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Is there a Good Life where Others are in Chains? Camus and Kierkegaard

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Abstract. Is it possible to lead a good life, if life itself is not good; that is, if the systems and structures of our social existence involve conditions of oppression, violence, and destitution? This article examines the question from the perspectives of Albert Camus and Søren Kierkegaard's writings. Both thinkers uncompromisingly force us to acknowledge the inherent suffering or absurdity of the human condition, and to ask the question of the possibility of value and meaningfulness. Whereas Kierkegaard focuses on inner or spiritual transformation, rejecting the worldly, however, Camus invites us to examine the outward, social dimensions of oppression and to revolt against injustice. Exploring the relations between Camus and Kierkegaard, and their pertinence for our contemporary context, we argue that despite their differences, the works of these thinkers can help to develop an existential ethics of concern or compassion based on the recognition of the fact that there is no good life where others are in chains.
Keywords: Camus, Kierkegaard, Good Life, Existential Ethics, Oppression, Freedom, Responsibility, Human Condition, Inequality.

"Freedom is a prison as long as one single individual is enslaved on Earth," wrote Albert Camus in his play *Les justes* (*The Just Assassins*), first performed in 1949 (17)[1]. Camus was speaking of a particular historical context — that of pre-revolution Moscow and the 1905 insurrection, but also by extension that of the Second World War and the Shoah. Over seventy years later, the political landscape has changed, as has much of our daily

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[1] All translations from foreign language sources are made by the author.

lifeworld and many of our concerns; however, Camus' words still find an echo in our modern contexts. In a world where selfish desires, political powers, or socio-economic conditions produce inequalities and servitude, in a world where equal respect of all individuals and fair possibilities are not granted to all, how can any individual be free, how can any individual live a meaningful and authentic life? Camus' affirmation seems to echo Theodor Adorno's claim that there is no good/right life in a bad/wrong one — "*Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen*" (19). What, indeed, can count as a good life, in a world where others live in such precarious situations that from the perspective of biopolitics, as Judith Butler claims, we can only say that their lives do not matter? The question of the good life, fundamental for moral philosophy, but also for each of us as existing human beings, seems to break down in the face of the radical injustices of our shared social sphere. Whatever value we may place on the ideals of humanity and human dignity, however much we may hold onto principles of justice and the intrinsic and inalienable value of human life, the empirical facts of human existence (present and past) confront us with the inescapable admission that not all lives matter equally, that not all individuals have a voice within our societies, that many people throughout the world live in conditions of subservience, poverty, or social invisibility, are victims of systemic discrimination or violence, and die of hunger because we cannot, or do not, provide for an equal or at least fair distribution of resources necessary for their subsistence. We may turn a blind eye on the world around us, fail (or choose) not to see the sufferings of others, seek refuge in our interiority and our internal sentiment of freedom, flee our responsibilities, or resign ourselves to accept these inequalities. Yet we cannot escape the question: is there any freedom where others find themselves in chains? Is there any possibility for a good life when "life" itself is not a universal good?

Existential philosophy, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s in France, struggled with these issues, attempting to redefine an existential or existentialist ethics able to take into account what were seen as the failings of traditional moral systems. With its emphasis on the concrete, singular individual, his quest for meaning and freedom despite the ambiguity and despair of the human condition, existential philosophy rejects, in Jean-Paul Sartre's terms, "abstract morality" which "supposes that one can be moral in

a fundamentally immoral situation" (1983, 24). Met with great enthusiasm (and also strong critiques) in the post-war period, the existential critique of morality and value, of the quest for an absolute, nevertheless runs the risk of leaving us empty-handed. In spite of the attempt to promote existentialism as a humanism—as Sartre famously did—existential philosophy has always encountered the difficulty of sketching out a convincing moral perspective. Existential thinkers such as Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir highlight the difficulty of traditional accounts of morality; in Beauvoir's terms, the problem is that "the requirements of action push [people] to treat each other like instruments or obstacles" (2017, 13). Sartre likewise contends that "any system of values resides upon exploitation and oppression" (1985, 302); the world we find ourselves in is one of perpetual struggle between the interests and values of different individuals and groups, so that the human being is always a potential threat to others, and potentially superfluous. Yet if instrumentalization, exploitation, and oppression are the constant common denominators of human existence, what can count as a good life, and what can be our reasons to act or justifications for our actions? For while Sartre and Beauvoir place the accent on human freedom and choice, the whole problem is precisely that we live in situations where many are not free to choose the lives they wish to lead, and perhaps not even free to ask the question. This contradiction moreover lead Beauvoir to later reject the views developed in her *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947); in 1963, Beauvoir claimed that it was "aberrant to pretend to define an ethics outside of a social context" and to employ notions like "concrete freedom" when what she really meant was something altogether different: "I never confined myself to saying: these people need to eat because they are hungry. Yet that was what I thought" (2018, 99-100).

The existentialist critique of its own attempt to establish an ethics may appear as a failure to describe the moral world in existential terms. Nevertheless, existential thinkers, beginning with Søren Kierkegaard, have perhaps more than any other philosophical tradition grappled with the question of what constitutes a meaningful life. Camus and Kierkegaard, notably, are among the philosophers/thinkers who uncompromisingly force us to examine the question of whether a good life is possible in the midst of a bad one, and who strive to understand under what conditions a life can be

worth living despite generalized suffering. Their works highlight the inescapable tensions, absurdities, and failures of our lives, and the quest for meaningfulness and authentic or earnest existence in spite of the constraints that the social world places upon us. Although Camus inherited much from Kierkegaard's philosophy, these two thinkers nevertheless embrace divergent attitudes toward the human condition and radically different solutions as to how we ought to react to these dilemmas. While Kierkegaard rejects the very possibility of earthly justice and encourages us to seek justice and equality in the world of spirit, Camus claims that it is our duty to rebel (or revolt) against the absurdities of the world. We will examine their responses to the human condition, and what relevance these can have for our present-day moral situations and possibilities for understanding the good life.

I. The Plague is Life

The current sanitary situation, with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the ensuing confinement of over half of the world's population, and its human, economic, and political consequences, have arguably made Camus one of the most relevant thinkers for our times. Not only does his novel *La peste* (*The Plague*) resonate highly with our present lived situation; Camus' philosophical analysis of the absurd, as the divorce between man and the world, the confrontation between our aspiration toward objective knowledge and the inevitable failure of science and reason to provide definitive answers, clearly echoes our current predicament. That a virus, a minute entity which scientists hesitate to qualify as living, could bring our societies to a halt and produce massive consequences in terms of lives lost—as well as a loss of socio-economic possibilities, jobs, resources, and even food for subsistence—has led to a generalized recognition of what Camus described as "a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and lights [where] man feels a stranger" (1996d, 20). The familiar world of our everyday occupations and projects has suddenly become unfamiliar; we are faced with new dangers, new restrictions on our freedoms, new habits, new spatio-temporal configurations of our lifeworld. The feeling of absurdity, as Camus describes it, is precisely this acknowledgement that the "world escapes us," becomes "strange" and "inhuman," revealing the fracture between our longing for

clarity and unity and the impossibility of our quest (1996d, 31). We lived in a world where science provided answers; we are suddenly confronted with how little we know. We lived in a world of routine organization—"Wake up, tramway, four hours at the office or factory, meal, tramway, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday on the same rhythm…" (Camus, 1996d, 29)—we find ourselves suddenly obliged to invent our lives anew. We lived in a world where death was largely invisible; we suddenly see everywhere images of mass graves and listen to the daily death tolls.

Camus, of course, did not link this awakening to the absurd, in *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (*The Myth of Sisyphus*), with any particular external event such as situations of war or pandemic; the absurd is not a produced circumstance, but rather a feature of the human mind and the human condition. While as he claims there are moments in every individual's existence where it is possible to awaken to this consciousness, there may however also be moments when the absurd reveals itself collectively. In *La peste*, Camus describes such a situation, when "once the doors were closed", the citizens of Oran realize that they are all in the same boat, and that the individual experience "suddenly became, from the first weeks, that of an entire people" (67). What the threat of the plague brings to the city of Oran is first an objective confinement (all entry to the city is cut off, there are no more trains, no postal service or communication possible with the outside world), but more importantly a subjective confinement: the "extremities of solitude" in which the citizens find themselves despite their collective imprisonment (Camus, 2006b, 74), and the loss of hope with regard to the future. The plague brings along not only fear of death, but also dramatic changes to the rules and social contexts that are so "extraordinary" that they could not "be considered normal or lasting" (Camus, 2006b, 78). And perhaps more importantly, it brings about a change in man's negotiations with the world—a loss of freedom, of the individual's possibility to make autonomous decisions in the context of supreme emergency where the present state of affairs dictates what is necessary. As the plague takes hold of the city, Camus writes, some individuals:

> even managed to imagine… that they were still free men, that they could still chose. But in fact, we could say in the middle of the

> month of August, that the plague had overtaken everything. There were no more individual destinies, but a collective history that was the plague and the feelings shared by everyone. The most important of these was separation and exile, with what they include in terms of fear and rebellion. (2006b, 155)

Camus' novel is certainly not a treatise on ethics, and in many respects refuses to adopt a moral position, preferring to describe the diversity of struggles and reactions of those confronted with the plague. But it does ask an important moral question: what type of response or responsiveness is required of us in the face of such events, where action is necessary but where we have no guides, no objective knowledge that can provide certainty, nor even freedom to choose or true individuality? What type of moral attitude should we adopt, when there is no clear right path, when we find ourselves submerged in a false or bad life? What is a good life, in the face of the "banality of evil", to use the expression coined by Hannah Arendt? Quite distinct from the existentialist ethics of Sartre, which places the focus on human autonomy and choice, Camus' existential approach points directly to the limits of autonomy. For as Camus states, evil is almost never the direct consequence of human wickedness—it results rather from ignorance, that "ignorance that thinks it knows everything and grants itself authority to kill." And likewise, what we may consider to be good or heroic acts are really nothing more than what should be seen as normal or "natural" responses—when "the whole question is to prevent as many men as possible from dying", those who actively worked to combat the plague were "not admirable [but] merely logical" (Camus, 2006b, 126).

The refusal to pronounce a moral judgment, to praise or condemn, does not, however, entail that there is no proper moral attitude. In *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus affirms that one ought not to "talk about morality (*disserter sur la morale*)" (95-96). The reason he gives is that moral laws and norms do not necessarily correspond to proper moral actions or attitudes: "I have seen people act badly with great morality and I see every day that honesty does not need rules" (Camus, 1996d, 96). The only true ethics, Camus claims, would have to be one of divine commandment—in other words, originating in a principle or volition outside of the human world of experience. Yet the attitude Camus describes as the absurd rejects the very

possibility of such an external perspective. We are, as human beings, limited to the world we perceive; our knowledge can never move beyond the confines of our experience. Although we may desire transcendence and truth, these always escape us—this is precisely what the experience of the absurd reveals. Yet rather than regret this, and seek consolation in a world beyond, Camus affirms that we have to learn to live in the absurd, and to hold on, with great lucidity and clear-sightedness (*clairvoyance*), to this contradiction in our lives. We need to learn to "live without appeal," in full consciousness of our mortal condition, its inconsistencies and potential failures (Camus, 1996d, 86). We need to assume our acts and their consequences, "be ready to pay", but the question is one of responsibility, not one of guilt (Camus, 1996d, 97).

In a series of conferences given after the war, Camus formulates more clearly his position with regard to this moral dilemma. Evoking the problems of morality in the context of the war period, Camus indicates that the difficulty was precisely that the situation revealed traditional moral values and norms to be a "monstrous hypocrisy" (2006a, 37) that forced acquaintance with the fact that individuals could commit the worst crimes not out of wickedness, but simply by indifference or passivity. Not only moral reason, but even ideals such as humanity and the general belief in normal human reactions were put on trial with the "discovery [that] there are men who cannot be persuaded. It was impossible for a victim of the concentration camps to hope to explain to the SS who were beating him that they should not do it" (Camus, 2006a, 41). For the generation of young intellectuals who had been educated with the idea that there was no truth, but only phenomena and perspectives, and who rejected traditional sources of value such as church and state, Camus affirms that the only intellectual option possible seemed to be a negation of the notion of value itself. Yet the historical circumstances forced individuals to make choices, to determine "their personal position with regard to murder and terror", and to take sides despite the absence of clear direction or knowledge of the good (Camus, 2006a, 37).

Camus' question is thus: how can we find value in a world where there are no systems of absolute value, how can we make sense of the contradiction that we live in a world where we have to fight for what is right

when justice seems to be a relative notion? What principles can guide our behaviour in the absence of universal moral law? His response is that what is required is the proper type of attitude, which he qualifies as revolt or rebellion (*révolte*) against injustices and forms of oppression which make communication between individuals impossible and can only lead down to solitude. Even in the absence of strict moral guides, Camus proposes a "morality of freedom and sincerity" in the recognition of our shared human condition, beginning with the ability to "see the human condition as it is" (2006a, 50, 53). This requires understanding that we will never be able to eradicate all of the world's suffering or injustice, or arrive at a utopia of universal happiness or eternal felicity. But we can and ought to strive to alleviate suffering, and to abolish the conditions of oppression which render communication between individuals impossible and create systems of systemic injustice. The key is to become lucid about our situation, and that of humanity, and to act in consequence. To rebel is neither to resign ourselves to the feeling that there is nothing that we can do, nor to place our hopes in some future world or higher power where justice will be reestablished. It is rather an attitude of the mind, and corresponding concrete actions in the world, which refuse to accept that these injustices are valid. "What is a rebel (*un homme révolté*)?" Camus asks: "A man who says no" (1996b, 27).

Camus invites us to engage in a lucid quest for truth about our condition and our world, to "never again bow down before the force of arms or money", but rather to strive to "make justice conceivable in an evidently unjust world" (2006a, 63). Our task should be to strive to define what type of world we want to live in, what human values are important—to have the courage to assume responsibility for our lives and make them meaningful despite the world's apparent absurdity. He defines two types of predominant wrong attitudes toward life: one consists in affirming that it is entirely tragic and there is nothing to be done, the other in claiming that life is good and there is nothing to rebel against—in other words, resignation or blind acceptance. Both of these attitudes fail to take into account the nuances of our condition, and deprive us of the responsibility that we can and ought to take for our individual and collective existence. Even in the face of terror and in situations of powerlessness, we can and should have the courage and humility to continue to strive for right and justice. As he writes at the end of

his novel *La peste*, there will be no "definitive victory", no final eradication of the evils of the world, no end to our struggle. "What does it mean, the plague?" he asks. "It's life, and that's all"; all we can do as human beings is to keep advancing, to accomplish "what had to be accomplished and what, doubtless, will have to be accomplished again" (Camus, 2006b, 279). But if the plague is life, Camus also encourages us to see that "in men there are more things to be admired than to be despised" (2006b, 279). We may not be able to determine the circumstances of our existence, our facticity or social conditions; we may not be able to bring about the just world that we dream of or abolish all systems which perpetrate injustices. But for Camus, it is through an unfailing belief in the dignity and value of man that we can come to terms with the contradictions of our existence and make our lives meaningful even in the face of extreme depravation. Camus' message is that the only world we know is the human world—and it is up to us to ensure that this world maintains (or regains) its humanity.

II. Camus and Kierkegaard

The position Camus defends throughout his works is one of uncompromising lucidity with regard to the world in which we live, and also an uncompromising passionate hold on the possibility of humanity. The facts of our human world lead inevitably to violence, suffering, and despair. In this, he echoes the thought of Kierkegaard, whose works had become extremely popular in France during troubled times of the 1930s and 1940s,[2] and to whom Camus refers in *Le mythe de Sisyphe* as "perhaps the most endearing" of all the existential thinkers (44). Kierkegaard, like Camus,

[2] See for example Mélissa Fox-Muraton, "Faith in the Mode of Absence: Kierkegaard's Jewish Readers in 1930s France (Rachel Bespaloff, Benjamin Fondane, Lev Shestov, and Jean Wahl)", *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2016, pp. 189-216; Mélissa Fox-Muraton, "Philosophy of Existence in France in the 1930s", *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach*, ed. Arne Grøn, René Rosfort & K. Brian Söderquist, Berlin: De Gruyter 2017, pp. 7-26; Margaret Teboul, "La réception de Kierkegaard en France 1930-1960", *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, vol. 89, 2005/ 2, pp. 315-336; Hélène Politis, *Kierkegaard en France au XXe siècle: Archéologie d'une réception*, Paris: Éditions Kimé 2005; Jon Stewart, "France: Kierkegaard as a Forerunner of Existentialism and Poststructuralism", in *Kierkegaard's International Reception*, Tome I, *Northern and Western Europe,* ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009, pp. 421-59.

begins his literary and philosophical career in *Either/ Or* with the affirmation of "[h]ow empty and meaningless life is" (SKS2, 29/EO1, 29) and with the questioning of what could be the meaning of life in a world of injustice. This injustice is clearly linked to the social world: "If people are divided into two great classes, it may be said that one class works for a living and the other does not have that need" (SKS2, 40/EO1, 31). While the perspective of the aesthete sketched out here may not be Kierkegaard's official position, in his later works as well, such as *The Sickness unto Death*, the Danish thinker insists on the misery of life, and affirms for example that the religious perspective "discovered a miserable condition that man as such does not know exists" (SKS 11, 124/SUD, 8). Our world is one of suffering and despair, of inescapable inequalities, and of "tormenting contradiction" (SKS 11, 134/SUD, 18). From within different historical and intellectual contexts, Camus and Kierkegaard both point to the fact that, while we often, in the business of our daily lives, fail to recognize it, we are in fact ensconced in a bad/wrong life. Their works call upon us to awaken to the absurd, or to despair in Kierkegaard's terms, as a means for finding our selves—against the loss of forgetting of self that our social lives entail. And they both argue that the aim of philosophy is not to engage in abstract speculation, but to enable us to start to live, or as Kierkegaard remarks, "to exist more capably" (SKS 13, 24/PV, 17).

Despite this kinship in their philosophical approaches and attitudes, Camus and Kierkegaard have often been read as radically incompatible thinkers[3]. There is of course an obvious difference in their philosophical project: while Camus encourages us to abandon all questions of transcendence and faith, and hope in another world, Kierkegaard's message is the exact opposite. Given that there is no earthly justice, what we ought to strive for is eternal felicity (*evige Salighed*). While Camus pleads for an attitude of revolt and concrete actions in the world, Kierkegaard defends the

[3] See for example: Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*, London: Routledge 1995; James Wood, "Camus and twentieth-century clarity: The sickness unto life", *The New Republic*, 8, 1999, pp. 88-96. Leo Stan also speaks of a failed encounter between these two thinkers, arguing that "the Camusian reception of Kierkegaard's religiousness is severely undermined by oversimplifications and misunderstandings despite the texts Camus was able to consult" (Leo Stan, "Albert Camus: Walled within God", *Kierkegaard and Existentialism*, ed. by Jon Stewart (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 9), Ashgate 2011, p. 85.).

notions of hope and faith, and argues that we should reject concerns of worldliness or worldly dissimilarity:

> Ultimately only the essentially religious can with the help of eternity effect human equality [*Menneske-Lighed*], the godly, the essential, the not-worldly, the true, the only possible human equality; and this is also why—be it said to its glorification—the essentially religious is the true humanity [*Menneskelighed*]. (SKS 16, 83-84/PV, 103-04)

It would seem that we have to choose between two alternative options: either revolt or faith. Either concrete actions in this world or expectancy for another. Either an existence deprived of all certitude or the choice—despite any rational possibility for certitude—of placing ourselves before God.

While these two thinkers diverge with regard to the question of faith, this may occult many of the more profound similarities between them—and notably, as Daniel Berthold has pointed out, their common "belief in our capacity to transform our forsakenness into a life worth living" which, beyond the question of God's existence, is the "shared ground in which the debate must take place" (2013, 148). While Camus rejects the notion of faith, he nevertheless indicates that the question of revolt cannot be understood outside of the context of the development of Christianity in the Western context—metaphysical revolt only becomes possible in a world that embraces the notion of a personal God, since to rebel is always to rebel "against someone" (1996b, 47). Thus, he notes that revolt ought to be understood within the "contemporary history of religious sentiment": "it does not suppress God, but simply speaks to him as an equal" (Camus, 1996b, 42). The metaphysical rebel is the individual who contests the order of the world—but to contest that order is to acknowledge that the world is (at least potentially) ordered.

The difference in social and historical context should also be taken into account when confronting Camus' and Kierkegaard's thought. While Kierkegaard of course lived at a time when slavery still existed in the colonies and poverty was predominant among the lower social classes, Golden Age Denmark was nevertheless an age of great prosperity and social

development. Kierkegaard's works are addressed to readers situated in a comfortable bourgeois world, whereas Camus addresses a world torn apart by years of war, famine, concentration camps, legalized murder, and generalized hardships. While not exactly an accurate portrait of human reality,[4] Kierkegaard describes his age as one in which: "The times are past when only the powerful and the prominent were human beings—and the others were bond servants and slaves" (SKS 9, 80/WL, 74). Camus had experienced a quite different social reality, one in which human beings were treated like livestock on a massive scale. Kierkegaard was responding to a world in which everyone described themselves as Christians simply because they were baptized and went to church on Sundays; Camus to a world in which in the name of convictions and beliefs individuals granted themselves authorization to torture and kill—or, from a different perspective, to resign in the face of adversity and throw themselves to their knees saying there is nothing to be done (Camus, 2006b, 125).

This difference with regard to the actuality of concrete lived experience and social contexts inevitably lead to a very different diagnosis on the part of these two thinkers. In his analysis of Kierkegaard, Camus writes that the former "did better than discover the absurd, he lived it" (1996d, 44). Confronted with the contradictions of human life and his own experiences, Kierkegaard, according to Camus, "refuses consolations, morality" and seeks to remain in the consciousness of his own suffering and of a "reality that surpasses him," recognizing that "antinomy and paradox become criteria for the religious" (1996d, 44, 59). If the religious is the absolute scandal for reason, Kierkegaard invites us to accept this irrationality and embrace it in our lives. Yet despite his affectionate reading of Kierkegaard, Camus also critiques his position, suggesting that Kierkegaard's error was to want to "be cured" from the sickness unto death, and to "escape the antimony of the human condition" (1996d, 60). Camus, to the contrary, maintains that rather than try to flee our condition, our task is "to live in it" (1996d, 62). He quotes the opening passage from the "Eulogy on Abraham" in *Fear and Trembling*:

[4] Slavery was only abolished in the Danish colonies in 1847, year in which Kierkegaard published *Works of Love*, and existed on a large scale throughout the world in his days.

> If a human being did not have an eternal consciousness, if underlying everything there were only a wild, fermenting power that writhing in dark passions produced everything, be it significant or insignificant, if a vast, never appeased emptiness hid beneath everything, what would life be then but despair? (SKS 4, 112/FT, 15)

While Kierkegaard presents this as a hypothesis, to which he responds that such a world would be "empty and devoid of consolation… But precisely for that reason it is not so" (SKS 4, 112/FT, 15), Camus argues to the contrary that the "absurd spirit" prefers to remain in despair and not attempt to escape the anguish implied in the question "what would life be then?" (1996d, 62-63). And he qualifies Kierkegaard's attitude as a form of "philosophical suicide," that refuses to follow through to the ultimate consequences of reasoning (Camus, 1996d, 63). Kierkegaard's "leap" into faith, as a remedy to despair, fails to answer the question that Camus asks: "It was a question of living and thinking with these rifts, of knowing whether we had to accept or refuse. There can be no question of masking the evidence, of suppressing the absurd by negating one of the terms of the equation. We need to know if one can live or if logic commands that one die" (1996d, 73). Camus asks us not to leap into faith, but rather to remain in that perilous moment of absolute destitution, to seriously ask the hard question of whether life, if it is potentially meaningless, potentially superfluous, is still worth living. Kierkegaard's merit, he suggests, is to have asked the question, but his error is to have dodged it, to have ultimately given up reason in the name of faith. For Camus, the requirement of philosophy, to the contrary, is to "remain on the dizzying edge, that is honesty, all else is subterfuge" (1996d, 74).

Some aspects of Camus' portrait of Kierkegaard can obviously be called into question. As Leo Stan has pointed out, Camus' description of Kierkegaard as a thinker who refuses consolations and morality appears to give "too much credit to the early period of his authorship" and ignore the importance of ethics in texts like the second volume of *Either/ Or* or the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (2011, 78). It is true that Camus' laconic references to Kierkegaard make it difficult to situate exactly what texts he was referring to. In his notebooks from 1936, Camus makes two references

to Kierkegaard which may, however, prove helpful for understanding the way in which he was reading the Danish philosopher. The first of these brief remarks states: "Kierkegaard, the origin of our ills is comparison. Commit fully. Then, accept with equal force the yes and the no" (Camus, 2013a, 31). While this is far from a direct quote, we might suggest that Camus was thinking of the "Preliminary Expectoration" in *Fear and Trembling* where the narrator explains that he does not have faith and cannot understand Abraham. Here Kierkegaard writes:

> Philosophy cannot and must not give faith, but it must understand itself and know what it offers and take away nothing, least of all trick men out of something by pretending that it is nothing. I am not unfamiliar with the hardships and dangers of life. I fear them not and approach them confidently. I am not unfamiliar with the terrifying… I have seen the terrifying face to face, and I do not flee from it in horror, but I know very well that even though I advance toward it courageously, my courage is still not the courage of faith and is not something to be compared with it. I cannot make the movement of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd; it is for me an impossibility, but I do not praise myself for that…I can bear to live in my own fashion, I am happy and satisfied, but my joy is not the joy of faith, and by comparison [*i Sammenligning*] with that, it is unhappy. (SKS 4, 129/FT, 33-34)

The direct reference to the absurd here, as well as the reference to comparison, as that which shows a life to be unhappy, suggest that this perspective may have been the one Camus had in mind when beginning the work on his cycle of writings on the absurd. While, of course, the pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio's life-view cannot be assimilated with Kierkegaard's perspective, Camus' thought from this time period clearly echoes this world-view sketched out by his predecessor, and like Johannes de Silentio, Camus identified with the idea that it is not the role of philosophy to give faith, but that the philosopher must become familiar with the terrifying and plunge with confidence into the absurd—and as Camus states, fully commit to this life-view.

Although this first reference might lead us to conclude that Camus was primarily familiar with the pseudonymous authorship, a second reference to Kierkegaard indicates that Camus was well aware of

Kierkegaard's stance as a religious author. In an undated remark from 1936, he writes: "Protestantism. Nuance. In theory, admirable attitudes: Luther, Kierkegaard. In practice?" (Camus, 2013a, 36). Although this is little to go on, some further evidence can be found in other passages in the notebooks as to Camus' points of contention. In May 1937, he quotes without any commentary a passage from a 1519 sermon where Luther defends the idea that it is "more important to believe firmly in absolution than to be worthy of it" (Camus, 2013a, 42). While Luther and Kierkegaard suggest that faith is the only path to salvation, Camus' writings clearly place the emphasis on individuals' actions and responsibility. While he does not outright reject the possibility of grace, he is extremely critical of doctrines that put the emphasis on grace thus can lead, as he suggests in his notebook entry, to problematic consequences with regard to practices and actions in the world.

From these remarks, it is clear that the "Kierkegaard" that Camus identifies with is the figure of the individual who *cannot* attain faith, and who does not wish to—the figure represented by Johannes de Silentio. Yet, Camus seems well aware of the fact that this is not Kierkegaard's true position. Taxing his interpretation of Kierkegaard in *Le mythe de Sisyphe* as a misunderstanding or an oversimplification is, therefore, itself a misunderstanding. Camus was well aware of the distance that separated him from the positions of his Danish predecessor; he nevertheless found in Kierkegaard's writings a form of kinship with his own concerns. One ought to note as well that Camus' reading of the Dane appears to be much indebted to the early Kierkegaard reception of the 1930s by thinkers such as Lev Shestov (Léon Chestov) and Rachel Bespaloff[5] who read Kierkegaard as an irrationalist, engaged in a personal struggle which, in Shestov's words, showed how "in the throes of despair and terror, human thought is transformed and acquires new forces" (2006, 37). The early reception of Kierkegaard's works in France had put the focus on themes such as absurdity and despair, and it is therefore not surprising that Camus takes these up in

[5] Bespaloff was actually the first to publish detailed philosophical analyses of Kierkegaard's works in France, in two articles published in 1934 and 1935 respectively: "Notes sur *la Répétition* de Kierkegaard", in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, vol. 117, no. 5-6, 1934, pp. 335-363, and "En marge de 'Crainte et tremblement' de Kierkegaard", in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, vol. 119, no. 1-2, 1935, pp. 43-72.

his own readings, and transforms Kierkegaard's understanding of the absurd—related to the paradox of the incarnation and the finite/infinite relation—into a metaphor for the human condition as a whole. Whereas for Kierkegaard, the absurd is related to the possibility of faith ("the movement of faith must continually be made by virtue of the absurd" [SKS 4, 132/FT, 37]), Camus situates the absurd in life itself. Beyond a simple misunderstanding, this transposition must be understood within the context of Camus' project in *Le mythe de Sisyphe*: to follow reason through to its final logical consequences, starting from the possibility of meaninglessness of the world and of life. His question is very different from Kierkegaard's—it is not how we should understand faith, but how we should rationally engage with life, in a context where we cannot know whether there is anything beyond the world of human experience[6].

Beyond the obvious differences in perspective and project between these two thinkers, there are many ways in which Camus' oeuvre directly echoes predominant themes in Kierkegaard's writings. Perhaps the most important of these is their common critique of an age that has become passionless, and lost itself in theories and abstractions. In a 1946 conference, Camus suggests that what makes institutionalized murder and the system of the death camps so utterly horrendous, is precisely that these crimes were perpetrated not as a result of any human passion, but rather through "instinct elevated to the heights of an idea or a theory. Passion, even murderous, would have been preferable. Because passion comes to an end, and another cry arising from the flesh or the heart can convince it" (Camus, 2006a, 41). In such a world, victims and executioners are no longer individuals that can hope to communicate with one another; in an age without passion, nothing and no one is strictly human. Kierkegaard offers a similar critique of his "present" age, describing it as a "*sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion*" (SKS 8, 66/TA, 68), where we are not moved by any of the common human

[6] Leo Stan has argued that one of the major differences between these two thinkers is their relationship to rationality; whereas for Camus encourages the lucid use of reason, for Kierkegaard reason cannot apply to existential, ethical, and religious questions (Stan, « Albert Camus », pp. 64-65). As we have argued elsewhere however, Kierkegaard may not be as dismissive of reason as is often claimed. (See Mélissa Fox-Muraton, "There is No Teleological Suspension of the Ethical: Kierkegaard's Logic Against Religious Justification and Moral Exceptionalism", *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2018, pp. 3-32).

emotions, but rather by "pragmatic rules, a calculus of considerations" that lead down to "habitual and excessive relativity" (SKS 8, 67-68/TA, 70). A passionless age moreover is described by Kierkegaard as one where the dominant emotion is envy, which becomes a prison for human freedom and self-knowledge—and "envy holds the will and energy in a kind of captivity", a "prison" or "penitentiary" (SKS 8, 78/TA, 81). A passionless age is one which ceases to be truly human, where everything is dictated by the laws of economics—where "everything becomes, as it were, transactions in *paper money*" (SKS 8, 72/TA, 74)—of institutions, and of the press. It is an age of levelling and of disengagement, of negation and loss of self.

Camus probably did not have the opportunity to read *Two Ages*, which only came out in French translation in 1979,[7] although he may very well have been familiar with some of the general arguments through the work of the early French reception of Kierkegaard by figures such as Jean Wahl, who had read Kierkegaard in German and would have been familiar with the highly influential translation of the last part of the text, *Kritik der Gegenwart* (1914)[8]. While this text is undoubtedly Kierkegaard's most socially engaged writing, the critique of passionlessness is nevertheless one of the predominant themes in Kierkegaard's writings, from the opening passages of *Either/Or* where Kierkegaard writes: "Let others complain that the times are evil. I complain that they are wretched, for they are without passion" (SKS 2, 36/EO1, 27) to the *Postscript* where he distinguishes between the objective, passionless thinker and the subjective thinker who recognizes that all "existence-issues are passionate, because existence…involves passion" (SKS 7, 321/CUP, 350-51). Whether or not there was a direct influence on Camus' thought here, what is important is the similarity of their diagnoses with regard to the ailments of their contemporary ages. For Camus, as for Kierkegaard, the loss of passion and passionate engagement leads down to a loss of humanity, a world of vain chatter and the imprisonment of the individual. While a revolutionary age—in Kierkegaard's terms—or acts of revolt or rebellion may tear everything down, the passionless age is one which succumbs unwittingly to the prisons in which it ensnares individuals,

[7] *Un compte rendu littéraire*, trans. by Paul-Henri Tisseau and Else-Marie Jacquet-Tisseau, in *Œuvres complètes de Søren Kierkegaard*, vol. 8, Paris: Editions de l'Orante 1979.

[8] Translated by Theodor Haecker, published in *Der Brenner*, no. 19 pp. 815-49 and no. 20 pp. 869-908, 1914.

"*lets everything remain but subtly drains the meaning out of it*" (SKS 8, 74/TA, 77). Worse than the destruction inherent in an attitude of revolt, passionlessness destroys the very foundations of our humanity and sense of self, and renders everything indifferent. From the individual perspective, Camus illustrates this through the figure of Meursault, in *L'étranger* (*The Stranger* or *The Outsider*), whose lack of passionate engagement in his life leads him to the scaffold for a murder he had no reason or desire to commit, and who is only able to reconnect with himself and the world by escaping indifference through the eyes of others. As Meursault states at the end of the text: "For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I could only wish for many spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hatred" (Camus, 1996a, 186). From the social perspective, Camus argues that it was this lack of passionate engagement that led the world to massive acts of destruction and legalized criminality.

If Kierkegaard and Camus share a similar diagnosis of the world's malady, their works also point toward a common solution: communication. Although despair or absurdity may reveal us to be alone in the world, Camus nevertheless repeatedly affirms that man is not alone, that our condition is one of togetherness which the tragic social or metaphysical aspects of our lives may prevent us from properly seeing or render impossible (where some are subjected or enslaved by others), but which it is our task to accomplish in life. It is "communication… in the mutual recognition of [human] dignity" that is our task as individuals, that which we ought to serve and fight for (Camus, 2006a, 49). Dialogue, communication, and giving voice to those who have been deprived of the right to speak are at the heart of Camus' work as a philosopher and author; as he claimed in his Nobel acceptance speech in 1957, the work of an artist can never be a solitary endeavour, as its aim is to show what is most universal. And yet, the task of the writer exists because some individuals are deprived of their freedom, have no voice, are reduced to silence—and Camus saw his task as a means of making this silence present and palpable to the world (2006a, 334-35).

For Kierkegaard as well, communication (*Meddelelse*) is indubitably at the heart of the authorial strategy. That communication could be the solution to our moral problems in Kierkegaard's view may seem a harder claim to defend, however, as Kierkegaard (especially in the *Postscript*),

appears to associate the ethical with the solitary, subjective position. As he writes: "every individual is… set apart by himself… existing ethically… the individual human being stands alone" (SKS 7, 295/CUP, 323)—each individual, with regard to his ethical existence, finally is called upon to stand up himself, no one can replace him in his responsibility. This rather extreme affirmation, often taken up by twentieth-century readers either critically (as with Theodor Adorno, Emmanuel Levinas or Knud Ejler Løgstrup's critiques of Kierkegaard's violence or solipsism), or positively in the affirmation of self-determination and project as one finds in Jean-Paul Sartre or Simone de Beauvoir, has for example led Karl Verstrynge to claim that separation is the condition for all existential ethics (2016, 99). While ontological separation is indeed at the heart of Kierkegaard's reading of the self, it is nevertheless important to nuance that this view of man "standing alone" ethically is not the only one presented in the works. Indeed, in many places, Kierkegaard directly points to communication with others as the key to avoiding the dangers of moral solipsism. In *The Sickness unto Death*, for example, with regard to the despairing individual, Kierkegaard claims that the greatest danger for the one in despair is to remain enclosed within himself—such despair can only lead to self-destruction or suicide:

> If this inclosing reserve is maintained completely… then his greatest danger is suicide… The danger, then, for the completely enclosed person is suicide. But if he opens up to one single person, he probably will become so relaxed, or so let down, that suicide will not result from inclosing reserve. (SKS 11, 180/SUD, 66)

The solution here is very simple, opening up, sharing, talking with one single other person can save one from solitude and its terrible consequences: judging that life is not worth living. Similarly, in the essay "Does a Human Being Have the Right to Let Himself Be Put to Death for the Truth?" Kierkegaard argues that our moral duty when confronted with someone "harbouring a terrible thought", who may for example be contemplating committing an act of violence against himself or others, is to engage a dialogue. "If you suspect that someone dear to you is secretly harbouring some terrible thought, just get him to tell it… If you yourself are in the situation of being on the verge of becoming enclosed with a terrible

thought, then speak to someone else about it" (SKS 11, 62/WA, 56). Speaking to someone, sharing through language, provides a means of escaping the isolation in which the individual finds himself—it is the ethical solution to the ontological problem of solitude.

Communication is never complete or absolute, for Camus or for Kierkegaard, and neither is it easy. And this is perhaps precisely where the two thinkers have the most in common: their works are an uncompromising attempt to make the path more difficult for us, to show their readers that the comfortable lives we live, trudging along from day to day, are really so much more complex; that what we think we know is really fraught with uncertainties; that happiness (or eternal felicity) are not goods to which we can just easily make a claim, but rather things for which we must earnestly strive with all of our might. For Kierkegaard, it is faith that has to be made harder, for Camus it is reason. Despite this difference, these thinkers both unceasingly point to our task with regard to existence, in the midst of our often non-reflexive contentment. And they call out to each reader as a singular individual, who thus singled out is required to take a stand.

III. Is it Possible to Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?

Camus opens his essay on the absurd with the startling claim:

> There is only one truly serious philosophical problem: that is suicide. Judging whether a life is or is not worth living is to respond to the fundamental question of philosophy. Everything else, whether the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories, comes afterward. (1996d, 17)

With this affirmation, Camus argues that what really matters is the existential and ethical dimension of our existence. What makes a life worth living? This question remains pertinent in our day, where according to estimates by the World Health Organization, 800,000 people die every day at their own hands, accounting for 1.4% of all deaths in 2018, and for every person who successfully commits suicide, 20 more attempt to (WHO). Suicide is not, however, merely a problem of individual mental health; 79% of suicides occur in poor or middle-income countries, revealing that suicide

is often directly linked to living conditions and life possibilities, in other words to socio-political and economic concerns. If suicide is a serious philosophical problem, then, it is not only a question of what makes an individual judge that life is (not) worth living, but also an issue of social concern.

Although Camus framed the question in terms of suicide, within the broader corpus of his works, it appears that his central preoccupation is not suicide, but rather murder (both active and passive: i.e., allowing others to die through inaction or non-assistance). It is the generalized disregard for human life, institutional systems which legalize murder, which are the real challenge to the quest for meaning. While capital punishment, death camps, and genocide are of course the most obvious symbols of "legalized" murder, and frequent references in Camus' writings, the question also arises with regard to more indirect institutionalized practices. Current examples are numerous: according to the United Nations World Food Programme, 265 million people could be "pushed to the brink of starvation" in 2020 due to lack of food resources. Approximately 1.5 million people still die every year from tuberculosis, making it the deadliest infectious disease and one of the top 10 causes of death, despite the fact that effective treatments that could cure most cases exist (WHO, *Global Tuberculosis Report*). In 2017, it was estimated that around 25 million people work in forced labour and 15 million are in forced marriage (International Labour Association). And as the recent killings of George Floyd, Jakob Blake and many others by police officials in the United States have brought to public attention, systemic racism and violence is far from being eradicated in some of the world's wealthiest and most educated countries; according to research published in 2019, one out of every 1000 black men can expect to die at the hands of the police in the US (Edwards *et al.*, 2019).

These facts, along with many others, constitute a brutal challenge to the possibility of living a good and meaningful existence. The problem is not a metaphysical one, but a very concrete socio-economic reality: in a world where there are, at least for the time being, enough resources to feed and shelter the world's population, where science has enabled us to develop treatments for many illnesses which still ravage large parts of the world, where international law and human rights declarations pretend to guarantee

equality, a large part of the world's population lives in conditions where access to these goods and rights is not ensured. The problem is not that suffering and death exist—these are natural parts of our human condition. The real issue is that we live in and promote systems and institutions that provoke unnecessary suffering and death—and that our acceptance of these systems and institutions suggests that we do not consider all lives to be equally valid and meaningful. Or as Judith Butler formulates it, that there are many individuals in the world who are "ungrievable" in the sense that there is "no present structure of support that will sustain that life, which implies that it is devalued, not worth supporting and protecting as a life by dominant schemes of value" (2012, 10).

In her analysis of the problem, Butler nevertheless insists on the fact that these inequalities and forms of exploitation which make life bad or false are the conditions upon which the question can emerge for an individual—a subjective and personal question, one of how "I" can understand "my" life as good or strive to make it good despite the conditions in which "I" find myself. Asking the question of the good life thus necessarily involves both a subjective and a critical stance—but also a recognition of the fact that:

> Whether or not I can live a life that has value is not something that I can decide on my own, since it turns out that this life is and is not my own, and that this is what makes me a social creature, and a living one. The question of how to live the good life, then, is already, and from the start, bound up with ambiguity, and is bound up with a living (*lebendig*) practice of critique. (Butler, 2012, 11)

In other words, any understanding of the good life cannot be abstracted both from the fact that life is not an ideal, but rather the lived experience of a concrete, singular individual, and also that each of us is bound by our vulnerability and dependency to others and to the social structures we inhabit. Any ethics which places the emphasis on autonomy and choice (as with the Sartrean notion of radical freedom), fails to recognize the dependency as part of our necessary lived experience. At the same time, any ethics which focuses on abstract ideals, like justice, fails to take into account that these notions are always related to the concrete ways in which individuals exist within the social structures of the world, and risks

"eradicating the 'I'" or producing new forms of "effacement" (Butler, 2012, 16). As Butler rightly remarks, the question of whether and how one can lead a good life in the midst of a bad/ false one is not so much an investigation into the empirical facts of human existence, as it is a matter of understanding how the question can arise and be answered for the embedded and embodied individual.

With regard to this questioning, Kierkegaard's and Camus' writings offer a path toward an existential approach to the ethical question of the good life, despite conditions where the very notion of goodness has become relative. The responses they give are nevertheless different, as they address decidedly different problems. Whereas Camus formulates the question from the perspective of the most destitute, of those who find themselves in situations of effacement or social invisibility, the "ungrievables" in Butler's terms, Kierkegaard addresses those who find themselves in situations of power, success and worldly superiority, and encourages them to become aware of the fact that the worldly injustices require that these "goods" be called into question.

For Kierkegaard, this implies that we must be able to reject the social and intellectual considerations that generally impede us from seeing ourselves truly. It is as concrete, existing beings, in the specific situations in which we find ourselves, that we can come to exercise our freedom. Yet this freedom is not the freedom of autonomy, of absolute free choice, or of the absence of determinism. Neither is it something that is always already acquired for the individual. It is rather that for which we must always strive, and the quest for the good is linked with our quest to become selves. Kierkegaard makes this seemingly paradoxical remark in the second volume of *Either/Or*: "As soon as a person can be brought to stand at the crossroads in such a way that there is no way out for him except to choose, he will choose the right thing" (SKS 3, 164/EO2, 168). This is not to say that "the right thing" has some particular content that is to be discovered, but rather that what is important is the act of appropriation which "truly gives life meaning" (SKS 3, 164/EO2, 168). In order to do so, we are obliged to engage critically with our ordinary manners of being in the world, and ordinary forms of value. Giving life meaning is not so much a matter of *deciding* on the meaning of existence, as of becoming capable of taking up our lives in the right type of

way. Traditional accounts of the good life, Kierkegaard notes, are often linked to certain qualities or states that are esteemed within the social sphere: "We encounter life-views that teach that we are to enjoy life but place the condition for it outside the individual. This is the case with every life-view in which wealth, honours, noble birth, etc. are made life's task and its content" (SKS 3, 177/EO2, 182). Kierkegaard, to the contrary, invites us to place the condition for meaningful existence within the individual—and this requires that we learn how to truly take up ourselves as selves.

The focus on the individual and on selfhood is not, however, merely an acclamation of the modern propensity toward individualism. To the contrary, Kierkegaard describes the modern world as one in which being a self is the most difficult of tasks, since "a self is the last thing the world cares about and the most dangerous thing of all for a person to show signs of having. The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all. No other loss can occur so quietly; any other loss—an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc.—is sure to be noticed" (SKS 11, 148/SUD, 32-33). In a world which has relativized the Good and seeks value and meaning in goods that can be acquired externally, our questions usually become ones of our relative success in life, of our possessions and accomplishments. We however often fail to recognize how ensconced we are in the relative values and social considerations that alienate us from ourselves, or see ourselves through the images that society reflects back to us, or through our imaginary representations or emotional responses to these. In contrast, seeing oneself truly requires a particular type of self-honesty or earnestness that can often be painful. In order to see ourselves as we truly are, we may have to be ready to ask ourselves difficult questions and accept replies that go against our self-image. This may involve questioning the coherence between our beliefs and actions, such as becoming aware of the fact that despite our passionate claims about justice, we do not in fact give much of our time or money to charity to actively help those in need, or putting on trial our own judgments or prejudices regarding others.

Seeing oneself, then, is not merely a question of subjectivity or a form of subjectivism. Much to the contrary, Kierkegaard suggests that it is a means of opening up to our responsibility for others and for the world around us, of becoming concerned about the world and actively engaging in it. In the

"Ultimatum" at the end of *Either/Or*, he offers a stringent critique of the "easy, cosy conclusion" we so often fall back on in our daily lives: "One does what one can" (SKS 3, 324/EO2, 345). The complacency in the easy attitude of giving up, of refusing to acknowledge our responsibility or possibility for responsiveness to the needs of others, is an attitude which, though quite normal from a psychological point of view, often prevents us from seeing ourselves truly. Kierkegaard invites us to the contrary to find a different kind of meaningfulness in the recognition that in relation to others "you might always be in the wrong" (SKS 3, 328/EO2, 349). No matter how much we may help, give, or share, we could always do more; no matter how great a number of lives we help to better, there are always others in need. But if this type of recognition is painful, it can also enable us to engage in the world in a new manner. Rather than seek the self-satisfaction that comes with believing that we have played our part and now can profit from the fruits of our labour, Kierkegaard suggests that true joy, and a truly meaningful life, are only possible once we realize that the benefits we enjoy are never exactly deserved. Such an attitude is a prerequisite for seeing ourselves as *concerned* and *caring* about the problems and moral issues of our world and those who inhabit it. Seeing ourselves as concerned requires that we be able to identify with others' suffering, with the claims that they make upon us—not merely from an intellectual standpoint, but also from an emotional or passionate one. The injustices of our world are not intellectual problems, or problems that can be solved by knowledge: we know that resources are unfairly distributed, that discrimination is unfair, and that our systems produce inequalities. The problem is often not that we do not know or have solutions, but rather that we are not moved to act—that we do not adopt the right type of attitude, that we fail (at least partly or on occasions) "lovingly to *be concerned for the others*" (SKS 11, 74/WA, 69) in ways that move us to change our practices.[9]

While Kierkegaard addresses a readership that seeks comfort in the idea that it has done what it could and is not responsible for the world's injustices, Camus' concern from the outset is to give voice to the most destitute, and to reveal, as he writes in the preface to the second edition of

[9] Of course, Kierkegaard's position on neighbor-love poses a number of serious questions and challenges; we have examined these elsewhere. See Mélissa Fox-Muraton, "Existence Philosophy as a Humanism?", *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2019, pp. 241-64.

his first book published, *L'envers et l'endroit* (*Betwixt and Between*), the "poverty" and "injustice" of the human world (16). In his literary works, Camus portrays lives of lostness, estrangement, and solitude; but also, the possibility, despite the hostile world his characters inhabit, of love, disinterested behaviour, goodness, humility, and courage. Camus' writings illustrate the lives of ordinary individuals and trivial quotidian situations, the very triviality of which often becomes the occasion for violence. His best-known character, Meursault, exemplifies this endeavour: Meursault, an ordinary man leading an ordinary life of habit and routine, becomes an outsider, a criminal and an enemy of the people. While Meursault is often read as an absurd figure, it is important to note that in the novel, there is nothing particularly absurd about his behaviour. We encounter Meursault just after he has learned of his mother's death; his emotionless response is really nothing other than a typical manifestation of mourning. He meets a girl, is attracted to her, but does not know what love means, just like many others. He gets caught up in circumstances with an acquaintance that lead him to commit a murder—albeit not an everyday act, but nevertheless a very human one. He is sent to prison, put on trial and condemned to death. Though the condemnation is justified, the absurdity of the situation resides in the fact that he is not condemned for the murder, but rather for being a "moral monster" who committed the outrageous sin of drinking coffee with milk at his mother's funeral: "what I did not understand was how the qualities of an ordinary man [became] crushing charges against a culprit" (Camus, 1996a,154). What is remarkable about Meursault is not that he is exceptional—it is that he is exceptionally ordinary. "Like everyone" (Camus, 1996a,184), he leads a life of routine behaviour, encounters hardships and suffering (his experience in prison reveals the depths of this suffering— "No, there was no way out and no one can imagine what the evenings in prison are like" [Camus, 1996a, 126]), and finally must confront death. Yet it is precisely because, at the end of the novel, he is able to examine his situation honestly, without hope or anger, that he is able to understand that despite his trials, he has led a happy life. In the midst of absolute destitution, having relinquished all of the goods for which we often strive—success, recognition, freedom, love—Meursault discovers another kind of freedom in detachment.

Meursault is not a man of virtue, of course, but as Camus repeatedly suggests throughout his works, virtue can be misleading. In *La chute* (*The Fall*), the narrator speaks of the discovery of his own duplicity: "I understood then… that modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress" (Camus, 1996c, 90). The concern for how we are seen by others, the rewards and positive consequences for ourselves that our actions can bring about, are often seen as virtues in the modern world, whereas Meursault's indifference appears monstrous through the lens of social conventions. Camus' work points however to the ambiguity of our moral motivations and actions in the world. We may do the right things, but for the wrong reasons. We may act wrongly, for no real reason at all. We can commit the worst of evils, not on the basis of any type of vice or even conviction, but merely out of ignorance. As Thomas Nagel argued, a significant part of the success or failure of our moral enterprises depends on factors outside our control, on "moral luck." Nagel gives several examples: a person who "was an officer in a concentration camp might have led a quiet and harmless life if the Nazis had never come to power in Germany. And someone who led a quiet and harmless life in Argentina might have become an officer in a concentration camp if he had not left Germany for business reasons in 1930" (1979, 26). Camus makes a similar claim through the character of Meursault: what led to the murder was nothing other than chance (*le hasard*). He becomes a murderer because he finds himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. Had he not been on that beach that day, he would have remained a free and innocent man.

If our lives are conditioned, if much of what we accomplish or fail to accomplish as individuals depends on luck or chance, and if our motives and actions are ambiguous and often deceptive, what then can be the meaning of the "good life"? Kierkegaard formulates one response to this question in *Either/ Or*, where he suggests that the good life is to choose or accept to live in conformity with the social rules and conventions in which one finds oneself, to appropriate one's circumstances; choosing oneself ethically, the individual "possesses himself as an individual who has these capacities, these passions, these inclinations, these habits, who is subject to these external influences…a social, a civic self" (SKS 3, 249-50/EO2, 262). His duties are defined by the ethos of the community; in a society where marriage is the

norm, the individual's duty may be to marry, and a "good life" the life of a married man, like the figure of Judge Wilhelm. Yet what happens when the good life as defined by society involves promoting hatred and murder, waging war, and committing genocide? Or more simply, when the ideal of marriage comes in conflict with certain individuals' desires and preferences (as was Kierkegaard's case), and becomes itself a bad life for those who are its victims?

Kierkegaard, in *Works of Love*, maintains that we need to reject societal definitions of the good, and even any consideration at all of earthly dissimilarities; thus, the only possibility for a good life lies in the religious attitude. Camus also radically claims that we need to reject societal definitions of the good; and despite his critique of religion, his response is also a turn inward. In light of the ambiguity of our lives and situations, Camus' response is that what we most need, in order to be moral beings, is lucidity, first and foremost about ourselves. We need to accept to see ourselves as we truly are, escape the indifference of our non-reflexive engagement in everyday life, and take up the task of examining ourselves honestly (neither seeking flattery nor self-torment, as Kierkegaard wrote). And we need to see the world as it truly is, rather than bask in the illusions we feed to ourselves; we need to learn to see the misery in which others (or we ourselves) live, the oppression our institutions impose upon us, and take these up in such a way that we acquire strength and force from our destitution (Camus, 1996d, 85).

Can one lead a good life in the midst of a bad life? We would like to offer the radical argument that both Kierkegaard and Camus respond negatively to this question. There is no freedom where others are in chains. There can be no good life in a world where oppression exists. This of course does not mean that we never encounter happiness and contentment. Even in the most precarious of situations, there is still the possibility for moments of joy, expressions of love and generosity, and human togetherness—and as Camus suggests, the good largely outweighs the bad. It also does not mean that we cannot, even less should not, strive to live better, or more capably, in full awareness of ourselves and others around us. To the contrary, the affirmation that there is no good life in a bad one ought to be a constant

reminder that we are always in the wrong, and that we should never content ourselves with the world's injustices.

Saying that there is no good life in a bad life does not entail, either, that we should not earnestly take up the question for ourselves, but rather implies that this question must always be asked with critical distance. Recognizing that life is not essentially good, or that my life cannot be good if others are enslaved or oppressed, may be the first step for understanding that we are all, as human beings, dependent and vulnerable, that our lives are not entirely in our own hands, that if we are lucky enough to find ourselves in privileged situations where our daily lives are not ones of constant struggle, it is really a matter of luck or chance, and not one of worth or merit. And as Kierkegaard and Camus suggest, this recognition is essential to our capacity for responsiveness, and to adopting attitudes of love or compassion. Camus and Kierkegaard thus sketch out a very different type of existential ethics from the one to be found in existentialist philosophy: an existential ethics grounded in our vulnerability, destitution, and suffering, but by the same token an ethics of concern. And as Camus writes in his notebooks in 1954, this difference is essential: "According to our existentialists, every man is responsible for what he is. Which explains the total disappearance of compassion in their universe of aggressive old men. Nevertheless, they claim to be fighting against social injustice. There are therefore people who are not responsible for what they are" (2013b, 131-32). An ethics of compassion or concern, to the contrary, begins with the understanding that we are not fully responsible for what we are. That we are not fully responsible does not, however, mean that we are not called upon to answer for our acts. It may, to the contrary, be the condition of the call.

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Language and Anxiety and Despair in Kierkegaard

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And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them into shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name
(Shakespeare)

Abstract. This essay explores the possible relationship between anxiety and despair in Kierkegaard. This means that two works of Kierkegaard are in focus: *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) by the alleged pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis and *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) by the alleged pseudonym Anti-Climacus – arguably Kierkegaard's two most anthropological works. My main argument is that language as something fundamentally ambiguous is absolutely central to Kierkegaard's understanding of the human being and therefore also to his conceptions of anxiety and despair. But as a writer, Kierkegaard is, consequently, facing a problematic which is linked to his use of pseudonyms: If language as something fundamentally ambiguous is the defining aspect of the human being, there is no way of escaping it and therefore, in a sense, no kind of metalanguage one can turn to. I explore how this fact is reflected in the two works in focus and how it affects the relationship between the two pseudonyms. This relationship turns out to be a volatile one in a way which challenges the idea, promoted by Kierkegaard himself, that Anti-Climacus, when compared to a pseudonym like Haufniensis, represents a higher kind of pseudonymity.
Keywords. Kierkegaard, anxiety, despair, language, metalanguage, ambiguity, sin.

It is not an easy task to categorize Søren Kierkegaard. Many labels appear to fit, but none of them do so without leaving a significant remainder. Is Kierkegaard a philosopher? Is he a theologian? Is he a literary writer? He is all of these, you could argue. But you might as well argue that he is neither.

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This resistance to definitions we normally apply without thinking twice about it is in itself extraordinary. And we might even not have exhausted the catalogue. You can also argue that Kierkegaard is primarily a psychologist or an anthropologist, a thinker on the essence of the human being.

In the following, I will discuss how Kierkegaard, the philosophical theologian, writes about the essence of the nature of the human being. I will explore the psychological and anthropological dimension of his thinking. Of course, the essence of the human being has to do with the mind of the same being. As human beings we live mental lives, so to speak. Our nature is inseparable from the fact that we speak the language that we speak. Language determines our relations to others and, notably, our relation to our own selves. We speak, and therefore we are the beings that we are.

Kierkegaard writes most specifically about the psychology and anthropology of the human being as determined by language in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844).[1] In *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) he also writes about it, but without addressing the role of language to the same extent – at least not explicitly. Both works are pseudonymous and we will have to give a thought to this fact at some point.

Both works are about the mental state of man and about what might unsettle it. It goes without saying that *The Concept of Anxiety* is about the state of anxiety. *The Sickness unto Death* is about the state of despair. We know about the two as something that can attack us. We might suffer from bouts of anxiety and bouts of depression (despair as Kierkegaard understands it is affiliated to but not identical with depression). We might also know these states as being more permanent, lurking deep inside us and sometimes springing forth in the shape of the aforementioned bouts. This is how Kierkegaard understands them. They are part of the human condition and have their points of origin in the fact that we are the linguistic beings that we are. This is what I will focus on.

[1] I have written on the topic of language and anxiety in Kierkegaard in a former article of mine from 2009: "Irony Haunts: on Irony, Anxiety and the Imaginary in Kierkegaard", Cappelørn, Niels Jørgen, Hermann Deuser and Brian Sôderquist (eds.), *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2009*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Anxiety and Language

The pseudonym Kierkegaard chose for *The Concept of Anxiety* is Vigilius Haufniensis, which could be translated as the watchman or vigilant observer of Copenhagen. Haufniensis introduces himself as a psychologist and distances himself from theology as a discipline. The idea of sin – and especially original sin – is vital to his understanding of anxiety, but since it belongs to theology as a dogmatic category, he can, so to speak, only borrow it from dogmatics along with the concept of anxiety itself. And after having finished his analysis of the phenomenon of anxiety, he makes the gesture of delivering it back to dogmatics.

All of the most central formulations about anxiety thus appear in the section of *The Concept of Anxiety* which discusses the story about the Fall of Man from Genesis. And they occur within a small number of pages, in which the exposition is indeed very condensed. The most central – as well as the most striking formulation – might be the following:

> Just as the relation of anxiety to its object, to something that is nothing (linguistic usage also says pregnantly: to be anxious about nothing), is altogether ambiguous, so also the transition that is to be made from innocence to guilt will be so dialectical that it can be seen that the explanation is what it must be, psychological. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 43)

To be anxious is to be anxious about nothing. What does that mean? It means that the object of anxiety is not something substantial. This is what distinguishes anxiety from fear. When you are confronted with a real danger, it makes you feel afraid. But you might be stricken with anxiety when there is no real danger threatening you. The insubstantial object of anxiety, then, is not located in the real, physical world. It only exists in the mind of the one who suffers from anxiety. It is, in short, something imaginary, a product of the imagination. It is in this sense that the object of anxiety is nothing. The object of anxiety is *airy nothing* given a *local habitation* and some kind of *name* in the mind (cf. my epigraph, quoted above, from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). It is nothing in the same sense that dreams or fantasies are nothing because they are not substantial.

Existentialism tends to agree that anxiety differs from fear and that it is a kind of disposition or mood situated deep within us, which is unrelated to any concrete threat or danger. And existentialism tends to think that the kind of freedom which is exclusive[2] to the human being is insolubly linked with this disposition or mood. Freedom is also linked to anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*. A gnomic and very enigmatic definition of anxiety states that it is "freedom's actuality as the possibility of [the, my insertion, JB] possibility." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 42) That freedom becomes an actuality, could well be related to the fact that the possibility of making a choice – a serious one, of course – manifests itself. This is most likely the reason why Haufniensis discusses the story of the Fall of Man which, in a way, is the story of what is tempting to designate as the original choice: should one eat from the tree or not? Being able to make a choice means having to take into account the possible consequences of doing one thing or another. This, in turn, implies some kind of consciousness about oneself: 'What will happen to *me* if *I* do this or that?' In Kierkegaard, becoming conscious of oneself is a condition for being – or realizing the potential for becoming – spirit. Becoming spirit is synonymous with making the right choice of choosing good instead of evil (where not choosing is still acting in the sense that it is choosing evil), which means choosing faith[3]; a choice that cannot be made once and for all, but one that must be constantly renewed. The manifestation of a choice thus actualizes freedom as a possibility for the possibility of the human being of becoming spirit. This is how the gnomic and enigmatic definition of anxiety could be understood.

Being conscious of oneself and being able to imagine consequences is obviously not something one is capable of without language. Language is a condition for freedom and anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety*. And Haufniensis is interested in the qualitative leap, the transition from the state of innocence to the state of sin and guilt and the role which language and imagination play when it comes to this leap. We begin with the state of innocence and the real enigma is how we can move on from there – and how

[2] Kierkegaard would use the term *Forrettighed* which in the Danish language of the 19th century means something like 'special privilege'.

[3] Which again underlines the fact that, while Haufniensis' phenomenology of anxiety might be psychological in its orientation, it cannot sever itself from issues that relate to theology and dogmatics.

anxiety can make its mark in this state before we have any genuine consciousness of self? As Haufniensis formulates it, again invoking nothing as a decisive factor: "But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time [in a state of, my insertion, JB] anxiety." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 41) Nothing, we have noted, is related to the insubstantial nature of what is imagined. But what can be imagined in the state of innocence prior to language? If we consider the case of the human infant there is of course no state which is strictly prior to language. A human infant is born into an environment where language is spoken. And the same human infant is born with the disposition to become a speaking being and will probably understand more than we believe or perceive before it begins to produce speech itself. This means that a word or a phrase, even if it is not properly understood, can still set a mental process in motion in a very small child and beget ideas and sensations, however vague they may be.[4] In fact, it only takes a word, it takes nothing but a word, Haufniensis concludes:

> Innocence still is, but only a word is required and then ignorance is concentrated. Innocence naturally cannot understand this word, but at that moment anxiety has, as it were, caught its first prey. Instead of nothing, it now has an enigmatic word. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 44)

When a human being realizes its disposition to speak it at the same time realizes its disposition to feel or experience anxiety. As regards his use of the story of the Fall to illustrate this, Haufniensis observes:

> Here (…) I have adhered to the Biblical narrative. I have assumed the prohibition and the voice of punishment as coming from without.[5] Of course, this is something which has troubled many

[4] Therefore, Sarah Horton is right when she observes, in her article "Illegible Salvation: The Authority of Language in *The Concept of Anxiety*", that: "Innocence is, and always has been, a haunting absence" (Horton, 2018, p. 128).

[5] Which, of course, is what this narrative does and which, according to Haufniensis, is what the myth in general does: "The myth allows something that is inward to take place outwardly." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 47) The psychology of Haufniensis thus appears to isolate the human individual from the community he/she is a part of. Psychoanalysis does not. According to psychoanalysis, the prohibition and the voice of punishment comes from without, from the Other – and is internalized afterwards.

> thinkers. But the difficulty is merely one to smile at. Innocence can indeed speak, inasmuch as in language it possesses the expression for everything spiritual. Accordingly, one need merely assume that Adam talked to himself. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 45)

But who taught Adam to speak? One is not let off the hook so easily, since the question of the origin of anxiety is then entangled in the question of the origin of language – a question which has greatly troubled many thinkers since the beginnings! Haufniensis' attempt to solve the problem does not really do the job. When Adam speaks, he claims, it is as much language that speaks:

> The imperfection in the narrative – how it could have occurred to anyone to say to Adam what he essentially could not understand – is eliminated if we bear in mind that the speaker is language, and also that it is Adam himself who speaks. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 47)

What Adam could not understand is the nature of the punishment for eating from the tree, namely death. Adam in Eden in a state of (almost) innocence has no clue what the word "death" signifies. But he is, according to Haufniensis, doing the speaking himself – or rather, language is. Haufniensis is obviously aware that the problem is by no means solved, so he adds a note which simply postpones any further clarification of the issue:

> If one were to say further that it then becomes a question of how the first man learned to speak, I would answer that this is very true, but also that the question lies beyond the scope of the present investigation. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 47)

Still, two possible answers to the question spring to mind. The first one is that the human race is the origin of language in that it taught itself to speak. If this is the case, then the human race is itself the architect behind the possibility of each human being of becoming spirit. Alternatively, language has come from outside, for example as a gift from the God who created the human being. This is another example of how Haufniensis can in no way disentangle himself from issues that have to do with theology and dogmatics. And he does discretely side with theology and dogmatics when he ends the

note with this remark: "But this much is certain, that it will not do to represent man himself as the inventor of language." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 47)[6]

God warns Adam about a punishment which is meaningless to him. Eve eats from the tree and makes Adam eat as well. Thus, the qualitative leap from innocence to sin is completed and original sin is henceforth a constituent of the human condition. But according to Haufniensis, the story relates what happens inwardly as if it took place outwardly – as myths in general do. In the Biblical narrative, however, one more character has a part to play. Someone persuaded Eve to eat from the tree before she made Adam do the same. Haufniensis is wary of this character from the tale, stating:

> There remains the serpent. I am no friend of cleverness and shall, *volente deo*, resist the temptations of the serpent, who, as at the dawn of time when he tempted Adam and Eve, has in the course of time tempted writers [Kierkegaard has inserted a dash here in the original and it is truly cardinal sin that the translator has left it out – my comment, JB] to be clever. I freely admit my inability to connect any definite thought with the serpent. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 48)

Haufniensis is not quite precise in his rendering of the Biblical narrative here. As just mentioned, the serpent tempted Eve, who in turn tempted Adam, it did not tempt Adam *and* Eve. However, we must remember Haufniensis' idea that all of this is taking place inwardly. It is merely Adam, the human being, who speaks to himself – or, rather, language which is doing the speaking. Does this mean that it is not possible to distinguish between God and the serpent in this myth? Is the voice of the prohibition also the voice of the temptation? Does the prohibition instigate the desire to transgress? Indeed: it can be assumed that "the prohibition awakens the desire" (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 44). If this is so, it might explain why Haufniensis can only indirectly (one is tempted to write: ironically) side with theology and dogmatics. If this is so, the serpent – which Haufniensis

[6] This could be an opening for a psychoanalytical understanding of the text of Haufniensis'. The idea that man is not the inventor of language could dovetail with the idea that language is the language of the Other. Which, in turn, gives a new perspective to Haufniensis' claim that "the speaker is language" and, theologically, might invoke the idea of hereditary sin.

cannot connect any definite thought with – is language. When he abstains from reflecting on the serpent, he abstains from indulging in metalanguage. In the supplement to the English translation, which I am using here, a passage from Kierkegaard's papers (V B 53:11) is quoted in translation in a note to Haufniensis' remark about the serpent: If anyone wishing to instruct me should say, "consistent with the preceding you of course, could say, 'It [the serpent, translator's comment] is language,'" I would reply, "I did not say that". (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 185)

Kierkegaard would say he did not say that the serpent is language – whereby he, of course, by way of the nature of paralepsis, actually says it.[7] But this means that ambiguity is at the heart of the matter.[8] Language, of course, is altogether ambiguous. Linguistic phenomena like irony and paralepsis exploit this fundamental feature of language, but they both only work within the bounds of a given context – and such bounds are ever so fragile. Since anxiety is a consequence of the language, which is fundamentally ambiguous, it must itself be of an ambiguous nature: I have already quoted Haufniensis stating the following:

> Just as the relation of anxiety to its object, to something that is nothing (linguistic usage also says pregnantly: to be anxious about nothing), is altogether ambiguous, so also the transition that is to

[7] The text of Kierkegaard as well as of Haufniensis is thus permeated by irony. One reader who is aware of the irony of Haufniensis' claim of not being able to connect any definite thought to the serpent is Roger Poole in his chapter on *The Concept of Anxiety* in *The Indirect Communication*. What this remark indirectly hints at, Poole suggests, is the fact that the serpent is all over the place in *The Concept of Anxiety* in the shape of the sibilant (the hiss-sound) 's'. A lot of the central terms, like sin (in Danish: *synd*), begin with this letter which, as a consequence, is repeated again and again. Poole develops this idea in a section bearing the title "The Acoustic Signifier" (Poole, 1993, pp. 100-107). This is a very creative idea which should not be dismissed as mere cratylism. One could well argue that this hissing sign is the textual embodiment – or replacement – in *The Concept of Anxiety* of the metalanguage that Haufniensis abstains from.

[8] In a rich article on *The Concept of Anxiety*, "Adam's *Angest*: The Language of Myth and the Myth of Language", Hugh S. Pyper reaches the same conclusion: "The serpent *is* the problem of language and its interpretation, the creative potential of counterfactuality which opens the way to deception and the dizziness of possibility." (Pyper, 2001, p. 95) Following Paul Beauchamp, he also refers to the snake as "the first hermeneut" (s. p.), the one who questions what God did say and thus makes the prohibition a question of interpretation and a case of something which might be understood otherwise.

> be made from innocence to guilt will be so dialectical that it can be seen that the explanation is what it must be, psychological. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 43)

The relation of anxiety to its (non-)object is altogether ambiguous. But what does that mean, how do we experience that? It means that the thing we imagine, which makes us anxious at the same time, exerts a strange attraction. We are drawn towards what repels us.[9] As Haufniensis points out, anxiety in the child is something he or she will not be without, it captivates him/ her with its "pleasing anxiousness" (42). Haufniensis goes on to state the following, which pertains to everybody and not only to children:

> The qualitative leap stands outside of all ambiguity. But he who becomes guilty through anxiety is indeed innocent, for it was not himself but anxiety, a foreign power, that laid hold of him, a power that he did not love but about which he was anxious. And yet he is guilty, for he sank in anxiety, which he nevertheless loved even as he feared it. There is nothing in the world more ambiguous (…). (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 43)

This maximum of ambiguity justifies the chiastic definition Haufniensis offers of anxiety: "Anxiety is *a sympathetic antipathy* and *an antipathetic sympathy*." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 42, Haufniensis' italics) As mentioned, this ambiguity involves even the human infant who is born into a linguistic environment and is predisposed to become an interactive part of it. A human being is never less than a human being:

> That anxiety makes its appearance is the pivot upon which everything turns. Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit. In innocence, man is not merely animal, for if he were at any moment of his life merely animal, he would never become man. So, spirit is present, but as immediate, as dreaming. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 43)

[9] This is what irony and anxiety have in common. Irony attracts and repels, a fact which is embodied by the version of the true Socrates portrayed in *The Concept of Irony*.

The fact that man is such a synthesis of the physical and the psychical is further fuel to the bonfire of ambiguity which pertains to anxiety. But the definition of the human being which is implied here very much prefigures the definition of the self of the same being in the beginning of *The Sickness unto Death.* I will now turn my attention to this work on human despair and ask some simple questions (which is of course no guarantee that the answers will be likewise). Are there any affinities between the anxiety of *The Concept of Anxiety* and the despair of *The Sickness unto Death*? Is language a decisive factor when it comes to despair? And how does the pseudonymous author of *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus, relate to Vigilius Haufniensis?

Despair – and Language?

One reason why a comparison between *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death* is not so simple is that the pseudonyms associated with these works are of different nature. Haufniensis already differs from the Kierkegaardian pseudonyms that precede him and from those that follow immediately after him.

The pseudonymous works *Either-Or*, *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* contain elements of fiction and other characteristics which make a good case for their pseudonymity. The same goes for *Stages on Life's Way*. And even Johannes Climacus of the *Fragments* and the *Postscript* is attributed with so many biographical traits that he assumes the character of a fictitious author. In comparison, Haufniensis is much more anonymous, and the nature of *The Concept of Anxiety* does not, at a first glance, make it seem obvious that it should be a pseudonymous work. However, when one considers the way Haufniensis keeps theology and dogmatics at a distance, as well as his remark about the serpent, one realizes there are reasons why Kierkegaard decided on the pseudonymous solution.

Anti-Climacus is also the pseudonym alleged to be the author of *Practice in Christianity* – a work which does not contain the same psychological orientation which is shared by *the Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death*. Anti-Climacus is not provided with many biographical traits when compared to Johannes Climacus. Due to his name, however, a connection – and an opposition – is of course established between him and

Johannes of the *Fragments* and the *Postscript*. Still, at a first glance it is not easy to fathom why Kierkegaard chose to invent a pseudonymous author for *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*. He did, indeed, feel the need to explain himself – at least to himself. In his papers and journals, he writes the following:

> Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus have several things in common; but the difference is that whereas Johannes Climacus places himself so low that he even says that he himself is not a Christian, one seems to be able to detect in Anti-Climacus that he considers himself to be a Christian on an extraordinarily high level (…) I would place myself higher than Johannes Climacus, lower than Anti-Climacus. (*JP, VI,* 6433)

When compared to Johannes Climacus, who declares himself not to be a Christian, Anti-Climacus is thus a higher form of pseudonym. Kierkegaard would place himself in the middle between these two extremes. A pseudonym like Anti-Climacus, then, allowed Kierkegaard to write directly about the ideality of the Christian religion without necessarily indicating that he could himself live up to such an ideality. But does this mean that Haufniensis is a lower form of pseudonym like Johannes Climacus? The immediate answer to this question would be affirmative. On the one hand, and as mentioned, *The Concept of Anxiety* and *the Sickness unto Death* are both anthropological and psychological in their orientation, while both belong to the category of works in which the dialectical exposition is dominant. But on the other hand, Anti-Climacus does not have to borrow any of his concepts from the discipline of dogmatics and deliver them back. And while Haufniensis analyzes a story from the Old Testament, Anti-Climacus discusses Christ as a potential source of taking offense. Anti-Climacus thus comes across as a Christian to a higher degree than Haufniensis – at least at a first glance.

Anti-Climacus, though, does not write much on the question of language and he does not comment on the story of the Fall and consequently does not say anything about a certain serpent. However, his definition of the human self in the very opening of *The Sickness unto Death*, the first section of the first part, does imply that the question of language is essential to his understanding of the human condition. As mentioned, this definition is very

much prefigured by Haufniensis' definition of the human being, which I have already quoted. The definition of Anti-Climacus goes like this:

> A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? 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. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 13)

A human being is spirit (or the possibility of becoming spirit) and this is the self. The self, understood as spirit, is a relation which relates to itself. But what is a relation in this case? It is a synthesis according to Anti-Climacus: "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis." (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 13) Haufniensis' definition was that the human being is "a synthesis of the psychical and the physical". When it comes to the definition of Anti-Climacus, the finite, the temporal and necessity must be what relates to the material body, the physical. It follows that freedom, the eternal and the infinite must relate to the mental and immaterial sphere, the psychical. However, Anti-Climacus continues: "A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self." (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 13) And he goes on in a way which might undermine the definition of Haufniensis:

> In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus, under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 13)

Haufniensis merely stated that spirit is the positive third of the synthesis between the psychical and the physical. Anti-Climacus indeed complicates the matter. The third might be a "negative unity" – and, it must be understood, a negative unity is not yet the self. Only when the relation itself relates to itself do we have a positive third – and thus the self which is spirit.

It follows that it is not enough that the synthesis is some kind of mental awareness or consciousness of the surrounding world or environment. Only when this consciousness itself relates to itself, only when it is self-consciousness proper, do we have the positive third which is the self which is (the potential or possibility of) spirit. But language is obviously the precondition of any such proper self-consciousness. It is because of language that I can relate myself to myself. Therefore, the complication goes both ways, so to speak, between Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus. Anti-Climacus demands that the third which is spirit is proper self-consciousness – which has language as a precondition. Haufniensis has informed us that nothing is more ambiguous than the qualitative leap from innocence to its opposite because a certain serpent – language – is synonymous with ambiguity. Anti-Climacus appears to need some help from outside and perhaps he gets that:

> Such a relation that relates itself to itself, a self, must either have established itself or have been established by another. If the relation that relates itself to itself has been established by another, then the relation is indeed the third, but this relation, the third, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 13)

Self or spirit as third, self-consciousness proper, is a relation which also relates to "another", to that which established it. This "another" could simply be taken to be language. Language is what establishes self-consciousness as its precondition. This "another" could also be taken to be God; God, perhaps, as creator and/ or as giver of language.

If we simply take "another" to be language, there is no obvious difference between the definitions of Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus. The latter has just made us dizzy with a daunting series of what approximates tautologies. However, the former did in fact himself point beyond his own scope or position. He refused to think anything definite about the serpent and he stated that "it will not do to represent man himself as the inventor of language."

Does this mean that God is the inventor and donator of language, or does it mean that language is beyond our control because it is always the language of the other? This question, it appears, is "the pivot upon which

everything turns". That everything turns and we in no way can advance beyond ambiguity (and tautology) might indeed be indicated by the definition of the human being of Anti-Climacus. Permit me to repeat it: "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis." A synthesis is, in short, a synthesis, Anti-Climacus writes. He also specifies what are the constituents of a certain synthesis, the human being as a synthesis of the psychical and the physical. The positive terms of the synthesis must necessarily relate to the psychical as a condition for self-consciousness and spirit. It would be very easy to list these constituents in an order which reflected this fact. It would be ever so easy to list them in this way: "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, *of the eternal and the temporal*, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis." Anti-Climacus does not. He reverses the order of the middle pair of constituents and thus unsettles the whole equation. As a result, everything surely turns and keeps turning.

Anti-Climacus thus makes it clear from the outset that logical and dialectical brilliance will not take his enterprise anywhere. Only God can take it somewhere, and God is a power whose existence cannot be proven but must be believed. Only when God is posited does it make sense to claim that there are two basic forms of despair. Anti-Climacus suggests this – without explicitly positing God:

> This is why there can be two forms of despair in the strict sense. If a human self had itself established itself, then there could be only one form: not to will to be oneself, to will to do away with oneself, but there could not be the form: in despair to will to be oneself. This second formulation is specifically the expression for the complete dependence of the relation (of the self), the expression for the inability of the self to arrive at or to be in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only, in relating itself to itself, by relating itself to that which has established the entire relation. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 14)

It makes no sense to replace "that which has established the entire relation" with language in this equation. The only replacement which makes sense is "God". Anti-Climacus makes God an irreplaceable part of the equation without explicitly positing or mentioning Him (he will do that later on in *The Sickness unto Death*).

The dialectical brilliance of the exposition of the various shapes of the two basic kinds of despair – despairingly not wanting to become a self and despairingly wanting to become a self – thus rests upon this indirect act of positing. At the same time, it echoes the not less brilliant exposition of Haufniensis of the shapes of the two basic kinds of anxiousness: anxiousness about what is good and anxiousness about what is evil. This latter distinction also presupposes a dogmatic idea about the nature of good and evil which in turn makes God an irreplaceable part of the equation without explicitly positing God.

If we read them along lines such as these, there is no absolute way of distinguishing between Haufniensis as a "lower" pseudonym and Anti-Climacus as a "higher" one. Anti-Climacus might represent a position of faith to an extraordinary degree, but he cannot rid himself from the paradoxes and tautologies that follow from the fact that language also plays an irreplaceable part in his exposition. This is evident from the proleptic state beyond despair which ends the first section of the first part of *The Sickness unto Death*:

> The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 14)

Again, it would make no sense to replace "the power" with "language", here. Again, only the replacement "God" makes sense. But the state, which is described, to rest transparently in God, is not something which can be achieved as a once-and-for-all, as something definite and definitive.

Thus, despair cannot be completely rooted out as a permanent state.[10] Dogmatically understood, to rest transparently in God would be to have no thoughts or wishes that would not be in complete accordance with the will of

[10] In fact, what is suggested by Erica Weitzman in "The World in Pieces: Concepts of Anxiety in H.C. Andersen's 'The Snow Queen'" is much rather the case: "For Kierkegaard, however, faith is itself the highest irony, a leap into despair, a necessary illusion or precisely the realm in which nothing makes sense. Despair is thus not a stage that must be passed through on one's way to adulthood but rather an interminable task and the pre-condition for salvation as self-knowledge and understanding of the human condition vis-à-vis God." (Weitzman, 2007, p.1117)

God, to have rooted out self-will in the negative sense completely. Understood in relation to language, such a state of transparency would be a state beyond all ambiguity, a state of perfect match between the signifier "I" and what it signifies – in effect, a state beyond language, since the consciousness of self as a relation of a signifier ("I") to a signified inevitably implies a difference. Any such state of transparency can thus only be approximated and striven for in the perpetual struggle to obtain and maintain faith as Kierkegaard understands it.[11]

If we cannot rid ourselves of language, we cannot rid ourselves of ideas about what we want or what we do not want to become. We cannot root out the imaginary dimension of our mental being. Wanting to be a self or not wanting to be a self means also relating oneself to possibilities. Both are aspirations which must necessarily engage the imaginary. But self-consciousness proper is only possible when one's relation to language is fully established. Self-consciousness proper is only possible on the other side of the state of innocence.

Thinking on or from the basis of Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus, one might conclude that while anxiety relates to the transition from the state of innocence to its opposite, the phase of the enigmatic acquisition of speech,[12] despair relates to the state where one is fully established as a speaking being. But as I just stated, wanting to or not wanting to be a self are aspirations which partake of the imaginary. Having acquired speech, having been fully initiated into the community of speaking beings, does not abolish the imaginary – far from it.

This can only mean that Haufniensis, so to speak, must still be a part of or participate in what is exposed by Anti-Climacus. In fact, it appears that

[11] As I read her, Horton understands the transparency as, or as rooted in, the very difference which is the condition of language and thus of the self: "(…) the self's ground is that very blank that opens it to alterity." (Horton, 2018, p. 131) To rest transparently in the alterity which is God on the basis of this very blank, this difference, would still be a perpetual struggle, something which one can only perpetually strive for.

[12] Enigmatic because while we learn to speak as a gradual process, language is something you either possess – or is possessed by – or not. Language makes no sense if you are not in possession of the code or deep structure. You can only learn to speak if you already possess the code or the deep structure at least as a potential or possibility. The conflict between the idea of the acquisition of the ability to speak as a gradual process and the idea of it as a leap of a kind is not easy to resolve.

Anti-Climacus states this as a fact on a couple of occasions when he refers directly to his predecessor or precursor. The first instance is this one:

> If despair is perplexity (…), then the ignorance of despair [not being aware that one is in despair, my comment, JB] simply adds error to it. The relation between ignorance and despair is similar to that between ignorance and anxiety (see *The Concept of Anxiety* by Vigilius Haufniensis); the anxiety that characterizes spiritlessness is recognized precisely by its spiritless sense of security. Nevertheless, anxiety lies underneath; likewise, despair also lies underneath, and when the enchantment of illusion is over, when existence begins to totter, then despair, too, immediately appears as that which lay underneath. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 44)

It only takes a word to unsettle this ignorance, this security, this enchantment of illusion. Anti-Climacus points to the parallel between himself and Haufniensis and therefore the end of the enchantment of illusion he refers to is by no means an escape from the imaginary. When he mentions Haufniensis a second and last time, Anti-Climacus emphasizes the foundation in dogmatics which Haufniensis in turn cannot escape from:

> Yet there is and remains a difference, and it is a qualitative difference, between paganism in the stricter sense and paganism in Christendom, the distinction that Vigilius Haufniensis pointed out with respect to anxiety, namely, that paganism does indeed lack spirit but that it still is qualified in the direction of spirit, whereas paganism in Christendom lacks spirit in a departure from spirit or in a falling away and therefore is spiritlessness in the strictest sense. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 47)

Anti-Climacus thus emphasizes what he and Haufniensis have in common when it comes to the mental states, they take an interest in (Anti-Climacus on despair approximating Haufniensis on anxiety), and when it comes to their theological orientation (Haufniensis as psychologist approximating Anti-Climacus as extraordinary Christian). It comes as no surprise, then, that he more or less equates his own despair with Haufniensis' anxiety – though without mentioning the latter:

> Even that which, humanly speaking, is utterly beautiful and loveable – a womanly youthfulness that is perfect peace and harmony and joy – is nevertheless despair. To be sure, it is happiness, but happiness is not a qualification of spirit, and deep, deep within the most secret hiding place of happiness there dwells also *anxiety, which is despair*; it very much wishes to be allowed to remain there, because for despair the most cherished and desirable place to live is in the heart of happiness. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 25, my italics)

Here, anxiety and despair are literally equated. And immediately after this has been done, a key definition of Haufniensis' is repeated: "Despite its illusory security and tranquillity, *all immediacy is anxiety and thus, quite consistently, is most anxious about nothing*." (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 25) One senses a certain snake could be invoked here. And one might not be far wrong:

> Immediacy probably does not know it, but reflection never snares so unfailingly as when it fashions its snare out of nothing, and reflection is never so much itself as when it is – nothing. It requires extraordinary reflection, or, more correctly, it requires great faith to be able to endure reflection upon nothing – that is, infinite reflection. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 25-26)

We are not quite free from tautology, since this formulation appears to chase its own tail in an uncanny way – reflection which fashions its snare out of nothing becomes nothing only then to become reflection upon nothing. To be sure, the tail chased is language as the condition for the imagination as well as for reflection:

> Imagination is infinitizing reflection, and therefore the elder Fichte quite correctly assumed that even in relation to knowledge the categories derive from the imagination. The self is reflection, and the imagination is reflection, is the rendition of the self as the self's possibility. The imagination is the possibility of any and all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the intensity of the self. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, 31)

Thus, Anti-Climacus reiterates the basic insights of the pages from *The Concept of Anxiety* I have dwelt upon here *before* he explicitly mentions

Haufniensis. I consider this reverse order as regards his references to Haufniensis and *The Concept of Anxiety* to be parallel and congenial to his significant reversal of the middle pair of the constituents of his definition of the synthesis of the human being. Everything turns and keeps turning. Or more precisely: since there is no escape from the snare of language, the question of the nature of the relationship between Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus (as they, the "higher" and the "lower" pseudonym, perpetually approximate each other) is the pivot upon which everything turns.

Afterthought

The ambivalence of language is so intense that the notion that all language is metalanguage might be synonymous with the idea that metalanguage is strictly speaking an impossibility. From *The Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death*, one might get the impression that the human being is irredeemably caught up in the snare of this ambivalent language. The anxious subject or the subject in despair come across as solipsistic subjects in a state of isolation from others (apart from the otherness which language is, as mentioned). Especially as regards the pernicious instances of anxiety and despair: anxiety about what is good and despairingly not wanting to be a self.

From the point of view of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, this does not augur well. Either language is basically metalanguage or metalanguage is strictly speaking impossible, the ambivalence of language would appear to rule out the possibility of the kind of talking cure which psychotherapy and psychoanalysis most often aspire to be. And this is probably true if any such talking cure is conceived of as a Freudian *Durcharbeitung* of what traumatizes the one suffering from anxiety or despair (or *anxiety, which is despair*). But while any such talking cure might not be successful, language might still be ambiguous to a degree where there could be hope for a cure of talking, of a different kind. A cure of talking – a cure not resting on any kind of working through which depends on whatever referential content that is traumatizing – might be a utopian idea. But faith, hope and love could still entertain an idea that the mere fact of communicating via language in the

broadest sense of the term might in itself have a healing power – or at least have the potential of such a power.[13]

Anxiety, especially demonic anxiety in the sense of Haufniensis, does not want to communicate, it wants to remain in a perniciously withdrawn and introvert state. And if it wants to escape this painful state, it might find it impossible to do so – at least if it thinks that if it could only explain itself properly, it would be the way out. However, the way out might be found in what I just termed the mere (f)act of communicating. Haufniensis does appear to imply as much. His diagnosis, which comes first, is formulated this way:

> The demonic does not close itself up with something, but it closes itself up within itself, and in this lies what is profound about existence, precisely that unfreedom makes itself a prisoner. Freedom is always *communicerende* [communicating, translator's comment] (it does no harm even to take into consideration the religious significance of the word); unfreedom becomes more and more inclosed and does not want communication. (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 124)

Then follows what might perhaps be shorthand for the cure of talking: "The law for the manifestation of the demonic is that against its will it 'comes out with it.' [says it, formulates it, my comment, JB] For language does indeed imply communication." (Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 124) I take this to mean something other than formulating what is the matter or what is the burden or what is traumatizing. What language implies is not the communication of any such content but communication as such and as

[13] This might be related to the two theses guiding Steven Shakespeare's article "Satan's Angel: The Inhuman Communication of Kierkegaard's Early Discourses": "All language is a risk: the risk of giving Satan a voice" and "All language is potentially an expression of hope: the hope that Satan will redeem us." (Shakespeare, undated, p. 1) In *Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*, he comes to a conclusion which is formulated less equivocally: "But ultimately, Kierkegaard sees language as an invitation to a particular form of life: one which renounces idolatry, one which risks everything to set the other free. We do not simply act in the void, but as always already indebted to the other. And that debt is not merely an immanent transaction, a matter of relative give and take. It involves us with the Other who created us out of nothing. Language does not so much refer to God as refer us to him, the God who, as the 'inventor of language' is the one who 'holds the blessing in his hands'. (Shakespeare, 2001, p. 238)

something which is beyond control and calculation.[14] If language is the language of the other then it is – also – the language of communication, of community and of communion – the latter perhaps even in a secular sense. But this is merely an afterthought that I must take the full responsibility for. Neither Haufniensis or Anti-Climacus – nor even Kierkegaard – are authorities beyond the ambivalence of language that I can appeal to.

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[14] This is Horton's conclusion: "To be saved by language, one must abandon the attempt to control it, to resist its authority, to fight its ultimate illegibility by imposing definitions and distinctions on what we do not have the power to read." (Horton, 2018, p. 133) I agree, but it remains unclear to me precisely what she understands the "authority of language" to be. On the other hand, it becomes obvious that the phenomenon of chatter, idle prattle, which Haufniensis bashes in *The Concept of Anxiety* and which Kierkegaard bashes on numerous occasions elsewhere, becomes an ambivalent notion. One should no longer rest assured that one can distinguish between chatter in the pernicious sense and the kind of communication-beyond-control that has got a potentially saving grace. The pernicious kind of chatter in Kierkegaard is discussed by Peter Fenves in his excellent monograph *Chatter*.

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Anxiety and Kierkegaard's *Angest*

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Abstract. This is a translator's inquiry into what one may call the untranslatability, or near-untranslatability, of a Kierkegaardian concept. The article consists of five sections. Section I (Translating *Angest*) presents my personal reasons for embarking on this article. Since Kierkegaard employs *Angest* both colloquially and as a concept, Section II (Colloquial *Angst*) is a brief presentation of the general definition and uses of this word in everyday Danish, and Section III (Kierkgaard's *Angest*) is an analysis and panoramic view of *Angest* as concept, based on quotations extracted mainly from *Begrebet Angest.* Section IV (German *Angst,* English 'anxiety', Danish *Angest*) is a short semi-historical presentation of some previous attempts to find and establish a suitable equivalent for *Angest.* Section V (The Conceptual Inheritance of Søren Kierkegaard) reiterates the idea that *Angest*, as a Kierkegaardian, Nordic concept, is not suitable for rendering into another language because too many of its connotations and original meanings would be lost in translation.
Keywords: *Angest,* anxiety, angoasă, hereditary sin, dogma, psychology, translatability.

Introduction

Translators, compared to general readers, are supposed to be more sensitive to words when they render them into their target language, more aware when a translation strikes the wrong note. My interest is semantic, literary and cultural. I focus on *Angest* intending to show Kierkegaard's pristine Nordic presence in this concept, and to signal that the premature establishment of a received and popular international system of equivalence, which does not always convey the spirit of Kierkegaard's Danish concept, ought to be treated with healthy scepticism. As Kierkegaard's writings are read by most in English translations, 'anxiety' – the current official English version of *Angest* and one of its most received and employed translations –

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will be given the main consideration. Other equivalents, such as French *angoisse*, Romanian *angoasă*, (to mention only two of the terms closest to *angustia,* the Latin root of *Angest*) will be dealt with *en passant,* because they seem to render the intention of another author than Kierkegaard, not the original connotations of the Danish *Angest.* While 'the meaning of a poem can only be another poem', the meaning of *Angest* can only be *Angest.*

One result of naturalising a significant number of so-called equivalents to several of Kierkegaard's key concepts is that concepts such as *Angest, Anfægtelse, Tilværelse, Aabenbarelse, Inderlighed, Øieblik,* gradually lose their 'strangeness' and original connotations.[1] In this article I attempt to show that Kierkegaard's professed meaning, the quintessence of his concept *Angest*, is watered down in 'anxiety', a premature yet, alas, already ossified English 'equivalent'. I will concentrate on *Angest*'s English (not Romanian, Portuguese or Latvian) equivalent, because Kierkegaard is, it is claimed, read by most people in English. Besides, (since it is easier to read and translate a 20th century updated English translation with the difficulties ironed out, than Kierkegaard's original Danish text from the 19th), his books are sometimes translated into third languages from English, rather than Danish.

I) Translating *Angest*

Kierkegaard uses *Angest* lavishly, both as a concept and colloquially, in many of his writings. By glancing at its frequency in just two of these – *Begrebet Angest* (BA) and *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift* (AuE) – we can report that *Angest* appears 150 times in BA, and 10 times in AuE.[2]

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[1] On false friends and concepts difficult to translate (into Romanian) I have commented regularly in my Romanian translations of Kierkegaard, in the Translator's Introduction to *Philosophiske Smuler* (*Fărâme filozofice,* Amarcord, Timişoara, 1999), *Begrebet Angest* (*Conceptul de anxietate,* Amarcord, Timişoara, 1998), *Gjentagelsen* (*Repetarea*, Amarcord, Timişoara, 2000), *Frygt og Bæven + Forord* (*Frică şi cutremur + Prefeţe*, Honterus, Sibiu, 2007), *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift* (*Epilog neştiinţific definitiv,* Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, Cluj, 2017).

[2] *The Kierkegaard Indices,* compiled by Alastair McKinnon, Vol. II, *Fundamental Polyglot Konkordans til Kiekegaards Samlede Værker*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, pp. 29-30 (BA) and p. 31 (AuE).

It is not always easy to ascertain whether, or when, the term is employed colloquially or as a concept in a context; nor is it easy to define and delimit its conceptual meaning when we want to translate it. It therefore seems unwise to translate the word always in the same way, as a concept, a concept that, according to J. L. Borges, Kierkegaard 'endowed with a new shiver of fear',[3] whose meaning floats continuously in the twilight zone of 'freedom's psychological attitudes towards sin'. My need and urge to understand and render correctly the meaning of Kierkegaard's *Angest* grew from translating *Begrebet Angest* into Romanian; from trying to find – from a translator's point of view – the specific meaning given by the author to this word; and from a feeling of inadequacy when comparing *his Angest* with a number of current equivalents, in English and in a few Romance languages.

In regard to translating *Angest* into Romanian (my maternal language), it is relevant to note that Kierkegaard's *Angest* and existentialism entered Romanian via the mainstream, atheistic, existentialist and, especially, linguistic terminology and writings of Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre and Jean Wahl. It is therefore not surprising to see that Kierkegaard's (translated) Romanian terminology was tainted from the beginning by French existentialist terminology, thinking, and discourse. *Begrebet Angest* was translated into French in 1935 as *Le concept de l'angoisse.* Romanian *angoasă,* a loan word from French, was allegedly borrowed from Sartre's *angoisse* and incorporated in the incipient Romanian Kierkegaard terminology, regardless of the fact that *angoasă*, unlike *Angest*, is obviously oriented 'in the direction' of Sartre's nausea. Dedicated Romanian translator G.I. Tohăneanu considers *angoasă* 'a word that gives great joy to snobs who, by not being properly acquainted with existential philosophy, use it indiscriminately, *ergo* abusively'[4]. Solid as a rock, it nevertheless remained an important, received part of the general Romanian Kierkegaard vocabulary, and an example of an over-hasty terminological tradition that, even today, sturdily resists innovation and alternatives, based on the false argument that the antiquity of a concept, or conception, is also a proof of its soundness. *Angoasă* blatantly fails to convey the meaning of *Angest* and recalls instead

[3] *Selected Non-Fictions,* Jorge Luis Borges, Penguin Books, New York, 2000, edited by Eliot Weinberger, translated by E. Allen, S. J. Levine, E. Weiberger, p. 519.

[4] G. I. Tohăneanu, *Dicționar de imagini pierdute,* Amarcord, Timișoara, 1995, p. 49. My own translation.

Antoine Roquentin's Sartrian feeling of 'nausea, sickly sweet feeling coming from objects – a pebble, a chestnut tree'.

It is not uncommon for a translator – if they feel unable to convey directly the sense of a (source language) key word into their own (target) language – to consult translations of the same word into other languages, especially major languages and (ideally) related to the translator's own, in the hope that more experienced translators of that text have already found an equivalent that reflects, on a one-to-one basis, the meaning of the original concept, in this case of *Angest*.

As *angoasă*, and other equivalents of *Angest* in Romance languages, used in early translations, didn't seem to encapsulate the spirit of Kierkegaard's concept, I copied, or imitated, the English 'anxiety', rendering it in Romanian as *anxietate*, and regretted it ever since.

II) Colloquial *Angst*

In order to highlight graphically what I could call the specific background of this concept, its Danish 'landscape', the way in which thought, sound and language are intertwined in it, and to illustrate the difference between its original sense and the one conveyed nowadays by a couple of its equivalents, I am going to render Kierkegaard's titles and quotations both in Danish and in their English version. In this way I hope to help (re)link *Angest* somehow to its original text, sound and the author's perspective of original sin, and to kindle the reader's interest in its original language. It is also intended as a reminder of the fact that, by writing in Danish, Kierkegaard was aware that he was addressing a limited number of (informed) native readers. I would like to mention in this connection Roger Poole's article on Kierkegaard from 1998, 'The Unknown Kierkegaard; Twentieth-century receptions'. Poole here quotes from Jeremy Walker's book *The Descent into God* (1985):

> It is in the interests of scholarship in its widest sense, that we (*a*) pay Kierkegaard the elementary compliment of using his own chosen titles: (*b*) recall that he wrote and thought in Danish – just as Plato wrote in Greek, Aquinas in Latin, and Kant in German – and begin to read him in his own language; and (*c*) refrain from

> using English titles which cut English-language scholarship partially off from concurrent scholarly work in, say, French and German.[5]

Angst is a common word in everyday Danish. If people in the Danish street today are asked, 'What is *angst*?' they might answer that it can be an adjective or a noun, such as:

> *a) ræd, sky, bange, utryg, nervøs, panisk, skræmt, urolig, beklemt, vidskræmt, angstfuld, forfærdet, ængstelig, betænkelig, frygtagtig, forskrækket, foruroliget, hjerteklemt, panikslagen, skrækslagen, rædselsslagen,* or
> *b) gru, uro, bæven, frygt, gysen, panik, skræk, rædsel, skyhed, uhygge, banghed, utryghed, bekymring, klemmelse, urolighed, alteration, oprevethed, nervøsitet, sindsoprør, sjæleangst, beklemmelse, bestyrtelse, beængstelse, forfærdelse, frygtsomhed, hjerteangst, hjertebæven, angstneurose, forskræmthed, modfaldenhed,ængstelighed, betænkelighed, frygtagtighed, forskrækkelse.*[6]

Should this information be insufficient or less relevant, its two-page definition can be found in the first volume of the *Dictionary of the Danish Language*[7] from 1919. According to that, *Angest* is derived from the Latin *angustiæ* (narrowness, difficulty), was adopted by Danes from two Middle Low German terms, *angest* and *anxt,* was spelled *Angest* in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and is spelled *angst* nowadays. The reader who rates a dictionary from 1919 too remote from the vocabulary used by Kierkegaard, can choose to consider Danish philologist and historian Christian Molbech's (1783-1857) definition of *Angest* in his celebrated *Danish Dictionary*:[8]

> Egentlig Klemmelse, Trykning for Hjertet; men bruges kun for: en høj Grad af Frygt for eller Bekymring over en forestaaende Fare. Frygt for et stort, nær forestaaende Onde, hvorfra man ei ved at redde sig, er Angest ... betagen af en høj Grad af Frygt.

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[5] Roger Poole, 'The Unknown Kierkegaard', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard,* CUP, Cambridge, 1998, p. 65.

[6] Poul Garmark, *Kryds-og-tværs ordbog,* Munksgaards Ordbøger, Norbok, 1990, p. 28. NB: I refrain from translating the above words into English, to avoid introducing unnecessary vocabulary.

[7] *Ordbog over det danske Sprog, Første Bind,* edited by Verner Dahlerup, Nordisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1919.

[8] Christian Molbech, *Dansk Ordbog indeholdende det danske Sprogs Stammeord. Anden, forøgede og forbedrede Udgave,* Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1859, pp. 78-79.

This could be translated into English as:

> Actual constriction, pressure on the heart; used only for a high degree of fear or worry about an impending or threatening danger. Angest is fear of a great imminent evil, which one doesn't know how to escape ... gripped by a high degree of fear.[9]

This definition points to symptoms that, somatically, recall the spasms of chest pain felt by someone suffering from *angina pectoris.* Other related root-words of *Angest* are, apart from *angustiae,* the Latin *ango* (to strangle), *angor* (suffocation), the Greek *agchô* (tighten, suffocate) and the Gothic *aggwus* (narrow).

III) Kierkegaard's *Angest*

Kierkegaard came across German *Angst* in his reading of the Romantics, Hegel and Johann Georg Hamann. Schelling sees in the word 'the sufferings of the divinity longing for creation'. Hamann (according to A. Hannay) characterised *Angst* as an 'impertinent disquiet and holy hypochondria'.[10] Kierkegaard gave this concept a new and definitely more complex meaning.

To translate *Angest* into another language, the translator must, naturally, understand and take into account the entire rainbow of implicit and explicit meanings given by Kierkegaard to this word (and the way it had to be understood by the audience it addressed). One of the reasons why this word, or concept, is (nearly) untranslatable could be the author's intention of expressing the maximum meaning with one word, an intention that might recall Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty when he/it declares, 'When *I* use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'[11] (A modest example of how a parable can be turned into a philosophical statement.)

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[9] All Danish-English translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[10] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, *(CA)*, edited and translated by Alastair Hannay, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, 2014, pp. XV-XVII.

[11] Lewis, Carroll, *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*, The Nonesuch Press, London,1939, p. 196.

Danish philosopher Villy Sørensen asserts that an author who uses his words 'as a poet, a philosopher and a theologian will most likely appeal to more people than one who expresses himself solely as a poet, philosopher or theologian. But when he, like Søren Kierkegaard, cannot be called one of the three at any one time, but often all three things at the same time, he will certainly be criticised for not really being any of them.'[12] (Kierkegaard, we might add, preferred to be considered a poet orientated towards religion.) We would like to exemplify in the following some features of his psychologically dogmatic concept *Angest.* Whether these features are also characteristic of terms like 'anxiety', 'anguish' or 'angoasă' will be tackled here and in the next section.

Angest, as a concept, could broadly be defined as being without an object, yet is related to freedom, the Old Testament, psychology, nothingness, innocence, vertigo, despair, and other notions. Linking seemingly disparate features, Kierkegaard generated a new concept.

Kierkegaard's 'main' meaning of *Angest* is not easy to fathom, not even from the book as a whole. We could, though, cautiously acknowledge that we are dealing with a concept that is doubtless polysemantic and charged with, at least, 1) a dogmatic meaning (in the science of absolute spirit), 2) a psychological meaning (in the science of subjective spirit), and 3) an ethical meaning (in the science of objective spirit). According to Lee Barrett:

1) dogmatics asks the question, 'Why do people sin?' and answers, 'Because they are sinners.'[13] (Jean Wahl is thought to have suspected Kierkegaard's overt religious thinking of being meant to 'lure his readers into the depths of subjectivity for the sole purpose of making them discover there the unhappiness of man without God');

2) psychology asks the question, 'Why do people sin?' and answers, 'People sin because they are anxious;'[14]

As regards ethics, we will only mention that 'with the appearance of sin, all is lost for ethics'.

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[12] *Sørensen om Kierkegaard*, *Villy Sørensens udvalgte artikler om Søren Kierkegaard*, Redaktion og efterskrift af Gert Posselt, Gyldendal, 2007, p. 155.

[13] Lee Barrett, 'Kierkegaard's "Anxiety" and the Augustinian Doctrine of Original Sin´, in *International Kierkegaard Commentary, The Concept of Anxiety,* Vol. 8, edited by Robert L. Perkins, Mercer University Press, Macon, 1985, p. 54.

[14] Ibid.

The *Introduction* to *Begrebet Angest* warns the reader that the course of the analysis will be sinuous and move intermittently from the dogma of hereditary sin to psychology:

> 'Nærværende Skrift har sat sig som Opgave at afhandle Begrebet "Angest" psychologisk saaledes, at det har Dogmet om Arvesynden *in mente* og for Øie. Forsaavidt faaer det da ogsaa om end taust med Syndens Begreb at gjøre. Synden er imidlertid ingen Opgave for psychologisk Interesse, og det vilde kun være at hengive sig til en misforstaaet Aandrigheds Tjeneste, om man vilde behandle den saaledes.'[15]
>
> 'The present work has set itself the task of treating [the concept of] "anxiety" psychologically in such a way as to have in mind and view the dogma of hereditary sin. Accordingly, it has taken into account, although tacitly, the concept of sin. Sin, however, is no matter for psychological concern, and it would be to abandon oneself to the service of a misunderstood cleverness if one were to treat it so.'[16]

In the following, certain of the term's characteristics will be discussed at some length (A, B, D and E), while others will be described briefly (C, F, G, H) or their place in Begrebet Angest simply mentioned.

A) *Angest* and dogma

Angest points in the beginning to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, the fall of Adam, original (hereditary) sin – the first sin – the fall of humanity to the Adamic form, the actuality of sin and, implicitly, the possibility of salvation; and to the fact that the first sin is Adam's decision to eat the apple. *Angest* is defined as the outcome of hereditary sin, the guilty decision presupposed by dogmatics. Sin enters the world in *Angest*, a category hardly ever treated in this manner by anyone other than Kierkegaard.

> 'Den Angest, som Synden bringer ind med sig, er vel nærmest først idet Individet selv sætter Synden, men er også dunkelt tilstede som et Mere eller Mindre i Slægtens qualitative Historie.'[17]

[15] Kierkegaard, *Samlede Værker 3, (SV3)*, p. 113.
[16] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 19.
[17] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., p. 146.

> 'The anxiety that sin brings in with it is really only present when the individual itself posits sin, and yet this anxiety is obscurely present as a "more or less" in the qualitative history of race.'[18]
>
> 'Arvesyndens Følge eller Arvesyndens Tilstedeværelse i den Enkelte er Angest, der kun er quantitativt forskjellig fra Adams.'[19]
>
> 'The outcome of hereditary sin, or hereditary sin's presence in the individual, is an anxiety that differs only quantitatively from that of Adam.'[20]

(The fact that *Vigilius Haufniensis* links *Angest* with the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin does not entail that Kierkegaard himself was a partisan of this idea, as it deprived man of his free will and responsibility. This could be a reason why Kierkegaard decided at the last moment to sign this work Haufniensis.)

The relationship between *Angest*, hereditary sin, Adam and Eve and the Old Testament can be for many (readers and) translators – straining to find Kierkegaard's 'real' meaning of the word – surprising. So it would have been for later atheistic existentialists: for Nietzsche, who declared God dead, Camus, who confessed: 'There are words that I have never understood, such as sin' (*Noces),* for Sartre or Heidegger, for whom existence is everything, as well as from an ontological point of view. Philosophers considered the subjective idea (that hereditary sin is the prerequisite of *Angest*) as being Christian, not philosophical. Yet, to understand the core of Kierkegaard's *Angest*, his longing for a renewed contact with the Divine, we must highlight the fact that he rejected the idea of differentiating philosophy and civilisation from dogmatism, regardless of the fact that, just three decades after Kierkegaard's death, such a differentiation became real. The process of secularisation and laicisation was given a laconic, though relevant, description by Baudelaire, who noted: 'Theory of true civilisation. It has nothing to do with gas, or steam or table-turning. It consists in the diminution of the traces of original sin.'[21] A diminution nevertheless foreign to a

[18] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 66.
[19] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., p. 145.
[20] Kierkegaard*, CA, op. cit*., p. 64.
[21] Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals,* translated by Christopher Isherwood, Blackmore Press, London, 1930, pp. 84-85.

professed Christian and theologian such as Kierkegaard, for whom the idea of not thinking of God was inconceivable. It is therefore important to underline that *Angest* reflects consistently (if not clearly) its strong connection to dogmatics. To learn to be anxious (in the right way) about sin was the task of every individual, a leap in his quest of himself, a far cry from the threatening laicised, non-Christian thinking.

Contemporary Danish philosopher Poul Lübcke goes further and calls Kierkegard's *Angest* a 'fundamental angst'. Lübcke argues that:

> 'Fundamental angst is not the angst about whether Protestantism, Catholicism, Christianity or Mohammedanism is the right doctrine, it is rather the angst about whether a religious interpretation of existence makes any sense at all.'[22] 'Angst shows that the reality structures a person has hitherto deemed necessary are nevertheless problematic.'[23] And that: 'The more a person flees from his freedom, the greater the angst.'[24]

B) *Angest* and psychology

Angest, apart from being a dogmatic category, is an emotional movement. What, one might ask, is the object of *Angest*? And one might answer that:

Angest belongs to psychology and psychological observation. The subtitle of *Begrebet Angest* defines a treatise which is a 'psychologically oriented deliberation'.

> 'Angest er en Bestemmelse af den drømmende Aand, og hører som saadan hjemme i Psychologien.'[25]
>
> 'Anxiety is an attribute of the dreaming spirit and belongs as such to psychology.'[26]
>
> 'Angest er en sympathetisk Antipathie og en antipathetisk Sympathie.'[27]

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[22] Poul Lübcke, 'Angstbegrebet hos Kierkegaard og Heidegger', *Agrippa – psykiatriske tekster,* årg.3, nr. 1, 1980*,* p. 62.
[23] *Ibid*., p. 63.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 64.
[25] Kierkegaard, *SV3, op. cit*., p. 136.
[26] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 51.
[27] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., p. 136.

> ‘Anxiety is a *sympathetic antipathy* and an *antipathetic sympathy.* ’[28]
>
> *Angest* is a ‘desire for what one fears’, a dream-like movement.

The fact that Kierkegaard was Denmark’s foremost depth psychologist was claimed as early as in 1877, by Georg Brandes:

> Danish Literature of the first half of the nineteenth century culminates and ends with Kierkegaard ... no other writer of our literature has descended deeper into the abyss of the human heart, no one has ever felt as fervently, thought as acutely or taken a higher flight in his enthusiasm for the ideals of purity and determination.[29]

Heidegger too – whose generalised *Angst* is (unlike Kierkegaard’s) removed from religion and characterised mainly by fear and terror – considers Kierkegaard a Christian psychologist and ‘the man who has gone furthest in analysing the phenomenon of *Angst*’ (SZ 190 IV).[30]

Kierkegaard himself experienced states of mind often described in his works. Yet, the fact that ‘his *Angest*’ is not simply a description of a personal ‘holy hypochondria’, or a personal narcissistic lament, is observed by Danish literary historian Kresten Nordentoft, who writes:

> More interesting, however, than applying the views of Kretschmer, Freud, Jung or others to Kierkegaard’s suffering, is an investigation of Kierkegaard’s own diagnosis of suffering, and thus the discovery that his talk of anxiety and despair is not merely the literary autobiography of a neurotic, but a genuine psychological theory. Kierkegaard was not merely a suffering, sickly individual. He also had a critical, analytic distance from this sickness.[31]

Kierkegaard’s *Angest* is something other than a simple description of a ‘common’ mental disorder, of a clinical cluster of experiences often

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[28] Kierkegaard, *CA, op. cit*., p. 51.

[29] Georg Brandes, *Søren Kierkegaard; En kritisk Fremstilling i Grundrids*, Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, Copenhagen, 1877, pp. 271-272.

[30] George Pattison, *The philosophy of Kierkegaard*, Acumen, Chesham, 2005, p. 84.

[31] Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard’s Psychology,* translated by Bruce Kirmmse, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, 1981, p. XIX.

grouped together, to be cured with 'powder and pills'; it is – as we will see in the following – more than that.

C) *Angest* and ethics

Angest seems to serve as a middle term in the relation of ethics to (hereditary) sin. The ethical aspect of *Angest* can only indirectly be located; one must distinguish between the first and second ethics. (These, however, will not be discussed here.)

> Man ser let Bevægelsens Forskjællighed, og at den Ethik om hvilken vi nu tale, hører hjemme i en anden Tingenes Orden. Den første Ethik strandede paa den Enkeltes Syndighed .... Den ny Ethik forudsætter Dogmatikken og med den Arvesynden, og forklarer nu af den den Enkeltes Synd.'[32]
>
> 'The difference in the movement is easy to see, also that the ethics of which we are now speaking belongs in another order. The first ethics ran aground on the sinfulness of the individual ... The new ethics presupposes dogmatics and along with it, hereditary sin, and now, with that, explains the sin of the individual.[33]

D) *Angest* has no object

Angest makes us aware that we do not know how consciousness functions, how it arises from matter. It is our response when our existence has been threatened and:

> 'er aldeles forskjelligt fra Frygt og lignende Begreber, der refererer sig til noget bestemt, medens Angest er Frihedens Virkelighed som Mulighed for Muligheden.'[34]
>
> 'it differs altogether from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite; whereas anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility for the possibility.'[35]
>
> 'Sartre correctly interprets Kierkegaard as emphasising that the point, the "object", of anxiety is never anything external to the self itself and its own possibilities.'[36]

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[32] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., p. 119.
[33] Kierkegaard, *CA, op. cit*., pp. 26-27.
[34] Kierkegaard, *SV3, op. cit*., p. 136.
[35] Kierkegaard, *CA, op. cit*., p. 51.
[36] Pattison, *op. cit*., p. 83.

E) *Angest* is vertigo, the dizziness of freedom

It is the reality of freedom as 'freedom's reality', as 'the possibility for freedom'.

'Freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibilities' describes man's awareness of his potential and unlimited freedom to choose. It points to the idea of taking/avoiding responsibility, and of the possibility of choosing to jump into the threatening, yet inviting, abyss of its own possibility. Not to choose (as Sartre was to add later) is, in fact, to choose not to choose.

'Angest er Frihedens Virkelighed som Mulighed for Muligheden.'[37]

'Anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility.'[38]

The most poetic characterisation of *Angest* is perhaps that:

> Angest kan man sammenligne med Svimmelhed. Den hvis Øie kommer til at skue ned i et svælgende Dyb, han bliver svimmel. Men hvad er Grunden, det er ligesaa meget hans Øie som Afgrunden; thi hvis han ikke havde stirret ned. Saaledes er Angest den Frihedens Svimlen, der opkommer, idet Aanden vil sætte Synthesen, og Friheden nu skuer ned i sin egen Mulighed, og da griber Endeligheden at holde sig ved.[39]

> Anxiety can be compared to dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason? It is just as much his own eye as the abyss, for suppose he hadn't looked down. It is in this way that anxiety is the dizziness of freedom that emerges when spirit wants to posit the synthesis, and freedom now looks inwardly at its own possibility and then takes hold of finiteness to support itself.[40]

F) *Angest* is innocence; the effect of nothing and fear of the future (death?)

'Hvad er det da? Intet. Men hvilken Virkning har Intet? Det føder Angest. Dette er Uskyldighdens dybe Hemmelighed, at den på samme tid er Angest.'[41]

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[37] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, p. 136.
[38] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 51.
[39] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., pp. 152-153.
[40] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 75.
[41] Kierkegaard, *SV3, op. cit*., p. 136.

'What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect has nothing? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that at the same time it is anxiety.'[42]

G) *Angest* is comparable to *Tungsind* (heavy spiritedness, brooding)

'Angest har her samme Betydning som Tungsind paa et langt senere Punkt, hvor Friheden, efter at have gjennemløbet de ufuldkomme Former af sin Historie, i dybeste Forstand skal komme til sig selv.'[43]

'Anxiety has the same meaning here as melancholy at a much later point, where freedom, having passed through the imperfect forms of its history, will in the profoundest sense come into its own.'[44]

H) *Angest* is not merely an academic term, a reproductive scholarly opinion, but the expression of longing for profound *Inderlighed* (translated, alas, as 'inwardness')

'Ved "Angest" kommer man heller ikke at tænke paa Paragraph-Vigtighed, men paa Eksistents-Inderlighed.'[45]

'The term "anxiety" puts one less in mind of paragraph-gravity than of existential inwardness.'[46]

Haufniensis's circular investigation – from dogma to psychology – ends by prompting psychology to restore *Angest* to dogmatics, and let it become a religious category again.

'Her ender denne Overveielse, hvor den begyndte. Saasnart Psychologien er færdig med Angesten bliver den at aflevere til Dogmatiken.'[47]

'Here this deliberation ends where it began. Once psychology has finished with anxiety, it is to be handed over to dogmatics.'[48]

The question a translator may wish to ask at this point is: how many of the above-mentioned features must the ideal equivalent of *Angest* contain? And the answer is elementary: all of them, at least.

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[42] Kierkegaard, *CA, op. cit*., p. 50.
[43] Kierkegaard, *SV3, op. cit*., p. 137.
[44] Kierkegaard, *CA, op. cit*., p. 52.
[45] Kierkegaard, *SV3,* Bind 9, *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift,* p. 225.
[46] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by A. Hannay, CUP 2009, p. 226.
[47] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, *op. cit*., p. 240.
[48] Kierkegaard, *CA*, *op. cit*., p. 196.

IV) German *Angst,* English 'anxiety', Danish *Angest*

Angst is mentioned for the first time in English (literature) by George Eliot. In her novel, *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), Eliot describes *Die Angst* as a 'pain at her heart'. *Angst* entered English in the 1940s. Its philosophical English definition is:

> A recurrent state of disquiet concerning one's life which Existentialists interpret as evidence that human life has a dimension which a purely naturalistic psychology cannot comprehend. The term was introduced by Kierkegaard, who held that *Angst* (usually translated here as "dread") concerning the contingencies of fortune should show us that we can only gain a secure sense of our identity by taking the leap of faith and entering into a relationship with God.[49]

Angst is – in more than one language – a current, international term, with an approximate general meaning, different according to language, country, tradition. Recent English translations of Kierkegaard – our main concern – seem to prefer (as mentioned before) 'anxiety', a word that seems to overlook the deeper meaning of *Angest*, to have little sympathy with Kierkegaard's intention, and to overshadow, rather than render or define, the basic nature of *Angest.* 'Anxiety', despite its inability to grasp the whole gamut of meaning of the original concept, has been chosen (as new equivalent of *Angest*) both by R. Thomte (1980) and A. Hannay (2014) in their recent Danish-English translations of *Begrebet Angest*. 'Anxiety' has bravely overruled both the Middle English 'anguish', Eliot's '*Angst*' and Walter Lowrie's 'dread' (from 1944).

A possible justification of this general terminological preference is offered by Alastair Hannay, in his comprehensive Kierkegaard biography:

> what Kierkegaard calls "*Angest*" is something that most people will have experienced. Were it not for the fact that the now acceptable English word "angst" has acquired a fairly specific clinical use in connection with neurosis and certain exaggerated

[49] *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy,* Second Edition, edited by T. Honderich, OUP, 2005, p. 36.

> forms of fear or remorse, Kierkegaard's "*Angest*" might nowadays be straightforwardly translated by that term ... Although "dread" has the advantage of a weight and richness that "anxiety" lacks ... "anxiety" is, I think, the better because more neutral term.[50]

I am not convinced that the notion 'that most people will have experienced *Angest*' is true, or that the alleged neutrality of 'anxiety' reflects (despite its remaining semantic connection with the German *Angst*) Kierkegaard's original idea. Hannay's hint that: 'Kierkegaard's *Angest* might nowadays be straightforwardly translated as "angst"' is nevertheless interesting; at least because, as sound, German *Angst* is naturally closer to Danish *Angest* (than 'anxiety'). Yet, as cultural-semantic equivalent, it cannot sufficiently embody the author's intention. I shudder to think that *Angst*, in the long run (due perhaps to the general context and the mind of its contemporary hearers, or from indifference to Kierkegaardian accuracy) 'forgets' Kierkegaard's deeper meaning, the psychological aspect of the problem of original sin. We can envisage that, as the historical connection wears off, *Angst* will lose its original coating and acquire again a 'specific clinical' meaning and use – close perhaps to Heidegger's laicised *Angst*?

Evening on Karl Johan Street, 1892, by Edvard Munch

[50] Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard. A Biography,* Cambridge, 2001, p. 213.

V) The Conceptual Inheritance of Søren Kierkegaard

Argentine writer J. L. Borges observes, 'in a page that anthologists prefer, Kierkegaard modestly praised his maternal language, which some have judged inappropriate for philosophical debate.'[51] (See also Efraín Kristal's study on translation).[52]

Kierkegaard demonstrated his position towards his maternal language vs. languages of culture *par excellence,* as early as 1841, in his (Danish, *not Latin*) philosophy dissertation on *The Concept of Irony*, a position he followed up in 1845 with his celebrated paeon to his maternal language from *Stadier paa Livets Vei* (*Stages on Life's Way*).[53]

Today, Greek, Latin, French and German have been replaced by global English. Thanks (especially) to English translations, a substantially increased number of people can read, study and comment on (Kierkegaardian) texts, otherwise accessible only to a restricted number of (native) readers. This transfer of meaning sometimes commands that Kierkegaard's (Pascal's, Heidegger's etc.) texts learn to 'philosophate' and accommodate to the language and thinking of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Russell. It also explains why literature and criticism not written in English are often overlooked, why English Kierkegaardian terminology plays such a crucial role in the understanding of Kierkegaard, and why the clumsy (translated) equivalent of a concept can do more damage than retaining its untranslated Danish version.

Kierkegaard's production consists of some 10,000 pages of books, lesser publications, notes, journals, manuscripts, letters and dedications: not as many as Heidegger's 14,000 pages, or Luther's, but a considerable number of volumes, pages, paragraphs, concepts ... words. (It is at word level that the actual process of translation takes place.) His concepts, from *Aabenbar* to *Øieblikket,* were explained in Danish by Jens Himmelstrup in 1964.[54]

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[51] Jorge Luis Borges, op. cit., p. 519.

[52] Efraín Kristal, *Invisible Work. Borges and Translation,* Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2002.

[53] Kierkegaard *Stadier paa Livets Vej,* Andet Halvbind, in *SV3,* Bind 8, udg. af Drachmann-Heiberg-Lange, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1963, pp. 277-281.

[54] Kierkegaard, *SV3*, Bind 20, *Terminologisk Ordbog,* v. Jens Himmelstrup, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1964.

Recently, they have been listed, translated into English and explained in the new, six-volume series of *Kierkegaard's Concepts*. This comprises approximately 200 concepts, on roughly 1500 pages', from 'absolute' to 'writing'.[55] Despite Kierkegaard's general erudition and knowledge of 'languages of culture', his 'technical language' consists, quite often, of ordinary language words such as 'common man', 'dance', 'dialogue', 'renunciation', 'resolve'. Instead of using metalanguage, Kierkegaard preferred to direct his attention to ordinary words, give these a twist (or two), to perhaps puzzle readers with his choice and make them aware of surfaces often hidden by their own absent-mindedness, jaded reading, preconceived ideas, etc. Often Kierkegaard urges the reader to look for meaning in the seemingly common, well-known, or 'insignificant'. Of the 200 concepts mentioned above, Kierkegaard singled out *Angest* as the only concept that he would dedicate an entire book to. He needed 172 pages to explain and define *Angest,* in *Begrebet Angest* (1844) and elsewhere. To understand *Angest* is, we could say, to understand Kierkegaard, and his branding of this word, to understand that 'the excellence of a single word is enough to outlive a generation,'[56] and to understand as well the danger of agreeing to a premature terminological standardisation while the process of translating his writings is still at a pioneering stage. Especially when the precipitated choice of an (English) equivalent can become a 'new original' concept. J. L. Borges parallels this phenomenon with the exercise of 'translating a sentence from one language to another. Then from one to another and so on. And to see at the end what remains of the original phrase': something that recalls the game of Chinese whispers where – as information is passed on from person to person – the message becomes distorted. The promise, or reality, of a brave new English-dominated world (even though it is preferable to a Chinese or Russian one) has been described by Australian linguist A. Wierzbicka in her book on the advantages and drawbacks of English as a global lingua franca. Her statement is, I believe, relevant also in our context.

[55] *Kierkegaard's Concepts,* Vol. 15, Tome I – VI, edited by S.M. Emmanuel, W. McDonald, Jon Stewart, Ashgate, Farnham, 2013-2015.
[56] Cook, *Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 2:938.

> Thus, if the words that define reality for us – especially *human* reality – are English words shaped by history and culture, and if moreover we are not aware of this and take the "reality" as defined by them for granted, then our view of the world is slanted: the English words on which we rely most create a conceptual barrier between us and the speakers of other languages, and preclude a neutral, culture independent perspective.[57]

Alternatively, by paying attention to Kierkegaard's original concept(s) and *apparently* insignificant idiomatic details, the reader could be rewarded by the exercise of re-thinking and recalling the *Stemning* ('mood', 'atmosphere') originally emanated by Kierkegaard's thinking and (his) Danish terminology. The job of a translator is, naturally, to render, reasonably well, a text from the source into the target language, without spiking it heavily with loan words, unless, as in this case, it is absolutely necessary. Northrop Frye describes this dilemma as follows:

> It is impossible that a Greek tragedian can have meant by *ananke* what the average English reader means by "necessity". But the translator must use some word, and the real difficulty lies in the reader's inability to recreate the word "necessity" into a conception with the associative richness of *ananke.*[58]

In order to relieve the reader of such unnecessary strain, my translator proposition – in regard to conveying without distortion the meaning of *Angest* – is to retain the Danish word in the translated text and explain its meaning to the reader in a footnote, shorter than the present article.

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[57] Anna Wierzbicka, *Imprisoned in English; The Hazards of English as a Default Language,* OUP Press, 2014, p. 187.

[58] Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry; A Study of William Blake*, Princeton UP, 1947, p. 427.

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Kierkegaard's Heritage on Philosophical Personalism

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Abstract. In this article we aim to demonstrate the importance of Kierkegaard's thought reflected in some philosophers who represent what we know as philosophical personalism. Among them, we have chosen Martin Buber, whose reading of Kierkegaard's work is reflected in his dialogical philosophy; also, Emmanuel Mounier, who mentions in his work the clear influence of the Danish philosopher in the way of thinking the concept of the human person, which represents the foundation of philosophical personalism. In the same way, Karol Wojtyla's relationship with Kierkegaard is explored from the concept of inner auto-teleology. It is a new approach that reflects the reading of Kierkegaard that the Polish philosopher – later Pope John Paul II – has kept in mind. Finally, we close with a reflection on the influence of Kierkegaard on the Swiss philosopher Max Picard, related to the concept of silence.

Keywords: personalism, human person, dialogic philosophy, the movement of personalization, auto-teleology, silence.

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Introduction

When considering Kierkegaard's heritage in the 20th century, we realize the variety of fields (philosophy, theology, literature, art, psychology, psychoanalysis) in which the thought of the Danish philosopher finds a deep echo. No one today can deny his presence behind existentialist philosophy, phenomenology, philosophy of language, or political philosophy. Among many others, Søren Kierkegaard is also the creator of a *dialogic philosophy*, which lays the foundations of philosophical personalism – adding Jewish and Christian philosophy that, deep down, are based upon classical humanism[1] – a philosophy that can orient us in an increasingly fragmented world.

Nowadays, there are few who dare to speak about Kierkegaard's relationship with personalism, especially because, on the one hand, the latter, for some reason, identifies itself rather with the Catholic tradition of a Thomistic nature, and on the other, Kierkegaard is pigeonholed into "Protestant" theology, or he is labeled as an "irrationalist", or as a "fideist"; these labels are totally unjustified and show a lack of understanding of his philosophy. It is true that Kierkegaard was influenced by the Lutheran tradition, but this does not mean that his position is "dangerous" for the Christian thinking or for Judaism, since the most important Christian philosophers from various denominations, as well as Jewish philosophers, read and admired his works.

At the same time, there are a number of important Catholic thinkers for whom Kierkegaard is a decisive philosopher. For example, the same S.S. John Paul II (Karol Wojtyla) identified Kierkegaard as a prolific thinker for the Catholic tradition (Mulder, 2010, p.14); Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) mentioned Kierkegaard in his work Introduction to Christianity (2001); Romano Guardini (Guardini, 2001) recognizes in Kierkegaard an important and original thinker; as well as the Thomist philosopher and theologian Cornelio Fabro (1980), who not only translated his works into Italian, but also inaugurated a form of interpretation reading Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers; or Ferdinand Ebner, a well-known Catholic philosopher, who recognizes the great influence of Kierkegaard on his thinking, as Habib Malik tells us: "Ebner's enthusiasm for Kierkegaard reached its peak in the early 1929, when he wrote in his diary: The reality of spiritual life came into

[1] There also exists a Muslim personalism: Muhammad Aziz Lahbabi, *El personalismo musulmán,* Madrid: Instituto Emmanuel Mounier, 2017.

the world with Christ: with the Paradox. What our time needs: Kierkegaard and once again Kierkegaard" (Malik, 1997, p. 387).

In recent decades, personalism has been appropriated, as we have already mentioned, particulary by the Christian Catholic tradition, and is directly associated with the French thinkers of the '20s and '30s, especially with Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier. It has been forgotten that personalism as such encompasses many thinkers, like Mounier himself (1967, p. 17) who established his famous "tree of existentialism".

In his writing, *The Worldview of Personalism. Origins and Early Development*, Jan Olof Bengtsson (2006) wants to demonstrate that personalism is not only associated with Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain, but that its origin is found in the German idealist thinking of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, naming Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi as a possible origin of this philosophical field, whose objective was to debate against pantheism, which, at that moment, identified more closely with atheism. This problem arises in what was called the debate between rationalists and pietists in the age of the Enlightenment. Little by little, the *Aufklärung Weltanschauung* finds its end in this controversy around pantheism, and the new social, political, and moral order of the 18th century in Prussia, through which a new critical thinking was created against the despotism of reason and therefore against political despotism. Jacobi defended individual autonomy and shared Goethe's belief that the most important thing is "the problem of how individuals establish themselves through actions as valid personalities – as self-justifying works of art". (Eschelmüller, 1996, p. 32)

Considering the roots of this concept, the one who uses it most emphatically is the German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. Jacobi began to develop the idea of personalism in 1809, some ten years after Schleiermacher had already started this debate in his writing *On Religion* (1799). For the same reason, Jan Olof Bengtsson considers that authors such as Schleiermacher, Trendelenburg and Kierkegaard are decisive personalities in the development of personalism[2]. He claims:

[2] "Kierkegaard actually debates with Lessing and Jacobi and proposed a new method of philosophy to tackle `the subjective individual´s relationship to Christianity". (Carlisle, 2020, p. 189).

> It is important to have a clear picture of Kierkegaard's position in relation to the early development of personalism. His was not only among the most influential criticism of Hegel; his philosophy was also one of the most important manifestation of a more general assertation of the human individuality in the nineteenth century (…). He developed the common reactions, insights and impulses of personalism in a rather different direction. (Bengtsson, 2006, pos. 319).

This is how *Der Personalismus* (Personalism) was understood at that time, in the context of 18th century Prussia, as a "new humanism", which arose in the convergence of three currents of thought: Enlightenment, Philosophical Romanticism (*Sturm und Drang*) and German Idealism, trying to create a dialogue between Philosophy, Theology, and the political and moral social context. Although the term was coined in this context, it was very rarely used by the thinkers of the time.[3] Still, there was an interest in this idea of personalism that has been passed on for centuries to come. Max Scheler stated that: "According to the results found about the existence and value of the person, we must now judge the various forms of ethical personalism that have been presented throughout the nineteenth century to the present." (Scheler, 2001, p. 650)

It is also commonly forgotten that there is a personalism developed in relation to the Jewish tradition, that is rooted in Rahel Levin Varnhagen's philosophy, a Jewish thinker and writer of 18th century Prussia, and continued afterwards by Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig and even Emmanuel Levinas.

Nevertheless, the core of personalism is represented by the concept of *human person*, with its dynamic, integral, and paradoxical experience, which, as Mounier says, is the most objective thing that is only known subjectively (Mounier, 2002, pp. 676-677), and that gives meaning to and dignifies reality. Other concepts that define personalism are sociability and community. "Personalism stresses uniqueness and a unique value of every

[3] Friedrich Schleiermacher is the one who mentions it in his writing *Über die Religion* (1799) (Schleiermacher, 1990, p. 166). As Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it: "Schleiermacher coined the quasi-combat concept of 'personalism', with which he intended to overcome all pantheistic tendencies within the theology of the trinity." (Gadamer, 1998, p. 25)

person, the meaning of interpersonal relations, and God who connects all persons and is himself a Person" says Bojan Zalec in his article *Solidary Personalism, (T) transcendence and God in Irigaray's Thought*[4] (2015). And in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, in the Personalism entry, Jan Olof Bengtsson affirms that:

> Personalism does defend a unique theoretical understanding of the person; this understanding is in itself such as to support the prioritization of practical or moral philosophy, while at the same time the moral experience of the person is such as to decisively determine the theoretical understanding. Stressing the moral nature of the person, or the person as the subject and object of free activity, personalism tends to focus on practical, moral action and ethical questions (Bengtsson, 2018).

There are many thinkers whose focus has been the human person, but when Emmanuel Mounier drew his famous "tree of existentialism" – from which personalism derives as a branch –, the main stem is represented by Kierkegaard, and upon it rests the thought of the 20th century.

Søren Kierkegaard manages to create an original thought that offered personalism unprecedented (modern) perspectives to develop. Trained in the German philosophical spirit, a student of theology and a devout Christian, he had the genius to create a decisive thought, because "Kierkegaard was a deeper religious character, a subtler analyst of the modern mind, and a better writer than most of the personalists." (Bengtsson, 2006, pos. 4915).

In the context of modernity, the emancipation of the concept of *person* is related to Kierkegaard's category of the single individual (*den Enkelte*)[5], which brings with it a new perspective on the concept of freedom and, implicitly, on the way of understanding the ethical and the religious life from an existential becoming. His category of individual translated as *spirit*

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[4] Bojan Zalec, *Solidary Personalism, (T) transcendence and God in Irigaray's Though*, 2015. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316835278_Solidary_personalism_Ttranscendence_and_God_in_Irigary%27s_thought

[5] As José García Martín claimed: "Axiologically considered, *den Enkelte* has a value in itself; it's completely personal. For this reason, we can also affirm that to be *den Enkelte* is to be a person, with all that this implies. In this sense, the single individual is one who is positively and entirely a personal being, with a dignity that places him above any other worldly reality". (García Martín, 2009, p. 73) (Our translation from Spanish to English).

(I) has a relational meaning, being built through a relationship with itself. But for the spirit to be completely self-realized, it has to relate to another, and fundamentally to the divine, which is the power that founds the relationship. Due to this way of understanding the existential structure of the human being, as a relationship sustained by a "relationship with a third", which is God, we can speak with respect to the Kierkegaardian philosophy of a *theological anthropology* based on the man-God relationship.

The image of God, which the Danish philosopher is defending, is that of a personal God that man manages to know when he chooses himself, choosing God at the same time. Only Kierkegaard could create this closeness to God that the individual can feel, this trust and this love. Valter Lindström claimed: "Kierkegaard can make the most abstract idea of God glow with personality and life, with a combination of majestic distance and intimate nearness". (Lindström, 1980, p. 38). For Kierkegaard, God exists and has a meaning only in relation with the human being. If God were to have a cold existence, distanced from what the life of the human person is, He would have no meaning. God is where man is and *vice versa*. That is why man, by choosing himself in his eternal value, chooses God at the same time. In other words, in the act of choice the individual becomes aware of himself as an absolute "I choose the absolute, and what is the absolute? It is myself in my eternal validity." (*KW* IV 214; *SV* II 192; *SKS* 3 205)[6].

The idea of the person as an eternal value is what Kierkegaard inherits throughout the modern philosophical tradition[7]; and also, he offers the idea

[6] All the references to Kierkegaard's works were taken from the English translation by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, from Princeton University Press, quoted as: *KW* IV 214, meaning: Kierkegaard's Writings, volume IV, page 214. Next to it, we quoted the references from the complete works in Danish from the First and 4th editions as follows: *SV* II 192; *SKS* 3 205, meaning: *Samleade Værker,* volume II, page 192, and *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol 3, page 205. The full references can be found in the bibliography at the end of this work. All the other quotes translated from the original Spanish are our own.

[7] Bojan Zalec also considers Kierkegaard among the pioneers of this personalist tradition: "Let me mention just some thinkers whose work is especially important as a source, origin and foundation of solidary personalism: Christian faith and (intellectual) tradition in general, works of Søren Kierkegaard, Nikolay Berdiaev, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, France Veber, José Ortega y Gasset, Milan Komar, Emmanuel Mounier, Martin Buber, Eric Voegelin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Emmanuel Levinas, Zygmunt Bauman, Hannah Arendt, Edith Stein, Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła), Józef Tischner, Luce Irigaray, Paul Ricoeur, David Hollenbach, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Martha Nussbaum, Hubert Dreyfus, René Girard and others (this list is, of course, not exhaustive) (Zalec, 2015, p. 13).

of existential ethics to philosophy, one of a "mature ethic", as stated by Jean Wahl (1970, p. 178). This caught the attention of several thinkers in the 20th century, especially from the 1920s to the '30s, when Kierkegaard's work began to be translated and spread in the German and the French cultures. From that moment, there is no great philosopher who has not had the curiosity to read him. In the following pages we would like to highlight the influence and heritage of Kierkegaard on some of the most important personalist thinkers, such as: Martin Buber, Emmanuel Mounier, Karol Wojtyla and Max Picard.

1. Kierkegaard and Martin Buber: The World of Relationship

Martin Buber's relationship with Kierkegaard's thinking can be understood as one of "encounters" and "disagreements". Although Buber reads it, and finds him to be an important thinker, he also has points of divergence. When he was writing about the dialogical principles, Buber confessed that, around 1920, a new paradigm began to manifest itself, which united Jewish and Christian thoughts, determined by the increasingly decisive presence of the ideas posed by Søren Kierkegaard, whose work began to penetrate the European philosophical realms. He began to be read in Germany because of Theodore Haecker's translations in the Austrian Journal *Der Brenner*, not to mention his work, *Søren Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit,* published in 1913. All the major German philosophers read *Der Brenner* and the translations. (Malik, 1997, p. 387).

Buber's encounter with Kierkegaard happened through this *Journal* around 1915. In a letter from this same year, he wrote to a friend about Abraham's problem in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (Buber, 1991, pos. 4257). Martin Buber is the creator of the dialogic philosophy, and of the communitarian personalism that inspired the personalist philosophy of the 20th century. Buber begins the philosophical work with *Ecstatic Confessions* (1909) on religious themes. This will lead him to the creation of the dialogical thought that he initiates with his work, *Daniel. Dialogues on Realization* (1913), defining it as the fundamental act through which man realizes himself in his own existence. This concept refers to the idea of the Kierkegaardian qualitative leap, a decisive choice that makes the individual

commit with his existence, realizing himself; that is, choosing the possibilities of his own existence. As Maurice Friedmann well states:

> Probably the strongest influence on Buber's concept of realization, however, was the existentialist philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. In Kierkegaard's earlier works, the germ of some of Buber's most important early and later ideas is found: the direct relation between the individual and God, in which the individual addresses God as Thou; the concept of the *knight of faith,* who cannot take shelter in the universal, but must constantly risk all in the concrete uniqueness of each new situation; the necessity of becoming a true person before relating; and the importance of realizing one's belief in one's life. These similarities, plus Buber's own treatment of Kierkegaard in his mature works, make it clear that Kierkegaard is one of the most important single influences on Buber's thought. (Friedmann, 2002, p. 39).

In his article, *The Politics of Existence: Buber and Kierkegaard*, Robert R. Perkins also finds a certain similarity regarding the ideas of politics and society in the two philosophers: "Both Buber and Kierkegaard are fundamentally concerned with how we organize ourselves into Communities and societies in a sense that includes, but is not limited to, the narrow Concepts of everyday politics". (1995, p. 67)

For Kierkegaard, the man-God relationship is essential and primordial, since only through this relationship can man become what he is, can he become aware of his uniqueness and then open himself up to a *Thou*. The God that Kierkegaard refers to is not God as the Absolute. In other words, he is not an abstract category, but rather the personal God that man manages to know when he chooses himself, choosing God at the same time. And it is in this choice that Buber will later identify the divine *I–Thou* relationship.

In his essay, *Original Distance and Relationship,* Buber mentions the fact that "becoming oneself for me" is a psychological and not an ontological relationship, criticizing Kierkegaard for his idea of an ontological relationship as the foundation of existence**.** When he chooses himself, man chooses himself in the relation (as spirit) that is already set by the relationship with God. The Kierkegaardian idea of "becoming oneself" does not have a solipsistic purpose, nor is it the identity of Fichte's $I = I$; on the contrary, it

means a freedom movement whose teleology is an ethical-religious one, and when an ethical-religious problem is put into discussion, the other, my alterity, is implicit in this process of becoming. Let's not forget that *the individual* in Kierkegaard's philosophy is a category that announces exactly the particularity and uniqueness of this becoming as a relationship and at the same time, it is opposed to the category of multitude. For Kierkegaard, "becoming oneself" is an essential relationship, since without it, it is impossible to enter into a relationship with the other. The individual needs to make himself present first, and then personify himself before God, who sustains him.

In his article, *Ethics as Sociability. Buber, Marcel and Levinas,* Franco Riva mentions that, with Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Levinas, a renewal of ethics arises, "that is not based on values or on the adequacy between being and knowledge, and, finally, not even on a universal reason" (Riva, 2005, pp. 633-655), but this ethics begins in front of the other *face.* Basically, it is about a new ethics that arises as a response to the idea of ethics based on an epistemic adequacy between being and thinking. In other words, it is about a living ethics that occurs in front of the other, in the experience with the other, and not in knowledge. Kierkegaard is undoubtedly the one that opens the way of this existential ethics. His ethics does not propose a suspension of responsibility or moral norms as such, but it is a way of life in which the individual, the person, through choice, must assume its existence with all that it implies, in such a way that moral or ethical standards make sense for the existence of each human being in his or her uniqueness.

In Kierkegaard's thought, ethics becomes an existential and, at the same time, universal task of becoming what one really is. As Stephen C. Evans states, "The task is essentially to become a person; every person must be assumed to be capable of such personal existence" (Evans, 1983, p. 74). On the other hand, Robert Perkins states that "It is apparent that Kierkegaard's and Buber's analyses of the ethical situation share many characteristics, the most important of which must surely be the intimacy of ethics and politics. (…) The differences between Buber's and Kierkegaard's ethics are more matters of expression, philosophical sources, and history than substance." (Perkins, 1995, p. 175). In this sense, we agree on the similarity, despite the fact that Buber, in his writing *The Eclipse of God,* criticized the

fact that the religious stage in Kierkegaard is reduced to the ethical. Nevertheless, the Jewish philosopher recognizes the influence he receives from Kierkegaard, and Abraham from *Fear and Trembling* draws his attention, being "the figure that occupies a central place in both Jewish and Christian traditions", as Daniel F. Polish says (2007, pos. 250).

2. Kierkegaard and Emmanuel Mounier: The Movement of Personalization and Becoming Oneself by Choice

Regarding personalism, no one can deny the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, who dedicated his life's work to leave testimony that the human person is not a scientific or metaphysical abstraction; it is not a formula, but a living being that suffers, doubts, loves, and whose singular being is an event of becoming. In Europe between wars, – the time of Mounier's formation – there was a resurgence of Kierkegaardian philosophy that gradually penetrated countries such as Germany and France (due in particular to the work of Jean Wahl and Lev Shestov), and Kierkegaard began to be read by the important philosophers of those times: from Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Mounier, Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel to Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida, among others.

When Mounier projected his main work, *The Personalism*, he had in mind the ideas he learned from the main apologists of Christianity: Pascal and Kierkegaard, to whom he also added the Marxist ideas of praxis, and Nietzsche's vitality. Moreover, personalism was projected as a new humanism, or as the synthesis between the two critiques of the depersonalization of the modern world: on the one hand, Kierkegaard, who calls for the consciousness of subjectivity and its freedom, and, on the other, the Marxist concept of praxis (Mounier, 2002, pp. 682-683).

The French philosopher was concerned about understanding the person as an activity (*praxis*), that of becoming herself, that each human being has to carry out. Using the concept of the movement of personalization to describe this *praxis*, Mounier holds that each person has an existential task. That is why Kierkegaard reminds him of "the Socratic revolution", in the sense that, when understanding the Danish philosopher as a modern Socrates, he challenges the modern man, leading him towards the choice of himself as

a singularity (individual). It is true that with Kierkegaard there is a great leap that arises in the history of philosophy: the subject ceases to be an abstraction, a simple *cogito,* and becomes a *living subject*; that is to say, the subject becomes personalized, it becomes an incarnate spirit.

For Mounier, the human being is a free and auto-creative person who can enter into the heart of the logical structures of thought as "a principle of unpredictability that dislocates any desire for definitive systematization." (Mounier, 2002, p. 676) In this way, the idea of person indicates what in each man cannot be treated as an object, since it is a lived activity of self-creation, communication and adhesion that is apprehended and is known in its act as a movement of personalization (Mounier, 2002, p. 677); an idea inspired by Kierkegaard's[8] and Marx's thoughts, as well as the Christian Humanism that has as a model the incarnation of Christ. Mounier claims that in Kierkegaard and Marx, the human being is understood by way of his existential activity (or in the praxis of reproducing a way of life), always in relation to another; because it is the presence of a gaze that tells us "Look who you are", and that dodges, breaks, and sometimes destroys every preconceived scheme of the experience of becoming a person.

For Mounier, the incarnation of Christ beats in each of his words. We could almost say that the movement of personalization is living by imitating Christ, in the process of the incarnation of the spirit. Christ is the Absolute Model, He is – as Kierkegaard would say – the Absolute Paradox (*KW* VII 37-46, *SV* IV 204-214, *SKS* 4 243-252), and He cannot be reduced to a concept or a principle, but His truth is to have existed historically, in His presence, that invites the human being to look at himself in a singular way, as if it were his own incarnation and suffering.

Being human implies understanding that it is not enough to be shaped only by nature, but that we must assume this fact in our decisions, understand it as a choice of ourselves in time. The strong relation between Mounier's idea of the person and Kierkegaard's individual is precisely this: that the person is movement, a becoming, a choice of oneself and not a predetermined self in one's own identity. The reason for this is explained by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety:*

[8] As Carlos Díaz says in the prologue to *The Personalism*: "Mounier always tried to make a synthesis between Marx (active side, although also reflective) and Kierkegaard (experiential dimension, although also vital)". (Díaz, 2002, p. 13)

> The most profound reason for this is what is essential to human existence: that man is *individuum,* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race. (…) Since the race does not begin anew with every individual, the sinfulness of the race does indeed acquire a history. Meanwhile, this proceeds in quantitative determinations while the individual participates in it by the qualitative leap. For this reason, the race does not begin anew with every individual, in which case there would be no race at all, but every individual begins anew with the race. (*KW* VIII 28,33-34; *SV* IV 300, 305; *SKS* 4 335, 340)

For Kierkegaard, each individual being himself and, at the same time, the species, he/she is something given and something open; it is a gift and a task; it is inheritance and possibility. Not because of having the best talents, the privileges, the investors, or the financial sponsors, is the moral quality of a person defined or assured; it will depend on the way in which he/she relates to his/ her own decisions. We mean that the person, for both Kierkegaard and Mounier, is essentially freedom and possibility in all its senses; it is always a relationship in the dialectical structure of its existence – following Hegel but deconstructing it – in which each one is a synthesis of various spheres or dimensions, anthropologically speaking of body and soul sustained by the spirit; of necessity and possibility; of finitude and infinitude, from abstract categories; and of eternity and temporality. As Kierkegaard claimed in *The Concept of Anxiety*: "Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit (…) a relation that indeed has persistence and yet does not have endurance, inasmuch as it first receives that latter by the spirit." (*KW* VIII 43-44; *SV* IV 315; *SKS* 4 349).[9]

From our point of view, the idea of the human being as a synthesis is essential to understand the personal freedom as a choice of oneself. For Kierkegaard, although this dialectical relationship is natural, ontological, it does not reach its fulfilment or its fullness if it is not through the spiritualization of the whole relationship, that is, through personalization, as

[9] This synthesis is explained in the third chapter of *The Concept of Anxiety* (1980 /*KW* IV) as the relationship between eternity and temporality, and in *The Sickness unto Death* (1983 / *KW* XIX) under the categories of finitude and infinity, necessity and possibility.

Mounier would say. Thus, the movement of being a person is an activity of liberation of the person from the modern *cogito.*[10] This means that the person is not the center of a self-identification with himself; his own name is not found in the concept of the self, generated by modern philosophy; it is not found in the very identity of Cartesian self-consciousness, but in the original act that directs the person to communicate with others in a language vitally performed as dialogue.

For both, Mounier and Kierkegaard, the Cartesian *cogito,* which established the self as the foundation of knowledge and being, is not a true certainty, because it does not allow the experience of the human condition as a revelation. Mounier changes Descartes's idea "I think, therefore I exist" into "I am loved, therefore I am" as a certainty, greater than any self-conscious identity: "the act of love is the strongest certainty of man, the irrefutable existential *cogito*: I love, then being is, and life is worth (the worth of being life). It does not confirm me only by the movement through which I establish it, but by the being that the other grants me in it." (Mounier, 2002, pp. 701-702)

For Kierkegaard, as well as for Mounier, existence is the truth of being in time as something really dynamic in which the future is integrated under its own honesty with the past in the present. This implies a series of moral virtues: patience, humility, listening, repentance, sacrifice, forgiveness, which allow us, in a certain sense, to be waiting for the other who justifies us in the relationship.

With all these ideas, we want to underline that the dynamic constitution of the person as a movement of personalization in Mounier is based on Kierkegaard's dialectic of choosing to be oneself, because both philosophers conceive the person not as identical, but as transcendent to the Cartesian conception of the self, as a being open to a fundamental love relationship before and on the horizon of his time.

[10] The *cogito,* the "I", as has been defined from René Descartes to the essence of the human being as a self-conscious identity of his thought with the act of thinking itself. (Descartes, 1994, pp. 26-27). This idea of the "I" is the one that both Mounier and Kierkegaard criticized, because it ends up making the human person an abstract entity. (Díaz, 2010, pp. 89-96) (Mounier, 2002, pp. 701-702) (*KW* XVI 68-90; *SV* IX 69-89; *SKS* 9 75-95).

3. Kierkegaard and Karol Wojtyla: Interior Teleology (Auto-teleology) as a Personalistic Ethical Foundation and Faith as a Purification of Reason

As a philosophical thinker and a professor of ethics, Karol Wojtyla (SS John Paul II) has distinguished himself by re-founding the ethical norm as the action and dignity of the person through the concept of *auto-teleology*, separating himself from a more deontological interpretation of the Kantian tradition, to which the formalism of Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics has also contributed under the concept of teleology of good. Wojtyla has stated that it would be better to speak of the human person than of the human nature, and, in that sense, he transforms the concept of Aristotelian teleology into that of *auto-teleology*, as Juan Manuel Burgos tells us: "man never tends to something outside himself without tending towards oneself or, in other words, that teleology is, in reality, auto-teleology." (Burgos, 2018, p. 85).

Wojtyla's relationship with Kierkegaard has not been explored, but we are convinced that the Polish philosopher read Kierkegaard's works and used some of his ideas without a lot of reference to them in his writings. From our point of view, there is an obvious concept that creates this link between Wojtyla and Kierkegaard, that of *auto-teleology*. Before Wojtyla used this concept, only one philosopher had mentioned it, and this was Kierkegaard. Thus, we find that, in both philosophers, there is the idea of a personal self, understood as a choice of the inner *telos* that constitutes it. In other words, it is more than evident that Wojtyla's idea of *auto-teleology* finds its roots in Kierkegaard's idea of inner teleology, established in the text *Either/Or* (II), called "The Balance Between Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality".

For Wojtyla, in both of his writings, *Love and Responsibility,* and *Action and Person*, the specificity of the ethical norm is represented by the principle of the person's act that conditions morality from within, which means that, through this act, the person makes himself good or bad. As this definition implies the ontic potentiality of the person-act dynamic, it is the norm of morality that actualizes it; meaning that the norm of morality is the foundation by which the being of the person is actualized as an identity between the person and his/ her act.

This means that the principle of the norm of morality is potentiality, which is a desire for a purpose that has to do with self-possession and self-control. Wojtyla describes this self-determination as an honest good that corresponds to the human being by way of nature (Wojtyla, 2005, p. 251). For the Polish thinker, the norm of morality is constituted by the honest desire for the realization of one's own dignity that is presented as an end in itself, and as a substantial value of the person that can only be realized in his act (action), therefore it is not reduced to any interest or specific manifestation, even if it is done through them. As Wojtyla says: "precisely with this aspiration to dignity, and only with it, can the specific character of the norm be translated, which is not only imperative, but also a categorical one." (Wojtyla, 2005, p. 252) Wojtyla clearly marks a differentiation between dignity and its value, since the first is not conditional, but inborn, and the second can have conditions to be the object of wish (desire). Therefore, the responsibility to be good or bad is what establishes the norm of morality, and intervenes in its determination, as Wojtyla tells us.

The underlying issue is the confusion of the species of purpose, which is not the same to understand it in the field of natural teleology, personal auto-teleology or purpose as "interests" that are more convenient for a person. Hence Wojtyla specifies that:

> The norm of morality has as its object the good in itself (*bonum in se*). Consequently, morality places in man (subject and author of his acts) the inclination to know, choose and carry out precisely this *bonum in se*, the attitude of placing it above the *bonum utile* and also the delectable *bonum*. This inclination – in other words, the inclination to know, choose and do the honest good (*bonum honestum*) – establishes the foundation of the norm and the normativity (Wojtyla, 2005, pp. 259-260).

The inclination to the honest good, that is human dignity itself, is an *auto-teleology*, a self-determination that is not conditioned or reduced to the purposes as interests of biological nature, but to those of the full realization of personal being.

In *Either/Or* (II), Kierkegaard establishes that what defines a choice, or an ethical act, is that it is not reduced to a simple choice, nor is the unconditionality of the act determined by a series of *a priori* principles. It is

about the fact that, before choosing, each individual is already determined by the impulse to personality, and when this impulse is chosen, an interest in what is chosen is produced. Kierkegaard states, in the voice of the pseudonymous author of the text, Judge Wilhelm:

> The choice itself is crucial for the content of the personality: through the choice the personality submerges itself in that which is being chosen, and when it does not choose, it withers away in atrophy. (…) One sees that the inner working of the personality has no time for imaginary constructions in thought, so that it continually speeds ahead and in one way or another posits either one or the other (…) I may very well say that 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. In the choosing the personality declares itself in its inner infinity and in turn the personality is thereby consolidated. (*KW* IV 163, 167; *SV* II 148, 149, 152; *SKS* 3 160, 164).

This is what Kierkegaard calls the *inner teleology* of the individual as an indelible mark of ethics, since this choice does not occur without criteria, is not arbitrary, nor is it something merely formal, but the possibility that this inclination of the honest good is revealed in its particular manifestations (*KW* IV 168-191; *SV* II 153-161; *SKS* 3 165-173). The choice is the opening gap of the past in its link with what the future has to reveal; it is a look of faith in the bond of time that, like trust and hope, opens and disposes each person to become by an act of receiving it, as Kierkegaard states:

> When around one everything has become silent, solemn as a clear, starlit night, when the soul comes to be alone in the whole world, then before one there appears, not an extraordinary human being, but the eternal power itself, then the heavens seem to open, and the *I* chooses itself or, more correctly, receives itself. (…) But what is this self of mine? If I were to speak of a first moment, a first expression for it, then my answer is this: It is the most abstract of all, and yet in itself it is also the most concrete of all—it is freedom. (*KW* IV 177, 214; *SV* II 160, 192; *SKS* 3 172, 205).

The inner teleology of each person is a passion defined by this type of choice as a horizon of possibilities, as the manifestation of the infinite power of the personality, which makes the person come out of his natural or

cultural determinations and reductions, and places him as a unique and singular being. As Kierkegaard explains:

> Now, when I say that the individual has his teleology within himself, this may not be misinterpreted to mean that the individual is central or that the individual in the abstract sense is supposed to be sufficient unto himself, because if it is taken abstractly, I still have no movement. The individual has his teleology within himself, has inner teleology, is himself his teleology; his self is then the goal toward which he strives. But this self of his is not an abstraction but is absolutely concrete. (…) His self must open itself according to its total concretion. (*KW* IV 274; *SV* II 246; *SKS* 3 260-261)

Being a person as an inner teleology avoids relativistic reductionism and moralizing dogmatism, since, at its extreme, each of the two is a denial of the ethical paradox of being a person.

As we already mentioned, Wojtyla uses the concept of auto-teleology to separate himself from a naturalistic interpretation of Aristotelian teleology, or from a Kantian formalism, since he has already made it clear that the norm of morality and normativity is not a theoretical or ideological addition to the reality of the experience of morality; it is the most specific determination of the person in his own actions. With this idea, ethics becomes a critique of both culture and nature; but, at the same time, it constitutes a new sphere of an order of relationships, in which the dignity of the person is understood as a fundamental criterion of the judgments, of the conscience denoted as prudence.

Beyond understanding the norm of morality of the human person, we also could note another, more general reference, which reflects the importance of Kierkegaard for Karol Wojtyla, already as Pope John Paul II, regarding Christian philosophy and the relations between faith and reason, as pointed out in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio:*

> Christian philosophy therefore has two aspects. The first is subjective, in the sense that faith purifies reason. As a theological virtue, faith liberates reason from presumption, the typical temptation of the philosopher. Saint Paul, the Fathers of the Church and, closer to our own time, philosophers such as Pascal and

> Kierkegaard reproached such presumption. The philosopher who learns humility will also find courage to tackle questions which are difficult to resolve if the data of Revelation are ignored—for example, the problem of evil and suffering, the personal nature of God and the question of the meaning of life or, more directly, the radical metaphysical question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" (S. S. John Paul II, 1998, pp. 42-43).

S.S. John Paul II refers to Kierkegaard's existential thinking as related to the idea of faith as the act that goes beyond the limits of reason. This is a common thread in Kierkegaardian writing, reflected both in his pseudonymous works and in his *Edifying Discourses*. Kierkegaard is among the few thinkers who show that, in certain situations, reason is powerless, which is why the individual has two passions as options: either the scandal of reason, or the passion of faith, and hence Abraham's faith by virtue of absurdity in *Fear and Trembling*. For Kierkegaard, faith is a singular exercise that is not derived from a need or from a historical reason; that is why the Christian relationship with Christ is personal and unique (subjective) before the revelation of grace. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* the pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus says that there are two types of thinkers: the objective and the subjective one. The difference is that the subjective thinker, when he is thinking, he does so in relation to his existential condition and not only to the results of thought (*KW* XII.1 73-74; *SV* VII 56-58; *SKS* 7 74-76). Faith is, therefore, not a superstition or a cognitive faculty inferior to reason, but the way in which subjectively, personally, or singularly, we relate in the becoming of ourselves, after going through the pain of reason with existential realization in time, the so-called contemporaneity.

4. Kierkegaard and Max Picard: Silence and Inwardness

Max Picard is part of this wave of crisis thinkers, being, on the one hand, the creator of a philosophy expressed in a poetic work *par excellence*, which can be included in the field of contemporary philosophical personalism; and, on the other, one of the most important thinkers when it comes to understanding the human person in its anthropological and ethical

foundation of modernity, in its process of loss of meaning and the revaluation of the world, understood as the very continuity of God. Alfonso López Quintás stated that "in the line of thought – which largely inspired the European philosophical anthropology of the last quarter of a century moves Max Picard, the Swiss writer, who has always lived in close contact with nature and in strict fidelity to the natural rhythms. His beautiful works on language, silence, married life, the flight from God, acquire all their depth in the light of the interpretation of language and rise far above mere edifying literature" (López Quintás, 1998, p. 350).

The Swiss philosopher develops his ideas in the philosophical field dominated, at that time, by the phenomenological school represented especially by Martin Heidegger, and by Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism, but also by the personalism set out by Mounier, Gabriel Marcel or Ferdinand Ebner. Far from competing with these great figures, and far from clinging to some system of thought, Picard can be identified in this line of *philosophers-poets*, since he writes guided by a mystical sensibility, having several thinkers as sources of inspiration, especially Søren Kierkegaard, the Christian philosopher who would completely touch his heart.

In his work, *The World of Silence,* Picard directly quotes Kierkegaard. This authentic writing is the first comprehensive study of silence as the constitutive foundation of reality and language. But how does Kierkegaard inspire Picard about silence?

It is already known that Kierkegaard did not write any work that referred directly to the idea of silence, but that it represents a common thread throughout his writing. Although the theme of silence is more present in his pseudonymous work, like *Fear and Trembling*, or in the *Edifying Discourses* called "What We Learn from the Lilies in the Field and from the Birds of the Air", we are not exaggerating when we affirm that silence is a faithful companion to Kierkegaard's life and work. On several occasions he confessed that silence was his teacher, and he encouraged us to let ourselves be educated by silence, to which he opposed the empty talk. "Learn silence and teach silence", said Kierkegaard, almost as an "imperative". It is also known that Kierkegaard created a peculiar method called "indirect communication", by which he wanted to convey the message of his thought

without authority. This method is based on the authentic communication of interiority, which, in order to be able to fulfil itself, requires silence.

Without silence, there is no inwardness, no word, and no presence of God for us. For this reason, Kierkegaard encouraged us to learn the silence of the birds in the air, and the lilies on the field, to be able to separate ourselves from the noisy tumult of human society (*KW* XV 160-209; *SV* VIII 250-293; *SKS* 8 260-304). For the Danish philosopher, the art of silence is to begin getting closer to oneself and to God, since only silence is the realm in which God dwells.

Inspired by Kierkegaard and by his relation to nature, Picard posits that silence teaches us that everything is unity, that there is no difference; that it is in this silence that the human being learns about his meaning. Silence, for Picard, is an original phenomenon and a positive ambit. Silence exists, it is a permanent presence that connects us with the past and with the future, with the words, and with ourselves. "In silence" says Picard, "man is confronted once again with the original beginning of all things: everything can start again, everything can be re-created" (Picard, 1964, p. 6).

How do we re-create? Through interiority and prayer as a form of authentic communication. For Picard, prayer is the most complex form of communication with God; it is recollection, the return to our inner being. When we pray, we do not speak or ask, but we become listeners of the silence through which God speaks to us. This is because prayer is the silent language that takes us away from worldliness, from the world of "others"; it makes us reflect on our existence and invites us to contemplate it. It turns out that, mediated by silence, prayer is the most honest communication that occurs between God and man. God is the eternal listener, as Picard would say, and if this listener were missing, all conversation would be a mere and empty monologue.

Picard speaks of a relationship between silence and faith. He is convinced that: "The sphere of faith and that of silence belong together. Silence is the natural basis on which the super-nature of faith is accomplished" (Picard, 1964, p. 228). Without this silence, the human being cannot approach the mystery that is God. And we remember Abraham's story in *Fear and Trembling,* when precisely the only form of communication between God and Abraham was silence. It is the divine word that we all must

learn to listen to through prayer, since, as Kierkegaard also said, silence is the mirror in which one must see oneself and find oneself. For Picard, living without silence is living without God.

Both Kierkegaard and Picard are critical to the logocentric culture, which no longer allows spaces of silence. That is why they both consider that communication without silence cannot be conceived. Picard affirms: "When two people are conversing with one another, a third is always present: silence is listening" (Picard, 1964, p. 9).

Kierkegaard, a critic of empty talk, and Picard, a critic of the usefulness of language, both understood that language represents a priceless gift for the human being, but that it can only be lived and communicated if it is related to silence. For the same reason, both agree on the idea that the only way of not losing our essence is to create spaces of silence. From our point of view, Kierkegaard and Max Picard are two of the few thinkers who explore the field of silence and simultaneously that of language, which became fundamental categories for understanding the anthropological structure of the human being as a person or single individual. For both, silence has a transforming power, helping man to discover himself, to participate into existence by becoming a listener of the divine. The two philosophers remind us that, behind the walls that build words that separate and break, there is always something: it is the silence from which we can "re-create" ourselves over and over again.

Although not very present in the sphere of personalism, the category of silence, as these philosophers show us, is impossible to be ignored when it comes to the ontological and anthropological constitution of the human being. But Kierkegaard and Picard managed to open a path to a new way of understanding the existential reality of the human person.

5. **Conclusions**

Arguing how we understand Kierkegaard's heritage to philosophical personalism – while making it clear that personalism cannot be reduced to the Aristotelic-Thomistic tradition, as there are a lot of different thinkers who have contributed to the development of this current of thought –, it seems appropriate to us to point out that there are many other personalistic

thinkers who, in their philosophical discourses, have found in the ideas of the Danish philosopher a source of inspiration: John Henry Newman, Romano Guardini, Gabriel Marcel, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Jacques Maritain, Dietrich von Hildebrand, among others. This is because Kierkegaard was the creator of a complex philosophy that revolves around the human person, inwardness, and its existential relationship with the divine, as an integral dynamic of revelation, donation, and acceptance, where human dignity and the dignity of the world intertwine as a glorification of love. For this reason, the person is unobjective, and personalism establishes the point where every society is demarcated from being humanist or anti-humanist.

Like no other philosopher, Kierkegaard has been able to touch the sensitive strings of our hearts as human beings; he spoke to us about what we need to hear and know: from choice, love, despair, freedom, absurdity, anguish, repetition, to God, Christ and faith, among others. This happened because, for Kierkegaard, philosophy was not a mere speculation; it was his way in which life is put into play, worrying about real existential issues, betting on a philosophy of the unstable, of contradiction, of paradox, of an existence that must be reconquered over and over again.

The 20th century revolves, in its philosophical debate, around this original thought that Kierkegaard, alongside Nietzsche, left open for the future. Since then, philosophy can do nothing without the faith of Abraham, the cry of Job and the dance of Zarathustra.

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Why Love Entails Suffering:

Kierkegaard on the Logical Consequences of Needing God

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Abstract By virtue of love's world-affirming influence, each human being is drawn into a meaningful realm of experience. The acceptance and endorsement of love as a sacred power is linked with a belief in the goodness of existence. At the very least, if God is love, then the value of life is not in question. However, this is not because the sum of all pleasures and pains shows us that it is mostly delightful to exist. On the contrary, there is a non-accidental connection between love's ontological status and the vulnerability which it induces in the person who loves. In this paper, the inexorable connection between love and suffering is explained, with reference to a wide range of Kierkegaard's religious writings.
Keywords: love, suffering, Kierkegaard, emotion, religion, affirmation.

"Love," Kierkegaard writes, "is the source of all things" and "the deepest ground of spiritual life."[1] This sacred force which moves the human soul is the ground of all significance in our existence:

> There is a place in a person's innermost being; from this place flows the life of love, for "from the heart flows life." But you cannot see this place; however deeply you penetrate, the origin eludes you in remoteness and hiddenness. Even when you have penetrated furthest in, the origin is always still a bit further in, like the source of the spring that is further away just when you are closest to it... Love's hidden life is in the innermost being, unfathomable, and then in turn is in an unfathomable connectedness with all existence. Just as the quiet lake originates deep down in hidden springs no eye has ever seen, so also does a

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[1] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.215; *SV* 12.209. Modified translation.

> person's love originate even more deeply in God's love. If there were no gushing spring at the bottom, if God were not love, then there would be neither the little lake nor a human being's love. Just as the quiet lake originates darkly in the deep spring, so a human being's love originates mysteriously in God's love.[2]

Love, as the enigmatic power at the base of the psyche, is the deepest ground of human existence. This, Kierkegaard claims, is the explanation we crave in our inner being, which explains the meaning of life "in the God who holds everything together in his eternal wisdom."[3] A deity of infinite wisdom, who is manifest in the experience of love, is the "source of all love" so that, as passionate beings, we are what we are only by virtue of being *in* love.[4] Kierkegaard traces all significant existence to the love on which the self is ontologically dependent, and construes this fundamental emotion in religious terms:

> What is it that makes a person great, admired by creation, well pleasing in the eyes of God?... What is it that makes a person unwavering, more unwavering than a rock; what is it that makes him soft, softer than wax? - It is love!... What is it that cannot be given but itself gives all? It is love. What is it that perseveres when everything falls away? It is love. What is it that comforts when all comfort fails? It is love. What is it that endures when everything is changed? It is love.[5]

That upon which we are inevitably dependent is not of our own making; love is the creative source from which all things proceed, and the ground in which they subsist.

But why should we apply a sacred name to such an enigmatic power,

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[2] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.8-10; *SV* 12.13-15 (Kierkegaard quotes Proverbs 4:23). See also Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 138-40.

[3] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.87; *SV* 4.84. "God is infinite wisdom," Kierkegaard writes in another discourse, and then (one sentence later): "God is love." - *Without Authority*, *KW* 18.11; *SV* 14.135.

[4] See *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.3; *SV* 12.10: "How could one speak properly about love if you were forgotten, you God of love, source of all love in heaven and on earth... you who are love, so that one who loves is what he is only by being in you!" On existing *in* that upon which one depends, see also O'Meara, *Plotinus*, 26-27.

[5] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.55; *SV* 4.57.

and how can it explain so many things? Kierkegaard's answer is that the phenomenon of love gives us a direct insight into the basic nature of existence: "God is Love, and therefore we can be like God only in loving."[6] It does not make sense to speak of divinity as if it could be encountered as an object; it is understood only in the experience of love.[7] Kierkegaard's view that love is fundamental to the self informs his reading of the idea that our being is "rooted and grounded in love":[8] in loving others unselfishly, we also define our own individuality. From an oceanic primordial unity,[9] each of us develops as a distinct self by forming bonds of love, or care,[10] with the external world. Love may begin as "a pre-individual and pre-moral force," but this initially unreliable impetus can be refined and developed into the religious virtue of neighbourly love.[11] Kierkegaard's conception of a loving God as the enabling condition of all meaningful existence ties in directly with an account of what it would mean to live morally. To describe love as the ground of existence is to make "an ontological claim of the most fundamental

[6] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.62-63; *SV* 12.66.

[7] See, e.g., *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.182; *SV* 12.176.

[8] The phrase "rooted and grounded in love," from Ephesians 3:13, is cited in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.80; *SV* 4.78. See also 1 John 4:8, in which it is written that *anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is Love*. The authorized contemporary Danish translation of this passage is: "Den, der ikke elsker, kender ikke Gud, for Gud er kærlighed." - *Bibelen*, 1124. For Kierkegaard, an emotional person "is not self-creating", as Gouwens comments in *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, 98.

[9] On the differentiation of self and world out of a primary "oceanic" condition, see the discussion of *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (*KW*, 5.165; *SV*, 4.150) by Nordentoft: *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 104-105. See also Nordentoft's remarks on the differentiation of subject from object as a "subject-constituting separation," in which certain objects are charged with significance: "Erotic Love," 90-91. Kierkegaard writes of a time in which "the child has not yet separated himself from his surroundings," in which his identity is "gestalted in vague and fleeting outlines," like ocean waves; this is the time when the child "is still at as good as one with the mother." See *JP* 4.4398; *PAP* I C 126 and *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.62; *SV* 13.64.

[10] Kierkegaard's understanding of love as a kind of *care* prompts Ferreira to read *kjerlighed* as "caring": see *Love's Grateful Striving*, 43-44. Neighborly love, then, involves caring for each human being "according to (i.e., not in spite of or regardless of) his particularity." - Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, 362.

[11] Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 385. Even though it is a spontaneous "event over which we have no control," love can be refined into a deliberate way of being, as Jegstrup points out: "To let the other be is how Kierkegaard understands love as obligation", and truthful subjective comportment requires that one be "attuned to being as love." - *Text and the Performative Act*, 125.

kind, about the dynamic energy which founds all things", and this sacred agency is present in each person "in such a way that it demands that I recognize and affirm this same validity and dignity in every other human being."[12] Since love not only "proceeds from the heart", but also "*forms* the heart", a person's moral identity is defined by love in such a way that only the person who loves knows who he is and what he must do.[13] And because each of us owes his or her distinctive singularity to the fundamental influence of love, moral goodness can only take the form of affirming each person's existence as the unique loving individual whom he or she is. This means valuing his/ her well-being for its own sake, aware that his/ her sphere of concern defines her identity and conditions his/ her happiness.

Love is the "passion of the emotions," or the "emotional passion," that connects the one who loves with the second-person beloved, thereby constituting the middle term in the relation.[14] On Kierkegaard's trinitarian view, "The love-relationship requires threeness: the lover, the beloved, the love - but the love is God."[15] As Ferreira explains, "God is not the 'middle term' by being the direct object of our love in such a way as to marginalize the beloved; God is the 'middle term' by being the center of the relationship because 'the love is God.'"[16] Love is the divine force that connects us to the finite realm in which our concrete duty is to love the person we see. By loving others not *as* gods, but *through* God, we become subject to existential imperatives and susceptible to moral emotions.

Human life would be empty and vain if nothing were valued for its own sake, and so we must love unselfishly at least in some cases in order to

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[12] Thomas Langan, *Being and Truth*, 311; Arnold B. Come, "Kierkegaard's Ontology of Love," 91-92.

[13] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.12; *SV* 12.18. See also *Either/Or*, *KW* 4.125; *SV* 3.119. The "truly loving" person, as Kierkegaard writes, "loves every human being according to his distinctiveness; but 'his distinctiveness' is what for him is *his own*; that is, the loving one does not seek his own; quite the opposite, he loves what is the other's own." - *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.269; *SV* 12.258.

[14] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.112; *SV* 12.112.

[15] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.121; *SV* 12.120. Kierkegaard elsewhere suggests that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is what sustains us more generally: *JP* 1.296; *PAP* II A 419. Cf. Nicholas of Cusa, "On the Vision of God," 267-68.

[16] *Love's Grateful Striving*, 72. Cf. Bowen, "Kierkegaard on the Theological Ethics of Love," 25: "In any relationship of love, Love (i.e., *God himself*) is the aforementioned 'third term' and eternal Reality."

avoid a nihilistic predicament. It makes sense, then, to characterize love as the divinity that shapes our ends.[17] Going a step further, we could say that to practice Christianity means, above all else, to live in accordance with the conviction that God is love, to follow the promptings of a religious influence which one does not necessarily understand but to which one is comprehensively indebted. Since we are ontologically dependent upon love, we have the choice either to affirm this fundamental dependency or else to live in a state of denial. In the name of truthfulness, Kierkegaard invites us to make a wholehearted affirmation of the ground of our being.

When we see things with loving eyes, every aspect of the world is enriched.[18] If we believe that God is love, then we ought to find that life is meaningful and good - not because a loving attitude endows objects with value, but only because it disposes us toward a charitable interpretation of the world. With a loving disposition we appreciate things for being what they are: love is not an objective entity, but a subjective mode of comportment which enables objects to appear significant. Our given emotional world is one in which ordinary things are weighted with significance (a corpse is revolting, a living-room soothing); yet these value-rich features would be perceived as neutral facts by anyone other than an emotionally responsive subject.[19] Describing what it would be like to be completely indifferent to everything under the sun, Dostoevsky's "Ridiculous Man" writes:

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[17] Kierkegaard associates love with providence and uses both terms to designate the source of individual human distinctiveness: see, e.g., *JP* 1.909 & 2.1372; *PAP* IV B 170 & IX A 182. See also *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.84-85; *SV* 12.86 and *PAP* XI^2 A 177 & XI^2 A 259. On God as "the source and origin of all distinctiveness" who gives being to each of us, see *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.271; *SV* 12.260. On the sense in which we human beings are capable of nothing apart from God, see *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.319; *SV* 4.283-84.

[18] Kierkegaard describes one who "has pondered upon the nature of God, upon the fact that God is love," and who has reflected "upon what follows from this as a consequence," that "all things must work together for good." Even this person, he says, could sometimes doubt "whether after all God is love": *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.197-98; *SV* 13.188-89. Lowrie translation. It is only when "you believe that God is love" that "all things serve you for good." See *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.193; *SV* 13.185. On the other hand, compare Carlsson, *Kierkegaard and Philosophical Eros*, 139-147.

[19] See Lingis, *The Imperative*, 119-20. Cf. Kolenda, *Religion without God*, 112: "To speak of the meaning *of the universe* is to speak of the way this meaning becomes apparent in personal experience."

> All of a sudden, I realized that it *would not matter* to me whether the world existed or whether there was nothing at all anywhere. I began to intuit and sense with all my being, that *there was nothing around me*. At first, I was inclined to think that in the past there had been a great deal, but later on I divined that formerly too there had been nothing, it had merely seemed otherwise for some reason. I gradually became convinced that there would be nothing in the future either. It was then that I suddenly stopped being angry at other people and almost ceased to notice them. Indeed, this became apparent even in the most trivial matters: for example, I would bump into people as I was walking along the street.[20]

Except for a bit of Cartesian certainty about his own existence, this narrator has lost everything to axiological skepticism: he is so indifferent to the palpable objects he bumps into that they might as well not exist. He does not have the loving mode of awareness that is required in order to be able to perceive the significance of things. It does not make sense to speak about pre-existing subjects actively bestowing significance onto objects, since moral perception cannot occur at all unless we are already involved in life as persons to whom things matter. And it is not an incidental fact about us that we are loving or caring beings - rather, it is "a structuring condition of the universe of our possibilities."[21] Along the same lines, Heidegger writes: "it is not the case that objects are first present as bare realities, as objects in some natural state, and that they then in the course of our experience receive the garb of a value-character, so they do not have to run around naked."[22] From the point of view of an unloving observer, it would not even be self-evident that the external world exists.

To the apathetic person, it will never be *obvious* that anything *deserves* to be loved. But what is at issue here is not objective warrant: it is a basic disposition to see things in the best possible light.[23] Just as love is unasked-for by us, it is uncalled-for by the world - and yet it is only by virtue of its gratuitous "infinitude, inexhaustibility, immeasurability" that love can

[20] Dostoevsky, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," 108.
[21] Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*, 32-33.
[22] Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 69.
[23] Cf. Rudd, "'Believing all Things': Kierkegaard on Knowledge, Doubt, and Love," 127. See *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.225-28; *SV* 12.218-20.

summon the romantic soul into a caring engagement with contingent reality.[24]

The affirmation of love's divinity goes hand-in-hand with a belief in the goodness of existence.[25] At the very least, if God is love, then the value of life is not in question - however, this is not because the sum of all pleasures and pains shows us that it is mostly *enjoyable* to exist. On the contrary, there is a non-accidental connection between love's ontological status and the vulnerability which it induces in the person who loves.[26] To borrow another philosopher's image,[27] "the multiform history of our loves, with all their complications and incidents, lives finally from that elemental, cosmic force, which our psyche" simply "administers and models in various ways. The differently styled turbines and engines which we submerge in the torrent should not make us forget that it is the primary force of the torrent itself which mysteriously moves us."

Does it follow that we should be ready to join in unequivocal praise of this sacred force, for making everything the way it is? Not necessarily. We have yet to consider why Kierkegaard not only admits that love "can give birth to pain," acknowledging this possibility, but even goes so far as to claim that "suffering is the very token of God's love," as if suffering were essentially correlated with being *in* love.[28] In other words, we have not yet considered the darker consequences of following love's influence wherever it may lead, like the mystics who "feel within them something better than themselves," and hence "simply open their souls to the oncoming wave."[29] A poem by Philip Larkin begins with a celebration of this oceanic feeling:

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[24] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.180; *SV* 12.175.

[25] Cf. *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.215; *SV* 12.208.

[26] Love's "deep sustaining power" and the "vulnerability" to which it gives rise are noted by Edward Mooney in *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, 59-60.

[27] José Ortega y Gasset, *On Love*, 37.

[28] See *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, *KW* 10.47; *SV* 6.278 and *JP* 4.4692; *PAP* X^4 A 630. On love as the sacred origin of pain and suffering, see also *KW* 10.35; *SV* 6.269 and *JP* 2.1123; *PAP* VIII^1 A 649. Love renders a person liable to "suffering" in the sense that Schopenhauer has in mind when "in his gloomy Indian view" he says that "to live is to suffer": *JP* 4.3881; *PAP* XI^1 A 181. Cf. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 2:157. See also, e.g., Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, 59: "To love is to suffer. The more we love, the more we suffer."

[29] Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 99.

And the wave sings because it is moving;
Caught in its clear side, we also sing.

However, the flux and undulation of emotional existence will not always make us feel like singing: only a few lines further on, he suggests that we may be "so devised as to make ourselves unhappy."[30]

Apart, we think we wish ourselves together,
Yet sue for solitude upon our meetings...

All of a sudden, we are no longer singing, but unhappily trapped in a sorrowful song that we never asked to be part of. The joy expressed in the poem's opening lines now appears to have been naive: "If the waves began to reflect, they would suppose that they were advancing, that they had a goal... that they were working for the Sea's good, and they would not fail to elaborate a philosophy as stupid as their zeal."[31] But what is the nature of this connection between love and suffering?

In other words, why is it that a person who is "moved in love" must "suffer in love"?[32] Every bond of love is a bond to possible sorrow: even the most unselfish love of another human being is a vulnerable attachment to another center of agency. We are captivated, both by the subjective experience and by the intentional objects of our love: unless we manage to stifle or resist this overwhelming experience, we are decisively *bound* by it.[33] As opposed to the "isolated self" of the Stoic, the Kierkegaardian self is open and engaged in a network of caring relationships which define its identity. This is why we betray ourselves when we resist love's influence: we are who we are by virtue of what we love. And this fabric of attachments can also be described as a web of care that places us at risk of being affected directly *by*,

[30] From an untitled 1946 poem: Larkin, *Collected Poems*, 6-7. The following lines may be an allusion to Schopenhauer's tale of the porcupines who crowd together to avoid being frozen to death, only to move apart due to the pain of one another's quills: *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 2:396.

[31] Cioran, *Drawn and Quartered*, 147.

[32] *JP* 3.2447; *PAP* XI[1] A 411.

[33] *Stages on Life's Way*, *KW* 11.176; *SV* 8.158. As Kierkegaard writes, the "free" heart has no concerns and (therefore) no history; however, for a loving person, "the heart must be bound." - *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.148-49; *SV* 12.145-46. See also Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 18-20.

and empathetically *for*, whatever stands at the other end of these fibres of connective tissue. Insofar as a person loves, he or she is at the mercy of a world in which value may dawn unexpectedly and what is valued may be taken away. The life lived on these terms is always difficult - it is vulnerable to passionate suffering in so many ways - but this is the price we must pay for a meaningful existence, in which significance is not nihilistically projected by the will but in which it almost forces itself upon us.

It may be an edifying observation that faith in love is one condition of "a life that is truly worth living," but it is by way of this great blessedness that we experience the heaviest suffering.[34] A self that is built up by love is *thereby* rendered susceptible to *pathos*.[35] To trust in the sacred agency of love is not to be assured that one will be granted whatever is wished for: no such guarantee is available to us as finite creatures. There are times when what we happen to receive fits our notion of what is good, but it would be wrong in these cases to believe that Governance has given us preferential treatment. What appears to be happy fortune does not bring any assurance of favoured standing, just as tragedy is not necessarily merited. Reverential trust is not a conclusion drawn from favourable circumstances; it is an inward disposition through which we perceive every external state of affairs. A person with this trust will not assume that he must somehow deserve whatever good he may have been given, nor will he assume that it will not be taken away. Faith in love is neither a calculated arrangement nor an exchange in which one receives tit for tat: it is an acceptance of whatever may proceed from an enigmatic, unpredictable source.

In the discourse entitled "To Need God Is a Human Being's Highest Perfection," Kierkegaard argues that an awareness of one's reliance on this self-grounding power, although it "makes life more difficult," is needed if one is to know oneself.[36] When the erotic self covets objects in the external

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[34] *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.200-201; *SV* 13.191. See also *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.130-32; *SV* 12.129-30. Cf. Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, 5: "The heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become."

[35] Antigone, for instance, is not merely active but in a crucial sense acted upon: "Her pain is now increased by her love, by her sympathetic suffering with the one whom she loves." - *Either/Or*, *KW* 3.164; *SV* 2.151.

[36] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.312-13; *SV* 4.278-79. In "The Gospel of Sufferings," this self-knowledge is more explicitly associated with the weighty and

world and then has its wishes luckily fulfilled, it imagines that it can count on a happy fate from now on.[37] In a deeper sense, the passionate human being ought to be aware that circumstances may change - however, "the surrounding world can actually be so favourable, so tangibly trustworthy," that a person is seduced into a superficial feeling of secure well-being. When its good fortune is threatened, the covetous self clings more tightly to its probabilistic hopes; but it is precisely at such times that one is in a position to learn the deeper truth that, with regard to valued externals, a person is not in a position of ultimate control. To accept this uncontrol is to open oneself to a gratitude which is not based upon the false belief that one is securely in possession of the good. To trust in love with an unconditional faith that no contingent experience could shake is to cultivate a different way of perceiving things, according to which even the most difficult experiences are seen as meaningful. When Paul says "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice," Kierkegaard suggests that he is pausing to listen "to everything terrible that may be uttered," and then, in spite of everything, repeating his conviction that one must nevertheless rejoice.[38] This is the assurance of a faith that preserves its spirit of gratitude even "in the maelstrom of spiritual trial"; it does not follow that one's life becomes easy - on the contrary, "it can become very hard."[39] But it is simply not possible to prohibit hardship from a life that contains deeper meaning, in which one traces everything to a God of love. Love "does not secure against despair by means of feeble, lukewarm comfort," and faith is not a recipe for tranquillity: on the contrary, the "magnitude of the terrifying" is proportionate to the influence of this

passionate task of taking up one's cross: see *KW* 15.221-22 & 15.252-57; *SV* 11.206-207 & 11.234-39. Cf. Come, *Kierkegaard as Theologian*, 278-83. Kierkegaard's belief that meaningful suffering has shaped his life is expressed, e.g., in an 1848 journal entry: *JP* 5.6135; *PAP* VIII[1] A 650.

[37] On the belief among rich "Christians" that material wealth is evidence of their favored status, see Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 254. Regarding the "theodicy of good fortune," see Hans Joas, *The Genesis of Values*, 29. A notebook entry from 1853 speaks about how Kierkegaard gave up believing "that God expressed his love by sending earthly gifts, happiness, prosperity," etc. See *JP* 6.6837; *PAP* X[5] A 72.

[38] See *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.321; *SV* 4.285-86. Kierkegaard is quoting Phillipians 4:4.

[39] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.322-26; *SV* 4.286-89.

grounding power.[40] The essential connection between love and suffering is that by virtue of loving, a person is liable to be affected in many different ways by contingent events. This vulnerability is the logical consequence of caring about aspects of the world that one cannot predict and does not control.

As a matter of implication, this is because the self is built up by love in such a way as to be susceptible to passion. The religious sensibility of a Kierkegaardian Christian is an orientation toward what is loved, not a belief in God as a very large bird, an elderly uncle, a fluffy marshmallow, or any other objective entity that can be imagined to exist on a cloud somewhere, apart from human inwardness.[41] Suffering that arises from a faith in the divinity of love is not egoless or illusory, but is based upon the reality of the individual subject and its relations of care with what is outside of itself.[42] If we are committed to believing in the possibility of love, and in the significance of the threads by which it binds us to the world, then we must accept the possibility of suffering.[43] Schopenhauer is aware that "the thousand threads" which hold us emotionally "bound to the world" are precisely what lead us to suffer, but he also realizes that a life without susceptibility to emotions would not be that of an individual.[44] We have a

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[40] See *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.41; *SV* 12.45 and *Christian Discourses*, 17.95-96; *SV* 13.95-96. Cf. *PAP* XI[1] A 382. On how someone who is "moved by God's love" consequently "takes care" in such a way that "his life will become suffering," see *JP* 1.538; *PAP* X[4] A 624.

[41] Kierkegaard affirms that {a} God is love, {b} love is not itself an object, and {c} we can be God-like only as loving subjects. With regard to {a} and {c} see *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.62-63; *SV* 12.66. Regarding {b} see *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.182; *SV* 12.176. The equation between "to love God" and "to be loving," can be found in *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.130; *SV* 13.126. Unselfish love is not dependent upon its object, but it is not "proudly independent" of all objects either. As Kierkegaard says, it looks "down to earth" in order to love "the person one sees" in his or her contingency: see *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.66-67 & 16.174; *SV* 12.70 & 12.169.

[42] Because, for Kierkegaard, the "absolute significance" of the distinct individual is the "very principle" of Christianity (*JP* 2.1997; *PAP* VIII[1] A 9), despair is "a failure to face the challenge of realizing the inherent value of one's life." - Hannay, "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," 337.

[43] For Kierkegaard it is not possible that a reverent person could avoid being involved in relationships, as it is for Epictetus: *Discourses* III.22.69.

[44] *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:390. Of course, his conclusion is that we should be relieved to be liberated from individuality. This is not simply because of the "sum total of misery, pain, and suffering" in life, but because individuality (according to

choice between individuality-and-suffering or neither/ nor; arguably, the latter alternative cannot be acceptable to anyone who believes that, since a divine agency "has *created* and *sustains* this world," we ought to avoid the "ascetic fanaticism" that "hates it."[45] The heavier the burden of our concerns, the more value we experience in life; but the weight of our cares can also lead to seemingly unbearable suffering. This is the predicament that every loving person must live with: genuine passions cannot be turned on and off like a water faucet, since they arise from a basic emotional engagement which our subsequent emotional responses presuppose.

This grounding allows a person to be a moral agent, but it is not itself a moral evaluation - it is better described as a religious acceptance of the conditions of human being. Either one loves or one does not love, and this fundamental commitment is not made from an ideally rational standpoint. It is made without any knowledge of what will ensue. Of course, one may preclude suffering by resisting or revolting against this initial commitment, and withdrawing one's care from the world:[46] but is it perhaps better for this

Schopenhauer) is not the locus of significant truth but is fundamentally illusory: see, e.g., *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 2:156.

[45] See *JP* 2.1399; *PAP* X^2 A 241, a journal entry which goes on to suggest that things of this world should be regarded as harmless but ultimately distracting playthings from which a child is weaned; see also *JP* 3.2888; *PAP* X^4 A 260. Cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* V.36. It is noteworthy that some of Kierkegaard's late apocalyptic writings explicitly conflate Stoicism and Christianity: see *JP* 2.1266; *PAP* X^4 A 13 and *JP* 4.4518; *PAP* X^5 A 63. Kierkegaard recognizes, most of the time, that the two schools are antithetical - however, he sometimes advises a *contemptus mundi* attitude. Similarly, Augustine denies the value of human life in favor of an unearthly future, demonstrating "a callous lack of love for neighbors... and an otherworldly hatred of all things temporal" (Schlabach, *For the Joy Set Before Us*, 101-102) which Arendt describes as "pseudo-Christian" since its "denial of human existence" makes neighborly love impossible: *Love and Saint Augustine*, 27-30. See *City of God* 12.1 & 22.22. The strain of unloving self-interested eschatology in some of Kierkegaard's own later works can be found, e.g., in *The Instant* (#2) & (#8), *KW* 23.121 & 21.304; *SV* 19.121 & 19.285. See also *JP* 3.2551, 4.3642, 4.4670, & 4.4940; *PAP* XI^1 A 297, X^4 A 174, X^4 A 158, & X^5 A 41.

[46] Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, 49. On the risk of being torn apart or "care-buried" as a consequence of loving, see also Ronald de Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*, 231-32. Cf. Ulrika Carlsson, *Kierkegaard and Philosophical Eros*, 2 & 56-62. See also her review of Pamela Hieronymi's *Freedom, Resentment, and the Metaphysics of Morals* (*Mind*, 2021): "The world of the objective stance is as alien and barren to us as outer space. If we lived our lives as though what others did and said did not reflect their inner selves, and as though what moved within those inner selves was of no concern to us, we would lose the possibility of communion with others – of real love and intimacy – and thereby also cease to be ourselves."

project not to succeed? We are tempted to resent whatever threatens our security, hardening ourselves against the external world. But we can also trust in the incarnation of "the divine-human love that *freely chooses avoidable suffering*."[47] The figure of a suffering God who makes a passionate sacrifice exemplifies the commitment to love and suffer in an uncertain world, rather than avoiding unhappiness and frustration (together with happiness and fulfilment) by way of stoical apathetic detachment.

In the face of this unasked-for and inexplicable givenness, Kierkegaard suggests that we should not ask why, but rather give thanks for whatever has been given - even when it seems that we have been dealt a bad hand. With annoying persistence, he asks:

> And when your allotted portion was little, did you thank God? And when your allotted portion was sufferings, did you thank God? And when your wish was denied, did you thank God?... And when people wronged and insulted you, did you thank God?[48]

To these rhetorical questions, the reader might answer: no, of course not. After all, the concept of thankfulness does tend to imply that one is happy with a gift. But Kierkegaard insists that gratitude should not be contingent upon the quality of what has been given in the eyes of the recipient: instead, it ought to take the form of unconditional acceptance.

It is possible, not only by virtue of a lack of effort, to experience a comprehensive sense of desolation, like the person whose soul was worn out by cares to the point that everything seemed confused, as if "the wild pandemonium of life" could not be resolved into any overall harmony. Looking at "the anarchy into which everything seemed to have disintegrated," such a person may have given in to despair. Or perhaps he simply became alien to everything: "He saw what others saw, but his eyes continually read an invisible handwriting in everything, that it was emptiness and illusion."[49] This nihilistic vision may be the result of having loved and suffered, and seen too much: the tragic consequences that often follow from

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[47] Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, 170. See also *JP* 1.307-308; *PAP* VIII[1] A 343-44.
[48] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.43; *SV* 4.44-45.
[49] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.94-95; *SV* 4.90-91.

trusting in love can make us incapable of believing that it is fundamentally worthy of trust.[50] As Thomas Hardy points out, our passionate experience is sometimes of the "incapacitating kind" that does not leave us wiser but only "unfits us for further travel."[51] After suffering her tragic fate, his character "Tess" laments:

> It wears me out to think of it,
> To think of it;
> I cannot bear my fate as writ,
> I'd have my life unbe.[52]

It may be admirable for the subject of an apparently meaningless suffering to avoid utter despair, but it is not easy to maintain a faith in love that believes all things. When "despondency wants to make everything empty for you," to transform all of existence until "you do indeed see all of it, but with such indifference" that it seems as if God has withdrawn from the world, "far away from all this triviality that is scarcely worth living for" - this, Kierkegaard says, is precisely when it is most important to have faith in love:[53] "If for one moment, one single moment, it were to be absent, [then] everything would be confused." Still, the fact that we are both the instruments and the victims of this dynamic force does not by any means require us to endorse it with joyful reverence, and thus to embrace the risk of suffering.[54] If Kierkegaard still believes in "a benign and love-impregnated cosmic order," this cannot be a facile belief which is blind to the many legitimate reasons for thinking differently.[55] Faith does not consist in an asinine confidence that, in the scheme of things, everything works out for

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[50] See *JP* 1.741; *PAP* III A 195.

[51] *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 98. This is the novel that Hardy wrote immediately after studying Schopenhauer: see Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, 408.

[52] "Tess's Lament," in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 487-88.

[53] *Works of Love*, *KW* 16.300-301; *SV* 12.288-89.

[54] Kierkegaard writes in an 1849 journal entry that "my life's significance corresponds precisely to my suffering." In other words, it has been so constitutive of who he is that it cannot be dismissed as something unfortunate that "he" might have avoided. See *PAP* X^4 A 92. On the link between particular sufferings and the tragic sense of life in general, see also Hannay, "Kierkegaard and the Variety of Despair," 332 and Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, 314.

[55] John Kekes, *Moral Tradition and Individuality*, 224.

those who love with a proper religious understanding: it is a matter of accepting one's place in the whole unknown process.

The standard example of a character who faithfully embraces his fate in spite of all sufferings is Job. He is introduced as a *blameless* and *upright* man, who lives a flourishing existence as a friend of God, appreciative of his many contingent goods: animals, pastures, family, and health.[56] But when the work animals are stolen and the livestock struck by lightning, when the house is blown down onto the heads of his children, and when Job's own body is covered with painful and disfiguring sores, he refuses to curse God or to give up on life. Surveying the ruins of his former happiness, he does not self-deceptively comfort himself by denying the loss that he has suffered, "as if there were strength in falsehood."[57] Instead, he feels the full extent of his loss, recognizing (as Kierkegaard comments) that "if God is love, then he is also love in everything, love in what you can understand and love in what you cannot understand."[58] This is not a rationalization of God's ways, simply a recognition that our attitude toward what is out of our hands must be either acceptance or distrust - and a refusal to admit the limits of our own power and knowledge is one of the more perverse versions of distrust. The "young man" in *Repetition*, in a dumbstruck apostrophe to Job, asks him: "When all of life collapsed upon you and lay like broken pottery at your feet... did you immediately have this *interpretation of love*, this joyful boldness of trust and faith?"[59] This character, who at first seems unconvinced by Job's "miserable worldly wisdom" and the reverence that accompanies it, eventually takes heart in his story.[60] Job's witness, as Kierkegaard suggests, is addressed not to the happy but to the troubled, who *would* listen only to the voice of someone who has suffered miserably. And Job does not lecture on the perfection of life: he never accepts the idea that his suffering must be *for the best* from some standpoint. Neither misrepresenting his present wretchedness, nor forgetting the significance of what he formerly loved, Job

[56] See, e.g., Job 1:1, 1:13-22, 2:1-8, & 29:4. Kierkegaard's remarkable discourse on Job is located in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.109-24; *SV* 4.103-16.
[57] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.118; *SV* 4.110.
[58] *Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 15.264-68; *SV* 11.245-48.
[59] *Repetition*, *KW* 6.197; *SV* 5.169 (my italics); cf. Job 1:22 & 19:25-27.
[60] See *Repetition*, *KW* 6.204-205 & 6.208; *SV* 5.174-76 & 5.177.

throws himself on the ground and cries out with the words that Kierkegaard cites as the title of his discourse:[61] "the Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Because of this affirmation in the midst of the worst plight, Job strikes a chord with those to whom optimism seems ludicrous or stupid: he demonstrates that "all the joy proclaimed in the world in which sorrow is not heard along with it is but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."[62]

It is not as if Job suffered once and for all something that would never be experienced again – as Kierkegaard points out, only a light-minded person could wish not to be reminded of Job and his incomprehensible distress.[63] This narrative reminds us that the source of human suffering is impossible to fathom, in any case. This is why an exemplary truth is illustrated by "someone in the world who lost everything," for whom "the whole thing remained inexplicable and obscure."[64]

> How would he not understand that when the sea is raging wildly, when it heaves itself toward heaven, people and their fragile buildings are then flung about as in a game; that when the storm rages in its fury, human projects are but child's play; that when the earthquakes in the anguish of the elements and when the mountains sigh, men and their glorious works then sink as a nothingness into the abyss.

How, indeed? Yet faced with the same evidence, Job does not yield to despair: singing out with absurd praise, he traces everything to God. Confessing that he was born naked into the world and does not know what is going on, Job responds to his profound loss with gratitude for all the blessings that he must have been given, if he was in a position to have them taken away.[65] Those who take themselves to be immune to suffering are asked to think about how they might respond when similar trials arrive at their door, and are advised to learn from Job how to be honest with oneself about the source of whatever

[61] Job 1:20-21. See *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.109; *SV* 4.103.
[62] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.122; *SV* 4.114. Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1.
[63] See *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.110-12; *SV* 4.104-106.
[64] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.119-20; *SV* 4.111-12.
[65] Job 1:20-21; see *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.121; *SV* 5.113.

good fortune one may enjoy. What is of value in human life is a contingent gift, and ought to be appreciated as such;[66] as Kierkegaard writes at the end of the discourse, "no one knows the time and the hour when the messages will come to him, the one more terrible than the other."

But, as Mooney asks, "how can a man as afflicted as Job is, nevertheless affirm the inexhaustible meaning of the particulars around him, or of the particular he is?"[67] The answer comes from the voice of God that speaks from out of the storm to call Job's attention to the wonders of the world that Job did not create and does not comprehend. The givenness of love itself has much in common with the contingent givenness of all things: Job gives credit where credit is due when he praises the sacred agency that had given him everything that he was in a position to lose. And only love can suffer and yet maintain this perspective of acceptance, in spite of all the objective grounds for nihilistic doubt and all pessimism about the logical link between love and emotional vulnerability.[68] No doubt, it takes audacity to affirm this "interpretation of love" in the worst of circumstances: Job violates Ockham's razor, one might say, going beyond empirical facts to conclude that his children were *given* and then *taken away*, when a far less extravagant explanation would be that they were simply born and raised, and then unfortunately buried by a storm from the desert.[69] When a person maintains faith in love after surveying the range of human suffering, he or she is not making a "scientific" observation but stating a basic principle of interpretation. Because love alone is capable of finding significance in existence, our life as value-perceiving moral agents is predicated upon an implicitly religious affirmation. For Kierkegaard, this is the real either/ or:[70] "Either God is love: and then it is absolutely valid to stake absolutely everything on this... or God is not love: and then, yes, then the loss is so infinite that any other loss is of no consequence whatsoever."

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[66] *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.123-24; *SV* 4.115-16.
[67] *Selves in Discord and Resolve*, 32. See also Job 38:1-41:26.
[68] Cf. Hall, *The Human Embrace*, 79.
[69] See *Repetition*, *KW* 6.197; *SV* 5.169 and *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.119; *SV* 4.111.
[70] I cite a journal entry from 1848: *JP* 3.3746; *PAP* IX A 486. Mark C. Taylor discusses the sense in which the "humanistic atheist" does not realize that the death of God would mean "the death of the self" in *Erring: A Post-Modern A/Theology*, 20.

It requires courage to say *thy will be done in me*, to identify one's highest perfection with one's most abject dependency, and it may also require a belief that love is more than a blind striving. But Kierkegaard seems to have an answer even for those who argue that existence erupts from an abyss and is otherwise groundless.[71] He speaks in one letter about how "the *blind* god of love always finds a way," as if teleology could supervene upon an intrinsically meaningless process; in another, he makes reference to "accident, Governance, or whatever it may be" that governs contingent events.[72] And in a suggestive journal entry that aims to explain how suffering can be accounted for without reference to "the devil," he writes:

> The unconditioned, the being-in-and-for-itself, is so terribly strenuous for a human being, and one would therefore so much like to be rid of it, [to] press a purpose upon God - and in that very second, he becomes in fact dependent upon finitude... This is why I repeat so often that God is pure subjectivity, has nothing... in himself which could lead to his having, or having to have, purposes.[73]

In each of these cases he suggests that we ought to comport ourselves affirmatively even if significance is merely an emergent property of a process which is incomprehensible because it is senseless; a force that is basically aimless cannot go wrong, at least.[74] Still, this is hardly a consolatory remark. When Camus takes at face value the question from *Fear and Trembling* -

> if at the basis of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that writhing in dark passions gave rise to everything significant or insignificant, if a voracious and unfathomable emptiness were hidden under everything, what would life be then except despair?[75]

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[71] See, e.g., Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, 23.

[72] *Letters and Documents*, *KW* 25.64 & 25.338; *Breve og Aktstykker* 18 & 241 (to Regine Olsen and P. M. Stilling). For Kierkegaard as for Marcus Aurelius, what is at issue is whether or not the individual is *cared for* (see, e.g., *JP* 3.3628; *PAP* VII[1] A 130) - and he submits that to believe in providence is a matter of existential commitment, rather than an empirical conclusion: see *JP* 2.1117; *PAP* VII[1] A 61. Cf. *Meditations* IX.28 & XII.14.

[73] *JP* 2.1449; *PAP* XI[2] 133. Hannay translation. See also *JP* 4.4901; *PAP* X[4] A 613: "In the unconditioned all teleology vanishes." Cf. Arnold B. Come, "Kierkegaard's Ontology of Love," 96-98. On *kjerlighed* and its ontology, see Krishek, *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love*, 111-15 & 142-144.

[74] As Ortega points out: *On Love*, 189.

[75] *Fear and Trembling*, *KW* 6.15; *SV* 5.17. Modified translation.

- he answers that despair may be the appropriate response.[76] Yet Kierkegaard will not be reconciled to absurdity so easily; instead, he suggests an "absurd" religious perspective from which even tragic frustration can be traced to the origin of all significance in life. And he also reminds us that the way we perceive things always depends upon how we are disposed: a charitable gaze regards everything in the best possible light.[77] This may be more of an ideal hope than an achieved state of being, but he agrees with Simone Weil that the self must "go on loving in the emptiness, or at least to go on wanting to love, though it may only be with an infinitesimal part of itself."[78] It is only faith in love, not a rejection of it, that can save us from despair.

Perhaps there is more than a human need at stake in this, but a truth about the nature of reality which can be understood only in a spirit of gratitude. Circumstances may provoke us to say, "it was somewhat unkind of love to let it happen," but we ought not allow this response to expand into a comprehensive ingratitude for existence.[79] Rather than being so petty as to keep track of every single way in which we have been hurt, we need, Kierkegaard says, to place trust in the eternal power in which our being is rooted. Even someone who has "passionately experienced" that "hope disappoints" should not for this reason cease to believe that God is love, since this belief is not susceptible to circumstantial disproof.[80] It is something that must be accepted or rejected as an axiomatic premise. And the religious conviction which it brings has little in common with the sentimental idea of God as "an old fussbudget who sits in heaven and humours us" - it requires submitting to the terms of an uncertain world in which value is precarious and impermanent, and in which there is no assurance of a happy ending.[81] In

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[76] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 41.

[77] See, e.g., *JP* 2.1254 & 4.4554; *PAP* VIII[1] A 522 & X[2] A 355.

[78] Weil, *Waiting for God*, 121. Cf. *Christian Discourses*, *KW* 17.196; *SV* 13.187.

[79] See *JP* 3.2442; *PAP* X[5] A 50. See also *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, *KW* 5.71; *SV* 4.71: "Indeed, even if love has led a person astray, even if it cannot acquit him later, it will nevertheless say: Would I abandon you in the hour of need?"

[80] *JP* 6.6884; *PAP* XI[1] A 215. Kierkegaard is making reference to Schopenhauer's remark that we are disappointed either by hope itself or by the attainment of the object that was hoped for. See *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:573. For more on Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, see Furtak, *Wisdom in Love*, 184-189.

[81] See, e.g., *Stages on Life's Way*, *KW* 11.374; *SV* 8.178: "the person who wills religiously

support of his thesis that life is not "decidedly preferable" to nonexistence, Schopenhauer asserts that only a blind life-force could be responsible for placing us in a predicament which is "so precarious, obscure, anxious, and painful."[82] By virtue of existing, however, we have already been tacitly accepting and relying upon the influence of this force: we are *always already* living as emotional creatures whose being is rooted and grounded in love, and a consistent nihilism toward the ground of our being would require us to commit suicide.[83] Kierkegaard urges us to make the best of our dependency by interpreting the source of all things as a sacred power.

Our life as emotional agents do not follow from a reasoned conclusion that such a life is unambiguously worth living, but from a commitment that is not exactly rational. This is the sense in which emotion cannot simply be reduced to rationality: our capacity for emotional reason could not be realized if we did not, at least implicitly, embrace our existence as loving beings. In making such an affirmation, we open the door to suffering. But to have no such reverence and to be closed to the possibility of experiencing significance in life is not simply to be liberated from a superfluous belief. It is to watch significance withdraw from the world, and to do violence to the sacred basis of the self. Love is a pre-moral force, whose visible results are so chaotic as to justify ambivalence if not outright distrust; nonetheless, Kierkegaard suggests that a truthful human being must affirm the mystery at the heart of its existence, calling an unknown source by the name of God.[84] Whether or not we can bear the weight of this affirmation is another question. Ultimately, the point is that faith in a God of love is a necessary condition of meaningful existence, even if it is terrifying to accept that what builds us up is also what makes us suffer.

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must have receptivity precisely for the terrible." The more a person is moved by the eternal force of love, the more difficult her life in time is apt to become: see *JP* 2.1434; *PAP* X^5 A 55. Schopenhauer points out that suffering "does not flow in upon us from outside, as [rather] everyone carries around within himself its perennial source." - *The World as Will and Representation*, 1:318.

[82] *The World as Will and Representation*, 2:579-80.

[83] Cf. Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought*, 130.

[84] See, e.g., *JP* 5.6135; *PAP* VIII^1 A 650. Lear argues that the fundamental restlessness of the human psyche "is not itself good or bad; indeed, it is not a principle of any teleological system. It exists *before good and evil*." See *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*, 89.

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Reception and Renewal in the Kierkegaard Literature

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Abstract This essay will try to define the beginnings and contemporary events of Hungarian Kierkegaard research, but it must be made clear that we can only examine the most significant works written about Kierkegaard. Before the Second World War, Hungarian culture and intellectual life were closely linked to German intellectual life. Therefore, the reception of Kierkegaard's philosophy in Hungary can only be discussed regarding the period coming after the publication of his works in German. Moreover, it is an important fact that Kierkegaard became known to European culture through his German reception. It must be said that studies on Kierkegaard before the Second World War were probably deeper and more detailed than they were after the war. The 1980's and 90's saw a rebirth of the reception of Kierkegaard, mainly due to political changes going on in Hungary.
Keywords: Hungarian culture, Kierkegaard reception, Germanism, Brandes, Lukács.

Introduction

In terms of reception, we could talk about very different areas of the human spirit, such as literature (especially poetry), art, film, or different areas of human sciences, but we have to decide which area to focus on. In the strictest sense, we are now trying to concentrate on the research on works by Kierkegaard and, in addition, on the phenomena of his works in Hungary, in order to be able to show the clear effect of his philosophy. One proof of his effect in Hungary is that a great number of his works were published in

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Hungarian. Nobody doubts that Kierkegaard's philosophy exerted a certain influence on European culture (including art, literature, humanistic disciplines, and especially 20th century European philosophy). The concepts used by Kierkegaard – from the avant-garde to existentialism – have been traced throughout the history of European ideas. Kierkegaard was perhaps the only philosopher besides Nietzsche who had an influence that exceeded the one produced in the field of philosophy. The reception and influence of his philosophy in Denmark is represented for example by the tremendous work of the *Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre* – this work was completed with 44 volumes of the entire oeuvre published and his influence was so great and broad that it cannot be compared to the ones of other previous philosophers.

Now, we would like to prove that the research into Kierkegaard's work already appeared at the beginning of 20th century in parallel with the reception of these texts in Europe and in the German-speaking area. First and foremost, we need to establish when Kierkegaard research began in Hungary, but it should be made clear that we can only deal with the most significant works written about him in this essay. It is well known that the Hungarian cultural and intellectual life stood in very close connection with the German intellectual life before the Second World War, that is why the reception of Kierkegaard's philosophy in Hungary could only be spoken of in German terms after the publication of his works. It follows that Kierkegaard was also made known for European culture through the German reception, as a number of these works were translated into German as early as the end of the 19th century. However, their effect was limited to a narrow theological circle. In addition, their impact was mainly perceptible in the Scandinavian region. The first important event of the 19th Century was the work on Kierkegaard by *Georg Brandes*, which had already been published in Denmark in 1877, before it came out in 1879 in a German translation (Brandes, 1924), and was reprinted several times later on. *Georg Brandes* drew attention to Kierkegaard in a letter written to Friedrich Nietzsche in such a way that he wrote the following:

> There is a Nordic writer whose works would interest you, if only they were translated, Søren Kierkegaard; he lived 1813-55 and is, in my opinion, one of the deepest psychologists there is. A little

> book I wrote about him (translated Leipzig 1879) does not give a sufficient idea of his genius, for this book is a kind of writing, written to check his influence. But from a psychological point of view, it is probably the finest thing I have published. (Nietzsche, 1904. p. 282)

Although Kierkegaard was ahead of his time, the real essential effect produced by his philosophy only began in the 20th century (Steffensen, 1983). But it has already been proven that Nietzsche was never able to either read Kierkegaard's works or recognize his philosophy. The most important phase of Kierkegaard's influence undoubtedly spans the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. The Hungarian reception was established through German mediation, and the publication of German translations was a significant step, therefore the biggest event was the action of *Eugen Diederichs-Verlag* to transfer and publish the collected works of Kierkegaard. In addition, the newspaper *Der Brenner* in Innsbruck also played an important role.

Essay of Georg Lukács on Kierkegaard

In accordance with our preliminary remarks above, we are acting correctly if we combine the investigations on the Hungarian effect of Kierkegaard with the discussion regarding a short essay, *The Foundering of Form Against Life: Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen*, which was written by Georg Lukács in 1909 (Lukács, 2010). An essay by Rudolf Kassner (Neue Rundschau, 1906) gave Lukács a reason to write about the relationship between Kierkegaard and Regine.

This was the first writing about Kierkegaard in Hungary, as *The Soul and the Form* must have been one of his most important works of the period preceding World War I. Lukács refers back to Kassner's work several times in this short essay, and it is easy to see that Kassner had a significant influence on Lukács. It is also noteworthy that in this book (*Soul and Form*), there is an independent essay on Kassner as well (*Platonism, Poetry and the Forms*: *Rudolf Kassner*). Kassner, who belonged to the Austrian Neo-Romanticism, "was very clearly shaped in a peculiar way by the encounter with Kierkegaard", as Steffens Steffenen writes (Steffenen 1983, p. 213).

The Platonic inheritance is connected with the ethical-existential background in Kassner's work, which leads to the fact that the ethical question will, in a way, be almost the most important problematic for Lukács. This essay occupies an important ranking for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of the first essays to deal with the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard at the beginning of this century. Secondly, it remains the only important work on this subject until the 1930's. Hence the influence it exercises, and not only in Hungary.

Now, of course, we cannot consider every single question in the same way as the distorted picture of *The Destruction of Reason*. Therefore, the research into Kierkegaard's philosophy must be kept away from his Hungarian reception. It is probably not questionable that Lukács was not a Kierkegaard researcher, but Kierkegaard influenced him mostly through his personal life and philosophical fate, which is well proven when Lukács's later Marxist works are contrasted with his personal life and especially with his role in Hungarian culture. For Lukács behaved quite differently as a private person than as a representative of an ideology. For him, human and moral courage was always the most important thing and to be always strictly observed in private life.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Lukács says that what is the most important in Kierkegaard's philosophy, and in life in general, is that life is a *gesture*.

> The gesture alone expresses life: but is it possible to express a life? Is not this the tragedy of any living art, that it seeks to build a crystal palace out of air, to forge from the insubstantial possibilities of the soul, to construct, through the meeting and parting of souls, bridge of form between men? Can gesture exist at all; and has the concept of form any meaning seen from the perspective of life? (Lukács 2010, p.44)

Lukács was most impressed by the fact that Kierkegaard's life and thought are undeniably connected in a way that it is exceptional in the history of philosophy, perhaps comparable only to the fate of Socrates. And this fact had a definite influence on the whole of his life. We have to emphasize, however, that it was more of a personal impression, because Lukács probably never dealt systematically with Kierkegaard's philosophy; he did not know

his works well enough, therefore he made mistakes on several occasions when referring to them. To give just one example: understanding the paradox in connection with possibility and reality and calling it a gesture is based on an error. But the personal approach of expression he used in this essay proves and illuminates Lukács's attitude quite well in his time. He determines the essence of Kierkegaard's philosophy in the following way:

> But the deep meaning of Kierkegaard's philosophy is that he places fixed points beneath the incessantly changing nuances of life and draws absolute quality distinctions within the melting chaos of nuances. And, having found certain things to be different, he presents them as being so unambiguously and profoundly different than what separates them can never again be blurred by any possible nuance or transition. Thus, Kierkegaard's honesty entails the paradox that whatever has not already grown into a new unity which cancels out all former differences must remain divided forever. Among the things you have found to be different you must choose one, you must not seek "middle ways" or "higher unities" which might resolve the "merely apparent" contradictions. (Lukács 2010, p. 48)

What is to be determined? Is it a polemic against Hegel? As Hegel says about the role of the individual in the system of reason, that it must be subordinated to higher units, and

> For the rest, at a time when the *universality* of spirit (Allgemeinheit des Geistes) has grown so much stronger, and, as is fitting, when what is purely singular (Einzelheit) has correspondingly become even more a matter of indifference, and so too when the universality of spirit now both sticks to its entire breadth and claims all the cultural wealth it has built up, then the share in the total work of spirit which falls to the activity of any individual can only be very small. As the nature of science implies, the individual must thus all the more forget himself; namely, although he must become what he can and must do what he can, there is nonetheless even less which must be demanded of him, just as he in turn must both anticipate less for himself and may demand less for himself. (Hegel 2018, p. 45, Hegel 1986, p. 67)

And, on the other hand, Lukács seems to agree with Kierkegaard when he writes using his words:

> There is never any room for life in a logical system of thought; seen in this way, the starting point for such a system is always arbitrary and, from the perspective of life, only relative— a mere possibility. There is no system in life. In life there is only the separate and individual, the concrete. To exist is to be different. And only the concrete, the individual phenomenon is the unambiguous, the absolute which is without nuance. Truth is only subjective— perhaps; but subjectivity is quite certainly truth; the individual thing is the only thing that is; the individual is the real man. (Lukács 2010, p. 48)

But it is also true that in a later period, Lukács – like Franz Kafka – can do almost nothing with Kierkegaard's concept of God and with God's being. Here are the most famous words from *Either-Or* that one is always wrong before God, more precisely: "the edifying in the thought that against God we are always in the wrong" (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 159). Lukács is not interested in the consequences of this thought because religious life is totally irrelevant to him. Kierkegaard knows very well that the ethical question precedes the religious phase of life, because, in the religious, the dialectic of ethics becomes a paradox. For Lukács, life is also a gesture; and gestures played a very important role in his life, even in the Marxist era – that cannot be dismissed out of hand. In addition, it is an ethical issue and not at all a religious one. It is crystal clear that Kierkegaard is interesting for Lukács as an ethical position, as well as a philosophical and human fate, and just as important is his relationship with Regine. It shows well what the philosophical position from birth to death in the life of a philosopher is, or what it should be. Life is an incurable sickness leading to death (see Kierkegaard's famous work*: Sickness unto Death*), a paradox where the question really remains open, as he writes:

> Where would the path which broke off suddenly at his grave have led to if he had gone on living? Where was he going when he met his death? The inner necessity of death is only in an infinite series of possible explanations; and if his death did not come in answer to an inner call, like an actor taking his cue, then we cannot regard

> the end of his path as an end and we must try to imagine the further meanderings of that path. Then even Kierkegaard's death acquires a thousand meanings, becomes accidental and not really the work of destiny. And then the purest and most unambiguous gesture of his life – vain effort! – was not a gesture after all. (Lukács 2010, p. 57)

The First Philosophical Works after Lukács

As it has already been pointed out above, the first philosophically evaluable works based on the Lukács essay on Kierkegaard were published in the 1930's. First and foremost, it should be mentioned that they can mostly be described as fundamental, detailed writings, so they were neither better, nor worse than the works published in Germany in their time. The main focus here must be put on five well-known works that represented the research on Kierkegaard before 1945, two of which are particularly worth highlighting and explaining. Above all, let us add, however, that they represented not only the research of this time, but almost the whole Hungarian Kierkegaard reception in general, because later Kierkegaard's philosophy was described in the Marxist times as hostile or undesirable. The research on Kierkegaard's work restarted after the regime changed.

In the interwar period, philosophical interest turned to the relationship between the individual and the common lifeworld. As it deals with the question of inwardness and outwardness, i.e., the so-called *Life and Existential Philosophy* (*Lebens und Existentialphilosophie*) has always played an important role in the philosophical thinking in Hungary. During this time, the philosophical scene was diverse and colourful, but also very demanding from a scientific point of view. Almost all philosophical questions were raised among the topics presented by the authors of that time, including epistemological, ethical, art-philosophical, art-historical, cultural-philosophical, and, of course, religious-philosophical questions. The research in the history of philosophy received a noticeable and dynamic upswing, so a great number of books on various philosophers and philosophical directions of that time were published during this period, and so were their corresponding translations. The philosophical research can be seen as a result of the rebirth of philosophy, almost contemporary with the

most significant European waves. The "*Nyugat kör*" (West circle[1]) is worth mentioning with some well-known personalities (such famous poets as Mihály Babits, Gyula Juhász or Pál Ignotus). It should be mentioned as a curiosity that Gyula Juhász, for example, wrote several poems on Nietzsche and about his philosophy (e.g., *Übermensch/ Overman*). It can be asserted that a general renewal and development in philosophical life and thought took place before 1945, *i.e.*, there was one good chance for the connection to the mainstream of the European philosophy, was almost completely torn apart as a hope by the Marxist supremacy after the communist seizure of power.

As already emphasized, German and Austrian cultural processes have always had a great influence on Hungarian cultural history. It can therefore be assumed that not only the German publication of his works by Eugen Diederichs-Verlag, but also the secondary literature on Kierkegaard, published in German as well, had a significant influence on his reception in Hungary. Three important works on Kierkegaard's philosophy were published in the early thirties in Hungary. So far, these three can be qualified as the most significant in connection with the Danish philosopher. In chronological order: the first was written by a theology professor and religious scholar in Transylvania, Sándor Tavaszi (1888-1952). The title of his book is: *Kierkegaard személyisége és gondolkodása* (*Kierkegaard's Personality and Thought*) and it was published in Klausenburg (Kolozsvár). We can clearly see that Tavaszi was deeply influenced by the various philosophers and theologians, especially Oswald Spengler, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Søren Kierkegaard. He published a book on Schleiermacher (*Schleiermacher filozófiája*/ *Schleiermacher's Philosophy*) as well. In addition to that, he produced several writings about these topics. He sometimes investigated theological, cultural, and ethical questions in the spirit of Kierkegaard. At the center of Tavaszi's interest stood deep existential problems, which always belonged to the existential question about being. As he wrote, man has to be given back his existentiality in philosophical thinking. He firmly believes in problems identified by Kierkegaard and Heidegger in connection with the only real life of the existence or of concrete beings. Tavaszi's book – or we would rather say: his

[1] The journal *Nyugat* (West) was the defining journal of 20th century Hungarian literature.

treatise on Kierkegaard – was first published as an article and only later as a special edition, similar to those of *Theodor Haecker*, who selected and published some works in Austria, e.g., *Die Tagebücher* (Diaries). The books selected and translated by Haecker were published by Brenner Verlag. They made a deep impression on Tavaszi's thinking. This quite short text gives a very good summary of Kierkegaard's life and thinking but does not intend to go into a deep analysis of Kierkegaard's philosophy and the thoughts of German idealism.

Széles, in his book on Kierkegaard, clearly understood that the so-called life stages are not the most important problematic in Kierkegaard's philosophy. One rather must deal with the individual existential categories and the question of the individual in connection with Kierkegaard's conception of time to better understand his philosophy and attitude towards life. It should be emphasized that the question of time became the most important one for Széles in this respect, which can be described as a very modern explanation and essential view. First and foremost, Széles writes a relatively detailed biography of Kierkegaard and a diachronic exposition of his works. It is quite clear that he based this approach on the famous work by Harald Höffding, published in 1896 under the title *Sören Kierkegaard as Philosopher*. But what is very important for Széles is the following: such existential questions as, for example, the leap, the decision, the choice, the repetition or the paradox etc. This work by Széles, well adapted to the research of the time, is able to represent and reflect the basic questions of Kierkegaard's philosophy quite well. Of course, there are imperfections in Széles's thinking about Kierkegaard in various respects, such as the assessment of the criticism against Hegel, which he regards as only a negative influence on Kierkegaard's thinking, ignoring the fact that it is sometimes more likely Kierkegaard's opinion about Danish hegelianism, especially about Prof. Martensen and his circle and not always about Hegel himself and his philosophy. According to Széles, there are three essential criticisms of Kierkegaard's thinking: 1.) an aesthetic-romantic view of life as a criticism of everyday life; 2.) a criticism against Hegel (as already mentioned); 3.) a criticism against official Christianity that became too secular. Against all these, according to Széles' opinion, Kierkegaard tries to create a completely different possibility of the real existential life by his own

strength, and then to preserve it. He must therefore set a personal existence against the rational and all secular system, taking care, at the same time to protect his own and internally created world (*Inwardness*, *Inderlighed*; Kierkegaard 1992. p. 194). Széles differentiates between subjective and objective thinking. The first function internally and clearly rejects the matter of the external world, while the second one is directed towards the exteriority from which the inwardness of the subject is supposed to disappear. Subjectivity is truth, and truth is subjectivity – quoted by Széles (Kierkegaard 1992, p. 194), but precisely with this, he simplifies the one very complicated problematic of existence and the relationship between the thought that was called by Schelling "negative" and the "positive" philosophy (SW II, 3, p. 57). We can therefore assume that Széles did not know the German idealism in detail, because it is evident that he never thoroughly dealt with the essential questions and problems of it. But, as it has already been mentioned, the greatest novelty in Széles' conception is precisely the fact that he does not want to accept the unsatisfying division of the stages and with the Kierkagaardian interpretation derived and explained from them. Instead, he wants to find the thematic, or more precisely, the existential categories (anxiety, sin, despair, etc.) in order to present Kierkegaard's philosophy as a radical existential turn in the modern history of philosophy. The main thing for him is the question of time in connection with eternity and with the point of contact between the two, *i.e*., the moment (*Øieblikket*) that is not referred to as the atom of time (*ἄτομος*), as was described by Plato or Augustine earlier, but as the atom of eternity, therefore the point of contact in human life. One can say with a clear conscience that this attitude is an essential novelty in the field of the research on Kierkegaard in Hungary, because it focuses on the existential question and the conception of time. Consequently, such existential concerns as *leap, fear*, *passion*, etc., come to the centre of interest. And *sin*, to which he attaches great importance, and what he defines as a transition to the religious. Széles differentiates Climacus from Anti-Climacus in the following ways. The essence of life in Climacus is *Ratio*/ *Dialectic*/ *Reason* (*Vernunft*). Anti-Climacus is represented by *belief*/ *paradox* and *existence*. The reason is capable of the interpretation of the world. But existence determines everything with the help of dialectics, a method which, at the end, turns into paradox. The essence of both the first

world (Climacus) and the second one (Anti-Climacus) should be laid on the ontological foundation that can decide everything. Let us say that Széles has some errors in explaining the difference between Climacus and Anti-Climacus, but the essential question can be posed quite precisely if the decisive problem is called ontological.

The second most important work in the first half of the 20th Century was written by Béla Brandenstein (1901-1989), who was a student of the famous thinker Ákos Paulers. Brandenstein made a very rapid career in philosophical research in Hungary before the communist era, but later, he worked at Saarbrücken University. He was only 31 years old but was already an associate professor at the University of Budapest when he finished his book on Kierkegaard. Brandenstein never limited his research to questions concerning the history of philosophy. Instead, he tried to carry out an independent ontology and gnoseology. He even turned to the question of ethics at the end of his life. As Tibor Hanák remarks: "According to this, the centre of Brandenstein's philosophy is not simply being or reality, but rather God as the highest being, from whom all being arises and to which all being necessarily leads. His philosophy is a preparation for theology, in the truest sense an ancilla theology, a deeply religious philosophy." (Hanák 1990, p. 168) In addition to his book on Kierkegaard, he also published an important work on Nietzsche in 1943. During this period, Brandenstein was interested in the essence of human beings and in the basis of being in general. For this reason, he also wanted the renewal or, more precisely, the creation and foundation of philosophy in Hungary. Hungarian philosophy and the research on the history of philosophy reached a point before the communist turnaround where they had developed very rapidly. One could not, of course, determine exactly what this development in philosophy might have done after the Second World War without this unfortunate political turn. At that time, almost all philosophical directions (epistemology, logic, ethics or ontology of being, etc.) were represented in Hungary, but after this turnaround in politics, they were almost all pushed back by the preponderance of Marxism.

Brandenstein's work on Kierkegaard is partly a biography, partly a systematic exposition of Kierkegaard's philosophy. It shows the development of Kierkegaard's train of thought in a chronological order

following the course of his works. It is fair to say that it is the first writing on Kierkegaard that made his philosophy known in the circle of wider philosophical research in Hungary. Brandenstein's method is reminiscent of the works of Kuno Fischer, which makes the difference between the biographical position and the associated philosophy in such a way that one really knows that they cannot be essentially interpreted one without the other. It should be emphasized that for Brandenstein the *Upbuilding Discusses* and religious attitudes of Kierkegaard are just as important as his philosophical writings. They even seem to be much more important on several occasions, but he knows very well that the main questions cannot be separated from the philosophical exposition. It is noteworthy that he puts a special emphasis on some of Kierkegaard's works, such as *The Concept of Anxiety* or *The Sickness unto Death* and also *The Works of Love*. What is really interesting for Brandenstein is the nature of sin and, in connection with it, the peculiarity of anxiety, which differs from fear in that it does not have a specific and generally determinable cause: anxiety of nothing pursues the first person to sin and therefore it turns out that anxiety is a "sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy." (Kierkegaard 1980, p. 42) And God's prohibition awakens the desire of the first creature because Adam must have had knowledge of freedom, since the desire would be there to use it. Prohibition scares him because prohibition awakens the possibility of freedom in him.

From a Lutheran perspective, Kierkegaard's view of the Church triggers a discussion with Lajos Zsigmond Szeberényi (1859-1945). He was a pastor in Békéscsaba, a town in Eastern Hungary, who has expanded his knowledge of the Danish language and culture. He translated several works by Kierkegaard from Danish (e.g., *Self-examination* or *The Immutability of God*), as well as texts written by other Scandinavian writers e.g. the works of Knut Hee Andersen. But he only wants to concern himself with the *Upbuilding Discourses* and the so-called theological writings, and completely ignores his philosophical train of thought, as if Kierkegaard had no other works at all. What is also extremely interesting for Szeberényi is the debate with the Lutheran Church that was previously triggered by Kierkegaard. *The Moment* and the writing about Martensen's funeral oration in the memory of Bishop Mynster arose deep offense in him. Szeberényi felt as if as a "knight" he had to defend the church against the anti-clerical attack

by Kierkegaard. He feels a great hatred towards Georg Brandes, who is called the most threatening anti-Christian in his book. He considers Kierkegaard's late writings against the Church to be the most dangerous writing in cultural history, and he writes about it: they can be described as the most valuable treasure trove of all sects and "anti-Christian movements".

But there is another work by Sándor Koncz (1913–1983), playing a very strange role in the research on Kierkegaard in Hungary, because it was written shortly before World War II and, as a result, it also shows how the general pre-war situation was reflected in Hungarian culture. Koncz was a theologian, but in contrast to Szeberényi, he was able to review and present Kierkegaard's philosophy without any official theological bias. His work deals with the relationship between Kierkegaard's philosophy and the theology after the First World War. It presents Kierkegaard's historical position and significance in philosophy from ancient times to modern times with the huge philosophical background. Koncz knows well contemporary philosophy like e.g., Jaspers and Heidegger, and his reflection on them can be described as completely correct. In the opinion of the author, the path of Kierkegaard's interest is determined by an existential problematic, but he cannot or does not really want to reflect the systematic view of Kierkegaard's philosophy. This is rather a representation of the historical train of thought than a deep philosophical relationship to the existential questions and problems, but it is out of purpose anyway. He wants to indicate the order of his research in the analysis of Kierkegaard's personality as a critical behaviour and as a so-called "positive" link with theological thinking. But as for his opinion in connection with German idealism, one could say that it is extremely superficial. He sees no continuity, instead, there is discontinuity between the German idealism and Kierkegaard, because he actually did not know either Hegelian or Schellingian philosophy very well, or more precisely, he didn't know Schelling's late philosophy at all.

Koncz is right, however, when he writes about the Kierkegaardian philosophy like a turning point in the sense of Copernicus, but he cannot reproduce the essence of this turning point exactly. All the same, he reminds the opinion of Theodor Haecker about Kierkegaard several times, which explains the Kierkegaardian philosophy very well. Koncz relies almost exclusively on the diaries, but he tries to discover and show the important

connections between Kierkegaard's followers, as he rightly does with the philosophy of Schestow, Unamuno, Berdyaev, or other contemporary theologians.

As a brief summary, we conclude this article by saying that Kierkegaard scholarship before World War II can be considered deeper and more detailed than after the war, and comparable to the best and most valuable tradition of research on Kierkegaard in Europe at the time.

Late 20th Century and Today

Kierkegaard's reception in the communist era is difficult to discuss because the most important works and translations of his philosophy tend to date from before the Second World War. Should one describe the work of József Szigeti or the partly highly demagogic and partly tendentious work of Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, or should one rather look at Kierkegaard's influence on the well-known and peculiarly philosopher Béla Hamvas or deal with the world-famous poet János Pilinszky? We do not want to take or follow any route, as we believe that the latter option would be more valuable.

We think that it is important to mention Béla Hamvas's outlook on life in a few words, because his view is typical of this century. Béla Hamvas (1897-1968) studied Hungarian and German literature at the University of Budapest, where he worked as a librarian between 1927-1948. After the communist seizure of power, he worked as a warehouse assistant and unskilled worker on major construction sites. He always remained a class enemy for the communist system. He also wanted to promote the new worldview that surpassed philosophy, which showed great interest in the existentialist interpretation of human existence but was ultimately not satisfied by it. In almost all his works, he refers to Kierkegaard's philosophy and to Nietzsche, albeit in a very particular way, with highly intellectual and astonishing ideas freely mixed in his thinking, because he is quite sure that this is how he can create his personal philosophical approach. This special character consists in the fact that Kierkegaard was an occasion for Hamvas to be able to find his own philosophical and very subjective point of view. This is expressed, for example, in an essay *(Kierkegaard Szicíliában/*

Kierkegaard in Sicily), published in his work *Szellem és egzisztencia/ Spirit and Existence,* which is nothing more than a journey that happened in a dream, where there is no immediate word about Kierkegaard's philosophy. We hope to be able to assert that Hamvas was one of the most peculiar authors, with one of the most beautiful writing in Hungarian culture. We must add that Hamvas wrote his works partly before the world war and partly after it, but it is more important to count him among the post-war authors, because after his death, his effects began to be seen only in the 1970's and 1980's.

During these years, several different writings related to Kierkegaard's philosophy were published (e.g., Tordai - Márkus: *Tendencies in the Contemporary Bourgeois Philosophy/ Irányzatok a mai polgári filozófában*, P. Behorovszky: *Madách and Kierkegaard*, L. Imre: *Kierkegaard and the Russian Symbolism/ Kierkegaard és az ororsz szimbolizmus*, E. Rozsnyai: *Philosophical Portraits/ Filozófiai arcképek*, F. Fehér: *Poet of Antinomies/ Az antinomiák költője* etc). But the most important of these is by Béla Suki, which appeared as an introduction to the selected Kierkegaard's works in 1969. This collection contains several excerpts from Kierkegaard's works (such as *On the Concept of Irony, Either-Or, Repetition, Fear and Trembling, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, The Concept of Anxiety*), parts of which made Kierkegaard's thought accessible in Hungarian. We have already shown that some of Kierkegaard's works were published before the Second World War, but on the one hand, these were not the most important, and on the other hand they were not published with the scientifically acceptable comments. Béla Suki was an unusual scholar and *bon vivant*, who worked as a teacher in a secondary school in Szeged after the 1956 revolution until his death, and published several works (on Hegel, Heidegger, etc) in which he tried to separate Kierkegaard's thought as a cultural process from Romanticism. Suki sees Kierkegaard as the successor of the destruction of Hegelian philosophy, who was able to create his own world of life out of this crisis, and showed that the inner world or intimacy, which is synonymous with the concept of being in Kierkegaard, is more important in the modern age than ever before.

One of the most important events in Hungarian research on Kierkegaard is the publication of *Either-Or* in Hungarian language in 1978.

Basically, *Either-Or* is the first complete philosophical book by Kierkegaard to attract wider attention in Hungarian culture. It interested philosophers but also poets, writers, and artists. It was republished several times later (the last edition so far was published in 2019, with an afterword by Zoltán Gyenge). An excellent afterword was written by Agnes Heller for the first edition, which reminds of Georg Lukács's essay several times in tendency and style. We find here a very similar interpretation, which, after all, does not seek to distance Kierkegaard from German philosophy, but rather to show a close connection between them. The title speaks for itself: *Phenomenology of the Unhappy Consciousness* (*A szerencsétlen tudat fenomenológiája*). In this work, the author tries to find a balance between German philosophy, especially Hegel and Marx, and Kierkegaard, which shows well that one cannot interpret them separately. Even apart from the philological connection, there are many philosophical similarities between them. It follows from this that the "unhappy consciousness" plays such an important role in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, as if Hegel himself had already thought that some thinker would come as his successor and say: "Professor! Your system is imperfect because there is a lack of individual subjectivity and personal existence." And that is why he created a phenomenological level in the system, to which existence, revolted against the system, can also belong. So, in general, the Kierkegaardian way can create a truly living alternative (either-or), and means, one might say, that one can choose one or the other, so that one either belongs to the system as a small cog in its wheel, or one has a realistic possibility of existential choice. Can Kierkegaardian thinking be such a decision that another living possibility of life can be established, or does it remain trapped in the system anyway? At the end, Heller writes, there are only two real and logical decisions for the general alienation of the civilized (or, in fact, unruly) world; it is precisely the following either/ or: either we create our existential relationship to the world, or the world itself should be changed. One of them means having to create an inner, living world on your own, while the other means creating such an external situation that is not suitable for the individual but for everyone, giving people a real possibility of life.

From 1980 to 2010, it is not possible to follow the development of the translations of Kierkegaard's works very well. Never before have so

many been published as in these years and now. e.g., *Fear and Trembling* (*Félelem és reszketés*) – 1986, *The Concept of Anxiety* (*A szorongás fogalma*) – 1993, *The Repetition* (*Az ismétlés*) – 1993, *The Sickness unto Death* (*A halálos betegség*) – 1993, *Philosophical Fragments* (*Filozófiai morzsák*) – 1997, *Training in Christianity* (*A keresztény hit iskolája*) – 1998, and several smaller writings. We can perhaps say without further ado that there was a Kierkegaard renaissance in Hungary from 1990-2000 onwards. Several writings are published in various magazines (especially in *Gond*) and in special issues (e.g., *Kierkegaard in Budapest*). In 1996, a book was published about the relationship between Schelling and Kierkegaard (*Kierkegaard and German Idealism* by Zoltán Gyenge), which tries to illustrate the connection between Schelling's late philosophy and Kierkegaard on the basis of Kierkegaard's notes. And later, more monographic essays came to light (e.g., *Kierkegaard élete és filozófiája*/ *Kierkegaard's Life and Philosophy* by Zoltán Gyenge). Several important works on Kierkegaard have been published (Judit Bartha, István Czakó, Anita Soós, András Nagy), several conferences have been organized, among which *Crossroads in Kierkegaard's Thinking* (1999) and the conference on the bicentenary in Szeged (2013) are worth mentioning (The complete Kierkegaard bibliography in Hungarian was compiled by Judit Barta.)

Conclusion

The biggest problem was to create a coherent Kierkegaard terminology. Many of his works were translated from German, many translations were problematic, and this was reflected in the books about him. A step forward was the publication of a new edition based on Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter. It aims to publish Kierkegaard's most important works in 10 volumes with the same translators. Several of these volumes have already been published. And another important translation is Kierkegaard's Berlin Lectures (*Berlini töredék*, Budapest: Osiris, 2001, translated by Z. Gyenge).

All in all, Kierkegaard is still perhaps one of the most prominent philosophical personalities in Hungarian culture, along with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Not only in philosophy, but also in art and literature.

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Kierkegaard's Spatial Politics.
Nations and Nationalism, Irony and the Demonic

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Abstract. Kierkegaard is not usually considered a political thinker. However, many of the concepts and themes he develops have distinct political import. In particular, I will show that his thought functions as a counterpoint, and a counterweight, to the nation-state as constructed in European modernity. Indeed, the modern State is founded on a specific notion of space – the national territory –, which in turn has important consequences on the creation of nationhood, and on the relation to foreigners. Kierkegaard allows us to view the fallacious underpinnings of such a construct, thanks to his ingenious use and concept of space, but also to his distinctly ironic stance as an author. His analyses of irony, freedom and anxiety (and in particular, anxiety before the good, the demonic) give us insight into the defects of the nation-state, and some of its worst elements, such as nationalism. Kierkegaard offers us an alternative conception of space.
Keywords: Kierkegaard, spatial politics, nation-state, space, borders, foreigners, irony, demonic, walking.

Introduction

Kierkegaard is not a political thinker in the usual sense of the term. "No, politics is not for me"[1], he writes. Notwithstanding some rather reactionary statements against the liberal wave sweeping Europe in 1848, and his peculiar form of Danish patriotism, there is little in the way of structured political concepts. His works repeatedly seem to compare the political to the crowd, the mob, while emphasising how the different stages on life's way can only properly be undertaken by the individual.

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[1] S. Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents,* #253, KW XXV, Princeton University Press, 1979. All Kierkegaard works will henceforth be cited in the Princeton edition (*Kierkegaard's Writings*, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, 26 vols.*)*

My aim here is to show that, while Kierkegaard does not directly offer us political analyses, his writings still open a wealth of concepts which may usefully be applied to understand and clarify political stances and situations. This is what has been called Kierkegaard's "indirect politics"[2], which are deemed to have played a major role in the elaboration of the thought of such major radical political philosophers as Lukács, Adorno, Benjamin or even Carl Schmitt. In particular, certain "motifs", and themes, which Kierkegaard uses to analyse the contemporary situation of the self can be usefully transposed to the political. Kierkegaard's ironic wielding of irony throughout his authorship (and in his *Concept of Irony* in particular) may itself be seen as a political statement on what he calls "the world-historical situation".

Kierkegaard's political import goes further, as turning entirely away from the common good in order to dwell on oneself is, in his eyes, not necessarily the right option. In fact, he often denounces a certain way of concentrating on oneself as a form of the demonic. Focusing obsessively on oneself as one attempts to progress through life's way may, paradoxically, be a means of *avoiding* becoming a self, and of disregarding those around us who are such a crucially important part of making us who we can be[3]. Misunderstood, the focus on the self and away from politics is susceptible to falling prey to despair. Judith Butler once noted that "the return to ethics has constituted an escape from politics"[4] and "ethics displaces from politics"[5]. Kierkegaard would agree with this statement, if "politics" is understood in the broader sense of structures of power which might oppress or disempower the individual. Becoming a self can only be done in relationship to, and in reference with, other individuals but also, more broadly, by being attentive to the structures of empowerment and disempowerment surrounding the individual.

I will here focus particularly on two notions extensively studied by Kierkegaard – irony and the demonic – which help us understand modern

[2] B. Ryan, *Kierkegaard's Indirect Politics,* VIBS Books, Amsterdam, 2014.
[3] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, KW XVI.
[4] J. Butler, "Ethical Ambivalence", in M. Garber, B. Hanssen and R. Walkowitz (eds.), *The Turn to Ethics,* New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 15.
[5] J. Butler, "Politics, Power and Ethics: A Discussion between Judith Butler and William Connolly", in *Theory & Event*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 3.

politics. I will proceed in two steps: first, I will look at the form (and *in specie,* the spatial form) of the modern polity and its flaws, and will then show how Kierkegaard's thinking, and particularly his analysis of irony and anxiety (in the demonic) might offer a helpful and insightful examination of, and counterpoint to, these defects. Overall, Kierkegaard offers us an alternative conception of space to that of the modern state, and such alternative is all about opening spaces for human freedom to flourish.

The Modern State, its Space and the Creation of Necessity

Sovereignty has, since the various treatises of Westphalia in 1648, been inseparable from the principle of territoriality, consecrated by the nation-state: a political entity cannot exist without territory, i.e. a space which must be exclusive, absolute, and wholly controllable. The principle of territoriality is sanctioned by international law, and has acquired a status of self-evidence, in spite of being a historically constructed phenomenon. "The total sovereignty of the state over its territorial space in a world fragmented into territorial states gives the state its most powerful justification. Without this the state would be just another organisation", writes John Agnew in a famous article tellingly entitled "the territorial trap"[6]. The advent of the nation-state as the supreme form of political organisation marks the isomorphism between territory, state, nation, population, and culture, thus multiplying the effects of its power, as control of an area becomes the indirect means to control a population. Territory is a tremendously ingenious invention to justify and legitimise political power: territoriality is a political strategy, as it reifies and materialises power, while obscuring its social aspects, or the hierarchies and methods set up to enforce control. While operating on the assumption of a homogenisation of space, territory also works in ways that create inequalities, exclusions, and hierarchies. One singular effect of territoriality as a political strategy is what Robert Sack calls its "magical" properties[7], due to its ability to displace attention from the relationship between controller and controlled to that between controller and

[6] J. Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory", in *Review of International Political Economy,* Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring, 1994, p. 54.
[7] R. Sack, "Human Territoriality: A Theory", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 73, No. 1, Mar. 1983, pp. 55-74.

surface area: the combination of the territorial reifying effect and the displacing effects leads to territory appearing as the source of authority, and, in the guise of the "homeland", appearing as becoming the end rather than the means of control. This was *coup de génie* of the invention of territory as the operative political principle: founding the polity on a shared space (rather than on any other pre-existing personal commonality such as tribe, ethnic group…) gave the state the form of a container, within which we in turn create a collective cultural, social and political identity. The spatiality of the state engenders the construction of a "fictive ethnicity", in Étienne Balibar's terms[8]: fictive insofar as it will claim some immemorial past, build a mythical narrative of national history, its heroes and its wars, invent traditions, usually impose a common language, and thus construct a seemingly common ethnicity in what is a contingent group of people. As Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger explain, modern nations, however young, generally claim to be rooted in the remotest past, and their communities, to be so natural as to require no definition other than self-assertion[9].

In a famous passage, Ernst Gellner compares the map of the modern world to a Modigliani painting: "There is very little shading; neat flat surfaces are clearly separated from each other, it is generally plain where one begins and another ends, and there is little if any ambiguity or overlap"[10]. This clear spatial distinction is true not just of states, but of how we perceive peoples and cultures, too: peoples, if they want to have a claim to nationhood, need to occupy a certain fixed territory; the longer they have occupied said territory, the more political and historical legitimacy they gain. The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy "naturally" discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which we theorise contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies, "each 'rooted' in its proper 'place'"[11]. Each national

[8] E. Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship,* transl. by J. Swenson, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 87.

[9] E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, (eds). *The Invention of Tradition,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 14.

[10] E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* London, Blackwell, 1983, p. 139.

[11] A. Gupta, and J. Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference", in *Cultural Anthropology*, 1992, 7 (1), p. 6.

community is viewed as essentially rooted in its immemorial homeland, and all are spatially distinct. Rootedness is not perceived merely as a psychological and social need: it pervades our metaphysics, as it does our political and legal structures. Our "natural" spatialisation defines our horizon. The biological metaphor of the tree, and of plants, gaining sustenance from their roots, is pervasive. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari note: "It is odd how the tree has dominated Western reality and all of Western thought, from botany to biology and anatomy, but also gnoseology, theology, ontology, all of philosophy...: the root-foundation, *Grund, racine, fondement"*[12]. All things we value – truth, moral goodness, etc. – must stem from such an organic, immobile, rooted origin, which merely reflects the natural situation of peoples in general. This, in turn, leads to a discourse of homeliness. The nation-state is represented as *our* space of subjectivity, our nestling home, our cocoon of certainty, within which we will only meet "people like us", our "fellow citizens", who share the same culture, the same worldview. Gaston Bachelard notes in his *Poetics of Space* that "life begins (…) enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house (…). Within the being, in the being of within, an enveloping warmth welcomes being"[13]. Having a territorialised home, a 'nest', is understood as natural as life itself. To be a self means being nurtured from a permanent abode that is one's home. The self is a spatial being, and this spatiality is conceived as a natural and homely situatedness: a home which is also the "homeland", which is viewed as equally nurturing and essential to the self as the private home.

In other words, if we look at the nation-state, everything about it inaugurates a form of polity which attempts to claim separateness, fixity and sedentariness as a natural, immemorial, legitimate and, crucially, *good* set-

[12] G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* transl. by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 18.

[13] G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* transl. by Maria Jolas, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994, p. 7. Simone Weil is even more heavy-handed in her *L'Enracinement: "*To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community, which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings." S. Weil, *The Needs of the Soul,* transl. by Arthur Wills, London and New York, Routledge Classics, 2002, p. 40.

up. Stability, be it domestic or international, as marked by the spatial differentiation of communities, has become an intrinsic value of politics; everyone should stay in their own home. This has immediate implications as to the relationship between nation-states and foreigners: the foreigner is the anomaly. It is no small paradox that while one person out of thirty today is a migrant[14], we continue to view migrants as incongruities and exceptions to an otherwise stable order of sedentary peoples. Migrants are troublemakers: they disturb our well-ordered world of neatly differentiated peoples, and spoil the clean separateness of each national space. They are also represented as beings of loss – people who have lost something: a home, a culture, a cocoon, an identity; they are a bit less human, in a way. Such enclosure of sameness has found much resonance today, unfortunately. Foreigners are seen as the ones who cannot understand "us", since they are intrinsically different, and from elsewhere. Because of the fantasised rootedness and fixity of "our" people, we derive the right to exclude outsiders, who are subject to long series of conditions to ascertain that they are "worthy", or that they deserve to enter our home.

In short, the creation of nation-states amounts to an operation of naturalisation of the conventional and even the arbitrary, an operation which is at the core of the statehood: making artificially created realities (traditions, social norms, culture, the group itself) appear natural. The State naturalises space and boundaries (essentially through cartography); it naturalises the community and the nation, naturalises our supposed "need" to belong... Nature and natural laws are necessary, hence anything that falls outside their ambit is a disorder, an anomaly; and nothing is more natural, it is said, than our community. One of the key characteristics of the spatial nature of the modern state is to naturalise its inherent arbitrariness, just as Rousseau showed in his *Second Discourse*: inequalities and injustice born out of the civil state are retrospectively attributed to the state of nature, thus legitimising them.

How may we otherwise call this political process of naturalisation? It is simply the naturalistic fallacy at work. A retrospectively constructed and fully imagined nature becomes the justifying ground for political and social

[14] Global People Movements Report 2020. Report prepared by Oxford Analytica and Legatum Institute Foundation.

positions: in other words, the "Is" becomes an "Ought"; we have moved from description to prescription; a fact has become a value; being (a certain identity, a certain nationality…) is interpreted as a justification for being. The separateness and sedentariness of peoples, because are viewed as natural, are now advocated as both desirable and obligatory: they have become normative. As Marco Moretti points out, we consider immovability and sedentariness as the default, "natural" option for cultural groups, so that most of our philosophical, political and legal structures are founded on this premise; this explains why nomadic groups, however elaborately organised politically, have been slowly but systematically delegitimised since the 19th century[15].

What is striking here is that everything about the nation-state is about creating necessity. From a contingent political set-up, it magically produces a space of necessity: its people are naturally rooted here, hence they cannot *not be* here, they belong here; whereas the migrant is only an accident, a contingent intruder. The political version of the naturalistic fallacy, founded on the spatial nature of the modern polity, has thus translated into the creation of political and social necessity. Typically, the fact of our presence on this land is taken as a justification, hence a *right* to be on this land, and exclude newcomers from it; our prior presence, i.e. mere chronological precedence, acts as a normative validation of our justified right to be here. Because we *are* (i.e. happen to be) here, we *ought* to be here; which in turn gives us the supposed right to decide who else ought or not to be here. More generally, the fundamental issue here is that of *belonging* itself. The premise is that those who are already inside have standing to exclude those who did not have that chance. But this only obviates the fundamental question of *the right to belong*; or, in other words, why citizenship would be equivalent to *the right to* citizenship: a fact does not create a right. It becomes a second order problem: we are members of a said community; but does this mean we have the right to decide who becomes a member? A nation is not a club.

In this process, the state posits as legitimate, and therefore necessary, the culture, social system, and community it has actually contingently created. In other words, the nation-state has performed the magical trick of turning politics, which had since Aristotle been defined as the art of the

[15] M. Moretti, *International Law and Nomadic People,* London, Authorhouse, 2012, p. 6.

contingent, into the management of necessity. By naturalising space through its invention of territory, the modern State has re-introduced necessity as a political category. Hegel, one of the chief thinkers of the modern State, wrote that "the sole aim of philosophical inquiry is *to eliminate the contingent*"[16]: in effect, this is what the Nation-State does, by grounding its being and its creation of nationality on a supposedly natural element, thus marking foreigners as mostly undesirable, and eminently contingent, beings who have no right to be here.

Kierkegaard: Space and Contingency

It is here that Kierkegaard can play a role in reframing the debate on the nation-state, and consequently on foreigners and migrants. It is no surprise that he viewed himself essentially as an outlier, an individual simultaneously in and out of his own country, an "anomaly" in his own country. His whole life and authorship are precisely about not belonging – about being an outsider to one's family, environment or social/ intellectual milieu, and having therefore to find meaning through other definitions of identity. The self's identity is not a given (and certainly not given by one's national community), it is to be built through an on-going journey.

Reminding us of the fundamental contingency of the self and its being is one of the most valuable political lessons of Kierkegaard: the substantial totality of the state is a lure, and a lie, as Socrates exemplifies. "To a certain degree, the state does not exist at all for [Socrates] (…). His life is utterly incomprehensible to the state"[17]. His life is incomprehensible to the State, because it defies the normal categories with which we view citizens. Socrates is ironic, and is never where you think he is, nor is he ever who you think he is. Kierkegaard saw irony as the crucial lesson of philosophy – "cutting the umbilical cord with substantiality"[18]. In Kierkegaard's reading, Socrates' relationship to the world and the substantial life of the state or of the city is one of constant displacement and decentring, of "voiding the nutshell"[19].

[16] Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* transl. by H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 28. Author's emphasis.
[17] Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony,* KW II, p. 195.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 94.
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 61.

Irony is therefore also the graceful art and acceptance of the contingent. Socrates indirectly denounces substantial belonging to a totality as empty and fallacious; what matters is the decision by the subjectivity to relate to itself in a manner which makes freedom and truth possible. "The ironist (…) has stepped out of line with his age, has turned around and faced it."[20] Socratic irony is thus an experience of political dissent as well as, importantly, metaphysical contingency, because it signals the emergence of freedom. And since irony is intrinsically generous, it further points others in that direction too. Irony frees oneself from the shackles of objectivity and substantiality, and helps free others, too.

The ironist points to the virtues of contingency also because of his relationship to space. Ontologically speaking, space belongs to all of us, and we are only contingently situated where we are. This is one of the key Socratic lessons. Both John Locke and Immanuel Kant strongly emphasised that the Earth can only be thought of as a common possession. This naturally did not refer to any empirical reality as much as the moral and metaphysical impossibility of assigning any fundamental legitimacy to any original appropriation of territory. "Originally, no one had more right than another to a particular part of the Earth", says Kant[21]. Our property deeds or territorial rights are only ever derivative, contingently granted rights. It is this very contingency which nationalism obviates and conceals behind the discourse of the immemorial past of the nation and the natural sedentariness of peoples. This is the reason why Kant granted as a "third definitive article for a perpetual peace" the universal right of hospitality: the right to be welcomed wherever one goes. The meaning of hospitality is exactly that fundamental contingency: our places and lives may not be substitutable, but our positions are; you could very well tomorrow become the very migrant whom you hate today. What is this, if not the lesson that our existence rests fundamentally on a contingent, rather than a necessary, basis, especially when it comes to space and place? Taking space, and spatial contingency, seriously entails acknowledging the contingency of the original situatedness, of our original belonging. Being born here, living here, does not grant any necessary right

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 261.
[21] I. Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 212.

on this land: the *Quid Facti* is not a *Quid Juris*, and this is exactly the paradox of migration. Actually, the meaning of belonging itself can only be thought within the fundamental framework of original contingency. Levinas writes: "My being-in-the-world or my "place in the sun", my home – have they not been the usurpation of places belonging to others already oppressed by me or starved, expelled to a Third World: rejecting, excluding, exiling, despoiling, killing. 'My place in the sun', said Pascal, 'the beginning and the archetype of the usurpation of the entire world'"[22]. Socrates is here to remind us of this fundamental fact of our existence.

What is indeed the lesson of contingency but that of the openness to the undecidable, the undetermined – to the possibility of unforeseen events; and this, in turn, is the openness for human freedom? Rather than being viewed as enclosed goldfish aquariums, political spaces should be the very spaces of possibilities and changes – and of chance encounters, like Socrates does. James Donald writes: "We experience our social world as simply the way things are, as objective presence, because that contingency is systematically forgotten"[23]. Kierkegaard's ironic stance throughout his authorship is a lesson in re-learning the value of contingency. To that extent, his work may be called metaphysical, notwithstanding the narrow meaning he gave to this term, and how ceaselessly he mocked it. His reflection centres on the fundamental modalities of metaphysics.

It therefore comes as no surprise that spatial analogies will be used abundantly to characterise irony, and they are omnipresent in Kierkegaard's work; spatial analogies which indicate a displacement, an emphasis on margins, periphery. More generally, Kierkegaard points towards another concept of space, one which would not be defined as an indefinitely extended, isotropic flat surface, but a space understood as allowing meanderings, chance encounters, openness, "thrown-togetherness"[24]. Socrates indicates metaphysical contingency by pointing the contingency of situatedness: relating ironically to oneself is to produce another kind of space, and emphasising the reversibility of our positions, thereby creating the

[22] E. Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence,* transl. by Michael B. Smith, London, The Athlone Press, 1999, p. 23.
[23] J. Donald, *Imagining the Modern City,* London, Athlone Press, 1999, p. 168.
[24] D. Massey *For Space*, London, Sage Publications, 2005, p. 149.

conditions for a Kantian hospitality. "The true centre for Socrates was", as Kierkegaard proclaims, "not a fixed point but an *ubique et nusquam*"[25]; in irony, idea acts not as plenitude, but as a boundary; the ironist being a "dash", both inside and outside the world[26], who deflates the over-inflated balloon of self-centredness and rootedness; this is why Socrates is a gadfly. Socrates pierces the exaggerated self-righteousness of sophists and rooted nationalists, by showing the futility of belonging and of the whole notion of "my place in the sun". Socrates endorses both chance events and luck (he indeed bumps into people on the agora and brings something essential out of what is an accidental encounter), as well as freedom. Fundamentally, Socratic irony teaches us to give a spatial meaning to freedom – to hover above rather than rooting down: Socrates is "free and above [actuality]"[27], he "floats above"[28] his work. For Socrates, "the whole given actuality had entirely lost its validity; he had become alien to the actuality of the whole substantial world (…) [Socrates] used irony as he destroyed Greek culture. His conduct toward it was at all times ironic"[29]. The position of the ironist is negative, insofar as he only points to the flaws in the substantial construction, without building it up himself. Irony helps us relate ironically to the myth of the substantiality of the state, and reasserts the fundamental contingency of our identities and our social, political world. If irony questions the over-valuation of belonging, and questions the very notion of identity understood in a substantial way, no wonder, then, that Socrates was such a poor citizen, and had henceforth to be executed for such non-exemplary citizenship; and that he similarly brought others to detach themselves from the substantial life of the State. Socrates relates more easily to the one who does not naturally belong (the slave Meno, e.g.), thus manifesting that the essential lies in the accidental, not in what appears necessary. He "refus[es] to recognise", as Kierkegaard observes, "the sovereignty of the nation"[30], and thus can be seen as a perpetual "tangent" to

[25] Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony, op. cit.,* p. 16.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 152.
[27] *Ibid.,* p. 253.
[28] *Ibid.,* p. 324.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 264.
[30] *Ibid.,* p. 193.

the state. It is this perpetually tangential position which allows the ironist to defeat the self-enclosure of rootedness.

Irony teaches us the virtues of displacement, of foreignness, of uprootedness, of "restlessness"[31], says Kierkegaard – of recusing identity as a source of freedom. It is this very ironical position which Richard Sennett describes in *The Foreigner* in the form of Alexander Herzen, a Russian *émigré* to Paris in the 1840s, who learns to "deal creatively with [his] own displaced condition"[32]. Sennett claims that Herzen the ironist, just like Socrates, contrasts "the truths to be discovered in becoming a foreigner" and the "truth-claims of place and beginnings"[33]. When the nationalist-naturalist morphs a fact into a right (being here means having the right to be here, and the right to exclude others), the ironist, always a foreigner or a stranger in his own land like Socrates, voids that fact of any necessity, and even of much meaning. The ironist shifts from the category of substance to that of event: what matters, and what is decisive in our lives, are events that occur, not substances that exist. Pascal Massie writes, with reference to Aristotle's analysis of chance encounters: "A chance-event is an event, not a substance. Chance is nothing – a failure, a coincidence without reason; a cause without a cause – yet it is a nothing that changes everything"[34]. Space does that: it converts substances into events, identity into possibility, or, in Paul Ricœur's words, sameness into responsibility. Space de-substantialises things, which is why it can be both frightening and challenging: in particular, it de-substantialises the meaning of belonging thanks to irony. To relate to existence in irony is thus also to learn the meaning of mobility, nomadism, foreignness, and to give a spatial meaning to freedom. This requires to think space differently – neither the empty and flat *tabula rasa,* nor the subjective cocoon of particularity and nestedness, but a space understood as *essentially* political, the Socratic agora of chance encounters, which, like destiny, transforms the inessential into the essential; the agora which allows relationships to move from a common belonging perceived as both original and destinal, to a genuine encounter, a space of alterity, of contingency, and

[31] *Ibid.,* p. 246.
[32] R. Sennett, *The Foreigner,* London, Notting Hill Editions, 2011, p. 69.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 75.
[34] P. Massie, "The Irony of Chance", in *International Philosophical Quarterly,* 2003, 43 (1), p. 28.

of the possibility of events. Claude Romano writes: "The event cannot (…) be prefigured by any possibility; but it reconfigures, in an unpredictable way, all possibilities by its mere occurrence. An event is a beginning (…), it is in the realm of possibility, or even of the possibility to create possibilities, of *possibilisation* (…). It transfigures the world"[35]. This is what space does: it creates the possibility of possibilities, through the possibility of events, which happens ex nihilo, without any cause or reason, and in excess of any project I had formed. Chance events just "happen" without having been planned or predicted – and yet they transform my world, in that they open new, decisive possibilities in existence. Herein lies the "irony of chance": chance events cannot be anticipated, but once they do occur, they transform one's life. This is exactly what irony teaches us: what appears to be essential does not lie in natural necessity – but in the accidental and the contingent.

Irony helps us understand the very term of "belonging" in a novel way in order to think of a political condition which would no longer be tied to territoriality, a "cosmopolitan condition" in Michel Agier's terms[36] – and what is Socrates if not essentially the cosmopolitan spirit. Derrida writes:

> This chaos and instability, which is fundamental, founding and irreducible, is at once naturally the worst against which we struggle with laws, rules, conventions, politics and provisional hegemony, but at the same time it is a chance, a chance to change, to destabilise. *If there were continual stability, there would be no need for politics, and it is to the extent that stability is not natural, essential or substantial, that politics exists and ethics is possible.* Chaos is at once a risk and a chance[37].

Kierkegaard's view of Socrates is precisely that: an individual whose significance lies in "destabilising", in upending the substantial status quo, by re-introducing the "nothing" of contingency in what claims to be a necessary construct. No wonder he was convicted by the court. But it also shows that

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[35] C. Romano, « Le possible et l'événement », in *Philosophie*, ed. de Minuit, no. 41, 1994, pp. 63-65. Our translation.

[36] M. Agier, *La Condition cosmopolite. L'anthropologie à l'épreuve du piège identitaire,* Paris, La Découverte, 2012, p. 5. Translation ours.

[37] J. Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism", in C. Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 84. Our emphasis.

we can usefully reiterate today Kierkegaard's assertion that "particularly in our age, irony must be commended"[38]; his stance is metaphysical, as it posits the facticity of existence, its contingency, its metaphysical relationship to freedom, situatedness and space. Recall the nation's fishbowl-syndrome: we are goldfish in naturally pre-defined bowls and think of ourselves as *insiders*, allowed to exclude outsiders. Kierkegaard teaches the virtues of the outsider, and dissolves the necessity of belonging: in the end, all hangs on the fragile thread of irony and human freedom, of decisions of relationships which may be revoked, and which have to continually be freely re-asserted. Foreigners exhibit that all we take as certain, necessary and immediate (our language, our mores, our culture) is accidental and contingent. Foreigners, and immigrants specifically, force us to face the unpleasant reality that our supposedly foundational national certainty, our cocoon, is only the result of contingency – of contingent historical, political and linguistic events. As Vilém Flusser states, "for the native who is settled, the immigrant is even more alien and strange than the migrant outside his door, because he exposes as banal what the native considers sacred. He is worthy of hatred and he is detestable because he reveals the *heimat*'s beauty as prettified kitsch"[39]. He further manifests the inherent contingency that we too, one day, might be – or already are – the very immigrants we apprehend are so alarmed about. Socrates was similarly hated by the State – and had to pay for it with his life.

Going for a Walk

Kierkegaard's famous love of walks and walking may be interpreted in this light: just like Thoreau, Kierkegaard sees walking as opening new possibilities for freedom, for thought, and for existence: freedom has thus a spatial component, and implies a displacement from the mathematical geometric concept of space which encloses one in a fixed position. "In the life of the spirit there is no standing still"[40]. Whereas the nation-state wants us to believe that sedentariness is natural, and that nomadism, and any form of exile, a pathology, Kierkegaard inverts the paradigm and asserts that

[38] Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony, op. cit.,* p. 327.
[39] V. Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant: Objections to Nationalism,* Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2003, pp. 6-7. Our translation.
[40] Kierkegaard, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions,* KW X, 206.

nomadism, movement and mobility are healthier and more "natural", spiritually, than stasis and motionlessness, which so often turn into morbid rigidity.

Many of his characters loaf around the city, as he himself recalls in numerous instances of his diaries his walks throughout his beloved Copenhagen, leaving to chance the opportunity to strike a conversation, see friends or acquaintances, discover new sights. Without thematising it as Walter Benjamin did, one can nevertheless say that not only was Kierkegaard himself a *flâneur,* a peripatetic thinker, but also that he theorised the metaphysical implications of changing the notion of space to turn it from a geometric expanse to that of a "journey of discovery" (*Opdagelsesrejse)*. Kierkegaard's analysis of human existence (which he opposes to divine being) acquires a spatial meaning: whereas the self was classically viewed as some permanent, immobile substance (hence the importance of rootedness and sedentariness), Kierkegaard theorises the self as an itinerary, a journey. Nomads and loafers are not lost – or if they are, Kierkegaard says, they are on the way to finding themselves, whereas the immovable rooted self never got a chance to find himself. Moving, and migrating, is not a loss, contrary to what is usually asserted (loss of one's culture, of one's identity). To be a nomad, to invent itineraries is an enhancement, not a degradation, of one's humanity. In *Point of View*, he writes:

> I was a street-corner loafer [*Dagdriver*], an idler, a *flâneur*, a frivolous bird, a good, perhaps even brilliant pate, witty, etc. — but I completely lacked "seriousness". I represented the worldly mentality's irony, the enjoyment of life — the most sophisticated enjoyment of life — but of "seriousness and positivity" there was not a trace; I was, however, tremendously interesting and pungent[41].

[41] Kierkegaard, *Point of View,* KW XXII, p. 61. Walter Benjamin writes: "For the perfect *flâneur*,… it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow… To be away from home yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world […] the spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito […] We might also liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness, which, with each one of its movements, represents the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life". (W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, London, Belknap Press, 2002, p. 24)

As Bartholomew Ryan notes, being a *flâneur* is a distinctive ironic stance[42]. Here again, Kierkegaard's indirect political positions re-emerge: by tracing and embodying a different spatial configuration, he changes the meaning of our spatial, and hence spiritual, being. Being a *flâneur* is the opposite of being in a crowd, though both take place outdoors, and with others: one enhances freedom and creates its spaces, when the other stifles them.

Tim Ingold, in his beautiful history of lines, distinguishes between two types of lines: those which "signify occupation", and those which "[have] gone out for a walk"[43]. "The straight line is an icon of modernity. It offers reason, certainty, authority, a sense of direction", he adds[44]. It is also a line which can only be crossed: it means separation, prohibition, "do not trespass!". Modern states are founded on just such lines. In contradistinction, the wayfaring line is one that one can travel *along*, not *across:* it indicates a possible journey, which happily exiles us from ourselves, only to allow us to recreate a new, richer identity. In his famous piece *Walking*, Thoreau compares the walker to the camel, who ruminates while walking: as we ingest new experiences of surfaces, lights, sounds, these new perceptions transform who we are. And while one could walk *along* lines of life, lines are now a geometric edge which one can only try to get *across* at one's own peril, as clandestine immigrants so painfully experience. The changed meaning of lines is also a changed meaning of ourselves. This is exactly the distinction enacted by Kierkegaard.

Nationalism as the Demonic

As stated, the national territory functions like a container, from which "we" are entitled to exclude those who are not perceived to belong, immigrants and foreigners. The frenzy to build walls (more than 40,000 km of walls built since the fall of the Berlin wall), despite their proven inefficiency, testifies to this frantic desire to exclude at all costs. Nationalism is rearing its ugly head again.

[42] B. Ryan, *op. cit.,* p. 145.
[43] T. Ingold, *Lines – A Brief History,* London, Routledge, 2016, pp. 84-85.
[44] Tim Ingold, *op. cit.,* p. 167.

But what is nationalism and its zealous effort to close itself in, if not a form of the demonic? Indeed, Kierkegaard indicates that the demonic can be found "in all possible spheres"[45] – including the political.

"The demonic is unfreedom that wants to close itself off (…). The demonic is *inclosing reserve* and the *unfreely disclosed*"[46]. The demonic is a form of anxiety, but anxiety before the good: any form of generosity, of openness is a threat. When Kierkegaard describes the terrifying angst of the demonic, panicked by the proximity of the good, we eerily see the parallel with the increasingly walled-in nations, panicked about an "influx" of foreigners perceived as a threat, as that which threatens their very being, just like communication threatens the demonic. "The demonic does not close itself up within itself (…); unfreedom makes itself a prisoner (…). Unfreedom becomes more and more enclosed and does not want communication (…), [it] closes itself off more and more"[47].

But as Kierkegaard emphasises, the will to close oneself in, to cut all relations to exteriority, is bound to fail. The tragic paradox of waning sovereignties is that, just like the demonic, the attempt to cut off all migration and close oneself in is doomed to failure, because the "self" which is so intensely held on to – national identity, cultural sameness, etc. – is empty when kept as a treasured substantial good: in its stead, we find "dreadful emptiness and contentlessness"[48]. Wendy Brown, in her book on the contemporary political obsession with walls, repeatedly emphasises their inefficacy[49], or of all forms of defensive barriers: it is the "fantasy of impermeability"[50], as the illusory attempts of Frontex to keep Europe closed in show. The only type of sociality such a demonic, nationalistic enclosure allows is, as Kierkegaard states, "the cohesion in which they cling to one another so inseparably and anxiously"[51], where they cling to the fantasy of a unified cultural, ethnic or national identity. Pierre Hassner wrote that the anxiety of the modern international system of state coexistence is that of a

[45] Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety,* KW VIII, p. 125.
[46] *Ibid.,* p. 123.
[47] *Ibid.,* p. 129 ff.
[48] *Ibid.,* p. 133.
[49] W. Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 121.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[51] *Concept of Anxiety, op. cit.* p. 137.

"solitude which can never be found"[52]: each State would like to be able to be entirely sovereign, yet it is always dependent upon others for international cooperation. Brexit is a spectacular and paradigmatic example thereof. "Taking back control" is increasingly manifest as what it always was: an empty, fallacious promise about closing oneself in entirely, which "is and remains an impossibility", in Kierkegaard's terms, because "it always retains a relation"[53]. The paradox of sovereignty – being the ultimate ruler at home, but dependent on other, equally ultimate, sovereignties to respect and enforce it – is identical as that of freedom demonically contradicting itself in wanting to shut the whole world out to be fully itself, yet always dependent on others to achieve itself. This is what allows Kierkegaard to describe the demonic as the "contentless"[54]: there is no substantial good, not even a substantial being, to be preserved if not in openness and communication. This is why it will focus even more in *appearing* self-content and self-possessed, whereas it is only an empty shell. W. Brown writes: "Walls constitute a spectacular screen for fantasies of restored sovereign potency and national purity. They function brilliantly as icons of such potency and protection, *even when they fail"*[55]. Nationalism, for all its high claims, is undoubtedly "boring"[56], however strident, if only because it wants to be singular, unique and irreplaceable, whereas it is ever so vulgarly unexceptional. Prisoner of itself, it has nothing to show for itself but an increasingly empty, and hence increasingly vociferous claim of sovereignty – all the more vociferous that it has so little to show for itself. J.-L. Chrétien writes that "the demonic does not want to coexist because it does not want to exist, and attempts an impossible autarky without any *autos*"[57]. Similarly, the States close themselves in presenting themselves as simultaneously vulnerable, victimized, pure and righteous[58] –

[52] P. Hassner, « Raymond Aron and the History of the Twentieth Century », in *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 1, March 1985, p. 30. Our translation.
[53] *Concept of Anxiety, op. cit.* p. 123.
[54] *Ibid*., p. 132.
[55] W. Brown, *op. cit*., p. 9. Our emphasis.
[56] *Concept of Anxiety, op. cit.*, p. 132.
[57] J.- L. Chrétien, " Perdre la parole ", in *Kierkegaard ou le Don Juan chrétien*, Paris, éd. du Rocher, 1989, p. 164.
[58] See W. Brown, *op. cit*., p. 132

whereas the cruelty and inhumanity shown towards migrants and foreigners belie such claims of purity and goodness. Kierkegaard writes:

> The self in despair is always building only castles in the air, is only shadowboxing. All these imaginatively constructed virtues make it look splendid (…); such self-command, such imperturbability, such ataraxia, practically border on the fabulous. Yet *(...) the basis of the whole thing is nothing*[59].

Conclusion

Kierkegaard noted that the ironist simultaneously belongs and does not belong to this world, and, throughout his work, forces us to think of the polity in a form different from the nation-state, delinked from the metaphysical categories of necessity and substantiality. Nationalism attempts to prove the necessity of belonging, and of belonging to a given territory. Such necessity is delusional, and this is why it can turn into a ferocious violence against foreigners, those "who do not belong". The political lesson of Kierkegaard, whose works serve as a powerful counterpoint to the myth of national rootedness and the sirens of self-justifying nationalism, is that we need to gracefully welcome our metaphysical contingency – and the foreigner, the outsider, the outlier. It is simply a new, and more welcoming conception of space.

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Den Enkelte as Socio-Political in Kierkegaard Texts

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Abstract: This study examines whether there is lexical evidence in Kierkegaard's writings to support the view that *den Enkelte* is far removed from a conceptual mistaking of his thought as individualistic, in that it leads to a withdrawal from the social and political milieu to becoming a lonely rebel. It considers six selected texts from the Kierkegaard Corpus, for its linguistic and literary approach that employs computer applications to establish a conceptual-linguistic map of *den Enkelte*. Interpreting numerical data and analysing the map, the study offers an answer to the research question as to whether there is lexical evidence and considers the implication of the evidence for understanding related questions in Kierkegaard studies. In brief, it identifies 12 terms and provides another perspective from which to augment our grasp of a concept that Kierkegaard considers to be principal in Christianity as "existence-communication".
Keywords: universal, establishment, collision, crowd, confession, conscience, upbuilding, good, eternity, extraordinary.

I. Introduction

Kierkegaard scholarship, roughly from about mid 1970's, has been working to dispel a persistent misunderstanding of his thought as "individualistic. The basis of it is the concept of "the single individual" (*den*

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Enkelte). This popular misunderstanding conceives of *den Enkelte* as somewhat of a lonely person or rebel.[1] Disillusioned by the dishonest machinations of social and political institutions, he withdraws from family and political ties and seeks a pure and direct relation with God. A critical reading of the texts, however, shows that Kierkegaard's views go in precisely the opposite direction. Thus, instead of isolating oneself, *den Enkelte* plunges one into the social and political milieu for the sake of strengthening it, and thereby exposes one to fierce opposition, martyrdom and even death.

A source of the confusion and misunderstanding may be with having to render appropriately a term from Danish to English. For the English term "individual" is rendered from the Danish *det Individet* or *den Enkelte.* The Kierkegaard Corpus shows the usage of both. Accordingly, *Individet* occurs 494 times, and mainly in the pseudonymous writings. By comparison, *Enkelte* occurs 810 times through the Corpus: pseudonymous and acknowledged writings. Further, *Individet* with its cognate, *Individualitet*/ individuality occurring 178 times, is a loan word in Danish. The other, *Enkelte*, is a native term built up from the Danish word, *En*, which stands for the numeral one. Thus, its word sense is referencing the one, that which is by itself, alone, single. And it has as synonyms personality or self in Kierkegaard's texts. In this study, the focus is on *Enkelte*, to throw it into conceptual relief and to better understand whether its implied struggling means being impelled to work for the improvement of society and becoming exposed to a collision with a conformist socio-political process and milieu.

[1] An example of individualistic representation is Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (New York, Scribner, 2007) which sketches the individual at the aesthetic level. For a discussion see Brian Conniff "DeLillo's Ignatian Moment: Religious Longing and Theological Encounter" in "Falling Man," *Christianity and Literature*, Vol. 63/ 1(2013), pp. 47-73, accessed at https://www.jstor.org/stable/26290138. Also, a 2019 blog from David Crump in his corrective response on "Kierkegaard on Becoming and Individual, Seriously", in *Humanity Reviewed*, accessed on July 21, 2021, at http://humanityrenewed.com/ kierkegaard-on-becoming-an-individual-seriously/. Publications by Steven Evans and by Sylvia Walsh are dispelling the confusions, as well as more recent essays including Jose Garcia Martin's "The Category of the Single Individual in Kierkegaard," *The European Journal of Science and Theology*, Vol 13/ 3 (2017), pp. 99-108. In the same volume, previous issue, there is a relevant treatment by Martina Pavlikova, "Kierkegaard's reflections in Don DeLillo's Novel 'Falling Man,'" Vol. 13/ 1 (2017), pp. 15-23.

Clarifications may work inadvertently in an opposite direction to increase the confusion. The Kierkegaard scholar Gregor Malantschuk claims that there is a development in Kierkegaard's thought from the "individual" (*Individ*) to the single individual (*den Enkelte*). He also notes that it is the latter concept with its different levels on which the upbuilding literature concentrates[2]. He is implying changes or development in the concept. Kierkegaard takes the category of *den Enkelte* (the single individual) as a principle of Christianity understood as an existence-communication. He points out that the concept has a double dialectic. It can be used to signify either the outstanding and only person, or someone whom "every human being is or can be, and thus to call attention to the dialectic one will always use *the single individual* in a double stroke."[3] The double stroke may mean that the term has a double *entendre,* referencing the usage in the pseudonymous as well as in the upbuilding literature. While each of the two clarifications sheds some light, it is not enough to dispel whether *den Enkelte* is referencing a type of individual or a process of self-determination and inner growth towards a relationship to God. Is there more to understanding the concept, to getting a clear view as to whether or not it implies a wrenching out of the individual or of the self from the socio-political order of the day?

II. The Study

This study, seeking to offer more insight, clarifies whether *den Enkelte* for Kierkegaard necessarily plunges one in the social-political milieu. Its research question is whether a conceptual map of *Enkelte*, based on relevant Kierkegaard writings, discloses lexical evidence for the claim that it does do that. An answer and thus the study on the whole may shed further light on the difference between the single individual and individuals

[2] Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence*. Translation of *Fra Individ til den Enkelte* by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2003), p. 110.

[3] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View of My Work as an Author* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 115.

for Kierkegaard and perhaps on its significance for a better understanding of the relation between the religious and the secular[4].

III. Methodology

Lexical evidence consideration, or the rate of use of a term and its associated words used by a text to communicate a thought or idea, is another methodological approach to literary studies. The choice of titles for creating the conceptual map, reflecting claims by Malantschuk and Kierkegaard introduced above, is based on large occurrences of the term *den Enkelte* in different titles (texts) of the Kierkegaard Corpus. The study employs a software computer package that has a machine-readable version or electronic texts of the *Samlede Værker* (3rd edition), referred to as the Kierkegaard Corpus, and that includes computer applications for doing statistical routines. They aid in creating a conceptual space for *den Enkelte* as a literary object that can be explored from different angles. This approach enables seeing the texts freshly, that is, through aberrant frequent terms associated with *den Enkelte*. Along the way, the researcher has to make certain decisions.

Computer applications aid in the decision-making process. They assist the researcher in deciding about the following: text(s), search term and unit of text to retrieve and create mini-texts, a list size showing the associated words that have very high aberrant frequencies or z-scores, and a matrix that profiles the data or distribution of listed words across the mini-texts and used as input to a multidimensional scaling program, SimCA. The output of the SimCA program is a numerical or principal component analysis and an array of points (representing associated words in relation to the texts). The output is then interpreted, and an explanation is offered of the significant connections among the aberrant words in the mini texts, in order to produce a conceptual map and an answer to the research question.

To achieve that end, the next phase in the study is to explain what thoughts in the different texts are conveyed by the associations among terms with highly aberrant frequencies, expressed as z-scores. A word has a high

[4] The distinction between Christianity and Christendom and that between the religious and the secular with respect to the single individual and the "Present Age" is dealt with by Brayton Polka, "The Single Individual in Kierkegaard: Religious or Secular?" Part 1, *The European Legacy*, 19:3, (2014), pp. 319f. DOI: 10.1080/10848770.2014.898928

z-score if its observed frequency, repeated use, is statistically different from its normal rate of use or profiles in the Kierkegaard Corpus. The computer-assisted approach rests on the view that very high z-score words cannot be occurring accidentally in their repeated use but must express connections in the mind of the author.

IV. Steps in the Method

The computational approach has six simple steps for the use of a corrected machine-readable version of *Samlede Værker* (3rd edition). The version is bundled with computer applications to do statistical routines and related programs used in Alister McKinnon's Computer Workshop[5].

1. Settle on the Danish titles that have large occurrences of *den Enkelte.* Our selection is the following six: *Either-Or I, Either-Or II,* 18 *Upbuilding Discourses, Upbuilding Discourses in Various Sprits*, *Works of Love,* and *Practice in Christianity.*

2. Retrieve from each of the six titles sentences containing the search term *den Enkelte* and combine then to form a mini text of the text in question.

3. Do a word count of each mini-text, then merge the count files to produce a master list that shows for each term the frequency and z-score. Applications do the counting, merging, and calculating. The z-score is a measure of standard deviations from the Corpus norm of the rate of use for a term.

4. Study the master list of z-score terms to determine where to trim off. It was trimmed to keep words occurring three or more times. After some more studying as to which words have high frequencies, or scores, or variants included, a decision was made to drop functional words except for two (*hven* and *Hver)* and to keep the top 30 words whose z-score is 8.3 or greater. **Table 1** shows the list of 30 aberrant frequent terms with raw frequencies and z-scores. It includes a variant form as well, of *Enkelte*, *Mængden* and

[5] *The Kierkegaard Computer Workshop* (Montreal, 1999) is a set of written programs on a disc for Kierkegaard Corpus analysis: Kierkegaard's authorship with 34 titles, programs to extract words and fragments of texts, to count words and do statistical routines, and Michael Greenacre's early version of SimCA (version 2,0) for multidimensional scaling.

Samvittighed, and a cognate of *Skrifter*. However, the Table provides no information of the statistical proximity of the different terms to one another according to their profiles for each title. For that, the SimCA program is used, and it requires a matrix.

5. Create a matrix showing the distribution of the 30 words in the six titles. The matrix is shown as **Table 2.**

6. Input the matrix to the SimCA program which then gives as output a numerical or principal component analysis. The SimCA program allows for a graphic analysis in five dimensions, of which the first three are manually laid out, each separately, and shown as a thematic dimensional chart, **Figure 1**.

The SimCA information enables seeing further connections among the words and the titles/books that previously may have gone unnoticed. The Figure enables one to survey much of the data from Table 2. Abfreq terms and mini texts are represented by the program as points arrayed according to dimensions or polarities. It shows the terms that are largely tending to each pole and thereby contributing to the steady state or to the resistance to change, of a dimension axis.

V. Interpreting the SimCA information (Table 3)

The dimensional chart, Figure 1 below, lays out three dimensions or axes defining the conceptual space or solution for *den Enkelte*. They correspond to the first three shown by the Histogram information at the top of Table 3, the numerical analysis output. Accordingly, the first three account for 80.52% of the total inertia or resistance to change in the stability of the axis or array of terms, represented as points in further defining the conceptual space. That percentage of total inertia is appropriate in this case to warrant focusing attention on the first three.

The Row Contribution section, below the Histogram in Table 3, shows the 30 abfreq terms as point names, the quality of the fit (QLT), and total inertial contribution (INR) for each point. For a **QLT** of 1000, the fit is good. Column heads ***k*=**1, **k**=2, and **k**=3 indicate the three axes or dimensions, and the values under each are the axial position for each of the

30 points (abfreq terms). We are interested in the large numbers/ values under ***k***, ***COR***, and ***CTR***. The **k** value/ number for a point is its axial location away from the center. Now, the larger the number, the greater is the tendence towards a pole in question (designated by +/- sign). The ***CTR*** is the percentage contribution of inertia or stability that a point/term makes to the axis in question. Large values or contributors (percentages to one decimal place) assist in naming the axial poles and hence a dimension as shown in the chart, Figure 1. Note for example that *Alemene*/ universal is a comparatively large contributor to the negative pole of axis1, and to the positive of axis 2.

The **COR** value of an abfreq term, represented as a point, indicates the extent to which the point/term is best suited to be explained on the axis in question. Hence, the larger values/ contributors (with values shown in brackets) are the basis for an explanatory narrative of the name of an axial pole. They are italicized in each narrative account given below.

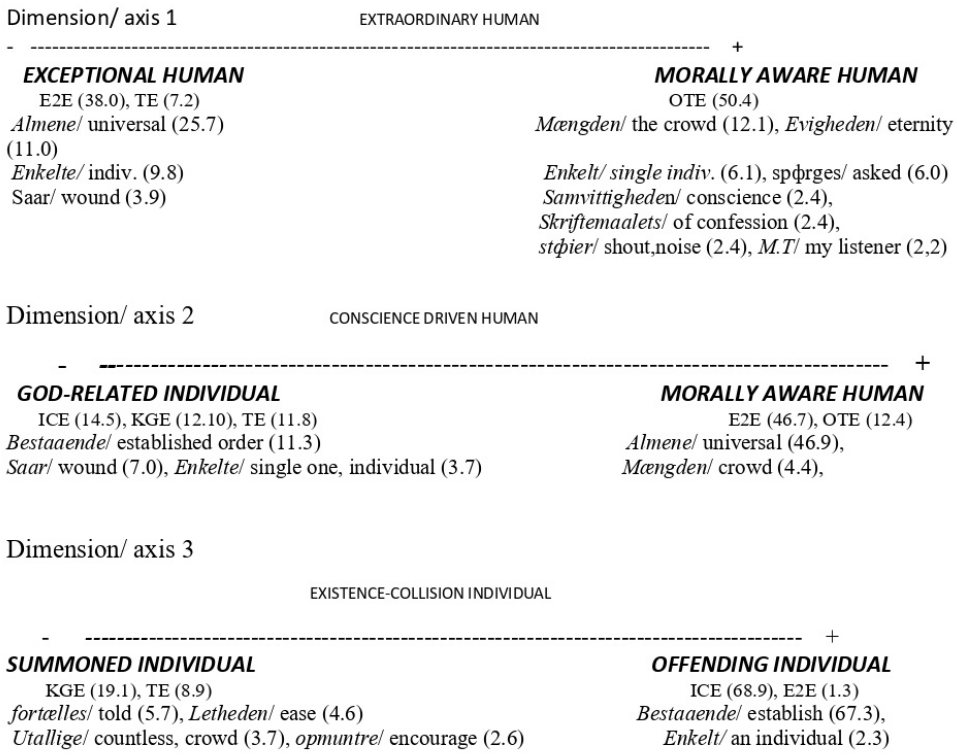
The Column Contributions below the Row are for the six mini text title containing *den Enkelte*. The ***CTR*** value of each word and text within a designated dimension is shown in brackets. The acronyms for the mini texts are E1E and E2E for the two volumes *Either/Or*, TE for *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, OTE for *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Sprits,* KGE *for Christian Discourses,* and ICE for *Practice in Christianity*. The end letter **E** in the title acronyms indicates a mini text of *Enkelte* sentences.

A two-dimensional array of all the row and column data is part of the SimCA output and as shown in **Figure 3.** It collapses the row and column data for the five dimensions to display them as two dimensions. However, **Figure 4** is a three-dimensional conceptual map for *Enkelte,* a rough manual sketch based on a handful of rows and columns data and showing pole names.

Settling on names for opposing poles of an axis was done after studying how the large ***CTR*** value contributors relate in the mini-text passages for each pole. This was done for the three axes shown below with a name for each axis.

Figure 1

Thematic Dimensional Chart



VI. Analysis of opposite pole names for each of the three dimensions

The analysis requires explicating each polar name to better understand the dimension, and to have a brief or summary description. Large COR value abfreq terms (points in the numerical analysis) are tending more towards the pole in question or strongly correlated with it. Thus, the exposition offered is based on the relations among them as reflected in the respective mini-text, and hence an expansion of the polar name. The expositions are rough, for they keep as close as possible to the text in

rendering sentences that contain the abfreq terms, including some smaller contributors. Each polar exposition ends with a summary description of all the points made. A note about referencing: the page citation has a letter before the number to indicate the text, the first number in the page citation is of the Danish text in *Samlede Vaæker* 3rd edition, followed by a slash and the page in the English text.[6] The italicized English words in the expositions below are equivalents of the Danish terms in the abfreq list.

Dimension -1

EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN
E2E (53.8), TE (20.40)
Saar/ wound (43.6), *Almene*/ universal (43.6),
Taknemmelighed/ gratitude (15.8),
velvillige/ favourably (9.4),
Forbønnen/ intercessory prayer (9.4).

A description of the pole named **Exceptional Human** is based mainly on words associated with the titles *Either/Or*, II and *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses.* Of the five words shown, two relatively largely COR word contributors *Saar/* wound and *Almene/* universal, occur in the first title.

The textual connections among the terms make the following five points: a) For the exceptional human, fulfilling the life-task of actualizing the universally human, the *particular* (*Enkelte*) is the *universal*. b) To persist in earnestly expressing the *universal,* the *exceptional* avoids confusing the *wound* of the *universal* with that of the *particular* which is too light to have any life meaning and can easily become a means of escape from expressing the *universal* (EE2, 302/329). c) Persisting to remain in the *universal* and still be joyful is a reason to express *gratitude* (EE2, 217f/ 234f). d) The exceptional *individual*, as one *whom* by himself is *favourably* disposed to

[6] Pagination for English texts is the one in the Howard. V. Hong and Edna H. Hong translations in the Princeton Edition: Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/ Or*, 2 vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), *Works of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), *Practice in Christianity* ((Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

accepting and giving a good home to the upbuilding discourses is the person whom the author considers his reader and to whom he expresses his *gratitude* (T104/107). Giving assent to *intercessory prayer* in church does not mean that even the individual by himself (*Enkelte*) understands devotedly that God is a human being's highest perfection (T272/305).

Summarily, *Enkelte* is denoting a human being as having to fulfil as a life-task the universal becoming particular in his/her own life. Doing so occasions a wound or pain from the universal, for which one is thankful. Although, the extraordinary individual may seek to escape the wound through mistaking it for ordinary human pain or giving lip service recognition to it in the intersessionary prayer of the church.

Dimension +1

MORALLY AWARE HUMAN

OTE (85.0)
Samvittigheden/ the conscience (89.7),
Evigheden/ eternity (85.6),
Forklarede/ transfigured one (78.8),
Fortjenester/ merit (78.8),
Mængden/ the crowd (78.8),
Skriftemaalets/ of confession (78.8),
skrifter/ confess (78.8),
splitte/ split (78.8),
støier/ shout, noise (78.8),
Enkelt/ single one (71.0),
unddrage/ evade (66.2),
Samvittighed/ conscience (64.3)

Named **MORALLY AWARE HUMAN,** the pole is described by 12 large **COR** value terms from the text *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. In the set shown above, two include a variant or cognate form: *Samvittighed, -en/* conscience and *Skriftemaalets and skrifter*/ confess. The first, *Samvittighed,* along with *Evigheden/* eternity show very large values and thus must feature strongly in a description of the polar name.

The textual connections among the 12 terms make the following six points:

a) In *eternity*, *conscience* speaks only with the *single one* about whether he/ she had done good or evil (118/221). b) *Conscience* speaks also in temporality but can get easily drown out by the *noise* of the *crowd*, compared to *eternity*, which has space for everyone and has neither *crowd* nor *noise* (I18/221f). c) The (spiritually) *transfigured one* wanting to be beneficial after death, is like eternity in his visit by avoiding the *crowd* and dealing only with the *single one* (126/138). d) In *singularity* before God, one confesses not accumulated *merits* but sin, and thereby comes to realize that he/ she really has no *merit* (137/ 150f). e) In the moment of *confession,* the *single one* comes to recognize that the *confession* is about how he has lived, if it was in earnest as a *single one* (137/151). f) Willing the good in truth may include sagaciously having to *split* up a *crowd* for individuals to be *alone*, with neither aid from the *crowd*, nor having a *crowd* of onlookers (91/96).

Summarily, *Enkelte* refers to a human being standing alone, singularly, in the "here-now", willingly choosing between doing good or evil, and having to give in eternity an accounting solely for himself, whether he lived earnestly as a single one doing good.

Dimension -2

GOD-RELATED INDIVIDUAL
TE (21.2), **ICE** (21.0), **KGE (**20.6)
opmuntre/ encourage (27.8),
Utallige/ countless, crowd (23.6),
Mangfoldige/ multiplicity (22.9),
hven/ whom (21.1),
Bestaaende/ established order (17.2),
velvillige/ favourably (14.4)

The exposition of the pole named GOD-RELATED INDIVIDUAL is rendered in accord with six terms from three texts: *Eighteen Upbuilding Discoursers*, *Practice in Christianity*, and *Works of Love.*

The textual associations among the six identified by larger **COR** values make the following five points: a) That love is to be known by its fruits, sacred words of biblical text, it is said admonishingly to the *single individual* to *encourage* him not to make his love become unfruitful (19/18). b) With Christ, as with God's providence, there is neither number nor crowd, for the *countless* are counted, each as a *single one* (73,133/71, 138). c) The discourse, seeking the f*avourably* disposed reader, *whom* (ever) is a single reader, concentrates not on the *particular* (*Enkelte*), but on willing what is one and the same in its *multiplicity (KG 209/25; T 55/53 13/07, 101/107, 158/174).* d) On everyone regardless of life's circumstance, each *singly* considered, was on *whom* the God-man in his sorrow turned his eye. (IC 84/78); and e) with the *single individual* becoming related to God, began the collision of the single individual with the deified established *order* (IC 90/88).

Summarily, *Enkelte* is referencing a particular kind of individual. It is everyone who by, of, and for himself stands related to God and finds himself to be inescapably in conflict with the established socio-political word that has deified itself.

Dimension+2

MORALLY AWARE HUMAN
E2E (44.6), **OTE** (14.1)
Almene/ universal (53.5),
Saar/ wound (53.5),
Hver/ each (39.3),
Forklarede/ transfigured one (19.4),
Fortjenester/ merit (19.4),
Skriftemaalets/ of confession (19.4),
skrifter/ confess (19.4),
splitte/ split (19.4),
støier/ shout, noise (19.4)

This pole shares the name of another pole, MORALLY AWARE HUMAN. However, its description is comprised of nine terms from two

texts: *Either/Or II*, and *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits.* All nine terms have already appeared formally in or more expositions above except for Hver/ each. The term occurs mainly in the *Discourses,* emphasizing a singleness in connection with moral awareness. One textual example relates it to two other terms as follows: in temporality the *conscience* is seeking to make *each one* separately into a *single individual,* but the *noise* and *crowd* deafen the *conscience* (OTA 118/128f).

To continue with the description, the relation among the remaining terms makes an additional six points as follows: a) Fulfilling the life-task of actualizing the universally human, the *particular* (*Enkelte*) is the *universal*. b) Expressing the *universal* would mean having to avoid confusing the *wound* of the *univers*al with that of the *particular* which is too light to have any life meaning and can easily serve to escape actualizing the *universal* (EE2, 302/329). c) The *transfigured one* wanting to be beneficial after death, is like eternity in his visit in avoiding the *crowd* and dealing only with the *single one* (OTA 126/138). d) *Alone* before God, one *confesses* not accumulated *merits* but sin, and comes to realize that he/she really has no *merit* (OTA 137/ 150f). e) For in that moment of *confession,* the *single one* comes to recognize that the *confession* is about how he has lived, whether in earnest as a *single one* (OTA 137/151f). f) Willing the good in truth may include prudently having to *split* up a crowd *for* individuals to be *alone*, *each* one separately, without either aid from the *crowd* or drawing onlookers (OTA 90f/96f).

Summarily, *Enkelte* is referencing the individual who alone, in his/ her particularity, wills for his life to work for the good and may include aiding others to singularly decide on working for the good as a life-task. Particularizing the good/ universal in one's life incurs becoming wounded, having to struggle with oneself.

Dimension -3

SUMMONED INDIVIDUAL
KGE (25.6), TE (12.6)
Mangfoldige/ multiplicity (39.0),
opmuntre/ encourage (36.3),

Utallige/ countless, crowd (32.4),
fortælles/ told (22.1),
Letheden/ ease (22.1),
m.T/ my listener (16.0)

To expand on the name of this pole, SUMMONED INDIVIDUAL, we draw on six terms with large COR values in connection with two texts, *Works of Love*, and *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses,* showing large COR values. The latter text is making relatively small contribution, having a single occurrence for each of the first three terms in its mini-text sentences. This then means that the terms are more strongly associated in the former.

Already introduced in earlier expositions, four of the six terms are tending more strongly towards the pole, compared with the two new ones, *Letheden*/ ease *m.T*/ my listener. Three textual relations among the six make the following six points: a) That *single individual* choosing to read the discourse deliberates lovingly over the difficulty and the *ease* as to whether they are properly related to represent the essentially Christian and not to falsely make the *ease* too great (KG 9/3). b) The discourse dwells on love as building up instead of spreading itself on *particulars* and *multiplicities* (KG 209/25f). c) The *single individual* is summoned by the Gospel to bear in mind that the tree is to be known by its fruits, metaphorically meaning that the *single individual*'s love is the tree. (KG19/14). d) In summonsing, the Gospel does not *encourage* the judging of humans, or informs the reader (*my listener*) of the discourse about its author; rather, it is addressing every *single one* to be mindful *of* not allowing his/ her love to become unfruitful, to work such that love could be known, rather than shown, by its fruits (KG 19f /14). e) That it is *told* to the *single individual*, even though *told* to all, is the emphasis of eternity (KG 98/97). f) Christianity's essential view of humans is first and foremost to view the *countless ones* separately, each as a *single individual* (KG, 135/138)

Summarily, *Enkelte* is the one whom the Gospel summons, not to allow his/ her love to become unfruitful. For the individual message told to all is that love could be known, as with a tree, by its fruits and that the single individual is the tree, he/ she is love.

Dimension +3

OFFENDING INDIVIDUAL
ICE (77.8), E2E (1,0)
Bestaaende/ established order (81.0),
Enkelt/ an individual (14.3),
unddrage/ withdraw (8.6),
Evigheden/ eternity (3.8)

The four terms explaining this pole, OFFENDING INDIVIDUAL, are primarily from *Practice in Christianity*, rather than from *Either/O*r II, given the exceedingly large differences in the COR values for their respective mini texts. Further, two of the four associated terms have comparatively smaller COR values and are thus making comparatively minimal contribution to the explanation.

The textual relations among the six convey the following points: a) The *single individual*, by wanting to *withdraw* from his relationship with the *established order* brings him into a collision with the *order* (IC 95/ 93). b) The *established order* in its deification holds out to the *single individual* the prospect of advancement straight to *eternity*, obliging him to judge as the *established order* that is deemed divine (IC 92/90). c) To accept that enchanting prospect of the deified *established order* is to cease belonging to the category of *a single individual* (IC 92/90) d.) Christianly understood the term "*single individual*," corresponds to *an individual* spiritual struggling with himself, even while physically and corporately struggling with the established order to improve it (IC 208/223). e) For *eternity* will examine *an individual* singly about his life, whether his struggling has been inward so that he may join other *single individuals* who endured in their struggling and thus passed the test (IC 208/223).

Summarily, *Enkelte* is understood to refer to a category or type of individual, one who is in spiritual struggle (upbuilding love for neighbour) and at the same time finds himself in a physical-corporeal struggle to reform a temporal governance that considers itself divine and improve.

The textual account of the six polar names incorporates all the abfreq terms except *værdige/* worthy and the EIE mini text containing two of its

three occurrences. The reason for its seeming marginality is that its largest inertial contribution is to the fifth axis (k=5) representing 5.97% of the total inertia of the array, and therefore relatively small. A textual consultation of the mini-text sentences shows it is not adding any supplement to the polar descriptions. Its usage suggests that individuals (*de Enkelte*) are to makes themselves *worthy* judges and fellow contestants to determine who is best suited for the tile of the Unhappiest One (EEI 203/221f). Its third occurrence is in the TE mini text in a sentence, wondering whether anyone is capable of cataloguing from the countless expectancy experiences regarding the *individual*, the ones that are seemingly un*worthy (*T197/219).

Considered together, the six textual expositions of the polar names show how *Enkelte* functions with respect to each of the three thematic dimensions identified above. In short, each represents a different perspective of the conceptual map along the lines of either the exceptional human, the conscience driven human, or the existence-collision individual, each with respect to having the life task of particularizing the universal.

VII. Findings and Implications

We find that the expositions altogether support the following points:

1) *Enkelte* in Kierkegaard's lexical register may refer either to the single individual who at the minimum, by himself is aware of himself, to individuals as in everyone, or to a human who is exceptional in the sense of committing to a life-task to particularize (actualizing) the universal. Together, the three usages suggest that *Enkelte* is referring to a type of individual that one is to become. *Either/Or II* represents the type as an exceptional human being, one committed to make his life (the particular) actualize the universal. In the upbuilding discourses the universal is rendered as working for the Good, by willing one thing, and may include having to disperse the crowd prudently, so that each one sets for himself separately a life-task of particularizing the universal.

In the two Christian discourses, the Gospel summons all to particularize in their lives the building up of love to bear fruits; in *Practice in Christianity* the particularizing is expressed through a spiritual struggle as an active member of society. A type or category, the single individual is that

human standing alone, separately from the crowd, in making his life qualitatively different by having to account in eternity as to how he has lived. That is whether his life was shaped essentially by a spiritual struggling that impels towards improving the socio-political milieu for others to make their lives likewise, qualitatively different from having to live a life shaped by depersonalizing and dehumanizing forces that constitute the social whole. Working for improvement inevitably brings one into physical and corporeal struggle with forces constitutive of the social whole, the established order.

2) The trials of the spirt, inwardly struggling with oneself in maintaining a God-relationship, presupposes active belonging to the socio-political milieu, compared to a hermetic or monastic withdrawal. The upbuilding discourses or titles underscore that belonging with reference to conscience and confession relative to the Good or eternity, respectively. The Christian titles, especially *Works of Love*, underscore the belonging through the Gospel summoning all to make sure that love within us continues to upbuild and does not become unfruitful, to persist in loving the neighbour. That persisting includes a readiness to listen, to be humble in order to aiding those standing in need, including the unlovable. The operative term in our conceptual map is *fortælles*/ told. As noted in our exposition above, everyone is told or summoned by the Gospel to the task of making one's life build up love, and not just the single individual. The task, when told to anyone, binds that individual to doing it; eternity looks on to see whether what is told (to build up love in oneself) is becoming actualized (KG 98/97).

3) The fact that the single individual type of human is one plunged in the socio-political milieu is made clear by *Practice in Christianity*. The spiritual struggle is occasioned by a collision with the established order and its ordinances, and not just with Christendom. That is, the established order considering itself a deified authority offers the individual the option of reaching eternity through a dependent and loyal relation to the socio-political order of the day. The single individual withdrawing from a loyal relationship, from exercising the option, becomes an offending human being who now is in a struggle that is spiritually within himself and that is physically-corporeally with the deified establishment that is wondering if the individual thinks he is higher than the established order, that he is divine. The operative terms in the context of *Practice* are the two, *withdraw* and *established order*.

The collision starts with the single individual withdrawing from the relationship with the deified order, the individual not wanting to have commitment to a worldly master when it is eternity that will test him about how he has lived in the world. Hence, the physical-corporeal struggle is more than just resistance to the levelling of the masses, to socio-political conformity that the established order demands. It includes working for the good by changing the condition so that the countless numbers of people would each by himself become a particular human being who alone is willing for himself a life-task. Such is the start of becoming *den Enkelte*, the person who listens to or is told of the summons to build up love for neighbour.

Altogether, the expositions of thematic dimension make available a satisfactory level of consideration (thick descriptions) to allow reading *Enkelte* as a special category, a double dash category to recall Kierkegaard, for a human type plunged in a struggle in two directions that are dialectically related, at once is both a spiritual trail and a physical collision with the powers and principalities: officials and leaders, rules, regulations, ordinances of a deified socio-political order. A clear indication of this is that the expositions delineate the difficulty of practicing Christianity, of becoming a Christian. Furthermore, the expositions together are indicative of a development in the meaning *of den Enkelte*: from willing to accept by and for oneself a life task – actualizing the universal (*Either/Or*), to more specificity about the universal as willing/ doing the Good to stay spiritually related and be accountable to eternity (*Upbuilding Discourses*), to actively building up the love for the neighbour in oneself (*Works of Love*), and finally to come into a struggle that is inwardly-spiritually with oneself and that occasions a physical-corporeal struggle with the socio-political order (*Practice in Christianity*). The forward movement means that a person's identity, becoming genuinely human, does not depend on loyalty to the society or to the established order considering itself as deified.

To our research question the answer is mainly affirmative, given the expository direction and analysis above. The conceptual map indicates lexical evidence to support understanding *den Enkelte* as a category representing a human type struggling on one hand spiritually to keep himself related to eternity and on the other hand physically-corporeally to improve the socio-political order that by machination considers itself deified

demanding loyalty. In effect, the established order is a power apparatus that is totalizing and integrating individuals to achieve conformity in a social whole. It diminishes conscience or inner strivings that make for moral authenticity. The evidence includes primarily the usage of the following 12 abfreq terms: *wound* in EE2*, favourably* disposed reader of the discourses in T, *confession*, *conscience*, *splitting up* the *crowd*, and *told* (the task) in KG, and *eternity* and *established order* in IC. The terms are tell-tale signs, their usage or sense ascertained from their textual contexts shows how they are significant for our research question. The contexts have presuppositions that are historical, ontological, and hermeneutical for the terms to make sense or to communicate the author's thought. Our discussion above alludes to their specialized contextual usage as underscoring a human type that has a spiritual responsibility or accounting to eternity as to how he/ she has lived his/ her life, whether they have persisted spiritually and at the same time actively relating to, plunged in, the socio-political milieu. In short, the single individual, *Enkelte*, is a human type of being an individual, one that is simultaneously in struggle with commitments to both himself to answer to eternity (the religious), and to the governance of world affairs (the secular). The struggle properly understood is holding together, simultaneously, what is functionally and qualitatively different, namely the secular and the religious.

Finally, Kierkegaard structures the concept *den Enkelte* in relation to the human capacity to listen, broadly understood. Note the use of eight abfreq terms that imply in one way or another having to listen: *my listener*, *conscience*, *noise*, *crowd*, *intercessory prayer*, *asked*, *told*, and *confess.* Each presupposes or demands the act of turning attention to oneself, as in being alone with oneself, thereby becoming self-conscious, which is basic for an eternal consciousness. For without the latter no account can be given in response to the question *asked* by eternity of each one separately about himself and how he has lived. To briefly recall from our expositions, *my listener* is the one favourably disposed to making acquaintance or becoming reacquainted with features of our common humanity set out by Kierkegaard's upbuilding discourse: patience and expectation, remorse/*conscience*, *noise* and *crowd* deafening *conscience,* confessing*, praying*, and doing what is *told* by the Gospel, namely, to build up within oneself the love for the neighbour,

so that love *could* be known by its own fruits. Listening as part of the inner workings of ourselves in doing the good for others, rather than external behaviour and collective activity, is a defining feature of Kierkegaard's single one, *den Enkelte*.

VIII. Conclusion

Our discussion shows lexical evidence consisting of 12 terms. Their textual interrelations support a position that *den Enkelte* implies a commitment to work towards strengthening the social-political environment: doing the Good, building up in oneself love for others as one's life task. Solitude as part of daily living is a necessary condition for listening to oneself in order to choose that listened self as a life task. For it implicates one to relate earnestly oneself to eternity, to realize an authentic identity by particularizing the universal, and for which one answers in eternity as to how he/ she lived – whether earnestly struggling spiritually with oneself and physically-corporeally to strengthen the working of the socio-political for the good. To stand alone (*Enkelte)* is to stand separately from the noisy masses and against the power relations that reduces one to a simulacrum (Baudrillard) of a collectivity, a utility of a totalizing power apparatus to achieve social conformity. The nosiness effectively deafens conscience, and seemingly excessive and inescapable power relations diminish moral sensitivity and individuality. In modern society, the totalizing power apparatus is shaped by external forces related to governance, economics, politics, mass media with its sound bites and pixels, and consumerism. Against such forces is *den Enkelte* in collision, in a physical and corporeal struggle to limit or reform, so that countless others may stand alone to realize an identity that is eternally valid. Such are the thoughts that the use of the 12 terms, as they relate to one another in the texts, are conveying about *den Enekelte* as plunged in the socio-political milieu to improve itself.

In addition, the study intimates lines of thinking as to how memory, which neuropsychologically implies boundaries, is recalled in eternity, and related to identity. Eternity's question to each one is how he or she has lived. Perhaps there are more levels of memory, besides the working and attentive ones. Memory might be karmic as in East Asian religious traditions; the study

is suggestive of cross-cultural issues in philosophy of religion and a further exploration by cross-cultural religious dialogue.

Being preliminary, the study has room to be more extensive, robust and perhaps more insightful. A richer study would likely include a frequency list with a much lower cut off z-score point instead of 8.3, or about 60 terms, and an explanation of more than three dimensions. Of course, more space and labour would be required for interpreting a larger data set. Further, the inclusion of a title such as *Sickness unto Death*, that has 30 of the 810 occurrences of *Enkelte* would add to the details in the conceptual map.

Still, the attention that this preliminary study brings is to the term *Bestaaende* which is underscoring that *Enkelete* is referencing a particular human type. Of that type is anyone spiritually struggling within himself, by building up love so that its fruits could be known and finding himself plunged in a physical and corporate struggle. It is struggling to improve the socio-political milieu that is stifling countless ones from becoming counted (*den Enkelte)*, by insistence on socio-political conformity and loyalty to it.

Appendix: Tables and figures for *Enkelte*

Table 1

Abfreq. List

30 Aberrant frequent words in Mini texts:
(EEI, EEII, T, OTA, KG and IC)

Word/ Use	Z-score	Raw Freq.
Enkelte/(single)individual	126.71	280
Enkelt/a single one/individ.	27.25	38
Mængden/crowd	19.60	20
Bestaaende/established order	18.04	18
Taknemmelighed/gratitude	16.85	6
Skriftemaalets/confession	16.37	4
Støier/shout,noise	16.37	4
Samvittigheden/conscience	16.13	8
Almene/universal	15.97	20
Utallige/countless(people)	15.59	4
Forbønnen/intercessory prayer	14.69	3
velvillige/worthy	13.75	4
Letheden/ease	12.83	4
spørges/asked	12.37	10
Evigheden/eternity	11.72	26
Mængdens/of the crowd	11.57	5
skrifter/confess	11.11	3
splitt/split up, disperse	10.65	3
Hver/everyone, each	9.98	8
Fortjenester/merit	9.88	3
Saar/wound	9.88	3
Unddrage/withdraw	9.39	5
Mangfoldige/multitude	9.28	5
Forklarede/transfigured one	8.96	3
opmuntre/encourage	8.71	3
værdige/favourably	8.71	3
Hvem/everyone,each	8.66	27
m.T./my listener	8.46	8
Samvittighed/conscience	8.46	8
fortælles/told	8.38	5

Table 2

Data Matrix for *Enkelte*
Distribution of abfreq terms across six minitexts
(EIE, E2E, TE, OTE, KGE, ICE),

		1 E1E	2 E2E	3 TE	4 OTE	5 KGE	6 ICE	sum	
1	Alm	0	20	0	0	0	0	20	Almene/universal
2	Bes	0	0	0	0	0	18	18	Bestaaende/establich order
3	Enk	0	1	0	23	5	9	38	Enkelt/single one
4	Ene	21	42	70	60	43	44	280	Enkelte/single one/individual
5	Evi	0	0	0	22	0	4	26	Evigheden/eternity
6	For	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	Forbønnen/intercessory prayer
7	Foe	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	Forklarede/transfigured one
8	Fot	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	Fortjenester/merit
9	for	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	fortælles/told
10	hve	0	1	12	8	3	3	27	hvem/when
11	Hve	0	1	0	6	1	0	8	Hvem/everyone, each
12	Let	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	Letheden/ease
13	Man	1	0	1	1	2	0	5	Mangfoldige/multiplicity
14	Mæn	0	0	0	20	0	0	20	Mængden/crowd
15	Mæs	0	0	1	4	0	0	5	Mængdens/of the crowd
16	m.T	0	0	0	6	2	0	8	m.T/my listener
17	opm	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	opmuntre/encourage
18	Saa	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	Saar/wound
19	Sam	0	0	0	5	2	1	8	Samvittighed/conscience
20	San	0	0	0	6	1	1	8	Samvittigheden/the conscience
21	Skr	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	Skriftemaalets/of confession
22	skr	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	skrifter/confess
23	spl	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	splitte/split
24	sfþ	0	0	0	10	0	0	10	spørges/asked
25	stþ	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	støier/shout, noise
26	Tak	0	1	4	1	0	0	6	Taknemmelighed/gratitude
27	und	0	0	1	3	0	1	5	unddrage/withdraw
28	Uta	0	0	1	0	3	0	4	Utallige/countless,crowd
29	vel	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	velvillige/favourably
30	vær	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	værdige/worthy
	SUM	24	69	99	195	73	81	541	

Table 3

NUMERICAL ANALYSIS
SimCA output for *Enkelte*

INERTIAS AND PERCENTAGES OF INERTIA

HISTOGRAM

```
 1 0.427873   36.49%  ************************************************
 2 0.288742   24.62%  *********************************
 3 0.227539   19.40%  **************************
 4 0.158514   13.52%  ******************
 5 0.070026    5.97%  ********
  --------
    1.172694
```

ROWCONTRIBUTIONS

I	NAME	QLT	MAS	INR	k=1	COR	CTR	k=2	COR	CTR	k=3	COR	CTR	k=4	COR	CTR	k=5	COR	CTR	
1	Alm	1000	37	216	-1726	436	257	1913	535	469	316	15	16	298	13	21	-103	2	6	Almene/universal
2	Bes	1000	33	161	-68	1	0	-989	172	113	2145	810	673	287	15	17	-108	2	6	Bestaaende/establish.order
3	Enk	1000	70	31	610	710	61	46	4	1	274	143	23	272	141	33	-36	2	1	Enkelt/a single one
4	Ene	1000	518	49	-284	722	98	-144	185	37	-40	15	4	-64	36	13	69	42	35	Enkelte/single one/individual
5	Evi	1000	48	47	990	856	110	344	103	20	210	38	9	-47	2	1	11	0	0	Evigheden/eternity
6	For	1000	6	21	-647	94	5	-802	144	12	-697	109	12	-1496	501	78	-824	152	54	Forbønnen/intercessory prayer
7	Foe	1000	6	8	1182	788	18	586	194	7	-142	11	0	-108	7	0	32	1	0	Forklarede/transfigured one
8	Fot	1000	6	8	1182	788	18	586	194	7	-142	11	0	-108	7	0	32	1	0	Fortjenester/merit
9	for	1000	9	51	-332	17	2	-947	140	29	-1190	221	57	1987	616	230	-205	7	6	fortælles/told
10	hve	1000	50	22	-46	4	0	-327	211	18	-234	108	12	-433	370	59	-395	307	111	hven/when
11	Hve	1000	15	10	629	496	14	560	393	16	-216	58	3	204	52	4	-14	0	0	Hvem/everyone,each
12	Let	1000	7	40	-332	17	2	-947	140	23	-1190	221	46	1987	616	184	-205	7	4	Letheden/lightness
13	Man	1000	9	11	-173	21	1	-569	229	10	-743	390	22	310	68	6	644	292	55	Mangfoldige/multiplicity
14	Mæn	1000	37	56	1182	788	121	586	194	44	-142	11	3	-108	7	3	32	1	1	Mængden/the crowd
15	Mæs	1000	9	8	817	671	14	308	96	3	-253	65	3	-386	150	9	-139	19	3	Mængdens/of the crowd
16	m.T	1000	15	13	804	631	22	203	40	2	-404	160	11	416	169	16	-27	1	0	m.T/my listener
17	opm	1000	6	14	-437	66	2	-898	278	16	-1026	363	26	826	235	24	-411	58	13	opmuntre/encourage
18	Saa	1000	6	32	-1726	436	39	1913	535	70	316	15	2	298	13	3	-103	2	1	Saar/wound
19	Sam	1000	15	8	647	643	14	6	0	0	-118	21	1	465	332	20	-45	3	0	Samvittighed/conscience
20	San	1000	15	10	837	897	24	198	50	2	13	0	0	203	53	4	-15	0	0	Samvittigheden/the conscience
21	Skr	1000	7	11	1182	788	24	586	194	9	-142	11	1	-108	7	1	32	1	0	Skriftemaalets/of confession
22	skr	1000	6	8	1182	788	18	586	194	7	-142	11	0	-108	7	0	32	1	0	skrifter/confess
23	spl	1000	6	8	1182	788	18	586	194	7	-142	11	0	-108	7	0	32	1	0	splitte/split
24	spø	1000	18	28	1182	788	60	586	194	22	-142	11	2	-108	7	1	32	1	0	spørges/asked
25	stø	1000	7	11	1182	788	24	586	194	9	-142	11	1	-108	7	1	32	1	0	støier/shout,noise
26	Tak	1000	11	16	-522	158	7	-118	8	1	-436	110	9	-966	541	65	-561	183	50	Taknemmelighed/gratitude
27	und	1000	9	4	566	662	7	-7	0	0	204	86	2	-307	194	5	-167	58	4	unddrage/evade
28	Uta	1000	7	22	-411	48	3	-910	236	21	-1067	324	37	1116	355	58	-360	37	14	Utallige/countless,crowd
29	vel	1000	7	28	-647	94	7	-802	144	16	-697	109	16	-1496	501	104	-824	152	72	velvillige/favourably
30	vær	1000	6	46	-706	52	6	-759	60	11	-564	33	8	-1045	113	38	2672	742	565	værdige/worthy

COLUMN CONTRIBUTIONS

J	NAME	QLT	MAS	INR	k=1	COR	CTR	k=2	COR	CTR	k=3	COR	CTR	k=4	COR	CTR	k=5	COR	CTR	
1	E1E	1000	44	73	-481	121	24	-396	82	24	-238	29	11	-326	55	30	1170	713	867	Either/Or I
2	E2E	1000	128	258	-1129	538	380	1028	446	467	151	10	13	119	6	11	-27	0	1	Either/Or II
3	TE	1000	183	137	-423	204	77	-431	212	118	-333	126	89	-596	404	410	-218	54	124	18 Upbuilding Discourses
4	OTE	1000	360	216	773	850	504	315	141	124	-68	7	7	-43	3	4	9	0	0	Upbuild.Disc. in Various Sprits
5	KGE	1000	135	145	-217	38	15	-509	206	121	-567	256	191	791	498	533	-54	2	6	Works of Love
6	ICE	1000	150	172	-45	1	1	-531	210	146	1023	778	689	114	10	12	-28	1	2	Practice in Christianity

Figure 2
Two-dimensional array of SimCA data for *den Enkelte*

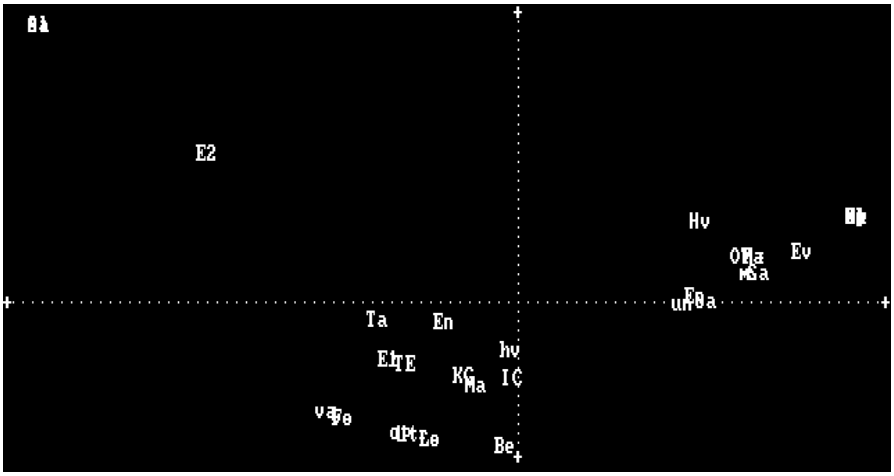
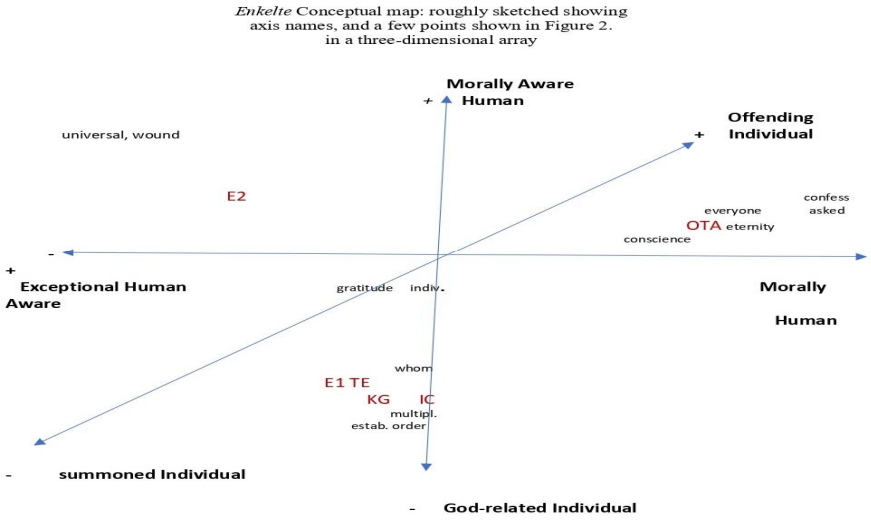


Figure 3



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The Problem of the Intermediary: On the Compatibility of Psychoanalytic Theory and Religion

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Abstract. Psychoanalytic theory appears to suggest that neurotic individuals need the assistance of a psychoanalyst to achieve psychological wholeness. Religion also posits the necessity of an external force if the individual is to achieve psychological wholeness. According to religion, however, this force is God. Attempts to make psychoanalytic theory compatible with religion appear to suggest that the psychoanalyst serves as a kind of intermediary between the patient, or analysand, and God. According to Kierkegaard, however, this would amount to making one human being "a god in relation to another human being." But this, on his view, is precisely what religion denies. No human being can be a god in relation to another human being. This essay argues that the apparent opposition between the fundamental assumptions of psychoanalytic theory and religion is merely that: *apparent*. Psychoanalysis, properly understood, I argue, does not claim god-like significance for the psychoanalyst, and religion, properly understood, allows individuals to play significant roles in helping one another to achieve psychological wholeness.
Keywords: psychoanalysis, Christianity, witch doctors, neuroses, wholeness.

Introduction

"It is constitutive of neurotic conflict," writes the philosopher and psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear, "that the parts [of the psyche] are cut off from each other, and that real communication between them has become *impossible*. The aim of the psychoanalyst," he continues, "is to overcome this structural impasse."[1] Only by overcoming this impasse and thus reestablishing communication among the disparate parts of the psyche, Lear explains, can psychological wholeness be restored.

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[1] Jonathan Lear, "The Socratic Method and Psychoanalysis," *A Companion to Socrates* (Blackwell, 2009), p. 453.

Psychoanalytic theory thus appears to suggest that the neurotic individual cannot attain psychological wholeness on his own, that he needs the assistance of some external force, namely, the psychoanalyst. Religion also posits the necessity of an external force if the individual is to achieve psychological wholeness. According to religion, however, this force is God. Any attempt to make psychoanalytic theory compatible with religion would appear to suggest that the psychoanalyst could serve as a kind of intermediary between the patient, or analysand, and God. But this, according to Søren Kierkegaard, is something no human being can do for another human being. The view, he argues, that a person needs the assistance of someone else in order to establish the proper relation to God, makes the assisting individual more than merely human. On this view, asserts Kierkegaard, a human being would be "a god in relation to another human being."[2] But this is precisely what religion denies. No human being can be a god in relation to another human being.

I'm going to argue that the apparent opposition between the fundamental assumptions of psychoanalytic theory and religion is merely that: *apparent*. Psychoanalysis, properly understood, I will argue, does not claim god-like significance for the psychoanalyst, and religion, properly understood, allows individuals to play significant roles in helping one another to achieve psychological wholeness. That is, I will argue that psychoanalytic theory is not inherently anti-religious, and that religion allows psychoanalysis to play a role in helping individuals to achieve psychological wholeness.

I. The Religious Perspective on Psychological Wholeness

Kierkegaard takes up the question of how we are related to truth in his *Philosophical Crumbs.* According to Kierkegaard, there are two mutually exclusive ways of understanding our relation to truth. The first, which he identifies as "the Socratic account," is that we are essentially in possession of the truth. The second, which he refers to initially only as "the alternative

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Crumbs* and *Repetition,* tran. M. G. Piety (Oxford, 2009), p. 165.

account," but which he later reveals as the Christian account, is that we do *not* have the truth. "The Socratic view," he asserts,

> is that each individual is his own center and the world is centred around him, because his self-knowledge is a knowledge of God. This is how Socrates understood himself and, according to him, how everyone must understand himself and, with this in mind, how he must also understand his relation to another individual, always with equal humility and equal pride.[3]

The difficulty with such a view, according to Kierkegaard, is in its making self-knowledge equivalent to knowledge of God. Christianity posits a split between God and human beings that makes any attempt to understand God, or the ultimate nature of religious truth, problematic, so problematic, in fact, that the solution can be achieved only by God revealing it to human beings through the vehicle of the incarnation. One could argue, however, that the problem is not specific to Christianity, but to every religion that posits religious truth as transcendent. We may indeed be able to come to understand something about that truth merely through introspection, or with the assistance of the right sort of Socratic interlocutor, but something about it will always escape us.

From the Socratic perspective, we have the truth essentially, but have contingently forgotten it. We need a "teacher" only as an occasion to help us "remember" the truth we already possess. From the religious perspective, on the other hand, we do not have the truth. We are defined as "being outside the truth..., or as being in error."[4] But just as Socrates saw getting people to appreciate that they did not know what they thought they knew was prerequisite to their being able to attain true knowledge, so does religion assume that people must first appreciate the truth about their subjective situation before they can come to have the proper relation to religious truth. According to Christianity, this relation can be established only with the help of God's appearance in the person of Christ. Christ, in Kierkegaard's *Crumbs*, is referred to as "the teacher." Unlike the Socratic teacher, however, Christ, Kierkegaard explains, "cannot contribute to the learner's

[3] Ibid., p. 90.
[4] Ibid., p. 92.

remembering that he really knows the truth, because the learner is actually in a state of error." Christ reminds the learner "not that he already knows the truth, but that he is in error. With respect to this act of consciousness," Kierkegaard explains, "the Socratic applies. That is, the teacher, whoever he might be, even if he is a god, is only an occasion; because I can discover my own error only by myself. Only when I discover it, and not before, has it been discovered, even if the whole world knew it.[5]

Kierkegaard's concern in *Crumbs* is not initially with our knowledge of God. It is with our knowledge of ourselves, because until we come to understand our subjective situation as characterized by a profound need for transcendent truth, we won't seek such truth. Yet it is only after we have first sought and then found transcendent truth that we can experience psychological wholeness.

II. The Nature of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is an important means of attaining self-knowledge. The popular perception, however, is that psychoanalysis assumes a fundamental inability on the part of the patient, or analysand, to achieve this knowledge on his own. Analysts tend to be viewed as either possessing insight into the nature of the human psyche, and hence an ability to heal damaged psyches, that those who are not schooled in psychoanalytic theory cannot possibly possess, or as pretending to such knowledge and skill. They are seen as elevated above their patients, or as elevating themselves above them, as being viewed almost as gods, and at least occasionally, as encouraging such adulation.

Lear argues in an essay entitled "The Socratic Method and Psychoanalysis"[6] that psychoanalysis is effectively a Socratic conversation where the analyst and the analysand are essentially on equal footing. Freud, observes Lear, "came to think that neurotic suffering was the outcome of conflict between different parts of the soul," which is to say between the id, the ego, and the superego. Lear's thesis is that psychoanalysis is a type of

[5] Ibid., p. 92.

[6] Jonathan Lear, "The Socratic Method and Psychoanalysis," in *A Companion to Socrates,* eds. Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar (Blackwell, 2009), pp. 442-462.

conversation that helps to "bring about structural change in the psyche" that undoes the "neurotic structure" and establishes "healthy relations between what had hitherto been warring parts."[7]

But does such structural change in the psyche *require* the assistance of an analyst? Lear's account of psychoanalysis actually suggests that it does not. Lear gives an example which he takes from an article by Lawrence Levenson in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*[8] of an analysand, whom he calls Mr. A, who sought analysis because though he was outwardly successful, "inwardly he felt anxious and inhibited." He felt that he was wearing a mask to conceal his *real* "ugly, nasty"[9] self. Toward the end of an apparently successful analysis, Mr. A developed a cough that he interpreted himself as an expression of angry feelings he harboured toward his analyst.

But why, he wonders, would he be angry with his analyst? The analyst had not done anything but "been there." "Maybe that's why," the analyst responds. This response gives rise to a torrent of hitherto unacknowledged angry feelings from Mr. A. "What is striking about neurotic conflict," observes Lear,

> is that it makes thoughtful evaluation *all but* impossible. Mr. A is disappointed he has not received a magical cure; and he is angry at his analyst for not giving him one. But he would also be embarrassed to recognize those wishes. And he is afraid of his own anger – indeed, he is angry at himself about his own anger. On top of that, he is genuinely grateful to his analyst for all the help he has received. He has grown in many ways, and he is proud of that. Nevertheless, instead of being able to take up all these conflicting and ambivalent feelings and think about what he wants to do with them all, he develops a cough. The cough becomes a kind of nucleus of the conflict – expressing his angry feelings while also keeping them under cover. This is what makes Mr. A's conflict neurotic: the aspiring and pretending parts of the soul cannot find any genuine way to communicate; and lacking this, they conflict in ways that have bizarre and often unwelcome manifestations.[10]

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[7] Ibid., p. 452.
[8] Lawrence Levenson, "Superego defense analysis in the termination phase," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 46 (1998), pp. 847-866.
[9] Ibid., p. 453.
[10] Lear, *op. cit*., p. 54.

But instead of offering Mr. A an interpretation of the psychological significance of his cough, "the analyst invites the analysand back to his own just-spoken words."

> "You haven't done anything but been here."
> …
> The analyst's remark – "Maybe that's why" – brings Mr. A back to his own words [continues Lear] – and thus back to the feelings of gratitude and puzzlement he has just been experiencing – and invites him to listen to another voice [i.e., the voice of complaint] that may also be getting expressed in the here and now.
> …
> In effect, the analyst's remark invites Mr. A to use his own words to perform a bridging function between the aspiring and pretending parts of the soul. He can now actually consider his conflicting feelings and think about how he feels overall.
> …
> It is important [observes Lear] that by 'maybe the analyst actually means *maybe.* The analyst, like Socrates, genuinely does not know. Instead of offering an answer, the analyst extends an invitation to the analysand to *bring out the irony for himself.*[11]

But if the analysand *is* actually able to bring out the irony for himself, then communication between the parts of his psyche has *not* actually become *impossible,* as Lear initially claimed, but only very difficult, as is indicated by the wording with which the presentation of this case begins: "What is striking about neurotic conflict," observes Lear, "is that it makes thoughtful evaluation *all but* impossible." Not *actually* impossible, "all but" impossible, which is to say, only very difficult. Thoughtful evaluation is facilitated by the analyst, but the analysand is essentially capable of it on his own, even if it is very difficult. It is precisely because the analysand is essentially capable of such evaluation that the role of the psychoanalyst is Socratic.

But to say that a person is essentially capable of doing something on his own is not the same thing as saying he *will* do it on his own. Socrates demonstrates in Plato's dialogue the "Meno" that Meno's slave boy is essentially capable of understanding the Pythagorean theorem on his own, but even students in an intro philosophy class know it's extremely unlikely

[11] Ibid., pp. 455-456; emphasis added.

he would ever do so without the assistance of Socrates' questions. This essential capability is profoundly mysterious in that while most people have no trouble understanding the Pythagorean theorem with the right instruction, they would not be able to come up with this geometrical insight on their own, but can arrive at it only as a product of a particular type of human interaction.

Genuine understanding is not the product of didactic instruction, or a superior teacher imparting to an inferior student information of which he had hitherto been ignorant. Genuine understanding, Plato makes clear, while it may require the right kind of questioning from the right sort of interlocutor, is a product of an individual's working out the insight for himself (Meno 85 c10-d4). According to Socrates, only after an individual has worked out the logic of a truth for himself, has he really understood it. Genuine instruction is thus a conversation of a sort, between equals. This is as true of psychoanalysis as of instruction in geometry. The psychoanalyst can no more force self-knowledge on an analysand than Socrates can force knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem on a slave boy.

Human beings are profoundly social and hence need one another not merely in a practical sense, but in a spiritual sense as well. "[T]he deeper meanings which shape a person's soul and structure his outlook," writes Lear in *Love and Its Place in Nature,* "are not immediately available to his awareness. A person is, by his nature, out of touch with his own subjectivity. (…) The only way to get at these deeper meanings is through a peculiar human interaction."[12] "The unrelated human being," writes C. G. Jung, one of the founders of psychoanalytic theory, "lacks wholeness, for he can achieve wholeness only through the soul, and the soul cannot exist without its other side, which is always found in a 'You'."[13]

The human psyche is so complex that no one can come to understand himself without a great deal of effort. Just as there was a Pythagoras, however, so are there likely human beings who need little *explicit* assistance from others to come to understand themselves. Most of us *do* need such assistance, however, if we are to come to know ourselves at the deepest level. But the assistance offered by the psychoanalyst does *not* elevate him above

[12] Jonathan Lear, *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), p. 4.

[13] C. G. Jung, *"*The Psychology of the Transference," *Collected Works of C. G. Jung,* Vol. 16 *The Practice of Psychotherapy* (Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 244.

his patient in a God-like manner. No psychoanalyst can force self-knowledge on an analysand. Analysis is essentially a conversation between equals, even if one of the parties in the conversation is a little more expert than the other in directing the conversation in productive ways.

Jung expressed the view that psychoanalysis was essentially a conversation between equals in 1935 in an essay entitled "Principles of Practical Psychotherapy."[14] "If I wish to treat another individual psychologically at all," he writes,

> I must for better or worse give up all pretensions to superior knowledge, all authority and desire to influence. I must perforce adopt a dialectical procedure consisting in a comparison of our mutual findings. But this becomes possible only if I give the other person a chance to play his hand to the full, unhampered by my assumptions. In this way his system is geared to mine and acts upon it; my reaction is the only thing with which I as an individual can legitimately confront my patient.[15]

The therapist, explains Jung, is not "an agent of treatment but a fellow participant in the process of individual development."[16]

III. Psychoanalysis and Religion

Psychoanalysis is often considered inherently atheistic. This is due partly to Freud's critical remarks about religion in his famous work *The Future of an Illusion,*[17] but also undoubtedly to the increasing hostility toward religion of contemporary Western intellectuals as exemplified, for example, in the writings of the so-called "new atheists."[18] This hostility is likely shared by at least some practicing psychoanalysts whose views of religion are so unsophisticated as to reduce it effectively to superstition.

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[14] C. G., Jung, "Grundsätzliches zur praktischen Psychotherapie," *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie,* VIII (1935): 2, pp. 66-82. Ibid., pp. 3-20.

[15] Ibid., p. 5.

[16] Ibid., p. 8.

[17] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (*The International psycho-analytic library*), 1928.

[18] The "new atheists" is generally taken to refer to Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens.

The psychoanalytic community was not, even in its earliest days, universally hostile, however, to religion. The Swiss priest Oskar Pfister was, for example, one of the founding members of Zurich branch of the *Internationalen Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung.* Pfister published many works in what is now known as pastoral psychology, including a response to Freud's *The Future of an Illusion,* entitled "The Illusion of a Future," in which he asks whether Freud's belief in the eventual triumph of reason over religion did not itself conceal a wish that created a new illusion – a scientific (i.e., *wissenschaftlich*) illusion.[19] Jung observed that all religions were in essence "psychotherapeutic systems" (Jung, p. 193). "Not only Christianity with its symbols of salvation," he wrote, "but all religions, including the primitive with their magical rituals, are forms of psychotherapy which treat and heal the suffering soul, and the suffering body caused by the soul" (Jung, p. 16).[20] But to assert that religions have psychotherapeutic value is not the same thing as asserting that psychoanalytic theory is essentially compatible with religion. Perhaps psychoanalysis is a superior psychotherapeutic system that necessarily supersedes these earlier systems. If we return, however, to the view of psychoanalysis as a type of conversation between equals, we can see that it does not conflict with the religious view that psychological wholeness can ultimately be found only in the proper relation to transcendent religious truth. And indeed, Lear argues convincingly for the compatibility of religion and psychoanalytic theory in his book on Freud.[21]

The purpose of the psychoanalytic conversation is to deepen self-knowledge in a way that is empowering to the analysand. Such self-knowledge is essential from the perspective of religion because it includes a knowledge of one's need for transcendent truth. Even if we do not immediately appreciate this about ourselves, we would appear to have at least

[19] Oskar Pfister, "Die Illusion einer Zukunft" *IMAGO*, Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften XIV (1928) 2-3.

[20] This might perhaps explain the fact that research suggests witch doctors are often as effective as are psychiatrists in the treatment of psychological disorders. That is, witch doctors presumably belong to what Jung identifies as "primitive" religions and hence also have their own psychotherapeutic systems. See E. Fuller Torrey, M.D., *Witch Doctors and Psychiatrists: The Common Roots of Psychotherapy and Its Future* (New York, Harper & Row, 1986).

[21] Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (Routledge, 2005), pp. 203-209.

an intimation of it. We want to know ourselves, and even Socrates appears to have found this challenging. "Despite the fact," observes Kierkegaard,

> that Socrates used all his powers in an effort to understand human nature and to know himself, despite the fact that he has been lauded through the centuries as the person who best understood human nature, he claimed the reason he was disinclined to contemplate the natures of creatures such as Pegasus and Gorgon was that he was not quite certain whether he (the expert on human nature) was a stranger monster than Typhon* or a gentler and simpler being, that by nature participated in something divine (*cf.* Phaedrus, 229e).[22]

Socrates did achieve *some* insight into human nature, however, or at least into his own nature, and that insight is expressed in his humility. He did not know the nature of his relation to the divine. This knowledge is precisely what we lack as well, according to Kierkegaard. Like Socrates, however, we can come to understand this about ourselves, and this understanding is a crucial step in what one could call our path toward the divine. "With respect to this act of consciousness," Kierkegaard asserts, "the Socratic applies." What we cannot do is get beyond this ignorance without divine assistance, and psychological wholeness, according to religion, requires that we get beyond it.

The truth, according to Kierkegaard, is that God is love, and what that means for us as individuals is that we are loved, which is to say that we are lovable. But this "insight" about ourselves is something we find almost impossible to sustain. Ultimately, according to Kierkegaard, only God can make this possible for us. In order for God to make this possible, however, we must first come to understand that we need God, and making us aware, in a sense, of this need is something with respect to which it appears our fellow human beings, and in particular, psychoanalysts, can play a role.

But religion does not necessarily limit psychoanalysis to a merely negative role in establishing psychological wholeness. Psychoanalysis can do more than help us come to understand how much we need God. Faith that God is love is inseparable from faith that we are loved by God, and hence *lovable*. It is this faith that ultimately enables us to come to know ourselves

[22] Kierkegaard, *Crumbs,* p. 111.

as we truly are, according to Kierkegaard. But would such faith in *divine* love be possible if we had not first experienced *human* love? How could we understand that God is love and hence that we are loved, if we didn't know what love was? We must first learn what love is, it would seem, from our relationships with other human beings.

This is where psychoanalysis can play a positive role in the life of a religious individual or in the life of an individual from the perspective of religion. Tanya Lurhmann writes in her book *Of Two Minds* that "Freud remarked, in a letter to Carl Jung, that psychoanalysis is a cure through love."[23] This is Lear's position in his book *Love and Its Place in Nature*. "Love in Lear's sense," Lurman explains, means "wise nurturing. He sees that nurturing embodied in a fundamental analytic commitment

> that for therapy to be therapeutic, an analyst must engage emotionally with a patient and must empathize and sympathize (to some extent) with the patient, and that through this process the patient may grow into a better-formed individual with a more developed sense of inner responsibility and freedom. Analysts believe that respect and love for others grow along with respect and love for oneself and that respect and love for oneself can be nurtured by a caring analyst. Analysts talk about their patients as if they thought of themselves as wise mentors or parents. They obviously care for their patients, and they care deeply. No other word but "love" quite captures this emotional tone of an analyst's involvement with his patients.[24]

Ultimately, for Kierkegaard, a person will not be able to love himself properly until he has accepted that God is love and that hence to love both oneself and others is what one could call the proper order of the universe. The loving attention of the analyst can serve not only to help an individual discover for himself his profound need for transcendent truth, it can also be an important means of helping him to understand something of the nature of that truth. We understand what love is, however imperfectly, because we have experienced it ourselves in our relationships with other people.

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[23] T. M. Luhrmann, *Of Two Minds: An Anthropologist Looks at American Psychiatry* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 200.
[24] Ibid., p. 201.

The analyst is not an intermediary between the patient and God any more than any other loving human relationship, properly understood, inserts itself between the individual and God. All love points toward God as its transcendent source. Each of us can be a sign in that sense for others. Religion requires, in fact, that we endeavour to do this. The psychoanalytic conversation is one of the ways we do this, even if the "other," the "You," we are ultimately seeking is not the "you" of the psychoanalyst, but the person of God.

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The Indestructible Repetition of Desire – Kierkegaard near Lacan

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... it must be posited that, as a characteristic of an animal at the mercy of language, man's desire is the Other's desire.[1]
(Jacques Lacan)

If one imagined a crowd of young people, each one wishing, one would find out by means of the wishes to what extent there was something deeper in the individual's soul, because there is no mirror as accurate as the wish.[2]
(Søren Kierkegaard)

Abstract. This essay explores the narratives of desire in Kierkegaard, in the psychoanalytic approach of Jacques Lacan's formulation of the object a, cause of desire. The indestructible desire, as Freud put it, forms the core of the uniqueness of the subject and its constitution. Consequently, the repetition of desire in existence becomes itself indestructible and, furthermore, pertains to the impossibility of satisfaction. In psychoanalysis, the symbolic phallus as a significant of lack mediates the relation between the subject and its lack, which is a lack of the Other. In Kierkegaard, desire deploys itself existentially in seduction, in accordance with his sacramental relation to Regine and also to the dialectic of his literary characters, especially with respect to the erotic stages. The paper closely follows Kierkegaard's own psychoanalytic intuitions, ranging from the repetition of lack and the

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[1] Jacques Lacan, *The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power* in *Écrits*, p. 52.

[2] Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, p. 248. SKS 8, 347.

psychoanalytic relevance of the erotic stages to a desire of repeating the new and an ultimate desire that goes beyond the limits of a desiring subject.
Keywords: desire, repetition, anxiety, psychoanalysis, object a, Other.

Søren Kierkegaard spent his fairly short life with continuous writing and incessant brooding on his indestructible yet unrealized desire towards his eternal love object, Regine Olsen, whom he called "one unnamed"[3] in his last will – as if in a glimpse of what psychoanalysis means by *lack of being* – in his attempt to go beyond any mutual identification or complementarity between lovers. While love in all its polymorphic avatars, both conceptually and biographically, has been extensively dealt with in Kierkegaard's oeuvre, the desire that subtends it has rarely been approached[4], despite the thoroughly discussed erotic stages from *Either/Or*. Yet, desire is almost everywhere in Kierkegaard's registers of writing, from the longings and yearnings in the Journal, to his unsatisfied melancholic personas: from Faust to *Quidam*, from Ahasuerus to Johannes the Seducer and from the Merman and Don Juan to Socrates itself. And its weight protrudes even more so in his edifying discourses, where one cannot escape the weft of negative theology, philosophy of the unique (den *Enkelte*) and the desire to be desirable in eternity, to be unequivocally desired by God. It is nothing else than to simply desire the good and to desire God while emptying oneself through a peculiar *kenosis* that would render the human side of a such a longed-for *contemporaneity with Christ*, the one who chose to be desired as the son of Man. It is this *desire to be desired* that touches on a repetition of desire itself, beyond all consciousness of psyche, and that entails the psychoanalytic perspective of an unconscious and indestructible desire, deployed throughout existence in its utmost uniqueness. In other words, the Kierkegaardian

[3] *Apud*. Joakim Garff, *Kierkegaard's Muse: The Mystery of Regine Olsen*, pp. 245-247. Especially the fourth, elliptical draft of the dedication to *On My work as an Author* is truly engaging in a psychoanalytic perspective regarding the lack of being: 'One Unnamed, whose name shall one day be named, And will – "*be named*"'. Later on, the dedication was again changed in the same eschewing manner and transferred to *Two Discourse for the Communion on Fridays.*

[4] A notable exception is Carl S. Hughes's comprehensive essay, *Kierkegaard and the Staging of Desire*, which nevertheless focuses rather on Kierkegaard's theatrical and performance strategies concurring to his religious, than on the function of desire in the psyche and its declinations in existence and in writing.

ethical-aesthetic impossibility of repetition is overlapped by the impossible satisfaction of desire which vaults the original constitutive lack of psyche. What could surprise outsiders is that Regine is effectively a key to this vault – in both existence and eternity, as ostensibly declared by Kierkegaard himself.

In this short essay, I will approach the problem of desire in Kierkegaard by way of Jacques Lacan's view of the indestructible[5] desire, summoning the remainder which he calls *object a*, cause of desire, and, also, what this impossible satisfaction of desire presupposes beyond the dimension of the object. The dissatisfaction around the lack, *i.e.*, the precarity in any object of desire, thus engages for Kierkegaard a repetition in life and in writing, a working progress of what we can adequately call a "desire-unconscious". I will therefore address this slightly opaque constellation of the *desire-unconscious*, starting from the problem of lack that passes into seduction, engendering the travail of repetition proper. I will then pursue to considering the dimension of pain and anxiety within desire, in close affinity with what could be the object cause of desire for Kierkegaard, in order to finally conclude on the possibility of a desire beyond both the object and the subject, based on the contingency of love.

Regine and the Repetition of Lack

Far from being a precursor of psychoanalysis as such, Kierkegaard has nevertheless engaged intuitively and philosophically in many clinical stances with respect to melancholia, repetition, uniqueness and so on. Moreover, his strategies regarding the poeticizing of Regine, and the "mausoleum", created long before her passing[6], stand even today as solid

[5] Originally defined likewise by Freud, in close relatedness to the indestructibility of the Unconscious itself, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

[6] The biographer Joakim Garff astutely calls like this all the notes, correspondence and drafts that Kierkegaard collected in reference to "our own dear little Regine, who in a manner of speaking is dead" (*op.cit.*, p. 357). It was a peculiar collection of his own writings, put beside the rest of the Kierkegaardian corpus and which was to be burnt, but was ultimately sent to Regine after his death by his nephew Henrik Lund and kept by her for posterity: "Everything is found in a packet in her cabinet, in a white envelope with the inscription: 'About Her.'" Some months earlier, Kierkegaard had also placed in the cabinet his

proofs of his insight in the dynamics of *psyche* and their deployment in human existence (i.e., *ek-sistence*). At the end of a lesson from his XXth Seminar, *Encore*, dedicated to the Feminine as sexuality and as exception and, moreover, to what he calls *feminine jouissance*[7], Jacques Lacan states the following:

> In other words, it's no accident that Kierkegaard discovered existence in a seducer's little love affair. It's by castrating himself, by giving up love, that he thinks he will accede to it. But perhaps, after all – why not? – Régine too existed. This desire for a good at one remove (au second degré), a good that is not caused by a little a – perhaps it was through Régine that he attained that dimension.[8]

This non-accidental discovery and living of existence via Regine awakens a desire that aims the Other, which in psychoanalysis, and especially in Lacan, can otherwise be only an Other of lack, a "missing partner", or *Hétéros* as he himself calls this absolute difference; hence the lost object which becomes a vacuole in itself – the object *a* – and which, according to Lacan, causes neither more nor less than the desire of the subject around this void remainder of the desire of the Other. Kierkegaard knew that it was impossible to forge an encompassing theory and, least of all, a philosophy of desire, therefore he put it into act in his own existence and always in connection with the fundamental instances of his own living experience, mainly, his father, God as the Other and, perhaps most of all, Regine. Therefore, it is rather Kierkegaard as a non-philosopher (as understood by Jacques Colette[9], not against philosophy but putting existence and the lived experience of the *psyche* in existence before metaphysics), who is the vehicle of desire throughout his work, tightly intertwined with his own existence, *via* and *quia* Regine. As for her existence as such, to which Lacan's rhetorical question alludes, it remains a mystery, not only a historical and empirical

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Notebook 15 with its lengthy entry titled "My Relationship to 'her' Aug. 24th 49. somewhat poetical" (*op.cit*., p. 353).

[7] According to Lacan, the feminine jouissance is the experience of sheer uniqueness that bypasses the symbolic and phallic order. I will come back to it several times, particularly in the last part of my essay.

[8] *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX, Encore*, p. 77.

[9] Jacques Colette, *Kierkegaard et la non-philosophie, passim*.

one, acknowledged in the title of Joakim Garff's praiseworthy biography, that strives to reconstrue her life and emotions, but an enduring enigma that refuses the obvious symbolic discursive qualifications, pertaining indeed to the feminine uniqueness and its inclination to the other jouissance (Fr. *jouissance autre*[10]). One is always compelled to return to her mystery when treating desire in Kierkegaard, as in a somewhat ironical twist of repetition itself, involving the woman in flesh and blood, made famous in history, without whom the genius would have not put his own contradictions and symptoms alongside his unbreakable desire to be desired, an existential "transcendence"[11] to which Regine might have held a key. Lacan's rhetorical question and pun to Regine's existence (*ek-sistence*) marks precisely the mystery of this supplementary desire that only "one unnamed" could have instilled. But this "desire at one removed" (at its second degree if we are to literally translate it from French) already implies an exceeding of the object of desire. Therefore, a first paradox in desire arises, due to its impossibility to be destroyed which obviously means an impossibility to be fully attained: an object that causes desire (Fr. *objet cause du désir*) is repeatedly beset by the mystery of desire itself, linked to what Lacan calls the feminine *pas-tout* of the woman, thus allowing the possibility of the *jouissance autre*, an experience outside the phallic order in the midst of the repetition of desire. In fact, it is Regine's and not Kierkegaard's desire that reveals the lack (and the loss) in "the seducer's little love affair", encompassing this psychoanalytic function of desire, between jouissance and love, between the mechanisms of seduction and the unhappiness that they incur. Often associated with the already dead father as a sort of partner in eternity, Regine

[10] The other jouissance (also called supplementary or simply feminine by Lacan) is linked to the fact that the woman is not wholly into the symbolic and phallic logic of the signifier, in other words, that she is more open to the lack in the Other, and, consequently more apt to "enjoy" (Fr. *jouir*) the abovementioned missing partner beyond any objectual logic. Without getting into details, the proximity suggested by Lacan between some mystical experiences (of John of the Cross or of Theresa of Avila) and this supplementary jouissance is relevant in terms of its going beyond the "impossible sexual relation", fr. *Hors-sexe*.

[11] As in the transcendence of existence as such, pertaining to an infinite of interiority (*Inderlighed*) rather than to a fundamental ontology of being, as in the first Heidegger. Although desire in psychoanalysis is not infinite *per se*, its indestructible dimension functions as analogue to an infinite desire of the Other that lacks.

holds not only the place of an agalma which marks Kierkegaard's renunciation of the woman, including of her sexual position in order to fulfill his religious goals of a down to earth knight of faith, if I may put it like this. It is also – as Nicole Bousseyroux, a prominent Lacanian psychoanalyst, points out – a renunciation of marriage as such and by that an elevation to the dignity of an *absent partner*, making her ek-sist as nothing less than the indeterminate place of the Other[12]. It is a place which could not be inflected by way of the symbolic (*i.e.*, by what Lacan holds to be the *Name of the Father* as a symbolic function), due to the double curse (malediction of God during childhood and the rape through which Søren suspected he was conceived) that constituted the sinful melancholic co-existence of him and his father as an open pit – for as many as seven generations, feared the superstitious genius! It should attentively be observed that the place of the lack isn't the lack as such, a confusion that Kierkegaard is possible to have unwillingly perpetuated going as far as to overlap Regine in his last will with his dead(ly) melancholic and sinful father as source of all his "movement" – in life and in writing, one might add:

> That is my will, and that is what you have deserved, you our own dear little R., you who once with your grace enchanted and with your grief forever moved him who neither the world's flattery nor its opposition has up to now moved. Only two persons affect me in that way: my dead father, and then – someone else who is also dead: our own dear little R.[13]

The Woman – with capital W – does not exist for Lacan. Nor does the Name of The Father that would sustain a desire articulated to the law, but

[12] « Il y a donc bien un double refus, un double renoncement chez Kierkegaard : il renonce à la fois au mariage et au sexuel. Il renonce à Régine *et comme épouse et comme corps parlant*. *Mais ce n'est pas pour la perdre. C'est pour la faire exister*, comme étant religieusement liée à jamais à lui par ce qu'il appelle « un saut dans la foi » […] Ce bien au second degré pour lequel Kierkegaard sacrifie l'objet *a*, Régine comme objet cause de son désir, c'est quoi ? C'est le bien au second degré qu'est le partenaire absent. C'est Régine, la Fiancée éternelle, que Kierkegaard élève alors à la dignité du partenaire absent, auquel il se sent, comme à Dieu, religieusement lié à jamais. » (Nicole Bousseyroux, „Rencontres manquées avec le sexe. Clinique du partenaire manquant", *L'en-je lacanien*, 2010/ 2, no. 15, pp. 125-127).

[13] *Apud*. Joakim Garff, *op. cit*., p. 358.

only the debased father, whose sin is, according to the French psychoanalyst, Kierkegaard's sole heritage: "The father, the Name-of-the-father, sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law — but the inheritance of the father is that which Kierkegaard designates for us, namely, his sin." [14] Nevertheless, "our R" did exist in life as a desiring individual[15] who unconsciously evaded Kierkegaard's strategies to "poeticize" her, even despite the complicity of their staged encounters in Copenhagen while "innocently" and silently crossing paths several years after the rupture; and not in the least, she lead her life ethically alongside Fritz Schlegel and much to little dialectically for the Kierkegaardian "couture", despite his bizarre attempt to stage a meeting in the presence of her husband, had they both agreed. On the other hand, the mystery of her own love and desire for her ex-fiancé was apparently never extinguished by her long and apparently mostly uneventful life in marriage. Kierkegaard's desire for Regine as a woman apparently withstood, as pulsatile as ever, until the very last moments of his life, if we follow what little has remained from his conversations with his friend Emil Boesen on his deathbed. It is an *affair of seduction* that has thus lasted in eternity, neither quite as an erotomaniac delusion, nor as in Kierkegaard's overstated and narcissistic perspective of owning Regine[16] into eternity, but plainly as an encounter by virtue of the desire of the Other that insisted in both Regine's and Kierkegaard's differently repressed passions and lacks. Consequently, a reading of Kierkegaard's narratives of seduction in a psychoanalytic perspective becomes the next step of deciphering his insight and his strategies in shaping the psyche (and his own psyche) as desiring subject.

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[14] *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 34.

[15] Nicole Bousseyroux's somewhat exaggerated claim that Kierkegaard's affair with Regine proved the Lacanian inexistence of Woman (with a W) is not, of course, to be totally dismissed from a clinical point of view, but it is questionable whether Kierkegaard thought of the woman entirely outside a conceptual frame, notwithstanding the broodings of *In Vino Veritas* to which the author refers. (*Op. cit*., p. 128)

[16] Psychoanalytically speaking, this would mean owning Regine as a substitution for the lack of the Other, in an all-encompassing eternal phallic jouissance. Still, Kierkegaard's varying dialectic positions don't always support this interpretation and, anyway, a thorough diagnosis would be as useful as it is superfluous for my endeavor. Kierkegaard's diagnosticians didn't otherwise fare well with time.

Narratives of Seduction and Production of Desire

The overwhelming influence of Hegel and of idealist metaphysics impacted Kierkegaard's thought and many of his writings much more than one who simply browses through his discourse could comprehend, whether this is homiletic, confessional or strategically pseudonymous. Thus, the place of *desire* in Hegel's *Phenomenology* could not be of little interest for the young Kierkegaard who wrote *Either/Or* as an existential literary experiment, namely a Bildungsroman with Hegelian-like characters. While Vincent McCarthy has correctly pointed out the affinities of what Hegel called *Begierde* to define the most general form of self-consciousness with what Kierkegaard has functionally assigned as desire in *E/O*, he also listed the various Danish words that denote desire in all its polymorphic references, ranging from *Ønske* (the correspondent of the German Wunsch, used by Freud), *Lyst*, *Laengsel* to *Begjering* (etymologically linked to the Hegelian *Begierde*) and especially *Attraa*[17] "which is used by Kierkegaard as the strongest form of desire, sensuous or not."[18] It is clear that, even if the first Kierkegaard inherited a strong idealistic train of thought, he was never (not even in his first years) a thoroughly faithful Hegelian, trying rather to put the latter's categories and idealism essentially into existential thought and writing – just like Heidegger will strive to do, in his own fashion, approximately a century later by way of his fundamental ontology. Therefore, it is not the concept in Hegel's architecture in the *Phenomenology* that matters[19], but its existential deployment; yet what existential ambitus

[17] Vincent McCarthy, *Narcissism and Desire in Kierkegaard's Either/Or, Part One,* in *International Kierkegaard Commentary*. *Either/Or I*, vol. 3, ed. by Robert L. Perkins, p. 64 *sq*.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 65.

[19] Lacan praises Kierkegaard in his seminar on anxiety, precisely for having made a concept out of anxiety, showing the paradox that we can hold on to existence only by way of anxiety and thus conceptualize it; in fact, the etymological parenthood between concept (*Begriff* in German, *begreb* in Danish) and grip, grasp, handle – *Griff*, *greb* is more than obvious. This is of high importance for what I aim in this essay, since it can all very well be analogous in the case of desire, anxiety's inextricable companion in Lacanian theory and practice. "At the level of *embarrassment* stands what we shall legitimately call the *concept of anxiety.* I don't know if Kierkegaard's audacity in bringing in this term has really been taken account of. What can it mean other than that there is *either* the function of the concept as Hegel would have it, that is, the symbolic hold over the real, *or* the hold

and resonance of desire could there be without the experience of seduction? For all these reasons, one can easily conclude that *Attraa*[20] plays the main part in Kierkegaard's Bildungsroman and, consequently, in his existential "psychology", furbishing the three erotic stages alongside their Mozartian avatars in their seduction horizons. Let me then shortly revisit these Romantic biases of desire as seduction, in accordance with Kierkegaard's stakes and in repeating his own existential role as a "seduced seducer".

The three stages of desire (properly called the "immediate erotic stages", as if to suggest an *avant la lettre* basically psychoanalytic vibrancy) vaguely follow a Hegelian train of thought, from the *an-sich* of Cherubino to the *für-sich* of Papageno and *an-und-für-sich* of Don Juan. Yet, there is something opaque beyond this too harmonious dialectic and beside the perfect unity between inner and outer that the author A ascribes to Mozart's Don Giovanni. And Kierkegaard points through his Chinese boxes like pseudonyms, this opaque art (i.e., experience) of desire in the correspondence between from and matter in Homer, before introducing the three characters of dreaming, seeking and desiring desire:

> The poet wishes for his subject matter, but, as they say, wishing is no art; This is quite correct and truthfully applies to a host of powerless poetic wishes. To wish properly, however, is a great art, or, more correctly, it is a gift. It is the inexplicability and mysteriousness of genius, just as with a divining rod [*Ønskeqvist*], which never has the notion to wish [*ønske*] except in the presence of that for which it wishes. Hence, wishing has a far deeper significance than it ordinarily does; indeed, to abstract reason it appears ludicrous, since it rather thinks of wishing in connection with what is not present, not in connection with what is present.[21]

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that we have, the one anxiety gives us, the sole final perception and as such the perception of all reality - and that between the two, one has to choose?" (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X*, p. 333).

[20] According to Camilla Sløk, "the Danish word in Kierkegaard's text is *Attraa*, which the Hongs translate as "desire"; however, "attraction" might be a better translation. *Attraa* has an element of mutuality. Desire can be seen as an individual project, but to see desire as individual misses the point in seduction, at least as understood by Kierkegaard. To him, seduction is an act of attraction where both the (perceived) seducer and the (perceived) seduced are seduced by their mutual attraction towards each other" (Seduction, *Kierkegaard's Concepts, Tome VI: Salvation to Writing*, p. 18).

[21] *E/O*, *I*, p. 50. SKS 2, 57-58.

The gift of wishing or rather the gift of desire is consequently on the side of the object, already undermining the Hegelian dialectic and pertaining also to the idea of a production of desire, *ex nihilo*, an inner oriented analogue to divine creation. This unconscious production is where the process itself, animated by the mysterious gift, ensures the immortality of the artistic product, as in Homer. Putting aside the rhetorical connections to Kierkegaard's own existence and presence that are at work even here, in one of his most distanced critical stances, the hypothesis of a repetition of desire in creation and seduction can be grounded in this brief digression. A's clear reference is to a production of desire in art, as opposed to "abstract thinking" – not only German idealism but the epistemological one as a whole – for which wishing has no reference and is, plainly put, nothing outside knowledge, not even in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, where desire as self-consciousness is only a mark within the metaphysical system that doesn't belong as such to the subject's "mysteriousness and inexplicability". Moreover, the object and the subject are not only co-relative but are constitutive to each other in this present mysteriousness within the production, in order for it to be immortally seductive due to what apparently is a mere contingency: "good fortune, the absolute correlation of the two forces."[22]

Interpreting desire as a force that the subject produces in the contingence of life with regard to an Other ("form", in its cohesion with "subjective matter") allows a Lacanian scrutiny of this remarkably perceptive essay on desire as seduction – otherwise coherent with the psychoanalytic approaches from Freud's libido to Lacan's object a *cause of desire* and to the

[22] *Ibid*., pp. 49-50, SKS, 2, 57: "This correlation is so absolute that a subsequent reflective age will scarcely be able, even in thought, to separate that which is so intrinsically conjoined without running the danger of causing or fostering a misunderstanding. For example, if it is said that it was Homer's good fortune that he acquired that most exceptional epic subject matter, this can lead one to forget that we always have this epic subject matter through Homer's conception, and the fact that it appears to be the most perfect epic subject matter is clear to us only in and through the transubstantiation due to Homer. If, however, Homer's poetic work in permeating the subject matter is emphasized, then one runs the risk of forgetting that the poem would never have become what it is if the idea with which Homer permeated it was not its own idea, if the form was not the subject matter's own form."

defense when facing what he calls the *desire of the Other*. Thus, in its sixth seminar, *Desire and its Interpretation*, Lacan seeks to define his abovementioned desire-unconscious with reference to the object a, forging a new view of interpreting the circuit of desire in the constitution of the subject. Without getting into much detail concerning the tortuous dynamic of the well-known "graph of desire", between demand as need and demand as love and with respect to the lack of being and to the phallus as the signifier of lack, I will point out several occurrences that seem to be in close affinity with the Kierkegaardian narratives of seduction. The first one is the distinction, which according to Lacan philosophy was unable to articulate, between object of knowledge and object of desire.

> There are, on the one hand, objects that are supposedly situated in reality, in the sense that I have just articulated and there are, on the other hand, objects that are inscribed in the relationship between the subject and the object, a relationship that at least latently implies knowledge. When people claim that the object matures as desire matures, what object are they talking about? […]
> We have reasons to distinguish, on the contrary between the object that satisfies the desire for knowledge – the philosophical notion of which has been the fruit of centuries elaboration – and the object of a desire.
> It is owing to a confusion between those two notions that analysts have been so easily led to posit a correspondence between a certain constituting of the object and a certain maturing of the drive.[23]

Here, Lacan attempts to dispel the conceptual construction of the object within philosophy and later sciences, the *Cupido sciendi*, the desire to know in which the object and the subject have come together in a sort of "co-naturalness" during the history of Western thought[24]. The epistemological dominance was always presupposed by a certain position and choice, continues Lacan, which led precisely to the sacrifice of the individual's desire on the altar of the unbiased objectivity that led this quest inherited by all sciences from philosophy. It is not a critique of science or an anti-epistemological ruling of Lacan who would judicially deconstruct philosophy, but an effort to raise attention on the difference of psychoanalytic discourse and

[23] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation*, pp. 365-366.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 366.

practice, whose unprecedented architecture has nonetheless a lot of sources and roots in Western thought. Still, more precisely, Lacan denounces the epistemologically charged confusion between the object of knowledge and the object of desire that led to "a correspondence between a certain constituting of the object and a certain maturing of the drive."[25] Yet, there is no linear relation between the drives and the object of desire, despite the drives that accompany the partial objects – oral, anal, scopic, invocatory, the last two, not at all foreign to the erotic stages of E/ O, being in the realm of desire that bypasses demand. Lacan contends that the object of desire proper, which can only be his refiguration of the lost object, the object a, must be deduced by way of language, considering the subject of the unconscious enunciation (Fr. *énonciation*) which, differently from the subject of the relatively conscious utterance (*énoncé*), cannot be comprised in a discourse and needs to be therefore approached in its synchronic dimension. This brings me to the second point of convergence with Kierkegaard, that of the disappearance of the subject, the *aphanisis* (a concept borrowed from Ernest Jones, who used it in the context of the anxiety of castration[26]), which is not a simple vanishing, as long as the indestructible desire persists. In Lacan's words, "the subject can no longer get his bearings [*se saisir*] in desire starting at a certain moment. He is no longer [*il manque à être*]. It is this lack [manque] that encounters the phallic function."[27]

Now, to come back to Kierkegaard's apparently over discussed erotic stages, the Lacanian *aphanisis* bears not only a lot of similarities with the dreaming desire of the Page from the *Marriage of Figaro* but seems to fit the pattern of Freudian primary narcissism, as Vincent McCarthy passingly remarks[28]. And in terms of desire, Cherubino's dreaming *Tungsindig* and

[25] *Ibid*., p. 366.

[26] ἀφάνισις in its original Greek writing, it is used by Lacan also in order to articulate the phallus as a signifier of lack and, by dismissing Jones's theory, to show that woman and man cannot have a common denominator in their desires, precisely because of the different perspective towards the essential signifier *phallus*.

[27] *Desire and Its Interpretation*, p. 430.

[28] "The Page is intoxicated with erotic love, *tungsindig* as he dreams about what he has, *melancholsk* as he desires *[attraae)* what he possesses (EO, 1:78). (Interestingly, a similar phase is described in Freudian literature as "primary narcissism," by which the self-sufficient intra-uterine life or the life of the nursling is designated.)", Vincent McCarthy, *op. cit*., p. 66.

"infinitely deep" fullness indicates that there is no determinate object, not even an object that lacks, thus proving the Freudian intimacy between narcissism and melancholia – not necessarily a melancholic structure, but a position, like Freud's *Hilflösigkeit* of the small child, which Lacan defines as a defense from the desire of the Other, particularly acute in the cases of phobia[29]. I will quote this exceptional fragment, all the more so because Kierkegaard uses his both terms for melancholia, *Melancholi* and *Tungsind*, probably in order to emphasize the monolithic "ever-present" longing and "still quiescence", in whose narcissistic deepness the subject seems to fade away:

> Desire, consequently, which in this stage is present only in a presentiment of itself, is devoid of motion, devoid of unrest, only gently rocked by an unaccountable inner emotion. Just as the life of the plant is confined to the earth, so it is lost in a quiet ever-present longing, absorbed in contemplation, and still cannot discharge its object, essentially because in a more profound sense there is no object; and yet this lack of an object is not its object, for then it would immediately be in motion, then it would be defined, if in no other way, by grief and pain; but grief and pain do not have the implicit contradiction characteristic of melancholy *[Melancholi]* and depression *[Tungsindighed],* do not have the ambiguity that is the sweetness in melancholy. Although desire in this stage is not qualified as desire, although this intimated desire is altogether vague about its object, it nevertheless has one qualification – it is infinitely deep.[30]

The lack of movement while paradoxically desire functions in the Page's longing and contemplation is remarkably similar with the subject's commerce with the phallus that, according to Lacan, reveals precisely the being of the subject, metonymically brought into play: "Desire is the metonymy of being in the subject, the phallus is the metonymy of the subject

[29] "Finding himself in the primitive presence of the Other's desire as obscure and opaque, the subject has no resource, he is *hilflos*. *Hilflosigkeit*, to use Freud's term is known in French as the subject's 'distress. It is the foundation of what, in psychoanalysis, has been explored, experienced and qualified as 'trauma'." (*The Desire and Its Interpretation*, p. 17)

[30] *E/O, I*, pp. 76-77. SKS 2, 82.

in being"[31]. It is obvious that Kierkegaard couldn't have articulated the theory and the economy of the object and even less a dynamic of lack of being in the proper Lacanian meaning, linked to the signifier phallus and to the signifying chain. Still, this "desire-presentiment of itself" seems to be precisely an articulation of the metonymy of being in the subject, in so far as "the dream about what he has"[32] outlines a distress and even the lack in form of an object – as Moustapha Safouan put it in his commentary of Lacan's *Desire and Its Interpretation*[33]; a lack which causes the response of desire and also an infinitely deep anxiety, "without the ambiguity that is the sweetness in melancholy". On the other hand, the awakened desire of Papageno proves two lines of correspondence to psychoanalysis: firstly, what Lacan calls the retention of the object, in the sense that the latter becomes a sort of hostage of desire, marking a tearing of the object from the field of need – in the sense of the overlapping of need, demand and especially desire between the former two in the infant. Moreover, the cut in the imaginary object of desire leads to the castration complex, which, in connection to Kierkegaard's own seducer life and together with Don Juan's desiring desire I will approach in the next chapter. I believe that what I called the narratives of seduction, where desire is produced in order to state and also to defend oneself in its identity while still holding on to imaginary objects, conveying the indestructible repetition, can have the second point of Archimedes in Papageno's desire; this exquisitely anti-romantic fragment proves that Kierkegaard recognized the drama of separation and of entwining with the object beyond its indeterminacy as what makes the psyche come into existence:

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[31] *Desire and Its Interpretation*, p. 23. The relation to the phallus signifier is different with respect to male and female, as it inflects between being and having (Fr. *être et avoir*), under the menace of castration. Lacan's formulas, on which I will I not insist here are as provocative as they are clinically fit to express "the malediction of sex" through the re-reading of the famous Freudian *Penisneid* (*envy of penis)*: *Il n'est pas sans l'avoir* & *Elle est sans l'avoir*.

[32] *E/O, I*, p. 78. SKS 2, 83.

[33] « Le sujet manque à lui-même, oui, dit Lacan, mais ce manque est un manque particulier : manque en forme d'objet, l'objet cause du désir justement, désormais symbolisé par la lettre *a*. » (Moustapha Safouan*, Lacaniana. Les séminaires de Jacques Lacan*, vol 1, p. 129)

> The desire and the object are twins, neither of which comes into the world one split second before the other. But even though they came into the world absolutely coinstantaneously, and even though they do not have an interval of time between them, as twins generally have, the significance of this coming into existence *[Tilblivelse]* is not that they are united but rather that they are separated. The result of the separation is that desire is torn out of its substantial repose in itself, and as a consequence of this, the object no longer falls under the rubric of substantiality but splits up into a multiplicity.[34]

The Energy of Anxiety and the Desire of Repetition

This multiplicity split of the object, paradoxically functional in its very entwinement with the desiring subject, can already be interpreted in terms of the cut of the imaginary object, pertaining to the phantasy to which the desire is adapted – written by Lacan as $ ◊ a. Furthermore, Papageno's "seeking desire" can already be linked with castration and its conundrum, strategically hinted at in the interplay of seduction. But it is Don Juan's initially "absolutely qualified" desire and also, the relation between Cordelia and Johannes in *The Seducer's Diary* that interfere the main psychoanalytic points concerning the phallic order of desire and the anxiety that borders in the complex of castration, but also the self-castration with respect to the phallus[35], corresponding to Kierkegaard's own experience of the "second order good" that he was to gain by way of Regine. I will insist on the first one, because of its close ties to womanhood as exception despite the famous 1003 conquests.

Surprisingly for some, Don Juan is not a proper seducer, since "to be a seducer always takes a certain reflection and consciousness, and as soon as this is present, it can be appropriate to speak of craftiness and machinations and subtle wiles. […] therefore, he does not seduce. He desires, and this

[34] *E/ O*, *I*, p. 80. SKS 2, 85.

[35] Here, his identification with Farinelli is noteworthy. It happened, not accidentally, with a simple signature (the subject's most intimate mark that ek-sists in language), at the end of a letter to Emil Boesen where Kierkegaard requested *The First Love*, a play by Eugène Scribe.This early sublimation is very interesting from the clinical perspective of Kierkegaard's own ek-sistence together with his own first and only love within the mechanism of a substitution (*suppléance*) of Identity.

desire acts seductively."[36] It is the act of desire that epitomizes him as the third erotic stage, authentic in his immediacy made manifest by Mozart, and not the synthesis of the former two, not an illusory absoluteness of his desire based on craftiness and machinations. Through his irreflective acts, "he does not consciously seduce", to the extent that he is not at all ethically laden, to freely paraphrase Camilla Sløk's conclusions[37]. Namely, what makes him touch a sort of "pure desire" (with all due reservation to the romanticism in the syntagm) implies the fact that he is already exposed, in his immediacy, to the void of castration and to the full experience of desire as lack of being. That is to say he ek-sists beyond the interplay of seduction in an experience eccentric to the specular metonymy of Papageno and all the more so to the fixed identification of Cherubino, which were both caught in the abovementioned gap between utterance and enunciation. Don Juan is the desire itself in its indeterminacy and in ineffable repetition, it is a desire of enunciation in its Mozartian lyricism[38], one may say, hence the apparently lofty indifference[39] to the objects of seductions that Vincent McCarthy correctly notices. He rather puts himself in the alluring position of the phallus, in an almost feminine manner, confessing the *pas tout* – not whole as Lacan calls it – of his feminine "objects" and relating it to the possibility of the other jouissance, Still, he cannot access an experience totally outside the phallic, due to its overtly dramatical sensuousness, a demonic one that "hovers between being an idea and an individual" on the one hand, and to the

[36] *E/ O, I*, p. 98, SKS, 2, 102-103.

[37] "Kierkegaard relates reflection to ethics, stating that since don Juan is not using reflection, that is, consciously planning how to be seductive, he just *is* desire.", *op. cit*., *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, p. 22.

[38] The connections to Faust (the spiritual demonic as opposed to the sensual one indicated by Don Juan) and to Ahasuerus, especially in the Journal, are a theme in its own right. "It is interesting that Faust (whom I perhaps more properly place in the third stage as the more mediate) embodies both Don Juan and the Wandering Jew (despair). It must not be forgotten, either, that Don Juan must be interpreted lyrically (therefore with music), the Wandering Jew epically, and Faust dramatically." (*E/ O, I, Supplement,* p. 459. SKS 19, 94)

[39] Referring to Kierkegaard's approach of Don Giovanni, Vincent McCarthy goes perhaps a little too far in his attempt of proving the pervasiveness of desire and its impossibility to forge a dialectic, hypothetically assumed by Kierkegaard through an implicit acknowledgment of the incompleteness and inadequacy of A's theory. "Don Giovanni, of Mozart's opera of the same name, is the representative of desire. And yet his desire is not yet fully awakened, is not translucent. For the status of the object of desire is still very much in question, called into question by his indifference." (*op. cit.*, p. 67 sq.)

irrepressible law of continuing to desire and enjoying the imaginary satisfaction on the other. The champagne metaphor from the end of the essay, which goes strikingly beyond the significance that Mozart ascribed to the champagne aria, is Kierkegaard's abridgment of this kind of repetition of "sensuous" desire that dissolves itself in music resonating in the enjoyment of his lust:

> He dissolves, as it were, in music for us; he unfurls in a world of sounds. This aria has been called the champagne aria, and undoubtedly this is very suggestive. But what we must see especially is that it does not stand in an accidental relation to Don Giovanni. Such is his life, effervescing like champagne. And just as the beads in this wine, as it simmers with an internal heat, sonorous with its own melody, rise and continue to rise, just so the lust for enjoyment resonates in the elemental boiling that is his life.[40]

As Lacan puts it, Don Juan is a hysterical phantasy with the guise of seeking the knowledge of femininity in this "boiling" 1003 which for Kierkegaard becomes comic in life if related to a particular individual[41]. But in any case, Don Juan as individual, as well as Johannes are much more castrated than the dreaming and seeking seducers that designated the lack of being in a sort of holophrase (Cherubino) and also in the compulsion of multiplicity (Papageno). This can be expressed by the substantial anxiety that energizes *Don Giovanni*, a "hysterized" anxiety in order to avoid full despair and, moreover, to combust his "zest for life" and for womanhood:

> There is an anxiety in him, but this anxiety is his energy. In him, it is not a subjectively reflected anxiety; it is a substantial anxiety. In the overture there is not what is commonly called – without knowing what one is saying – despair. Don Giovanni's life is not despair; it is, however, the full force of the sensuous, which is born in anxiety; and Don Giovanni himself is this anxiety, but this anxiety is precisely the demonic zest for life.[42]

[40] *E/O, I* p. 134. SKS 2, 136.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 92. SKS 2, 97.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 129. SKS, 2, 131.

Kierkegaard's own (pseudo-demonic) strategy with regard to Regine seems to have been quite the opposite to the donjuanesque "zest for life", although its stakes in the field of desire must simulate the kind of seduction and abandonment that is stereotypically adherent to all of Don Juan's personas in literature in the largest possible meaning. If this hysterization proper to Don Juan (i.e., a hysteria of sensuousness if an analogy to the *hysteria of the Spirit* could be formulated) shows the hollow in symbolizing castration, then Kierkegaard's self-castration (*Supra*) evoked by Lacan is the other side of this energy of anxiety that made him poeticize and eternalize Regine by way of her lack as partner and as woman for himself. The pain of giving up the "sovereign mistress of his heart", as he called her in an intimate and equivocal eulogy at the time of the engagement, is already manifest when he is asking "a blind God of Love", without any particular name, if he should embrace her in writing or in the plain life of this world:

> You, Sovereign mistress of my heart [Regina], hidden in the deepest privacy of my breast, in my most brimming thoughts on life, there, where it is just as far to heaven as to hell – unknown divinity! Oh, can I really believe the poets' tales that when one sees the beloved for the first time one believes one has seen her long before; that all love, like all knowledge, is recollection; that love too has its prophecies, its types, its myths, its Old Testament in the single individual.
> Everywhere, in every girl's face, I see a trace of your beauty, but it seems to me that I would have to have all girls in order to extract *your* beauty from all of theirs; that I'd have to circumnavigate the earth to find that continent which I lack, and that the deepest secrecy of my entire 'I' nevertheless points to it as its pole;—and in the next moment you are so near to me, so present, so powerfully making my spirit whole, that I am transfigured in my own eyes and feel that here is a good place to be.… You blind god of love! You who see in secret, will you tell me openly? Shall I find what I am seeking here in this world, shall I experience the *conclusion* of all my life's eccentric premises, shall I *enclose* you in my arms – or does the order say: onward? Have you gone ahead, you, my *longing*; do you summon me, transfigured, from another world? Oh, I would cast everything aside to become light enough to follow you."[43]

[43] *Apud.* Joakim Garff, *op. cit*., pp. 48-49, SKS 18, 8-9.

This wonderfully crafted note gives us the measure of Kierkegaard's anxiety, alongside his equivocality between a "seeking desire" of a continent that lacks and a desiring desire "from another world", giving way to a turmoil in the atmosphere of this strive to "recollect forward" – assuming it can be related to the quasi-Proustian quests of the young man in *Repetition*. The mysterious continent was not to be that of female sexuality, the one sought and assumed by Freud as an enigma that surpassed his psychoanalytic efforts, since Kierkegaard castrated himself, giving up sexuality as well as marriage[44]. The Hamletian like dilemma, to marry or not to marry[45], is otherwise not solved, but bypassed with the recurrent metaphor of the thunderstorm in *Repetition*. One should not forget here that this specific regret (i.e., secular repentance) is not only the picaresque wisdom of life, but a direct a reference to Socrates[46], who is himself an apostate of desire against certified knowledge, but whose pure negativity is to be surpassed by an existential advent only possible in Christianity – this "indeterminate determination" and empty designation of pure being that sticks the human to repetition and dissatisfaction, much too necessary for experiencing what love is[47]. However, the first manuscript of *Repetition*, written in Berlin, ended

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[44] According to Nicole Bousseyroux's conclusion. *See Supra*, footnote 10. Lacan sees Kierkegaard, by virtue of the difference between recollection and repetition, as a precursor of Freud's *Wiederholungszwang* related to a symbolic, unconscious repetition (*Cf. Seminar on the Purloined letter* in *Ecrits*, p. 35).

[45] The ecstatic discourse of *Diapsalmata* is at stake with regard to a lot more than the "aesthetical validity of marriage", resembling in some respects a Shakespearean staged monologue with existential puns to Hegelianism and classical philosophy: "Hang yourself, and you will regret it. Do not hang yourself, and you will also regret it. Hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. Whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. This, gentlemen, is the quintessence of all the wisdom of life. **It** is not merely in isolated moments that **I,** as Spinoza says, view everything *aeterno modo* [in the mode of eternity], but I am continually *aeterno modo.* Many believe they, too, are this when after doing one thing or another they unite or mediate these opposites. But this is a misunderstanding, for the true eternity does not lie behind either/or but before it. Their eternity will therefore also be a painful temporal sequence, since they will have a double regret on which to live." (*E/O, I*, pp. 38-39. SKS 2, 47-8)

[46] *Cf. E/ O, I*, p. 613.

[47] "He starts out from the concrete and arrives at the most abstract and there, where the investigation should begin, he stops. The result he arrives at is actually the indeterminate determination of pure being: "Love *is*," because the addendum that it is longing, desire, is no determination, since it is merely a relation to a something, which is not given." (KW, 2, 46. SKS 1, 107) The Hong version is slightly different, as it translates *ubestemmelige Bestemmelse* by *indefinable qualification* (CI, p. 46).

with the young man's suicide[48] signalling, as Joakim Garff observes, that only a miracle would bring them back together and able to repeat their existence as partners, to transcend the hollow dialectic of interiority. I can thus argue that, while the three erotic stages in *E/O* summarize an incompleteness of desire, this is not only due to the impossibility within desire itself, but to the fact that there would be a fourth stage, intimately conjoined to Kierkegaard's existence and to his inabilities to follow a straightforward dialectic, but also to take leaps of faith because he was suspended between what he understood as the ethical and the so acutely desired religious. In fact, I should say that this fourth erotic stage marks the passing from the repetition of desire to a desire of repetition, of repetition as transcendence[49], where desire is no longer self-produced (self-produced by the self, to put it more accurately), but for which Regine finally becomes *a cause* and not only *an object of* or *in* the desire of the existential wanderer, among, let's say, other *mille e tre*.

Instead of Ending: The Desire beyond the Subject

Is there a final stake in the intricate and sometimes profusely opaque narratives of desire in Kierkegaard's production, a literature that is prone to the pain of existing? With respect to Regine, his unorthodox schemes, often spreading to the reconstruction of picaresque or legendary Romantic characters, seem to come to a halt as soon as he leaves for St. Croix to become "governess"[50] of the Danish West Indies, deriving Kierkegaard towards his

[48] *Apud*. Joakim Garff, *op. cit*., pp. 139-141. "The suicide was a more or less indirect message to Regine that if there should be any repetition of their relationship, then a miracle was needed, a divine intervention, which the book put more pointedly by saying it would have to be by virtue of the absurd – as happened in the case of Job who got everything back twofold." Garff links the revision of the text precisely to Regine's engagement to Schlegel.

[49] "Modern philosophy makes no movement; as a rule, it makes only a commotion, and if it makes any movement at all, it is always within immanence, whereas repetition is and remains a transcendence. It is fortunate that he does not seek any explanation from me, for I have abandoned my theory, I am adrift. Then, too, repetition is too transcendent for me." (*FT/ R*, p. 186, SKS 4, 56-7)

[50] In one of the conversations at Frederiks Hospital with Emil Boesen, Kierkegaard seems to hold on to his peculiar irony; while complaining about his everlasting Paulinian thorn in the flesh, he sarcastically expresses his fear that Regina could have become a governess,

extreme battle with the church. Still, he kept her not only in his mind but also as a "governess" of his, tellingly maintaining her erotic-seductive dimension perennial. The confusion in Kierkegaard's myriads of idiosyncratic strategies to keep Regine as his deity of love – from his construction of the Merman as the one who is really seduced by Agnes to their near collisions in Our Lady's Church or on their common routes and, finally, to his awkward request to Fritz Schlegel to mediate an intimate encounter and discussion with the soon to be "governess" – , is simply an incarnation of the impossibility to touch on the Other's enigmatic desire within the ambit of repetition; or, more conceivably in the dailiness of life, the impossibility to be wholly seduced by an Other while "discovering existence" in his love affair. This impossibility (i.e., the impossibility of a sexual relation according to Lacan but also an impossible achievement of a desire to be desired) always gives way to the rest, the vacuole that is object *a*, conditioning the subject but nevertheless causing his desire if elevated to a certain dignity[51] by the way of sublimation. Nevertheless, all these devices of "staging of desire" (if I were to assume Carl Hughes's title) in both *agape* and *eros* brought Kierkegaard to the self-castration which could allow him to confess this desire of the Other and Regine as its cause, as I have already concluded above. But could all this "staging" vibrate unconsciously beyond all theatricality in the relation with the Other as God, the only missing partner

relating it to her new statute as governess of the Virgin Islands. "How strange. The husband became Governor. I don't like that. It would have been better if it had happened quietly. It was the right thing that she got S [i.e., Schlegel], that had been the earlier understanding, and then I came in and disturbed things. She suffered a great deal because of me (and he spoke about her lovingly and sadly). I was afraid she would become a governess. She didn't, but now she is governess in the West Indies." (*Apud*. Joakim Garff, *op. cit*., p. 88).

[51] Lacan reinterprets the Freudian *das Ding* in the context of the movement of sublimation. "We have only one word in French, the word 'la chose' (thing), which derives from the Latin word "causa." Its etymological connection to the law suggests to us something that presents itself as the wrapping and designation of the concrete. There is no doubt that in German, too, "thing" in its original sense concerns the notion of a proceeding, deliberation, or legal debate. Das Ding may imply not so much a legal proceeding itself as the assembly which makes it possible, the *Volksversammlung*." (Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 43) & "Thus, the most general formula that I can give you of sublimation is the following: it raises an object - and I don't mind the suggestion of a play on words in the term I use - to the dignity of the Thing." (*Ibid*., p. 115)

that Kierkegaard would have been effectively able to love beyond the "love affair in discovering existence" and beyond the self-castration – the imaginary ablation of phallus, the mutilation needed to poeticize Regine? Maybe this kind of desire is a *desiderium* in interiority, one without a subject, anticipating the desire of the analyst[52] in a cure but also the absolute difference between the subject and the impossible Christian God, a "qualitative" difference yawning in the contingency of love.

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[52] *Cf.* Luis Izcovich, „Le désir de l'analyste et la différence absolue" in *Champ Lacanien*, 2015/ 1, no. 16, pp. 67-73. « Ce désir non métonymique est bien spécifique en ceci, je pose, qu'il est désir sans sujet. Autrement dit, non seulement une analyse permet de répondre à la question de savoir qui a désiré dans le sujet, non seulement elle produit un sujet désirant mais plus fondamentalement, quand il y a passage à l'analyste, elle opère une transformation par le passage d'un sujet qui désire à un désir sans sujet qui serait le propre du désir de l'analyste. » (p. 71)

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Book Review

Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*
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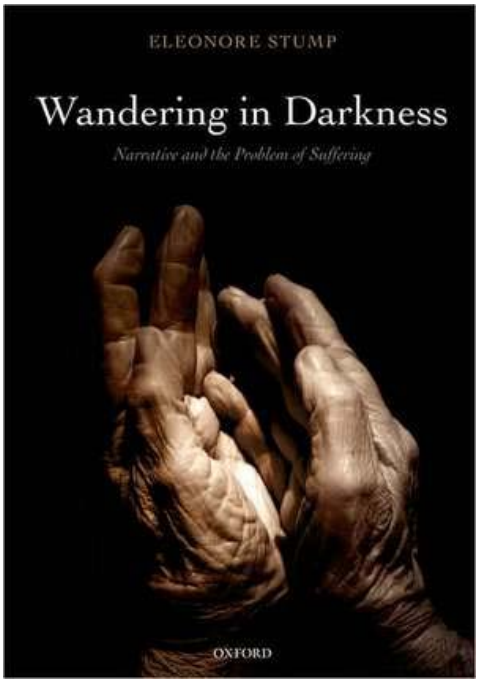

Eleonore Stump's impressive *Wandering in Darkness* is not a book about Kierkegaard. It is a book about what philosophers and theologians refer to as "the problem of evil." Nevertheless, Kierkegaard figures so largely in the book that a review of it is appropriate here. The problem of evil is typically characterized as the apparent incompatibility of evil with the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. That is, if God truly were both all-powerful and all good, God would not allow evil, or more specifically, the evil of human suffering. Since, atheists argue, there clearly is such suffering in the world, there cannot be a God, at least not as traditionally conceived.

More than a few important figures in the history of Western thought have argued that the existence of evil is not, simpliciter, incompatible with the existence of God. This was an issue of particular interest, as one might expect, to medieval philosophers, and Stump takes as the point of departure for her own grappling with the problem of evil the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Stump begins by explicating the Thomistic view of what human beings care about. "Everything Aquinas believes about God's reasons for allowing suffering," she explains, "depends on that general view. For Aquinas, the best things and the worst things for human beings are a function of relations of love among persons, so that for Aquinas love is at the heart of what we care about" (p. 21).

Stump then explains that her "defense" of the compatibility of the existence of God with human suffering, which she distinguishes from a theodicy, will develop a part of Aquinas's thought that Aquinas himself leaves undeveloped. Stump is an able theologian and there is much to recommend the book, including a very eloquent defense of non-propositional, and in particular, narrative, knowledge to a philosophical understanding of knowledge, as well as to a philosophical understanding of the person more generally. Like every other philosophical and theological attempt to solve the problem of evil, however, it is ultimately question begging. Believers may find it persuasive, or at least find parts of it persuasive, but atheists will be unconvinced. Also, despite its gargantuan size (over 600 pages), it is actually quite narrow in focus in that it takes on the more tractable problem of human evil while ignoring the less tractable problem of natural evil. Even less satisfying is the fact that Stump explicitly

rejects a consideration of such problems as the Holocaust. Some evils, she writes, with what would appear to be a complete absence of irony, are so great that "those evils are not fit subjects for the academic exploration of the problem of evil" (p. 16).

Stump's refusal to engage with one of the worst evils in human history sets the tone for the work as a whole. Despite its length and the obvious erudition of its author, the book is disappointingly superficial. Nowhere is this more apparent than in its treatment of Kierkegaard's account of the Akedah, or the Biblical story of the binding of Isaac. Stump takes this story as a paradigmatic account of human suffering, a suffering, in this case, that would appear to have been specifically orchestrated by God. She contrasts her interpretation of the story with what she asserts is Kierkegaard's, as it is presented in *Fear and Trembling*, explaining that she's using the story to "bring out the salient features of [her] differing interpretation." Stump acknowledges that she is not a Kierkegaard scholar and asserts that readers should feel free to take her interpretation of Kierkegaard's reading of the story of Abraham and Isaac "as only a Kierkegaard-like interpretation" (p. 260).

Unfortunately, Stump's interpretation of Kierkegaard's reading of the story of Abraham and Isaac is not very Kierkegaard-like.

Stump correctly asserts that Kierkegaard presents Abraham as caught in a dilemma. Where she errs is in her characterization of the dilemma. For Stump, as for so many other interpreters of Kierkegaard, Abraham's dilemma is that of choosing between his ethical obligation not to kill and God's command that he sacrifice Isaac. This dilemma, she observes however, is resolved, according to Kierkegaard by his infamous "teleological suspension of the ethical." That is, Stump argues that the ethical prohibition against the killing of an innocent child is overridden, according to Kierkegaard, by God's command to sacrifice Isaac (pp. 260-261).

Stump's interpretation of *Fear and Trembling* is not new. Kierkegaard himself uses the phrase "teleological suspension of the ethical" (*teleologisk Suspension af det Ethiske*) several times in the work. There are indications, however, that Kierkegaard does not mean to suggest that God's commands would ever conflict with genuine moral or ethical obligation. One doesn't have to be an expert on Kierkegaard to take issue with Stump's

interpretation of *Fear and Trembling*. In fact, one only needs to have read the introductions to Alastair Hannay's and Sylvia Walsh's translations of the work in order to understand what sort of "dilemma" it presents.

> The opening pages of each of the three problemata [explains Hannay] all follow a uniform pattern. First the ethical is defined as the universal, then a consequence drawn from this, followed by the observation that to accept this consequence is to concede that Hegel's account of the ethical is right. Thereupon our author claims that if Hegel's account is indeed right, then Hegelians have no right to talk of faith or to give credit to Abraham as its father, for according to each of the consequences in question Abraham must stand morally (even criminally) condemned. The three consequences of defining the ethical as 'the universal' are: (i) that the individual's moral performance must be judged by its underlying social intention; (ii) that there are no duties to God other than duties that are in the first instance to the universal; and (iii) that it is a moral requirement that one not conceal one's moral projects or the reasons one has for failing to carry them through. In each of the problemata Abraham is shown to infringe the principle of the ethical as the universal by failing to conform to the consequence, or implicated requirement, in question. Abraham acts as though there were a superior measure of moral performance that made social intentions irrelevant; he supposes himself to have an absolute duty to God that overrides the ethical defined as the universal; and he cannot reveal his intention to the parties concerned. (p. 28)

> Hegel defined ethical life (Kierkegaard uses a Danish expression, 'det Sædelige', which is a direct translation of Hegel's 'das Sittliche') [Hannay continues] as the identification of the individual with the totality of his social life. The basic idea behind an ethics of Sittlichkeit is that public morality, or the principles of social and political cohesion underlying any actual society, are expressions of universal human goals. If there is a human telos (goal) at all, that is where it finds expression. Thus, in order to become moral, the individual should conform to, and begin to want to act in accordance with, the principles of public morality that any State must be based on. 'The State', says Hegel, 'in and by itself is the ethical whole.' This is precisely the idea of the ethical as the universal which the problemata present as a hoop that Abraham must jump through in order to prove the morality of his action. Abraham consistently fails.

The reader of Sylvia Walsh's translation of *Fear and Trembling* will find a similar case made for dismissing the idea that Kierkegaard believed God's commands could ever conflict with a person's genuine ethical obligations.

> The general thrust of Protestant liberal thought from Kant to Hegel [observes C. Stephen Evans in the introduction] has been to understand genuine religious faith in ethical terms. Kant himself had closely linked true religious faith to the ethical life: "*Apart from a good life-conduct, anything which the human being supposes that he can to do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious delusion and counterfeit service of God."* When Kantian ethics is converted by Hegel to *Sittlichkeit* then the equation of faith with the ethical sets the stage for the triumph of Christendom and the identification of religious faith with social conformism. (p. xxix)

Evans correctly argues that "genuine faith," according to Kierkegaard, "requires an individual relation with God that is personally transformative." Faith in God "is not reducible to fulfilling one's social roles," though this faith serves as the basis, Evans observes, of a renewal of the self and of social institutions.

Only ethics in this specifically religious sense actually counts as ethics for Kierkegaard because it is only through a transformation of the individual that there is any hope of that individual's conforming their will to the substance of the moral law. Outside of Grace, guilt is too debilitating, too corruptive of the subjective determining ground of the will.

Hannay argues that Kierkegaard envisages an alternative to the Hegelian view of morality and that there is no conflict on this alternative view between what ethics requires and what God commands. Most Kierkegaard scholars agree that Kierkegaard does not equate ethics with *Sittlichkeit/Sædelighed* the way Hegel does. Kierkegaard arguably endeavors to make this clear himself in that he repeatedly qualifies "the ethical" in *Fear and Trembling* as "the universal." There is, in addition to these qualifications, at least one completely unequivocal reference in *Fear and Trembling* to "the ethical in the sense of social convention" (*Det Ethiske i Betydning of det Sædelige SKS* 4, p. 153/ *SV,* 2nd ed. III, p. 123).[53]

[53] Unfortunately, the allusion to Hegel is obscured in both the Hongs' and, more surprisingly, Hannay's own translation of the relevant passage. The Hongs have "[t]he ethical in the sense of the moral" (p. 59) and Hannay has "[t]he ethical in the sense of ethical life" (p. 88).

When Kierkegaard speaks of ethics in what is for him the genuine sense, he generally uses the hyphenated expression "ethical-religious." Ethics cannot ultimately be separated from religion, according to Kierkegaard. More importantly, ethics cannot be separated from Christianity, as is clear in, for example, Kierkegaard's ethical treatise *Works of Love.*

If there is a God, then the proper relation to God, according to Kierkegaard, is the individual's telos. Kierkegaard believes that an individual's relation to God entails an obligation to relate in a particular way to the rest of creation. This, in turn, entails that ethics is subsumed under religion, which means there cannot be any conflict between ethical duty and religious duty. The two are the same.

Not only is the logic of the above identification of ethical and religious obligation unassailable, but Kierkegaard has, again, left ample clues in *Fear and Trembling* to indicate that "the ethical" as it is presented there ought always to have quotation marks around it in that there is another higher, specifically Christian, ethics in the background, an ethics not unlike the one that Stump defends in her effort to provide an ethical justification for Abraham's apparent willingness to sacrifice his son.

According to Stump's interpretation of the Akedah, however, Abraham *isn't* actually willing to sacrifice his son. Abraham's faith, according to Stump, is that God won't ultimately ask him to do that. Stump argues that Kierkegaard, in presenting Abraham as torn between his ethical obligation not to kill and his religious obligation to follow God's command that he sacrifice Isaac, has misunderstood the true import of the Akedah. Abraham's situation, she asserts, presents no dilemma.

> If we read the episode of the binding of Isaac [she argues] in the context of the whole narrative of Abraham's life, in which Abraham's doublemindedness about God's goodness is manifest… then it is clear that God is not pitting his authority against morality in asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, as Kierkegaard apparently supposed. … God's demand for Isaac and the requirements of morality are on the same side in this story (p. 303).

"The faith that makes Abraham the father of faith," Stump asserts, "has its root in Abraham's acceptance of the goodness of God, Abraham's belief that God will keep his promises, and Abraham's willingness to stake

his heart's desire on that belief" (p. 304). That is, God has promised Abraham that, through Isaac, he will father a great nation, and Abraham persists in this belief even in the face of God's command that he sacrifice Isaac. Stump argues that God has repeatedly shown Abraham that he is trustworthy, hence ethics requires that Abraham accept God as trustworthy. That, according to Stump, is what ethics demands. There's no dilemma, no conflict between the requirements of ethics and God's command. What God commands is precisely what the moral law requires.

This contorted reading of the Akedah is made possible, again, only by Stump's assertion that Abraham believes that God will *not*, in the end, require the sacrifice of Isaac. That is, God's repeated demonstrations to Abraham that he is "trustworthy" imply that he does not really intend for him to sacrifice Isaac. Such a reading is profoundly problematic, however, in that it implies that Abraham views God as capricious. That is, Abraham takes the command that he sacrifice Isaac as genuinely divine, while at the same time persisting in the conviction, *not* that God will resurrect the slain Isaac, but that God will change his mind, that he will decide, in the end, that Abraham need not sacrifice Isaac. But can a capricious being also be "trustworthy"? Stump's reading of the Akedah is indeed creative and original. Sadly, however, it would appear that it is also ultimately incoherent.

Stump's confused characterization of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling,* and her own tortured interpretation of the Akedah, is revealing of the larger problems with *Wandering in Darkness*. Not only does Stump assiduously avoid what one could arguably call "the hard problem" of evil, which is to say, *natural*, as opposed to human evil, but she also succeeds in defending suffering only by a similarly tortured account of what it means for God to satisfy a person's "heart's desire." She claims, on the one hand, that a person's heart's desire, such as Abraham's desire to see his line continue through Isaac, is specific to that person, and, on the other hand, that the true desire of everyone's heart is union with God. If we broaden the definition of "God" to something like "the Good," then Stump is in good company in defining the true desire of everyone's heart in the way she does. The difficulty is with the argument that the satisfaction of *this* desire redeems the suffering associated with the thwarting of the other desires that, according to Stump, make us the individuals we are. Some theists might agree with this,

but it is far from clear that all of them would. Moreover, this argument isn't particularly original. The precise way Stump develops the argument is original, but the argument itself is not. It is the same, in the end, as the arguments of the medievals, though arguably less coherent.

Book Review

Thomas P. Miles, *Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the Best Way of Life. A New Method of Ethics*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, ISBN 978-1-137-30209-0)

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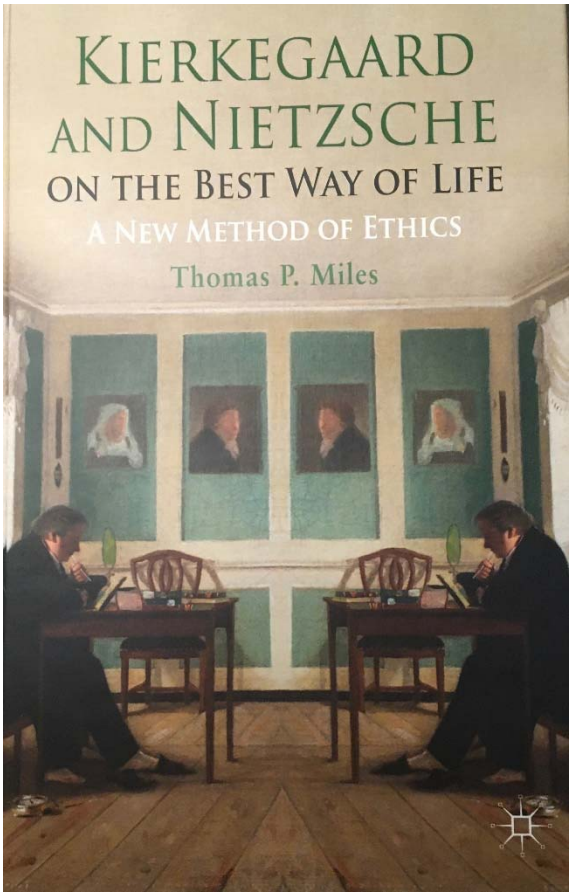

Thomas P. Miles's 2013 study *Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the Best Way of Life* is a tightly focussed discussion of two of existentialism's most important nineteenth century ancestors. His argument centres on one highly original and significant claim that is implied in the reference to 'the best way of life' in the title. For what Miles sees as the key contribution of both writers to philosophical ethics is their concern for what he calls ways of life. That is to say that their interest is primarily directed neither towards moral principles, as in deontological forms of ethics (most notably Kant), nor towards an account of the virtues, as in the work of many contemporary ethicists (including many Kierkegaard commentators). Instead, both the Dane and the 'good European' see the whole way of life in which principles and virtues are embedded and in which they, so to speak, come alive as what is truly primary in ethical discourse. This, Miles contends, provides a more adequate basis for developing a comparison between these two dissimilar twins than most of what has thus far been presented in the secondary literature. This, as he points out, has gone down a number of by now well-worn tracks. One such track is when Kierkegaardians attempt to show that their master has exposed Nietzsche's fallacies in advance of their being formulated; another is when Nietzscheans return the favour by showing how Nietzsche frees Kierkegaard's unhappy consciousness from the burden of a guilt-soaked Christianity; yet another is when it is claimed that they are both saying essentially the same thing. Miles's contention, however, is that while there are indeed a range of significant points of contact, there is no obvious winner or loser, nor should we fall for the illusion of identity. What they do have in common, though, and what differentiates them from the majority of other moral philosophers is, precisely, their concern for ways of life – even though Kierkegaard's option for a religious way of life and Nietzsche's proclamation of a life of sovereign creativity are clearly quite different. An important corollary of this claim is that this not only provides a point of view from which to stage a productive comparison of the two thinkers, it also identifies a contribution that they can jointly make to the contemporary development of philosophical ethics.

Miles, it should be said, is avowedly non-polemical, although he does not hesitate to expose the short-cuts and confusions taken by several previous commentators in their efforts to demonstrate the superiority of one or other

thinker or to assert their identity. Perhaps the most common of these is the confusion between the idea of 'resignation', as it is developed in *Fear and Trembling*, and faith itself. This is important because, seen from a Nietzschean point of view, if faith is not essentially different from resignation then it becomes a prime example of the kind of world-denying negative nihilism that is the target of so many of Nietzsche's polemics. At the same time, this identification misses the crucial point that Kierkegaardian faith, as illustrated in the figure of the knight of faith (also from *Fear and Trembling*), is both defined in opposition to resignation and also involves its own, albeit paradoxical, form of world-affirmation. The formula Kierkegaard=world-denying/ Nietzsche=world-affirming just doesn't get off the ground if we are respectful of what is actually said in the texts themselves.

However, to repeat, Miles is avowedly non-polemical and his primary aim is not to refute previous attempts to bring Kierkegaard and Nietzsche into dialogue nor to argue against the value of other approaches to ethics. Particularly with regard to the latter, he argues that a focus on ways of life will still have a place for, e.g., reflections on virtue. In these terms, his proposal is intended to be complementary rather than oppositional. Nevertheless, the inadequacy of focussing on virtue alone is shown when we consider that the same virtues can be present in radically different forms of life. For both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche would, for example, agree that honesty and courage are integral to the ways of life they wish respectively to recommend. But, clearly, they ultimately seem to mean very different things by them or, to put it to more accurately, these same virtues function very differently when they are contextualized in such different forms of life.

Although Wittgenstein is mentioned only on the last page, Miles's category of 'ways of life' seems to resonate with Wittgenstein's concern for understanding religious language in relation to the 'forms of life' in which it is embedded. Here as elsewhere, Wittgenstein's philosophical style meant that his insights and formulations were often suggestive rather than prescriptive and there is scope for debating just what these forms of life might be. In this connection it is perhaps a pity that Miles does not expand on the Wittgenstein connection – especially as he comments that he was 'one of the 20th century's best readers of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche' (p. 271). However, even without further development of the Wittgenstein connection, Miles's

study offers not only a distinctive but also a potentially fruitful approach to both authors that has far-reaching implications.

In the context of philosophy of religion, it makes entire sense not to start with the defining propositions of dogmatic and metaphysical claims about God. Although these cannot ultimately be avoided, fully to understand just what is being claimed requires taking account of what they mean in the whole way of life to which the religious believer (or *mutatis mutandis*) the devout atheist is committed. Failure to do so results in the all too common situation that believers and atheists are quite simply talking past rather than to each other. This is why, in my own philosophy of Christian life, I decided to start with a phenomenological reading of François de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, a practical guide to living the Christian life, rather than one or other doctrinal claim regarding the existence of God, the ontological insufficiency of the world, the corruption of human nature, or the necessity of a redeemer to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. (De Sales' spirituality, by the way, has many close analogies with what we find in Kierkegaard's own religious writings and he was himself a reader of the French 'master'.) Dostoevsky wrote of his literary aim as being to show 'the man in man' and he seems also to have believed that we can only approach the question of God when we have once understood what is truly essential to being human – something which is not as obvious as some have thought and, for each of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (as well as Dostoevsky) by no means identical with rationality. In other words, if a philosophical approach to religious belief rests on an inadequate phenomenological interpretation of religious life, then it will inevitably fail adequately to account for its purported subject-matter. In this sense, Miles's proposal is to be welcomed and affirmed.

At the same time, this does not mean excluding an eventual *Auseinandersetzung* with fundamental ontological claims. One example of where this matter is in Kierkegaard's discussion of the aesthetic way of life. Like many other commentators, Miles sees the essence of the aesthetic life as being the pursuit of enjoyment. However, I would argue that whilst this is undoubtedly one element in Kierkegaard's description of the aesthetic life, the aesthete's commitment to a version of metaphysical nihilism is no less important. This is flagged up when, in the essay 'The Rotation of Crops',

Either/Or's 'A' sets out his view that the origin of the universe is to be found in a blind and purposeless vortex. It would almost certainly be futile in a short review such as this to argue for the priority of 'way of life' over metaphysical commitments or vice versa, as if we could show that it was the metaphysical commitment that brought forth the way of life or, alternatively, the way of life that engendered the metaphysical commitment. What is the case is that there is a profound congruence between way of life and metaphysics and to understand one requires also understanding the other. It therefore follows that the analysis and interpretation of a given way of life is essential to understanding just what – humanly – is at issue in our metaphysical positions and that this is a point on which Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (and, I would add, Dostoevsky) were both pioneers. This, then, vindicates Miles's central claims – claims that have still to be given due appreciation in understanding the Kierkegaard-Nietzsche connection.

Varia

Suffering in Mental Illnesses. Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives upon Subjectivity, Corporality and the Abatements of Personal Autonomy*

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Abstract: Within this paper we will offer a short overview of the conceptual distinctions offered by three different contemporary philosophical perspectives, namely phenomenology, embodied cognition and applied medical ethics which prove to be useful in approaching the issue of suffering involved in mental illnesses.

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The aim of this article is to argue that the suffering experienced in mental illnesses can be expressed firstly as a "pathology" of subjectivity or as a difficulty occurred in structuring the subjective mundane experience. Secondly, we will attempt to explain how suffering in mental illnesses can be conceived as dysfunctionalities in the experience of the lived body's intermediation of the subject being-in-the-world. Finally, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate that suffering in mental illnesses also employs a social component, by affecting personal autonomy and by distorting the decision-making process of the sufferer.
Keywords: phenomenology, psychopathology, suffering, subjectivity, corporality, personal autonomy

Introduction

In approaching the phenomena related to suffering, philosophy and especially phenomenological investigations have highlighted the importance of subjective experience and have also emphasized the intrinsic connection between the concepts of suffering and subjectivity. This is one of the main reasons for which, during the last decades, much progress has been achieved in the research on subjectivity. Drawing on differing views upon subjectivity, offered by various philosophical traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and analytic philosophy of mind (Cairns, 1976; Tengely, 2004), the novelty brought forth, at the beginning of the third millennium, in Western institutional frameworks, such as the Center for Subjectivity Research in Copenhagen, consists in proposing more integrative views upon (inter)subjectivity, by carrying out rather interdisciplinary researches on the human subject and its relations to itself, to others and to the world. This type of study, which uses conceptual as well as methodological diversity, aims at achieving a comprehensive understanding of subjectivity. However, rapid advancement in this field of research is difficult to achieve, because any thorough research on subjectivity is constrained to eventually deal with its own limits in understanding the way in which human individuals reflect meaningfully upon and mentally structure their own experiences by using language. This *difficulty* of illustrating, in-depth, all the hidden elements of subjectivity is one of the reasons why, up to now, even in the Western academic milieu, still, only small, nevertheless relevant, steps have been made towards setting out theoretical milestones which could help in depicting subjectivity. Among these steps, one of the most important regards

acknowledging the fact that to approach subjectivity from a perspective which is tributary to a single field of research does not suffice for offering an accurate representation of subjectivity. To give only one example, among the limits imposed by purely philosophical approaches which aim at completely grasping subjectivity, the most persistent ones turn out to be what one could generically term "anomalies" in seizing, relating to, interpreting and expressing the meaning of human individuals' lived experiences. Paradoxically, not even philosophy is able to reach, only by itself, either the limits of subjectivity or the "pathologies" of subjectivity. That is why we strongly believe that more effort has to be brought in for emphasizing the need for various types of interdisciplinary approaches of subjectivity.

And it is even more so when we realize that, within the Romanian academic framework, approaching the topic of subjectivity, with its encompassed elements, from an interdisciplinary perspective, is only at the beginning.

In brief, the starting point of our inquiry is that a certain type of meaning, a rather feral, i.e. "in the making" (Richir, 1992) one is apparent even in mental illnesses. A literature review upon the subject demonstrates that in spite of all the benefits which could be entailed by interdisciplinary approaches which would link philosophy of subjectivity and the issue of its pathologies, has started to be in the public eye.

The latest breakthroughs of scientific researches in the field of mental disorders, which are tributary to unprecedentedly advanced procedures of mapping the brain in order to unveil the aetiology of mental disorders, have also reached the limits of their inquiry when touching the issue of subjectivity. Moreover, these scientific methods, which are due to late technological developments, could entail strong ethical, social and political shortcomings, by using rather objectified representations of the human individual. This type of purely scientific research, which wonders away from most humanistic approaches, usually assumes radical representations of a future within which the human being is treated similarly to a mechanism, thus being easily adjustable, according to an ideal type of an external (often bio-medical) protocol, in order to achieve its best functioning, or, even with the purpose of human enhancement. In brief, the fact that, up to now, very little is known about subjectivity and consciousness and, moreover, that one

cannot be sure that all can be strictly scientifically explained and "mapped", constitute reasons which could explain why, in the last couple of years, much effort has been spent in order to link philosophical research with empirical sciences, such as neurosciences, developmental psychology, psychiatry or clinical psychology. Even though inherent difficulties of assessing subjective constructs in empirical designs have been internalized both by philosophers and by empirical scientists, the premise which connects an entire philosophical scene which follows the thematic thread of the Husserlian "lived" experience of subjectivity with empirical perspectives on psychopathology consists in a *belief* that only such a combined phenomenological approach could lead to an exhaustive understanding of what allegedly enters the sphere of mental illnesses. Our study which aims to emphasize the relationship among suffering caused by mental illnesses, subjectivity, corporality and autonomy, by explaining how suffering involved in mental illnesses affects the structuring of one's mundane experience, the (mis)perceptions of one's own body and the abatement of one's decisional autonomy rallies with the above mentioned interdisciplinary researches.

The phenomenological perspective upon the psychiatric object

A series of questions that concern especially the field of psychiatry understood in its double sense - of *science* (more precisely of clinical neuroscience), respectively of *pragmatic medical discipline* (more precisely of medical practice) delimits today a whole philosophical debate that concerns several questions regarding the way of conceiving symptoms and signs of mental phenomena considered abnormal. Therefore, the first question that arises when we look at the current status of the field of psychiatry could be formulated as follows: is it sufficient for the signs and symptoms of mental illness to be identified and/or understood by disregarding an assessment of the nature of consciousness or subjectivity? An adjacent question concerns the way in which current science (neurosciences, but also contemporary psychological approaches) conceives consciousness and/or subjectivity: is an objective conception of consciousness and subjectivity, respectively, appropriate?

The next question, which arises from the previous question, concerns the extent to which it may be useful in both psychiatry as a science and in clinical practice to observe and formulate appropriate distinctions concerning the phenomenal or experiential field of each individual patient and to what extent these distinctions may constitute fundamental conditions necessary for the classification, research and treatment in the field of psychiatry.

Another question, which obviously depends on a positive answer to the first two questions, involves an interdisciplinary theoretical position because it addresses how philosophy might contribute and be useful in understanding and classifying abnormal mental phenomena. To put it more precisely, the question would be: what and how could philosophy be "put at the service" of psychiatry as a science and as a medical practice alike?

In the light of this last question, a new direction is emerging in the researches focused on the relationship between phenomenology and the experience of suffering caused by mental illness, which proposes a more precise delimitation of the field of psychiatry. That is why this direction places the idea of a "psychiatric object" (Parnas, 2013) as the central concept of the debate related to mental suffering.

A precise definition of the notion of psychiatric object is provided by Ivana Markova and Germán Elías Berríos. Abnormal mental phenomena, that is disorders of experience and expression (symptoms, signs, behaviours, suffering and altered existential patterns) are constituent elements of what could be generically called "psychiatric object" (Marková and Berrios, 2012). If the whole configuration of the psychiatric context involved and still involves the attempt to transform into objective elements of knowledge and to categorize by a forced leap singular subjective experiences, the notion of psychiatric object proposes a return to the phenomenal foundation of mental illnesses. The notion of psychiatric object launched from the field of philosophy, respectively of the subdomain of epistemology, tries to solve the problem of translation that occurs in any psychopathological description. This problem is synthesized by Parnas by describing the illicit passage that psychiatry as a field of medicine presupposes, from a subjective experience (that is an experience lived in the first person) of a patient, an experience expressed, most often, in a singular manner, in behavioural and/or discursive structures unique to specific categories of symptoms and signs that are

expressed in terms of the third person, in an attempt to extract, from that experience, "objective" information that can be understood and shared for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment and/or research (Parnas, 2013, p. 270).

Certainly, such theorizations, which are supported by either ontological or epistemological approaches related to the notion of psychiatric object, have at least a chance to enrich the contemporary picture of psychiatry currently understood rather as clinical neuroscience, if not the ambition to fully reconstruct the essence of research related to the field of psychiatry.

This type of theorizing starts from the awareness of a stagnation, if not of a stalemate, in the current psychiatric research, understood as belonging entirely to the clinical neuroscientific disciplines. The new approaches try to bring to the forefront of research questions about the nature of the "mental realm", respectively about the general principles/ultimate causes of signs and symptoms of experience and expression disorders and questioning the implications of the current knowledge process in the field of psychiatry. (Parnas 2013, p. 270). Moreover, another requirement of this new direction of approaching the relationship between philosophy and psychiatry is the need to operate with precision some distinctions in the phenomenal and experiential field of suffering caused by mental illness. These distinctions are considered to be fundamental conditions for the classification, treatment and research of mental illness. That is why the use of interdisciplinary tools created from the perspectives offered by psychology, phenomenology, philosophy of mind and ethics applied to the medical field is the only viable way to repair the shortcomings of current psychiatry.

Jaspers' Perspective on Psychopathologies

This trend of "rediscovery of psychopathology" is deeply dependent on the first systematic description of the anomalies of mental phenomena offered by Karl Jaspers in his work *General Psychopathology* published in 1913. This work, published in the years Freudian psychoanalysis established itself, advocates the inclusion of philosophical approaches, especially phenomenological, respectively of systematic explorations of the experiences and subjective perspectives of each psychiatric patient,

proposing a certain type of methodological pluralism in the field of psychiatry, extending psychiatric research beyond what happens in the brain to investigate the correlations and causes of processes psychic in relation to the biological processes that take place in the brain, thus overcoming the "somatic prejudice" that reduces all psychic processes to interactions between elements of a somatic nature (Jaspers, 1963, p. 18).

Moreover, Jaspers proposes a fluid, fluctuating, and changing description of consciousness as a mutually interdependent and inter-penetrable unit, denying both its static and atomized nature, which does not manifest itself in separable fragments. "Conscious psychic life is not just an agglomeration of separable and isolated phenomena, but presents a total relational context which is in constant flux and from it we isolate our particular data in the very act of describing them." (Jaspers, 1963, p. 58) Numerous phenomenological approaches are positioned along the lines of this holistic approach, focusing on the form of human subjects' experiences, rather than the static content of feelings, and therefore the phenomenological method can be useful in describing how phenomena occur in certain contexts, overcoming the dualism between the psychic realm and the somatic realm. Jaspers is the one who analyses the phenomenological method as a framework for approaching psychic anomalies, demonstrating that for any approach to psychic pathologies, a thorough understanding of patients' subjective experiences is critical and, therefore, self-descriptions and communicating their personal representations, as well as the careful observation of behavioural expressions can be vital tools for psychiatry.

> So, in phenomenology we expect to account for every psychic phenomenon, every experience met with in our investigation of the patient and in his own self-description. In no circumstances should we rest satisfied with a general impression or a set of details collected ad hoc, but we should know how to appreciate every single particular. (Jaspers, 1963, p. 56)

Observing the distinctive nature of mental illness, he states that "it introduces a whole new dimension in which the incompleteness and vulnerability of human beings and their freedom and infinite possibilities are themselves a cause of illness," (Jaspers, 1963, p. 8) Jaspers recommends to psychiatrists that at least at a certain stage of their relationship with the

patient, should suspend any explanatory or therapeutic ambition in order to be able to fully dedicate themselves to the observational and descriptive task. (Parnas, 2013, p. 272).

For that endeavour, a part of contemporary phenomenology as well as some researches in analytic philosophy emerged from Jaspers' philosophy tried to prove that the human subject's use of language and expression not only hint towards the most concealed elements of subjectivity, but it might be as well relevant in grasping certain pathologies of subjectivity. Therefore, the patient's subjective perspective, as well as the spontaneous, uncontrolled expression of his experiences, may be indications of anomalies in the sphere of subjectivity and may become relevant for shaping a diagnosis of mental disorders. Observations related to the phenomenal field of patients can be translated into pertinent distinctions for both etiological and therapeutic approaches in the field of psychiatry.

Contemporary psychiatry has generally focused on the precise identification, respectively on the "objectification" of the individual experiences of patients in the form of a noticeable symptom. However, the totality of patients' experiences cannot be reduced to well-defined and articulated symptoms or pure signs, but it has an irreducible and singular horizon of meaning. In order to be able to adequately understand the suffering of psychiatric patients, respectively the implicit or pre-reflexive contents that symptomatic personal expressions presuppose, the phenomenological method aims to suspend, on the one hand, the presuppositions assumed at the level of the common sense both regarding the nature of consciousness and, in counterpart, of its "altered" states and, on the other hand, to put in brackets the psychic-somatic dualism of the nature of the human being.

Embodiment, Disembodiment,

Hyperembodiment. New approaches of psychopathology

The philosophical question of the mind-body dualism that enjoys a long tradition of theoretical discussions seems to be a very useful tool in understanding the phenomenology of certain psychiatric illnesses. An entire trend, that emerges both from psychology and from philosophy, is today

using philosophical distinctions, respectively a few critical distinctions inspired by the phenomenological tradition such as object body (*Körper*) - subject body (*Leib*) difference both for the advancement of today's research in psychopathology and for a more thorough conceptual understanding of embodiment, disembodiment and hyperembodiment.

Critical phenomenological distinctions, such as object body (*Körper*) - subject body (*Leib*) - dichotomy coined by Merleau-Ponty in "*Phenomenology of perception"* (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) between the body that we, as human beings pre-reflectively live (lived /subject body-*Leib*) and the physical body that we perceive ourselves and that can be perceived by others (object body-*Körper*) - seem to be able to offer alternative perspectives upon the aetiology of mental illnesses and, thus, to provide new conceptual instruments that could be useful in conceiving mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, depression or anorexia as pathologies of subjectivity and/or disorders of embodiment rather than treating them as pure disturbances occurred in the brain circuitry or as neurobiological dysfunctions. Moreover, drawing upon the original work of Varela and colleagues (Varela et al., 1991) where embodiment is described not only as a process of "embedding of cognitive processes in the brain circuitry, but also to the origin of these processes in an organism's sensory–motor experience in relation to its environment", two other related notions, namely that of disembodiment and of hyperembodiment, have been spotlighted as useful not only in identifying and setting up the limit between mental normality and pathology, but especially in describing subjective experiences of symptoms in mental illnesses. Thus, deriving from the phenomenological distinction between the lived or subject body (*Leib*) and the physical body (*Körper*), and inferring based on the related distinction between body schema and body image, several authors elaborated a questionnaire addressable to psychiatric patients which seizes their subjective experiences related to their situation, namely their bodily (self-)perceptions and dynamics and processes and also anomalies in their fundamental self-awareness (Moeller P. et al., 2005). Administering the questionnaire to patients suffering from different psychopathologies revealed several core disturbances with regard to bodily (mis)perceptions in certain mental pathologies.

If general, normal internalization of the bodily experience is, usually, interrupted only by somatic illnesses, injuries, extreme fatigue, clumsiness or other bodily necessities, which disturb the implicit common perception of one's body capacities. In mental illnesses, the subject-body is deprived of its main trait as basis of the person's relation to the world, i.e. of a medium ensuring and facilitating the human subject's experience of being-in-the-world. For psychiatric patients often, "the body that they are" becomes "an object that they have", and on which they are dependent and which they are able to control only to a certain extent (Fuchs, 2021).

Part of the suffering experienced in the case of schizophrenia is caused by a disruption in the embodied involvement in the world, caused by the very fact that one's own body becomes an object of exclusive attention, of conscious thinking and ultimately generates a hyperreflexive sequencing of mental processes which divides usually unperceivable bodily processes and places them in the foreground of perception. This overcrowding of fragmented objects become disturbing and requires the need to somehow reorganize this incoherent collection. A possible response to this kind of suffering lies in the patient's attempt to reorganize "over the course of time, these noncontextualized fragments by emerging delusions that provide a new but rigid coherence of the perceptual field by sacrificing some features while preserving others." (Fuchs, 2009, p. 572)

Ethical dilemmas in approaching mental illnesses. The case of schizophrenic pregnant women

Yet another type of suffering involved in the case of schizophrenia is related to the loss of autonomy caused also by the impossibility of assuming one's own corporality and hence proper embodied relationships with the others. This issue of disembodiment, as well as the loss of autonomy create even more difficulties for schizophrenic pregnant women.

Even though ethical issues revolving around the medical care of patients suffering from psychiatric illnesses was a correlative part of the incipient discussion regarding respect for autonomy within medical practice, yet, small steps in approaching the ethical dilemmas regarding the decisions

concerning reproduction in the case of women suffering from mental illnesses were made only towards the end of the 1990's. What the end of the XXth Century brings forth in the ethical analysis of psychiatric patients is a systematic discussion of the complexity of issues involved by the cases of women suffering from mental illnesses. Moreover, while ethical implications of human reproduction in the case of non-psychiatric patients had, by that time, already been approached, the ethics of medical practice regarding reproduction in the cases of psychiatric patients had not yet been established by the beginning of the new millennium. To be sure, the ethical dilemmas entailed by reproductive will of women suffering from mental illnesses are extremely complex, not only because this type of illnesses distorts the patients' decisions either before and during pregnancy, or even after giving birth, but also because mental illnesses enchain a whole range of difficult psychological, biological and social implications, as well.

The emergence of ethical debate regarding reproduction in the cases of psychiatric patients could be explained by the exigence to address the extreme vulnerability of the patients suffering from schizophrenia who were confronted with the need to make any reproductive decision. Therefore, 'respect for vulnerability' represents, as such, an ethical type of approach, for it takes into account both the objective perspectives on the patient's frailty and the subjective perception upon her/his own suffering. The aim of this kind of approach is to bring in balance the medical protection of the patient with her/his empowerment to gain autonomy (Dudzinski, 2006).

Among mental illnesses, schizophrenia represents the ultimate challenge with respect to ethical care of the patient, and, therefore, the results of all ethical debates around this illness could well be used as an ethical milestone to be adapted in the medical approach of other psychiatric illnesses. Moreover, the status of schizophrenic patients is relevant mostly because of its constitutive vulnerability (Dudzinski and Sullivan, 2004) caused both by the intrinsic aspects of their illness, and by the social or economic status determined by the nature of their suffering.

Thus, the schizophrenic patients suffer not only because of the psychological and biological and implications of their disease, which impedes them from breaking loose from the effects of the illness, or even from overcoming them, but they are also socially affected, as their level of

autonomy is highly reduced by their condition. Therefore, the starting point of most of the studies dealing with ethical issues concerning medical conduct in the case of schizophrenic patients consists in approaching the question of their autonomy in decision making and action. If everyone is able to agree that, in all cases of schizophrenia, the process of decision making is impaired, yet, what makes the autonomy of the schizophrenic patients so elusive is the fact that it does not affect all patients at the same degree, nor does it impact them at any moment in time. The most expressive statement regarding the schizophrenic patients' autonomy describes it as "chronically and variably impaired" (McCollough et al., 2002). If, today, decision-making concerning reproduction implies major ethical concerns for every prospective parent, this type of deliberation becomes even more troublesome in the cases of persons suffering from schizophrenia. That may well be the reason why even though most ethical dilemmas concerning schizophrenic patients revolve around their reduced decision-making capacity, a whole lot of other empirical studies and review articles have focused on various issues ranging from family planning and abortion requests to prenatal, intrapartum, postpartum care and parenting problems. However, even though these empirical researches are taking into account, altogether, the psychological, the biological and the social consequences of this type of mental illness (Miller, 1997; Nilsson et al., 2002; Seeman, 2012), certain of the above-mentioned issues have not been, until recently, fully covered from an ethical point of view. To give just one example, an ethical framework for the intrapartum management of patients with major mental disorders was only freshly formulated (Babbit et al., 2014). A general requirement in medical ethics asks for the most adequate solution to the conflict between the imperative to respect the patients' autonomy and the obligation both to help and to protect the patient from harm. If even non-psychiatric patients may sometimes be prone to making decisions which risk, in the same way as other, to be against their own interest(s), thereby endangering their own health, schizophrenic patients, and, even more so, pregnant schizophrenic women, are subject to perilous decisions. This kind of extreme vulnerability imposes to doctors a type of ethical approach which partially differs from their usual response to cases of decisional competent patients. A high level of decisional competence imposes physicians a total respect for patients'

decisions regarding their own condition and treatment, whereas in the case of schizophrenic patients, who manifest a reduced level of autonomy, it rather becomes advisable to act in such a way as to protect them from any possible harm caused by their choices. For that reason, the idea of assisted decision making was proposed both as an alternative to paternalist medical action, and as a guidance for improving the patients' decisional capacity. For example, assisted decision making was framed as a critical tool to be used in cases of mothers experiencing bad vibrations because of the pregnancy. Moreover, in medical ethics literature, assisted decision making is mentioned as the only solution for avoiding paternalism (Coverdale, 2004). As it focuses on reversible impairments, besides counselling, it includes problem solving strategies, communication skills training, education, medication as well as other types of psychosocial interventions, all leading to the improvement of patients' decisional capacity. Yet another type of decisional intervention, used whenever neither assisted decision making, nor the medical improvement of this capacity are not feasible options, as it happens, for example, in the case of psychotic denial of the pregnancy, is represented by the surrogate decision making (Coverdale, 2004, p. 662). This type of decisional intervention takes either the form of substituted judgment, or as a kind of reasoning which follows the standard of the patients' best interest. Nevertheless, patient assent cannot be eschewed, by no means, in the situation of surrogate decision making (Dudzinski and Sullivan, 2004). Any intentional protection of any patient who does not have the necessary capacity to make competent medical decisions from her/his non-autonomous medical choices is rather advisable to remain the last resort solution, for it represents a form of weak paternalism on behalf of caregivers (Dudzinski and Sullivan 2004, p. 479). Schizophrenic patients' requests for abortion imply critical ethical dilemmas and, therefore, need to be very carefully considered by doctors, by always taking into account their decision-making capacity, their genuine preferences and also the contingencies of each case. In medical ethics literature, one of the cases considered emblematic for psychotic denial of pregnancy is that in which the patient's decision to terminate the pregnancy has not been respected by the doctors because, irrespective of the fact that they agreed with the patient, this decision was not acknowledged as autonomous (Dudzinski and Sullivan, 2004; Dudzinski,

2006). Thus, even if the patient's decision to abort might have been well considered to be in the patient's 'best interests', the doctors ignored this medical standard due to the fact that the prerequisites of such a decision were not fulfilled and, therefore, the woman's decisional competence was affected.

Amidst the complex configuration of ethical issues involved in cases of psychotic patients, yet another dilemma occurs. It concerns the way in which the foetus is affected by the actions carried out by the schizophrenic pregnant women based on their prior decisions either to continue to take antipsychotic medication during pregnancy or to refuse prenatal medical care. A first ethical implication regards the moral and, at the same time, the general medical status of the foetus. Generally, only viable foetuses, which reached an age of 24 weeks, are to be, by default, considered as patients (McCollough & Chervenak, 1994). However, there are cases in which mothers bestow on the foetus the status of a patient even before the 24 weeks limit, thus, even though the foetus is being considered pre-viable. For, as soon as the foetus is considered as patient, both doctors and the pregnant women have ethical obligations toward the latter.

Due to the complexity of ethical issues surrounding cases involving both mental illness and pregnancy, considerable progress has been made in the last twenty years. On the one hand, a general ethical framework to guide decision making in the management of pregnant schizophrenic patients has been created based on the empirical data regarding schizophrenia and pregnancy (McCullough, 2002). On the other hand, in approaching ethical issues in cases of psychotic patients, the value of cooperation has been useful in structuring a relational ethics, which opposes a prior framework in which the conflict of rights or obligations is salient (Seeman, 2004).

Conclusion

We have tried to show the importance of concepts and distinctions emerged from the phenomenological tradition for elaborating new types of endeavours able to substantially contribute to the knowledge in the field of psychopathologies. Moreover, we have tried to demonstrate its usefulness in creating new methods, either speculative or empirical, able to assume the ideal of helping the attempts of scientifically decoding mental illnesses.

By depicting some of today's most important trends from a rather comprehensive, humanistic conceptual framework and by offering an alternative perspective upon the status of the patients' suffering from mental disturbances, we have attempted to emphasize the need for treating them as active human subjects. These new types of research, namely phenomenology of mental illness, embodied cognition and applied medical ethics, aim at improving the social integration of persons who suffer from psychopathologies. By assuming that in treating mentally ill persons one has to deal with a human *subject* worthy of respect and not with a completely passive subject, these types of approaches could also be relevant for the improvement of the doctor-patient therapeutic relation in the case of mental illnesses.

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