham, we have three improvisations on faith.⁴ This makes for contingency of meaning or interpretation. Grant that each exemplifies a trusting openness. What do we make of their obvious differences? There's a contingency that surrounds who is a *person* of faith, and also, around who is the *author* of these sketches of faith. Is it Kierkegaard speaking, or is it de *silentio*? And if the latter, why trust a writer whose code name is "silence," who is loud about silence and faith, and who frankly confides that he *can't understand* it?

The text lacks a stable figure of faith, a stable author, and in addition, lacks a stable register, style, or tonality. Style and genre set the aims and moods of writing. Lyric is one mode of writing, and dialectic, another; yet we're told on *Fear and Trembling's* title page that we hold a "Dialectical Lyric."

We also have burlesque, fairy tale, and fable; satire, farce, and tragedy; the grotesque and the sublime. We have the antinomian and apophatic and what has been dubbed the eucatastrophical (a tale with an unexpected finish that's marvelously good).⁵ There are scenes that approach slapstick: Johannes mentions the possibilities of killing Isaac at home to avoid the bother of a climb; of having a parishioner run out after the sermon, knife in hand, to corner his own son; of having the strolling burgher stop to watch rats, or of having his wife serve him lamb. And more serious than slapstick, but eccentric and unfathomable, *de silentio* gives us four serene captions under the opening quartet of terrifying Abraham portraits. What genre or mood are *they* meant to enact? Abraham holds a knife. The captions have a mother weaning her child. Soon we realize that this is an improvisatory installation without center. How can this four-movement *divertimento* give us a clue about faith?

Especially at the start, anything like fear and trembling is subdued or sidelined. It's as if we're meant to bracket such intensity, leave it at the door. Perhaps its impact, if permitted, would disable our reflective capacities. The *Preface* doesn't prepare us for a killing scenario, and the opening "*Attunement*" (meant to set a mood for thinking), let us mull wistfully or daydream. There's a pervasive tone of fantasy and "what if" afoot. What *if* we take Abraham (or the nursing mother, or the figure who could be a shop owner), to be a figure of faith? *Fear and Trembling* begins as if a fairy tale were being dreamily recalled: "*Once there was a man...*" And the would-be fairy tale is about a man who had a *daydream*, who remembered "a beautiful childhood tale."⁶ This is decidedly *not* the tonality of reporting or critiquing would-be child-sacrifice, about which there is absolutely *nothing* dreamy nostalgic, or beautiful. It's as if Johannes wants to suspend any frame that delivers stark, bare bones realities. Even a monstrous Abraham, the father with knife in hand, might be a diversion from the truth, for that knife *blinds*, doesn't it? Think instead of Chagall's dreamy version of the scene, so unlike Caravaggio's full-force rendering. Chagall has Abraham almost whimsically floating, among stars, angels, and lambs.

Improvisation and fantasy are the other side of Kierkegaard's aversion to doctrinal disputation and academic commentary or contention. Look again at the titles of the two books universally taken as the core of his theology and philosophy: *Philosophical Fragments* and *Unscientific Postscript* may not strike one as punchy at first. But those are only discrete tags, not full titles. The little book usually translated *Fragments* is best rendered in full as *Philosophical Crumbs, or Scraps of Philosophy*. Its follow up—a 600 page *afterthought*, postscript or appendix—is best rendered, in full, as *Concluding Unscholarly Postscript to Philosophical Crumbs: A Mimic-Pathetic-Dialectic Compilation—an Existential Contribution*. Sober scholarship? Hardly. A Serious Contribution to Philosophy or Theology? Perhaps it's improvisational kitsch, but if not, the *Postscript* especially is surely the most comical para-philosophy ever. It belongs to no genre, is infinite in scope, and infinitely becoming.

Let's say that we've more or less established that *Fear and Trembling* is a text of diverse and indeterminate tonal register, genre, and authorship that

gives us not just Abraham on Moriah, but a mixed crew of faith's exemplars. If we grant all this, why should we think that *Fear and Trembling* is a guide to a stable conception of faith?

Here are three answers. First, we are shown over and over what faith is *not*. This clears the board for what faith might be. Second, by rummaging through candidates that turn out not to pass muster, we get habituated to *precisely the difficulty* of faith, of tracking it and of *living* by it, through trial and error. The difficulty and temptations of the terrain are replicated, testing our acuity and resolve. Third, there is what we could call the "positive theme," that faith is *trusting openness* modulated as *giving up* (or resignation) and *getting back* (the world or love or faith as a gift). Let me pause on the second sort of teaching the book affords: the way we are led through the difficulties of tracking faith.

Working through the conundrums of the text, seeing how faith as open trust permeates the comportment of Abraham, of the mother, of the burgher, is seeing how faith might permeate any number of lives. The indeterminacy of faith is the indeterminacy and contingent variation in lives that can be animated by faith. We learn what faith is while avoiding theological thesis and antithesis. Tracking de silentio's multiple images and styles and figures merely recapitulates given experience in the world at the level of text. By practicing the knack of tracking faith's varied embodiments, in mothers and women rocking silently as they knit, grooves are laid down in the heart and mind that deepens our capacity to follow the dispersion of faith through any number of persons, and to avoid identifying faith with church-goers or creedal confession. A knack for following the text becomes a knack for seeing faith outside the text. It is a knack for keeping faithfully trusting and open in the interpretation of life experience and its ambiguities as they flow into the present.

Insofar as we give ourselves to indeterminacies in this way, we inoculate ourselves against the strident singleness of vision so characteristic of self-deception. The self-deceiver needs to bolster self-esteem and reduce complexity. We'll feel better about ourselves (we think) if we simplify and purify our sense of the world, burying the distasteful or cruel things elsewhere. Faith is an *expansion* of virtue—self-deception, a lethal *contraction*. I'll return to this.

II. Descent and Rebirth, Falling and Rising

Here are two enigmatic, tone-setting pronouncements: "Only one who descends to the underworld saves the loved one."⁷⁷ But we might ask why the lover and beloved are charged with descending into the nether regions? Is all love an infernal *ordeal*? Here is a second pronouncement: "[T]he one who works will give birth to his own father."⁷⁸ This echoes the psychological truth that in acknowledging our ancestors, inheriting them properly, starting with my father—is work, spiritual labor. Linking the two gives us a compound enigma: a descent in the name of love into the nether regions of unclarity is

a prerequisite to fixing one's paternity, and hence, one's birth, or rebirth. Go down, then come up, reborn.

Fear and Trembling is a kind of motley or medley; a quilt or collage, many panels and squares stitched loosely together, scene after scene; a carnival and horror show, a Chagall-like *dreamy* sort of art.⁹ Abraham first appears in “*a beautiful dream*” of an old man remembering a childhood story. Giving up waking life for a dream—and then getting waking life back, dream included—is entering the giving up and getting back of faith. Cycling in and out of imagination can be radically transformative. We redo our past by such cycles, and so redo our present as an offspring of the past. As in a dream, oracle, or prophecy, *de silentio* whispers that the faithful *give birth to their fathers*.¹⁰ Such is the power of imaginative transformations. In a simple biological sense mothers give birth to their children from the womb, and in a more complex imaginative sense they give birth to an infant's growing independence in weaning. If we are beings toward death, as Heidegger learns from Kierkegaard, we are equally beings from birth, as Arendt learns from Kierkegaard. Birthing ourselves is modeled on birthing our children. We are mother and father to ourselves, giving (imaginative) birth to our fathers and mothers in practices of self-nourishment and earning inheritance or legacy.

Levinas sees only the monstrosity of Moriah with its apparent invitation to killing. He misses these quiet images of faith as natality or birth.¹¹ A mother weaning or a shopkeeper watching rats scamper under gutter planks are images of a tender attention to, and acceptance of, life.¹² The denial of the maternal in philosophical thinking is pervasive. To account for its repression would be a long story, but a colleague puts the issue this way: “As philosophers, we have engaged in self-deception in order not to ‘messy’ the waters of philosophical investigation by recognizing the voice of the maternal. Doing so would complicate an otherwise tidy, ‘single-vision’ view of the world.” And she adds, “Leaving out the maternal closes off a morally essential reality.”¹³

In addition to a view of natality, *de silentio*'s writing provides numerous other glancing perspectives: a critique of bourgeois market society (*Preface*); a critique of direct communication (*Epigraph*); a critique of religion as bible-based hero-worship (*Speech in Praise of Abraham*); an attack on rule-based and bureaucratic conventional morality (*Problema*); an appreciation of domesticity (mothers weaning, shopkeepers strolling home for dinner, knitters by the fire, sovereigns not wanted). In addition, the little tome provides a slightly pornographic peephole into dream-like blood-and-violence, as well as a critique of the spectacular city.¹⁴ It provides a range of polyphony (the voice of terror, of praise, of detached analysis), and a startlingly imaginative array of thematic variations on the theme: Abraham might have dallied there, rushed there, stabbed himself, asked God to do it, refused outright, done it in despair, or in deception. All this, in a little non-book by a non-author.¹⁵

It's remarkable that Don Quixote can belong in this varied troop of knights of faith—perhaps *de silentio*'s inspiration!¹⁶ The merchant-like fellow will

not *immediately* bring to mind the mad Spanish knight, but imagination can mark links. Quixote was living Christianly and erratically in a world that took him to be mad; yet he was more Christian than they. The apparent merchant is living Christianly but not erratically, not madly; yet he is more Christian than they. How? Well, he refuses the ethics of convention that guarantees that a wife shall not leave her husband without dinner. He will be free of resentment should the meal not be there; he'll feel perfectly at ease. There is a notable delight and a freedom from presumption or moralism. He shows delightful assurance paired with cognitive, moral, and spiritual humility. All this makes this sane fellow a likely knight of faith.

The pattern of faith in *Fear and Trembling* is an assured stance amidst threatening contingency. Now we can add that this faith is lived out in *giving up and getting back*, being quieted then receiving, suffering then celebrating, moment by moment over time.¹⁷ Is this what the poet Yehuda Amichai has in mind in his title *Open Closed Open*?¹⁸ Abraham opens to God, closes down in fright, hand closed on the knife, then opens to a transformed world as the angel speaks. The nursing mother opens her breast to her infant, closes it off in blackening the breast, then opens the infant to a new, more independent world. The shop man opens to the world, imagining even a roast head of lamb awaiting him at home, finds that possibility perhaps closed, gets his world back, as fresh as before. Job is wonderfully open, then horribly closed in his anger and grief, then wonderfully silenced, opened, by the gift of new worlds. Faith is this pattern of giving up Isaac and getting him back.

III. To Cover up Suspicions

Self-deception is defense against threats to moral self-image or integrity. To protect your daughter, you might lie to a thief, but that would not be deceiving *yourself*. To protect yourself, you might lie to your friends, but if you know you are adopting the tactic of lying, that would not be self-deception, either. In self-deception, I want to *hide my lying from myself*, and hide from myself the threatening facts that *need* to be hidden to protect my moral self-image. As Melville has it, “[W]hen a man suspects any wrong, it sometimes happens that if he be already involved in the matter, he insensibly strives to cover up his suspicions even from himself.”¹⁹ In faith I hide nothing from myself. That’s how it defies self-deception.

Let me pause for a moment to consider how self-deception is possible. Sartre and others have wondered about this. If I do the deceiving, I must know I’m deceiving; but if I successfully deceive myself, I can’t know I’ve deceived myself.²⁰ Which is it? Do I know or not know what I’m doing? Well, when I skillfully apply my brakes, I knowingly, skillfully, act, yet I don’t have to advance, or have, any belief about what I know. If someone asks, “Do you know how to brake?” it suffices to say, “I do it all the time.” The proof is in a way of acting (“braking”), not in holding a belief or in knowing that something is so. I can know how to deceive (how to keep a straight face when lying, say) without knowing about what goes into

doing this successfully. The paradox of knowing and not knowing is only apparent. “Knowing” can mean that I know how to do something skillfully, say how to negotiate complex situations where cognitive uptake is essential. Just as I know how to correct my imbalance, as I’m about to slip on ice, so I know how to correct psychic imbalance as something transpires that wounds my self-image. In this sense, I can know how to hide hurtful things from myself, and how to hide that process of hiding from myself. The net result is that I can avow sincerely that in some circumstances that I am not hiding things from myself when in fact I am doing precisely that. Children of five or six can be enormously skillful in evading damage to their self-image—“Mom, I didn’t steal the cookies from Jane!” (said in worked-up but “real” sincerity).

I tell myself a lie (knowingly making myself unknowing) in order to restore balance to my reigning self-conception. Self-deception works “out of sight” in the way catching one’s balance works out of sight. It’s a kind of “learned instinct” to recapture one’s balance, whether on ice or when one has “slipped up” in maintaining the moral ground one hopes to flawlessly tread. Yet we also have instincts that oppose the mechanisms of self-deception. With luck and companionable mentors and friends, we learn to catch those moments when our first impulse is to cover up. But often the instinct of wanting to be better than we are wins out, and we kid ourselves, shamelessly.

As we drive home, I mention that I feel sorry about your daughter’s “bad luck” in an advanced geometry class. You protect your self-image by passing off what you know full well is her poor performance by protesting that she didn’t perform that poorly—and by venturing that her bad grade will almost certainly be overlooked by the teacher in the long run. You skillfully give a tilt to whatever evidence and interpretation can boost your self-image as a successful parent of a successful child—and you cover up the rest with aplomb and finesse. You sense my mild skepticism, and so work harder to make your character—and hers—spotless. She didn’t do *that* poorly, you repeat, raising your voice in irritation. You close yourself to hard truths, to full realities, to painful ambiguities, persuading yourself that contingencies are in your control when they aren’t. You have no faith, for faith is living without despair and transparently, hiding nothing from yourself, in circumstances that threaten your sense of moral viability. Being of faith is maintaining the fragile stance or mood of *transparency* toward oneself. It is akin to *receiving* yourself, acknowledging who you are and your position, with full knowledge that brutal, unexpected, inescapable contingency could destroy the self you now are.

Imagine that the weaning mother is self-deceptive, without faith. She has (let’s imagine) an investment in thinking of herself as never causing worry or pain to her child. Even as she blackens her breast she tells herself that her infant “won’t notice a thing”—a tremor in her hand betrays the contrary: she fears her infant will be pained. A friend tactfully asks about her trembling hand. She hides the truth from herself, saying she shakes from too much caffeine. She has no faith, for she can’t brook the contingency that her infant will be harmed.

This imagined mother is faithless because she knows implicitly that contingency can befoul her dearest wish (that her child not be harmed). And she manages to deny to herself that such a contingency might occur. Her body shows fear and trembling not simply because of objective circumstance but because she is in the risky project of lying to herself in hope of self-protection. Living faithfully with uncertainty and contingency rules out self-deception.

Fear and Trembling displays faithful responsiveness to contingency in meaning, interpretation, mood, situation, and selfhood. It is subversive of the natural desire to avoid or deny the multifold uncertainties that constitute rich life. To live faith's wild, tender, and pedestrian unfurling is to open to contingency. Love, wonder, and grief are responsive to fragility. To protect my investments in power and efficacy, I may come to deny the uncertain and fragile, against which I am ultimately powerless. I bury this denial from myself in order to shore up commitments to things I control: critique, discipline, technique, or efficacy. But then I forfeit those humane responses—love, wonder, grief—that presuppose vulnerability. To relentlessly assert prerogatives of the mastering, executive self strips the world of the background against which humane response shimmers.

IV. Affliction and Reception

The nursing mother is not self-centeredly wrestling with a problem, gathering her resources to master it. The world presents issues: the child must be weaned, set free. The mother, we surmise, realizes that how the weaning goes is not totally in her control. If she is of faith she awaits her time, the child's time, and doesn't cast blame if her timing is off. The infant speaks its comfort (or discomfort) to the listening mother. We remember the "shop man knight of faith" jauntily returning home expecting that his good wife has a meal waiting. He realizes, we surmise, that how his dinner goes is not totally in his control. He awaits his time and will accept the world come what may. Rats scamper under gutter boards or not; the table is set or not. The evening meal declares its presence (or absence). Both nursing mother and strolling burgher listen willingly, patiently to an outer, intimate world. Those of little faith try to wrestle the world to make it answer their needs and aspirations. Those of faith realize that some veiled contingencies may eventuate, and they will be patient—not attack the veiling or contingency to eliminate it.²¹ The minute either of them attempt to wrestle ambiguity or contingency to the mat, they will have lost faith.

Say I turn to technique to subvert unwanted obstacles that confront me. The turn to technique is a turn away from faith. I become a technocrat. If my life is upset by tremors of death, grief, shame, or guilt, faith may get me through where technique breaks down. Others might offer nostrums: "Don't cry, take a walk, you'll get over it. Trust in the Lord. Don't probe. Grow up." Psychological, doctrinal, rabbinical, or ministerial nostrums are meant to function as technique, but in profound crisis, have no traction.

Death and grief expose limits to technical control. Joy and delight define limits, too—they can't be made to happen, any more than grief can be made to disappear. Both wondrous and terrible contingencies defy mastery through knowledge or technical control. Surprised by good or bad fortune, we sense we are exposed to bottomless mystery—the joys of a child's smile, the sadness of a child's death. Neither provide openings for expert technical response. Such mystery and enigma doesn't retreat but expands and fans out as we dwell in (and experientially undergo) the multifold meanings of grief, innocent delight, vulnerability and love. Faith carries us through where technical response stalls or has no grip.

As thinkers who by profession are trained to attack and subdue the ambiguous and problematic, we take offence at those regions where faith is at home, and seek to drain any need or trace of it. Pervasive commitments to rational progress, whether Hegelian, Analytic, or Marxian, aim to disenfranchise and bury quietude or inexpugnable darkness. We wield dialectics meant to subdue. But ultimate vulnerability and contingency disarm us—and not always when we're in the vicinity of faith. When this disarming is devastating, we have what Simone Weil calls affliction.²²

Afflictions are contingencies that are disturbing, harmful, painful—that we *suffer*. She writes, "To acknowledge affliction means saying to oneself: 'I may lose at any moment, through the play of circumstances over which I have no control, anything whatsoever I possess, including those things which are so intimately mine that I consider them as being myself.'" ²³ And Stanley Cavell sees that the loss of self might be a condition of gaining a self. As he puts it, "[The] possessing of a self is not—is the reverse of—possessive; ...it is the exercise not of power but of reception."²⁴ Faith, then, is the vulnerable condition under which a self is transparently received, with full knowledge that at any moment it might be taken, that contingency could destroy it, or that one could have to relinquish the self one now is.

Faith is first a trusting openness or transparency. It can now be further specified as a *giving up* (as in Job or Abraham or a weaning mother) and a *getting back*, a receptivity, openness, to a return of the world, the son, the nursing infant. Giving up and getting back is the double movement of faith in *Fear and Trembling*.²⁵ Self-deception is willfully, strategically, engineering a clean bill of moral health, which means willfully dismissing the verdicts of our own experience. We would masterfully take possession of the self we would be. But that mastery is denied us. To avoid self-deception, to abide in faith, the trick is to remain open to the world despite the contrary desire to master it, to close in on it, take possession of it. Yet affliction speaks only to a vulnerable, less than lordly self, only to a soul, and only less than a lordly, masterly soul can muster a true response.

Faith is at risk from several corners, not least our fear of the evident fragility of life. Love and faith reside amidst acknowledged vulnerability to contingency. They are an undergoing that is neither uniform nor transparent but eccentrically, enigmatically, open closed open, without rules for when to hold or when to let go—when to relinquish, when to welcome, arms open.

V. Double Vision

I've said we deceive ourselves in order to crudely simplify and violently purify our virtue—which makes of our virtue a vice. Faith, in contrast, is a subtle two-fold (or multifold) vision or mood, a yielding relinquishment of will-to-power, a willingness to await reception, and a ready responsiveness to what may be given. Faith is a giving up and getting back that *sustains without simplification* what emerges as a veiled and vulnerable complication and expansion of virtue.

Self-deception, in contrast, is a killing *contraction* of virtue. Single vision is subject to “hypo-nomia,” a compulsive adherence to narrow rules, to artificially constrictive and inflexible norms. Its rigid focus blocks out a saving modulation that could be provided by an openness to complex and multivalent circumstance. Such openness shows up in acknowledgement of contrary-tilting norms embedded in one's circumstance. Kindness can conflict with truth, mercy with justice, strength with humility, and so on. Rather than shutting it down, an expansive virtue listens to increasing complexity. Kierkegaard is right to link faith to objective uncertainty, to a self striving in darkness to become itself, to the possibility that ordinary ethics, as simple commonplace rules, might have to be suspended. And Kierkegaard is right to highlight the terror that accompanies radical suspension of rules in the name of deeper connections to difficult realities.

When we simplify in order to preserve a single constricted and violently “purified” virtue, we sacrifice what does not fit, creating, as I mentioned, from virtue what is surely a vice.²⁶ Sometimes the self kills itself, sacrifices itself, in the name of a radically “purifying” *nomos*. A soldier commits suicide because he can't live up to the categorical and pure demand that because others in his unit died for him, he must die for them. His survival profanes the nobility of their sacrifice, and so he must not survive. A celebrity singer, in her own eyes only a would-be beauty, takes her life because she lets her vision of superlative beauty become isolated from all other value, and demands categorically that she be an instance of “pure beauty.” She excludes herself from being *ordinarily* beautiful, or simply *attractive*.

Sometimes the narrow self of constricted vision kills others, sacrificing them as scapegoats in the name of “purifying” the social landscape by installing a restrictive ideal or archetype: the pure Aryan, the pure Christian, the pure male, the male who must despise any hint of heterodox sexuality (it's all brotherhood and guns), the pure female, who must be sexy, striking, and pose. Many, if not all, of our ideals or aspirations can slip in a moment from legitimacy to poison: “No one's better than anyone else!” “You're mine, my dear!” “Anything less than winning is losing!” “The unexamined life is not worth living!”

A colleague reminds me how it can be that neither “know thyself” nor faith's “allegiance to openness” are exempt from poisonous descent: “Couldn't faith's ‘I hide nothing from myself’ be denatured into a perverse nepsis, a remorseless, light-glaring-in-the-face interrogation of the self, distorted and distorting?”²⁷ Knowing oneself, or wanting to be faithfully open, requires a certain gentleness towards oneself. He adds,

It strikes me that living by faith...is so to live that faithfulness itself is rarely dwelt upon and certainly does not become overtly programmatic in the faithful person's life. Faith-fullness is an unforced, active, inward and sympathetic attention to what is uncertain and contingent, even while it is acknowledged to be uncertain and contingent. But it is not, or not often, attentive to itself. (Perhaps this is, phenomenologically, part of the experience of faith as a gift, a theological (and not a cardinal) virtue.)²⁸

I find this very helpful.

If self-deception closes off morally essential realities, faith opens *to* them—ever more opens to ever *more of* them. It is the opposite of an embrace of a dogma. Love, too, opens endlessly, shifting between relinquishment and embrace. Although I can't make the case here, I'll stand by the equation: what goes for faith goes for love. And what goes for Kierkegaardian faith is the utter absence, the ultimate impossibility, of anything like self-deception. Whether mortals can attain (receive) such faithfulness or love, and what the odds are, is quite another matter.

CHAPTER FIVE
FAITH AND THE UNCERTAINTY
OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

DARÍO GONZÁLEZ

Along with the names of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, Kierkegaard was once mentioned by Merleau-Ponty as one of the authors in which it has been possible to identify the “manner” and the “style” of the phenomenological movement, even when the method of phenomenology was not established.¹ Rather than just referring to the alleged forerunners of a particular philosophical tradition, this remark leads our attention to a style of thinking characterized by what we might call a critical approach to the problem of human agency. From Hegel and Marx to Nietzsche and Freud, and putting aside the fundamental differences that separate those authors, the double question concerning *our capacity to act in a world* and *the possible misrecognition of that capacity* defines the core of the investigation. The acknowledgment of such a duplicity—the interpretation of subjectivity as both *freedom* and *unfreedom*, as *truth* and *untruth*—is only possible in an epoch in which the essential features of “humanity” no longer can be recognized against the background of classical humanism. Far from the nostalgic longing for the lost substantiality of human nature, the Hegelian and post-Hegelian rediscovery of subjectivity consists in emphasizing the split that characterizes our situation as historical agents. This argument has been developed by an author whose relation to phenomenology, however, is in itself problematic, namely, Slavoj Žižek. In Hegel’s account of the Absolute “not only as substance, but also as subject,”

“Subject” stands for the non-substantial agency of phenomenalization, appearance, “illusion,” split, finitude, Understanding, and so on, and to conceive Substance as Subject means precisely that split, phenomenalization, and so forth, are inherent to the life of the Absolute itself. There is no “absolute Subject”—subject “as such” is relative, caught in self-division, and it is *as such* that the Subject is inherent to Substance.²

The consequences of this view for the discussion of Kierkegaard’s debt to Hegelianism cannot be fully unfolded here. Regarding Žižek’s overall interpretation of Kierkegaard’s philosophy of religion, it would suffice to quote a parallel statement: “Kierkegaard’s God is strictly correlative to the ontological openness of reality, to our relating to reality as unfinished, ‘in becoming’.... This is why Kierkegaard has to insist on God’s thorough ‘desubstantialization’—God is ‘beyond the order of Being,’ he is nothing but the mode of how we relate to him; that is to say, we do not relate to him,

he is this relating.”³ In fact, the correspondence between the ontology of “becoming” and the question concerning how “we relate” to God is one of Kierkegaard’s major assumptions in his Climacus writings. In the “Interlude” of the *Philosophical Fragments*, he seems to suggest that the proper comprehension of Christian faith depends on the possibility of discerning the structure of becoming—or “coming into existence” (*Tilblivelse*)—in our perception of “the past.”⁴ Christian faith is the relation to a God who has existed historically, i.e., the relation to a historical event to which the believer attaches an absolute significance. But faith is exposed to the illusion that consists in conceiving of history as the *necessary* movement from a past time to a present time, as if such a movement could take place without the intervention of a free acting subjectivity. In this sense, the question as to whether the believer “authentically” relates to the message of Christianity is explicitly tied to the problem of determining how he or she experiences his or her own position in history.

I. The Unknown Ground of Moral Agency

If anything can be qualified as the “manner” and the “style” of this sort of phenomenology *avant la lettre*, it is precisely the attention paid to the process of *pure phenomenization* in which subjectivity is constantly confronted with its illusions, the instantiation of a difference that prevents it from returning to itself as a transcendental consciousness. This brings us back to Merleau-Ponty’s incidental allusion to Kierkegaard. Let us notice that the author of the *Phenomenology of Perception* was dealing in the mentioned context with the crucial problem related to the interpretation of Husserl’s “phenomenological reduction.” Contrary to the idealistic account of reduction as the methodic withdrawal of consciousness towards its own “*Sinngebung*” or “active meaning-giving operation [*opération active de signification*],”⁵ Merleau-Ponty asserts that this movement is necessarily incomplete:

The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. This is why Husserl is constantly re-examining the possibility of the reduction. If we were absolute mind, the reduction would present no problem. But since, on the contrary, we are in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on which we are trying to seize (since they *sich einströmen*, as Husserl says), there is no thought which embraces all our thought...Far from being, as has been thought, a procedure of idealistic philosophy, phenomenological reduction belongs to existential philosophy.⁶

According to this interpretation, the basic presupposition of reduction is not transcendental consciousness but the very openness of existence, something Merleau-Ponty expresses by referring to “Heidegger’s ‘being-in-the-world.’”⁷

To what extent can Kierkegaard be counted among the authors who anticipate this view? “Our relating to reality as unfinished, ‘in

becoming’ ”—to quote once again Žižek’s expression—does not seem to have for Kierkegaard the form of a “being-in-the-world.” But we should remember that the world “in” which existence develops itself is not only the horizon of our interaction with entities but also a *historical world*, the horizon of freedom. As moral and historical agents, we “are” the freedom whose origin and essence no human act is immediately able to embrace. We can already recognize in Kierkegaard’s notion of freedom what Heidegger tells us about *Dasein*: a being that “is ontically ‘closest’ to itself and ontologically farthest.”⁸ From Hegel and Marx to Nietzsche and Freud, the structure of this experience has been described in different manners. As Nietzsche repeats in some of his works: “We don’t know ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? ...we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we *have* to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law ‘Each is furthest from himself’ applies to all eternity.”⁹ “‘Everyone is furthest from himself,’ all those who try to harness the self, know that to their cost—and the saying, ‘Know thyself,’ in the mouth of a God and spoken to man, is almost malicious.”¹⁰ The allusion to divinity in Nietzsche’s formulation is not at all insignificant. The dimension of subjectivity that the Delphi precept proposes to “know” is the Self in its practical function, the source of our actions. In their attempt to grasp this hidden source, human beings are confronted, as it were, with the imperative word of a God, a pure inscription that they are supposed to decipher. The saying γνῶθι σεαυτόν, *Know thyself*, marks at the same time the limit of knowledge and our encounter with divinity. What moral agents “do not know” about themselves is whether or not their actions can be interpreted as the expression of an infinite will, as the realization of “a God’s work.” This is also what Kierkegaard has in mind when he insistently refers to the figure of Socrates in the *Philosophical Fragments*: “he who believed that he knew himself now no longer is sure whether he perhaps is a more curiously complex animal than Typhon or whether he has in his being a gentler and diviner part.”¹¹ The difficulty posited in Kierkegaard’s and Nietzsche’s texts is not only related to the limitations—or sheer impossibility—of self-knowledge. Beyond the cognitive dimension of the phenomenon of reflection, the fact remains that self-knowledge constitutes a moral requirement.

Within the tradition of thought inaugurated by Hegel, Kierkegaard offers the advantage of explicitly pointing out the connection between the unknown ground of moral agency and the phenomenon of faith. Immediately after paraphrasing the text from *Phaedrus* in which Socrates affirms not to know who or what he really is, the author of the *Philosophical Fragments* introduces a fundamental question: “But what is this unknown against which the understanding in its paradoxical passion collides and which even disturbs man and his self-knowledge? It is the unknown. But it is not a human being, insofar as he knows man, or anything else that he knows. Therefore, let us call this unknown *the god*. It is only a name we give to it.”¹² And later in the same chapter:

What, then, is the unknown? It is the frontier that is continually arrived at, and therefore when the category of motion is replaced by the category of

rest it is the different, the absolutely different. . . . But this difference cannot be grasped securely. Every time this happens, it is basically an arbitrariness, and at the very bottom of devoutness there madly lurks the capricious arbitrariness that knows it itself has produced the god.¹³

Not knowing what we are and not being able to determine whether or not the encounter with “the god” is an illusion are, as it seems, one and the same thing.

What is at issue in these difficult passages from Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* is the need of a *revelation* of the difference between man and “the god,” between the human *subjectum* and its ground, between the finitude of historical agency and the absolute value of religious truth. Insofar as that difference cannot be embraced by reason—by the “methods” of human understanding—*faith* appears to be the only way to grasp the movement of phenomenalization of the Absolute, its “becoming,” its “coming into existence.” At the end of the *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard observes that his project has been carried out “beyond Socrates,” in as much as “a new organ has been assumed here: faith.”¹⁴ Beyond the Socratic standpoint—beyond the maieutic method—Christian faith is the “organ” that replaces the Greek *eros*, a new version of this passionate desire that leads our understanding to collide, to shatter against its own limits: “[T]hen the understanding stands still, as did Socrates, for now the understanding’s paradoxical passion that wills the collision awakens and, without really understanding itself, wills its own downfall. It is the same with the paradox of erotic love.”¹⁵

II. Love and the Absolute Paradox of Faith

The comparison of faith (*Tro*) and erotic love (*Elskov*) plays a specific role in the economy of Kierkegaard’s texts. Faith and erotic love are passionate movements, and, even more importantly, both passions entail the possibility of a *transformation* of the self. As becomes particularly clear in the case of erotic love, the “relation” between the lover and the beloved cannot be totally detached from the lover’s subjective position as a self-relationship. The erotic passion covers the distance between somebody’s “love for another” and “self-love,” something that Kierkegaard succinctly describes in Hegelian terms: “Self-love is the ground or goes to the ground [*ligger til Grund eller gaar til Grund*] in all love.”¹⁶ The “paradoxical” character of erotic passion is expressed by the duplicity of this formula. Self-love manifests itself, *it phenomenalizes itself* “as love for another, for one missing,”¹⁷ but this phenomenalization is at the same time the “foundering” of self-love. The practical significance of the paradox is that the manifestation of love irreversibly modifies the nature of the self: “the lover is changed by this paradox of love so that he almost does not recognize himself anymore.”¹⁸ Remarkably enough, the Hegelian idiom Kierkegaard applies in his account of erotic love contains the key to the abovementioned discussion on the difficulty of a fully achieved withdrawal

towards a transcendental principle. In as much as love becomes manifest, its transcendental condition is “sublated” (*ophævet, aufgehoben*) in the very process of phenomenalization. Hegel had explained the dialectics of “ground” and “existence” in a similar fashion:

The fact emerges from the ground. It is not grounded or posited by it in such a manner that ground remains as a substrate; on the contrary, the positing is the movement of the ground outwards to itself and its simple vanishing.... Consequently, the fact is not only the *unconditioned* but also the *groundless*, and it emerges from ground only in so far as ground has “fallen to the ground [*zu Grunde gegangen*]” and ceased to be ground: it emerges from the groundless, that is, from its own essential negativity or pure form.¹⁹

As soon as he characterizes this dialectical structure as a *paradox*, Kierkegaard stresses the impossibility of deciding whether self-love “vanishes” in the experience of erotic love or whether it actually “remains as a substrate.” In fact, both aspects constitute one and the same phenomenon: “self-love has foundered [*gaaet til Grunde*], but nevertheless it is not annihilated but is taken captive and is erotic love’s spoils of war [*spolia opima*].”²⁰ Self-love “can come to life again, and this becomes erotic love’s spiritual trial.”²¹ In this sense, *eros* is an imperfect prefiguration of the passion of faith, although both experiences are “paradoxical.” The essential difference between the paradox of love and the *absolute paradox* of Christian faith consists in the fact that faith demands the *radical* desubstantialization of the self. The difference becomes obvious in the passages in which Kierkegaard compares the Socratic and the Christian view of the relation between “the learner” and “the teacher.”²² As long as one remains within the frame of a pre-Christian interpretation of the divine, one can never know whether understanding itself in its own passion has not “produced the god,” as when Alcibiades evokes the hidden divine meaning of Socrates’ irony.²³ Here, the “unknown,” “the god,” “the absolutely different” is divested from any “distinguishing mark,” and it does not “disclose” itself as such but only as the ironic frontier of human understanding.²⁴ Christian faith, on the contrary, should relate itself to a God who discloses himself as absolute difference, to an incarnated God, to the “distinguishing mark” of a determined historical event. The philosophical challenge affronted by Kierkegaard consists precisely in defining a “passion” which does not remain tragically or comically caught in its own illusions, a passion that, unlike erotic love, is not exposed to the rebirth of self-love. Let us just keep in mind that Climacus, the pseudonymous author of the *Philosophical Fragments*, does not seem to respond to that challenge in a completely satisfactory manner. His question, as he ironically states at the beginning of the first chapter, “is asked by one who in his ignorance does not even know what provided the occasion for his questioning in this way.”²⁵ Only the pen of Anti-Climacus, the pseudonymous author of *Practice in Christianity*, will be able to give an account of faith on the basis of a “distinguishing mark,” as an answer to the “sign of contradiction” engraved in history through the event of Incarnation. But this is also the reason why Climacus’ writings are so important within the

philosophical tradition that, according to our initial suggestion, recognizes the constitutive split between subjectivity and its ground.

It might be argued that Christian faith signals a sort of reduction of the event of Incarnation in as much as the believer assents to, and is certain of, its truth. But we should not forget that this assent is the assent granted to a paradox. Its historical kernel, so to speak, cannot be properly reduced to the certainty of a scientific view:

If the fact of which we speak were a simple historical fact, the historian's scrupulous accuracy would be of great importance. This is not the case here, for faith cannot be distilled from even the finest detail. The heart of the matter is the historical fact that the god has been in human form, and the other historical details are not even as important as they would be if the subject were a human being instead of the god. Lawyers say that a capital crime absorbs all the lesser crimes—so also with faith: its absurdity completely absorbs minor matters.²⁶

Every methodological approach would fail in its attempt to grasp “the heart of the matter,” the real presence of the divine. It is true, however, that the intrinsic possibility of this failure is not completely alien to the experience of phenomenological “reduction.” In the pages of the *Phenomenology of Perception* cited above, Merleau-Ponty chooses an interpretation of reduction that seems to fit our purpose:

The best formulation of the reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of “wonder” in the face of the world. Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical. Husserl's transcendental is not Kant's, and Husserl accuses Kant's philosophy of being “worldly,” because it makes use of our relation to the world, which is the motive force of the transcendental deduction, and makes the world immanent in the subject, instead of *being filled with wonder* at it and conceiving the subject as a process of transcendence towards the world.²⁷

But this aspect of the phenomenological *experience* can hardly be interpreted as a feature of the phenomenological method. Against this background, the possible overcoming of the “Socratic” way of thinking in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* can perhaps be described in a more precise manner: the novelty of Christian passion rests on the fact that faith, unlike the maieutic method, is able to restore the conditions of a purely historical experience of truth. What Fink calls “wonder” should undoubtedly be counted among those conditions. If belief,²⁸ in general terms, is for Kierkegaard “the organ for the historical,”²⁹ it is precisely because “the historical has in itself that very illusiveness [*Svigagtighed*] that is the illusiveness of coming into existence.”³⁰ Thus “the organ for the historical must be formed in likeness

to this, must have within itself the corresponding something by which in its certitude it continually annuls the incertitude that corresponds to the uncertainty of coming into existence."³¹ Its capacity to annul the uncertainty of the historical implies that the passionate apprehension of coming into existence is in itself a form of "wonder" (*Beundring*).³² In his use of this concept, the author of the *Philosophical Fragments* is probably inspired by Franz von Baader, the German theologian who had described the mood of "admiration" (*Bewunderung*) as the fundamental medium of spiritual life.³³ What is particularly important in this context, nevertheless, is the emphatic conception of "the historical" as that which cannot be apprehended by immediate sensation, given that "immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive."³⁴ In its strictest sense, *historical* experience is always penetrated by the possibility of deception and self-deception.

III. The "Stumbling Block"

It is sufficiently clear that "the historical" does not designate here the factual occurrence of an event that may have been immediately sensed in the past. A good way to avoid this misunderstanding is to propose an essentially "hypothetical" definition of the historical: *provided that* something has happened, *then* it certainly belongs to a past that cannot be undone. But its intrinsic belonging to the past still carries the mark of the uncertain. Belief "annuls the incertitude" of the historical in the sense that the believer positively counts on the event, having occurred, as something that has changed the course of history in an irreversible manner, but in such a way that this irreversibility does not amount to logical necessity. Only the passion of belief recuperates, in other words, the radical *facticity* of the event, the impossibility of referring it to a necessary cause, its being rooted in "an absolutely freely acting cause."³⁵

We have seen, however, that Kierkegaard's account of Christian faith in the *Philosophical Fragments* involves a series of specific determinations. Christian faith—that is, "belief" in the "wholly eminent sense"—implies that a believer, in every particular case, can "repeat the dialectical qualifications of coming into existence,"³⁶ that he or she assumes the illusiveness of the event of Incarnation and annuls the incertitude of its coming into existence. Every time those qualifications are re-established, the believer "makes" the event "historical for himself" (*lader det for sig blive historisk*).³⁷ But the historical meaning of the event cannot be totally reduced to a transcendental operation. The "reduction" remains essentially unfinished in the sense that the event preserves its strange and paradoxical character. Such is the function of the notion of paradox in Kierkegaard's project. It should be noticed, however, that the presupposition of an "absolute difference" between the truth of faith and the believer's "untruth" entails the radicalization of the phenomenon of "wonder." In his papers from 1841, Kierkegaard had already observed that the allusion to wonder or admiration as philosophy's "positive starting point" corresponded to the ancient interpretation of philosophical thinking. Different from the classical view, modern philosophy was supposed to

begin “with doubt,”³⁸ a motif Kierkegaard himself had developed in his early writing on “Johannes Climacus.” In the meeting point between both traditions, the author of the *Philosophical Fragments* seems to suggest that the apprehension of “the historical” presupposes the conflict between the positivity of wonder and the negativity of doubt. One might even argue that he calls our attention to this conflict in order to indicate that Christian faith contains a moment of doubt. This is, for instance, Arendt’s interpretation, in a context in which the German philosopher considers the similarities between Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche:

Kierkegaard, jumping from doubt into belief, carried doubt into religion, transformed the attack of modern science on religion into an inner religious struggle, so that since then sincere religious experience has seemed possible only in the tension between doubt and belief, in torturing one’s beliefs with one’s doubts and relaxing from this torment in the violent affirmation of the absurdity of both the human condition and man’s belief.³⁹

As a matter of fact, in the vocabulary of the *Philosophical Fragments*, two parallel notions reinforce the sense of “wonder” attributed to the apprehension of the paradox. On the one hand, witnessing the paradox constitutes an *offense*, a stumbling block;⁴⁰ on the other hand, “the paradox in turn is the moment,”⁴¹ that is, the temporal occasion of a religious conversion. Both notions have important theological implications. The term “offense” (σκάνδαλον) appears in its verbal form (σκανδαλιζεσθαι) in a passage from the Gospels in which Jesus addresses John the Baptist’s disciples: “Blessed is he who does not take offense at me.”⁴² Closer to Kierkegaard’s use of the concept, Paul refers to the central message of Christianity—the crucified Christ—as “an offense to the Jews” and “a foolishness to the Greeks.”⁴³ In as much as it is the occasion for the individual’s radical decision, the *historical inscription* of that message has precisely the structure of “the moment,” and Kierkegaard does not hesitate to observe that “the moment of decision is *foolishness* . . . The expression of offense is that the moment is foolishness, the paradox is foolishness.”⁴⁴ The philosophical meaning of these expressions becomes clear against the background of the abovementioned comparison of erotic love and faith. Not by chance the “offense” is characterized as a sort of “unhappy love,”⁴⁵ the impossibility of experiencing the historical inscription of the Christian truth on the level of immediacy. The believer is *not* the happy lover, the immediately “blessed” one, the one who *does not* take offense, the one who does not stumble in his or her faith. Here it is important to stress that the initially unhappy character of the believer’s passion is an expression of the essential *difference* that separates him from the god who manifests himself: “this love is basically unhappy, for they are very unequal, and what seems so easy—namely, that the god must be able to make himself understood—is not so easy if he is not to destroy that which is different.”⁴⁶ The “offense” consists in the believer’s inability to comprehend the innermost kernel of the event of Incarnation, that is, *God’s love* as the “freely acting cause” of his manifestation.⁴⁷

What is “foolish” about the decision of faith is that the individual’s actions and utterances are no longer based on certainty but, as Kierkegaard puts it, on the annulation of uncertainty. The possible happiness of Christian passion depends on this annulation, the negating movement by virtue of which religious existence constitutes itself as entirely historical, fully “de-cided,” detached from the individual’s substantial relation to the world. It is true that the foolishness of the decision is “foolishness to the Greeks,” foolishness from the perspective of mere rationality. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, the “Greeks” are those who “seek after wisdom [σοφίαν].”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, rather than simply equating passion with irrationality, Kierkegaard seems to suggest that faith demands a transformation of wisdom on the basis of the experience of a paradoxical event. If the comprehension of this experience requires a *secunda philosophia*,⁴⁹ a new account of the individual’s relation to truth, it is precisely because *truth has become historical, that is: the apprehension of truth is now essentially interwoven with the apprehension of the untruth of subjectivity*. To this extent, faith deals with “the illusiveness of the historical,” with the deceiving character of coming into existence.

Our attempt to interpret the tension between truth and untruth as the hallmark of historical experience finds support in some of Kierkegaard’s arguments. The necessarily ambiguous account of subjectivity in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*—“Subjectivity is Truth,” “Subjectivity is Untruth”⁵⁰—relies on the categories introduced in the *Philosophical Fragments*. One of the fundamental presuppositions of the Christian view is that “the untruth... is not merely outside the truth but is polemical against the truth.”⁵¹ As soon as the truth is communicated by a “teacher” who “is the god himself,” the individual is “reminded that he is untruth and is that through his own fault. But this state—to be untruth and to be that through one’s fault—what can we call it? Let us call it *sin*.”⁵² The ethico-religious characterization of both truth (the teacher, the god) and untruth (the learner, the sinner) is consistent with the idea of a polemical—rather than purely logical—opposition. The shift from “logic” to “polemics” is more than an innocent rhetorical move. It implies that the medium in which truth expresses itself is the concrete medium of historical agency. Moreover, truth and untruth can only establish a strictly polemical contradiction *within the history of an acting subjectivity*. This is, by the way, the difference between “tragic error,” which is induced by the gods, and “sin,” which is acted and suffered by the same historical agent. When we read in the *Philosophical Fragments* that the sinner “is untruth... through his own fault,” we should perhaps put a certain emphasis on the adjectival qualification of the fault. It is the sinner’s *own* fault in so far as the “moment” of sin is not placed outside his own history. The theological frame of this conception has been defined in *The Concept of Anxiety*: “Only with the moment does history begin. By sin, man’s sensuousness is posited as sinfulness.”⁵³ Kierkegaard’s view of temporality seems to imply that Christianity provides the only possibility to *comprehend* historicity. From the “Greek” perspective, on the contrary, the question concerning the meaning of human action can only be posited by a tragic personality, that is, an individual who is not able to “annul the uncertainty” of the historical.

IV. “Repetition”: Dealing with Uncertainty

The formulation cited above deserves, however, a further clarification. The “annulation” of uncertainty is not, in Kierkegaard’s sense, a cognitive operation. His account of faith is strictly non-cognitivist: “The conclusion of belief is no conclusion [*Shutning*] but a resolution [*Beslutning*], and thus doubt is excluded. . . . Belief and doubt are not two kinds of knowledge that can be defined in continuity with each other, for neither of them is a cognitive act, and they are opposite passions.”⁵⁴ In general terms, belief is the passion that teaches the individual how to deal with uncertainty. But let us remember once again that Christian faith is belief in the “eminent sense,” that is, not just a passion but an “absolute passion.” If there is any difference between “belief” and “faith”—a difference that cannot be rendered in Danish—it is perhaps because faith is supposed to annul the uncertainty of the believer’s *own* historicity, the uncertainty of his or her historical situation as a moral agent.

Kierkegaard’s non-cognitivist account of faith can properly be defined on the basis of our previous conclusions. Rather than “apprehending” the event as an object of knowledge, faith is supposed to *produce* a certain position of subjectivity. Rather than an “object” of knowledge, the event of Incarnation is a *pure inscription*, something to be interpreted and, as such, characterized by the “illusiveness” of the historical. It goes without saying that historicity is not just a sort of blank page on which such an inscription should find its place. In that case, the historical would be accessible to immediate cognition, the kind of cognition that “cannot deceive.”⁵⁵ Historicity as such is the movement by virtue of which a past becomes significant because of its relation to a future. In the eminent sense of faith, this very movement is that of a subject who, in the search for truth, discovers his or her own untruth. In other words, the experience of the eminently historical is the experience of *repetition*. Žižek proposes a very useful definition of this phenomenon, although its application to Kierkegaard may seem problematic at first glance: “The time structure with which we are concerned here is such that it is mediated through subjectivity: the subjective ‘mistake,’ ‘fault,’ ‘error,’ ‘misrecognition,’ arrives paradoxically *before* the truth in relation to which we are designating it as ‘error,’ because this ‘truth’ itself becomes true only through—or, to use a Hegelian term, by mediation of—the error.”⁵⁶ Let us notice that the subjective mediation pointed out by Žižek literally precedes the “content” that is to be mediated. Kierkegaard himself explains repetition as reversed recollection, and “repetition proper” as “what has mistakenly been called mediation.”⁵⁷ Žižek’s reformulation of this view has the advantage of leading our attention to other theoretical constructions in which the relation between repetition and historicity is even more evident. One of them is Rosa Luxemburg’s discussion of the “necessarily premature” character of revolutionary attempts. The sense of this particular discussion can be traced back to “Hegel’s theory of the role of repetition in history: ‘a political revolution is generally sanctioned by the opinion of the people only when it is renewed’—that is, it can succeed only as a repetition of a first failed attempt.”⁵⁸ The “sanction” of history has in itself the structure of

a subjective mediation, of a temporally deferred meaning-giving operation. But the very idea of a “failed” revolution is linked here to the question as to whether historical action is able to produce a new position of subjectivity. In a similar fashion, Deleuze tries to find in Marx the key to his own notion of repetition as a “condition of action”:

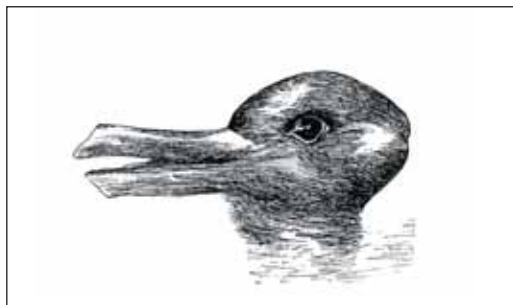
Marx’s theory of historical repetition...turns on the following principle which does not seem to have been sufficiently understood by historians: historical repetition is neither a matter of analogy nor a concept produced by the reflection of historians, but above all the condition of historical action itself. Harold Rosenberg illuminates this point in some fine pages: “...It is the revolutionary crisis, the compelled striving for ‘something entirely new,’ that causes history to become *veiled in myth*...”⁵⁹

As soon as one resists the easy temptation to oppose the role of collective “revolutions” in post-Hegelian political thinking to the function of the individual’s “conversion” in Kierkegaard, the possibility of comparing both phenomena becomes obvious. The passionate movement of Christian faith is situated, as it were, in the space between two revolutions, namely, between the qualitative leap which introduces sinfulness into the world and the new qualitative leap of forgiveness. The presence of “the god in time” invites the individual to relate him- or herself to both events. Conversion has, to this extent, the structure of a *historical experience* marked off by the acknowledgment of the believer’s untruth and by the appropriation of an absolute truth. But the radical significance attached to both “leaps” can also be the cause of a *mythical* interpretation of historicity. This problem is indirectly addressed by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety*: the dogmatic presupposition according to which “sin comes into the world...by a leap,” that is, as an event that cannot be inserted in a necessary development, is “to the understanding...an offense, *ergo* it is a myth. As a compensation, the understanding invents its own myth, which denies the leap and explains the circle as a straight line, and now everything proceeds quite naturally.”⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that here the “offense” is associated with the mythical explanation of the event. In the *Philosophical Fragments*, a similar question is raised in connection to the idea of “The God as Teacher and Savior.” In this case, the initial approach to the problem of Incarnation takes place in terms of a “poetical venture [*digterisk Forsøg*]”⁶¹ in which the passion of faith is compared to erotic love. Kierkegaard’s entire philosophical project in the writings from this period consists in the attempt to overcome the purely mythical interpretation of historical existence. Nevertheless, in as much as history is not apprehended as the evolution of a “substantial” reality, the only possibility of overcoming the mythical view is to stress the ethico-religious constitution of our experience of time. Historical existence consists in the dramatic experience of a “polemical” contradiction between truth and untruth. Only against the background of that contradiction can the individual “repeat the dialectical qualifications” of truth’s coming into existence.⁶²

CHAPTER SIX
CONSTANCY OF FAITH?
SYMMETRY AND ASYMMETRY IN KIERKEGAARD'S
LEAP OF FAITH

JEROME (YEHUDA) GELLMAN

Suppose when I look at this picture I see a duck:



After looking at it for a while I suddenly see a rabbit. Then, after looking at it for yet another while, again I see a duck.¹ The process that takes me from the duck to the rabbit and back to the duck is a symmetrical process. The process can be reversed under the same conditions of my gaze.

Next, consider an explosion. Between the situation prior to an explosion to that after, there is asymmetry. After the explosion there is no way for the explosive process to reverse itself. If the explosion were on film and you reversed the film, then you would have symmetry, but not in real life. An explosion is an asymmetrical process.

Consider now a change of water to ice. Water has turned to ice. If the temperature rises, the ice will turn back to water. So in that sense freezing and thawing of the same water is a symmetrical process. However, if the temperature never rises, or as long as it does not rise, there will be no return of the ice to water. Unlike in the duck-rabbit picture, for symmetry to exist conditions must change. I am going to call this: *conditional symmetry*. We now have three categories: plain symmetry, asymmetry, and conditional symmetry.

What I want to ask is what is the nature of the Kierkegaardian *leap of faith*? Is it an asymmetrical process, perhaps like Buddhist enlightenment is

supposed to be, once achieved never to be reversed? Or is the leap of faith symmetrical, given to going back and forth in relevantly similar conditions? Or is it conditionally symmetrical? And if so, what are the chances of change in the relevant conditions?

I am going to be focusing on the *leap of faith* regarding the Absolute Paradox, faith in the God-Man, who is both infinite and finite. This is what Kierkegaard calls “the absurd.” And I am going to be relating primarily to Kierkegaard’s first authorship, specifically to the three pseudonymous authors, Johannes de silentio, Johannes Climacus, and Vigilius Haufniensis, and to some entries in the journals for the relevant period of time.

My short, and perhaps surprising, answer to my question is that the leap of faith is asymmetrical. It cannot be reversed. And this tells us much about what Kierkegaard means by a leap of faith. My long answer will involve determining the place of human volition in the leap. I will examine and reject three views that have been advanced by Kierkegaard scholars on the role of human volition in the leap. Following that, I will be advancing my own view on this. With that in hand, I hope to provide an argument for why the leap of faith is asymmetrical.

I. The Leap of Faith

In a journal entry of 1836, Kierkegaard wrote this about “conversion” to faith:

Conversion goes slowly....one has to walk back by the same road he came out on earlier....This is why we are told to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, for it is not finished or completed; backsliding is a possibility. No doubt it was in part this unrest which drove people to seek so zealously to become martyrs.²

According to this passage, one advances slowly towards faith and might regress at any time. Even if you reach the end of the road, you might have a relapse. Indeed, Kierkegaard says with some wit, some chose to die martyrs rather than live with the risk of a relapse. Here, Kierkegaard is thinking of conversion to faith as symmetrical, perhaps not all that different from the symmetry of the duck-rabbit picture. At any moment a shift can occur taking you out of faith and back to where you had been previously.

Several years later, however, we find Kierkegaard occupied by a leap of faith, radically different from an incremental journey on a long road. A person makes “the leap of faith,” says Climacus, “the qualitative transition...from unbeliever to believer.”³ Here, the achievement of faith is not quantitative, or incremental, as when on a journey, but qualitative. The change to faith is a sudden flop-over, not advancing bit by bit until complete. Coming from Climacus this has much irony to it, since “Climacus” is a “climber,” implying just the kind of process he is rejecting. Climacus shares the name of the seventh-century monk who wrote a work entitled, *The Ladder of Divine Descent*. Here is no ladder. Only a leap.

Climacus returns often to the idea that there cannot be an “approximation” in faith, a process of coming closer and closer until you are there. Here is an example:

With the aid of approximation, the absurd becomes something else; it becomes probable, it becomes more probable, it may become to a high degree and exceedingly probably. Now he is all set to believe it....The almost probable, the probable, the to-a-high-degree and exceedingly probable—that he can almost know, or as good as know, to a higher degree and exceedingly almost *know*—but *believe* it, that cannot be done, for the absurd is precisely the object of faith and only that that can be believed.⁴

Together with the change from a quantitative to a qualitative conception of faith, I ask whether there was a shift from a symmetrical conception of faith to an asymmetrical or conditionally symmetrical one. To answer my question I need to turn to the difficult issue of the relationship between a person’s volition in the leap of faith and God’s contribution to the leap of faith. To what extent, if at all, does the leap transpire because of God’s causality in divine grace? On the one hand, for Climacus and Kierkegaard, the leap of faith involves a “passionate decision” of will, a decision made in individual freedom. On the other hand, Climacus asserts categorically, “Faith is not an act of will.”⁵ Faith is a gift of God. The problem is how to reconcile these two statements. How can faith be a matter of free decision, yet not involve the will? I want to look at three different attempts to explain the relationship between human volition and divine grace in the leap, those, respectively, by Louis Pojman, Jamie Ferreira and David Wisdo. I will propose an alternative view of this relationship, from which will follow an answer to my question about the symmetry of faith.

Louis Pojman has interpreted Kierkegaard to be a direct volitionist. Direct volitionism has two parts:

The volitional theory contains both a descriptive and a prescriptive feature. The former asserts that believing is an act of will, that in every belief situation the will is operative....The prescriptive feature asserts that one ought to will to believe certain propositions; for example one ought to make oneself believe that God exists.⁶

Descriptive *volitionism*, then, says that (P1) I can come to acquire beliefs by directly willing them into existence. And prescriptive volitionism says that (P2) There are some beliefs that I ought to directly will into existence. Direct volitionism differs from indirect volitionism. Indirect volitionism says that I can undertake courses of action for the purpose of hoping they will bring about a belief, and that sometimes, at least, I can succeed in bringing the belief to be. In addition, it says there are beliefs that I ought to try to obtain in that matter. Blaise Pascal was an example of an indirect volitionist, maintaining that one could help induce a belief in oneself by undertaking tasks apt for bringing about that result.⁷ Pascal held that in some cases an individual ought to do such tasks, such as religious rituals,

to induce belief in God. Kierkegaard, according to Pojman, was a direct volitionist, claiming that one can and ought to will into existence directly and immediately faith in the *Absolute Paradox*.

What then happens with *divine grace* in this story? For Pojman, there are two stages in the acquisition of faith. He says this about faith in the proposition that God has *come into existence*, as when God became a man:

This faith is not a natural faculty or capacity of man. It is unnatural. It is a gift of God....This faith is not an act of the will. We can do nothing to acquire it. It is a miracle. It is the necessary condition for being able to entertain the proposition that God has come into existence. Yet...it does not in itself guarantee that a person will make use of the gift, once bestowed. The will must re-enter, become activated....There is a cooperative effort between God and man in the process of salvation. God gives the capacity to believe and reveals the proposition; man must decide whether he will believe. The will is free to assent or reject the proposition once faith makes a decision possible. Human freedom is still operative in the midst of grace.⁸

“Faith” for Kierkegaard, according to Pojman, has two stages. The first stage is wrought by God. Here, God provides the conditions for a person to have the ability to choose faith. That we are able to choose to believe is a miracle, given by divine grace. No human will is operative at this point. In stage two, the person takes advantage of the divine grace and wills faith. A person *decides* to believe. We might fail to do so even though God has enabled our doing so. When we freely choose faith, it is our will that causes directly our belief to come into existence, per direct volitionism. This is how free decision and divine grace are reconciled, according to Pojman, for Kierkegaard. Grace operates before the human will is activated.

Pojman goes on to argue that direct descriptive volitionism is “essentially confused” and that prescriptive volitionism is “morally suspect.” Pojman rejects direct descriptive volitionism on the grounds that belief never has the phenomenal feel of our deciding to believe. Belief, rather, is something that happens to us. In addition, Pojman argues that one cannot directly will a belief into existence.⁹ (P1) is false. But then, by the principle that “ought implies can,” so is (P2) false. Concludes Pojman, Kierkegaard’s characterization of the leap as dependent on direct volitionism is indefensible.

Jamie Ferreira and David Wisdo, respectively, give far different readings of the category of decision in the leap. Ferreira rejects entirely that the leap is a result of a decision to believe on the part of the subject.¹⁰ She notes that Climacus emphatically rejects that in the leap one “closes one’s eyes, grabs oneself by the neck, à la Münchhausen, and then—then one stands on the other side.”¹¹ Baron Münchhausen (1720-57) was famous for his being the hero of a fanciful book of his wild adventures that first appeared in 1786. In the book there appears a picture of a “Münchhausen leap” in which the Baron pulls himself up from behind the neck and leaps with his horse to the other side of a stream.¹² That will power caricature is also later rejected when Climacus notes, “The inwardness and the unutterable sighs of prayer are incommensurate with the muscular.”¹³

Ferreira takes these comments by Climacus as a key to understanding the leap, denying what is surely its most common popular understanding as a heroic act of self-propulsion into faith. Climacus, says Ferreira, is opposing himself to such a caricature of the leap as a deliberate act of will power.¹⁴

Ferreira argues that the leap is not directly volitional at all. Yet, the leap must occur in freedom. How is this possible? Ferreira's view is that the leap is volitional in that it requires a decision to allow oneself to be grasped, by what Climacus calls an "infinite interestedness." Ferreira is here influenced by what Kierkegaard writes about the "leap" that is involved when one passes from the premises of a demonstration to its conclusion. In that "leap," Kierkegaard writes that there must be a "letting go" of the premises in order to pass—in a leap—at once to the conclusion. Just so, says Ferreira, the only willful decision involved in the leap of faith is a letting go and thus being open to the leap.

As Ferreira puts it, "The surrender of interestedness, of being grasped by something or decisively engaged by it, can account for both the letting-go which constitutes the leap and the passion which also constitutes it."¹⁵ The leap itself is a divine gift. However, says Ferreira: "Neither Kierkegaard nor Climacus falls prey to the common mistake of seeing a 'divine gift' and human activity as mutually exclusive categories. Although the transition to faith is clearly a gift, it is also something *we* do—we let go, we embrace the Absolute Paradox, we leap."¹⁶ To summarize, for Ferreira, in the leap one does not will faith into existence. Faith comes from God. Yet, one's will is active, since one must decide to open one's arms to be ready to receive the gift of faith.

David Wisdo concentrates on *Philosophical Fragments* and its pseudonymous author, Climacus. Like Ferreira, Wisdo too rejects thinking of the leap as a willful decision, calling it a "caricature" if one "imagines perhaps the spindle-legged Dane gazing over the precipice of existential decision. Having mustered up the courage, he grits his teeth, clenches his fists and springs over the abyss to find himself on the other side."¹⁷ The leap is not volitional, and neither Climacus nor Kierkegaard intended to advance anything like the direct volitionist thesis. Pojman is mistaken to think otherwise.¹⁸ For Wisdo, the key to understanding the leap of faith is to see it as a wonder, a miracle of divine grace: "The point is that faith is a miracle which cannot be explained by speculative philosophy. Ultimately, no one can become a disciple unless he or she receives from God the Condition, the gift of grace which transforms the individual into a new creature."¹⁹ Wisdo interprets this and other passages from the *Fragments* as implying that faith is entirely a matter of God's wondrous grace, and that therefore no human will is involved in its formation. Wisdo leans heavily on this passage in the *Fragments*,

But the one who not only gives the learner the truth but provides the condition is not a teacher. Ultimately, all instruction depends upon the presence of the condition; if it is lacking, then a teacher is capable of nothing, because in the second case, the teacher, before beginning to teach, must transform, not

reform, the learner. But no human being is capable of doing this; if it is to take place, it must be done by the god himself.²⁰

Here is how Wisdo puts it: “Faith enters the world as a miracle and as such resists our attempts to explain it by an appeal to will.”²¹ And, “In the end, it is not the will which accounts for the way one acquires faith, but rather faith which helps us grasp the miraculous transformation of the will.”²²

What then is left of human freedom and decision in the leap of faith according to Wisdo? Wisdo’s answer is that while the will is not operative in the formation of faith, it is operative subsequently. For inevitably the person who has received faith will suffer doubt and uncertainty. Any contingent belief, says Wisdo, has, for Climacus, a dimension of uncertainty and possible doubt attached to it. This distinguishes it phenomenologically from eternal, necessary truths that are believed with certainty. One can attain certainty of one’s contingent beliefs only by an act of will that suppresses or eliminates doubts and uncertainty. There, says Wisdo, is where the will is involved in the leap of faith. It is the source of one’s acquisition of utter conviction and certainty *after* receiving the gift of faith. However, the will plays no part in the acquisition of faith.

Wisdo is more minimalist about the will than Ferreira. For Wisdo, there is no activity of the will before receiving faith, whereas for Ferreira a prior condition of receiving faith is the prior willingness to be open to receiving it.

So we have three views on the connection between the will and grace in the acquisition of Kierkegaardian faith. All three locate difficulty in faith being at once both an act of the person’s will and an act of divine grace. Each, respectively, solves the difficulty by separating out the time of the activity of the human will from that of the activity of divine grace. For Pojman, by grace a person is given the possibility to have faith and is only “presented with the proposition,” while the acquisition of faith happens subsequently when the will then acts to appropriate the proposition in belief. The will is what creates faith. For both Ferreira and Wisdo, on the contrary, faith is acquired by the activity of divine grace alone. For Ferreira the will is active prior to that, in opening the person to the reception of the grace of faith, while for Wisdo the will is active after that, erasing doubts and uncertainty once faith has been granted as a gift.

II. Willing Faith

I propose that each of these views misses a proper understanding of the connection in the Kierkegaardian leap between human volition and divine grace. That is because none of these views is alive to an ambiguity in speaking about a subject, S, and a result, R, when one says, “S wills R.” Hence these views miss an ambiguity in the specific instance where “S wills faith.”

My view of the place of the subject’s will in the leap of faith depends on the distinction between *achievement* and *task* verbs.²³ In using an *achievement*

verb one asserts that an appropriate, desired outcome is caused to occur, over and above the undertaken task denoted by the verb. Achievement verbs are for this reason also called “success verbs.” Examples of achievement verbs are “cure,” “win,” “cheat,” “prove,” and “conceal.” When I cure somebody I am engaging in a task that succeeds in causing an appropriate desired end—an end in addition to the task I do when engaged in curing. I administer a medicine and achieve good health for the sick person. If I administered a medicine and failed to bring good health to the sick person, then I might have tried to cure but did not cure. Similarly, when I win a game I succeed not only in playing the game but in coming out ahead of my competitors. Contrasted with success verbs are task verbs. With a *task* verb there is no implication of success in any aim of the task, only reference to performance of the task denoted by the verb. Examples of task verbs are “try” and “hunt.” From the fact that I tried to cross the street it does not follow that I succeeded in crossing the street. Nothing follows about what came out of my trying other than what was involved in the trying itself. When I hunt, my purpose is to succeed in capturing or killing an animal. Whether or not I succeed in doing that, I will have “hunted” in any case. Similarly for “look for.” I can look for something yet fail to find it. These are task verbs.

Now, some verbs can be used both as achievement verbs and task verbs. Take the sentence, “At 8:00 I went to work.” “Went to” here can have an achievement sense, in which it will imply not only that I left my home at 8:00, but that I succeeded in arriving to work after leaving home. Such would be the case in a sentence like, “At 8:00 I went to work, and at 6:00 I came home.” “Went to,” however, also can carry a task sense, as when were I to say, “At 8:00 I went to work, but I never made it to the office because I fell sick on the way and instead went to the doctor.” “I went to work,” here, refers to nothing more than the going in the direction of where I work, not to having gotten to work. In both cases it is true that I “went to” work at the mentioned time, but the meaning of the verb in each case is different. Here is another example of multiple uses of the same verb. There is a difference between the achievement-sense of, “I ran the marathon,” implying that I managed to finish the marathon successfully, and the task sense, in which my saying “I ran the marathon” is consistent with my adding that I tired in the middle and was not able to finish.

My proposal, disagreeing with Ferreira and Wisdo and, in a way, agreeing with Pojman, is that in the treatment of grace and human will in the leap of faith, Kierkegaard and Climacus are asserting that the will is indeed active in the very act of the leap of faith. This is the most natural way of understanding the many references to the will in the leap. Without human willing of faith into existence, faith would not come into existence. Yet, the existence of faith is entirely due to an act of grace. There is no contradiction between these, because of the two senses, achievement and task senses, possible in the statement, “S wills faith into existence.” In the success-sense, “I will faith into existence,” implies that I execute an act of will, which act succeeds to bring my faith into existence. In the task-sense, on the other hand, “I will faith into existence,” implies only that I perform

the task in question. For my part I do the willing, but this time, without implying success in actually bringing faith into existence. In this sense, my willing faith into existence (not merely my *wanting* to have faith, which is a different matter entirely) is a task term. “I will faith into existence,” is like “At 8:00 I went to work,” in “At 8:00 I went to work, but never made it to the office.”

Given that clarification, here is my view of grace and volition in the leap of faith. Kierkegaard and Climacus don’t weary of telling us that the leap of faith is an absurdity. The absurdity we are most familiar with is the absurd *content* of the leap, the illogical belief that God became a finite human being while remaining infinite in nature. In the leap this absurdity is overcome by God. That is, God resolves the absurdity of the absolute paradox for the person of faith. In a journal entry Kierkegaard writes that what was absurd prior to faith is no longer absurd when in faith.²⁴ God turns the absurd to non-absurd for the person of faith. And in *The Concept of Anxiety*, pseudonymous Vigilius quotes Corinthians to say that in the leap of faith, “Behold all things have become anew.”²⁵ The absurdity of faith is undone in faith.

In my view, there is a second absurdity in the leap of faith, which is the absurdity in the very *act of willing* faith into existence. Just so, this absurdity, too, is undone by God in faith. To Kierkegaard, for faith to come into existence, *I must will it into existence*. However, Kierkegaard *knows*—contra Pojman—that this is absurd since I cannot succeed in bringing faith into existence by my willing, and I, the willer, realize that my willing will not succeed. In what sense, then, do I “will faith into existence?” In the *task* sense only. I perform the task of willing faith into existence, knowing that I cannot possibly succeed in thereby bringing faith to be. My task is absurd. Nevertheless, I do it, in the task-sense, and in the only way such an absurd act can be done: with great passion. I do this knowing that my willing will achieve success only if God’s grace will bring its success. In willing faith, my hope is that God will acknowledge my absurd willing and for it will grant me faith. When the leap transpires, it is the person who has *willed* it (“taskly”) into existence, but it is God who has made it to be. God makes my task into an achievement. In the leap, God resolves two absurdities, the one of content and the other the absurdity of my willing faith into existence.

Why must I will faith into existence (in the task sense) in order for God to grant me faith in grace? That is because a person cannot get faith until having what Kierkegaard calls an “absolute relation to the absolute.”²⁶ In this, the individual comes to realize that he “is capable of doing nothing himself but is nothing before God.”²⁷ It is in the act of willing faith—*knowing* that it cannot possibly succeed without God’s bringing it to success—that one comes to the ultimate sense of being nothing before God. Faith is the greatest state a person can be in. And this state is beyond one’s grasp. In absurdly willing faith into existence and failing, one comes to rely on God for everything. This is what Climacus called “self-annihilation,” and the essence of the religious life.²⁸

This is how it is possible for the leap of faith to include human willing it to be, while it is God who brings faith to be by a miracle of divine grace.

Both Climacus and Vigilius, respectively, quote pseudonymous Johannes de silentio as an expert on the leap. In *Fear and Trembling*, de silentio writes:

It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it—but this knight does....The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and come down again....But every time they come down, they are unable to assume the posture immediately....One does not need to see them in the air; one needs only to see them the instant they touch and have touched the earth—and then one recognizes them. But to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and to walk, to change the leap into life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian—only that knight can do it, and this is the one and only marvel.²⁹

In this passage, de silentio tells us that we will not know whether the person who leaps in the air is a Knight of Resignation or a Knight of Faith until he lands on the ground. Only by the manner in which he falls, without vacillation and falling naturally into the posture of the dance, will we recognize the Knight of Faith. I interpret this to mean not only that an onlooker watching the leap cannot know whether the person leaping is a Knight of Faith. The leaper himself cannot know whether he is a Knight of Faith until he lands in the way that only God can ensure. For the person can leap only with the *intention* of coming back to the ground totally in the posture. That is what he wills. Whether he will succeed in doing so, however, is fully up to God. God must bless the leap with success. When God does so, and only then, does the leaper know he is indeed a Knight of Faith.

I take Kierkegaard to be summarizing this position in the following journal entry of 1849: “Thus the absurd, or acting by virtue of the absurd, is acting in faith, trusting in God....I...turn to God in prayer saying: ‘This is what I am doing; bless it, then; I cannot do otherwise.’”³⁰ Taken in my way, the leap of faith is full of paradoxes. However, how the leap can require human volition when faith is a divine gift, is not one of the paradoxes in the list.

Each of Ferreira, Wisdo, and Pojman takes human willing in the leap in the achievement sense. Pojman is correct in thinking that Kierkegaard teaches that (P1) One can directly will faith into existence, and that (P2) One ought to directly will faith into existence. But, both only in the *task-sense*, not in the achievement-sense of the verb to will, as Pojman thinks. In the achievement-sense, Kierkegaard would agree with Pojman that one cannot directly will to have faith. Thus, Pojman errs in thinking that faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a direct consequence of divine grace. It is so, but must be prompted by a task of willing by the subject of the grace.

Ferreira is correct to attribute to Kierkegaard that (F1) In the leap of faith one does not get faith because one has willed faith into existence. Kierkegaard would agree that one cannot end up with faith by willing it to be. However, contrary to Ferreira, this does not imply in the task-sense of

deciding to have faith that (F2) In the leap of faith one does *not* will faith into existence. This is because one does directly will faith, but that willing does not achieve faith. Hence, Ferreira need not have concluded that human will is operative only prior to the leap of faith and not in the leap itself. One cannot propel oneself to the other side of faith simply by willing it to be. Yet, one must will it to be so.

Finally, Wisdo is right that (W1) The leap of faith is a miracle of divine grace. But wrong in thinking that for that reason (W2) The will does not participate in the leap of faith. The will is operative *within* the leap, in the task-sense, not only *after* the leap, but as part of the leap itself. So while Wisdo is right that God must make the person into a “new creature,” it does not follow that the leap is not initiated by human will.

III. Why the Leap is Asymmetrical

Given this background, I offer my defense of the asymmetry of the leap of faith. Were the result of the leap something I brought into existence myself, then perhaps also I could will myself out of the leap, go back and find myself without Faith. Then the leap would be symmetrical. But, that is not so. Although in the leap I must perform the task of willing faith into existence, the success of the leap, its achievement, is with God. Hence, were the leap to be symmetrical it would have to be so because God withdraws God’s grace and returns one to the other side. But this will not happen. For God will not undo the leap. From God’s perspective the leap is permanent, never to be undone.

Neither is the leap conditionally symmetrical (Kierkegaard does write of the leap as akin to “the leap by which water turns to ice,”³¹ which I have labeled conditional symmetry. But we should understand him to be referring only to the *form* of a leap of faith, and to nothing more. The transition from a water-state to an ice-state is a sudden, qualitative one). To be conditionally symmetrical, the leap would require God to revoke it under conditions of sin. But as I understand Kierkegaard and his pseudonymous authors, God does not do so under any circumstances. In the case of faith, the ice never turns back to water. Instead, the ice is replaced, with new waters leaping in upon where the ice had been.

The leap is asymmetrical. However, do not infer from this that faith is permanent. Not at all. While faith cannot be reversed, one can leap out from under faith, abandoning it to oblivion. One cannot undo God’s grace, but one can begin anew in opposition to God’s grace, and that—by sin. A leap of sin, Climacus tell us, is no less qualitative than the leap of faith. It is a sudden jump away from grace. Kierkegaard says that every person is his own Adam. And sinfulness comes into existence anew, Vigilius tells us, by an act of sin. At every moment sin and sinfulness loom as a possibility, and one must make the leap of faith again. To make the leap again is to will once again, with the help of divine grace.

To go from faith to sin, consequently, is not like going from seeing a duck to seeing a rabbit in the same picture. It is more like turning away from

an unambiguous picture of a duck, in order to gaze at an entirely different picture, one of a rabbit, instead. The duck picture remains a duck picture always as it was. Neither are there any conditions that allow the thawing of faith back into sin. Faith is an explosion. And here is the tragedy of the human condition. God confers grace everlasting upon us when we will faith. And then we just vanish, abandoning faith, for sin.

CHAPTER SEVEN
DOES ANTI-CLIMACUS' ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS
THEORY OF SELFHOOD
IMPLY A DISCONTINUITY OF THE SELF?

PETER ŠAJDA

The Sickness unto Death, whose official author is Kierkegaard's literary alter ego Anti-Climacus, is a work that is as influential as it is controversial. It is famous for its compact depiction of the structure of the human self, as well as for its extensive analyses of the notion of despair. Anti-Climacus' work is religious in nature, which is evidenced not only by its subtitle—"A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening"—but, above all, by the role that faith and one's relationship to God play in it. Furthermore, we know from Kierkegaard's *Nachlass* that Anti-Climacus is an author who writes from the perspective of "an extraordinary Christian such as there has never been."¹

It is only natural that Anti-Climacus' treatise has attracted the attention of numerous religious thinkers. One of them was the well-known German Catholic philosopher and theologian Romano Guardini who discusses Anti-Climacus' theory of selfhood in several of his works. Although Guardini appreciates certain aspects of Anti-Climacus' intellectual project, he maintains that ultimately *The Sickness unto Death* deceives its reader. It does not provide what it promises since it presents the reader with an untenable concept of selfhood. The self, as envisioned by Anti-Climacus, is discontinuous and elusive, this being largely due to the role of ethics and religion in his doctrine. In the following I am going to revisit Guardini's exegesis of *The Sickness unto Death*—which is largely unknown in the Anglophone Kierkegaard scholarship—and respond to his critique. The exploration of Guardini's confrontation with Kierkegaard seems all the more relevant, since several studies have recently underlined Guardini's pivotal role in the reception of Kierkegaard's ideas in Germanophone Catholic philosophy and theology.²

In the first part of my paper I will describe in broad strokes the German reception of Kierkegaard's philosophical legacy in the early twentieth century and Guardini's place in it. In the second part I will outline the basic structures of the theory of selfhood as proposed by Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness unto Death*. In the last two parts I will analyze Guardini's main objections to Anti-Climacus' theory and point out what I consider to be inconsistencies in Guardini's interpretation of Anti-Climacus' doctrine. As a concluding remark, I will make a brief suggestion concerning the underlying motive for Guardini's critique.

I. Guardini and the Inter-War Debate on Kierkegaard in Germany

Romano Guardini (1885-1965) represents an intriguing figure in the German intellectual life of the twentieth century. A prolific author and an active academician during the time of the Weimar Republic, Guardini rose in post-war Germany to a position of a widely respected intellectual authority. For his rich contribution to German and European cultural life, as well as for his humanist stances, he was awarded several prestigious honors, including the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade (1952) and the Erasmus Prize (1962).³

To the German academic public Guardini was known through his thematically diverse courses at the universities of Berlin, Tübingen and Munich; his leadership role in the academic youth movement; and, above all, through his manifold literary and editorial projects. As a *littérateur* with an extensive knowledge of the Western cultural heritage, Guardini wrote on a broad variety of philosophical, theological and literary subjects.

From the point of view of the present study, it is of particular importance that Guardini played a significant role in the German reception of Kierkegaard's thought in the first half of the twentieth century. As is well known, in the early decades of the twentieth century the German debate on Kierkegaard intensified in an unprecedented way. This was largely due to the publication of the first comprehensive German translation of Kierkegaard's *oeuvre*—the 12-volume edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* (1909–22)⁴—which introduced Kierkegaard to a wide readership and which Heidegger described as one of the most exciting events on the German philosophical-literary scene in the pre-war years.⁵ Kierkegaard's importance for German intellectual discourse was in the inter-war period enhanced by the productive reception of his philosophy in thinkers associated with two increasingly popular traditions of thought: existential philosophy⁶ and dialectical theology.⁷ However, Kierkegaard soon became a vital topic in other intellectual traditions, as well: in the *milieu* of German Neo-Marxism and the Frankfurt School⁸ and in the international group of Catholic thinkers known as the *Hochland* Circle. The latter centered around the journal *Hochland*—founded by Carl Muth and Paul Huber-Kempton in 1903⁹—and comprised several scholars who shared a genuine interest in Kierkegaard's philosophy. One of the key promoters of Kierkegaard within the Circle was Theodor Haecker, who converted to Catholicism in 1921. Eight years earlier Haecker had published his well-known monograph *Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*,¹⁰ and in 1914 he instigated a discussion on Kierkegaard in the trendsetting Austrian journal *Der Brenner*.¹¹ He continued to write on Kierkegaard after his conversion, authoring, among other things, the monographs *Christentum und Kultur* and *Der Begriff der Wahrheit bei Søren Kierkegaard*.¹² Apart from Haecker, at least three other thinkers associated with the *Hochland* Circle joined the debate on Kierkegaard in the 1920s and 1930s: Alois Dempf,¹³ Peter Wust¹⁴ and Romano Guardini.¹⁵

Guardini's literary confrontation with Kierkegaard stretches continuously from the mid-1920s to the mid-1960s, with Kierkegaard's name appearing

most frequently in Guardini's works from the late 1920s and the 1930s. Already Guardini's early texts show a rather broad and thorough knowledge of Kierkegaard's *oeuvre*. Based on his written reflections on Kierkegaard, Guardini can be said to have had a personal "hierarchy" of Kierkegaard's works, with the following three works at its top: *The Sickness unto Death*, *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments*.¹⁶ It was especially *The Sickness unto Death* that exerted a long-term influence on Guardini and provided him with a number of vital impeti. *The Sickness unto Death* had such a significant impact on Guardini because it contained a detailed account of the structure of selfhood. This was a theme that was of utmost importance to Guardini's own project of philosophical anthropology.

II. The Model of Selfhood in *The Sickness unto Death*

As we know from Kierkegaard's journals, *The Sickness unto Death* was published after an uneasy period of several months in which Kierkegaard had been weighing the options for his future as an author. Both the course of events and Kierkegaard's spiritual interpretation of the events in the light of the works of Fénelon and Tersteegen¹⁷ finally prompted Kierkegaard to go ahead with the publication of the writings that lay ready on his table. *The Sickness unto Death* was one of them, and it appeared on July 30, 1849 under the new pseudonym Anti-Climacus.

The leading theme of the work is *despair*—a sickness of the self—which Anti-Climacus examines from a variety of perspectives. However, before he proceeds to an in-depth analysis of this multi-faceted phenomenon, he provides a succinct description of what the self actually is and how it is constituted.¹⁸

Anti-Climacus identifies three fundamental levels at which the constitution of selfhood takes place. His essential finding is that at all these levels the constitution of selfhood happens in the form of a relation. Thus Anti-Climacus presents a complex relational model by which he attempts to demonstrate that the self is constituted as the interplay of three *parallel* and *interdependent* relations, whose successful realization enables the full unfolding of human selfhood.

First, Anti-Climacus points out the fact that a human being is a synthesis, a relation between two.¹⁹ He claims that at the most basic level the human is not a static substance but a dynamic relational entity: a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, necessity and freedom, the physical and the psychical.²⁰ This synthesis is the most fundamental relational structure of the human, but it is not the self yet. It is merely the first condition, presupposition, possibility of selfhood.

The human self emerges when a second relation takes place: when the synthesis relates itself to itself. The self is thus defined as a reflexive relation. In Anti-Climacus' own words, the process of the constitution of the self has the following dynamic: "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself."²¹ Drawing on more

traditional philosophical terminology, Anti-Climacus suggests that the self can be adequately described with the term *spirit*: “A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self.”²²

Alongside the two already mentioned relations that characterize the constitution of selfhood, Anti-Climacus points to a third relation that is equally essential. The human self is not just a synthesis that relates itself to itself; it is also a relation that has not established itself. It is a derived, dependent relation constituted by a power distinct from the human. Anti-Climacus identifies this power as God²³ and sums up the third relation in the following way: “The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that...in relating itself to itself relates itself to another.”²⁴

Thus, the successful realization of human selfhood consists in a conscious relation to oneself, in which the complex synthesis structure is respected and one's connectedness to God is taken into account. In this way, when Anti-Climacus speaks of the process of becoming a self—demanding that the self become itself—what he has in mind is actually an ethical-religious project: the choice of oneself as a complex God-related being.

However, Anti-Climacus is aware of the difficulty of such a choice, and throughout the book he reiterates the fact that a fully developed self is a rarity.²⁵ In fact, his whole work is dedicated to outlining a broad variety of possible failures at becoming a full-fledged self. The overarching term applied by Anti-Climacus to the different modes of failing at a full actualization of selfhood is *despair*. Although despair has many forms, its universal characteristic is that either the relation to one's own underlying synthesis structure or to the power that created that structure (or both of these relations) has in some way gone wrong. Any misrelation of this kind leads to a limited actualization of one's self, or as Anti-Climacus puts it sometimes: to a loss of one's self or to a lack of spirit.²⁶

Anti-Climacus provides numerous examples of how despair manifests itself, ranking the manifestations according to the frequency of their occurrence in real life. Among the most common cases he mentions those when, in relating to oneself, the human succumbs to one-sidedness and through an overemphasis or disregard fails to become him- or herself to a full extent. For example, when ignoring the body and overemphasizing the *psyché*, the human fails to actualize him- or herself as a balanced psychical-physical synthesis.²⁷ In a similar way, when infinitude is embraced without sufficient regard for finitude the self can choose to lead “a fantasized existence in abstract infinitizing,”²⁸ thus becoming just “a half of itself.”²⁹ Also, disregard for the fact that the self becomes itself *before God* leads to a misrelation which inhibits a truly holistic and balanced unfolding of one's self.

In short, Anti-Climacus' analyses of despair are to show that although the self is a permanently unfinished dynamic entity, the task of choosing oneself in a meaningful way consists in accepting two basic ontological givens: the underlying synthesis structure of the human self and the self's connectedness to God.

III. Guardini's Critique of Anti-Climacus' Theory of Selfhood

Romano Guardini paid close attention to what Anti-Climacus had to say about selfhood. It is obvious from several of Guardini's works that the reflections found in *The Sickness unto Death* intrigued him and provided him with vital inspiration for his own analyses of selfhood. Although Guardini tacitly appropriated a number of impulses from Anti-Climacus, his explicit comments on Anti-Climacus' doctrine of selfhood are almost exclusively critical. His critique is best articulated in four essays from the second half of the 1920s, in which he confronts Anti-Climacus on some of the key aspects of his theory. He elaborates this critique in the following essays: "Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen" (1926),³⁰ "Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Christentum und Kultur" (1926),³¹ "Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards" (1927)³² and "Lebendiger Geist" (1927).³³

Before examining more closely the theses outlined in these essays, two controversial aspects of Guardini's critique of Kierkegaard need to be mentioned.

First, Guardini ascribes no relevance to the fact that the official author of *The Sickness unto Death* is Kierkegaard's literary persona Anti-Climacus and not Kierkegaard himself. This means, however, that Kierkegaard is identified with one of his pseudonyms, which can be problematic, since it implies a reductionist approach to Kierkegaard's multi-perspectivist *oeuvre*.

Second, in Guardini's essays one often encounters the term *person*, which—although occasionally found in *The Sickness unto Death*—plays no major role in Anti-Climacus' analyses. The usage of this term in Guardini's texts is rather tricky, since in some cases it corresponds to Anti-Climacus' notion of the self in its broadest sense and in other cases to the form of self that Anti-Climacus posits as the ideal to be attained.

On the whole, Guardini's critique of Kierkegaard's anthropology can be said to begin with the proposition that Kierkegaard's notion of selfhood is overly dynamic and lacks a necessary static moment. Guardini argues that if one goes along with Kierkegaard's expositions in *The Sickness unto Death* and accepts the definition of the self as a relation or an achievement, one implicitly agrees to the self losing its continuity in time. It is Guardini's conviction that selfhood, or more precisely, personhood, is in Kierkegaard made dependent upon the realization of a certain choice and thus runs the risk of discontinuity if the choice is not made.

This is made explicit in the work "Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen," where Guardini identifies Kierkegaard as a leading protagonist of the philosophical paradigm of *dynamic personalism*.³⁴ According to Guardini, in this paradigm action is seen as the foundation upon which personhood rests, which completely obliterates the static aspect of personhood. Guardini sketches out the doctrine of dynamic personalism in the following way: "[P]erson appears as something that becomes; as something that only is as an act and in an act; something that flashes through

in certain, namely, personal acts....Person appears to be existing only in such acts; only in performance, and therefore only in passing."³⁵

In a later essay, "Lebendiger Geist," Guardini advances a similar critique against Kierkegaard's notion of selfhood, this time explicitly targeting Kierkegaard's concept of spirit. He describes this concept as purely *actualistic* and thus entirely devoid of a static moment. Guardini summarizes the actualistic view of spirit as follows: "Spirit is not something that is, rather always something that is performed; more precisely, something that performs itself. Even more sharply: spirit is a 'relation'; it is a manner in which one stands to him- or herself. Spirit is in that moment, in which the human assumes responsibility for him- or herself."³⁶

Guardini insists that any attempt to define personhood on the basis of the content of an act necessarily deprives *person* of a stable foundation and turns it into a discontinuous and ephemeral entity.³⁷ He claims that such an attempt equals the abolition of the ontic status of *person* since *person* is not understood as an ontic given, but rather as a task, a requirement.³⁸ Although Guardini does not discard the dynamic view of personhood altogether, he is convinced that a necessary static moment is missing from Kierkegaard's model of human selfhood.

Guardini's critique becomes even more interesting when he proceeds to examine the role ethics and religion play in the constitution of selfhood. Although Guardini himself views the human as a God-related being with an ethical responsibility, he rejects what he considers to be Kierkegaard's attempt to make selfhood dependent on religious and ethical action. He accuses Kierkegaard of an *axiological* definition of personhood, according to which personhood is attained through an "ethical-religious stance and disposition."³⁹

According to Guardini's interpretation, Kierkegaard demands that the individual, in order to become him- or herself, needs to choose him- or herself truthfully, which means that personhood is attained through a normative act that can easily go wrong. The standard for personhood is thus set very high, and the most basic ontic given is transformed into a *borderline concept*.⁴⁰ Interpreting personhood as the successful outcome of an ethical choice is for Guardini a truly discouraging and elitist idea. In his essay "Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards" he comments on it in the following way: "There is something extremely strained about this concept of the spiritual and the personal, something deeply imperiled. Spiritual personality stands, as it were, on the cutting edge of an act; an act that...is highly demanding."⁴¹

After criticizing the prominent place of ethics in Kierkegaard's description of the constitution of the self, Guardini turns his focus to the role God plays in this process. He is well aware of the fact that in *The Sickness unto Death* Anti-Climacus affirmed God's presence in the basic relational structure of the self, claiming that "[t]he human self is a relation that...in relating itself to itself relates itself to another."⁴²

Along the lines of the aforementioned critique of actualistic personalism, Guardini objects to the idea that personhood be made dependent upon a conscious realization of the relationship with God. From this perspective

he criticizes Kierkegaard's maxim that the human self becomes itself *before God* and sees this maxim as a further step towards a restrictive and overly spiritual concept of selfhood. He claims that the *before God*-clause, which he considers to be one of the pillars of Kierkegaard's concept of selfhood, ultimately has fatal consequences for Kierkegaard's whole anthropology. It implies, namely, that *person* is "a religious fact...[it] either is religious or is not at all."⁴³ Or, as Guardini puts it elsewhere: Kierkegaard defines *person* as "a Christian, believing, reborn self."⁴⁴

Kierkegaard's linking of the notion of person with a conscious religious choice represents, according to Guardini, a major theological *faux pas*. This is evident from the fact that it turns upside-down the classic theological principle, which stipulates that grace presupposes nature and perfects it.⁴⁵ In Kierkegaard's anthropology, however, grace has become the condition of nature since only a religiously existing human being can aspire to the title of *person*. For Guardini this is an unacceptable conclusion that further strengthens his conviction that personhood needs to be defined without recourse to ethical and religious action.

IV. A Response to Guardini's Critique

It is evident from Guardini's philosophical response to Kierkegaard's theory of selfhood that the issue at stake was of fundamental importance to Guardini's own thought. This is, as a matter of fact, true for Guardini's entire authorship: from the early work *Der Gegensatz* (1925)—in which the critique of Kierkegaard appears for the first time⁴⁶—to the works written in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁷ Although Guardini's position on Kierkegaard's doctrine of the self experienced certain shifts over time, he never explicitly withdrew the critique formulated in his essays from 1926 and 1927.

As the previous analyses suggest, Guardini's central finding in the essays was that Kierkegaard succeeded in transforming *person*—a basic ontic given—into a *borderline* concept. This critique is in line with Guardini's analyses in other works, where he consistently depicts Kierkegaard as a thinker who lays a great emphasis on the notions of discontinuity and separation. Guardini interprets this inclination as Kierkegaard's genuine but misplaced protest against the cult of continuity and unity common in German idealism. The strictness with which Guardini approaches Kierkegaard's theory of selfhood, however, seems to lead to a rather problematic interpretation of some of Kierkegaard's, or more precisely, Anti-Climacus' positions.

First, there indeed seems to be a "static" moment in Anti-Climacus' description of the self in *The Sickness unto Death*. Although Anti-Climacus defines selfhood as the interplay of three interdependent relations, he presents these relations as dynamic *invariants*. In other words, the relations *always* take place, irrespective of whether one is aware of them or not. What is dynamic and subject to change is *the way* in which they are actualized. This means that a choice of oneself *always* takes place: there is no way around it—even not choosing is a choice. Depending on how conscious the

human is of his or her choices and on the way the choices are realized, Anti-Climacus determines the extent of despair the self experiences.

Second, the invariant character of these fundamental relations ensures the continuity of the self in time. This is where the problematic character of Guardini's term *person* becomes apparent. As we have seen, Guardini claimed that for Kierkegaard *person* is "something that only is as an act and in an act; something that flashes through in certain, namely, personal acts.... Person appears to be existing only in such acts."⁴⁸ Elsewhere Guardini suggested that personal acts are those in which "the human assumes responsibility for him- or herself."⁴⁹ This, however, does not correspond to Anti-Climacus' most fundamental view of the human self; it rather corresponds to his view of the ideal or full-fledged form of selfhood. It is true that Anti-Climacus suggests that becoming a developed self is a task and involves responsibility, but even when this task is wrongly executed, one still remains a self. To be sure, selfhood in its fullness is not attained, but this does not mean that one would be deprived of selfhood altogether. The point of Anti-Climacus' analysis of despair is exactly to demonstrate that selfhood can be realized to a greater or lesser extent. However, even when the relation to oneself or to God becomes a misrelation, it still remains a relation. Thus, expressed with Guardini's terms, the act in which *person* is formed always takes place, even when it is performed in an utterly irresponsible way. The risk the human runs in such a case is not that of losing his or her selfhood/personhood; rather it is that of actualizing it in limited measure.

This means, however, that Guardini's notion of *person* corresponds best not to Anti-Climacus' basic notion of the self—as intended in Guardini's texts—but to the ideal of a fully developed self which Anti-Climacus defines in the following way: "In relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it."⁵⁰

As a final remark, it is important to note that Guardini's critique of Kierkegaard's theory of selfhood, and especially of its ethical and religious dimensions, can be seen from yet another perspective: from the perspective of the theory of grace. From this perspective Guardini's critique touches upon a very complex issue, and his concern is perhaps more legitimate. Although, as a religious philosopher, Guardini approves of Kierkegaard's incorporation of religious categories into anthropology, he sees in Kierkegaard the tendency to overemphasize the supernatural aspect of reality and downplay the natural order of things. As he explained in his essay *Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Christentum und Kultur*, Kierkegaard tends to abolish the productive tension between nature and grace,⁵¹ creating an unhealthy hegemony of the supernatural over the natural.⁵² Whether this is indeed Kierkegaard's position cannot be determined in this essay; however, it seems to be an important factor that predefines much of Guardini's criticism of Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BEING IN TRUTH AND BEING A JEW: KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF JUDAISM

TAMAR AYLAT-YAGURI

Judaism is a religion, culture and collectivity that traces its origin to the ancient Hebrew people of Israel. Judaism also refers to Jewish faith, belief, existence, law, and social-political environment. Kierkegaard writes on “Jewishness,” “Judaism” and “Jews,” and the concepts are mentioned directly or indirectly in most of his published works.¹

Kierkegaard's interest in Judaism is derived from his interest in Christianity, and he seems to be asking himself: which is the true religion? In this, he also seems to be asking: who is an authentic believer? A believer's authenticity entails singular uniqueness, whereas, “For the Christian who now looks at Judaism it is apparent that Judaism was merely a point of transition; but who vouches for its not being the same with Christianity?”² Here are two readings of the final phrase of the quotation: it could ask, a) “who vouches for Judaism being the same as Christianity” or b) “who vouches for Christianity, like Judaism, being a transition to The Truth.” Both readings are valid.

It has been said that Kierkegaard did not like Jews and that he was anti-Semitic. It has also been said that he did not like women, that he was chauvinist, and that he hated the heads of the Danish church and resented Hegelian philosophers. In that sense, Jews join a respectable company. However, my focus will be on Kierkegaard's philosophy, not on his character. Nevertheless, many scholars discuss Kierkegaard's view of Judaism starting with the question of whether or not he was anti-Semitic.³ “Anti-Semitism” may describe a range of possible attitudes. For example, it is possible for an individual to fail to love or admire Jews or Judaism and yet not be anti-Semitic. One could, for example, be indifferent. On the other hand, it is plausible for a person to be anti-Semitic without resenting or scorning Jews or Judaism.⁴ If this is accurate, we will do well to explore Kierkegaard's view of Judaism without having on the agenda a pending verdict about whether or not, and to what extent, he was anti-Semitic.⁵ In my opinion, attempts to compartmentalize Kierkegaard as anti-Semitic obscure, rather than elucidate, his views on Judaism.

Here I will assess how Kierkegaard understood Judaism. His view, as I present it, depends on how he maps a Christian individual's journey towards authentic belief. It is clear that my choice of this perspective pushes aside other ones, such as surveying the historical background of European and, in particular, Danish views on Judaism and the anti-Semitic trends of that period.

In the first part of my paper I will lay out a broad sense in which, for Kierkegaard, Christianity is a negation of Judaism. This is not a simple negation but an asymmetrical relation between the two. In the second part I will elaborate on three ways that contrast Christianity with Judaism. In the third part I will describe the believer's dilemma of authenticity. In the last part I will suggest an important role that Judaism and Jews play with regard to the authenticity of a Christian believer.

I. Either Christianity or Everything Else

Kierkegaard's concept of Judaism as a religion can be initially framed as part of a tripartite development of religiosity—the first being Socratic paganism (associated with the aesthetic stage), the second Judaism (associated with the ethical stage), and the final Christianity (associated with the religious stage). His thinking is later developed in his writings “toward a dualistic structure, a two-stage either/or.”⁶ Kierkegaard does not set the aesthetic against the ethical-religious, but makes the choice: “*either Christianity or everything else*”⁷ (including Judaism).

As the precursor of Christianity, Judaism played a central, if transitional role, and Kierkegaard was not unsympathetic to it. Gradually, however, his view darkened into a conception of pure dualism whereby Judaism, either in itself or as a part of Kierkegaard's new compound concept “Judaism and paganism,” came to stand as the antithesis to, and *enemy* of, Christianity. It is upon this either/or that Kierkegaard addresses Judaism—in harsh and offensive language. His strident rhetoric is sharper than that employed by educated people of his generation.

Most of Kierkegaard's diatribe is actually a critique of tendencies he attributes to Christendom. He maintains that established Christendom is “Judaism,” whereby tranquility had triumphed over the unrest of the soul. The Danish pastor, philosopher and politician Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, was portrayed by Kierkegaard as “Jewish,” in particular, due to what Kierkegaard regarded as his excessive emphasis upon specific ritualistic language and upon the congregation as a people historically chosen by God. Grundtvig's enemy, Bishop Mynster, is also labeled “Jewish,” a term that reflected, for Kierkegaard, his role in maintaining too close and comfortable a relationship between religion and the holders of social power. It is evident that a significant proportion of Kierkegaard's critique of the established Christianity of his times was couched in anti-Jewish language.

Christianity, of course, is the true religion in Kierkegaard's eyes, yet he develops a very particular understanding of what it means to be a Christian. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard's view of Judaism is contrasted with his view of Christianity, and Judaism begins to lose its separate status. At that point in time, Kierkegaard sees a striking contrast between Judaism and Christianity. He argues,

Jewish piety always clings firmly to the world and construes essentially according to the ratio: the more pious one is, the better it goes for him on

earth, the longer he lives, etc. A proverbial metaphor of how Jewish piety describes impiety is found in the saying: He shoots up like a mighty tree—but in a flash it is all over.

And so I [Kierkegaard] ask: . . . is this not a description of Christ's life—a man who in three years shoots up so high that they want to proclaim him king, and then he is crucified as a thief.

Judaism postulates a unity of the divine and this life—Christianity postulates a cleft. The life of the true Christian, therefore, is to be fashioned according to the paradigm which for the Jews is the very paradigm of the ungodly man.⁸

An asymmetry between Judaism and Christianity may be discerned in this context. A religious Jew can ignore the existence of Christianity whereas a religious Christian must take Judaism into account. This is the case since Judaism serves as a constitutive element within Christianity, while conceptually and rationally the mere existence of Christianity is a matter of indifference to Judaism. Christianity claims to be the authentic “Judaism,” or, at least, its successor. And it is impossible for the successor to take hold of the heritage as long as its owner is still alive.⁹ Given such asymmetry, the very existence of Judaism poses serious difficulties for Christianity. The roots of the Church go back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Furthermore, almost all the figures mentioned in the New Testament are Jews, and the most significant narrated events took place amongst the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

The total separation between the two religions is marked by the historical appearance of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Jesus is a name mentioned in the Bible¹⁰ and appears to be a shortening of Joshua. In early Jewish literature there is no mention of Jesus Christ or of the founders of Christianity. On the other hand, in the Talmudic literature the few references to Jesus Christ and his disciples seem to comment on Christian writings rather than on their historical appearance.

Through the years a curse was formed in the Hebrew, whereby Jesus' initials (Yeshu) came to mean: “May his name be wiped out.”¹¹ This might be the worst curse in the Bible—the inverse of the Genesis blessing, “Be fruitful and increase in number”—may your name be carried on. Whoever is so cursed is condemned to oblivion. This is, of course paradoxical, since by mentioning the name “Jesus” one commemorates and maintains remembrance of him. Some religious Jews are strict about refraining from uttering the name Jesus, referring to him only by the initials, or as “that man,” due to the Jewish religious law that forbids idolatry.¹² However, in the Talmud, the allusions to Jesus (in the same form that is used by the initials) do not refer to that curse. The Hebrew meaning of the name *Jesus* is the same one mentioned in the New Testament, that is, “the savior.”¹³

II. Contrasting Christianity with Judaism

“Early on,” argues Bruce H. Kirmmse, “Kierkegaard was fascinated with (and to some extent identified himself with) the character of the Wandering Jew, who was for Kierkegaard a romantic symbol of despair and of unforgivable sin, an outsider, an eternal wanderer with radical sin-consciousness.”¹⁴ Later on (from 1847 and 1848), in *Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits*, *Works of Love*, and *Christian Discourses*, Kierkegaard merges Judaism with paganism in a dualistic schema, with Judaism-paganism constituting a single pole, which is straightforwardly opposed to Christianity. In *Practice in Christianity*, Anti-Climacus espouses a hostile attitude toward Judaism, describing “Judaism in the time of Christ” as “a self-satisfied and self-deifying established order.”¹⁵ It is, perhaps, self-defying insofar as Christ is Jewish and the established order (Judaism) defies Christ, and by that defiance it defies part of its own self. In his final years, Kierkegaard maintained, “the Christianity of the New Testament absolutely does not exist—the little bit of religiosity which is present in the country is at most Judaism.”¹⁶

In what follows I will unfold three ways by which Christianity, for Kierkegaard, is contrasted with Judaism: in its world-view, its ethics and its politics.

1) In its world-view, Judaism favors “nature” and aims at “immediate” mundane comfort: “Judaism is divinely sanctioned optimism, sheer promise for this life,”¹⁷ says Kierkegaard. The Christian concentration on “Spirit” and suffering is part of what Kierkegaard regards as the individual’s collision with the world. The unmediated spiritual bond with Christ palliates the suffering in this world through His promise of the world to come for those who suffer in this vale of tears.

In Christianity, the believer can communicate with Christ face to face. Not so in Judaism. Kierkegaard says with reference to Moses, who was the only one to meet Jehovah face to face: “It is very characteristic of Judaism that it is able to see only the back of Jehovah.”¹⁸ These differences in world-view are striking. As Kierkegaard maintains,

It makes an infinite difference whether I assume that the mark of my being a pious man whom God loves is that I succeed in everything, possess all the earthly benefits, etc. (this is Judaism), or that the mark is simply that I am the suffering one, always having opposition, adversity (God’s fatherly solicitude to keep me awake) and finally suffering the opposition of the world because I adhere to God and confess Christ (this is Christianity).¹⁹

In contrasting Christianity with Judaism, Kierkegaard’s account revolves around “contradictory” concepts: nature versus spirit, “immediate” worldly comfort versus spiritual suffering, time versus eternity.

2) Ethically, Judaism is portrayed as the religion of sexual self-indulgence, while Christianity upholds virtuous chastity. Judaism establishes family life as a form of godliness, emphasizing God’s commandment of propagation. Christianity repudiates this by demanding an absolute adherence to the

relationship with God (Christ), which can lead to hatred of father and mother, of son and daughter as well as self-hatred.²⁰ Kierkegaard concludes,

Judaism is godliness which is at home in this world; Christianity is alienation from this world. In Judaism the reward of godliness is blessing in this world; Christianity is hate toward this world. The collisions of piety which Christianity itself announces it will bring about must be regarded by the Jews as impiety, consequently as far as possible from being the expression of godliness.²¹

The ethically antithetical concepts here are marriage versus chastity, fulfillment in this life against the promise of God's kingdom in the afterlife, recompense versus renunciation.

3) Politically, Kierkegaard portrays Judaism as the religion of collectivity: "On the whole the Jews were a historical nation in a much more profound sense than any other."²² But he sees Christianity as the higher religion because it focuses upon the individual. Viewing Judaism as a collective, Kierkegaard ironically ponders:

In what sense the Jews can be called the chosen people is a big question. They were not the happiest of people; they were rather a sacrifice which all humanity required. They had to suffer the pains of the law and of sin as no other people. They were the chosen people in the same sense as the poet and the like often are—that is, the most unhappy of all.²³

Kierkegaard's account revolves around politically contradicting concepts: objective collectivity versus subjective individuality.

These three ways in which Kierkegaard portrays Judaism in contrast with Christianity, may seem oversimplistic. An objection to Kierkegaard's views is that there are "seventy faces to the Torah," and that "Judaism" as dynamic and elusive, as is the case with any complex concept, does not yield to one consensual definition. And yet, there are characteristics in Kierkegaard's account of Judaism that are clearly found in it. Kierkegaard's view can be substantiated by the self-perception of its followers, adherents and its sources.

1) With regard to its world-view (according to Kierkegaard), Judaism favors "nature," "immediate" worldly comfort. In the Mishna we find that the spiritual and the physical realms are inextricably intertwined: "If there is no flour, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour."²⁴ Judaism indeed focuses on mundane needs and grounds its spirit on natural conditions, as evinced in the famous similes: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God."²⁵

2) Ethically (according to Kierkegaard), Judaism is a religion of sexual self-indulgence. Indeed, the first commandment in Genesis is "God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number.'"²⁶ Practicing the commandment to increase and multiply should engage every Jew. Such

activity may not guarantee sexual gratification, but makes it more likely. In any case, Kierkegaard would be justified in pointing out that Judaism does not endorse monastic celibacy.

3) Politically, Judaism is the religion of collectivity. From Abraham onwards, it entails the promise to become a nation. Following the binding of Isaac, Abraham is promised: “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.”²⁷ The Jews, indeed, maintain that they are the chosen people.

III. An Individual Journey Towards Authentic Belief

Johannes Climacus’ pilgrimage, in Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, is an individual’s journey towards authentic Christian belief. Here I will focus on subjectivity and individual consciousness, rather than on Kierkegaard’s view of Judaism.

In Climacus’ progress towards becoming a true Christian, whenever he comes to a crossroads he chooses what he sees as the Christian option over the Jewish one. The Jewish way as a whole is denied as a form of authentic belief. Notwithstanding, in Kierkegaard’s account of authentic belief, there are exceptional individuals, like Abraham and Job. What are we to make of Kierkegaard’s relationship to each of them? For Jews, after all, Abraham and Job are central to Old Testament Jewish teaching and heritage. Can the Christian that Climacus wants to become take Job and Abraham seriously, given that he is pledged to become a Christian, not a Jew?

Perhaps Climacus can relate to them seriously if they are living under the umbrella of religiousness A. That means he can relate to them as he does to the pagan Socrates.²⁸ Certainly Abraham, Job, and Socrates are exemplars of religiousness. One can learn from them, whether or not one sees Job or Abraham as Jews.²⁹ Furthermore, Abraham, Job and Socrates, each has the possibility of becoming Christian if they were to want it (and if it were an historical option for them). Kierkegaard sees this. He makes them “potential Christians,” and does not interpret them as the antithesis of Christianity.

Just as one does not need to know Hebrew to understand Abraham, so also one does not need to be Jewish to try to understand Abraham.³⁰ One can see the respects in which he is of faith whether or not one is Jewish or Christian. Some would say Abraham’s faith is only Jewish, and only comprehensible through the lens of Judaism. Yet, Kierkegaard, as *de silentio*, does not see Abraham through the lens of Judaism, and his audience includes anyone who wants to listen. It does not matter whether the reader is Christian or pseudo-Christian, Jewish or pseudo-Jewish or neither. What is relevant is that faith is under scrutiny.

Let us ask ourselves the following question: Climacus wants to become a Christian—why a Christian and not simply a man of faith? He claims that for him Christianity is a means to an end, a way to achieve the highest good of eternal happiness. But why Christianity? Just because he has heard that

it is a prerequisite for this good? And what if there are better ways? Easier ones? More rewarding ones? Ways that may lead both to earthly and eternal happiness?

Martin Buber tells the Hasidic story of an aged pious man, Rabbi Susya, who became fearful as death drew near. His friends chided him, “You’re a pious man, you have no reason to fear,” and Rabbi Susya replied: “I’m not afraid that I’ll be reproached that I wasn’t Moses. I’m afraid that I’ll be reproached that I was not Susya.”³¹ The difficulty for Rabbi Susya lies in the self-imposed obligation to achieve authentic self-identity as a believer. He is tormented with doubt that his understanding of authenticity was erroneous. If authenticity does not mean choosing to follow the laws of the Torah, aiming to be as pious as Moses, he may have led his life falsely. If authenticity means becoming an individual who is solely true to oneself, he was wrong in trying to be like Moses. He is tormented with doubt that the state of being a pious Jew is not achieved by identifying oneself with the paradigmatic Jew, Moses, or by abdicating his will before ethical standards and norms.

If I want to be a pious individual and I consider myself a Jew among Jews, why should I not follow the universal pattern Moses sets for being a pious Jew? The answer is that I am a particular person, not just an individual who objectively belongs to a community of Jews who take Moses to be the paragon of being a pious Jew. As a particular person, I am defined by special characteristics that differentiate me from other individuals of my sort.³² My features as an individual can be translated as instances of features of any member of a class, collectivity, or universal. A universal is a collection of individuals. But a particular, the particular person I am, for instance, is unique, singular, second to none and without replacement. Here there is no way to derive what I am as a particular from a class or collectivity or universal.

A person struggling to become an authentic individual cannot be identified as sharing objective traits with other members of a universal or class in the way a person struggling to prepare for a Bar Mitzvah can be identified as sharing traits with the collectivity of boys who prepare themselves for that ceremony. Or, to use another example, if I see an individual family, I know that the concept of “a family” applies to all families—and thus to this one. Particularity, in contrast, refers to a (subjective) relation that highlights uniqueness: what makes this family incomparable, quite unlike any other? If I have knowledge of its particularity, that knowledge carries exclusive meaning that is hard to fully communicate.³³ If I know this family as mine, the *particular* aspect of this family is in a way without parallel and known intuitively to insiders, but less so to outsiders.³⁴

In transforming the objective—a concept, a name (be it Judaism or Christianity, Susya or Climacus, for that matter)—into the particular and subjective, we move to existential particularity “behind” the identifiable individual. The difficulty is not to find private characteristics of Susya but to lend the name (Susya) an authentic personal meaning and value, perhaps a more or less hidden striving to be something elusive (objectively).

Born Christian, Climacus is baptized at the age of two weeks; he is a descendant of Christian parents, living in Denmark, in which almost everyone is Christian. All these conditions do not suffice in his eyes to see himself as a true Christian. All these do not grant the eternal happiness promised to the real Christian. Much like Susya, who is oblivious to his piety as it is found in the eyes of others, so is Climacus concerned only about the heavenly trial awaiting him, not how others construe whether he is pious.

IV. A Jew as the Other for a Christian Believer

Why does Climacus compare Christianity with Judaism? Why does Susya refer to Moses? For Susya, Moses is the other who is essential for his own self-definition. Moses is Moses; he is not a general concept or name, nor can he be subjected to an objective understanding. Moses is a unique individual. This is his relevance for Susya, who does not ask to override Moses. He only seeks his own true authenticity, holding Moses somehow in heart and mind. For Climacus, the Jew is the other in contradistinction to whom the Christian individual defines himself. The other becomes part of what defines or even constitutes the self, which typically configures its identity vis-à-vis the excluded other. Judaism, designated as a constitutive other for a Christian individual, makes the Jew a necessary entity and concept for Christianity. Kierkegaard explicitly emphasizes,

It cannot be made clear enough or be repeated often enough that Christianity certainly is related to Judaism, but in such a way, please note, that Judaism serves Christianity by helping it become negatively recognizable, is the repulsion of offense, yet they belong together for the very reason that this repulsion is an essential part.³⁵

Kierkegaard's view of Judaism as the other seems to present a process of "othering the other" in terms of knowledge. That is, the other's otherness is marked by different levels of understanding. Starting with the other who is not understood, or more accurately, the other who is understood only by way of negation, one ends up somewhat paradoxically, with the other who is not entirely different—that is, the other that *cannot be understood* (just as the seeker cannot understand what is needed to become what he or she will become). The incomprehensible but necessary other is personified by Abraham, who is the other of whom *de silentio* speaks with adoration partly for failing to understand him.³⁶ Through Kierkegaard's increasingly strident rhetoric, Judaism as described by Anti-Climacus is completely different from Christianity.³⁷ This can be linked to Kierkegaard's later apparently greater degree of "understanding" of these others, the Jews. The more he understands them, the more their otherness is explicitly accentuated; they are unknown to him in the way Christianity remains unknown to him.

With Judaism as the antagonist of Christianity, Kierkegaard does not need to give a moral defense of his view of Judaism *per se*. At this point,

an understanding of Christianity will suffice to create a complete ethical account of Christianity and Judaism alike. A perception of otherness is a condition for having an ethics, and an apprehension of the other's otherness provides a cognitive basis for it. In Kierkegaard's Christianity, Judaism provides that condition. *Thus Judaism in-itself is not judged ethically by Kierkegaard, but is one pole in a relationship that serves as the precondition of Kierkegaard's Christian ethics.* The Jew is thus a necessary component and factor for Christian identity and ethics.

Yet, Kierkegaard takes his understanding of Judaism a step further and views Christianity as superior to Judaism. He regards it as a stage which must be surmounted and utterly rejected: "Christianity in its whole history has had a constant tendency to promote Judaism as the equal of Christianity instead of using it as a point of departure or that which is to be abandoned when renunciation, unconditional renunciation, is proclaimed."³⁸ Kierkegaard adds, "By the time Christianity appeared, Judaism had developed into its own parody."³⁹ Thus, from this perspective, Judaism is perceived as negated with Christianity, as ignoble and unworthy.

This negation is evident in Climacus' formulation of the connection between Christianity and eternal happiness, which also clarifies his choice to become Christian: "Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity; subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personally interested passion for one's eternal happiness."⁴⁰ The attempt to formulate Kierkegaard's perception of Judaism by antithesis yields the following: *Judaism is nature; nature is worldly needs; worldly needs are objective; objectivity is essentially desires, and at its maximum a ceaseless, general interest for success in every earthly benefit.*

In his individual quest for eternal happiness, Climacus negates his way to Christianity first and foremost with the option of Judaism, in saying: "Christianity has itself proclaimed itself to be the eternal, essential truth that has come into existence in time; it has proclaimed itself as *the paradox* and has required the inwardness of faith with regard to what is an offense to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, and an absurdity to the understanding."⁴¹ The Jewish world-view, for him, concentrates on nature rather than on spirit; the Jewish concept of happiness, for him, is the transient, as opposed to the eternal happiness promised in Christianity; it is also a mundane one. And, for him, nothing could be further from true Christianity than this. Any religion that does not aspire to eternal happiness should be null and void. Both the Jewish world-view and the world-view of Christendom are distractions, temptations and failures vis-à-vis true faith.

Overall, then, Kierkegaard's apparent "anti-Jewishness" is not projected from the assumption that the Christianity around him is true, superior, or an "advance" on Jewishness. The condemnation of Judaism is precisely the condemnation of the so-called Christianity that surrounds him and that provokes his polemical attacks.

CHAPTER NINE
KIERKEGAARD AND HEGEL ON FAITH
AND KNOWLEDGE

JON STEWART

Hegel is well known for his claim that religion and philosophy share in some significant sense the same subject matter. Indeed, at the very beginning of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, he writes, philosophy “does, initially, have its objects in common with religion. Both of them have the *truth* in the highest sense of the word as their object, for both hold that *God* and *God alone* is the truth. Both of them also go on to deal with the realm of the finite, with *nature* and the *human spirit*, and with their relation to each other and to God as to their truth.”¹ At the beginning of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he expresses this even more radically by speaking of philosophy and religion as a unity:

Thus religion and philosophy come to be one. Philosophy is itself, in fact, worship; it is religion, for in the same way it renounces subjective notions and opinions in order to occupy itself with God. Philosophy is thus identical with religion, but the distinction is that it is so in a peculiar manner, distinct from the manner of looking at things which is commonly called religion as such.²

Hegel consistently claims that religion is a form of knowing and to this extent is continuous with philosophy. Similarly, he is consistently critical of all attempts to separate religion from philosophy and to isolate it in a sphere unto itself.

By contrast, Kierkegaard, working with an entirely different set of presuppositions, goes to great lengths to separate religion or specifically Christianity from all forms of knowledge. One of Kierkegaard’s main objections to Hegel’s philosophy is that it misunderstands the nature of religion by placing it on a par with various forms of scholarship and knowing. Through his pseudonymous authors, Kierkegaard stubbornly insists that faith is fundamentally different from knowledge, and Christianity from speculative philosophy. Kierkegaard’s famous words from his early *Journal AA*, already from the year 1835, sound like a kind of battle slogan that anticipates much of his later polemics: “*Philosophy and Christianity can never be united.*”³ All attempts at such a unification, in his view, result in a dangerous distortion of Christianity and its infinitely important message. Of all the well-known aspects of Kierkegaard’s criticism of Hegel or Hegelianism, this is certainly one of the most central and most significant. On its own it constitutes a large part of Kierkegaard’s philosophy of religion

generally and touches in one way or another on a number of related issues that are also of great importance to him, for example, the Incarnation, Revelation, and communication.

The positions of the two thinkers are grounded in two quite different sets of fundamental intuitions about the nature of religion. In the present essay I wish to explore this issue from both sides. How did Hegel understand the relation of faith to knowledge? Why did he wish to argue for the commensurability of the two? By contrast, why was Kierkegaard so insistent on keeping the two spheres absolutely separate and distinct? My goal is to bring the two thinkers into a dialogue with one another by capturing the basic premises and presuppositions that lie behind their respective positions. I will first explore Hegel's philosophy of religion with an eye towards this issue. Then I will give an account of the criticism of this and similar views as found in the works of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors. Finally, I will attempt to allow each to respond to the criticisms of the other on the key issues.

I. Hegel's Account of Faith

A. The Concept of Faith and its Relation to Knowing

Hegel addresses the issue of the relation of faith to knowledge, understood as speculative cognition, in a number of places throughout his *corpus*: "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate" from the *Early Theological Writings*,⁴ the "Faith and Knowledge" essay,⁵ the religion chapter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,⁶ the section on religion in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*,⁷ the foreword to Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs' (1794-1861) *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*,⁸ the review of Karl Friedrich Göschel's (1781-1861) *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen*,⁹ and of course the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.¹⁰ It would be impossible to give an exhaustive overview of all these works in this context. I will instead attempt to give a general account of Hegel's position based on scattered references to these different texts.

Hegel received his philosophical and theological education at a time when Kant's philosophy was the central object of discussion. Kant attempted to demonstrate the limits of reason by critically examining the faculties of the human mind. He argued that only those things that could be given in experience were possible objects of knowledge. By contrast, those things that were not possible objects of experience could not be known and remained forever cut off from us. These included God, immortality and freedom, which could not be demonstrated since they transcend the sphere of experience.¹¹ The point of this critique of reason was then "to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*."¹² By knowing the limits of human reason, one could then properly identify what lay beyond its purview and was thus the proper object of faith.

With this approach Kant effectively created a dualism of phenomena and noumena (or things in themselves). The former were things that could

be objects of possible experience and could thus be known, while the latter were not objects of possible experience but only of thought. We can think things as they are in themselves, i.e., apart from our ways of perceiving them, but we can never know them as such. According to this scheme, the divine clearly falls on the side of the noumena. All attempts to gain knowledge of God are thus doomed to failure since such attempts always invoke something that transcends experience and thus what it is possible to know.

Given that God was not an object of experience, Kant argued that from a metaphysical point of view God is unknowable. However, Kant nonetheless attempted to save a belief in God by means of the so-called postulates of pure practical reason.¹³ What was lost in the theoretical philosophy is won again in the practical philosophy. Although we cannot know God with certainty and can never demonstrate His existence metaphysically, we must nonetheless presuppose His existence in order for our moral universe to make sense. In other words, we must act on the assumption that there is a God and that we are free agents since without these assumptions our concepts of morality, responsibility, etc. would be meaningless.

This solution was problematic for many thinkers who were otherwise sympathetic to Kant's critical enterprise. To many it seemed that Kant had decisively demonstrated the limitations of reason and the fruitless nature of metaphysical speculation about the divine. However, they saw that his attempt to salvage the situation and escape the apparently agnostic conclusion by means of a postulate of practical reason was unsatisfying since it simply reduced God to a moral principle or, even worse, a presupposition for one. In other words, Kant's God seemed to be deprived of the usual characteristics attributed to him in dogmatics and to have more or less exclusively the function of guarantor of the moral world. God was no longer the loving personal deity who could be the object of prayer and adoration but rather a moral or epistemological principle.

Hegel believed that Kant had a profound insight with respect to his theory of representations and the necessary structures of the human mind. However, he was critical of the conclusions that Kant drew from this with respect to religion. Hegel objected to the claim that we could only have knowledge of objects of possible experience. He argued that those objects that Kant had placed beyond experience can in fact be known as objects of consciousness. Hegel claims that we have knowledge of the divine through *faith* itself. Every country and people has traditional beliefs about the divine that can be analyzed and understood. The goal of the philosophy of religion, for Hegel, is to explore these beliefs and to discover the hidden reason in them. Given this, he regards it as absurd to claim that we cannot know the divine or that God dwells in an inaccessible sphere beyond our own. On the contrary, the collective human mind is full of stories and ideas about the divine. It is the task of the philosopher to make sense of them and to disclose the knowledge of the divine that they contain.

Some will argue that it is, on the contrary, the task of the theologian to make sense of these ideas, but Hegel notes that since religion is a part of human culture that develops throughout history, it thus overlaps with

any number of other developments in different cultural spheres, such as history, politics, and philosophy. For this reason expertise is required that goes beyond that of a theologian or specialist in religion. What is required is someone who can grasp the wider movement of Spirit in the entire cultural sphere and then understand the religious phenomena in this sphere.

Hegel's initial intuition is the idealist claim that thinking is at the heart of the different human spheres of activity. Human beings are characterized by "Spirit," and every sphere of their lives is permeated by it: "it is through thought, concrete thought, or, to put it more definitely, it is by reason of his being Spirit, that man is man; and from man as Spirit proceed all the many developments of the sciences and arts, the interests of political life, and all those conditions which have reference to man's freedom and will."¹⁴ In this sense he is quick to reject the view that in religion we are concerned with some unique or special faculty, for example, feeling or immediate knowing, whereas in philosophy we are concerned with thought. In the *Encyclopedia*, he refers to "the prejudice of our day and age, which separates feeling and thinking from each other in such a way that they are supposedly opposed to each other, and are even so hostile that feeling—religious feeling in particular—is contaminated, perverted, or even totally destroyed by thinking, and that religion and religiosity essentially do not have their root and their place in thinking."¹⁵ Hegel attempts to refute this view as follows:

Making a separation of this kind means forgetting that only man is capable of religion, and that the lower animals have no religion, any more than right and morality belong to them....Religion, right, and ethical life belong to man alone, and that only because he is a thinking essence. For that reason *thinking* in its broad sense has not been inactive in these spheres, even at the level of feeling and belief or of representation; the activity and productions of thinking are *present* in them and are *included* in them.¹⁶

This recalls Hegel's criticism of Schleiermacher's claim that faith is essentially a feeling, specifically the feeling of absolute dependency on God. Hegel believes that there is an element of *thought* in feeling, which must be developed and understood philosophically; faith, therefore, cannot be a matter of feeling alone. Hegel argues that the result of Schleiermacher's view would be that "a dog would be the best Christian for it possesses this [sc. feeling of dependence] in the highest degree and lives mainly in this feeling."¹⁷ The point is obviously that only humans have religion; therefore, the cognitive faculty that is at work in religious belief must be one that is unique to human beings. To understand faith as mere feeling means devaluing the very concept of faith and reducing it to a base level.

Hegel further argues that the misunderstanding arises from the fact that when people hear the claim that religion, right and ethics are essentially concerned with thought, they mistakenly take it to mean that conscious reflection is always at work in these different spheres. Instead, Hegel's thesis is that the necessary *logos* or reason is always present and developing in these different contexts, regardless of how reflective particular individuals may or may not be.

Reason in religion is not, however, an abstract or formal principle; instead, it takes different specific forms in relation to different specific contents in the various descriptions of the divine provided by the different world religions. For Christianity to be a determinate religion, therefore, it must have a determinate content. If it lacks this content, then an ostensible belief in Christianity could in effect be a belief in anything at all. Hegel explains this while criticizing what he takes to be a mistaken “philosophizing” view of his own age that he associates with Jacobi and some of the German Romantics:

The Christian faith implies an authority that belongs to the church, while, on the contrary, the faith of this philosophizing standpoint is just the authority of one’s own subjective revelation. Moreover, the Christian faith is an objective content that is inwardly rich, a system of doctrine and cognition; whereas the content of this [philosophical] faith is inwardly so indeterminate that it may perhaps admit that content too—but equally it may embrace within it the belief that the Dalai-Lama, the bull, the ape, etc., is God, or it may, for its own part, restrict itself to God in general, to the “highest essence.”¹⁸

With these examples it is clear that content is not an indifferent part of a religion. The content is precisely what defines the individual religions and separates and distinguishes them from one another. Simply by saying that one believes is not enough to define one’s religion. But this content is precisely the proof that belief is a matter of knowledge. One must *know* the content of one’s belief in order to distinguish it from other beliefs.

Hegel argues that the advocates of religious feeling often make the mistake of confusing the object of belief in sense perception with that of religious belief. While one can believe in the truth of the senses, this is not what is at issue in religious faith. For the latter we are concerned with faith in God, not with some object of sense in any straightforward manner. Hegel illustrates this view by referring to Jacobi: “We *believe*, says Jacobi, that we have a *body*, we believe in the *existence* of *sensible things*. But, when we talk about faith in what is true and eternal, or about God being revealed, or given, in immediate knowing and intuition, these are not sensible things at all, but a content that is *inwardly universal*, i.e., objects that are [present] only to the *thinking spirit*.”¹⁹ Thus to know the divine one needs to think and to use philosophical cognition and not the senses.

This explains Hegel’s polemic against belief based on the miracles of Jesus. These miracles are also the objects of sense. As pure particulars they do not capture the universal truth and message of Christianity. The latter is only accessible by means of thought. Hegel grants that there is an aspect of immediate knowing in Christianity, but this is not the final word and is in need of being supplemented with something higher. He writes, for example, “Although Christian baptism is a sacrament, it implies, of itself, the further responsibility of providing a Christian education. This means that, for all that religion and ethical life are a matter of believing, or immediate knowledge, they are radically conditioned by mediation, which is called development, education, and culture.”²⁰ Therefore, the immediate elements

in religion must be developed into the higher forms of cognition if they are to be understood correctly.

B. Christian Faith as Revelation

One of the key features of Hegel's view of the Christian religion is that it must have a concrete content. As has been seen, he is critical of a merely formal conception of belief that is not related to any specific content. Moreover, this content is revealed and for this reason is known. Hegel thus refers to Christianity as "the revealed religion." He claims that this feature of Christianity renders absurd those views that claim that humans cannot know the divine. God revealed Himself to humanity so that He could be known. Thus Revelation itself is a proof that faith is in fact a kind of knowing. It would be absurd to imagine that God revealed Himself and yet failed to reveal anything. If He revealed Himself, then there must be some content in that revelation.

Since religion is a kind of knowing, it follows the same structural form as the different kinds of knowing in other fields. As we know from Hegel's idealist metaphysics, the Concept (*Begriff*) constitutes the basic structure of the world and the human mind. The Concept consists of the dialectical movement from universality (*Allgemeinheit*) to particularity (*Besonderheit*) and then to their unity in individuality (*Einzelheit*).²¹ This is the basic structure of all human thinking and thus of the different conceptions of the divine as well. While other religions capture this truth only partially or inadequately, Christianity fulfills and completes it. It is by virtue of this doctrine that Christianity is continuous with speculative philosophy and philosophical knowing. The Trinity represents a speculative triad of thought and is thus not just the object of mere sense or feeling. In the Christian Trinity, the metaphysical Concept is embodied in one of its highest forms. Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*,

the Absolute Spirit exhibits itself (α) as eternal content, abiding self-centered, even in its manifestation; (β) as distinction of the eternal essence from its manifestation, which by this difference becomes the phenomenal world into which the content enters; (γ) as infinite return, and reconciliation with the eternal being, of the world it gave away—the withdrawal of the eternal from the phenomenal into the unity of its fullness.²²

(A) God the Father, dwelling in the beyond, represents the universal aspect. (B) This universality must become particular and enter into actuality with Christ, the Son. (C) Finally, with the death of the particular, the Son is reunited with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Thus in this key Christian doctrine, when understood conceptually, one finds the necessary features of the metaphysical Concept.

A. God as universality: the Father.²³ God is initially conceived as an abstract idea or other in the beyond. The human mind abstracts from itself and posits another in opposition to itself. Self-consciousness is then

externalized and placed in a sphere that is beyond the known realm of actuality. In time this other comes to take on an independent reality of its own. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel writes, “The element of pure thought, because it is an abstract element, is itself rather the ‘other’ of its simple, unitary nature, and therefore passes over into the element proper to picture-thinking—the element in which the moments of the pure Concept obtain a *substantial* existence relatively to one another.”²⁴ This conception of God is entirely abstract; the divine is merely conceived as a self-conscious other that dwells in the beyond. Due to this abstract nature, this first stage represents that of universality, for if the divine were in any way concrete, then this universality would give way to particularity.

According to Hegel’s view, this purely universal conception cannot remain abstract and static for long. It is the nature of the Concept to develop and to be a part of a dynamic process: “Spirit. . . is movement, life; its nature is to differentiate itself, to give itself a definite character, to determine itself.”²⁵ The universal seeks to determine itself and make itself particular. The initial idea of God is that of a spirit “outside of or before the creation of the world.”²⁶ Here God is indeterminate since there is no other by means of which He can distinguish Himself. He dwells, as it were, in a universe with only one object. For this reason He remains abstract. Hegel describes this as follows in the *Encyclopaedia*: “Under the ‘moment’ of *Universality*—the sphere of pure thought or the abstract medium of essence—it is therefore the Absolute Spirit, which is at first the presupposed principle, not, however, staying aloof and inert, but (as underlying and essential power under the reflective category of causality) creator of heaven and earth.”²⁷ Thus, God’s first attempt to externalize and particularize Himself is understood to be in the act of creation. By creating the world, God creates an other to Himself. But this distinction does not adequately reflect and thus determine the nature of God:

When we say, God has created a world, we imply that there has been a transition from the Concept to objectivity, only when the world is here characterized as essentially God’s Other, and as being the negation of God, outside of God, without God, godless. In so far as the world is defined as this Other, the difference does not present itself to us as being in the Concept itself or as contained in the Concept; i.e., being, objectivity must be shown to be in the Concept, must be shown to exist in the form of activity, consequence, determination of the Concept itself.²⁸

The problem is that God is Spirit, but Spirit is not reflected in the world that He created. Thus in the dialectic of recognition and mutual determination, God stands opposite a thing and not another Spirit. The world itself is considered “godless,” a sterile thing. Another form of externalization and particularization is required for God to be genuinely determined as Spirit.

B. God as Particularity: the Son.²⁹ What is required is for God to externalize Himself not as an object but rather as Spirit. Thus, at the second stage God is understood to make Himself particular in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the Son God enters the world of actuality in the

form most appropriate to Him, Spirit. In this manner, an opposition arises between Father and Son, which mutually reflect and determine each other. God the Father is reflected in the Son in a way that He is not reflected in nature. Hegel explains, the divine “is, in fact, the negative in its own self and, moreover, the negativity of thought or negativity as it is in itself in essence; i.e. simple essence is absolute *difference* from itself, or its pure othering of itself.”³⁰ At this stage God by means of Christ is understood to become “the self-opposed or ‘other’ of itself.”³¹ Universality then stands opposed to particularity and abstraction to concretion, with each term being the other of its opposite: the “*actuality* or self-consciousness [sc. Christ], and the *in-itself* as substance [sc. God, the Father], are its two moments through whose reciprocal externalization, each becoming the other, Spirit comes into existence as this their unity.”³²

The revelation of God in Christ is a key characteristic of the Christian religion for Hegel, and it is for this reason that he designates it “the revealed religion.” The revelation is significant since it represents God showing Himself, revealing Himself or making Himself known to humanity. In the long story of the development of conceptions of the divine that Hegel has traced, he has shown that there is a movement from obscurity to clarity. It is only in earlier religions, where there is an alienation of humanity from nature and the world that the gods are conceived as unknown, obscure and impenetrable. By contrast, in Christianity the divine is revealed and humanity is thereby to be reconciled with it.

The other important dimension of the revelation is that God reveals Himself as a man, i.e., as Spirit. Human beings can thus immediately relate to the divine in human form. Hegel writes in “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate,” “Faith in Jesus means more than knowing his real personality, feeling one’s own reality as inferior to his in might and strength, and being his servant. Faith is a knowledge of spirit through spirit, and only like spirits can know and understand one another; unlike ones can know only that they are not what the other is.”³³ In this way, earlier forms of religious alienation—such as, for example, the revelation of the divine in Hinduism in the form of different animals—are overcome. Thus, the culmination of the story of different forms of revelation is Christianity in which God makes Himself known as a human being. Only in this way does the alien element of the divine disappear: “Spirit is known as self-consciousness and to this self-consciousness it is immediately revealed, for Spirit is this self-consciousness itself. The divine nature is the same as the human, and it is this unity that is beheld.”³⁴

According to the development of the Concept, Christ is the particular that has emerged from the universal. As a concrete particular, he has thus overcome the abstraction of the divine in the beyond of the previous stage. However, the particular, although being an advance in the development of the Concept, is still inadequate. The particular is empirical and transitory. Christ as a particular is not present to humanity forever. It is a mistake to think that one’s faith should be fixed on the particular as such. This leads to a kind of fetishism, whereby the believer is fixated on the concrete and empirical: one collects bones of the saint, or splinters of the cross; one

searches for the Holy Grail or the funeral shroud of Jesus. It is, according to Hegel, a mistake to understand the meaning of Christ solely as a particular in this way. Christ rebukes those who believe only because they have seen miracles. The particular points beyond itself to something higher. But in order to reach this, the particular must perish. Only when the particular has disappeared can the new principle emerge.

C. God as Individuality: the Holy Spirit.³⁵ The third step in the development of the Christian Concept is the Holy Spirit, in which the universal God in the beyond is known to be united with the particular revealed God. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the divine as it lives on in the community of religious believers. Hegel writes, "Spirit is thus posited in the third element in *universal self-consciousness*; it is its *community*."³⁶ The importance of this third and final stage is that the shortcomings of abstract universality and concrete particularity are overcome. With the death of Christ it is no longer possible to hang on fixedly to the particular; now one is compelled to contemplate the universal nature of the message, which is not some empirical thing but an idea. But it is no longer an abstract and empty idea as at the first stage of pure universality. Now in the Holy Spirit the Christian idea is full of content by virtue of the life and teachings of Christ that it contains. This is embodied in the spirit of the Christian community that is constantly contemplating and appropriating it in their specific context.

The particular, Christ, must therefore perish in order to establish an enduring truth for the religious community. In this way the sphere of nature is overcome and the revelation is completed as an idea. Only with his death is the idea of Christ truly realized: "The movement of the community as self-consciousness that has distinguished itself from its picture-thought is to make explicit what has been implicitly established. The dead divine man or human God is *in himself* the universal self-consciousness."³⁷ In the Holy Spirit the abstract God in the beyond and the particular incarnate God are unified, and the dualism ceases. Universal and particular are sublated in the individual. The individual believer is united with Spirit. Thus, Hegel regards the idea of the Holy Spirit as reconciling any number of key dualisms and forms of alienation that have plagued earlier religions. Therefore, only in Christianity is the truth known and is humanity reconciled with the world and the divine.

According to Hegel, the Christian account of the movement from the abstract God in the beyond to the concrete God with the Incarnation and finally to the resurrected God in the Holy Spirit is religion's way of expressing the speculative truth of the Concept. As has been noted at the outset, Hegel's central claim is that philosophy and religion express the same truth or the same content but in different ways. Philosophical knowing is in a sense the same as religious knowing.³⁸ Speculative philosophy attempts to demonstrate the necessity of the Concept in the different spheres of thought. In so doing, it shows that certain phenomena originally thought to be separate and distinct are in fact necessarily related and constitute a single conceptual unit. In this way philosophy overcomes various forms of dualism that are stuck at subordinate levels of knowing. The speculative history of the forms of religions that Hegel traces performs a similar function. It shows

the conception of the divine developing in such a way as to overcome the dualism of human and divine, and thus the alienation that humans feel from the divine. This dualism is just one of many forms of dualism that speculative philosophy attempts to sublimate.

Despite these similarities, there is also a key difference in the way in which religious thinking and philosophical thinking understand their objects. Religious thinking sees the story of the Incarnation and the Resurrection as grounded in divine freedom, just as it saw the Fall as the result of human willfulness. Thus, these events might or might not have happened, and in that sense are “contingent.” By contrast, speculative philosophical thinking discerns the *necessity* of this development since it embodies the development of the Concept. If there is a universal, it is necessary that there be a particular. If there are both a universal and a particular, it is necessary that they be united in an individual. This is a necessary movement of thought. It is no mere contingency, but a necessary ontological movement found in all spheres of human thought. The Christian Trinity thus mirrors the three parts of the speculative Concept. But the Christian believer fails to see the necessary conceptual structure that lies at bottom in the Trinity. This is what constitutes the difference between religious thinking and philosophical thinking. The speculative philosopher can see the Concept as Concept, i.e., in its pure conceptual form, whereas the religious thinker sees it only in its specific religious forms. The externalization of the universal in the particular is grasped in anthropomorphic terms as the birth of the Son of God in the world. Instead of speaking of the universal and the particular, the religious believer speaks of the Father and the Son.

In Hegel’s hierarchy of knowing, religious thinking thus represents the penultimate form of thought, second only to philosophy. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he explains as follows that religion is still inadequate in its grasp of the truth:

This form is not yet Spirit’s self-consciousness that has advanced to its Concept *qua* Concept: the mediation is still incomplete. This combination of being and thought is, therefore, defective in that. . . .the *content* is the true content, but all its moments, when placed in the medium of picture-thinking, have the character of being uncomprehended [in terms of the Concept], of appearing as completely independent sides which are externally connected with each other.³⁹

This is Hegel’s way of saying that the different conceptions of the divine are considered separate and in their essence unrelated. Their relation is only contingent. Picture-thinking is thus limited and falls short of being a completely adequate and satisfying form of knowing.⁴⁰ It requires philosophy to discern the conceptual truth in religion and thus to distinguish it from the contingent.

II. Kierkegaard's Criticism: The Separation of Faith and Knowledge

Just as Hegel's statements about religious faith are strewn through a number of different texts, so also Kierkegaard's accounts of Christian faith encompass virtually his entire *corpus*. Thus, I will focus my analysis on what I take to be particularly significant accounts that he gives through his pseudonym Johannes Climacus in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

At the beginning of the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard has his pseudonym make a key distinction that will inform both the content and the structure of the work. He speaks of "the objective issue," which he defines as the issue "about the truth of Christianity."⁴¹ By contrast, he continues, "The subjective issue is about the individual's relation to Christianity."⁴² The work itself is then divided into two parts reflecting this distinction. Right away here one can see the knowledge/faith dichotomy reflected. The objective issue concerns the knowledge that one can have about Christianity, while the subjective issue concerns the individual's faith. Climacus clearly takes Hegel's philosophy to belong to the objective side, which is evidenced by the fact that it is the second main standpoint treated in the Part One of the book, which is dedicated to exploring the different forms of the objective approach to Christianity. In that short section, "The Speculative Point of View," he begins his polemic against those who confuse the objective and the subjective approach, and he makes his initial attempt to demonstrate that the objective approach has nothing to do with Christian faith. However, his polemic is by no means limited to this section. In fact, it appears repeatedly in the second part of the book, dedicated to "the subjective issue," as he attempts to develop his view of the subjective approach to Christianity. This view is worked out and defined in explicit contrast to the objective view.

In the Introduction to the work Kierkegaard's pseudonym gives a useful preliminary sketch of the distinction that he will come to work out in the course of the next several hundred pages. He explains that "the issue is not about the truth of Christianity but about the individual's relation to Christianity, consequently not about the indifferent individual's systematic eagerness to arrange the truths of Christianity in paragraphs but rather about the concern of the infinitely interested individual with regard to his own relation to such a doctrine."⁴³ He then goes on to explain what the subjective approach means to him, specifically as an individual: "I, Johannes Climacus, born and bred in this city and now thirty years old, an ordinary human being like most folk, assume that a highest good, called an eternal happiness, awaits me just as it awaits a housemaid and a professor. I have heard that Christianity is one's prerequisite for this good. I now ask how I may enter into relation to this doctrine."⁴⁴ By "eternal happiness" here Climacus clearly makes reference to the doctrine of immortality or the resurrection of souls in Christianity. This is the guiding motivation for Climacus and, he argues, for everyone else since every individual has an infinite personal interest in his or her own eternal happiness or salvation. (Given the centrality of this claim, it is odd that the Christian doctrine of immortality fills so little space in Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole.⁴⁵)

In any case, this is a key point of difference between the subjective and the objective approach. It is connected to the epistemological question of the degree of certainty that can be achieved by the objective approach. According to Climacus, even the best, most rigorous scholarly approaches to Christianity, whether historical, philological or philosophical, will always fall short of certainty. There will always be something in them that can be called into doubt. For the objective approach this does not matter too much, since it lies in the nature of science to continually approach the truth as it gains new data and refines its own methods. This approach is always a kind of “approximation” of the truth that never reaches absolute certainty.⁴⁶ However, for the subjective approach this is a decisive shortcoming. Since what is at stake is one’s eternal happiness, nothing less than absolute certainty will do. Thus, even the very best results of the scientific, objective approach will fall far short of what is required for one to risk one’s eternal happiness.

Based on this point of departure, Climacus gives us several defining characteristics of the subjective approach. Among these one finds the following: passion, freedom and decision, becoming and striving, subjectivity, inwardness, absurdity and paradox, and indirect communication. Since these concepts are familiar to most Kierkegaard readers, I will touch on them only briefly.

(A) Passion. True Christian faith involves passion due to the fact that what is at issue is one’s own eternal happiness. By contrast, the historian or the philologist who approaches Christianity in an objective manner may well have a certain limited passion that derives from an intellectual curiosity about the material, but this can in no way be compared to the infinite passion of Christian faith.

(B) Freedom and Decision. Unlike science, according to Climacus, Christian faith requires a free decision on the part of the believer. By contrast, the goal in science is to construct discursive theories and proofs such that there are no gaps and every conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. The objective approach thus works with necessity and requires no decision as such; one merely needs to follow each step in the argument in order to reach the conclusion. By contrast, there is no such discursive way to Christian faith. The believer must simply make a conscious and free decision to believe. Necessity plays no role in faith.

(C) Becoming and Striving. While the objective thinker reaches a definitive result, the subjective thinker is always in the process of becoming and thus never comes to a final solution. Faith is not a resting place but a fluid movement.⁴⁷ The subjective thinker is always striving, without reaching a goal.⁴⁸

(D) Subjectivity and Inwardness. While the objective thinker is oriented outwards towards his or her subject matter, the subjective thinker is oriented inwards towards his own subjective relation to the divine: “Whereas objective thinking is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker as existing is essentially interested in his own thinking, is existing in it.”⁴⁹ This then leads to the concept of inwardness. “Therefore,

his thinking has another kind of reflection, specifically, that of inwardness, of possession, whereby it belongs to the subject and no one else.”⁵⁰

(E) Absurdity and Paradox. Kierkegaard’s pseudonym invokes Tertullian’s famous claim “*credo, quia absurdum est*.”⁵¹ He argues that only objective thinking can build on reasons, evidence and plausible arguments. By contrast, Christian faith requires one to believe in the absurd, specifically, what Kierkegaard sketches as the contradiction of the Incarnation, namely, that God, the eternal, became temporal. This is a contradiction that no amount of argument or reasoning can get around. This is “the ultimate paradox of thought,” which “thought itself cannot think.”⁵²

(F) Indirect Communication. While objective thinking can use direct communication, subjective thinking can only be communicated indirectly.⁵³ Since the content of faith is paradoxical and absurd, it cannot be communicated in a straightforward manner. Any attempt to do so will only result in distortions. The best one can do is attempt a form of indirect communication which enjoins one’s interlocutors to look into themselves and examine their own faith.

III. Critical Evaluation

How might Hegel respond to the criticism of the union of faith and knowledge and the model of faith that Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous author presents? Perhaps the most obvious objection is the charge of formalism: four of the five sets of characteristics of Kierkegaardian faith outlined in the previous section—passion, freedom and decision, becoming and striving, inwardness—fail to determine any specific content.

There are a number of passages in Kierkegaard’s *corpus* where he, or one of his pseudonyms, seems to confirm that he is guilty of this charge of formalism. For example, Climacus’ criticism of the historical point of view in the *Postscript* seems to point in this direction. Climacus invites his reader to assume first that “with regard to the Bible there has been a successful demonstration of whatever any theological scholar in his happiest moment could ever have wished to demonstrate.”⁵⁴ Even if one imagines that this was the best possible demonstration, Climacus insists that this is wholly irrelevant for the faith of the individual. Such an iron-clad demonstration can in no way help the believer to faith. By contrast, he continues,

I assume the opposite, that the enemies [sc. of Christianity] have succeeded in demonstrating what they desire regarding the Scriptures, with a certainty surpassing the most vehement desire of the most spiteful enemy—what then? Has the enemy thereby abolished Christianity? Not at all. Has he harmed the believer? No at all, not in the least.... That is, because these books are not by these authors, are not authentic, are not *integri* [complete], are not inspired (this cannot be disproved, since it is an object of faith), it does not follow that these authors have not existed and, above all, that Christ has not existed. To that extent, the believer is still equally free to accept it.⁵⁵

One can raise doubts and even definitively refute key points about Christianity, but as long as the existence of Christ is not disproved, there is no danger to faith. The point is clear: no truths that can be established by scholarship can ever have any relevance for Christian faith. The problem here is that this seems to deprive Christianity of almost all of its doctrinal content since (with the exception of the idea of the Incarnation) no such content is needed for genuine faith.

The relative emptiness of Christian faith is shown even more clearly in the *Philosophical Fragments*, where Climacus states quite straightforwardly that all that is needed for Christian faith is to know that Christ is God incarnate or, indeed, that some people believed he was:

Even if the contemporary generation had not left anything behind except these words: We have believed that in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died—this is more than enough. The contemporary generation would have done what is needful, for this little announcement, this world-historical *nota bene*, is enough to become an occasion for someone who comes later, and the most prolix report can never in all eternity become more for the person who comes later.⁵⁶

If only this minimal information is required, then it is clear that there is little of what we usually understand by way of Christian doctrine and dogma. If this statement is all that is needed for faith, then most all of the key questions of dogmatics remain open.

Another good example of this is Johannes Climacus' famous distinction between "what is said," which characterizes the objective approach, and "how it is said" which characterizes the subjective approach.⁵⁷ Climacus clearly places the focus on the "how" of faith. This would seem to imply that the key to faith is not its object or its content but rather the way in which one believes.

This seems to be confirmed in the striking passage that compares the purported Christian believer with the worshiper of idols:

If someone who lives in the midst of Christianity enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God, the house of the true God, and prays, but prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting upon the image of an idol—where, then, is there more truth? The one prays in truth to God although he is worshipping an idol; the other prays in untruth to the true God and is therefore in truth worshipping an idol.⁵⁸

This seems to imply that one can nonetheless be a Christian, although one worships an idol, provided that one does so correctly. For Hegel, this would of course involve a complete distortion and indeed destruction of Christianity, which has a necessary content, which it cannot do without.

Finally, in a draft of a response to what Kierkegaard regarded as the misappropriation of his works by his one-time friend and associate, the

philosopher Rasmus Nielsen (1809-84), he gives the following retrospective consideration of his intentions with his works: "In the pseudonymous writings the content of Christianity has been compressed to its least possible minimum simply in order to give all the more powerful momentum toward becoming a Christian and to keep the nervous energy all the more intensively concentrated so as to be able to master the confusion and prevent the intrusion of 'the parenthetical.'"⁵⁹ Here he states explicitly that it was the conscious goal, at least in the pseudonymous writings, to avoid entering into detailed points of dogmatics (as Nielsen had done). Kierkegaard seems to think that such discussions lead away from the true goal, which is to become a Christian. The idea is that such considerations, so to speak, introduce a parenthesis in the deeply personal process that is involved in the individual's consideration of his or her relation to Christianity. This seems again to be a clear indication that Kierkegaard intentionally avoids discussions about the concrete content of Christianity in favor of a focus on the form of belief.

One might argue on Kierkegaard's behalf that he does claim that the infinite passion of faith can have only one correct object, i.e., God or the Incarnation. One cannot have infinite passion for finite things. But this response would not be enough to satisfy Hegel since the doctrine of the Incarnation *alone* is not enough to qualify faith as *fully* Christian and so to distinguish it properly from the faith of other religions. While Kierkegaard likes to return to the absolute demand that Christianity places upon each individual believer by enjoining them to make a decision and believe, he seems to neglect the fact that other religions make a similar demand on their believers. How then is one properly to distinguish correct belief from incorrect belief if there is no fully articulated difference in content?

One might also argue that while Kierkegaard might appear to be a victim of formalism from Hegel's point of view, by the same token Hegel fails to do justice to Kierkegaard's unwavering demand for the recognition of the subjective dimension of faith. This question opens up the larger issue of whether or not Hegel and Kierkegaard are ultimately compatible in their general approaches. Since Kierkegaard's goal is the inward religious reform of the individual believer, he is not interested in understanding or knowing as such. Instead, his focus is on the irreducibly private and individual nature of faith. Given this goal, it is hardly surprising that he would find this aspect lacking in Hegel's account. By contrast, Hegel's goal is not individual religious reform but rather a philosophical, i.e., speculative, conceptual, understanding of religion. From this perspective the personal faith of the individual is not a relevant issue. The goal of speculative philosophy is to grasp the Concept in the different spheres of human thought and activity. But in these spheres there are also an infinite number of particular empirical entities that have nothing to do with the Concept. This is what Hegel refers to as the bad infinity of particularity. The irreducible, personal particular of the faith of the individual is not the object of philosophical inquiry for Hegel. Kierkegaard would be in perfect agreement with him on this point. Kierkegaard's objection would be that while Hegel rejects this sphere of private faith as irrelevant (from a philosophical perspective), it is, however, what is the most important thing from the truly religious perspective.

Here one can easily see that the two thinkers are simply at cross purposes. Although they can be brought into a dialogue, as I have attempted to do here, their goals are so completely different that this largely undermines a fair comparison since most of the criticisms on the one side or the other end up begging the question.

A couple of somewhat surprising or counterintuitive conclusions seem to follow from these considerations: (1) There is some irony here in Kierkegaard's repeated criticism of the abstraction of Hegel's philosophical system. Through his pseudonyms, he repeatedly charges Hegel with losing himself in vapid abstractions that have no connection to actuality and existence. Hegel is purportedly not interested in the burning truth for the individual. But here it is clear that the situation is just the reverse. It is Kierkegaard's view of faith that is overly abstract and lacking in real content, whereas Hegel has a clear view of what the content of Christianity is and should be in distinction from other religions. It is Kierkegaard who escapes to abstractions in his attempt to define Christian faith.

(2) A second counterintuitive point can be seen in the following observation. At least one branch of Kierkegaard studies sees the Danish thinker as a great Christian apologist, defending the faith against its detractors. He represents a great spokesman for the Christian religion in today's otherwise secular world. This same branch invariably sees him as the grand critic of Hegel's thought, which is regarded precisely as the epitome of modern secular reason in opposition to Christianity. However, when one looks at the matter more closely, one sees that Kierkegaard's statements about Christianity can hardly be taken as a defense or recommendation of the faith to non-Christians. Indeed, what he says about the impossibly high demands of Christianity almost seems designed to scare away potential new believers and alienate those who consider themselves old ones. Ironically, Hegel seems much better to fit the description of Christian apologist. He explicitly defends Christianity as the one true religion and indeed at times does so in a way that can be interpreted as offensive to modern sensibilities about ecumenism and religious tolerance.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ SKS 7, 222-3 / *CUP1*, 245.

² SKS 4, 124-5, 126 / *FT*, 28-9, 31.

³ Compare SKS 4, 130-131 / *FT*, 34-35.

⁴ S.U. Zuidema, *Kierkegaard*, trans. by David H. Freeman, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1960, pp. 1-50. Sytse Ulbe Zuidema (1926-70) was a professor of philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam.

⁵ SKS 11, 130 / *SUD*, 14.

⁶ SKS 7, 212 / *CUP1*, 233.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ SKS 7, 554-5 / *CUP1*, 611.

⁹ SKS 7, 555 / *CUP1*, 611.

¹⁰ Zuidema, *Kierkegaard*, p. 12.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 13.

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰ Ibid. (emphasis added).

²¹ SKS 7, 39 / *CUP1*, 33.

²² Zuidema, *Kierkegaard*, p. 17.

²³ SKS 11, 130 / *SUD*, 14.

²⁴ Zuidema, *Kierkegaard*, p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

CHAPTER ONE

JACOB GOLOMB: WAS KIERKEGAARD AN AUTHENTIC BELIEVER?

¹ As explicated in my following publications: “Kierkegaard’s Ironic Ladder to Authentic Faith,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 23, 1991, pp. 65-81; chapter 3 of my *In Search of Authenticity from Kierkegaard to Camus*, London, New York: Routledge 1995; “Kierkegaard in Zion,” *Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 19, 1998, pp. 130-137; “Buber’s *I and Thou* vis-à-vis Nietzsche and Kierkegaard,” *Existential*, vol. 12, 2002, pp. 413-427; “Kierkegaard’s Reception in Fear and Trembling in Jerusalem” in *Kierkegaard’s International Reception*, Tome III, *The Near East, Asia, Australia and the Americas*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 8), pp. 25-38.

² SKS 18, 177, JJ:115 / *JP* 5, 5664.

³ It is far from clear what exactly were his father’s sins to which the young Kierkegaard refers in his journal entry under the title “the great earthquake.” Was it the fact that the father once cursed God? That he has certain premarital relationship with Ane? In any case something not “Kosher” was revealed to Kierkegaard about his father. What it was still remains quite a secret and is open to various speculations.

See details in Joakim Garff's biography: *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, trans. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005, pp. 131-138.

⁴ All these can be found in new research by Joakim Garff (referenced in the previous note), and see my review of this valuable biography: "'And What Was Kierkegaard's Weapon? But A Pen!'" *The European Legacy*, vol. 13, 2008, pp. 651-654.

⁵ SKS 17, 24, AA:12 / KJN 1, 19.

⁶ SKS 17, 26, AA:12, note 5 / KJN 1, 21, note 5.

⁷ SKS 7, 173-228 / CUP1, 189-251.

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. by Peter Winch, London: Oxford University Press 1980, p. 73. This explains, among other things, why Kierkegaard had chosen to call the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling* by the name: Johannes de silentio. On Wittgenstein's admiration to Kierkegaard read: Patrick Gardiner, *Kierkegaard*, London: Oxford University Press 1988, p. 115, and M.P. Gallagher, "Wittgenstein's Admiration for Kierkegaard," *Month*, vol. 29, 1968, pp. 43-49.

⁹ SKS 4, 131 / FT, 36.

¹⁰ SKS 8, 138-250 / UD, 7-154.

¹¹ SKS 8, 148 / UD, 35. Hence the very act of willing is the prolegomenon for attaining the truth, which actually may remain unattainable. Thus in matters of authentic belief it is the way which is the truth.

¹² Portrayed in *Genesis*, chapter 22.

¹³ See Kierkegaard's candid admission: "I honestly confess that in my experience I have not found a single authentic instance." SKS 4, 133 / FT, 38. This raises of course the intriguing question how the believer can ever know that he had arrived at the climax of spiritual existence or authentic faith. This problem is dealt with lucidly by Tamar Aylat-Yaguri in her excellent *Human Dialogue with the Absolute: Kierkegaard's Ladder to the Climax of Spiritual Existence*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press 2008 (in Hebrew).

¹⁴ SKS 4, 147 / FT, 53.

¹⁵ SKS 4, 133 / FT, 39.

¹⁶ SKS 4, 161 / FT, 69.

¹⁷ Cf. Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, London: Oxford University Press 1972.

¹⁸ SKS 4, 201 / FT, 113.

¹⁹ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, ed. and trans. by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1961, p. 151, proposition 6.522.

²⁰ SKS 15, 225 / BA, 186.

²¹ SKS 4, 153 / FT, 60.

²² SKS 4, 126 / FT, 30. Interestingly enough, also the staunch atheist, Nietzsche, uses this formula for personal authenticity in the subtitle of his intellectual autobiography: *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House 1969, p. 217. On the relation of this formula to the Bible see my "Nietzsche's Positive Religion and the Old Testament," in *Nietzsche and the Divine*, ed. by Jim Urpeth and John Lippitt, Manchester: Clinamen Press 2000, pp. 30-56.

²³ SKS 4, 131 / FT, 36.

²⁴ It is quite significant that Kant, who worked out in detail a conception of religious life "within the limits of reason" and ethics "alone," considers this same issue, namely, whether or not a father could be "ordered" by God "to kill his son who is, so far as he knows, perfectly innocent." He concludes that since the moral law, being universal, cannot grant any exception to its maxims, and since such a command contradicts morality, it "cannot, despite all appearances, be of God." *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. by Theodore M. Green and Hoyt H. Hudson, New

York: Harper & Row 1960, p. 82. And see there the reference to the Abraham-Isaac story on p. 175. This view is rejected by Kierkegaard as too easy a way out of the paradox of faith.

²⁵ SKS 4, 152 / FT, 59.

²⁶ In chapter 3 of my *In Search of Authenticity from Kierkegaard to Camus*.

²⁷ SKS 7, 350f. / CUP1, 385.

²⁸ SKS 4, 115 / FT, 18.

²⁹ SKS 7, 268 / CUP1, 294.

³⁰ See SKS 7, 173-228 / CUP1, 189-251.

³¹ SKS 4, 134f. / FT, 39f.

³² Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1968, § 39, p. 151. On Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity and his ambivalent view of Jesus see my *Nietzsche's Enticing Psychology of Power*, Ames: Blackwell 1989; and the still classic presentation of Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche and Christianity*, trans. by E.B. Ashton, Chicago: Regnery-Gateway 1961.

³³ In the subtitle of this book: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1961.

³⁴ Explicated in my *Nietzsche's Enticing Psychology of Power*, Part 3, 1989.

³⁵ Read the first passages of Kierkegaard's beautiful "The Present Age" published in 1846 under his own name in *A Literary Review of Two Ages*. In his criticism of the anonymous crowd where the individual becomes "nothing at all" within the abstract "public," he actually anticipated Heidegger's anthropological sections of *Sein und Zeit*. It is not a sheer coincidence that one of the few great philosophers quoted by Heidegger in this *opus magnum* was Kierkegaard. Another thinker who liked Kierkegaard's anthropological critique of post-modern society was Martin Buber whose attraction to Kierkegaard is well known and whose only philosophical treatise, *Ich und Du* from 1923, contains several motives already presented by Kierkegaard in his short but great "The Present Age." For details see Jacob Golomb, "Buber's *I and Thou* vis-à-vis Nietzsche and Kierkegaard," *Existentialia*, vol. 12, 2002, pp. 413-427.

³⁶ This literary-philosophical masterpiece is analyzed in my *In Search of Authenticity from Kierkegaard to Camus*, pp. 22-26.

³⁷ Elaborated in chapters 1, 2 and 4 in my *In Search of Authenticity from Kierkegaard to Camus*, pp. 22-26.

³⁸ Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, pp. 812-813.

CHAPTER TWO

SHAI FROGEL: ACOUSTICAL ILLUSION AS SELF-DECEPTION

¹ SKS 4, 253-7 / PF, 49-54.

² At least in the case of Climacus, I have academic justification for assuming consistency, on account of the statement made in *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus dubitandum est* that "consistency of thought was a scala paradisi [ladder of paradise]." SKS 15, 17 / JC, 118.

³ SKS 4, 254 / PF, 50-1.

⁴ SKS 4, 214 / PF, 3.

⁵ C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self*, Waco: Baylor University Press 2006, p. 75.

⁶ SKS 4, 218 / PF, 9.

⁷ SKS 4, 220 / PF, 11.

⁸ It is clear that Climacus' *if* is not really an *if* since he speaks about the Incarnation from the point of view of Christianity. Nevertheless, it serves my purpose to play

along with his game since my interest lies in philosophy, not Christianity: I'm examining whether he succeeds in pointing to certain mistakes in philosophical thinking, not whether the Incarnation is true.

⁹ René Descartes, *The Meditations Concerning First Philosophy*, in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. by Laurence J. Lafleur, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing 1978, p. 75.

¹⁰ SKS 4, 227 / PF, 19.

¹¹ SKS 4, 242 / PF, 37.

¹² This brings to mind Immanuel Kant's claim that critical thinking begins from antinomy. Thus Kant writes in the *Prolegomena*: "[A]n unexpected conflict comes to light...and therefore reason is divided against itself, a situation that makes the skeptic rejoice, but must make the critical philosopher pensive and uneasy." Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. by Gary Hatfield, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 131.

¹³ SKS 4, 243 / PF, 37.

¹⁴ SKS 4, 245 / PF, 39.

¹⁵ SKS 4, 249 / PF, 44.

¹⁶ SKS 4, 250 / PF, 45.

¹⁷ SKS 4, 252 / PF, 47.

¹⁸ SKS 4, 254 / PF, 50.

¹⁹ SKS 4, 254 / PF, 50-1.

²⁰ Climacus is a philosopher by nature. See footnote 2.

²¹ SKS 4, 255 / PF, 51.

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books 1974, p. 287.

²³ Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity*, University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press 1984, p. 88.

CHAPTER THREE ROI BENBASSAT: FAITH AS A STRUGGLE AGAINST ETHICAL SELF-DECEPTION

¹ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. by Eliezer Goldman, trans. by Eliezer Goldman, Yoram Navon, Zvi Jacobson, Gershon Levi and Raphael Levy, Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press 1992, p. 37: "[Faith] is rather an *evaluative decision* that one makes...it does not result from any information one has acquired, but is a *commitment to which one binds himself*. In other words, faith is not a form of cognition; it is a conative element of consciousness."

² SKS 7, 181 / CUP1, 198: "All ethical and ethical-religious knowing is essentially a relating to the existing of the knower."

³ It is acknowledged today that Kant's ethical and religious thought has significantly influenced Kierkegaard's work. See Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1981, p. 42; Ronald M Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992; Ulrich Knappe, *Theory and Practice in Kant and Kierkegaard*, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004 (*Kierkegaard Studies. Monograph Series*, vol. 9).

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by Mary J. Gregor, New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, p. 57.

⁵ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 56, note.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by Mary J. Gregor, New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, pp. 199-200.

⁷ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 61: “[I]n fact we can never, even by the most strenuous self-examination, get entirely behind our covert incentives....”

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, New York: Cambridge University Press 1996, p. 77.

⁹ This is a very brief summary of a view that I expressed in detail in my article “Kierkegaard’s Relation to Kantian Ethics Reconsidered,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2012, pp. 49-74.

¹⁰ *SKS* 3, 155 / *EO2*, 157.

¹¹ *SKS* 3, 164 / *EO2*, 167.

¹² *SKS* 3, 310 / *EO2*, 328.

¹³ *SKS* 3, 310 / *EO2*, 329.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *SKS* 3, 311 / *EO2*, 330.

¹⁷ *SKS* 3, 311f. / *EO2*, 330f.

¹⁸ *SKS* 3, 312 / *EO2*, 330f.

¹⁹ *SKS* 3, 207 / *EO2*, 216.

²⁰ *SKS* 3, 207 / *EO2*, 216f.

²¹ *SKS* 3, 320 / *EO2*, 339.

²² *SKS* 3, 318 / *EO2*, 338.

²³ *SKS* 7, 505-510 / *CUP1*, 555-560.

²⁴ *SKS* 4, 130-131 / *FT*, 34-36.

²⁵ *SKS* 4, 143 / *FT*, 48: “The act of resignation does not require faith...this is a purely philosophical movement....”

²⁶ *SKS* 7, 526-7 / *CUP1*, 578-9.

²⁷ *SKS* 7, 506 / *CUP1*, 556f.

²⁸ *SKS* 4, 131 / *FT*, 36; *SKS* 4, 203 / *FT*, 115.

²⁹ *SKS* 18, 177, JJ:115 / *KJN* 2, 164.

³⁰ *SKS* 7, 75 / *CUP1*, 74-5.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDWARD F. MOONEY: A FAITH THAT DEFIES SELF-DECEPTION

¹ At some point reasons for what we do, or for what stance we assume, run out. This is the anti-foundationalism of both Wittgenstein and pragmatism. The moment reasons run out can be one of despair and skepticism, or of trust that we can nevertheless go on, and the world, with us.

² The man “looks just like a tax-collector,” which might suggest he is not one, but is like one. See *SKS* 4, 133 / *FTP*, 68.

³ *SKS* 4, 136 / *FTP*, 70.

⁴ Another figure of faith is a woman knitting; Agnes (in the third *Problema*) also wrestles with faith.

⁵ John Davenport picks up Tolkien’s discussion of the eucatastrophical and deploys it in “Faith as Eschatological Trust in *Fear and Trembling*,” in *Ethics, Love, and Faith in Kierkegaard: A Philosophical Engagement*, ed. by Edward F Mooney, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008, pp. 196-233.

⁶ I follow Hannay’s translation, rendering the title of this opening section, “*Stemming*,” as “attunement.”

⁷ *SKS* 4, 123 / *FTP*, 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For *Fear and Trembling* as depicting spectacle and carnival that diverts us from faith, see my *On Soren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy, and Time*, Burlington et al.: Ashgate 2007, Chapter 8.

¹⁰ No doubt this echoes Eckhart. I discuss de silentio's allusion to giving birth to one's father, of being mother to one's father, and hence to oneself, in *Knights of Faith and Resignation: Reading Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*, Albany: SUNY 1996, p. 40. In the Book of Job, Elihu tells us that in spiritual matters we are instructed by dreams, suffering, and songs in the night. To have access to "dreams, suffering, and songs in the night" is a condition of access to faith and its gifts.

¹¹ See my discussion of Pattison on natality, "The Intimate Agency of Death," *Kierkegaard and Death*, ed. by Patrick Stokes and Adam Buben, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2011, pp. 136-138.

¹² I pass on a caution first raised by Patrick Stokes (in personal correspondence). "I think we [must] face the question of how some of de Silentio's rather domestic pictures of modern knights of faith cohere with Kierkegaard's later writings, particularly the 1855 writings. Is there a problem with the fact that late Kierkegaard insists that to be Christian is to suffer and be prepared to be put to death?" Surely there is a problem reconciling various perspectives on faith that Kierkegaard presents in the *corpus* as a whole. It is sufficient to say that the accounts of *Fear and Trembling* define a major strand in Kierkegaard's understanding.

¹³ Jennifer Lemma, in correspondence; she adds, "There is an innate philosophical value to Kierkegaard's faith as it pertains to the population of women who are mothers and because of this, it deserves to be recognized as an integral part of ethical, philosophical discourse."

¹⁴ See note 9, above.

¹⁵ I consider what lies behind philosophy's neglect of the feminine and maternal in "Gender, Philosophy, and the Novel," *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1987, pp. 241-252.

¹⁶ See Eric Ziolkowski's chapter on Cervantes in his *The Literary Kierkegaard*, Evanston: Northwestern 2011.

¹⁷ See my extended discussion of this "double movement" in *Knights of Faith*.

¹⁸ Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open*, New York: Harcourt 2000.

¹⁹ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, New York: Penguin 2001, Chapter 20, p. 106.

²⁰ See Herbert Fingarette's classic analysis, *Self-Deception*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2000.

²¹ See Sheridan Hough on how the "shop man" lives with contingency: "Silence, 'Composure in Existence,' and the Promise of Faith's Joy," in *Why Kierkegaard Matters*, ed. by Marc A. Jolly, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 2010, pp. 147-157.

²² Simone Weil, "Human Personality," in *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. by George A. Panichas, New York: David McKay Company 1977, p. 332.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Stanley Cavell, "Thinking of Emerson," in his *The Senses of Walden*, Berkeley: North Point Press 1981, p. 135.

²⁵ Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, Chapters 3-6.

²⁶ Some of these formulations and illustrations follow the reflections of Andy Martin, in "Winehouse, Breivik and Deadly Ideals," *The Opinionator*, *New York Times*, July 26, 2011, written only days after the Oslo massacres. Of course, not all self-deception leads to violence; and not every attempt to save face is an instance of self-deception. Furthermore, I have kept close to faith as we find it in *Fear and Trembling*; Kierkegaard changes his tune later in life (see note 12, above). And there are numerous interpretations of faith in general circulation that in no way block, and no doubt encourage, the possibilities of self-deception.

²⁷ Kelly Jolley (in correspondence).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE
DARÍO GONZÁLEZ: FAITH AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF
HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

¹ Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Gallimard 1945, p. 8. English translation: *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith, London: Routledge 2003, p. viii.

² Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London: Verso 1999, p. 102. On Hegel's formula "Not Only as *Substance*, but Also as *Subject*," see also Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London: Verso 1989, pp. 227ff. Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes in Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols. 1-20, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928-41, vol. 2, p. 22.

³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*, London: The MIT Press 2009, p. 79.

⁴ Cf. *SKS* 4, 272-286 / *PF*, 72-88.

⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 11; *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xii.

⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 14; *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. xv-xvi.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 15; *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xvi. It is not our aim to settle the question as to whether Merleau-Ponty transforms or simply rejects the original version of phenomenological reduction. His remarks on this subject in *Le Visible et l'invisible* are, in any case, very illustrative: "the incompleteness of reduction ('biological reduction,' 'psychological reduction,' 'reduction to transcendental immanence,' and finally 'fundamental thought') is not an obstacle to the reduction, it is the reduction itself, the rediscovery of vertical being." *Le Visible et l'invisible*, Paris: Gallimard 1964, pp. 229f.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell 1985 [1962], p. 37. *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Niemeyer 1993 [1927], p. 16.

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift*, in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vols. I-VIII, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1968; vol. VI.2, pp. 259-60. (English translation: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufmann, New York: The Modern Library 1968, p. 451.)

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. V.1 1973, p. 240. See also *Morgenröthe*, in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. V.1 1971, p. 107 (§ 116): "Actions are *never* what they appear to be... all actions are essentially unknown."

¹¹ *SKS* 4, 244 / *PF*, 39. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230a.

¹² *SKS* 4, 245 / *PF*, 39.

¹³ *SKS* 4, 249-250 / *PF*, 44-45.

¹⁴ *SKS* 4, 306 / *PF*, 111.

¹⁵ *SKS* 4, 244 / *PF*, 38-39.

¹⁶ *SKS* 4, 244 / *PF*, 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik in Sämtliche Werke, Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 4, p. 595. English translation: *Science of Logic*, trans. by A.V. Miller, New York: Humanities Press 1969, pp. 477-478.

²⁰ SKS 4, 252 / PF, 48.

²¹ Ibid. This passage confirms the difficulty of comprehending Climacus' view of erotic love under the light of the called "erotic reduction" and, in general, the constellations of concepts proposed by Jean-Luc Marion in *Le Phénomène érotique*, Paris: Grasset 2003. Cf. for instance Marion's arguments concerning "The impossibility of a self-love" (ibid., p. 80ff.).

²² Cf. SKS 4, 222-230 / PF, 14-22.

²³ Cf. Alcibiades' erotic praise of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, 221d-222a, where he compares Socrates' speeches with "Silenuses" that, when opened, reveal the dignity of the divine.

²⁴ SKS 4, 249-250 / PF, 45: "Defined as the absolutely different, it seems to be at the point of being disclosed, but not so, because the understanding cannot even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself but uses itself for that purpose and consequently thinks the difference in itself, which it thinks by itself. It cannot absolutely transcend itself and therefore thinks as above itself only the sublimity that it thinks by itself. If the unknown (the god) is not solely the frontier, then the one idea about the different is confused with the many ideas about the different. The unknown is then in διασπορά [dispersion], and the understanding has an attractive selection from among what is available and what fantasy can think (the prodigious, the ridiculous, etc.)."

²⁵ SKS 4, 218 / PF, 9.

²⁶ SKS 4, 300 / PF, 103-104.

²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 14; *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xv.

²⁸ In the Hongs' translation, the word "belief" corresponds to the same Danish term (*Tro*) rendered by "faith" in other passages. The distinction seems to make sense when taking into account that the Incarnation is not the only historical event discussed in this section of the *Philosophical Fragments*.

²⁹ SKS 4, 280 / PF, 81.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² SKS 4, 280 / PF, 80.

³³ Cf. SKS K4, 280; Franz von Baader, *Fermenta Cognitionis*, vols. 1-5, Berlin: G. Reimer 1822-24, vol. 1, p. 39.

³⁴ SKS 4, 281 / PF, 81.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ SKS 4, 286 / PF, 88.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cf. SKS 19, 211, Not7:21 / KJN 3, 207. In the same note, Kierkegaard quotes Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b, and Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d. On the sources and implications of these references, see SKS K4, 279-282.

³⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, New York: Penguin Books 2006 (New York: The Viking Press 1961), p. 29.

⁴⁰ SKS 4, 253 / PF, 49.

⁴¹ SKS 4, 255 / PF, 51.

⁴² Matthew 11:6.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 1:23. Kierkegaard paraphrases Paul's sentence in several passages. Cf. SKS 4, 299 / PF, 102: "I believe and have believed that this happened, *although it is folly to the understanding and an offense to the human heart*; and SKS 7, 194 / CUP1, 213: "Christianity has itself proclaimed itself to be the eternal, essential truth that has come into existence in time; it has proclaimed itself as the paradox and has required the inwardness of faith with regard to what is an offense to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks—and an absurdity to the understanding."

⁴⁴ SKS 4, 255 / PF, 52.

⁴⁵ SKS 4, 253 / PF, 49.

⁴⁶ SKS 4, 232 / PF, 25.

⁴⁷ Cf. SKS 4, 232 / PF, 24: “What, then, moves him to make his appearance? He must move himself and continue to be what Aristotle says of him, ακινητος παντα κινει [unmoved, he moves all]. But if he moves himself, then there of course is no need that moves him, as if he himself could not endure silence but was compelled to burst into speech. But if he moves himself and is not moved by need, what moves him then but love, for love does not have the satisfaction of need outside itself but within.” On the “absolutely freely acting cause,” see SKS 4, 281 / PF, 81.

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:22.

⁴⁹ Cf. SKS 4, 328-329 / CA, 21: “...we could retain the designation and by πρώτη φιλοσοφία [first philosophy] understand that totality of science which we might call ‘ethnical,’ whose essence is immanence and is expressed in Greek thought by ‘recollection,’ and by *secunda philosophia* [second philosophy] understand that totality of science whose essence is transcendence and repetition.”

⁵⁰ Cf. SKS 7, 186-189 / CUP1, 203-209.

⁵¹ SKS 4, 224 / PF, 15.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ SKS 4, 392 / CA, 89. In the first paragraph of this treatise, Kierkegaard criticizes the interpretations according to which Adam’s sin “is placed fantastically outside history” (SKS 4, 332ff / CA, 25ff). As it becomes clear in the rest of the book, the point is that those interpretations do not overcome the “Greek” or philosophically pre-Christian view of human reality.

⁵⁴ SKS 4, 283 / PF, 84.

⁵⁵ Cf. SKS 4, 281 / PF, 81.

⁵⁶ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 61.

⁵⁷ SKS 4, 25 / R, 148; cf. SKS 4, 9 / R, 131: “...what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward.” These remarks are meant to introduce a literary exploration of the difference between erotic love and faith, the two fundamental forms of historical experience in Kierkegaard’s authorship. The search for “repetition’s love”—the only love divested from “the sadness of recollection”—fails at the very moment in which Kierkegaard’s characters get caught in a sort of romantic longing for substantiality.

⁵⁸ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 63.

⁵⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1968, p. 123. English translation: *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press 1994, p. 91 (my italics). Cf. Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, London: Thames & Hudson 1962, pp. 155-156.

⁶⁰ SKS 4, 338 / CA, 32. On the “myths” produced by the understanding, see also SKS 4, 351-356 / CA, 46-51.

⁶¹ Cf. SKS 4, 230-242 / PF, 23-36.

⁶² SKS 4, 286 / PF, 88.

CHAPTER SIX

JEROME (YEHUDA) GELLMAN: CONSTANCY OF FAITH? SYMMETRY AND ASYMMETRY IN KIERKEGAARD’S LEAP OF FAITH

¹ The duck-rabbit image as well as the examples of an explosion and of frozen water were suggested by Jamie Ferreira, “Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. by Alastair Hannay and Gordon Daniel Marino, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 207-234.

²SKS 27, 207, Papir 255:2 / JP 1, 420.

³SKS 7, 21 / CUP1, 12.

⁴SKS 7, 193 / CUP1, 211.

⁵SKS 4, 264 / PF, 62.

⁶Louis P. Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 1984, p. 105.

⁷Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. by W.F. Trotter, Oxford: Benediction Classics 2011, part 3, sec. 233.

⁸Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 101.

⁹I have defended the view that in special kinds of circumstances it is logically possible to will belief into existence, in Jerome Gellman, "Review of Jonathan Adler, *Beliefs Own Ethics*," *Iyyun, Israeli Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 53, 2004, pp. 107-117. However, although logically possible, in fact we cannot do it.

¹⁰Ferreira, "Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap," pp. 207-234.

¹¹SKS 7, 97 / CUP1, 99.

¹²Rudolf Erich Raspe and William Strang, *The Travels and Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, Brooklyn, New York: Melville House 2002, p. 25.

¹³SKS 7, 90 / CUP1, 91.

¹⁴Ferreira, "Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap," p. 215.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁷David Wisdo, "Kierkegaard on Belief, Faith, and Explanation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 21, 1987, pp. 95-114; p. 95.

¹⁸Pojman responded to Wisdo's critique in Louis Pojman, "Kierkegaard on Faith and Freedom," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 27, 1990, pp. 41-61.

¹⁹Wisdo, "Kierkegaard on Belief, Faith, and Explanation," p. 109.

²⁰SKS 4, 223 / PF, 14f.

²¹Wisdo, "Kierkegaard on Belief, Faith, and Explanation," p. 110.

²²Ibid., p. 112.

²³For the distinction see Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1963.

²⁴Pap. X-6 B 68 / JP 6, 6598.

²⁵2 Corinthians 5:17.

²⁶SKS 4, 150 / FT, 56.

²⁷SKS 7, 418 / CUP1, 461.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹SKS 4, 135f. / FT, 41.

³⁰SKS 21, 240, NB9:66 / KJN 5, 250.

³¹SKS 27, 275, Papir 283:1 / JP 3, 2345.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PETER ŠAJDA: DOES ANTI-CLIMACUS' ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS THEORY OF SELFHOOD IMPLY A DISCONTINUITY OF THE SELF?

The present paper was produced at the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences as part of the grant project VEGA 2/0201/11. It is a modified and enlarged version of my study "The Choice of Oneself: Revising Guardini's Critique of Kierkegaard's Concept of Selfhood" which appeared in the Slovak philosophical monthly *Filozofia* (vol. 66, no. 9, 2011, pp. 868-878).

¹ *Pap. X-6 B 48 / JP 6, 6349*. In his journals Kierkegaard makes several interesting observations on the place of *The Sickness unto Death* in his literary project of “illuminating Christianity.” Cf. *SKS 21, 294, NB10:69 / JP 6, 6361; SKS 21, 151-152, NB8:15 / JP 6, 6271*. See also Alastair Hannay’s comments on these journal entries. Cf. Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 375.

² Guardini’s treatment of Kierkegaard had a direct impact on several thinkers who played an important role in the twentieth-century Catholic reception of Kierkegaard. These included Erich Przywara, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Eugen Biser. For more detail see the following articles, all of which appeared in the volume *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Catholic and Jewish Theology*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2012 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 10, Tome III): Christopher B. Barnett, “Erich Przywara: Catholicism’s Great Expositor of the ‘Mystery’ of Kierkegaard,” pp. 132-133, p. 150; Joseph Ballan, “Hans Urs von Balthasar: Persuasive Forms or Offensive Signs? Kierkegaard and the Problems of Theological Aesthetics,” p. 6, p. 24; Ulli Roth, “Eugen Biser: Rediscovering ‘Christology from Inside,’” pp. 29-31, p. 42.

³ Valuable resources on Guardini’s life and work are Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz’s monograph *Romano Guardini. Konturen des Lebens und Spuren des Denkens*, Kevelaer: Topos plus 2005 and Franz Henrich’s article “Romano Guardini. Leben, Persönlichkeit, Charisma und Wirken,” in *Romano Guardini. Christliche Weltanschauung und menschliche Existenz*, ed. by Franz Henrich, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 1999, pp. 9-31. An in-depth analysis of Guardini’s reception of Kierkegaard’s thought can be found in Stephan Pauly, *Subjekt und Selbstwerdung. Das Subjektdenken Romano Guardinis, seine Rückbezüge auf Søren Kierkegaard und seine Einlösbarkeit in der Postmoderne*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 2000 and Peter Šajda, “Romano Guardini: Between Actualistic Personalism, Qualitative Dialectic and Kinetic Logic,” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Catholic and Jewish Theology*, pp. 45-74.

⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Gesammelte Werke*, vols. 1–12, trans. and ed. by Hermann Gottsched and Christoph Schrempf, Jena: Diederichs 1909–22.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Vorwort zur ersten Ausgabe der ‘Frühen Schriften’ (1972),” in *Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann 1975ff, Abteilung 1, vol. 1, p. 56.

⁶ See, for example, Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Berlin: Springer 1919 and Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Halle: Niemeyer 1927.

⁷ See, for example, Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, 2nd ed. Munich: Kaiser 1922; Emil Brunner, “Das Grundproblem der Philosophie bei Kant und Kierkegaard. Vortrag vor der Kantgesellschaft in Utrecht, Dezember 1923,” in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, vol. 2, 1924, no. 6, pp. 31-46.

⁸ Cf. Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*, Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1933 (*Beiträge zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte*, vol. 2); Siegfried Kracauer, “Der enthüllte Kierkegaard,” in *Siegfried Kracauer. Schriften*, ed. by Inka Müller-Bach, vols. 1-8, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971-90, vol. 5.3, pp. 263-67; Walter Benjamin, “Kierkegaard. Das Ende des philosophischen Idealismus,” in *Walter Benjamin. Gesammelte Schriften*, vols. 1-16 in 12 volumes, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann et al., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1972-99, vol. 3, pp. 380-83.

⁹ For more detail on the history of the *Hochland* journal, see Gilbert Merlio’s article “Carl Muth et la revue Hochland. Entre catholicisme culturel et catholicisme politique,” in *Le milieu intellectuel catholique en Allemagne, sa presse et ses réseaux*, ed. by Michel Grunewald and Uwe Puschner, Bern et al.: Peter Lang 2006, pp. 191–208.

¹⁰Theodor Haecker, *Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*, Munich: I.F. Schreiber 1913.

¹¹The 1914 issues of *Der Brenner* contained several essays by Haecker that treated Kierkegaard. They also contained an extensive response to Haecker's interpretation of Kierkegaard by Carl Dallago. See especially issues nos. 10-14, 16-17, 19-20.

¹²Theodor Haecker, *Christentum und Kultur*, Munich: Kösel 1927; Theodor Haecker, *Der Begriff der Wahrheit bei Sören Kierkegaard*, Innsbruck: Brenner 1932.

¹³Alois Dempf, *Kierkegaards Folgen*, Leipzig: Hegner 1935.

¹⁴Peter Wust, *Die Dialektik des Geistes*, Augsburg: Benno Filser 1928; Peter Wust, *Ungewissheit und Wagnis*, Salzburg: Pustet 1937.

¹⁵See, for example, Romano Guardini, "Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards," *Hochland*, vol. 24, no. 7, 1927, pp. 12-33; Romano Guardini, "Vom Sinn der Schwermut," *Die Schildgenossen*, vol. 8, 1928, pp. 103-25.

¹⁶Guardini explicitly mentions in several instances Kierkegaard's works which he considers most central. See Guardini, "Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards," p. 14, p. 23; Romano Guardini, *Christliches Bewußtsein. Versuche über Pascal*, Leipzig: Verlag Jakob Hegner 1935, p. 207. Another important fact is that Guardini repeatedly returned to motifs and themes adopted from *The Sickness unto Death*, *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments*. Apart from the mentioned works Guardini also referred to the following writings of Kierkegaard: *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, *Stages on Life's Way*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*, *Practice in Christianity*, and the journals. Cf. Peter Šajda, "Romano Guardini: Between Actualistic Personalism, Qualitative Dialectic and Kinetic Logic," p. 53.

¹⁷For more detail on Kierkegaard's decision-making in the summer of 1849 and his inspiration by Fénelon and Tersteegen see my study "The wise men went another way": Kierkegaard's Dialogue with Fénelon and Tersteegen in the Summer of 1849," *Acta Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 3, 2008, pp. 89-105. See also the journal entries SKS 22, 114-15, NB11:192 / JP 6, 6426; SKS 24, 351-57, NB24:54 / JP 6, 6762.

¹⁸The Anti-Climacian theory of selfhood has been the source of much debate in Kierkegaard scholarship and has inspired a wide variety of competing interpretations (see, for example, the polemics in the 1996 and 1997 issues of the *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*). The following articles and monographs, exploring the Anti-Climacian structure of the self, illustrate the wide range of opinions: Hermann Deuser, "Grundsätzliches zur Interpretation der *Krankheit zum Tode*. Zu M. Theunissens 'Korrekturen an Kierkegaard,'" *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 1996, pp. 117-128; C. Stephen Evans, "Who Is the Other in *Sickness unto Death*? God and Human Relations in the Constitution of the Self," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 1997, pp. 1-15; John D. Glenn Jr., "The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard's Work," in *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. by Robert L. Perkins, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1987 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 19), pp. 5-21; Alastair Hannay, "Spirit and the Idea of the Self as a Reflexive Relation," *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. by Robert L. Perkins, pp. 23-38; Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Kierkegaard on the Self," in *Ethics, Love, and Faith in Kierkegaard*, ed. by Edward F. Mooney, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2008, pp. 11-23; Michael Theunissen, *Der Begriff Verzweiflung. Korrekturen an Kierkegaard*, Frankfurt am Main 1993; Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, New York: Fordham University Press; Patrick Stokes, *Kierkegaard's Mirrors: Interest, Self, and Moral Vision*, Basigstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010, see especially pp. 61-69.

¹⁹SKS 11, 129 / SUD, 13.

²⁰SKS 11, 129 / SUD, 13; SKS 11, 141 / SUD, 25; SKS 11, 158 / SUD, 43.

²¹SKS 11, 129 / SUD, 13.

²² Ibid.

²³ SKS 11, 129-30 / SUD, 13-14; SKS 11, 132 / SUD, 16. Anti-Climacus at first points out that a human being is “a derived, established relation” that “has been established by another” and subsequently explains that it is God “who constituted man a relation.”

²⁴ SKS 11, 130 / SUD, 13-14.

²⁵ SKS 11, 139 / SUD, 23.

²⁶ SKS 11, 136 / SUD, 21; SKS 11, 155-156 / SUD, 40-41; SKS 11, 161 / SUD, 45-46.

²⁷ Cf. Richard Purkardhofer, *Kierkegaard*, Leipzig: Reclam 2005, pp. 75-76. See also the rest of Purkardhofer’s exposition of *The Sickness unto Death*, *ibid.*, pp. 72-83. Anti-Climacus discusses the human as a psychical-physical synthesis in the following instances: SKS 11, 129 / SUD, 13; SKS 11, 141 / SUD, 25; SKS 11, 158 / SUD, 43;

²⁸ SKS 11, 148 / SUD, 32.

²⁹ SKS 11, 152 / SUD, 37.

³⁰ Romano Guardini, “Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen,” in *Unterscheidung des Christlichen*, ed. by Heinrich Kahlefeld, Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag 1935, pp. 23-55.

³¹ Romano Guardini, “Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Christentum und Kultur,” in *Unterscheidung des Christlichen*, pp. 177-221.

³² Guardini, “Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards.”

³³ Romano Guardini, “Lebendiger Geist,” in *Unterscheidung des Christlichen*, pp. 151-176.

³⁴ Guardini, “Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen,” p. 25.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Guardini, “Lebendiger Geist,” p. 154.

³⁷ Guardini, “Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen,” p. 25.

³⁸ Cf. Guardini, “Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards,” p. 25; Guardini, “Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen,” p. 30.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴¹ Guardini, “Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards,” p. 15.

⁴² SKS 11, 130 / SUD, 13-14.

⁴³ Guardini, “Der Ausgangspunkt der Denkbewegung Sören Kierkegaards,” p. 16.

⁴⁴ Guardini, “Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Christentum und Kultur,” p. 193.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 192-193, pp. 195-196.

⁴⁶ Romano Guardini, *Der Gegensatz. Versuche zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten*, Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag 1925, pp. 41-42, p. 48, p. 53.

⁴⁷ Romano Guardini, *Freiheit, Gnade, Schicksal. Drei Kapitel zur Deutung des Daseins*, Munich: Kösel-Verlag 1948, p. 50, p. 54, pp. 99-101; Romano Guardini, *Die Annahme seiner selbst*, Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag 1960, pp. 5-30.

⁴⁸ Guardini, “Über Sozialwissenschaft und Ordnung der Personen,” p. 25.

⁴⁹ Guardini, “Lebendiger Geist,” p. 154.

⁵⁰ SKS 11, 130 / SUD, 14.

⁵¹ Cf. Guardini, “Gedanken über das Verhältnis von Christentum und Kultur,” pp. 189-199.

⁵² This objection is found in a number of twentieth-century critiques of Kierkegaard, often in analyses of his concept of intersubjectivity. See, for example, my comments on Adorno’s critique of Kierkegaard’s concept of neighbor-love in Peter Šajda, “Theodor W. Adorno: Dve tváre Kierkegarda ako kritika spoločnosti,” *Filozofia*, vol. 64, no. 9, 2010, pp. 826-827. An alternative reading of Kierkegaard which does not affirm this objection can be found, for example, in Martin Muránsky’s exposition of *Fear and Trembling*. Cf. Martin Muránsky, “Existuje absolútna povinnosť voči etike?” *Filozofia*, vol. 63, nos. 7 and 9, 2008, pp. 563–572, pp. 750–762.

CHAPTER EIGHT
TAMAR AYLAT-YAGURI: BEING IN TRUTH AND BEING A JEW:
KIERKEGAARD'S VIEW OF JUDAISM

¹For more on *Judaism*, see my entry in the volume *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, Tome IV, *Individual to Novel*, ed. by Steven Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate forthcoming (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 15).

²SKS 27, 101, Papir 68:2 / JP 2, 2208.

³Johnny Kondrup discusses the literature focused on Kierkegaard's alleged anti-Semitism in "Meir Goldschmidt: The Cross-Eyed Hunchback," in the volume *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, Tome, III, *Literature, Drama and Aesthetics*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 7), p. 127. He mentions Bruce H. Kirmmse "Kierkegaard, Jews, and Judaism," *Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 17, 1994, pp. 83-97 (a short version of "Kierkegaard, Jødedommen og Jøderne," in *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, 1992, pp. 77-107), and Ronald M. Green, "Fear and Trembling: A Jewish Appreciation," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2002, pp. 137-149. Kondrup finds it "worth noting that Kierkegaard kept his [seemingly anti-Semitic] statements to himself. . . . Kierkegaard himself apparently found them inappropriate for publication." (p. 128). Of course, this does not settle whether, and to what extent Kierkegaard was anti-Semitic. A different approach to Kierkegaard's alleged anti-Semitism is found in Peter Tudvad's *Stadier paa Antisemitisms Vej. Søren Kierkegaard og Jøderne* (Copenhagen: Rosinante 2010), where he "shows" that Kierkegaard was heir to the inherited Danish economic and social anti-Semitism as well as Lutheran theological anti-Semitism.

⁴This could be the form of anti-Semitism termed "the anti-Semitism of tolerance" that dominated the Golden Age of Denmark and which, perhaps, continues to exist into our time. It should be remembered, however, that the Danish people were the only ones who, as a nation, saved its Jewry during the Holocaust.

⁵German-speaking Jewish philosophers, theologians, writers, and literary critics, enjoyed an early start in the "productive reception" and transmission of Kierkegaard's thought. From as early as the first half of the twentieth-century, German-speaking Jews, read, translated, and engaged creatively with Kierkegaard's work. The question whether he was anti-Semitic does not arise for Kafka, Jaspers, Adorno or Buber, who were exposed to Kierkegaard through German translations and were among those who set the tone for the first waves of Kierkegaard's international reception. Heidegger's Nazi affiliation *requires* that every commentator confront and argue a case regarding its bearing on his philosophy. In stark contrast, for those Jewish intellectuals engaged with Kierkegaard, the accusation of anti-Semitism was a non-issue. For more, see Heiko Schulz, "Germany and Austria: A Modest Head Start: The German Reception of Kierkegaard," in *Kierkegaard's International Reception*, Tome IV, *Northern and Western Europe*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 8), pp. 307-419.

⁶Kirmmse, "Kierkegaard, Jews, and Judaism," p. 87.

⁷Ibid.

⁸SKS 21, 167, NB8:49 / KJN 5, 174.

⁹Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, Jewish Nation and the State of Israel*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House 1979, p. 324 (Hebrew).

¹⁰In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, dated to the 5th century B.C.

¹¹A Biblical curse from the Book of Psalms 109:13.

¹²*Mishna*, "Laws of Idolatry," 5:14.

¹³ Matthew 21:1.

¹⁴ Kirmmse, “Kierkegaard, Jews, and Judaism,” p. 87.

¹⁵ *SKS* 12, 97 / *PC*, 89.

¹⁶ *SKS* 13, 267 / *M*, 213.

¹⁷ *SKS* 25, 348, NB29:90 / *JP* 2, 2224.

¹⁸ *SKS* 18, 11, EE:13 / *KJN* 2, 6.

¹⁹ *SKS* 23, 325, NB18:105 / *JP* 2, 2219.

²⁰ Matthew 10:37: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” See also Luke 12:51-53, 14:26: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

²¹ *SKS* 23, 413, NB20:37 / *JP* 2, 2221. Also on the ethical difference, Kierkegaard adds: “Of all religions, the Jewish religion is closest to humanism. Its formula is: Stay close to God, and things will go well with you in the world. Christian piety is far, far too high for us.” *SKS* 23, 314, NB18:87 / *JP* 2, 2218.

²² *SKS* 18, 11, EE:13.a / *KJN* 2, 6f.

²³ *SKS* 19, 240, Not8:45 / *KJN* 3, 234.

²⁴ Mishna, “Masechet Avot” 3:20.

²⁵ Psalm 92:12-3.

²⁶ Genesis 1:22. See also 9:1: “Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.’”

²⁷ Genesis 22:17.

²⁸ In the posthumous *The Point of View for My Work As an Author* we read: “I for my part tranquilly adhere to Socrates. It is true, he was not a Christian; that I know, and yet I am thoroughly convinced that he has become one.... Qualitatively two altogether different magnitudes are involved here, but formally I can very well call Socrates my teacher—whereas I believed and believe in only one, the Lord Jesus Christ.” *SKS* 16, 36 / *PV*, 54. For further discussion, see Edward F. Mooney, *On Soren Kierkegaard*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2007, p. 49.

²⁹ *SKS* 7, 328 / *CUP1*, 359: “that Job believed should be presented in such a way that for me it comes to mean whether I, too, will have faith.” It is evident that Kierkegaard does not treat Job as an exemplar of the kind of Jewishness that he rejects.

³⁰ Johannes de silentio mentions that knowing Hebrew—i.e., seeing Abraham as a Jew—won’t help us to understand him. He makes this point ironically, in the course of making fun of a diligent scholar: “If [the learned exegete] had had Hebrew, perhaps it might have been easy for him to understand the story of Abraham” (*SKS* 4, 106 / *FT*, 9). The implication is that philological analysis won’t help a bit in understanding Abraham’s crisis—and by implication, addressing Abraham’s Jewishness (through knowing the Hebrew language) won’t help either.

³¹ Martin Buber, *Or Haganuz*, Jerusalem: Schocken Books 2005 (Hebrew) [*Das Verborgene Licht*, 1924], p. 208.

³² The concept of a person in existentialism and post-modernism can overlap with this concept of a particular (sometimes called a “singularity”). In the Hegelian tradition, individuality refers to an objective quality that applies to all undivided entities of its sort—that quality belonging to the “universal” sort of thing the individual thing is. “Particulars” do not share a “membership” in a universal.

³³ This kind of particularity is evident in God’s call to Abraham and in Abraham’s silent response in his willingness to sacrifice his son, as described by Kierkegaard, in *Fear and Trembling*.

³⁴ See also Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1992, pp. 302-305.

³⁵ *SKS* 25, 364, NB29:102 / *JP* 2, 2225.

³⁶SKS 4, 207 / FT, 120: “But there was no one who could understand Abraham.” See also SKS 25, 248f., NB28:41 / JP 2, 2223.

³⁷SKS 12, 97 / PC, 89.

³⁸SKS 25, 348, NB29:90 / JP 2, 2224.

³⁹SKS 18, 77, FF:14 / KJN 2, 71. The parody that Judaism has become is in its distortion of true religiosity.

⁴⁰SKS 7, 39 / CUP1, 33.

⁴¹SKS 7, 195 / CUP1, 213.

CHAPTER NINE

JON STEWART: KIERKEGAARD AND HEGEL ON FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

This article originally appeared in the *Blackwell Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, pp. 501-518. I am grateful to the editors and to Wiley-Blackwell for allowing me to reprint it here.

¹Hegel, *EL*, § 1; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 41. (*EL* = *The Encyclopaedia Logic. Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. by T.F. Gerats, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett 1991. *Jub.* = *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols. 1-20, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928-41.) *PhS*, p. 479; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 602: “Spirit itself as a whole, and the self-differentiated moments within it, fall within the sphere of picture-thinking and in the form of objectivity. The content of this picture-thinking is Absolute Spirit.” (*PhS* = *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1977.) *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by H.B. Nisbet, ed. by Allen Wood, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1991, § 270; *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 349: “The content of religion is absolute truth, and it is associated with a disposition of the most exalted kind.” *EL*, § 45, Addition; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 135-136: “absolute idealism can hardly be regarded as the private property of philosophy in actual fact, because, on the contrary, it forms the basis of all religious consciousness. This is because religion, too regards the sum total of everything that is there in short, the world before us, as created and governed by God.” See *PhS*, p. 488; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 614: “The content of religion proclaims earlier in time than does Science, what *Spirit* is, but only Science is its true knowledge of itself.”

²Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, vol. 1, p. 20; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 37. (*Phil. of Religion* I-III = *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols. 1-3, translated by E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: The Humanities Press 1962.) See also *Phil. of Mind*, § 573; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 458-474. (*Phil. of Mind* = *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, trans. by William Wallace and A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971.)

³SKS 17, 30, AA:13 / KJN 1, 25. See also SKS 17, 34, AA:17 / KJN 1, 29. SKS 17, 34-36, AA:18 / KJN 1, 29-31. See Hermann Deuser, “‘Philosophie und Christentum lassen sich doch niemals vereinen’—Kierkegaards theologische Ambivalenzen im *Journal AA/BB* (1835-37),” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2003, pp. 1-19. Andreas Krichbaum, *Kierkegaard und Schleiermacher. Eine historisch-systematische Studie zum Religionsbegriff*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2008, pp. 46-52.

⁴*Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. by Herman Nohl, Tübingen 1907. (In English as *Early Theological Writings*, trans. by T.M. Knox, Fragments trans. by Richard Kroner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1948; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1975.)

⁵“Glauben und Wissen oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität, in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen, als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie.”

Kritisches Journal der Philosophie, vol. 2, no. 1, 1802, pp. 1-188. (Reprinted in *Vermischte Schriften*, vols. 1-2, ed. by Friedrich Förster and Ludwig Boumann, vols. 16-17 (1834-35) in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols. 1-18, ed. by Ludwig Boumann, Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, Leopold von Henning, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832-45, vol. 16, pp. 3-157. (In *Jub.*, vol. 1, pp. 277-433.)

⁶ Hegel, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Bamberg und Würzburg, bey Joseph Anton Goebhardt 1807.

⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings*, ed. by Ernst Behler, New York: Continuum 1990, §§ 465-471; *Jub.*, vol. 6, pp. 305-307. Hegel, *EL*, §§ 564-571; *Jub.*, vol. 10, pp. 453-458.

⁸ Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs, *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*, Heidelberg: Neue akademische Buchhandlung von Karl Groos 1822. Hegel's foreword appears on pp. i-xxviii of Hinrichs' text.

⁹ Hegel, "Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen im Verhältnisse zur christlichen Glaubenserkenntniß.—Ein Beitrag zum Verständnisse der Philosophie unserer Zeit. Von Carl Friederich G.....I. —Berlin, bei E. Franklin. 1829," *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 1829, vol. I, (May-June) nos. 99-102, pp. 789-816; (June) nos. 105-106, pp. 833-835.

¹⁰ *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I-II, ed. by Philipp Marheineke, vols. 11-12 [1832], in *Hegel's Werke*.

¹¹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1781, 2nd ed. 1787, B xxix and f. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 116f.

¹² Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B xxx. *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 117.

¹³ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1788, pp. 219ff. *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. by Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill 1956, pp. 126ff.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* I, pp. 1f.; *Jub.*, vol. 15, p. 19.

¹⁵ Hegel, *EL*, § 2; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 42.

¹⁶ Hegel, *EL*, § 2; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 42f.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2002, pp. 347f.; *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 19.

¹⁸ Hegel, *EL*, § 63; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 168.

¹⁹ Hegel, *EL*, § 63; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 167.

²⁰ Hegel, *EL*, § 67; *Jub.*, vol. 8, p. 173.

²¹ Hegel, *EL*, § 163; *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 358-361.

²² Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 566; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 455.

²³ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, pp. 7-33; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 223-247. *PhS*, pp. 466-469; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 586-590.

²⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 467; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 587.

²⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, p. 10; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 226.

²⁶ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, p. 7; *Jub.*, vol. 16, p. 223.

²⁷ Hegel, *Phil. of Mind*, § 567; *Jub.*, vol. 10, p. 455.

²⁸ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, p. 16; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 231.

²⁹ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, pp. 33-100; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 247-308. *PhS*, pp. 469-471; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 590-592.

³⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 465; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 584.

³¹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 467; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 587.

³² Hegel, *PhS*, p. 457; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 575.

³³ Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. by T.M. Knox, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1948; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1975, p. 239;

Hegels theologische Jugendschriften, ed. by Herman Nohl, Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr 1907, p. 289.

³⁴ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 460; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 578.

³⁵ Hegel, *Phil. of Religion* III, pp. 100-151; *Jub.*, vol. 16, pp. 308-356. *PhS*, pp. 471-478; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 592-601.

³⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 594.

³⁷ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 473; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 594f.

³⁸ See “The Position of the Philosophy of Religion Relatively to Philosophy and Religion,” *Phil. of Religion* I, pp. 18-35; *Jub.*, vol. 15, pp. 36-52. See Quentin Lauer, “Hegel on the Identity of Content in Religion and Philosophy,” in *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Darrel E. Christensen, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1970, pp. 261-278.

³⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 463; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 581-582. Translation slightly modified. See also *PhS*, pp. 465-466; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 585-586. *PhS*, pp. 477-478; *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 599-601.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 412; *Jub.*, vol. 2, p. 520: “So far as Spirit in religion *pictures* itself to itself, it is indeed consciousness, and the reality enclosed within religion is the shape and the guise of its picture-thinking. But, in this picture-thinking, reality does not receive its perfect due, viz. to be not merely a guise but an independent free existence; and conversely, because it lacks perfection within itself it is a *specific* shape which does not attain to what it ought to show forth, viz. Spirit that is conscious of itself.”

⁴¹ *SKS* 7, 26 / *CUP*1, 17.

⁴² *SKS* 7, 26 / *CUP*1, 17.

⁴³ *SKS* 7, 24f. / *CUP*1, 15.

⁴⁴ *SKS* 7, 25 / *CUP*1, 15f.

⁴⁵ *SKS* 4, 439-443, 451-453 / *CA*, 139-141, 151-154. *SKS* 7, 153-173 / *CUP*1, 165-188. *SKS* 10, 211-221 / *CD*, 202-213. See Gregor Malantschuk, “The Problems of the Self and Immortality,” in his *Kierkegaard’s Way to the Truth*, trans. by Mary Michelsen, Montreal: Inter Editions 1987, pp. 79-96.

⁴⁶ *SKS* 7, 36 / *CUP*1, 30.

⁴⁷ *SKS* 7, 73 / *CUP*1, 73.

⁴⁸ *SKS* 7, 90 / *CUP*1, 91.

⁴⁹ *SKS* 7, 73 / *CUP*1, 72f.

⁵⁰ *SKS* 7, 73 / *CUP*1, 73.

⁵¹ See Pierre Buehler, “Tertullian: The Teacher of the *credo quia absurdum*,” in *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2008 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 4), pp. 131-142.

⁵² *SKS* 4, 243 / *PF*, 37.

⁵³ *SKS* 7, 74ff. / *CUP*1, 74ff.

⁵⁴ *SKS* 7, 35 / *CUP*1, 28.

⁵⁵ *SKS* 7, 36f. / *CUP*1, 30.

⁵⁶ *SKS* 4, 300 / *PF*, 104.

⁵⁷ *SKS* 7, 185 / *CUP*1, 202.

⁵⁸ *SKS* 7, 184 / *CUP*1, 201.

⁵⁹ *Pap.* X-6 B 121 / *JP* 6, 6574.