

Decision, betrayal, and faith: Kierkegaard's commitment and loyalty to true faith

Siobhan Marie Doyle¹

Abstract:

Søren Kierkegaard rejects the Kantian argument that the universal demand of ethics is the highest claim upon the

Inscriptions

– contemporary thinking
on art, philosophy and
psycho-analysis –

<https://inscriptions.tankebanen.no/>

Correspondence: Siobhan Marie Doyle,
siobhanmariedoyle@gmail.com

Section: Academic articles

Received: 6 June 2019

Accepted: 27 June 2019

Published: 1 July 2019

Financial statement: The scholarship
for this article was conducted at the
authors' own expense.

Competing interests: The author has
declared no competing interests.

How to cite: Doyle, Siobhan Marie.
“Decision, betrayal, and faith:
Kierkegaard's commitment and
loyalty to true faith.” *Inscriptions* 2,
no. 2 (2019): 45.

Copyright © 2019 Doyle. This is an
open-access article distributed under the
terms of the [Creative Commons
Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (CC
BY). The use, distribution or
reproduction in other forums is
permitted, provided the original author(s)
and the copyright owner(s) are credited
and that the original publication in this
journal is cited, in accordance with
accepted academic practice. No use,
distribution or reproduction is permitted
which does not comply with these terms.

individual. Whilst his Christian existentialism focuses on existence as ethical existence, within his existential framework the highest level of existence is the religious. Kierkegaard makes a distinction on this level between Religiousness A, or the last stage before faith; and Religiousness B, true Christianity. This essay explores the movement from religiousness A to B, and questions the location of the actual transition point, the boundary zone of humour. Since, for Kierkegaard, the divine is both immanent and transcendent, the fluidity of this boundary zone opens up the possibility that religious transition entails a double transcendence. This essay suggests that the highest point of Religiousness A is a movement to a certain form of the divine, whilst the absolute movement to Religiousness B is the reclamation of true faith.

Keywords: Kierkegaard; ethics; God; faith; Christianity

One of Kierkegaard's many goals, throughout the course of his authorship, is to confront the clergymen and systematic philosophers who, he argues, are betraying the Christian ideal by means of diluting the demand of faith: the reduction of faith to morality. The Danish Christians are also under constant attack for either deciding to accept faith as morality; or for simply not deciding, and thereby blindly following the dictates of popular morality. One of Kierkegaard's arguments in *Fear and Trembling* is that faith is being sold “at a bargain price” by offering a counterfeit in its place. This betrayal – declaring that the universal demand of ethics is the highest claim upon us – presents Christians with a dilemma with regard to the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac: Abraham's decision to obey God is ethically indefensible, and yet he is celebrated as the father of faith. In terms of *Fear and Trembling*, the decision to see religion within the limits of reason alone (ethics) is a betrayal of true faith. For Kierkegaard religion within the limits of reason alone (Religiousness A), does not relate to true faith (Religiousness B).²

¹ UCD and Saint Nicholas Montessori College of Ireland.

² Søren Kierkegaard argues that the difference between the levels of Religiousness A and B is that at the level of religiousness A, the individual is still operating within the limits of reason: thereby describing, explaining, and arguing for the existence of God. Religiousness A, as the objective perspective, is not however, the level of true faith, it is the last stage before true Christianity. The true Christian, who has reached the level of religiousness B, has gone through a transformation process, where his own will has been transformed into the will of God. This individual has an inward (or subjective) way of *knowing*, he now relies on the faculties of emotion (passion), intuition, imagination, and *faith*—as opposed to the

Kierkegaard's ethical level of existence: the betrayal of true faith

Throughout the course of his authorship, Kierkegaard argues against the idea that the universal demand of ethics is the highest claim upon every individual. Whilst he regards the ethical life to be a more elevated existential level than the aesthetic life; he regards religiousness B as the highest level of existence. What is curious to discover is that the ethical structure of Kierkegaard's deliberation II in *Works of Love* relates very closely to Kantian ethics.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant makes it clear that the moral law, or the good will, is the highest object of reason. For Kant, the "Good Will," like "Neighbourly Love" for Kierkegaard, is good without qualification. Kant describes the Good Will, as a good that shines like a jewel, but by its own light. He describes it as something that has full value in itself. Kierkegaard's argument in *Works of Love* is that while neighbourly love itself is infinite and eternal, it can only be made comprehensible to reason through the formulation of God's love into words (the command to love). The broader view of secular ethics presented by Immanuel Kant in his philosophy of morality – the idea that morality is too difficult for human beings without divine assistance – seems to have captured Kierkegaard's attention. His affirmation of Kantian ethics, in terms of the recognition of the problems associated with man's inability to conform to morality's demands (and hence the need for religion)³, is however coupled with Kierkegaard's whole-hearted rejection of what he sees as the Kantian reduction of religion. That is, the reduction of religion to morality, and faith to reason: the idea that true faith is nothing more than a pure *moral* faith in God.⁴ So, Kierkegaard, whilst affirming certain aspects of Kant's moral philosophy, also rejects the notion that all relationships with God simply require obedience to the moral law. For Kierkegaard, the limitation of faith to reason is a betrayal of true faith

In deliberation II (A, B, C) of *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard presents the concept "neighbourly love" (ethical love) in a way that seems to relate to the Kantian concept of the "Good Will." The problem is that whilst Kierkegaard sees duty as loving practical action; he also sees loving duty as a matter of conscience: which means, that it is also a direct or a personal relation to God. So, what are we to make of Kierkegaard's ambivalence towards Kantian ethics?

Kierkegaard's ambivalence towards Kantian ethics can be summed up as follows:

In positive terms

- A) His concept of "neighbourly love" relates closely to Kant's concept of the "Good Will" and,
- B) he praises Kant's ability to recognise the fact that morality is too difficult for human beings without divine assistance.

In negative terms

Kierkegaard wholeheartedly rejects what he sees as Kant's attempt to reduce religion to ethics and faith to reason. This is because he sees this reduction as the loss of God which he wants to make explicit.

Kierkegaard's problem with Kantian ethics is that within this framework the concept of God is derived from the moral law; which makes Christian faith synonymous with reason. This also means that the Kantian concept of God is reduced by being limited to the moral law. Contrary to Kant's view of God being embedded within the framework of the moral law; Kierkegaard's argument is that because faith is a paradox (God as both immanent and transcendent) it could never be fully grasped by reason. According to him, the paradox of faith can also be grasped

objective perspective, where 'knowing' remains dependent upon on sense perception and intellect/reason. Kierkegaard's distinction within the concept of Religion (Religiousness A and B), enables him to identify two distinct religious viewpoints:

- 1) The objective religious perspective/communicable = Christendom (Hegel);
- 2) The subjective religious perspective/incommunicable = The life of faith (Kierkegaard).

³ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (New York: Harper & Row Press, 1960), 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*

in another way – that there is an absolute duty to God: or, that there is a relation to God that is above and beyond the ethical.⁵

The Kantian reduction of faith to reason presents Kierkegaard with a twofold problem, firstly: although Kant's ethical theory nominally recognises God as the highest principle; his ethics is implicitly secular in terms of his assertion of human autonomy which entails that human reason is the highest or the absolute principle. Thus, one could argue, that what concerns Kierkegaard is that Kant's ethical theory projects "a loss of God that has not yet become explicit."⁶ The second problem that arises within the confines of the Kantian ethical system, is that the particular can never be higher than the universal: which means that the subjective or personal aspect of faith is completely eradicated. Even the individual who, being human, steps outside of the universal due to moral weakness (in terms of sin) has no higher court of appeal for his ethical failure beyond the ethical itself.

In short, there is no room for exceptions within the realm of the universal, which means that: i) there is no direct or personal duty or relation to God, and, ii) the individual who steps outside of the universal due to moral weakness (in terms of sin) has no higher court of appeal for his ethical failure beyond the ethical itself. In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard argues that without a higher court of appeal, a higher scale of value, or different form of truth – being precisely the telos of the ethical – then all sinners are lost. His argument and concern is that, without the possibility of the paradox of faith, all that can exist in the world is an objective (moral) form of faith. If faith, as objective faith, is all that exists in the world then true faith has never existed in the world – which amounts to a betrayal of faith, the reduction of true Christianity to Ethics.

Kierkegaard's reflection on the nature of true Christianity endeavours to release faith from the constraints of the moral law (first/secular ethics). What makes Kierkegaard's Christian ethics a form of second ethics – one that can deal with the manifestation of sin – is precisely that it allows for the propriety of the sinner to have recourse to *God's grace*, or God's unmerited mercy.⁷ The message that is embedded in this larger Christian perspective is: that the object of true faith is a loving God. A God who, in his supreme greatness (as immanent and transcendent) can be in a relation with the individual either i) indirectly through loving duty and conscience (the transformation of the eternal), or ii) directly through true faith (the single individual as the particular stands in an absolute relation to the absolute).⁸

Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialism focuses on existence as ethical existence; but ethical existence, as Kierkegaard argues, is the stage before the highest level of existence. At the furthest point of the ethical – resignation or religiousness A – Kierkegaard's single individual can make the decision to take a leap beyond Kant's metaphysics of morals. Contrary to the Kantian view – of an objective or rational form of faith – Kierkegaard defines faith as a paradox. According to him, true faith is an infinite or a religious passion; "a second immediacy" or a transformed spontaneity that emerges in the individual after ethical reflection.⁹ According to Kierkegaard, it is through the power of the infinite passion of love that the individual relates outwardly to the other as the neighbour (ethical), inwardly to the spirit (religiousness A), and directly to the God of transcendence (religiousness B). The highest level of existence, according to Kierkegaard, is the religious level: Religiousness A & B – it is here that the sinner is transformed through the experiences of repentance, forgiveness and God's love. It is at the highest existential level – religiousness B – that the individual receives God's grace, and ultimately experiences the joy of salvation: which is the particular's absolute unity with the transcendent God – and this, for Kierkegaard, is the recovery of true Christianity.

⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 97.

⁶ Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling* (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 122.

⁷ George Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Crisis of Faith* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 95.

⁸ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 85.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

Kierkegaard's religious level of existence: the decision to move beyond ethical existence

It is true to say that, for Kierkegaard, the individual who decides to embark upon the path to the absolute truth must begin this journey by embracing and living a life of civic virtue. Having chosen to embrace and live a life of virtuous action, Kierkegaard's ethical man may eventually face a twofold problem. This problem specifically relates to the ethical man who understands, from an objective perspective, the value and the importance of moral action. The first part of the problem is that this man, the one who makes decisions and accepts responsibility for his actions, is constantly faced with the overwhelming implication of the freedom of choice. This freedom entails the requirement of (right) reason as the proper foundation for all of his decisions or choices. He knows that living ethically entails making rational choices, but in order for these rational choices to be good ones, he needs to approach every situation with the attitude of a judge:¹⁰ as one who listens to conflicting or varying points of view and then interprets the facts "according to clearly defined and appropriate principles."¹¹ What this means is that the man who chooses to live his life on the level of the ethical faces perpetual ethical challenges. The second part of the twofold problem that faces the individual living his life on the level of the ethical is that while the ethical life begins with the practice of the civic virtues (external/objective); the incomplete nature of the ethical process may eventually become apparent to this individual. The problem is that the ethical individual may become dissatisfied with this mode of existence when he recognises the fact that ethical judgements are continuously subjected to: conflicting opinions, varying perspectives, involvement (cultural, political, religious), and human error. Which means that these judgements really do not (in themselves) provide him with the final, or absolute certainty that he is seeking.

The individual at the level of the ethical may come to the realisation that human consciousness, as finite consciousness, is itself a continual work in progress; and this why it can never achieve completion (or perfection) and so is not capable of providing him with the final, or absolute, certainty that he so desperately desires.¹² It is at this exact point in the life of the ethical man, that another existential crisis may be experienced. Kierkegaard's Judge William identifies the nature of the ethical man's crisis, and he offers this solution:

Only within himself does the individual have the objective toward which he is to strive, and yet he has this objective outside himself as he strives toward it. That is, if the individual believes that the universal human being lies outside him, so that it will come to him from the outside, then he is disorientated, then he has an abstract conception, and this method will always be an abstract annihilating of the original self. Only within himself can the individual become enlightened about himself.¹³

What Kierkegaard's Judge is saying here is that the objective truth that the ethical man desires, can only be discovered if he is prepared to turn his gaze inward; that is, if he is prepared to change his perspective from the objective to the subjective viewpoint. For Kierkegaard, it is only through this change of perspective that the ethical man comes to see and feel the root – the universal principles within – that connects him to the absolute truth. It is the power or force of this experience that enables the individual to understand that the ethical does not originate outside of the self, but is instead "within the self and it bursts forth from this depth."¹⁴ This change of perspective from the objective to the subjective enables the individual to see that in truth the ethical possibilities that are open to him throughout his life lie within him as actualities: that is, as stable, eternal principles which come from the spirit and are grounded in the love of God.

¹⁰ R. Z. Friedman, "Kierkegaard: First Existentialist or Last Kantian?" *Religious Studies* 18, no. 2. (1982): 161, 167. Friedman writes that "In Kierkegaard morality, which is essential in his view to the individual's passage to the truth, binds choice and reason together."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹² Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 184-198; Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 79; Adi Shmüeli, *Kierkegaard and Consciousness* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 35.

¹³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or II* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987) 259.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 257. See also Shmüeli, *Kierkegaard*, 36.

Kierkegaard's Judge indicates that the ethical man undergoes a certain kind of transition at this existential point. He explains that the individual only comes to truly know himself by choosing to be truly ethical, and when he finally chooses the truly ethical self he is then "in the process of actualizing himself"¹⁵ (the actualization of the ideal self). He argues that when the ethical individual reaches this critical point, his duty is no longer an external one, his duty now lies within himself.¹⁶ This inward movement is the first movement towards true Christianity.¹⁷

Kierkegaard's author Climacus supports the idea of the individual's transformation within the ethical level. He states that while the non-dialectical individual transforms the world, he himself remains untransformed because he never has the dialectical within, as it is always outside of him.¹⁸ What this means is that while the transformed aesthete appears outwardly to have changed, inwardly he remains unchanged. Climacus' argument is that while the "essential existential pathos" is essentially related to existence; to exist essentially means to exist inwardly where the highest action is suffering or infinite resignation.¹⁹ So, it is only through the recognition of the twofold problem at the level of the ethical and the process of the ethical struggle itself, that the outwardly ethical man becomes truly ethical, and this, I believe is the first transition to religiousness A.²⁰

The transition that the individual experiences on the ethical level is only possible when he realises that the universal is actually within him.²¹ It is only through the power of this experience that he comes to see and feel the root that connects him to the absolute truth.²² It is this transition – the unity of the self with the essential truths: a unity within *being* itself – that could be seen as a certain kind of transcendence.²³ It could be argued that while this movement takes place within immanence, it involves a certain kind of transcendent movement in the sense that it is a transition that takes place on the cusp, or on the boundary zone, between the highest level of the ethical and religiousness A. The trajectory of this transcendence from the finite to the infinite is one where the self as self-consciousness (through the ethical struggle): i) recognizes the eternal within, ii) painfully struggles to loosen its ties with the finite world, iii) turns to the infinite within, and iv) desires to become one with the spirit. Within this unity, which may be only a *momentary* one, the self is no longer conscious (in terms of self-consciousness) but is now the self, united with his true self as spirit. While this transition within immanence happens in a moment this experience can be repeated over, and over, again. The individual in finite time now finds himself existing on the, freely chosen, level of religiousness A.

Religiousness A and B: faith

In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard's *Johannes de Silentio* refers to the individual who exists on the level of religiousness A as a knight of infinite resignation.²⁴ His belief is that the possession of true faith requires two movements: firstly the movement of infinite resignation (religiousness A), and then the movement, or the leap, of faith (religiousness B).²⁵ Kierkegaard's author *de Silentio* states that in infinite resignation, the individual gives up what he most values in

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 259-260.

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 256. See also Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 129. Kierkegaard's inward turn at this point seems to herald the limit of ethics and the starting point of the inward turn in religious terms. The limit of ethics is clarified in Kierkegaard's ethical work, *Works of Love*. See also Sharon Krishek, "Two Forms of Love: The Problem of Preferential Love in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6, no. 4 (2008): 595-617. Here, Krishek acknowledges the limit of the ethical in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, and sets about challenging this limitation by reconciling it with the freedom of Kierkegaard's "double movement of Faith" in *Johannes de Silentio*'s [Kierkegaard's] *Fear and Trembling*; cf. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 139.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* II, 259. The twofold problem: i) the overwhelming implication of our ethical choice, ii) incomplete nature of the ethical process.

¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 388.

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 387, 176-177. Here Climacus [Kierkegaard] states that "all essential knowledge is essentially related to existence. Only ethico-religious knowledge has as an essential relationship to the existence of the knower."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 388.

²¹ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 261.

²² Shmueli, *Kierkegaard*, 36.

²³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 113; *Either/Or* II, 257-259; *Postscript*, 79-80 (n.), and 387-388 (n.).

²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 97. See also C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 138.

²⁵ This explanation relates closely to Climacus' description of religiousness A and B in the *Postscript*. See Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 494-495.

the world, and then reconciles himself to the pain of this loss. Kierkegaard's Climacus refers to this process of resignation as the edifying aspect of religiousness A, and he describes it as the annihilation of the individual "by which the individual puts himself out of the way in order to find God."²⁶ In accordance with Climacus' view, *de Silentio* states that "resignation does not require faith, for what I win in resignation is my eternal consciousness (unity with the infinite moral principles: an immanent awareness of myself²⁷) and that is a purely philosophical movement."²⁸

For Kierkegaard, infinite resignation (A) is seen as the last stage before true faith (B).²⁹ In *Fear and Trembling* his author uses the biblical character of Abraham for a twofold reason: 1) to explain the process of the double movement of faith, and 2) as an example of the knight of faith. In terms of the double movement of faith: as a knight of infinite resignation Abraham is prepared to painfully sacrifice what he most values in the world, his son, and thereby obey God's command. As a knight of faith he trusts by virtue of the absurd (that which transcends our intelligibility or reason) that God will return Isaac to him to love and protect in the future (the ethical). As a man of faith, Abraham truly believes that in the end everything will work out well, on the basis that all things are possible for God.³⁰

Kierkegaard's author *de Silentio* argues that the knight of faith exemplifies true faith. This individual undergoes the first movement of infinite resignation (immanence), and then by taking the leap of faith (transcendence) makes the second movement into the absurd. "All that can save him is the absurd; and this he grasps by faith."³¹ Whilst the fall-out of Abraham's faith is the suffering and the pain of not being understood, Kierkegaard's author tells us that through the power of his faith he also has the joy of regaining everything that he lost in resignation.³² Kierkegaard's *de Silentio* states that it is through this double movement that the knight of faith delights in the world as one who has learned to appreciate life through loss.

Through the story of the trial and tribulation endured by Abraham, Kierkegaard's author is able to argue that the paradox of faith is: that the single individual as the particular is higher than the universal.³³ What this means is that the individual at the level of religiousness B, who, "having been subordinate to the universal as the particular, now by means of the universal becomes that individual who, as the particular stands in absolute relation to the absolute."³⁴ This is indeed the transformation of the knight of infinite resignation into the knight of faith. Before fully examining the radical transformation of the individual at the highest level of existence, it is important to consider the relevance of the transitional phase of humour as a boundary zone.

The boundary zone of humour: the transition to faith

What is curious about the boundary zone of humour is that Kierkegaard's authors do not make it definitively clear whether this boundary zone lies between the ethical and the religious (A & B), or between the religious level itself in terms of religiousness A and B, or between both. So there are three possible locations for the boundary zone of humour:

²⁶ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 497; c.f. *Fear and Trembling*; see also Søren Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses, a selection* (London and Glasgow: Princeton University Press, and Augsburg Publishing House, 1944), 151-157.

²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 77. Kierkegaard's *Johannes de Silentio* says that the movement to resignation is a solitary and painful one, and he states: "what I win is myself in my eternal consciousness, in a blessed compliance with my love for the eternal being." He also states that "my eternal consciousness is my love of God [...] resignation does not require faith, but it requires faith to get the slightest more than my eternal consciousness, for that [more] is the paradox."

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

³² *Ibid.*, 139.

³³ *Ibid.* 84.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85; *Postscript*, 508-509.

- 1) Between the ethical and the religious level;
- 2) Between religiousness A and B;
- 3) Between the ethical and religiousness A; *and* religiousness A and B.

What these options open up is the possibility of a *double transcendence* in terms of faith. The idea of a double transcendence is based upon the fact that, for Kierkegaard, the divine is seen as both immanent and transcendent.³⁵ It could be argued that, when the Kierkegaardian boundary zone of humour is located between the ethical and religiousness A (infinite resignation), a certain kind of transcendence (eternal consciousness) takes place at the highest, or divine, point of resignation. It is true to say that the problem here is that this “supposed” transcendence takes place within the realm of reason, but it is also true to say that it is a movement from one existential level to another: that is, from the level of the ethical to the level of religiousness A. When the boundary zone is located between religiousness A (infinite resignation) and B (faith), there is no doubt but that this movement is one of transcendence, this is because this movement requires the individual to take a leap of faith from one realm to another: from the realm of being, to a realm that subsists beyond reason’s limits.³⁶

Interestingly, while the movement from religiousness A to B is clearly the leap of faith, it is a movement which takes place on the same existential level. It seems to me that the fluid nature of the boundary zone of humour helps to support the notion of a double transcendence. Let us consider the fact that *Johannes de Silentio* states that because humour reflects upon itself, it can never move beyond the sphere of infinite resignation.³⁷ Infinite resignation however borders both the ethical and religiousness B, and this is why I wish to argue that within the sphere of resignation (or religiousness A), it is possible for humour to be the boundary zone between: 1) the ethical on one side of resignation, and 2) religiousness B on the other side of resignation. What this means is that it is possible for humour to be the boundary or *transition* zone (albeit two very different forms of transition) between the ethical and religiousness A; and between religiousness A and B.

Johannes de Silentio makes it perfectly clear however, that the passion of humour is radically different from the passion of faith. We are told that the man who possesses the passion of faith is neither an ironist nor a humourist but is something still higher: he is the man who having reached the limits of infinite resignation is now ready to make the final movement: the paradoxical movement of faith.³⁸ It has already been stated that Kierkegaard’s own treatment of this existential sphere indicates that the boundary zone on which humour lies does not have to be treated as a fixed point within a rigid system. C. Stephen Evans writes that:

Humour is not a “slot” in a lock step of existential positions, but a possibility with a “range” [...] therefore it is perfectly proper to discover humour both at the beginning *and* at the end of religiousness A. It attaches itself to the religious life as a whole.³⁹

So, Kierkegaard may be pointing to two different forms of transcendence: one at the beginning of infinite resignation and the other at the end; and in this sense, that he may be pointing to two different types of transcendence: i) eternal consciousness,⁴⁰ or “the movement to infinity,”⁴¹ and ii) true faith. Both forms of transcendence relate directly to Kierkegaard’s description of the dialectic.⁴²

³⁵ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 96-97. Here Kierkegaard’s author tells that “prior to faith there is a movement of infinity [...] it is only when this has been done, only when the individual has exhausted himself in the infinite, that he reaches the point where faith can emerge.”

³⁶ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 438-439.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 80.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁹ C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1983), 201.

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 77.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴² Kierkegaard’s Climacus writes: “If the individual is in himself undialectical and has his dialectic outside himself, then we have the *aesthetic interpretation*. If the individual is dialectical in himself inwardly in self-assertion, hence in such a way that the ultimate basis is not dialectic in itself, inasmuch as the self which is at the basis is used to overcome and assert itself, then we have the *ethical interpretation*. If the individual is inwardly defined by self-annihilation before God then we have *religiousness A*. If the individual is paradoxically dialectic, every vestige of original

Kierkegaard's reclamation of true faith can only be grasped through the understanding of the transitions that happen at the transition zones of his existence-spheres (irony and humour): 1) the aesthetic to the ethical, and 2) the ethical to religiousness A, both of which take place within the realm of reason. It could be argued that the latter, by balancing (or ultimately relinquishing) its focus on the finite world is really a movement towards the infinite. So, while it is true to say that the movement from the ethical to religiousness A does not necessarily require a leap, my argument has been that it does seem to entail a certain kind of transcendence, in the sense that it is a movement from one form of immanence (the rational) to another (the divine). It is also interesting to note that while the Kierkegaardian movement from the aesthetic to the ethical (the boundary zone of irony) does not involve any form of transcendence at all, it does involve a minimal transition in terms of being an external change in the individual's behaviour, whereby his response to everyday life changes from an immediate response to a rational one: the Kantian limitation of religion to ethics.

Contrary to the Kantian reduction of religion to ethics and faith to reason; Kierkegaard argues that the movement to a higher level of the ethical requires a further movement, which is a move from the external or objective viewpoint to an internal or subjective one. Throughout the course of this analysis I have argued that the double movement of faith – a) the description of “dialectic of the infinite,”⁴³ and b) the leap beyond being “dialectic of faith”⁴⁴ – seems to reflect an understanding of the dialectic as a two-step process which is concerned with both being and beyond. In the light of Kierkegaard's understanding of the structure of the dialectic, it seems to me that he could be pointing to the possibility of an *initial* kind of transcendence, in terms of the unity of the self with the spirit (infinite moral principles) at the highest point of immanence.⁴⁵ In this case, the initial, or quasi-transcendence would be a paradoxical movement as it would take place within the realm of immanence: that is, from the higher ethical self to the highest level of religiousness A. Contrary to the movement to religiousness A, the movement to religiousness B is a transcendent one on the basis that the supreme edifying, or absolute divine, element is something outside the individual.

What the overall analysis has endeavoured to show is that Kierkegaard may indeed be pointing to a certain kind of relation, or unity, with the divine within the realm of immanence. Throughout the course of his pseudonymous authorship, his authors imply that through a process of self-annihilation (from audacity to repentance) the individual could clear the obstacles that are blocking his vision of God: the main hindrance being the individual himself. When these obstacles are finally cleared away, only then will the individual find the God-relationship within himself.⁴⁶ Contrary to Kant's understanding of religion, for Kierkegaard, God is not only immanent but also transcendent. So, beyond divine immanence, Kierkegaard is pointing to an unknown realm beyond the level of self-consciousness. He is pointing to a primordial realm that lies beyond, or pre-exists, the realms of: matter, sense perception, and reason. For Kierkegaard, the movement to the highest point of immanence is a movement to the divine, or the highest, consciousness of the intelligible realm; but the leap to God of transcendence is seen as a movement beyond the highest level of consciousness, to the absolute truth. This final movement is the reclamation of true faith, or the liberation of religion from the limits of reason alone.

immanence being annihilated and all connection cut off, the individual being brought to utmost verge of existence, then we have the *paradoxical religiousness*.” Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 507.

⁴³ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 79-80 (n.), 507.

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 66-67.

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 79-80, 438-439, 446-447, 505-507; *Fragments*, 49, 55-57; *Fear and Trembling*, 75, 77, 139.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 498. Climacus goes on to state that “quite rightly the edifying is recognizable here also by the negative, by self-annihilation, which in itself finds the God-relationship, is based upon it, because God is the basis when every obstacle is cleared away, and first and foremost the individual himself in his finiteness, in his obstinacy against God [...] in religiousness B the edifying is something outside the individual, the individual does not find edification by finding the God-relationship within himself, but relates himself to something outside himself to find edification.”

Bibliography

- Carlisle, Clare. *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York; London: Continuum Press, 2010.
- . *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling*. London: Continuum Press, 2010.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*. Michigan and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.
- . *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1983.
- Friedman, R. Z. "Kierkegaard: First Existentialist or Last Kantian?" *Religious Studies* 18, no. 2 (1982): 159-170.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper and Rowe Press, 1960.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or I and II*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- . *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
- . *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- . *Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- . *Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by David F. Swenson and Howard V. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962.
- . *The Concept of Anxiety*. Translated by Reidar Thomte with Albert B. Anderson. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- . *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- . *Works of Love*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Krishek, Sharon. "Two Forms of Love: The Problem of Preferential Love in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6, no. 4 (2008): 595-617.
- . *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Pattison, George. *Kierkegaard and the Crisis of Faith: an Introduction to his Thought*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997.
- . *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor Francis Group, 2002.
- Quinn, Philip, L. "Kierkegaard's Christian Ethics." *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. Edited by Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Shmuëli, Adi. *Kierkegaard and Consciousness*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971.