Faith, Reason, and the Limits of Linguistic Expression

An Investigation of Søren Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant

By

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Declaration

I, John Roe, certify that this thesis is entirely my own work, and has not been used by me in order to obtain a degree in this University or elsewhere.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

There exists an apparent conflict or disjunction between religious faith and reason – one that manifests in a tangible way as a clash between secular and religious ways of looking at the world. When we contextualize this divide in terms of a philosophical dialogue between Søren Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant, focusing on their respective accounts of reason and faith, the conflict doesn't read as something absolutely unequivocal. There is some aspect of the faith-reason relation that must be given greater consideration. This thesis seeks to evaluate Kierkegaard's view of faith as a response to that of Kant in order to find common ground with respect to their views of the limits of reason and the scope of faith. But, in the gradual process of focusing upon the role of language expression in their respective accounts, the implications for our view of the faith-reason relation become clearer. This investigation opens up a fresh perspective on how we can view this complex relation. It is a focused account that seeks to address what is an underdeveloped area in this specific field of philosophical research. It will show that, whilst there are conflicting standpoints to be found in Kierkegaard and Kant on some aspects of what is meant by both reason and faith, the problem to be addressed is fundamentally a shared one. That is to say, that the question over the limits of reason with respect to faith becomes a question over the limits of language. I argue that the disjunction can be viewed in terms of this issue. In order to move forward to a fuller understanding of the relation between faith and reason, a more robust account of the role of language in articulating ideas such as freedom, possibility, morality, and knowledge, within the context of individual faith, must be undertaken.

for my children,

believe your impossible to be possible

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Abbreviations

In the case of Kant, apart from *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* and *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* – the titles of which will be abridged as *Dreams* and *Prolegomena*, respectively – the volume and page number(s) of the standard Berlin Academy edition (1902-) will be cited. In the case of Kierkegaard and Hamann, texts are cited, where appropriate, using the following abbreviations:

Kierkegaard

CA: 'The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin.'

CUP: 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript to *Philosophical Fragments*.'

E/O: 'Either/Or: A Fragment of Life.'

FT: 'Fear and Trembling.'

PF: 'Philosophical Fragments.'

SLW: 'Stages on Life's Way.'

SUD: 'The Sickness Unto Death.'

WL: 'Works of Love.'

Hamann

Aesthetica: 'Aesthetica in Nuce.'

Cloverleaf: 'Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters.'

Golgotha: 'Golgotha and Scheblimini!'

Memorabilia: 'Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia. A Translation and Commentary.'

Metacritique: 'Metacritique on the Purism of Reason.'

Introduction

"Oh, you should never, never doubt what nobody is sure about."[1]

In order to avoid a lack of clarity, it would not be an unexpected move to begin a thesis with a definition of key terms. But, given that the very terms being discussed in this thesis – faith and reason – have more than just a single, agreed, meaning, it is necessary to intentionally avoid defining these from the outset. It is necessary, because working through the way in which these two terms are expressed is core to this thesis. Crucially, the question as to what 'meaning' is effected when we hear those terms points us in the direction of something more fundamental that needs to be considered. That is, the role of linguistic expression in the acquisition of such meaning. Through a study of the philosophical dialogue between Søren Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant over faith and reason, this thesis will show that, in forming questions regarding this problematic relation, certain assumptions are inevitably being made. That is to say, that neither Kant nor Kierkegaard can internally justify the assumptions they make, not least because they are speaking into (responding to, and speaking in) a tradition, even if they can to a degree justify the *way* in which they communicate this relation based on what is deemed to be permissible, or even, expected expression. The thesis will pose the question as to whether or not the *form* of expression that we encounter in Kant and Kierkegaard can adequately capture the essence of faith, and reason, and the relationship between the two. Or, another way of looking at this – which constitutes the central attempt of this thesis – is to say that the form of expression is absolutely key to the meaning that is effected: reason and faith have no fixed 'meaning' independently of the styles of linguistic expression employed in discussing them. Nevertheless, there arises the question as to what kind of language is appropriate in religious, theological, and philosophical discourse about God.

The quotation that forms the epigraph for this Introduction is taken from the 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. When one of the

[1] A line taken from: *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (1971) [DVD] Directed by Mel Stuart. USA: Paramount Pictures.

children asks after the chocolate, one of the parents interjects by saying: "I doubt there is any…I doubt if any of us will get out of here alive." The parent has no faith in that regard. In this context, we can understand that word 'faith.' And the quote is Willy Wonka's response. Strictly speaking it is borrowed, because it comes from Hilaire Belloc's poem, 'The Microbe.'[2] It can be interpreted as saying, in essence, that one ought to have faith, one ought to believe in the impossible – in that which goes beyond sensible human knowing. Crucially, if one is to speak into a tradition, one would find it impossible not to borrow from it in order to form a response. The question as to what constitutes an 'appropriate' response – highlighted by the use of an epigraph derived from an unexpected source – is therefore a legitimate one to be addressed in both Kant and Kierkegaard. There is an already established tradition of philosophical thought with respect to the relationship between religious faith and reason, and so too a tradition regarding the subject of language. However, the specific relationship between language and faith/reason is an underdeveloped one. The scope of this problem goes beyond the strictly religious, because it is a problem for philosophy more generally. That is, the problem of *how* we ought to communicate our deeply held thoughts and beliefs – our ideas, assertions, *posit*ions, etc. – really, as to how we can communicate our *selves* in a way that does justice to what we believe to be 'the truth.' What is it about this problem of faith and reason – viewed specifically from the perspective of language – that is so important? This thesis begins with that question and, asking the question in the first place is, as I see it, one that *ought* to be asked, if we are to understand the faith-reason relation from a fresh perspective. Viewed through the lens of the philosophical relationship between Kant's and Kierkegaard's thoughts about religious faith, this thesis will endeavour to show that the question of faith and reason is as much a question about language expression – the *how* of language, and its limits – as it is about the limits of reason itself.

[2] See: Belloc, H., 2008. 'The Microbe'. In *More Beasts (for Worse Children)*. [online] Project Gutenburg. Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27176/27176-h/27176-h.htm> [Accessed 21 August 2019].

Kant responds to Enlightenment metaphysics in order to correct a traditionally held view of reason, viewing it as erroneous to assert more than is permissible, or even possible, for reason to maintain. But there is an inherent problem in this kind of venture. To what can reason appeal in order to justify the assertion that it can legitimately adjudicate over itself? Inevitably, as a product of Enlightenment thought, Kant shares something crucial with such a view of the world. Namely, the idea that reason is the sole arbiter of what constitutes truth. Crucially, he must make some assumptions regarding what is meant by 'reason' if he is to get his project off the ground. And so he cannot divorce himself from tradition, as if it were possible to define with absolute rational independence that which is called 'reason.' But neither is there a guarantee that a rational view of the meaning of 'truth' will be protected from an alternative, competing account. Nevertheless, within the confines of these kinds of assumptions, he sought to make it clear as to how a specific reading of the faculty of reason operates within the human, grounding his argument on the primacy of sensible experience. He wants to say that, if reason is to be in a position to assert knowledge – which he assumes to be a given goal of reason – then such knowledge can only pertain to that which relates to possible experience. And so, he begins by attempting to establish the limits of reason.

But again, another hurdle must be crossed. What do we mean when we say 'knowledge'? Speaking into a tradition clearly comes at a price, for at every turn Kant must be precise in his language; the expression of thought must be attempted in such a way as to reflect the limits of reason. But, the problem with this is that one is assuming the limits of reason to be somehow independent of language. Be that as it may, in order to move forward, he sees it as necessary to make certain distinctions. That is to say, he tries to create a coherent, self-sustaining, terminological system. There is a hypothetical and logical character to Kant's approach. That is to say, *if* 'reason' (and, for example, 'knowledge' and 'truth') has a particular meaning, *then* there are some logical implications. But, the crucial point to be recalled here is that positing the initial *if* (over what is meant by 'reason') cannot be internally justified. In order to begin the process, Kant must respond to a traditional understanding of reason. The logical nature

of Kant's thinking means that he cannot simply stop at an explanation of reason's operation in relation to sensed experience alone. And so he sees it as necessary to give a further account of reason with respect to those ideas that, strictly speaking, go beyond sensed experience, of which the idea which most concerns us here is the specific idea of God.

Again, the same kind of question re-presents itself: what is meant by 'God'? Kant does not shirk from the task in this regard, attempting to arrive at a meaning from two perspectives: that of *theoretical* and *practical* reason respectively. In this way, his challenge to a singular meaning of 'reason' is made in order to make room for faith. But does that in some way diminish the status of reason, if reason is understood to be that which can unify our thinking about the world? And, what is meant by 'faith'? *In nuce*, for Kant, *if* 'reason' means X, *then* 'faith' means Y. Or, that moral faith in (Kant's) God is implied by Kant's understanding as to the meaning of reason. But then, does this imply that 'faith' is only *meaning*ful if expressed rationally? This thesis seeks to address these issues in Kant's account of reason and faith, not by arriving at definitive answers to these questions, but by contextualizing them as linguistic problems.

Kierkegaard, writing some fifty years after Kant, gives us a view of the human condition that is just as idiomatic and unique as that of his predecessor. As a product of the Romantic literary tradition, Kierkegaard responds to modern philosophical thought about religious faith, and to assertions regarding the role of reason in such faith, in a particularly unexpected way that is not in keeping with the kind of philosophy practiced by his contemporaries. As such, he straddles the literary and the philosophical, and can be more properly understood as a specifically Christian existentialist thinker. Notwithstanding these distinctions, what we see in Kierkegaard is a deep concern over the way in which religious faith was being practiced by mainstream Christianity in his native Denmark, and over the way in which faith had been, and continued to be, in some way undermined by systematic philosophy. But again, we cannot ignore the fact of his speaking into a tradition of thought about faith and reason as necessitating some prior assumptions as to what is meant by those words. To be more precise, in investigating his reception of Kant, viewed specifically in terms

of the faith-reason relation, this thesis adds to our understanding of Kierkegaard as wanting to redefine reason in order to reclaim the meaning of faith for Christianity, properly understood – that is to say, properly expressed.

Although there are some positive intersection points in their respective views of reason and faith, Kierkegaard's response to Kant is essentially this: *if* faith is X, *then* how do we account for a whole host of elements of the lived experience of faith? Not only does Kierkegaard want to challenge reason's (purportedly rational) view of itself, but he also wants to challenge Kant's articulation of 'faith' as ultimately inadequate. We must also say that Kierkegaard, too, cannot justify the assumptions he makes purely within the confines of his own constructs. But, neither does he pretend to do so. His justification has its *telos* in that which is central to his discourse: what it truly means to *be* a Christian. What counts for him is not the goal of striving towards a single philosophical meaning of 'faith' and 'reason', but rather that such meaning is a fundamentally experiential concern. For Kierkegaard, the individual perspective has absolute priority over any universal concept in relation to faith. And indeed, for him, reason and rationality cannot be thought of as being somehow separable from what it means to exist as an individual. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that the *way* in which Kierkegaard communicates his philosophy of faith in itself emphasizes individuality. And he in fact offers a view – one could also say, a justification – in relation to the significance of the way in which language operates in his communicating.

Essentially, Kierkegaard is responding not only to the philosophy of his contemporaries, but also to that of the Enlightenment. And so, he attempts to effect a particular meaning to not only those aspects of religious faith upon which he and Kant mainly agree, but, more crucially, to those essential elements missing in the latter's account. He connects with Kant, but wants to ask the kind of questions about faith that transcend a 'purely rational' account: what is the status of the ethical in relation to living one's life religiously? what precisely is involved in being free to choose? ought we to only speak of that which is possible when we have faith? what does it in fact *mean* to be a 'self'? And he confronts us also with the question of offense at what Christianity proposes, and

the inevitability of despair without God. But again, no more than Kant, the meaning of these terms resonates in a particular way within the specific linguistic space that is Kierkegaard's, and takes shape in an intentional form that stands in contrast to that of Kant. This thesis will tease out these complex themes, keeping in mind the way in which this can be viewed as Kierkegaard's response to Kant, but also as part of a much larger concern for the question of meaning in its relation to linguistic expression.

Both Kant and Kierkegaard are engaged in an attempt to make clear the way in which we can and ought to speak about faith. For Kant, who holds to a specific view of the limits of reason, faith, in turn, can be articulated in a similarly specific way. Kierkegaard wants to respond to this kind of limited rational language, opening up our understanding as to the multifarious character of faith. But, is there a guarantee, in the attempt to characterize this relation in a particular form of expression, that the results of *any* kind of endeavour can stand independently of the *way* in which it is articulated? This thesis will show that the meaning that is effected relies upon the way in which language is being utilized in the respective accounts. The way in which we understand both the relation between Kierkegaard and Kant, and the meaning of, and relation between, 'reason' and 'faith', is dependent on the linguistic forms being encountered. They both must make some assumptions within a defined linguistic space. But, is it always the case that they stay clearly within the boundaries of what they find to be expressible? This question will be investigated, most particularly in relation to Kant, who seems to want to articulate a view of some of the tenets of faith that, strictly speaking, lie beyond the limits of rational expression. In order to do this, he must, in effect, translate one language into another.

The boundaries are far less clear in Kierkegaard's account, and this arises by virtue of the way in which his thoughts are communicated. Even if it is possible for us to appreciate the way in which he interprets and represents, for example, Kant's view of the ethical, the way in which his pseudonyms speak to us seems to be a deliberate attempt to unsettle us with respect to our search for a definitive appropriation. But, there are intelligible reasons for this kind of

indirect communication, and these reasons will be made clear. By arguing that the limits of reason in relation to faith can take on a new meaning when reinterpreted in the context of the limits of language in a faith-reason discourse, a fresh perspective on the relation will be opened up. Thus, the question shifts from one which asks: 'What do we mean when we say: 'reason' and 'faith'?' to 'What language is appropriate in articulating faith?' The *how* of language becomes as important as the *what* in our attempt to speak faith in the context of the many complex themes presented to us by both Kant and Kierkegaard.

Literature Review

Kant appears first in this work because one of the key ideas here is to look at the way in which Kierkegaard is responding to Kant's critique of the limits of both reason and religious faith. Therefore, the justification for beginning with Kant is one of chronological priority, rather than an indication of primary emphasis. However, in order to do justice to Kant's thinking in this regard, and in an attempt to avoid skewing the project too far in one direction, some decisions regarding the choice of Kantian texts had to be made. In order to be in a position to establish the starting point from which – as I see it – Kierkegaard is operating, and in order to place us in an adequate position for a discussion in relation to the limits of language expression, there are four main texts of Kant's being considered. Namely, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and *The Conflict of the Faculties*. To a much lesser extent, there will be some reference to other Kantian texts that tend to corroborate our view of Kant's philosophical thinking about reason and faith.[3] In the case of the first *Critique,* the primary focus is on the Transcendental Dialectic, and most particularly on the closing section of the work – the Appendix – in which the idea of God makes its

[3] These are: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, and *What Does It Mean To Orient Oneself in Thinking?*.

strongest appearance. The *Groundwork* lays the foundation for Kant's later work, *The Metaphysics of Morals* – and as such, provides us with a clear insight as to his thinking in relation to moral theory. Clearly – as we will come to appreciate in both Kant and Kierkegaard – morality, or, the ethical, is a question for not only secular thinking about the world, but so too a question within religion. And so, the *Groundwork* is essential to our study of Kant's view of what he posits as the pure religion of reason. In the *Religion* book, and following on from that, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant attempts to draw a clear line between rational and revealed religion respectively, or, more pertinently, between rational, and non-rational, faith.

Kierkegaard's prolific literary output – which contributes to philosophical, theological, ethical, psychological, and specifically Christian thinking – was at its most intense in the period between 1843 and 1851. But immediately we must qualify what we mean when we say 'Kierkegaard', because a little over half of Kierkegaard's output takes the form of pseudonymous writings. Alongside these works are his dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony*, journals and papers, his Christian discourses, and other works, all penned in his own name. This thesis is confined to an investigation of most of the pseudonymous works from 1843-1849, with the exception of *Repetition*, *Prefaces*, and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*. Only one of the non-pseudonymous texts is included in this study, namely *Works of Love*, and only to a very limited extent in order to add to our understanding of Kierkegaard's thinking about love.

Kierkegaard's 'stages of existence' are well known, and it is in the pseudonymous writings that the ideas which define these stages are played out: how individuals relate to and exist within the aesthetic and ethical stages; how individuals have religious faith, or make (and fail to make) their way to faith; how the individual can give expression to existence. We are presented with different existential positions – 'all valid to a certain extent' (*PF*, p.12) – and so the decision to focus on these texts in particular is well justified. It is not an arbitrary move, nor an artificial construction. The aim here is to understand the relation between Kierkegaard's and Kant's thoughts about faith as exemplifying

the relationship between non-rational and rational perspectives, but also as part of the broader question as to the role of language in these particular expressions of faith. It is clear to me that it is through these texts that Kierkegaard can be interpreted as responding to Kant. We should not be surprised by this reception. The latter exerted, and continues to exert, an enormous influence upon philosophy. Kantian scholarship is vast to say the least. And so for us to find that Kierkegaard goes back to Kant is not surprising. In almost every one of the pseudonymous texts there is an evident understanding and appropriation of Kantian philosophy in terms of the relation between reason and faith. And within the pseudonymous texts themselves there is an underlying message being communicated by Kierkegaard with respect to the limits of language in attempting to encapsulate such a relation. In Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings we find a clear contrast with Kant's style and use of language, but the aim here is not simply to use Kierkegaard and Kant in order to point to something as obvious as a difference in style. Ultimately we will have something to say about the limits of *all* language in relation to the expression of faith, but with some assertions as to what form of expression might come closest to the ideal.

Finally, the pseudonymous texts are more often than not assessed in terms of chronological order. The reason behind this approach is to show how Kierkegaard's thoughts in relation to faith developed over time – albeit over a relatively short period – but also in order to come to an assessment as to the kinds of fundamentally consistent positions he promotes. As we shall see, there is a clear trajectory starting with *Either/Or*, culminating in *The Sickness Unto Death*. But rather than viewing successive pseudonyms as simply surpassing each other, from our viewpoint, these pseudonyms exist *alongside* each other. None are to be 'discarded' if we are to properly understand Kierkegaard, his relation to Kant, and the role of language, as belonging to a tradition that asks questions about religious faith.

My reading of Kant has a clear focus. That is, to establish some of the reasons for Kant's desire to speak about God within the context of his critique of reason generally. My approach to Kant – no more than Kierkegaard – has always

been one in which the investigation of the primary texts precedes and takes priority over that of the secondary material. But, clearly, and in order to do justice to Kant's view of the limits of reason, and most specifically as to how and why he introduces the idea of God into his system of thought, there have been a number of key influences upon my thinking. Henry Allison essentially reads Kant's project in relation to the limits of reason as one that begins with the attempt to establish the limits of knowledge in relation to experience, but one which inevitably points towards the need for an understanding of that which goes beyond such knowledge. Allison wants to say that Kant is concerned over the question as to how reason is to be employed, or, more precisely, as to what is meant by 'reason' when one is trying to establish a relation to that which goes beyond sensible knowledge. He interprets Kant as maintaining a position in which the specific idea of God is held not to be innate but acquired, but nevertheless one that reason will want to explain, or, acquire for its purposes. In essence, Allison helps us to understand the rational basis for the *why* and *how* of Kant's efforts to make room for the idea of God – God's 'thinghood' (Allison, 2004, p.399), as opposed to God's existence – which the former sees as reasonable. If we are to be in a position to say why Kant sees it as necessary to move forward into the area of religious faith, then Allison's account of Kant's thinking provides us with the kind of basis in order to understand the origin of such a move. It aids us in our understanding of the purely conceptual nature of Kant's interpretation of God – a concept 'to which reason is unavoidably led in its…unavoidable endeavor to think.' (p.421)

Paul Guyer echoes this kind of view of Kant in terms of the nature of a 'rational *belief* about' (Guyer, 2010, p.7) God. He sees Kant's positing of the *noumenal* – or, that which is unknowable from the perspective of purely sensory experience – as the way in which Kant plans to make room for faith. And he helps to make sense of the move that Kant inevitably makes in relation to the distinction between two iterations of reason – the theoretical and practical – in order to transition into a rational account of the question of morality that leads to practical faith in God. Again, like Allison, Guyer interprets Kant as wanting to say that there is an inevitable need of reason to want to have knowledge of the

supersensible. In order to overcome the limitations of theoretical reason, Guyer reads Kant's distinguishing between it and practical reason, and the positing of the idea of God as one of 'the natural products of the human faculty of reason' (Guyer, 2006, p.132), as an entirely rational move. Guyer's work – not least with respect to his role as co-editor and co-translator of a number of primary texts – gives a clear account in both specific and yet broad enough terms of Kant's philosophy of reason as it pertains to my reading of both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Like Guyer, I trace the move from the first *Critique*, and into the *Groundwork* – in which Kant fails to show why the categorical imperative ought necessarily to be obeyed – in order for me to say why Kant's discourse on religious faith is inevitable. Onora O'Neill's insightful *Tanner* lecture (delivered in 1996) on Kant's religion has certainly been important in supporting my view of Kant's motivations for wanting to transition into the area of religion. She too wants to offer an interpretation of the rational – and perhaps non-rational – reasoning for such a move by Kant. But we agree on a fundamental point, and again, this echoes both Allison's and Guyer's position: the idea of God is, for Kant, an absolutely necessary one. It is Kant's way of bridging the 'great gulf' (O'Neill, 1997, p.271) created in making the distinction between theoretical and practical reason.

For my investigation of Kant's specifically religious thinking, I have also drawn upon a number of other sources, most notably Chris Firestone, whose research has a particular focus upon the theological reception of Kant. He wants to counter the traditional view which sees Kant as having essentially eliminated God in the first *Critique*, only then to venture into the area of religion in order to deal with the negative implications for religious belief arising from his critical philosophy. Firestone concentrates on the idea that, for Kant, the idea of God is a meaningful one for reason. In articulating an understanding of reason in the way that he does, Firestone interprets Kant as essentially contending that we are rationally permitted to 'believe in God in certain ways, guided by…reason, if the world and our place in it are to be meaningfully understood.' (Firestone, 2009, p.12) If we are to truly understand what Kant is about, then, Firestone says, we ought to consider his project taken as a whole, rather than necessarily confining

our study of him to just the first *Critique* or just the *Religion* book. This kind of view certainly informs the specific choices of primary texts with which I am engaging. Fundamentally – and this is a view that I share with Firestone – Kant has an ultimately theological understanding of reason. That is to say, ultimate in the sense that his thinking about reason leads naturally to his thinking about the pure religion of reason in rational and moral terms, and about its relation to the already established Christian religion. However, Firestone goes further than I do in this thesis, insofar as he also wants to say that Kant's thinking opens up the possibility of 'moving…beyond generic theology…well beyond it to a more robust and Christian form of theology grounded on rational religious faith.' (p.142) In contrast, my aim is to confine my investigation of Kant to that which opens up into the possibility for Kierkegaard's response, which is one that tackles what the latter sees as a mistaken view as to what reason is permitted to say about, and what role it ought to play in, faith. It has to be said that the secondary literature by mainstream Kantian researchers shows a distinct lack of attention to the question of language in Kant. Whilst I also do not give an account of Kant's use of language in isolation, instead taking a bird's-eye-view of it in the context of both his relation to Kierkegaard, and as part of a more general argument with respect to the limits of linguistic expression about faith, nevertheless, it is true to say that the inclusion of Kant in such a discourse is quite lacking in the field generally. This thesis seeks to make a modest stride forward in relation to this gap in the secondary literature.

Philosophical research on Kierkegaard is almost as vast as that of Kant. But in terms of the focus of this project, the main influences upon my thinking are Ronald Green, C. Stephen Evans, and Merold Westphal. There is clearly a long tradition of philosophical thought regarding the relation between Kierkegaard and Hegel, and this is well justified given the sometimes openly polemical stance that the former takes with respect to the latter in parts of some of the pseudonymous texts. Less recent readings of this relation offer a view of

Kierkegaard as opposing Hegelian philosophy (Thulstrup[4]). And there are now available to us more enlightened views of this relation as being far subtler, and in many respects a more positive relation between the two.[5] Jon Stewart, for example, maintains that '[Kierkegaard's] relation to Hegel was in fact considerably more differentiated than Thulstrup would have us believe.' (Stewart, 1998, p.147) Nevertheless, Stewart says that this is 'not to suggest that Kierkegaard is straightforwardly a Hegelian or that he agrees with Hegel on every point.' (Stewart, 2003, p.623) However, my investigation concerns the relation between Kierkegaard and Kant as firstly aiding us in our understanding of Kierkegaard's emphasis upon the ethical in relation to faith, and secondly as adding to philosophical thinking with respect to the way in which language operates in the respective accounts.

Ronald Green sees Kierkegaard as responding to Kant in order to go beyond that rational view of religious faith. (Green, 1992, xv) And he also wants to maintain that there are key concepts which Kierkegaard inherits from Kant in his thinking about faith: moral 'intention' (p.48), or moral 'reason' (p.49) – the inward (subjective) relation to God; freedom (p.149); the propensity of reason to want to understand that which it cannot – the problem of Christ the Incarnation (p.168); and the need to posit God when proof is impossible. Green brings to light what I see as a valid way of understanding Kierkegaard's insistence on the importance of the ethical as the route to faith, in that, it is Kant's concept of the ethical that informs his thinking. This is evident in most of the pseudonymous texts. Essentially, Green contends that Kierkegaard picks up from where Kant left off in his thinking about faith: he returns to him in order to go beyond him. Although this is not the place in which to elaborate, it is important to say that, following on from Green's position, I also draw upon authors such as Edward Mooney and Anthony Rudd who take a broader view as to what, rather than who, Kierkegaard is fundamentally arguing against. Like me, they stress the fact that, ultimately, rather than focusing on a particular philosophical relation –

[4] See: Thulstrup, N., 1980. *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. G.L. Stengren. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
[5] See: Stewart, J., 1998 & 2003; Taylor, Mark C., 2000.

which nevertheless can bring clarity to the argument, and an increase in our understanding of Kierkegaard – we can interpret Kierkegaard as emphasizing the existential, rather than the rational, nature of faith.

No broad project concerning Kierkegaard could avoid the exemplary scholarship of C. Stephen Evans. His thinking plays some role in almost all areas of this thesis. But it is his interpretation of Kierkegaard's view of the role of reason in faith that is most fruitful. In a number of texts he deals with the relation and scope of reason, interpreting Kierkegaard as wanting to undermine the notion of reason's self-confidence (Evans, 1992, p.106) and pseudo-certainty of knowledge, stressing the limited and passionate character of reason, and the ultimately incomprehensible and uncertain nature of faith, properly understood as being 'above reason.' (Evans, 1998, p.52) One of Evans' main ideas is that, far from being an irrationalist, Kierkegaard in many ways affirms reason's role in faith – where reason is to be understood as 'the ideal of a set of processes that are aimed at truth' (p.22) – but only if a 'correct' view of reason is maintained. He brings clarity to Kierkegaard's understanding of what is meant when we say 'reason' as it relates to faith. In this light, I build upon this idea, emphasizing the fact that the limitations of reason – properly understood – are in a direct relation to the limits of language in the expression of faith. It is in the context of this question as to Kierkegaard's view of reason and its limits that this project engages with contemporary philosophical discourse, most notably with respect to Richard McCombs who critiques the idea of Kierkegaard as an irrationalist as merely a cover for what he calls his 'paradoxical rationality.' (McCombs, 2013, p.2)

Merold Westphal, whose primary interests lies in continental philosophy from Kant onwards, and in the philosophical dialogue between pairs of thinkers, exerts a large influence in the philosophy of religion. He can be listed amongst those who hold to a view of Kierkegaard's ideas about the ethical as relating to that of Hegel, without denying outright the possibility for a Kantian reading. Clearly, I cannot follow Westphal's path in this regard, but I interpret what he has to say about Kierkegaard in broader terms, i.e., viewed as a polemic with

systematic and rational thinking about faith. That is not to say that Westphal's appropriation of Kierkegaard is a confined view. He offers rich readings with respect to themes that are central my argument: the centrality of the individual, the personal relation to God, selfhood and the use of pseudonyms; our understanding of Kierkegaard's view of reason and subjective truth; the different ways in which faith is characterized by the individual pseudonyms; and an account of the leap of faith as a 'generic category referring to all qualitative transitions' (Westphal, 1996, p.70), upon which I elaborate in light of M. Jamie Ferreira's more specific treatments of the idea of leap and transition as it pertains to the self. Westphal often makes clearer those areas of the pseudonymous texts that are at least initially less penetrable. Like Evans, he informs most of the chapters in some form or another. I acknowledge his reading of the Kierkegaard-Hegel relation with respect to the ethical, but I interpret what he has to say about, for example, Kierkegaard's idea of 'Religiousness A', in terms of Kantian faith, the categorical imperative, and the idea of resignation. And I draw upon his invaluable *Kierkegaard's Concept of Faith* in order to get an overview of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous expressions regarding faith.

There is a significant figure in relation to language whose philosophical thinking is influential at key stages of this thesis. Namely, Johann Georg Hamann, an eighteenth century post-Enlightenment contemporary and friend of Kant's. A decision had to be made as to whether or not he belongs under primary or secondary texts. At the start of this literature review there was no mention of him. And yet, he is clearly not 'just' a secondary influence, not least because he is both one of the first in a line of philosophers who responded to Kant's first *Critique*, and a figure of influence for Kierkegaard. There are a number of texts by Hamann that are influential, but most notably his *Metacritique on the Purism of Reason* – which was a direct response to Kant's first *Critique* – and his *Socratic Memorabilia*. Although Hamann has received comparatively much less attention in the history of philosophy, there are –

thankfully[6] – three main interpreters of his philosophy who inform my project. They are John Betz, James O'Flaherty, and Terence German.

The main text of Betz's thematically-historically structured study – *After Enlightenment* – brings clarity to Hamann's thinking, including sections that deal with his specific response to a number of his contemporaries. From our perspective, he puts Hamann's response to Kant into context, and by that I mean in terms of the faith-reason-language issue. But, just as importantly, he helps us to understand these difficult texts. Always to the forefront is the issue of language, because it is central to Hamann's view of the world. That is, a 'view of language as the "mother" of reason (and, as such, the focal point of his debate with the Enlighteners).' (Betz, 2012, xii) Apart from his role in translating *Socratic Memorabilia*, James O'Flaherty's main secondary text, *Unity and Language*, like Betz, adds to our understanding of Hamann's philosophy as a whole. But it also steers us in the direction of the idea of unity, which, in the first chapter, is one of the main issues that Hamann sees as arising from Kant's philosophy. And secondly, it is a core idea of mine in the closing chapter, specifically in relation to the unifying role of language in the context of the expression of faith. Ultimately, for Hamann, as O'Flaherty puts it: 'language is the point at which the encounter between the divine and the human takes place.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.30) As is clear from the title, his investigation has the kind of focus that is the overriding concern of this thesis. Terence German also offers a focused view of Hamann's concern for language and faith in relation to the centrality of language expression from the experiential perspective of the self – an idea in keeping with Kierkegaard's opposition to the goal of abstracting away from experience. And so, German's interpretation plays into some of the themes of the final two chapters.

In many respects, Hamannian thought informs this project, but I go beyond his strictly theological view of language in order to take a broader

[6] If one has read Hamann, then one will understand the use of the qualification 'thankfully', for to say that Hamann's philosophical writings are almost impenetrable is inarguable.

perspective on the issue. And this is not to deny some of the other influences in terms of secondary material. I have already mentioned the fact that there is little focus in contemporary philosophy on the specific focus that is the aim of this thesis. However, many of the commentators on both Kant and Kierkegaard have *something* to say – sometimes indirectly – about the role and limits of language in faith. And so, in this respect, I interpret the interpreters with language in mind. However, some are more clearly interested in the question of language as it relates to these two philosophers. Stephen Shakespeare deals with anti-realist and realist debates over the linguistic expression of faith – the specifics of which I do not focus upon. Nevertheless, his is an important contemporary contribution in our understanding of Kierkegaard, and it becomes particularly pertinent in terms of the both Hamann's and Kierkegaard's assertions regarding the question of truth as (not) standing independently of its expression in language. Like me, Shakespeare sees the question as to *what* language is appropriate for the expression of faith as a central concern arising from Kierkegaard's philosophy. Michael Forster somewhat confirms a view of Kant's thinking about the limits of reason as shifting towards a greater appreciation of the role of language by the time the latter is writing specifically on religion. This idea works in the background, as it were, in my view of Kant's critique of reason as inevitably leading to the need (and permissibility) to speak about religious faith. There are authors who are important to a specific interpretation of the use of pseudonyms (Edward Mooney), indirect communication (Poul Lübcke), style (Manfred Frank), and the idea of silence in the face of limits of language in theological discourse (Derrida). Combined, what they (amongst others) offer is a way of thinking about the limits of reason and language in faith that is the main concern of the final chapter. I interpret these in such a way as to highlight the linguistic limit points in Kant's and Kierkegaard's respective accounts of faith and reason, and in order to argue for a more enlightened appreciation of the role of language in the search for philosophical meaning.

Outline of Chapters

The thesis opens in Chapter 1 with an investigation into Kant's view of the limits of reason, but the focus is immediately placed upon the distinction that Kant makes between theoretical and practical reason. For him, this distinction must be made, for reason must be in a position to account for the objects of our experience and our thinking. From the perspective of this thesis, this immediate concern over this distinction is central to our understanding of Kant's need to posit the idea of God. But this separating of reason in two becomes also the focus of an important response to the first *Critique* by one of Kant's contemporaries – Johann Georg Hamann. The second section of the chapter deals with the latter's argument against such a move, and more broadly, against any claims as to the autonomy of reason. Hamann's input is the first indication as to the course that this thesis will take, because it introduces the idea that language must be a central concern. We then go on to see in more detail the way in which Kant enunciates and makes room for the idea of God, within the context of his separation of reason. At this point, Kant's need to account for morality in a rational way becomes an important move. Rather than viewing Kant's initial venture into an explication of reason's limits as a self-contained unit, the implications of his position are understood as pointing towards the need for some version of faith in God.

There is a natural transition, therefore, into the need for an understanding of Kant's view of religious faith, which this thesis wants to say is a rational move for him to make, given the results of his attempts to find the limits of reason with respect to God as an object of thought. Chapter 2 is organized on the basis of first trying to establish the way in which he conceives of rational morality as leading necessarily to religion. Clearly this ethical component of religious faith in Kant must be properly understood if we are to be in a position to bring to light the way in which Kierkegaard responds to Kantian faith. Secondly, what is also necessary is an understanding of Kant's view of what is permissible in terms of *what* can be said about faith, and as to *who* can

legitimately evaluate (some of) the contents of Christianity from a rational perspective. The line that he draws between rational and revealed faith will be assessed, before finally scrutinizing the way in which he attempts to translate some tenets of the Christian faith into a rational language, and the extent to which his project stays within the boundaries of his view of reason.

Kierkegaard's reception of Kant's moral faith is the subject of the first part of Chapter 3, and we begin the chapter here in order to bring to light the fact that, for the former, the ethical is the route through which one makes one's way to true faith in God. In introducing most of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms at this point, it will become clear as to the extent to which these 'individuals' are, in varying degrees, taking Kant's view of the ethical on board in their respective life-views. But, more importantly, tracing the progress of Kierkegaard's presentation of the pseudonymous views allows us to appreciate his idea of the stages of existence as ideally leading to the highest stage that is the religious, even if, along the way, some voices – such as that of Johannes de Silentio – point us more dramatically towards an expression of religious faith as something much greater than just that of a purely rational moral (Kantian) faith in God. There is an attempt in this chapter to show the way in which Kierkegaard's thinking about the first part of what he calls the 'double-movement' of faith can be related to Kant's positing of resignation to the moral law as the route to faith. The chapter closes by showing the way in which the difficult second part of that movement transcends the merely rational leap.

This idea of the difficulty of faith is expanded out into the three chapters that follow. But there is an important point to be made here. The need to understand the ways in which Kierkegaard speaks more extensively about individual faith – this expansion in thought and expression – is to be viewed as part of a much broader contention of this thesis. That is to say, in terms of the difference between what Kant felt was permissible to say of faith within the constraints of the rational, compared with the kind of freedom of expression that we find in Kierkegaard, funneled through what he saw as a more appropriate form of expression of faith through the pseudonyms. Although there

is some common ground between the respective accounts of faith – such as, for example, the idea of human freedom as an assumed ground for religious striving – Kierkegaard wants to go beyond Kant in terms of what we can legitimately say about faith.

Divided out in terms of some of the complex themes with which we are confronted by Kierkegaard, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, deal with specific ideas that Kierkegaard sees as central to our understanding of what it means to have faith as an individual. In Chapter 4 the idea that we, as individuals, have the freedom to choose between different ways of living our lives – without or within faith – is brought into focus. And the second part of that chapter looks at some of the more conceptual ideas with which we are presented by the pseudonyms. Ultimately, what we see is that, in Kierkegaard's opinion, if we are to truly grasp what it means to have faith, then, we must get past thinking of the world merely in terms of what is possible, develop a greater sense of our eternal nature, and embrace the impossible. The highest ideal is, for him, that of surrendering to the idea that, for (and with) God, everything is possible. In Chapter 5 we will elucidate his concept of the self in all of the ways in which he sees it as possible to make or fail to make one's way to faith. Selfhood is a central concern for Kierkegaard, and not just merely a trope that exists as part of his polemic with systematic philosophy. If we are to talk about religious faith – and indeed about reason – then, even if we must do so from a philosophical perspective, we ought to speak from the point of view of what it means to be an existing individual rather than abstractly. There are some elements of Kant's philosophy of faith that are clearly either missing or under-expressed. Kierkegaard sees two human dispositions as necessary for making it over the threshold of faith: offense and despair. And so, in Chapter 6 we will see the way in which he characterizes these, and why he sees them as essential to an individual's movement of faith. In the section on offense, a greater understanding of Kierkegaard's view of the proper role of reason in faith will be made possible. And the section on despair will, as such, complete the project of an understanding of selfhood that, for Kierkegaard, can only find a resting point in our recognition of ourselves as a self before God.

Having been brought to the point where we understand the kind of thinking, assertions, and positions that both Kant and Kierkegaard adopt with respect to faith and reason, and having appreciated the philosophical relation between the two, we now begin to dig a little deeper in terms of the *forms* of expression of faith that we have encountered in their writings. This move is neither an artificially imposed, nor a separately conceived idea for this thesis. And along the way, hopefully, the idea of language has been a transparently consistent thread of thought. The final two chapters bring to light the question as to the *how* and *why* of the two accounts of faith, and ultimately as to the limits of any attempt to speak from within or without faith.

Chapters 7 and 8 are to be thought of as a two-part investigation on the theme of language. In the first of these there is an explanation offered as to why Kierkegaard uses the pseudonyms in order to communicate his thoughts about faith, and as to the role played by the style being employed. At the end of Chapter 7 there is a transition in focus. The concern over the limits of reason becomes one over the limits of language, and at this point Kant is reintroduced, but viewed from this specific perspective. In Chapter 8 there is an investigation of an idea that comes from Kierkegaard's thinking about language, namely, the distinction between direct and indirect communication. This is an important one to our understanding of the two accounts of faith, but one that isn't quite as clear-cut as it seems, and will be in need of clarification. Chapter 8 continues by offering a fresh perspective of Kant's need to give expression to religious faith as more than one that has a purely rational basis – one that can be viewed as part of a broader human need to give linguistic expression to faith. And this is followed by an explication of the kind of inevitable point of silence towards which theological discourse inevitably gravitates in the attempt to express faith – a silent space towards which, on different paths, and in different ways, I see both Kierkegaard and Kant as pointing us. The chapter will close my overall argument. That is to say, that not only is there clearly a deep need for humanity to give expression to faith – in whatever form – but that there is an equal need for a greater understanding of the role of language within that space,

notwithstanding an open acknowledgment as to the inevitable disagreement over the *way* in which faith can and ought to be spoken.

Hamann's argument with Kant is a key inspiration for the central question of this thesis, because, like Hamann, there is a challenge to the kind of assumptions that are being made with respect to *how* we ought to frame – that is to say, give expression to – the faith-reason relation, and as to whether or not a particular view adequately captures the true nature of religious faith. The question that concerns us most here is one of how we can and how we ought to speak faith. Or, that something as central as language ought to be always clearly acknowledged in our communicating it. Without this vital component, we only have a partial perspective. The first six chapters essentially work towards bringing this concern into focus, with some explanation and resolution underscoring the closing chapters on the role of language. Kant's articulation of how we ought to conceive of the limits of reason leads to an inevitable expression of religious faith. Kierkegaard responds to the way in which Kant translates faith. And we then see a more expanded communication of what faith entails from the perspective of Kierkegaard's individual, before investigating the implications of the method of communication, and the limits of linguistic expression in theological discourse. Fundamentally, this quest is motivated by a deep concern for what seems to be an ever increasing conflict between the secular and the sacred in contemporary Western society. This thesis attempts to look at the faith-reason relation in a new way, through the specific lens of language, and by understanding it thus, open up a pre-existing debate to a fresh perspective.

Chapter One: Kantian Reason

Taken as a whole, this chapter deals with a problem that Kant saw as a crucial one to be addressed. His is a response to a metaphysics which, in his view, had not adequately established what we are properly permitted to say about the human faculty of reason. He wanted to draw a line between what is possible, as opposed to impossible, for reason to assert of itself. And, in attempting to define the limits of what can be said to be knowable by reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this inevitably led Kant to want to pursue the problem of that which transcends the limits of the knowable. Crucially, from the perspective of language, Kant sought to establish a way in which it is possible for reason to speak about ideas that go beyond our empirical knowledge – our possible experience – and yet, ideas that are natural to reason. In the sections that follow, we will see the ways in which Kant attempts to define the limits of reason. That is to say, the ways in which he places limits on what is sayable *by* reason *about* reason. As we shall see in the second section of this chapter, Kant finds an early response to this project. Importantly, it is a response that points to the problem of ignoring the very question of language when one speaks of 'reason.' And it comes in the context of a reaction to the Enlightenment claim as to the 'authority' of reason. As Beiser puts it, it was a time in which philosophers began 'to question our apparently healthy and natural faith in reason. Why should I listen to reason? What reason do I have to obey it?...in short, whence the authority of reason?' (Beiser, 1987, p.1) If Kant is to preserve such authority, then he must attempt to give an account of reason's limits in such a way as to leave little or no room for an undermining response. This chapter will outline Kant's attempt to let reason speak its own limits.

1.1 The Theoretical/Practical Distinction and the Need for Unity

Our actual experience of the world is such that some objects of experience can be asserted as empirical certainties, whilst others are a part of our experience of the world, and are yet unprovable from an empirical perspective. Kant feels that if he is to establish the scope of reason (and preserve its authority), he must be

in a position to give an account of all of these objects of experience. In order to do this, he sees it as necessary to compartmentalise reason. That is to say, he wants to be specific as to what kind of 'reason' we are speaking about when we *assert* as opposed to when we *posit*. Therefore, he makes a distinction between *theoretical* and *practical* reason, respectively. What is at stake in Kant's critique is really a question over knowledge and its relation to human reason. His project seeks to assess the boundary beyond which we can only ever posit and not prove. This leads him question the true limits of metaphysics, i.e., what metaphysics can confidently claim, and it is through the lens of a reason that is limited by sensible experience that he wishes to carry out this criticism.[7]

The idea in Kant's 'generic account of reason' (Allison, 2004, p.309) – or, one could say, what reason does when viewed more broadly – is that human cognition attempts to 'bring everything together' that comes in through the senses, and then the understanding, in order to make them coherent. Beyond the sensible, the question for Kant is whether or not reason, in its purest/highest sense, can offer something as 'knowledge' in its own right. Kant says that pure reason can by itself have no knowledge of *noumena*, or, 'objects beyond the limits of our senses.' (Guyer, 2006, p.129) Knowledge is only possible when a

[7] For Kant, as beings who fundamentally rely upon the senses, it is through these senses that we exist. Kant's concept of reason is therefore confined to investigating how our reason operates on this basis, within the range of all possible experience, where appearances are given to us, and after which we process these experiences. He wants to say that space and time are *a priori* frameworks of our thinking. He devises a systematic framework for sundering apart the way in which we process these sensible intuitions. Kant's 'categories' – or, pure concepts of the understanding – are the principles upon which our thinking synthesizes sensible appearances. Outside of their relation to sensible objects, the categories do not have objective reality. They are just 'the pure form of thinking.' (B595) We make sense of the sensible world through the categories of understanding. This 'making sense' is what he calls 'unity of apperception.' It is our ability to *think* about the judgments that we have made. In this formal assessment of the operation of reason, the 'understanding' is the relation between the transcendental synthesizing and the unity of apperception. Importantly, Kant maintains that because we are limited by our sensible functions, we can only ever *know* on that basis. To put this another way, when an object is presented to me, my knowledge of that object is confined to what my understanding can ultimately make of that object. For example, I can conceptualize its oneness, depth, colour, even its persistence over time in my field of view, but ultimately I cannot *know* the object beyond this. Kant expresses this limitation by saying that what we sense (and subsequently process via our understanding, and conceptualize via the categories) is the *phenomenal*. In contrast, the 'thing-in-itself' that we sense but cannot ultimately know, he calls the *noumenal*. Knowledge, for Kant, must have limits. That is to say, the way in which we talk about *knowing* must necessarily be confined.

concept relates to possible experience. Kant thinks that it is necessary to posit the *noumenon* in order to be able to demarcate the line between what we can and cannot be said to know. Or, as Guyer says, in order to 'express the contrast that is inherent in the limitation of our actual knowledge to mere appearances.' (p.130) So, the *noumenon* is used to represent that purely intellectual idea. However, it is a negative idea, i.e., we can*not* know it. It is not a 'something' for us. But Kant wants to say that, in terms of our theoretical reason, we are inevitably drawn towards wanting to *know* in relation to objects that go beyond sensible experience. Guyer writes: '[Kant] thinks that there is a natural and inevitable pressure coming from within our faculty of reason itself that leads us to think we can have theoretical cognition of objects transcending the limits of our senses.' (p.130) Given this natural tendency, Kant attempts to show that *some* knowledge is in fact derivable purely through reason (or through pure reason). He makes the distinction between a theoretical use of reason as a cognition of what necessarily exists, and a practical use of reason as a cognition of what ought to be the case. One could say it is the distinction between what can be asserted as true, as opposed to what can be merely posited. He writes: 'Here I content myself with defining theoretical cognition as that through which I cognize **what exists**, and practical cognition as that through which I represent **what ought to exist**.' (B661)

Knowledge asserted on the basis of theoretical reason is that which we can confidently claim to be certain, such as logically necessary truths. For example, analytic *a priori* statements such as 'All bachelors are unmarried.' Whilst they are logically true, and although we can verify them in experience, we do not need to verify them in this way in order to show their truth. They have the characteristic of being strictly universally true and are strictly necessary. Their assertion rests upon a pure, logical reason. 'Unmarried' is already contained in the concept of what a 'bachelor' is, or, to put it more formally, the predicate 'unmarried' is already contained in the subject 'bachelor'. These kinds of propositions can be shown to be true using our *theoretical* reason, or that which *is* the case. On the other hand, there are other types of propositions, i.e., synthetic *a posteriori* propositions, that can be verified as being true through

experiential proof, i.e., empirical knowledge. These constitute yet another form of verifiable knowledge, but at the ultimately sensible end of the spectrum of what the human being, by virtue of its faculties, is capable of verifying. They rely upon experience in order to verify their truth.

Kant's ultimate aim, and what he sees as the proper aim of metaphysics, is to establish how one other category of knowledge is possible, namely that of the synthetic *a priori* proposition. These are the kinds of propositions that are necessary and universal, but cannot be verified with certainty, because they cannot be proven within the scope of our limited reason. Clearly, the understanding is not what is needed in order to make these kinds of concepts coherent, because the understanding can only deal with inputs from the sensible realm. In this respect, Kant distinguishes between 'Reason' as a higher-order function – which is concerned with universal guiding principles – in contrast to the kind of reason of the 'understanding' – which is concerned with 'comparatively universal rules.' (Rohlf, 2010, p.199) The latter is lower-order thinking, in that the understanding is the reflecting 'on the conditions of possible human experience' (p.199), rather than upon the larger conceptual whole. For concepts that go beyond sensible experience, something higher is required of reason, and this is where the higher, or 'second-order faculty' (Allison, 2004, p.310) of reason comes into play. For Kant, we can have synthetic *a priori* knowledge of 'universal and necessary truths [that] cannot be known *from* ordinary experience.' (Guyer, 2010, p.7) This is a reason-first position, which abstracts away from experience. Such knowledge does not extend to 'objects that we *cannot* directly experience' (p.7), for example, to knowledge of God. And so, Kant draws a clear boundary with respect to what we can name as *knowable*, but, crucially, this occurs within the context of making distinctions regarding our understanding of the word 'reason.' Making the distinction between theoretical and practical reason is part of the process of establishing the limits of reason. In other words, for Kant, we ought to be clear as to what can be *said* by reason. He says: 'all philosophy of pure reason…does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries.' (A795/B823) And so, there is a clear distinction

made by Kant between what can be known, and what can be posited, by reason, and as to how we ought to understand what we mean when we say 'reason.' He rules out the possibility of 'knowledge' of God (B856-857), but that does not eliminate the possibility of positing God on the basis of both theoretical (speculative) and practical reason. The idea of God is one such 'object' that requires a higher-order reason, but as Kant says, the *existence* of such a being can only be postulated 'practically' (B662), and not 'theoretically.' However, Kant seems to want to push the boundaries with respect to the scope of theoretical reason, which, strictly speaking, is concerned with what *is* the case. He makes a further linguistic distinction with respect to the use of theoretical reason in relation to that which goes beyond all experience. He calls this the 'speculative' (ibid.) use of theoretical reason. In other words, he points us in the direction of a use of theoretical reason that might be able to accommodate an idea such as God. But this is quite separate from any claims that might be made with respect to God's existence.

However, one can contend that – apart from the natural propensity of reason towards making distinctions – the need to separate reason into the theoretical and practical is performed by Kant precisely in order to get over the problem of knowledge with respect to the idea of God. How can he maintain and defend reason's high status if that idea goes beyond reason's reach? In order to do this he makes the separation. Practical reason – the 'ought' – is seen as the possibility for completing the project in pointing to the same ideal goal as theoretical reason. As Kant asks: 'whether from the point of view of its practical interest reason may not be able to guarantee that which in regard to its speculative interest it entirely refuses to us' (A804/B832) This is a striving towards a single ground which will explain nature and the moral order in a systematically coherent way, given that 'reason aims at…systematization.' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.560) The idea of God – as we shall see in more detail in later sections of this chapter – is posited as one thing for theoretical reason, and another for practical reason, i.e., as a useful 'regulative' idea; as the idea of a moral lawgiver. The two 'reasons' share in their goal of trying to say something about the world that is intelligible to rational thought, but that does not

necessarily mean that such a goal is achievable. The aim might be towards systematization in which theoretical and practical reason work in *conjunction* with each other. This is the view that 'there is one reason that has one kind of positive use in two different arenas, the practical and theoretical.' (Rauscher, 2010, p.291) But, there are no guarantees with respect to their use as being *unified*. That said, just because Kant makes a distinction between the theoretical and practical *uses* of reason, does not mean that he necessarily sees reason as being divided in the individual. That is to say, that the individual subject naturally seeks resolution, or unification in a single idea, such as that of God. Perhaps the mistake being made by Kant is in couching his argument in terms of the 'purity' of reason, and in making the theoretical/practical distinction in the first place. This 'mistake' is the subject of the next section: the problem of language.

Having made the distinction, the two 'reasons' seem to stand separately. As O'Neill puts it: 'Only the theoretical standpoint can accommodate science; only the practical standpoint can accommodate morality.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.273) The second-order faculty of reason (in contrast to its first-order use: the understanding and the categories) might have as its goal the ideal of bringing everything under a 'single principle.' (Allison, 2004, p.310) But does Kant show this to be the case? That is, does he show theoretical and practical reason to be unified? We should pause first to ask two questions. Is Kant's view of reason one in which unity is in actual fact the goal? And, if it is, what is the most important idea that fulfills this goal? Kant is clear in terms of the first question: unity is a goal. Reason looks for systematic unity – it 'is a **logical** principle' (B676). He writes: 'For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason.' (B679) Kleingeld calls this 'the search for a *single* end towards which all nature is oriented' (Kleingeld, 1998, p.327) [emphasis mine] For Kant, it is not that systematicity is constitutive of nature. Rather, it is because of our need for unity that we want to see it as such. It is an idea that helps us to 'organize the experiences presented to reason by the understanding…a perspective that we naturally take up to guide our

investigations.' (p.326) We need the idea of a *singularity* as ordering nature, because we search for such order in our seeking to understand.

The answer to the second question appears in a number of places.[8] But, Kant essentially responds in two ways. Firstly, by saying that the most important idea is that which offers 'the greatest systematic unity of the world-whole.' (B707) He says: 'It is thus rational, indeed *meritorious*, to pursue the mechanism of nature…as far as can plausibly be done.' (5:418) [emphasis mine] That is, until one can arrive at a 'single possibility.' (B609) For Kant, as rational beings we have a natural desire to ask almost ceaseless[9] questions in this quest. That is, until we arrive at 'the unconditioned' (Rohlf, 2010, p.196) final end. Secondly, it must be an idea that 'holds not merely for nature outside of us (material nature), but also for nature inside of us.' (5:435) In other words, an idea that is vital for both our understanding of nature, and our freedom as moral beings. However, although reason strives for 'completeness' (Guyer, 2006, p.131) in a 'first premise' (ibid.), theoretical reason comes to an impasse in terms of knowledge of such a final end. What does it naturally do next? It looks for a way out of the problem. A reasonable solution consists in utilizing practical reason in order to *approach* something of knowledge. From the point of view of practical reason, the *noumenal* can be expressed in a positive, and not negative sense. And it is through practical reason that talk of freedom, morality, and God, becomes more intelligibly sound. In other words, the attempt to make sense of freedom, immortality, and God from the perspective of our experience of morality has greater possibility 'under the rubric of practical belief or faith, not theoretical cognition.' (Guyer, 2006, p.130) One could say that practical reason begins where theoretical reason leaves off.

On one hand, Kant wants to claim that reason is one and the same – that theoretical and practical reason are unified, even if the two are 'different

[8] A 'single being' (B615); 'the one single concept, that fits necessary existence and is adequate to it…that the latter could be concluded from it' (B635); a 'ground lying outside of and beyond nature.' (5: 416); a 'final end' (5:442) 'the idea of a most perfect primal being.' (*Prolegomena*, p.1036)

[9] As Kant puts it, 'the questions never cease.' (A viii)

applications.' (Kleingeld, 1998, p.311) Perhaps Kant's idea is that they are unified insofar as they stem from the one reason. They certainly share some characteristics, such as systematization and the use of the idea of God. But, there is no guarantee that the principles and ideas that lie behind these general characteristics are specifically the same. That is, the motivation behind positing the idea of God might be different in the two articulations of reason. We could ask, for example, is there a unified idea of God in Kant's account – are the Ideal of reason, and the moral lawgiver, the same 'being'? It is one thing to say that theoretical and practical reason might work in 'harmony' (p.323) rather than towards 'the singleness of…one faculty.' (p.323), and entirely plausible to view the idea of 'order' originating in a rational supreme being as a shared idea for theoretical and practical reason.[10] But the two expressions of reason still read as being apart in what they propose to say. And, at least in terms of the goal of unity in reason, Kant's project fails. We need both theoretical and practical reason (for science and morality respectively), but we cannot understand how they might be unified. What will help us, that is, be useful, in such an understanding of human reason? Kantian reason 'aims at coherence' (O'Neill, 1997, p.273) – at unity and singularity. Kant's point is that, even though we cannot answer questions in relation to freedom, immortality, and God, neither can we ignore those questions. And so, there must be some way of squaring the claims of both theoretical and practical reason in order to somehow unify them. The final section of this chapter will address this issue. But, for now, we will turn to a contemporary of Kant who responded to the problem of the separating of reason. Namely, the 'Magus' (*Memorabilia*, p.90) of the North, Johann Georg Hamann.

1.2 Hamann's Response to Kantian Reason

> 'I nigh suspect that our entire philosophy consists more of language than of reason, and of the misunderstandings of countless words.'[11]

[10] 'In sum, the two uses of reason are not only not in conflict, but they both lead to the…view of nature as divinely designed.' (Kleingeld, 1998, p.336)

[11] Betz, 2012, citing Hamann, p.314, from: Hamann, J.G. (1955-75). *Briefwechsel*, vol. V, Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel (eds.). Wiesbaden: Insel, p.272.

Hamann is viewed as perhaps the first in a line of post-Kantian critics.[12] In essence, although he too viewed reason as a faculty that is given to man, he was critical of a view in which faith and reason were seen as in opposition. To be more specific, he argued against the idea that reason has a 'pure' status. He can be viewed as responding to the strictness of Kant's view of reason, arguing that not only is his language essentially impure, but that it does not even give an 'adequate account' (O'Neill, 1997, p.272) of freedom and knowledge as it is experienced. Instead – viewed as a gift from God – Hamann sees reason as not only co-existing with faith, but that faith and only faith is capable of illuminating reason. His was an inversion of the Enlightenment claim as to the superiority and primacy of reason that purported to be all encompassing, all explaining, and all illuminating. Hamann's polemic with the Enlightenment project finds its focus in Kant. In his *Socratic Memorabilia*, he addresses Kant who plays 'the role of universal philosopher' (*Memorabilia*, p.60), making sure to draw attention to the latter's key ideas with respect to the claims of reason's discoveries: 'You *must know everything*, and learn *nothing*; you *must judge everything*, and *understand nothing*, ever learning and never able to come to the *knowledge of the truth*.' (p.139) [emphasis mine] And he does so in order to correct Kant's philosophy as part of the broader project of the Enlightenment.

Kant attempted to systematize the elements of the operation of reason in the human being. Hamann argued that this sundering apart inevitably leads to a disjunction between theoretical and practical reason's view of the self – or, a 'wholly implausible metaphysical position that claims that human beings live in two unconnected worlds.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.271) But he also wants to say that the disjunction between faith and reason in Kant's account was both unnecessary and ultimately destructive of the human condition.[13] The thrust of his argument

[12] Betz, 2004.

[13] Friedrich H. Jacobi was amongst those who objected to Kant's philosophy in the 1790's. Jacobi was embroiled in the Lessing-Mendelssohn-Spinoza controversy in the late 1780's, in which there was a concern for what the Jacobi saw as the nihilistic implications of a theoretical reason of metaphysics that could not justify religious faith. Jacobi saw Kant's philosophy as heading in this same direction. However, this is much too large a topic to pursue here. For more in relation to Jacobi's input in this regard, see: 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn'. In *The main philosophical writings and the novel Allwill*, trans. G.

centers on the inevitable role that both language and tradition play in the supposed pure critique of reason, arguing that Kant ought to have acknowledged this as an *a priori* problematic.[14] In his *Metacritique,* Hamann expressed concern over critical philosophy's 'violent' (*Metacritique*, p.212) sundering apart of the two natural elements of human knowledge – the sensible and the thinkable – by a so-called 'pure reason' that makes them 'so dark, confused, and desolate.' (p.212)

In this text we can see two core approaches in his critique of Kant's system. Firstly, for Hamann, the shadow of doubt that is cast over the validity of sense experience, that leads Kant to posit the noumenal thing-in-itself, 'lies open and uncovered…in the very use of language of the most common perception and observation of the *sensus communis*.' (p.206) In other words, that in Kant's philosophy 'knowledge' is reduced to the sensible. In his view, Kant's project is blind to a 'double im-possibility' (ibid.): How can I know the objects of experience 'without and before any experience' (ibid.)?; How can I have 'sensible intuition before any sensation of an object' (ibid.)? Hamann is making the point that it is one thing to make distinctions between the noumenal and phenomenal, but it is another thing for it to be intelligible to me as a thinking being who holds beliefs as to myself as sensed and known, no more than the sensation and ordinary knowledge of objects as I really encounter them. Kant needs the idea of the thing-in-itself to begin his project, but ultimately denies us access to it in terms of knowledge. For Hamann, it is a mistake to attempt to purify reason on the basis of a 'transcendent' (p.207) principle that separates reason and knowledge from 'experience and its every day induction.' (ibid.) The claim as to what constitutes knowledge, or what can be knowable, rests upon a presupposition that reason is capable of grounding everything.

Di Giovanni. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009, pp. 173-251 (first edition, 1785), pp. 339-378 (second edition, 1789).

[14] The importance of Hamann in the history of philosophy is not to be underestimated in this regard. Betz maintains that: 'in Hamann one encounters arguably the first linguistic turn in the history of ideas…the subversive implications of a philosophy of language are for the first time forcefully brought to bear against the rationalism of the Continental tradition.' (Betz, 2012, pp. 231-232)

For Hamann, an appraisal of reason itself ought not to be avoided, because, as he sees it, reason is itself impure. In its striving towards certainty and universality, metaphysics makes the mistake of attempting to give expression to the human experience of reason using a language that more properly belongs to the realm of something like mathematics which aims for 'apodictic certainty.' (*Metacritique*, p.210) In response, Hamann argues for a wholistic view of the human condition with respect to reason. He writes:

> The sensibility and understanding arise as two stems of human knowledge from One common root, in such a way that through the former objects are given and through the latter thought: to what end is such a violent, unjustified, willful divorce of that which nature has joined together! (p.212)

Knowledge from a purely rational perspective leads Kant to say that we cannot know the thing-in-itself, of which the human being is one such example to itself. Yet, this conflicts with our knowledge of those objects through the senses. Whether one views the relation of thought to the sensible, or that of theoretical to practical reason, there is, for Hamann, a dichotomy implied in Kant's account. Hamann argues against this kind of sundering apart, and he sees Kant as having failed to unify, or reassemble, that which he has separated. He wants to correct Kant's approach, asking: 'Would not a single stem with two roots be an apter image of our knowledge, one root above in the air and one below in the earth?' (p.212) His second criticism of what he sees as Kant's argument in favour of the purism of reason, is one that takes shape in relation to the 'single stem' that is language. That the title of Hamann's first response to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is *Meta*critique [emphasis mine] is indicative of Hamann's argument against any sense of finality for such a critique. In other words, that it is possible, indeed necessary, to critique the critique of reason itself. If 'critique', or 'critical' assessment, are staple goals of the Enlightenment project, then, ironically, Hamann can be said to have brought that aim to its logical conclusion. That is to say, that he critiqued the critique of reason in a way that his contemporaries failed to do: 'he…was the child of the Enlightenment…he may be considered as the Enlightenment turning upon itself.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.6) But the way in which he does this is by burying beneath the foundations of Kant's aim for

purity, rather than attempting to surpass. For Hamann, Kant begins his project without first addressing the problem of language. It is through this lens that Hamann seeks to undermine the 'foundation' (Betz, 2012, p.245) of Kant's philosophy. In Hamann's polemic, he wants to say that Kant failed to cast the cold eye of a critical reason upon the vehicle of its own expression – language. Reasoning away from experience is all very well, but how does one do that when language is part of experience? His argument was that Kant, in trying to separate thought from experience, was in effect mysticizing in the *Critique of Reason*. Hamann's belief was that Kant was attempting to divorce himself from the 'shackles' of language, which is part of our experience of the world. Reason cannot be its own judge – 'for Hamann the only arbiter of reason was language.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.85) Reason is only enabled *in* language. Hamann would have surely agreed that an endless project of metacriticism is implied by his assertions. But this is his point. Why is 'critique' – if that is understood as the separating out of that which is naturally whole – the ultimate goal? As O'Flaherty says: 'The error consists in attempting to separate that which cannot be separated.' (p.86) Kant thinks that he has arrived at a pure system of reason that has universal import and necessity for all rational beings, but Hamann argues that this is simply not possible, given the nature of language in lived experience.[15]

Hamann responds in a way that is subversive and non-idiomatic with respect to the accepted methods of philosophical discourse. Kant's systematic, terse, and impersonal style aims to convey an objective stance. One might be led to ask as to why Hamann's style of approach in writing is an important point in his critique of Kant's assertions with regard to the power of reason. For him, the Enlightenment project was mistaken in thinking that everything could be made clear by reason alone. Hamann's style embodies his view, in that, it was an 'objection to the facile clarity of eighteenth-century art, literature, and philosophy.' (Betz, 2017, p.647) To put this another way, in terms of language,

[15] In the final chapter of this thesis I will deal in more detail with the role of language in the movement of faith, but it is important to see the way in which Hamann's argument against Kant's claims act as a foundation for later discussions in this sphere.

Hamann believed that the language of faith, and not reason, brings us closer to true enlightenment. He maintained a theological understanding of language, i.e., language as the divine gift of *logos*. Not only this, but because language is an element of the sensible realm, it is essentially a conduit between the divine and the human. This narrative is congruent with the idea of, for example, the Incarnation, where the divine and human aspects of God were manifested together.[16]

He calls to mind the expression of the subject-predicate relation, and Kant's distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. In a notable passage he presents us with a clever play on the ideas of the critical systematic philosophy, in order to highlight reason's fundamental dependency upon language. He calls into question its claims, intentionally intertwining philosophical and religious references in this characterization, playing upon its language and terminology:

> …the finest parable of the hypostatic union of the sensible and intelligible natures, the joint communication of the idiom of their powers, the synthetic mysteries of the forms a priori and a posteriori corresponding and contradicting themselves, together with the transubstantiation of subjective conditions and the subsumptions into objective predicates and attributes… (*Metacritique*, pp. 213-214)

For Hamann, rational language – just like any other – is essentially word play. It tells a story in a particular language, relying upon accepted terminology, in which terms relate to each other within that linguistic space.[17] Like the parable, it is open to interpretation. Not only this, but Hamann wants to say that 'it is impossible to invent a purely rational language, one that is equally and immediately accessible to any rational creature.' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.576) Furthermore, reason can arrive at contradictory conclusions, where 'a proposition can be ever so incontrovertibly proven without on that account

[16] Another example of this type of Lutheran way of thinking can be found in the idea of consubstantiation, where (in contrast to the Catholic and Calvinist doctrine of transubstantiation) the Eucharist is a manifestation of God that is both body *and* spirit, or human and divine. In other words, there is a natural contradiction posed by the Incarnation – God made man, and hence the Incarnation contains properties of its constitutive parts.

[17] Betz says that 'while abstract terms may have an important role to play within language, for Hamann, they cannot in any ultimate sense be isolated from it.' (Betz, 2012, p.244)

being believed.' (*Memorabilia*, p.167) The problem with thinking ideally and abstracting away from experience – as Kant acknowledged, in part, in his discussion of the antimonies – is that, it is possible for reason to argue for something in a rational way that is subsequently found to be practically unworkable. Kant bemoans the fact that the antimonies are 'worrisome and depressing' (A740) for a reason that finds them in 'conflict with itself.' (ibid.) But what he failed to acknowledge, in Hamann's view, is that the presence of the antimonies pointed clearly to the problem of language for reason.

For Hamann, 'the notion that there could be such a thing as a pure, secular space is, contra Kant, the real illusion of pure reason.' (Betz, 2017, p.665) This is part of the wider problem of reason's misunderstanding with itself. Kant wanted to reason away from experience – to separate reason into the theoretical and practical, to separate the sensibility and understanding. But, he failed to acknowledge the fact that the attempt to do this using language – which, for Hamann, is the place in which sensibility and understanding are unified – is an absurd kind of goal. Kant cannot entirely escape the sensible in his thinking, because his thinking is already (*a priori*) tethered to language. The distinctions that Kant wants to make are, for Hamann, artificial[18] ones, insofar as real experience – not least with respect to our experience of language – says something different. It is not only a question of whether or not a systematic approach is the most rational one to take, but also a question as to whether or not 'reason's goals are good ones to adopt' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.570), given that our ordinary (linguistic) experience of reason does not necessarily lead to disjunctions in the way that 'pure' reasoning might. One could say that he wanted to wound Kant where it would really hurt, that is, by essentially pointing out the irrational nature of such a project, insofar as '[T]rue reason…does not live by reason alone' (Betz, 2017, p.667), and to think otherwise is to be irrational. Hamann does not seek the destruction of reason. But when we recognize the true situation in which reasoned thinking takes place, we exercise an honest humility, and in doing so, we 'become…*more reasonable*.' (p.674) Kant wants to find the *a priori* principles that govern the way in which we sense (or, know) the

[18] As Hamann puts it: 'that which has been invented.' (*Memorabilia*, p.60)

world around us. Space and time, for example, are conceived of as constructs of our mind. But, Hamann points to the 'hidden mysteries' (*Metacritique*, p.206) implied by Kant's argument of how we can have *a priori* knowledge of an object independently of our experience of it, and how we can have a sensible intuition *a priori* present in us before the sensing of the object. For Hamann, the point is that, in making these kinds of distinctions in language, Kant creates what O'Neill calls 'a great gulf, which seemingly separates self from world, freedom from nature, and acting from knowing.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.271) What is important for Hamann is the maintaining of unity between the subject and the object – between the noumenal and phenomenal. In his opinion, a more rational approach ought to involve a more honest responsibility towards language.

He wants to pose the question as to why we should in fact be so concerned with striving for universal and necessary certainties in the first place, favouring instead the acceptance of the unknown in such a way that does justice to the reality of daily living. However, we must remind ourselves of the fact that whilst he does not deny the positive role that reason has to play, he ultimately puts reason in second position to faith. He argues against any aims that Kant might pretend to have achieved in the superstructure of the *Critique*. He points to three purported purifications of reason's operation, or to put it another way, to a misguided notion on Kant's behalf of having insulated or having saved reason from the negative implications of the Enlightenment project.[19] Firstly, to a 'partly misunderstood, partly failed attempt' (*Metacritique*, p.207) to purify reason of tradition, culture, and custom. Secondly, a transcendent purification of reason that attempts to place itself beyond 'experience and its everyday induction' (ibid.), where critique assesses itself to be the pinnacle of metaphysics. Thirdly, the notion that reason is empirically pure in its language.

Hamann responds by saying that 'the longer one deliberates' (*Metacritique*, p.208) over language as expression of a pure reason, the more impossible it becomes. Although Kant might have seen his project as setting out the limits for a metaphysics that has been overstepping the mark, there is no guarantee that he can avoid the ambiguities of language himself, given that he too was speaking

[19] For example, reason as leading to atheism; freedom as leading to corrupted morals, etc.

into a particular tradition.[20] Not only this, but if he eventually posits a lack of knowledge with respect to the thing-in-itself, Hamann asks, why 'does the world need a learned demonstration of it?' (*Memorabilia*, p.167) Hence, Hamann believes reason to be incapable of finding pure expression. He writes: 'language, the only, first, and last organon and criterion of reason, with no credentials but tradition and usage.' (*Metacritique*, p.208) Kant mistakenly assumes a pure language for the communication of pure thinking to be possible. But, for Hamann, this is a misconstrual, because: 'Not only is the entire faculty of thought founded on language…but language is also the centerpoint of reason's misunderstanding with itself.' (p.211)

Furthermore, Kant is incorrect when he tries to avoid the concern over language, instead maintaining that errors occur in the 'non-empirical employment of reason.' (p.211n)[21] But, Hamann thinks that Kant errs not only in thinking that human beings are, or could ever become, purely rational subjects, but also in thinking so ideally as to make the idea of God into a '[figment] of reason's imagination.' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.573) From Hamann's point of view, the ambiguities and impurities of language are there to be embraced. For him, the impurity of language is merely a cloak, behind which lies the Spirit of God. As God became man, and hence humbled Himself, so too is the divine manifested through language as 'part of the unity of the divine revelation.' (*Cloverleaf*, p.39) What Hamann was essentially calling for was greater honesty with respect to language rather than what he described as 'the talisman and rosary of a transcendental superstitious belief in *entia rationis*.' (*Metacritique*, p.210) Going beyond, or more precisely, going back before Kant's question as to how synthetic *a priori* propositions are possible, Hamann poses the question as to how thought itself is possible. Such a question brings to light the fact that, before Kant can arrive at a definitive critique of pure reason, he must assume

[20] As Betz says, 'for Hamann…there is no such thing as "pure reason" or reason *in abstracto*, but only reason within a tradition of interpretation.' (Betz, 2012, p.234) Kant's exposition of a history of the *development* of the idea of reason proves Hamann's point. That is to say, that a pure reason never existed, and still does not. In fact, Betz points to Kant's own postscript to the first *Critique* as being 'like an ironic bookend' (pp. 247-248) in this regard. Betz also says that 'Kant has borrowed not only from Aristotle's logic, but even from the scholastic tradition he rejects.' (p.240)

[21] See Kant, A xii.

something in advance of that project, namely, that there is thought in the first place. But of course, the point that Hamann wants to make is that even thought has an origin. This is not to say that Kant and Hamann disagree over the fact that thought as reason is a faculty that human beings possess *a priori*, but the point is that Kant cannot disregard this question in the first place. Kant's method of bracketing off 'empirical (and so too linguistic) considerations' (Betz, 2004, p.292) is, for Hamann, delusory. Kant is seduced by the idea that he can escape the language in which he is operating. Kant cannot escape the fact that he is responding to a tradition, even if he sees as his aim the search for *a priori* principles that can somehow get beyond it. It is not that Hamann was an opponent of the Enlightenment on the basis of being 'against reason or "enlightenment".' (Betz, 2017, p.642n) What he was against was the Enlightenment's blindness with respect to 'reason's historical, cultural-linguistic conditions.' (ibid.) His interaction with Kant is a 'playing-out' of his overall view. Hamann wishes to place the 'genealogical priority of language' (*Metacritique*, p.211) above Kant's twelve logical functions of the understanding in judgment. As he sees it, Kant fails to go back further than the presupposition that the main concern is one of attempting to find the limit, function, and scope of reason. Rather, for Hamann, 'Sounds and letters are…pure forms a priori' (p.211), but, as with space and time, they cannot be divorced from our experience of the world. Not only is it a mistake to separate in man what is already unified, but Hamann also wants to say that one could just as easily view the sensible realm as *a priori,* from which our concepts of time and space have evolved.[22]

Hamann is adept in playing the game of language. He sees that 'one can easily reverse the priority and say that…what we know a posteriori is, in fact,

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[22] 'The oldest language was music, and along with the palpable rhythm of the pulse and of the breath in the nostrils, it was the original bodily image of all temporal measures and intervals. The oldest writing was painting and drawing, and therefore was occupied as early as then with the economy of space, its limitation and determination by figures. Thence, under the exuberant persistent influence of the two noblest senses sight and hearing, the concepts of space and time have made themselves so universal and necessary in the whole sphere of the understanding…that as a result space and time, if not *ideae innatae*, seem to be at least matrices of all intuitive knowledge.' (*Metacritique*, pp. 211-212)

prior to anything we might presume to know a priori.' (Betz, 2012, p.249) But, there is an important point being made by Hamann. Purity of thought, and the purity of reason and its systematic treatment, are being investigated in a language that can never be pure. Hence, the foundation that Kant seeks can never be an entirely secure one from this perspective. Hamann asserts that Kant's project, far from being pure, is akin to a mythological striving of reason: 'for Hamann there is no such thing as a human logos that is free from mythos, no more than there is a logos that is free from experience, from tradition…and, last but not least, from the historical, cultural, and profoundly metaphorical play of language.' (p.257) We experience language as part of the sensible realm. It is inextricably bound to whatever we might hope to express in a conceptual way. Our expression of 'truth' is absolutely bound to language, and we ought not to shirk from this fact. For Hamann, we ought to be concerned for the 'here and now' (*Golgotha*, p.180) that is language. In his view, Kant makes the mistake of relying upon a language that is far from pure, in a philosophical project that can never claim absolute knowledge and truth, most specifically with respect to the idea of God. O'Flaherty writes: 'In the area of philosophy we find that authentic knowledge is not a product of over-weening reason but of ordinary language, which occupies a humbler station in the scheme of things than the ratio.' (O'Flaherty's prefatory remarks, *Memorabilia*, p.126)

1.3 The Limits of Reason: The Ideal of Reason and the Need for a Practical Account

In keeping with the project of seeking the limits of reason, Kant sees it as entirely necessary that he should be in a position to offer an account of the cause of our reality. From the rational perspective, Kant sees that the idea of God is one that is 'natural to human reason and can never be uprooted.' (Rohlf, 2010, p.193) Although we are perhaps getting ahead of ourselves when we point to the fact that, later on in his *Religion* book, Kant says that 'all use of reason ceases precisely with [the supernatural]' (6:53), but given that he maintains that 'to try to realize the ideal in an example…is not feasible, and even has about it something nonsensical' (B598), Kant has to choose his words wisely if he is

going to give a rational account of an original cause, or, an origin of everything. In the Spinozist view, causation is conceived mechanically – understood purely as efficient cause – as opposed to the idea of a final cause expressed as a personal God who wills a purpose. Spinoza follows the ontological argument in which God is a cause of itself. From the perspective of theoretical reason, Kant accepts the mechanical view of the universe. But, he does not rule out entirely the idea of a personal God, insofar as he conceives of God as the moral author of the world. He cannot accept the idea of God as a cause of itself, and – in keeping with an aim of reason to find finality – instead posits God as the ultimate and final cause.

In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant attempts to take account of the relation between our reason and that which can never be given as a sensible object of experience, and yet, that which applies to our experience of the world. Following on from our discussion in relation to the distinction Kant makes between theoretical and practical reason, there are clearly some ideas that cannot be proven to be true in the way that one proves an analytic *a priori* proposition. And neither can some ideas be verified in empirical terms. Such is the character of the three 'Ideas' (B595), as he calls them: freedom, the immortality of the soul, and God. They are such that 'no appearance can be found in which they may be represented *in concreto*.' (ibid.) For Kant, seeing as these ideas are already clearly important to us, we ought to be able to put them to 'positive use.' (Rohlf, 2010, p.208; Allison, 2004, p.437) The higher order reason will still want to make these ideas coherent, even if they do not naturally arise from that higher reason. That is to say, if they are 'acquired rather than innate.' (Allison, 2004, p.313) Given the focus of my work, it is the last of the three ideas that is of greatest concern.

We should recall what was said in the first section of this chapter. Namely, that, for Kant, the most important idea is that which offers 'the greatest systematic unity of the world-whole.' (B707) He also says that 'if we pursue this idea of…the original being…The concept of such a being is that of God thought of in a transcendental sense.' (B608) In terms of 'choosing his words wisely', Kant puts himself in a position to engage in God-talk by translating the idea of

God into the 'ideal' (B596) of reason. In saying 'God', 'the idea is taken only to be a placeholder in the system for organizing cognitions below it.' (Rauscher, 2010, p.298) It is 'a conception of a single being that satisfies all the requirements of an idea of reason.' (Guyer, 2006, p.145). That is to say, an idea that is conceived of purely by the intellect alone.[23] It is important to say here that Kant's concern for wanting to posit the ideal is directed towards the need of theoretical reason. That is to say, Kant is trying to get as close as possible to what *is* the case. But, as we shall see a little later, that is not to say that Kant is asserting God's existence. As an idea of reason, i.e., as something which can never be given as an object of sensible experience, the ideal of reason – or, God[24] – is 'even further removed from objective reality' (B596), compared with the idea of our freedom, which we can at least sense on an experiential level. In Kant's formulation, the ideal has what he calls 'practical power' (B597) as a 'regulative' (ibid.) principle for reason, in that, it grounds 'the possibility of the perfection of certain actions…in regard to the principle through which reason places limits on a freedom which is in itself lawless.' (ibid.) In other words, it acts as a ground for moral laws to be derived through what Kant calls practical reason. Or, more simply, the ideal is the origin of everything, and *that* 'everything' includes the idea of our freedom, and hence our ability to choose to act in certain ways. The ideal is Kant's expression of the most all-encompassing concept. But, we can have no relation to God when conceived of in this way except as an idea, because the absolutely 'transcendent' (B579) concept of the ideal can never be given in an example. The ideal of reason is just that: an object (as an idea) belonging to reason, which is 'to be found only in reason'. (B606) In Kant's critique, reason meets its limit at the point where it cannot assert the existence of God for certain, but can only hold God to be an ideal.

In effect, Kant can only go as far as hypothetical thinking in relation to the existence of the ideal. That is to say, 'as if' (B647) God exists. He writes: 'The ideal of the highest being is…nothing other than a **regulative principle** of

[23] To quote Kant: 'determined through the idea alone.' (A568/B596)
[24] 'The concept…of God thought of in a transcendental sense [is] thus the ideal of pure reason…of a transcendental theology.' (B608)

reason, to regard all combination in the world **as if it** arose from an all-sufficient necessary cause…but it is not an assertion of an existence that is necessary in itself.' (ibid.) In terms of knowing anything more than this, we are in a state of 'complete ignorance.' (B607) Kant sees it as a 'necessary maxim of reason' (B699) to proceed with the principle that there 'ought' to be a God as the source of the world, in order to guide the way one thinks about the world and in order to guide ones actions in the world, not as a constitutive principle that exists within the world of understanding, but as a principle that has its origin in something that lies outside of the world, and yet, a principle that regulates the operation of our reason. Although it 'cannot refer to any object beyond experience [it] must be used within experience to order cognitions of the understanding.' (Rauscher, 2010, p.290) For Kant, it is only a transcendental theology that would have as its aim the demonstration of proof of God's existence, which Kant maintains is impossible. Common human reason fosters 'the need to assume something that exists with absolute necessity in order to find a resting place for thought.' (Allison, 2004, p.410) However, he ultimately lays bare the futility of any attempt to prove the existence of God from the point of view of absolute necessity, and later, from both the ontological and cosmological perspectives.[25] Transcendental theology wants to say that we cannot proceed with God as a concept without asserting that God has objective reality. But, as Kant sees it, the most that reason can do is to 'assume that *some* being exists' (p.420) that is the cause of everything. However, reason can never assume 'that *any particular* being, including an *ens realissimum*, does so.' (ibid.) And so, the Ideal is appropriate at a general conceptual level, in contrast to both the attempt to infer reality to God, and the desire to ascribe specific attributes to a specifically named highest being. Kant sees that something different is required for our thinking of (and talking about) God if we are still concerned about something approaching proof. As we

[25] Although Kant sees reason as ultimately incapable of proving God's existence, Allison points to the fact that his attitude to the 'absolute necessity' attempt is a sympathetic one. One could say that, for Kant, although it fails, that attempt is the most reasonable one. Kant says of it that it is 'the one single genuine ideal of which human reason is capable.' (A576/B604) It is a 'faultless ideal' (A641/B669) because, one could say, it marries best with Kant's concept of reason in its highest and purest form, as that which is interested in saying what is necessarily the case.

shall see in the next section, Kant moves to a consideration of God from the point of view of practical reason, because proof of God's existence from the perspective of theoretical reason is absolutely impossible.[26]

From the fideist perspective – a position which sees reason and faith as being in opposition to each other – theoretical reason can be interpreted as saying, in effect, that the specific idea of 'God' is therefore redundant. From the point of view of the ontological proof of God's existence, Kant demonstrates how theoretical reason, or, 'that through which I cognize what exists' (B661) fails in its attempt. Any attempt to ground human freedom as a relation to the ideal (to God) on pure reason cannot therefore be posited from the point of view of the

[26] In relation to the possible proofs of God's existence, Kant begins by saying that reason seeks an ultimate ground behind its concepts, but realizes that its desire (with an ultimate ground as a presupposition), potentially fulfilled in an ideal, does not necessarily infer the existence of this ideal in reality. Furthermore, that 'this is the natural course taken by every human reason, even the most common, although not everyone perseveres in it.' (B612)

For Kant, natural human reason is such that, from common experience, it assumes that something exists as the ultimate ground of everything – an absolutely necessary being, the 'All without limits…the highest being.' (B615) But, Kant shows that the Cartesian (or 'ontological') proof of God's existence fails, and that all other proofs ultimately revert to this one proof. In brief, the following outlines how he arrives at his conclusion.

The desire of reason for the existence of God as 'an absolutely necessary being' (B620), derived as a pure concept of reason, is not proof that this kind of being necessarily exists. Thinking of this being as 'unconditionally necessary' (ibid.) is a problem, because our understanding operates on the basis of conditions that allow it to arrive at an assertion as to the status of something as being *necessary*.

From the point of view of an analytic proposition, Kant asserts that to say 'God is not' (B623) is non-contradictory, in that, the 'not' rules out all possible predicates, and hence there is no contradiction because one has ruled out all predicates and the subject. To say something like 'God is omnipotent' (ibid.) is a necessary judgment, because to say 'God is not omnipotent' is a contradiction in an analytic proposition. One might try to argue that God (as a subject) can never be cancelled (in an analytic proposition) but this would be to presuppose God as being absolutely necessary in the first place. Another argument would say that God is 'a most real being' (B624) – having 'all reality'. (ibid) In saying 'God exists', positing the existence of God adds 'nothing to your thought of the thing.' (B625) The predicate is essentially repeating the presupposition of its existence in the first place.

From the point of view of an analytic proposition (which is the type that can lead us to something as being absolutely necessary), this assertion is untenable. Kant points out that if one views the proposition 'God exists' as a synthetic proposition, then we do not necessarily face a logical contradiction in removing 'existence' as a predicate. As an abstraction, a logical proposition cannot work for the positing of God's existence; a synthetic version of the proposition leaves us with an uncertainty. From the point of view of an analysis of an analytic proposition that would try to argue logically that 'God exists', one is led to the conclusion that it fails – existence is not a predicate. Even saying 'God is' (B627) adds 'no new predicate.' (ibid.) As an object of pure thinking, God's existence cannot be proven, but neither can it 'be declared absolutely impossible.' (B629) For reason, lack of certainty as to God's existence is the 'true abyss.' (B641)

theoretical. And so, having already made the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, Kant wants to turn to the latter as a route through the problem. This is not to undermine the importance of the ideal in our thinking. The ideal of reason helps to give our reasoning towards the moral law a focus: 'that of directing the understanding to a certain goal' (B672) in order to 'obtain…the greatest unity' (ibid.) in its concepts in arriving at their 'immanent use.' (B671) But, the practical use of reason seems to work further towards such a goal. As Kinnaman puts it: 'Denied the possibility of attaining theoretical knowledge, reason finds its fulfillment in its practical employment.' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.559) Kant essentially transitions from the 'as if' concept of God as the ideal, to the 'ought' concept of God in a metaphysics of morals. Or, one could say, from the regulative, to the moral, idea of God. For Kant, reason needs always to find the solution to a problem. As he says: 'all questions that pure reason poses must absolutely be answerable.' (B723) It needs to arrive at its absolute limit, in order to establish a final answer. And so, we can say that, whilst theoretical reason's failure with respect to knowledge certainly makes room for faith, Kant cannot stop there. For him, there must be some way in which the idea of God can be expressed in a way that is in keeping with rational thinking and rational language. And so, he shifts to a different way of looking at the problem, positing the existence of a highest being, but from the point of view of a practical reason that can only say what ought to be the case, or, 'that through which I represent what ought to exist.' (B661)

Kant's argument against traditional metaphysics, is that it can never posit knowledge of God from the point of view of theoretical reason. God can be an object 'of practical faith, but never of knowledge.' (Guyer, 2006, p.134) Or, as Kant says, the practical idea of God has 'only…immanent use, namely for fulfilling our vocation here in the world.' (B847) Practical reason as moral theology is the only door that is open to us in terms of, not so much proving that God exists, but rather by way of a rational explanation that ought to make sense to our faculty of reason. As Guyer puts it: 'He…[points] toward an alternative moral theology, in which the existence of God is to be postulated not as a condition of "what exists" but rather of "what ought to exist."'(Guyer, 2006,

p.152) The God of theoretical reason is in this way re-expressed as the God of practical reason, and this shift in translation is a necessary outcome of the limits of what can be said in terms of the former.

For Kant, there has to be 'some transcendental ground' (B724) for the world, but to ask after the predicates or traits of that ground is a question that 'has no significance at all' (ibid.) – it is not a question that theoretical reason can validly pose as a question in the first place. However, perhaps practical reason is in a better position to assign traits to such a being, given that it is only confined to what *ought* to be the case? But first, he must prove that a universal moral principle exists, in order to attempt to make room – yet again – for the idea of God as making such a principle possible in the first place.

1.4 The Limits of Reason: The Rational Principle of Morality

Before we begin what will be but a brief sketch of the way in which Kant arrives at a universal moral principle, we should ask an important question. Namely, what is at stake in this search? If Kant cannot get to a single principle in the context of freedom – the kind of singularity towards which reason naturally strives – then, in effect, this undermines the idea of a single being, a final end, a cause of everything, which is the origin of an ordered reality. That is to say, what is really at stake is the idea of God. Having differentiated between theoretical and practical reason – between what we can know for certain, and what can only be posited, or, what ought to be the case – Kant moves to formalize the rules that should govern our behavior in the context of what our reason tells us. His is an attempt to find a universal and necessary principle that is compatible with the idea of our freedom as having a rationally intelligible original cause. We have already seen that God as the ideal acts as a regulative principle which is posited as a *telos* that lies outside of sensible reality. Our limitations as human beings rule out the possibility for explaining the ends and causes of the world sufficiently, and from the point of view of governing our actions, and hence practical reason, the idea of God as a *telos*, or final cause, is only there for the 'reflective' and not 'determining' power of judgment. (5:416) Nevertheless, what we must find in terms of a single guiding principle must not contradict that kind

of idea. In other words, a moral order in the world must exist if 'order', on a much larger scale, is being assumed.

For Kant, the metaphysics of morals is the 'rational part' (4:388) that seeks an *a priori* principle. He writes: 'a law, if it is to be held morally, that is, as a ground of an obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity.' (4:389) There must be something inherent in such a principle that stands independently of 'mere experience.' (ibid.) In other words, it must be 'true' universally, and at all times. It is not enough that a rational being should merely conform to such a law. Crucially, an action 'must…be done *for the sake of the law*.' (4:390) [emphasis mine] Because Kant is here dealing with the search for a principle to act as a law for 'the human being's will' (4:387), he introduces the idea of a 'good will.' (4:393) The 'good will' must be produced by reason as 'good in itself.' (4:396) In order to find out what constitutes 'good in itself', Kant chooses to do so via 'the concept of duty, which contains that of a good will'. (4:397) He chooses duty as an example of a concept that has good will as its root, in order that he can find a single principle of morality. But, it must be duty performed from duty's sake, and not merely from the point of view of 'inner satisfaction' (4:398), or from 'inclination' (ibid.), no matter what positive result the action brings about for others. If it is not duty performed for duty's sake, then: 'the maxim lacks moral content, namely that of doing such actions not from inclination but from duty.' (ibid.) In aiming to find a pure ground for a moral law, he says that the end involved in an action cannot be regarded, and that duty must arise 'from respect for law.' (4:400) This law must be one that I will adhere to, even against my inclinations – hence a universal law – and the moral worth of it relies upon the ground of reason alone. Kant says that 'the highest and unconditional good alone can be found' (4:401) in the 'will of a rational being.' (ibid.) It is something that we already possess as rational beings. Kant arrives at a formulation of his categorical imperative – a principle for morally perfect action for all rational beings derived through reason. It relies upon the assertion, that, as law giving ends in themselves, rational beings as members 'of a kingdom of ends' (4:433) autonomously generate a universal law that would complement the right of every other member to treat and to be treated only ever as ends in

themselves and not merely as means.[27] To do otherwise would be to infringe upon another's freedom as a rationally motivated being, and a universal 'systematic union' (4:433) would fail. His categorical imperative states: 'act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.' (4:421) This 'inner' (4:407) principle is entirely independent of motives and inclinations, except for the motive towards adhering to the categorical imperative as an end in itself. But, as Guyer points out, the categorical imperative is distinct from a fundamental 'principle.' Seeing as we are not 'purely rational' (Guyer, 2006, p.180) beings, with the propensity towards not acting out of duty for duty's sake, Kant prescribes a categorical imperative. By 'imperative' is meant that which 'we *ought* to follow, thus a constraint.' (ibid.)

However, Kant admits of a lack of proof as to why this principle in which rational beings take an 'interest' (4:449) should be *a priori* necessary (4:444), and that, as we are also members of a world of sense (4:454), it can only therefore extend as far as an 'ought.' (ibid.) In other words, he admits that it is impossible to make 'comprehensible' this interest. (4:459) There is clearly a gap in Kant's account of moral action. He cannot offer a 'final' reason as to why a rational being ought *necessarily* to act for the sake of the law as an end in itself. He presupposes that our common sense will be able to guide us with respect to knowing 'what the categorical imperative requires and that it requires that of *us*.' (Guyer, 2006, p.180) In other words, that we will naturally see that acting out of duty is a duty for every rational being. However, he cannot get to a more

[27] Kant attempts to get to a ground, positing the human 'as an end in itself, not merely as a means' (4:428), because one thing that sets us apart from other creatures is that we are able to act with ends in mind. Ends are of interest to us. It makes sense not to do anything that would prevent another person (and oneself) from 'preserv[ing] and promot[ing]' (Guyer, 2006, p.187) their humanity, i.e., not to treat them as merely a means to an end. There is a sense here in which the knock-on effects of one's actions are being factored in. One could say that the future implications are kept in mind. But, did Kant manage to find a rational ground that gets away from considerations of future implications in order to say why this necessarily ought to be the case? Why should *I* necessarily consider *you*? Perhaps the only answer that can be given is that our capacity to choose is what defines us as human beings, and that to undermine that capacity is to deprive oneself and others of something so crucial. In effect, he winds up back where he began, i.e., with the idea of freedom. So, the question really is: "Why are we free?" As Guyer says: 'the postulate of freedom is the presupposition of the very possibility of morality.' (p.230)

fundamental principle in order to ground that common sense assertion. He also cannot show why a good will 'is of any value by itself, entirely independently' (p.181) of that which it brings about, i.e., independently of experience. He tries to ground it in terms of duty, but cannot find a rational principle to ground the motivation of respect for law. He cannot show why the categorical imperative should be so compelling a choice on the basis of duty to duty itself.

Reason's view is a narrow one, in which 'reason by itself and independently of all appearances commands what ought to happen…inflexibly commanded by reason.' (4:408) And yet, reason again comes to an impasse. The categorical imperative is that which *ought* to hold for all rational beings, but the gap in Kant's account yet again 'makes room' for the idea of God. If 'a rational being needs a reason to adhere to a law' (Guyer, 2006, p.185), perhaps the idea of God in itself is a good enough reason? The moral law to be discovered *seems* to 'prescribe something to reason as an end without condition.' (5:449) But the gap in Kant's account of duty to the law, leads him to assign a new title to the ideal of reason. God is now re-expressed as the head of the kingdom of ends: 'a legislative sovereign in a moral realm of ends.' (5:444) The problem is that, in reality, 'it very often does not happen' (4:388) that human beings act out of a sense of duty. And so, Kant posits God as our 'moral lawgiver' (6:156), or, as a regulative moral idea.

In brief, we can posit God as the final end from two perspectives, namely, from the point of view of physical teleology, and from that of moral teleology. Our theoretical reason can be employed in pushing the boundaries of what is knowable in relation to the 'mechanism of nature' (5:418), and our practical reason can facilitate our relation to the 'moral legislator' (5:455) of the world. In the context of the principle of morality, the idea of God is 'necessary for action on the basis of the moral law.' (Rauscher, 2010, p.304) It seems that Kant is forever pointing us in the direction of faith, even if, from the perspective of language, he is bound to what is rationally intelligible in terms of the idea of God. These limitations are clear in terms of the kind of terminology he is drawn towards using. He cannot name God in quite the same way as the fideist who, in

this respect, seems to have the upper hand in terms of a far more straightforward, but not more assertive, expression. Nevertheless, he *must* include the idea of God in whatever form he deems to be applicable to a rational articulation. In the final section of this chapter, we will very briefly bring into focus the idea of Kant's pointing to faith in the context of his project of reason viewed in broader terms.

1.5 Pointing to Faith or The Unifying Role of Faith

The fact that Kant in some way felt bound to include God as one of the ideas of reason, when there was no logical or rationally explicable reason for doing so, is the subject of an 'extremely hostile reception' (Allison, 2004, p.320) to that part of his philosophy. However, as Allison maintains, there is nothing unreasoned about this decision on Kant's part. He writes:

> His concern is…with a certain kind of metaphysical reasoning, namely, one that leads to the positing of transcendent entities. Since the ideas of the soul and God clearly fall within this category, there is nothing arbitrary in Kant's inclusion of them…First and foremost, it is required by his theory of reason. Although reason's conception of the unconditioned is illusory, it is not self-contradictory. (p.321)

In other words, there is a perfectly rational explanation for Kant's use of the idea of God. And this seems to be a plausible statement to make in terms of both theoretical *and* practical reason. Reason, if it is to be viable in its broadest concept, ought to be able to include something as big as the idea of God. It ought to be able to exercise its 'demand for the unconditioned.' (ibid.) Be that as it may, we began this chapter by outlining the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, and then we saw how this distinction made by Kant leads to a problem in relation to reason as being unified. However, the idea that theoretical and practical reason stem from the one reason might be better thought of 'as a regulative claim' (Kleingeld, 1998, p.317) in itself. That is to say, thinking of unity as a common, regulative goal, in order to orient theoretical and practical thinking on the same path. But, what will bring them back together, as it were?

The distinction between the two serves to orient us in thinking *towards* the goal of unity – 'towards the form of a system of ends.' (B843) And so, even if we can never square the idea of God as the Ideal with the idea of God as our moral lawgiver, at least our thinking is working in a kind of unified way. We have a vested interest in orienting our thinking in this kind of direction in order to make sense of the world in which we live. Kleingeld says that Kant does not elaborate on what he means by 'form', but can we not posit that such harmony takes up a 'form' in the idea of moral faith within the boundaries of the religion of pure reason? We might be able to say that his *Religion* project was in some way an attempt to unify the theoretical idea of God as the Ideal, and the practical idea of God as our moral lawgiver. Is this one of his motivations for wanting to say something about religion, even if we can say that the idea of God, *per se*, is not shown by him to be necessary, nor does it necessarily follow that God, *per se*, is implied by morality? Even if he has failed to show that theoretical and practical reason are unified, it might give us an insight into the way in which he was thinking in attempting to transition out of the first *Critique*.

Even if 'much of the most influential literature on the *Critique of Pure Reason* does not deal with the Transcendental Dialectic…in much detail' (Kleingeld, 1998, p.324), we can say that Kant himself saw it as necessary to want to carry over the ideas from the end of the first critique into his discussion of morality, and then religion. So why did he find it necessary? If Hamann had a theological understanding of language and reason, then it seems to me that Kant too – when viewed in broad terms – had a theological understanding of reason's need to find some resolution to the questions of our existence. Kant limits reason in order to make room for faith. And in the next chapter, we shall see how he formally articulates *his* version of religious faith in contrast to Christianity. But, there is another way of looking at this too. Kinnaman (2001) essentially maintains that Kant does not succeed in showing how reason, as it is construed in the first *Critique*, is necessarily the best arbiter of what constitutes a truth for the individual to live by.[28] And we can further add that the

[28] 'We have no grounds, on the basis of the argument of the first Critique, to think that the goals reason sets for us can be achieved; nor does Kant's theory provide a basis for defending his

Groundwork still contains a gap in the account. There is nothing to stop the fideist responding by saying that, if rational thinking cannot get to the truth, then the truth is up for grabs. Religion – and more specifically, the Christian tradition in which Kant is embedded – can (and does) offer the individual a way in which to live their life that already has, for example, an ethical component. Can religion not also serve to guide us in our striving towards the highest good, to guide actions, thinking, science, and, more importantly, to guide religious faith? The challenge faced by Kant – when viewed as a defender of reason – is to give a reasonable account of the kind of faith that necessarily arises as a result of the limitations encountered by both theoretical and practical reason. He *needs* to give an account of faith in order to, in some way, unify that which had been separated. For Hamann, Kant merely secularizes the issue. He attempts to translate the idea of God into the language of reason.[29] In Hamann's view, 'Faith is not the work of reason.' (*Memorabilia*, p.169) But that is not to say that Kant's move into the sphere of religion is an irrational one.

At the end of the first *Critique*, one could say that the old God has been killed off. That is, there is no clear reason as to why the idea of God must be retained, seeing as Kant rules out all knowledge of God. However, O'Neill (1997) too sees Kant's efforts with respect to religious faith as helping to bridge this divide. For theoretical reason, God is posited as the Idea; for practical reason, as the moral lawgiver. It is this idea of God, albeit a 'new' God of reason, that helps to unify theoretical and practical reason. We cannot prove God's existence, but we can posit Him as our moral lawgiver, and, as we shall soon see, as the God of the pure religion of reason. She writes: 'Kant offers good reasons for thinking that the bridge across the great gulf can be bridged by *an* account of religion.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.271) [emphasis mine] One could say that the question of God, expressed in moral-religious terms by Kant, is in itself what unifies his project as a whole.

Why does he only introduce the three famous questions almost at the end of the first *Critique*? That is: What can I know?; What ought I do?; What

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conception of reason against other plausible and coherent sources of warranted assertion, such as religion.' (Kinnaman, 2001, p.560)

[29] Betz calls this 'Kant's fictionalization of the idea of the highest being.' (Betz, 2004, p.295)

may I hope?[30] Was it a case of putting the cart before the horse, or is there something else going on here? Kant answers the questions "What can I know?" and "What ought I do?" via theoretical and practical reason respectively. The last question – "What may I hope?" – is his way of introducing the idea of God more definitively into the argument. But, we can ask, does he perhaps have the idea of God and religion in mind from the outset, without making it explicit until 'required'? Perhaps his stated aim of limiting reason in order to make room for faith could be read as covering up the fact that one of his underlying aims was rather to account for faith by limiting reason, precisely because he knew that that was the only way of offering a solution to the problem of separate modes of reason? That question must remain unanswered. But, we have the advantage of looking at Kant's project in retrospect. And it is not implausible to maintain that Kant always had the question of God in mind, albeit from a reason-first perspective. We now move to the next chapter, in order to see exactly what form his expression of faith takes.

[30] See B833.

Chapter Two: Kant's Moral Faith

In chapter one we investigated Kant's setting out of the limits of reason and its operation. Kant makes a distinction between two forms of reason: theoretical reason asserts what *is* the case; practical reason, what *ought* to be the case. In the Transcendental Dialectic of the first Critique, he accounts for God as the Ideal of practical reason: God can never be an object of experience, but ought to be posited, because that idea applies to how we experience the world. In the *Groundwork*, he asserts that our practical reason can derive a supreme moral principle to guide our actions as rational and autonomous beings in a kingdom of ends.

The two main sources for Kant's expressions in relation to religious faith are his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant declares his religion project to be an 'experiment' (6:12) It is an 'attempt' (6:13) to unify reason and Scripture. Viewed through the lens of the conclusions of the *Groundwork*, a rational being ought to be able to recognize moral concepts of reason in their encounter with Scripture. That is to say, that Biblical teachings will resonate with our practical reason. If this were not the case, then the ecclesiastical faith in which a person might find himself or herself, by virtue of tradition, would be in conflict with what their innate reason would command. We can easily understand reason-derived moral concepts, but there are some contents of revelation that are not so easily understood, at least not until they are 'transformed into moral concepts.' (6:14) The aim of this first section is to attempt to encapsulate some key features of Kant's moral faith.

2.1 Morality Leads to Religion: The Moral Need for God, and the Good Heart

In the Preface to the first edition of the *Religion* book, Kant asserts that morality is a self-sufficient system that does not need religion, nor the idea of a higher being. He writes: 'morality…is in need neither of the idea of another being above him…on its own behalf morality in no way needs religion…but is rather self-sufficient by virtue of pure practical reason.' (6:3) Morality relies only upon the individual's recognition of duty, as an unconditional, universally held law. Mere

unquestioning faith in a higher being and their purported commands in order to inform one's duty, is not in keeping with self-sufficient rational morality. Although he wants to say that moral laws *can* be abstracted without ends as a ground, he does not deny that we are still inclined to ask the question as to what will result from our choices. However, he asserts that every decision over proper action must always revert to whether or not it abides by the 'supreme principle of moral maxims.' (6:4n) We can call this a *reason-first* position.

So, given this reason-first stance, how and why does he arrive at his concept of religious faith? The idea of God is clearly important to human beings, but it is also important for Kant's thinking in relation to the limits of reason. Theoretical reason cannot show why God should necessarily exist, even if such reasoning finds some resolution in the unifying idea of God. As we shall see, the moral system proposed for human action also needs the idea of God in order to make good on its aim. In short, Kant *must* introduce the idea of something external to man in order to make up for our deficiency vis-à-vis the fulfillment of the command of the categorical imperative. From the perspective of practical reason, we can make the idea of moral perfection and moral progress intelligible. However, in facing its own limitations with respect to this goal, the human being, as rational, is 'conscious of its impotence to satisfy its moral needs.' (6:52) It is natural that our reason should want to seek beyond the limit in order to fill in the missing piece of the puzzle with respect to the fulfillment of what is posited as possible for us.

So why ought that idea be that of God, specifically? He says that 'it is the human being's own fault' (6:3) if he should need the idea of a higher being and/or need some reason to observe his duty other than purely from the 'incentive' (6:3) of the moral law for its own sake. But, when he says that it is the human being's own fault, what he is trying to say is that, as beings who are naturally drawn to sensible desires and needs, this lure creates the conditions for a desire to posit God as a motivating force for our rational moral faculty. He maintains that this is a need that cannot be 'relieved' (ibid.) in any way other than through morality. We need to posit a higher being who can aid us in achieving the 'highest possible good in this world' (6:6n), which he believes

rational beings ought to have as a goal. In order to account for a relationship between religion and morality, Kant still faces a situation in which *some* leap beyond knowledge must be made with respect to the idea of a higher being. Although morality is, for Kant, a self-sufficient system, the realization of a reason-derived morality by human beings can only ideally occur in conjunction with the idea of an end for right conduct. That is to say, with the idea of duty conceived of as divine commands that originate in God as our moral lawgiver. As he writes: '[God as] an ultimate end of all things…a special point of reference for the unification of all ends.' (6:5) His view is that it is only the idea of God that unites the supreme moral principle (duty) with those ends (the highest good, self-perfection, and happiness of others) that ultimately refer back to that principle. The idea of God – more specifically, Kant's 'God' – can unite the efforts of individuals in a kingdom of ends. For Kant, it is only the idea of God that makes the highest good possible.[31] In Kant's moral faith, the 'kingdom of virtue' (6:94) finds its sovereign expressed as 'God.' We simply must posit a 'higher moral being' (6:98) above us in aiming for a highest good for the world. In this way, 'Morality thus inevitably leads to religion, and through religion it extends itself.' (6:6) But, we must be quite specific. Kant's is the 'pure religion of reason' (6:12), and his God has a specific character. He attempts to bridge the gap between a self-sufficient system of morality (a gap created by our failings as less-than-ideal humans), and religion, by reframing the supreme principle of morality – as manifested in Christ's teachings – as 'most holy.' (6:83) That is to say, it is through this principle, then through religion, that we 'worship' (6:7) God as that being which enables the highest good. We simply need 'the idea of a highest good in the world, for whose possibility we must assume a higher, moral, most holy, and omnipotent being.' (6:5)

Perhaps one might still harbor reservations with respect to the plausibility of the need for the specific idea of God? If the supreme moral

[31] For Kant, this is 'only the idea of an object that unites within itself the formal condition of all such ends as we ought to have…with everything which is conditional upon ends…and which conforms to duty…that is, the idea of a highest good in the world, for whose possibility we must assume a higher, moral, most holy, and omnipotent being who can alone unite the two elements of this good.' (6:5)

principle that would guide every rational being is that which is within every rational being as autonomous, then why is an external lawgiver in the form of God necessary? Is reason autonomous or not? For Kant, human beings can only intuit themselves through sense experience. Although we can arrive at a principle of morality from an intellectual perspective, our limitations as sensible beings prevent us from fully assessing our behavior against the standard of such a principle. Therefore, Kant wants to say that it is only God who can assess the inner motivation (or, heart) of the individual. Only God can understand us fully, and hence the specific idea of God as our moral lawgiver is necessary for moral faith. Notwithstanding the question of immortality, the afterlife, and the idea of final judgment[32], Kant's idea is that we humans can never have an absolute (divine) overview of the extent to which we have sinned in terms of the principle of morality over our lifetime.

Given that proper motivation is at the very core of the supreme moral principle, Kant asserts that all 'true duties' (6:99) of an ethical community must be viewed as coinciding with God's commands, and his system of faith must preserve at all times the idea of our freedom to choose. Kant thus translates the practical idea of duty into duty to divine commands originating in God as our moral lawgiver. One could say that Kant's concept of religion is an attempt to bridge the God-sized gap created by the ideality of a seemingly unachievable moral goal. However, it is important to stress that Kant cannot allow duty to God to be conceived of as something external to the ethical. He attempts to read the statement: 'We ought to obey God rather than men' (6:100n) as saying that human laws that transgress the ethical should not be obeyed, and that neither should purported divine laws that do likewise. We must always remind ourselves of what Kant means when he interprets 'God.' Obedience to divine law that has its origin in revelation, as an end in itself, is denied access in Kant's terms, not least because alleged commands can never be empirically proven to have originated in God. In order to act for good, one must always have the supreme

[32] These ideas are not central to an understanding of moral faith, given that the focus is on Kant's attempt to draw a line between the religion of pure reason and that of revealed faith, and so they are not being considered here or elsewhere.

principle of morality as one's guide. The autonomous human being is conceived of as the 'author' (6:21) of her own evil or good. In order to be morally good, rational beings must comply with the moral law totally, with no other end in mind except duty to the moral law as an end in itself. The singular nature of the command requires of us a singular and consistent response. As free, we can choose to live our lives in obedience to the moral law, or to exercise our freedom in not doing so. The result of our choice makes for the 'good or evil heart.' (6:29) He maintains that our deeds as such prove our moral evil (or moral goodness), but he is clear that the choosing of the moral law or not, is in itself an 'intelligible deed.' (6:31) In other words, we sin in our thinking when we disregard the moral law. We are being *unfaithful* in our thinking and choosing. He wants to circumscribe faith: 'Whatever is not of this faith is sin.' (6:30) Only when one is acting 'according to the spirit' (ibid.) that is the supreme principle of morality can one be said to be acting *faithfully*.

In religious terms, Kant's ideal rational being will be the one who is 'pleasing to God' (6:47) by virtue of an absolutely fundamental 'change of heart' (ibid.) – what he calls a 'revolution in the disposition of the human being' (ibid.) – in which a new being is created. He writes: 'And so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation…and a change of heart.' (ibid.) He says that our progress towards moral perfection, that is, towards becoming 'holy', is endless. It might be possible to become virtuous by habitually practicing obedience to laws that might alter the human propensity towards vice. However, Kant stresses the importance of the good heart as a fundamental subjective ground, notwithstanding the need for an accompanying progressive change of habit in the sensible realm. One is 'reborn' in moral faith when one chooses correctly. One fulfills one's divinely gifted 'moral vocation' (6:50) by orienting oneself correctly. Kant believes that these two elements are sufficient in order for human beings to become pleasing to God in the restoration of the good heart. The reason-first stance always underscores Kant's expression of religious themes.

The starting point for Kant's moral faith is a 'generic' (Westphal, 2014, p.83) expression of reason which 'is the exercise of the human intellect unaided, which is to say, not dependent on any divine revelation not already available to human intellect.' (ibid.) However, although Kant desires an abstract and pure ground for both nature and freedom, both theoretical and practical reasoning, according to Kant, lead to the need for the idea of God. Westphal sees this as the kind of reason which is 'at its very best' (p.83n) in not denying the idea of God. In this respect, the move to religious thought in Kant it neither unreasonable nor irrational. But we must always remember that, seeing as reason takes priority in Kant's account, his assessment in relation to established religion – which already makes its own claims with respect to proper behavior – will be limited to a language that is compatible with such a stance. As O'Neill puts it: 'Morality…appears as the parent rather than as the child of religion' (O'Neill, 1997, p.292), because, for Kant, practical reason is the only viable position from which it is possible to speak of faith.

Firestone (1999) reads Kant as arguing against experience as having a transforming power over what practical reason commands. Kant wants to move from a rationally derived system of morality towards experience, rather than the other way around. Reason comes first, then application.[33] When we are faced with the challenges of our sensual nature, and with the challenge of answering the question as to why we should necessarily act out of duty alone, then a transition takes place between what we can posit, and what we can never know. When Kant says, in effect, that rational morality (in the abstract) is self-sufficient, we can read this as saying that the truth that practical reason proposes is never transformed. It is a coherent ideal in itself. And so the move to religious thought in Kant is a 'transition' (B386) that is made in order to account for that which goes beyond our scope of knowledge. The idea of God is an avenue 'for reason's self-consistent extension.' (Firestone, 1999, p.165) Kant is not seeking to alter or transform reasoned thinking, but attempting to move 'to

[33] 'Kant's critical philosophy, considered as a two-tiered system of theory and practice.' (Firestone, 1999, p.167)

a new perspective.' (p.166) It is a move that we come to expect of reason, given its drive towards final knowledge. His understanding of religion – if reason is to be consistent – is therefore inevitable. Kant's opening statement in the *Religion* book asserts that morality – or at least the *ideal* of a rationally derived system of morality – can stand alone from religion. And yet, as Derrida (2002) interprets Kant, the idea that morality inevitably leads to religion places morality in a position of weakness. In other words, the fact that a religious expression is somehow necessary in order to make good on the project of morality, undermines the idea that morality is absolutely freestanding. Derrida says that what Kant implies is that 'the idea of a morality that is pure but non-Christian would be absurd.' (Derrida, 2002, p.11) For Kant, Christianity comes closest to the ideal religion. And so, the Christian God – re-expressed as our moral lawgiver – is necessary for moral faith. The idea here is that a *pure* religion completes morality, insofar as human beings are *impure*, i.e., imperfect with respect to the pure moral principle. Kant isn't simply making room for, or accommodating, faith. The transition to faith is absolutely necessary in Kant's account, even if someone like Firestone wants to say that 'finding the supposed room for faith Kant creates in his philosophy' is a 'challenge.' (Firestone, 2009, xii)

What we must always keep in mind is the idea of an interpretation of faith being attempted by Kant that is always informed by the perspective of reason. Kant might *want* to say that concepts that go beyond experience cannot 'have any meaning' (*Prolegomena*, p.1017) – at least from a theoretical perspective – but, the idea of God has meaning for humans. And so, from the practical perspective, 'the idea of God gives meaning to the moral quest where otherwise there would be none.' (Firestone, 2009, p.5) Kant therefore sees (a limited concept of) faith as rational – 'that when individuals act practically, they find themselves rationally compelled to believe' (Evans, 2006, p.54) If acting according to the supreme principle of morality is the given end, then its 'attainment' can only occur 'so long as [a person] *believes* that this end is possible.' (Wood, 1978, p.21) [emphasis mine] Without the idea of God, human

endeavour is at a loss. Religious thinking, as it were 'completes'[34] Kant's rational project. Religious reason answers the question: "What should I do?" by saying: "Do this, and you will not only be morally good, but you will also serve the highest good of becoming pleasing to God. That is your reward, and you will therefore be spiritually happy." But, pleasing to what God precisely? The response: the God of a moral faith which finds a specific expression in Kant's philosophy[35], even if, as some contend, he was in some way 'influenced by fideism.' (Evans, 1998, p.66)

2.2 Religious Spheres: Harmony or Dissonance in the Sayable?

Kant characterizes the pure religion of reason as a sphere contained within the 'wider sphere' (6:12) of revelation.[36] Although he views moral faith to be at the core of Christianity, he also maintains that there are contents of revelatory faith that are 'nonessential' (7:9) to reason. He goes as far as to say that the acceptance of those teachings of the Bible that have a purely revelatory origin does not automatically guarantee a faith that is in itself 'meritorious.' (7:41) In fact, according to him, there is no blame to be ascribed to a person of moral faith who cannot bring themselves to accept those teachings of Scripture that cannot be made intelligible by practical reason, because all that really counts in terms of our progress towards God is our morally focused relation to Him.

As noted previously, Kant describes his *Religion* project as an 'experiment.' (6:12) It is an attempt to see if some contents of revelation are compatible with his pure religion of reason. In doing so, he proposes that the results of his endeavour might show that the moral concepts to be found in a pure religion of reason might be 'sufficient to genuine religion.' (ibid.) We can recall that, for him, morality does not need the idea of a higher being, and by extension, revelation. Kant is trying to make sense of some of the contents of revelation from the point of view of reason, and for reason, but one could also

[34] See Firestone, 1999, p.155.
[35] 'Kant…contends that we can…believe in God in certain ways, guided by…reason.' (Firestone, 2009, p.12)
[36] '[Revelation] as a wider sphere of faith that includes the other [rational faith], a narrower one, within itself.' (6:12)

say that his project in *some* way makes revelation redundant. He can only attempt to bridge the divide between faith and reason by confining his argument to those 'tenets of faith that are the essence of any religion as such…the morally practical' (7:8-9), but only with a formulation of faith that arises from reason. As such, he does not in reality bridge the divide between a rational and a revelatory faith. He merely reaffirms reason's claim to a position of authority (reason-first) in which everything is open to scrutiny. The only thing that saves him from this accusation is the fact that he is explicit from the start that his proposed pure religion of reason is part of this wider sphere of faith. If it can be shown that a moral faith is sufficient to genuine religion, then, he maintains, reason and Scripture will be unified. In this way, the person who follows the former route 'will not fail to come across the other as well.' (6:13) However, the possibility for conflict between a revelatory faith and a pure moral faith is not ruled out. Ecclesiastical teachings might say one thing, whilst one's rational faith might say another. There might indeed be 'two religions in one person.'[37] (ibid.)

For Kant, only a religion (or church) based upon such a moral faith can be universal, i.e., one that is both 'necessary and…true.' (6:115) In contrast, a religion that relies upon historical, factual claims, is only convincing in so far as those claims can be verified. Kant asserts that it is 'absolutely impossible' (6:103) to become pleasing to God in a more intimate way other than through a rational faith. To cling to a faith that does not require anything of the individual other than a merely 'literal faith' (6:147) in God as the source of faith itself, is for Kant a faith that is deterministic, i.e., determined by God and not humanity. However, although Kant wants to say that the pure religion that arises from a purely moral faith should stand independently from the historical (as is characteristic of the written, documented word of Scripture), nevertheless, he also admits that a 'holy book and an ecclesiastical faith based on it' (6:132) are necessary if human beings are to be united in one religion. The Scriptures are 'useful to religious

[37] 'Were this not so, we would either have two religions in one person, which is absurd, or a religion and a cult, in which case…the two would have to be often shaken up together that they might…combine…however, they would soon have to separate again and let the purely moral religion (the religion of reason) float to the top.' (6:13)

faith as its mere sensible vehicle' (7:37), but moral faith is coherent in its own right. Revelation and Scripture serve some purpose, but are non-essential to moral faith. For Kant, even if these historical beliefs could be proven beyond a doubt to have never happened, his reason-derived religious faith would still have a solid footing. His view is that we cannot be prevented from interpreting Scripture rationally, but we are permitted to ignore certain teachings as questionable in terms of their divine origin. He writes: 'Only a moral interpretation…is really an authentic one.' (7:48) An interpretation of Scripture that cannot be made intelligible to reason is therefore 'inauthentic' faith. It cannot have a divine origin, given that Kant's concept of the divine is a specifically moral one. For Kant, it is a grave mistake to emphasize the historical elements as being essential for religious belief. One might encounter a problem in some of the tenets of faith espoused in the New Testament that in many ways override those of the Old Testament. The case of Abraham is an example of 'the mistake of including [these remnants of] Judaism in the tenets of faith' (7:38) that 'can well make us moan: *nunc istae reliquias nos exercent.*'[38] (ibid.) Kant wants to de-emphasize the role of historical 'truth' in the Bible's stories and statements, precisely because they contravene the tenets of a religion that would be driven by morality. Philosophical theology cannot accommodate every single piece of teaching from Scripture, but it does not pretend to have that as an aim.

In *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant focuses on the relation between philosophical and biblical theology. It is his response to the charge that he misused his philosophy 'to distort and disparage many of the cardinal and basic teachings of the Holy Scriptures and of Christianity.' (7:6) His response is borne out of a desire to justify his reasons for wanting to make revelatory contents intelligible to reason. He cannot avoid the need for an accommodation of Scripture because a rational project always has as its aim a maximum discovery of the truth. In saying that Christianity 'is not in itself a free faith' (6:164), Kant is pointing to the fact that there are tenets that Christianity asserts must be accepted. He sees reason as being charged with the task of making intelligible those crucial articles of Christian faith, in order that our purely moral faith

[38] Translated: "those remains now weary us."

should not be entirely divorced from contingent, ecclesiastical faith. So, how does he make room for revealed religion, and what, according to him, can be legitimately said? He makes the point that revelatory faith is integral to Christian religion only insofar as it is part of a work in progress towards the ideal religion of reason. However, he is more explicit in terms of what biblical theology can legitimately say. He asserts that biblical theology should confine itself to a literal understanding of Scripture, in the hope that the understanding will be in some way supernaturally inspired. Kant believes that, because 'truth' belongs to the sphere of philosophy, Biblical theology should not emphasize the historical aspects of the Bible, because, put simply, they can neither be proven nor disproven. According to Kant, these historical beliefs are 'not an essential part of religious faith.' (7:37) Biblical theology should not attempt to seek a 'moral' or 'nonliteral' (7:24) meaning in the Bible. To do so would be to step into the sphere of moral reasoning. Philosophical theology can 'evaluate with cold reason…unintimidated by the sacredness of the object.' (7:33) That is, it can enunciate the sayable in a rational language, without having to worry over preserving a content of revelation. But faith is 'delusory' (6:194) if it attempts to overstep the boundaries of theoretical and practical reason, for which the supernatural can never be a cognizable object. Biblical theology is deluded in wanting to interpret contents of revelation in rational terms because, as far as Kant is concerned, the direction in which one can legitimately 'move' between the spheres is dictated by reason-first rules.[39]

Kant offers no tangible solution to the problem he sees as being faced by the Biblical theologian in the attempt to interpret the Bible literally. He says that they can hope for a 'supernatural opening of [the] understanding' (7:24), but he does not spell out what that might mean. It seems that, having circumscribed a boundary, Kant wants to argue that what can be said in the outer sphere is acceptable as long as it does not involve reason. He leaves revelation to its own devices, as it were. If the Biblical theologian wants to make the argument that

[39] 'In Christian revealed doctrine, however, we cannot by any means begin with an unconditional faith in revealed propositions (of themselves hidden to reason) and then have erudite cognition follow behind.' (6:164)

their interpretations of the Bible are 'allegorical and mystical' (7:45), then we can point to the fact that they must be in a position to assess what parts of the Bible are for mystical interpretation and what parts are not. That would then seem to imply that a judgment is being made by engaging reason in that decision-making process, which of course Kant warns against.

Kant's opinion is that Christianity is a 'moral religion' (6:51) that promotes moral progress. And so, Kant has something positive to say about it. The yardstick by which an ecclesiastical faith is to be judged relates to how close it comes to Kant's pure religion of reason. For him, our moral predisposition is the 'foundation and at the same time the interpreter of all religion.' (6:120) In the Preface to *The Conflict of the Faculties*, as a footnote, Kant says that his intention in the *Religion* book was to 'set forth as a coherent whole everything in the Bible…that can *also* be recognized *by mere reason*.' (7:6) He is clear that the project of the religion book was not to appraise Christianity, but to show how some of the tenets of the Bible can be made intelligible from the point of view of reason. But, we can still legitimately ask the question as to how, when some elements cannot be so easily squared by reason, he can avoid the implicit appraisal of (some of) the teachings of Christianity as being irrational, or at least morally questionable in the eyes of reason. In other words, what cannot be spoken of intelligibly by reason is left in that space beyond reason's sphere, i.e., the wider sphere of revelation. For Kant, Christianity comes closest to the ideal pure religion of reason, primarily because of its alignment with the moral teachings to be derived by reason: 'its harmony…with the purest moral belief of religion.' (7:9) Saying that something is 'the most adequate' (7:36) should surely be read as an appraisal, even if Kant says that an appraisal of Christianity was not the aim of the *Religion* book.[40] And 'adequate' doesn't exactly read as an enthusiastic response to the Christian faith. Be that as it may, the point is that Kant is bound by both the aims and language of the rational sphere, and so we should not be surprised by his somewhat ambivalent reason-first attitude to the Christian religion. He sees Scripture as that element of ecclesiastical faith that is

[40] 'Since, in the book mentioned, I make no appraisal of Christianity, I cannot be guilty of *disparaging* it.' (7:8)

independent of the contingencies of 'tradition.' (6:107) It is a timeless 'revelation to present and future generations.' (ibid.) For him, Scripture is somehow mysteriously insulated from 'the subtle argument' (ibid.) of reason, insofar as, in his view, it is only reason that can assert certainties. Nevertheless, he sees revelation as being capable of providing human beings with the kind of certainty needed in relation to 'duty to divine service' (ibid.) by virtue of its moral content.[41] He cannot make a definitive pronouncement on Christianity *in toto*, but he *can* point to the merits of Scripture from a rational viewpoint.

Kant wants to preserve privilege not for Biblical theology, but for 'the philosopher' (Pasternack, 2015, p.497). As to whether or not he is guilty of appraising Christianity, I agree with the view that Kant's philosophical project in the *Religion* book *reads* as appraising 'traditional Christian doctrines and the biblical passages upon which they are based.' (Pasternack, 2015, p.498) But, when one adopts the broader perspective of language expression in relation to faith, then, rather than focusing on 'appraisal' – as a negative connotation – one can see that there is an inevitability to Kant's approach, which is that of a 'translation' into something intelligible to reason. We should not be surprised to find that Kant's attitude to the sphere of revelation – and to those operating within it – is one with a reason-first focus. Kant stands his ground in this regard. His 'firm answer is that morality rather than Scripture comes first.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.298) Kant's religion is not orthodox Christianity, and so, in the broadest sense, it is incompatible with Christianity as a totality. Kant's system needs the specific idea of God, whether or not we/he can account for it fully rationally. That is to say, why the idea should necessarily be named as 'God.' Davis accepts 'that religion and theology play an integral role in Kant's philosophy' (Davis, 2017, p.65), but he maintains that it is essentially incompatible with Christianity as it is normally understood. Kant was describing the pure religion of reason, as opposed to Christianity. He might want to say that philosophical theology ought to be communicated in a language that has a specific (philosophical) audience in

[41] As Kant observes, 'no subtle argument can stand up to the knockdown pronouncement, *Thus it is written*…How fortunate, when one such book…contains complete…the purest moral doctrine of religion.' (6:107)

mind – a communication that is scholarly, and for scholars 'with the appropriate powers of discernment' (Pasternack, 2015, p.488) – but, he cannot guarantee that it won't read as an appraisal. He proclaims that philosophical theology ought to keep a 'respectful distance' (6:191) from the teachings of revealed religion, and that Biblical theology is in a position of 'privilege.' (6:9) If philosophy is to use Scripture, it ought to be used in such a way as to provide support for such a philosophical view of faith, rather than to assess revealed religion. The purported ideal arises from what philosophy has to say regarding religious faith. But, Kant cannot be guaranteed that, from the perspective of Biblical theology (and the Christian), this won't be viewed as an appraisal. He can *say* that there is privilege, but this does not mean that he can avoid appraising.

From the Kantian perspective, some tenets of Christianity are 'nonessential' (7:9) and 'arbitrary and contingent.' (6:168) Anything that falls outside of that which is essential from the perspective of a rational and moral faith, is 'mere religious delusion and counterfeit service of God.' (6:170) For him, we are mistaken if we believe that we can bring about 'a supernatural effect' (6:177) through rituals and prayer. These belong to a mere nonessential 'fetishism.' (ibid.) But, all of this reads as a dismissive appraisal. We could say that, even though he views some tenets such as the idea of miracles, and the sacraments, as helpful in terms of inspiring us on an emotional level, such tenets are like 'window-dressing.' He does not consider them 'in themselves…necessary.' (Pasternack, 2015, p.494) Does this demolish the 'privilege' he affords to Biblical theology? It certainly seems like a fine line between a judgment and an assessment. We should ask as to whether or not saying they have instrumental value constitutes a judgment. Hamann would certainly point to the knot of language in which Kant is trapped. Speaking the sayable comes at price. What is gained by a rational expression of faith might well be at the expense of revealed religion. Is it Kant's aim to 'put [Christianity] through the filter of…reason…and give it back to us as the new, improved, reasonable version of Christianity'[42] (Westphal, 2014, p.199)? The simple response should be no - this is not Kant's

[42] This is Westphal's reading of what one of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms ('Johannes Climacus') is about.

aim. For him, revelatory and moral faith stand apart, even if there are shared elements to be found (by reason). He says that the pure religion of reason is the future ideal, and that Christianity comes closest. But, that does not imply that *his* goal is to 'improve' upon a pre-existing religion, even if he believes that an ecclesiastical religion will continue to work towards the ideal. He is not seeking to transform Christianity into something it is not, but the idea of a 'filter' is an important one. That is, the idea of an interpretation that seeks to separate out the *pure* from the *impure*, but please note, defined as such from the perspective of a 'rational' language.

2.3 Rational Translations Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason

In this section we will look at the ways in which Kant interprets, or rather, reinterprets some of the tenets of Christianity. In effect, we will see how far he gets in terms of being able to articulate a view of those tenets in a rational language. But when Kant says that a moral faith is the 'only faith which improves the soul' (6:124), where does that leave Christianity when taken in its totality? That is to say, in terms of those contents of faith that defy a fully rational explanation.

Kant must translate tenets of the Christian faith[43] into the language of pure moral concepts in order that they should hold universally – given that he believes in the infallibility of the latter as the source for his moral faith. For him,

[43] The subject of some of the ecclesiastical practices of the Christian faith is not the focus of this section. However, we can briefly say that Kant tries to make room for some of those elements of the practice of faith that, in themselves, are not the proper route to God's favour, but that are viewed by the Christian religion as effecting God's grace. These are: prayer, church going, baptism, and communion. Prayer can be accommodated by reason, by conceiving of its essence, or 'spirit' (6:195), as the sincere and pure moral disposition of the correctly attuned (good) heart. Positively emphasized is the 'inner' state of silent prayer, in contrast to the external articulation of prayer as mere words. Prayer is significant for the pure religion of reason only insofar as it can be related to moral disposition. The remaining practices, as ones that are essentially sensuous in nature, i.e., they are of the external rather than of the inner world of the individual, are somewhat made compatible to reason by regarding them in the context of how they can serve as a means to the end that is the moral relation to God. Church going is reinterpreted as individual 'edification' (6:198); baptism as the starting point for the individual's moral route to God; the communion rite as fostering the idea of a 'moral community.' (6:200) But, piety in itself is not enough, and is merely the outward practice of a 'delusory faith.' (6:194)

'only a moral interpretation…is…an authentic one.'[44] (7:48) The transformation of the 'mysteries of divine nature…into moral concepts' (6:14) is necessary, 'if they are to become intelligible to everyone.' (ibid.) He believes a philosophical theologian to be capable of extracting positive moral content from Scripture that is essential for our moral progress towards the ideal religion.[45] As to the objection that we cannot interpret the Bible rationally because it is revelation, Kant's reply is that, as we cannot use theoretical reason, we must use practical reason. (7:46) He acknowledges that there are holy and mysterious tenets that belong to the ecclesiastical faith of the individual, but he is interested in finding those elements of ecclesiastical faith that can be intelligibly translated for the purposes of a universally ideal religion, through which we can become universally pleasing to God. Contents that go beyond his concept of what constitutes 'divine' can be dismissed as being beyond the sayable. The Bible is 'divine' revelation to reason only insofar as what is revealed in it squares with the 'holiness' of practical (moral) reason. If a sacred, theoretical teaching of the Bible goes beyond (transcends) 'all rational concepts' (7:38) then we *may* interpret it from the point of view of reason. That is a matter of choice. But, if a teaching contradicts practical reason, 'it *must* be interpreted in the interests of practical reason.' (ibid.) There is no choice. For Kant, the integrity of pure moral concepts must always be preserved.

Revelation as it is given to us must be interpreted in order to make this kind of moral progress from mere ecclesiastical faith towards a pure moral faith in God. He says that only the 'Religion of reason and scriptural scholarship' (6:113) are the proper interpreters of sacred documents. However, it is not always clear in Kant's account as to whether or not he is translating on the basis of '*may* interpret' or '*must* interpret.' This distinction perhaps fades when we remind ourselves that Kant is attempting to see how close Christianity comes to the

[44] 'Only a moral interpretation…is really an authentic one…for since we cannot understand anyone unless he speaks to us through our own understanding and reason, it is only by concepts of our reason, insofar as they are pure moral concepts and hence infallible, that we can recognize the divinity of a teaching promulgated in us.' (7:48)

[45] 'I can…hold fragments of…revelation…up to moral concepts, and see whether it does not lead back to the same pure rational system of religion [from which I have abstracted].' (6:12)

ideal of the pure religion. And so, viewed in these terms, it makes sense that he should want to get as close as possible. Even if he believes that 'all use of reason ceases precisely' (6:53) with the supernatural, he nevertheless seems drawn into pushing the experiment as far as possible. If there is a question as to whether or not Kant oversteps the mark in terms of what he attempts to translate in rational terms, one must first be clear about the boundaries of the sayable within a given context. And so, the question becomes one of the limits of language in relation to faith, to which we will return in the final chapters.

Kant believes reason to be capable of unlocking some of the mysteries of Scripture by making them intelligible in moral terms. And yet he asserts that 'Miracles…[and] Mysteries' (6:52) are, strictly speaking, beyond the domain of reason. That said, as ideas that occupy that 'border' (ibid.) with the wider sphere of faith, he wants to investigate their relation to reason. He says that it is understandable from the point of view of 'the ordinary human way of thinking' (6:84) that miracles should herald the arrival into history of the newly improved version of religion that has transcended the 'religion of mere cult and observances.' (ibid.) These miracles, as 'events in the world, the causes and *effects* of which are absolutely unknown to us' (6:86), serve to mark the new religion as being apart in a special way. He wants to view these miracles as necessary 'aids' (6:84) for the establishment of this more evolved religion, and he says that there is nothing to be gained attempting to question the validity of those proclaimed supernatural events. They serve as a means to an end, the end being a religion that can 'hold its own on rational grounds.' (ibid.) However, he contests the idea that mere faith in the mysterious and miraculous is the only route to being pleasing to God. What counts is that we are morally pleasing to Him. It is perfectly acceptable that a human being could choose not to put too much weight on the specifics of the miracles of Christ's life, but it is essential that she should follow Christ's example from the moral perspective. Although that which is mysterious 'relates to reason' (6:138), such contents of faith cannot

hold as universal truths. Kant casts a doubt over the idea that the individual will be able to accommodate the mysterious if they are using their reason properly.[46]

He is not so much interested in an original fall into sin on the part of 'our first parents' (6:40), but in the idea that the human being moves from 'a state of innocence' (6:41) to a state of evil through a free choice. Although human beings always contain within themselves the possibility for a change of heart in the now – no matter how evil they have been up to that point – Kant wants to say that the human being is responsible for actions that 'must always be judged as an original exercise of his power of choice.' (ibid.) We cannot posit Adam as having been innately evil, because this would imply that God created him as such, which, to our reason, is unintelligible. Kant characterizes Adam as that first being 'who is represented with full control of the use of his reason from the beginning.' (6:43) Reason cannot make it intelligible why it should have originally been the case that Adam lapsed into evil. Kant is constricted in what can legitimately be said about Adam by virtue of moral faith's emphasis upon personal autonomy and responsibility. In terms of Scripture's account of original sin and the fall of Adam, he maintains that this is compatible with the idea of a starting point of innocence, from which there emerges the free decision to transgress 'the moral law as divine command.' (6:41) As we have already seen, his idea of the good heart is one in which the individual is fully responsible for making a change with respect to the moral principle. But the ecclesiastical idea of repentance as relying upon a petition (prayer) to God contradicts the spirit of moral faith. That is, a moral faith in which the individual is wholly responsible for making the change with respect to their transgressions. In the Preface to *The Conflict of the Faculties* he writes: 'anyone who still has to beg for this repentance (for his transgressions) does not really repent of his deeds…if the petitioner has faith, he does not need to ask for it.' (7:10) One ought to have enough (moral) faith in God in order to fully commend one's moral limitations into His hands.

[46] Kant says that seeing as 'mystery relates to reason yet is not something that can be imparted universally, each individual will have to look for it (if there is any such thing) in his own reason.' (6:138)

Kant's reduces the possibility of our cognition of God to what our practical reason can acquire and assimilate. God is therefore posited as our moral lawgiver, moral guardian, and our moral judge; the Incarnation as our moral exemplar; the Holy Spirit as that which 'speaks to our conscience with the voice of the holy law.' (6:140n) The attempt to attain knowledge of God's being as Triune in any other way would be to overstep the bounds of reason, and such a faith would be faith in 'a mystery surpassing all human concepts.' (6:142) Kant translates the concepts of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as mysteries that can yet be 'revealed' (ibid.) to our reason.

If human beings can *potentially* realize their own moral vocation, and thereby please God, then the idea of supernatural grace is difficult for reason to accommodate. We can only entertain the *idea* that there may be some divine aid at work. Given that we have a dual nature that forever pulls us in the direction of self-concern and the sensible, he says that 'some supernatural cooperation is also needed.' (6:44) He attempts to fill this gap in knowledge by translating it in terms of moral choice and moral progress. In the *Groundwork*, it could not be shown why human beings should necessarily take an interest in duty for duty's sake. On the basis of this predisposition without a cognizable ground, why should we then act morally? Kant expresses divine grace in terms of an 'incomprehensible moral disposition in us…the principle of pure morality.' (7:43) His concept of grace fills the gap in knowledge with respect to the ultimate ground of the moral law. However, there is more to his accommodation of divine grace. The Pelagian notion of grace is certainly to the fore. In order to become pleasing to God, the human being is responsible for striving towards Him. In terms of divine grace, Kant essentially says that freedom is that which is 'already possessed' (6:75) by us when we come into existence. That is, we are *a priori* graced with freedom.

However, Kant's notion of grace approaches that of Augustine when he introduces the idea of our hope for being 'relieved of all responsibility' (6:76) in relation to our moral striving. The human being who inevitably and unavoidably sins in terms of the moral law can never change that fact. The best they can hope for is that their positive efforts will secure salvation. Whilst the idea of

Christ the Redeemer is important, Augustinian grace emphasizes God's sole power in terms of our salvation, over and above the Pelagian idea of the human capacity to enable it. Kant's idea of the change of heart, and of God as the only one who can see into the heart of the rational being (assess the true disposition), is crucial in terms of this notion of grace. It squares with the Augustinian model to the extent that God offers the reward of salvation because the human has chosen to change. However, it does not extend as far as the idea of grace that posits God as causing the individual to make that choice. Kant is trying to 'answer a speculative question' (6:76) in relation to grace. In the end, he wants to say that, having made the revolution of the heart, the human is ultimately judged by God on the basis of the 'disposition' (ibid.) and not the 'deed.' (ibid.) From the perspective of practical reason, our salvation begins with us, but is ultimately a question of God's grace in light of our powerlessness to save ourselves. The extent of our responsibility is limited, but we are absolved in the end 'only on the assumption of a total change of heart.' (ibid.) Kant says that we can only hope that we can make ourselves worthy enough to warrant God's removing of the obstacles that might impede our progress. He does not rule out the possibility that God might positively assist us, but he also contends that we can have no access to knowledge of these acts of God.[47] We are faced with 'the abyss of a mystery regarding what God may do' (6:139) and as to what His nature might be with regard to the execution of our perfection. However, he is keen to remind us that a discussion of divine Grace is one that is merely supplementary to religion considered within the bounds of mere reason, although it is on the 'border' (6:52) with the wider sphere of faith, and therefore warrants rational expression. It must be sayable by reason.

In terms of his reason-first statements regarding faith, Kant believes that the only proper way to be in good standing with God – to be in a state of grace – is by advancing 'not from grace to virtue but rather from virtue to grace.' (6:202) Finally, although we can comprehend the idea of at least the possibility of

[47] 'A human being's moral improvement is…a practical affair incumbent upon him, and heavenly influences may indeed always cooperate in this improvement, or be deemed necessary to explain its possibility. Yet he has no understanding of…how to distinguish with certainty such influences from the natural ones.' (6:88)

becoming pleasing to God, Kant wants to say that reason cannot accommodate the idea that God should grant grace to one person and not another.[48] His concept of grace is one that is wholly bound to the idea of a universal and level playing field with respect to human freedom. If it is 'we ourselves [who] must work at developing that moral predisposition' (7:43), then it is we who enable divine grace. As to how this most proper route to God can be encouraged, Kant says that it is through the example of 'good people' (6:48) that this is possible. We can learn by others' adherence to duty, but not just merely with a sense of 'admiration' (ibid.), because performing one's duty is not to be seen as 'something extraordinary and meritorious.' (6:49) It is not the case that Kant thinks we are capable of seeing into the hearts of others in the same way that, in his view, God can. Rather, he thinks that by studying exemplars of good, it is possible to judge the underlying incentives of their actions. But, is there not a contradiction here? How can *we* be sure that the exemplar's motivation is properly focused? Perhaps we can only posit on the basis of their actions. Hence, they are there 'for encouragement.' He is therefore not shy about offering his thoughts in relation to the 'myth' (7:63n) of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. The only way that Kant's Abraham might have been able to entertain the idea that it truly was God speaking, is if what God was saying was intelligible to practical reason. Anything that transgresses this boundary calls into question its origin as divine. According to Kant, the fact that God's command was in opposition to the moral law was enough of a reason for Abraham to have doubted that it was God's voice in the first place. He says that there is a 'general moral law that whatever God does will be all good.' (6:86) However, in terms of that which reason can form a concept, i.e., the moral law, the case of the story of Abraham 'cannot be a divine miracle despite every appearance of being one' (6:87) He is clear: Abraham must have been mistaken. The command cannot have come from God, because it is 'directly in conflict with morality.' (ibid.) Kant's project cannot make intelligible a crucial component of the Abrahamic faith. The conviction that *all* of Scripture is the actual word of God is simply unacceptable.

[48] Kant maintains 'that a heavenly *grace* should work in him to grant this assistance to one human being, yet denies it to another…this…does not yield the concept of a divine justice but must at best be deferred to a wisdom whose rule is an absolute mystery to us.' (6:143)

Belief in the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac does not have to be believed as a fact, and Kant says that a church command 'to believe such a dogma, as necessary for salvation…out of fear…is superstition.' (7:66n) To put it more simply, for Kant, that which is 'divine' is also 'moral', and vice versa, because a concept of the divine that cannot be expressed by reason is beyond the stated boundary. He does not, and cannot, propose any other reading of the story of Abraham other than through the lens of reason.

How does he make room for the figure of Christ in relation to the pure religion of reason? In order for Kant to make a case for a religion within the boundaries of mere reason, he must make the Incarnation, which is the divine source of the Christian religion, intelligible to reason. Any attempt to make sense of some of the other contents of revelation without first tackling the idea of Christ as both divine and human would seem a pointless exercise. But Kant finds it neither difficult nor unacceptable that he should be selective in terms of what is sayable. Even if it were the case that no human being ever existed that was capable of complete obedience to the moral law, this would not mean that such a being was an impossibility. Rather, as possible, this kind of being would be necessary, i.e., our reason could posit, from the point of view of morality, what kind of being this would entail. We do not need any actual example of a perfect moral being in order for the idea of this type of being to be something we can strive towards. It is enough that reason can posit this kind of being. In the situation where we are assessing a being in order to see if they exemplify the most perfect moral being, we do not need to look any further than the evidence as it relates to what our reason tells us should be the case in relation to such a being. Based on the idea of God as Sovereign in a Kingdom of Ends, rather than the God of the wider sphere of revelation, he proposes that the highest elevation of humanity is ideally the most perfect moral being who would be 'alone pleasing to God.' (6:60) There is a tacit foundation to Kant's thinking, in which reason and the idea of the most perfect moral being inevitably proceed 'from God's being.' (ibid.) The idea of the most perfect moral being is intelligible to reason. At least in theory, we are capable of reaching that goal. Christ is expressed as our 'prototype' (6:61) and perfect moral exemplar. Therefore, to be

Christ-like is a reasonable goal that is a 'universal human duty.' (ibid.) In this way, Kant makes the central figure of Christianity intelligible to reason. It is reason's teachings, exemplified in Christ, that are 'most holy.' (6:83)

He speaks of the coming of Christ as a 'union with us' (6:61) which is at once God's descent into a human form, or, an 'abasement of the Son of God.' (ibid.) That is to say, God has a dual nature as the Incarnation. We can never point to a human example of a fully realised morally perfect being, because our humanity is necessarily impure. What really counts for Kant is not whether or not Christ is of supernatural origin, but how he conforms to the ideal. He says that it is the human aspect of his being that is significant for morally striving beings. If we could not relate to this divine being in terms of that which is intelligible to us, i.e., the 'frailty of human nature' (6:64), then, progress towards God would be somehow impossible. Christ's human aspect and his moral teachings are the means by which we can have a tangible relation to God. Only Christ can be afforded this characteristic of perfection from the point of view of reason. This is what Kant calls the 'practical faith in this Son of God' (6:62), or, a moral faith in God. It is only through becoming more Christ-like that the human being can hope to become pleasing to God. Although Kant attempts to explain Christ from the viewpoint of the moral prototype, he believes that an actual concrete example of such a being is unnecessary, or, nonessential, for our practical reason. Furthermore, to look for extra-moral proofs in relation to such a prototype, such as superhuman traits and abilities, and miraculous acts, is, for Kant, 'moral unbelief.' (6:63) Faith that attempts to ground itself on evidence will inevitably fail. It is therefore acceptable that a human being could choose not to put too much weight on the specifics of the miracles of Christ's life, but it is essential that she should follow Christ's moral example. He says that even in the case of a being that is for us an exemplar of moral perfection, we would still only be permitted to assume him to be merely human. We might allow that he *may* 'also be a supernaturally begotten human being' (ibid.), but this is a long way from asserting Christ's divinity.

But practical reason can comprehend, and ought never doubt, the rational ground of the teachings of Christ as our perfect moral exemplar. The

believer who has a purely moral faith has to be discerning. The purely moral content of Christ's life is what counts. We ought to 'choose to die to everything that holds [us] fettered to earthly life to the detriment of morality.' (6:82) That which is nonessential to moral faith ought to be jettisoned if one is to become blessed. And so, a core tenet of an ecclesiastical faith, such as the inscrutable story of '[Christ's] resurrection and ascension…cannot be used in the interest of religion…whatever its historical standing.' (6:128) Nor can the idea of Christ's atonement on our behalf be articulated in a way that is compatible with the idea of our crucial role in our own salvation. There are some things that are entirely beyond the sayable in Kant's language of reason.

If the aim of the *Religion* book is the circumscribing of a boundary between moral and revelatory faith respectively, then we can legitimately say that Kant seems to want to go further than he needs to in terms of what can be plausibly said in the rational language of a moral faith. In the final chapter, some observations will be made, within the context of the role of language expression, in order to try to understand Kant's motivations with respect to faith generally. He says that 'revelation is useful in making up the theoretical deficiency which our pure rational belief admits it has…and helps…to satisfy a rational need.' (7:9) But we can ask as to how revelation could ever hope to make up for this specific deficiency, or to satisfy this need? Are these words merely an empty gesture to an already existing ecclesiastical faith that must be accommodated on pain of further reprimand from the royal censor? In what we have discovered there certainly seems to be a sense in which revealed religion is 'superfluous' to reason's needs, even if Kant tries to make a distinction between that which is superfluous as opposed to 'nonessential.'[49] However, it is also possible to see Kant's efforts as a veiled appreciation of the deficiency of reason with respect to the reality of lived religious experience. He is attempting to negotiate difficult, and in many ways, dangerous territory. It's fair to say that his accommodation of miracles is less cogent in that he proposes that they can only be made

[49] 'But when reason speaks…as if it were sufficient to itself and as if revealed teachings were therefore superfluous…it is merely expressing its appraisal of itself… On the other hand…revelation as contingent tenets of faith – it regards as nonessential. But this does not mean that reason considers it idle and superfluous.' (7:8-9)

intelligible from the viewpoint of what he calls 'the ordinary human way of thinking.' (6:84) However, I think that this points to the fact that he is aware of the 'rational need' of ordinary cognition, over and above the ideal thinking of systematic philosophy. It doesn't fit into practical reason to believe, in an unquestioning way, in divine grace, but it is reasonable to want to account for it. Is Kant being entirely rational, or merely reasonable, in his expression of religious faith? We will have to wait until the final chapter for a resolution in this regard.

Kant's aim in the *Religion* book is to find a religion that is universally workable (coherent). Firestone calls this move by Kant, or rather, the activity of reason in this regard, as 'poetic reason or the poetic perspective of reason.' (Firestone, 1999, p.169) If Kant is to translate some of the tenets of the Christian faith into a rational language, then – like poetry – some imaginative thinking must take place. A question might linger. Is Kant humbling or preserving reason when he says that a philosophical translation of some tenets of faith does not pretend to be certain, nor to agreeing with the original meaning in Scripture, but only as aiming to interpret? I think it possible to respond by saying that it is both. He certainly believes that his approach is an honest one. He writes: 'Nor can we charge such interpretations with dishonesty, provided we are not disposed to assert that the meaning…is exactly as intended by [the holy books]…but rather…merely admit the possibility that their authors may be so understood.' (6:111) And so, taking our cue from Kant, we should keep in mind what he says about those tenets from the point of view of interpretation. In this way, perhaps the spotlight may be turned back upon reason itself, in order to see the extent to which a rational language is capable (or incapable) of capturing that which is essential to the Christian faith.

For Hamann, the Incarnation is a mystery to reason, and so too are the contents of Scripture. What is required is humility of the understanding with respect to Christianity as 'a kind of mystery religion.' (Betz, 2012, p.44) As Hamann says in *Cloverleaf*, understanding the messages in scripture cannot come about through a philosophical lens: 'The 'interpretation [of the scriptures] does not depend on philosophical reasons.' (*Cloverleaf*, p.58) But, from Kant's

perspective of reason, everything depends on what reason can say. The supplemental material added by Kant at the end of each book is on the 'borderline' limit of reason. Kant attempts to account for those elements that, strictly speaking, go beyond the limits of the rationally intelligible: grace, miracles, and mysteries. Derrida says that Kant's attempt to get over these problematic elements of the Christian faith, by applying 'moral ideas' (Derrida, 2002, p.13) to them, is a perversion of 'the purity of their transcendence.' (ibid.) From Derrida's perspective, not everything ought to be knowable; the mysterious must be preserved. But Kant, too, does not deny that there are some elements of faith that are beyond interpretation. Given that our knowledge is limited, there will always be a *remainder* after one has attempted a rational translation, even if that which remains is nonessential or even unhelpful to practical reason. Nevertheless, the point here is to look at the *way* in which Kant represents faith.

Kant gives us an account of divine grace, but, in Davis' opinion, it does not represent the ordinary Christian understanding of 'unearned' (Davis, 2017, p.66) grace. So, in what way does Kant's account of grace fall short? One view of Kant's idea of grace is that the reward for progress is grace. That we cannot reach the highest goal isn't the important point for Kant. His emphasis is on our ability to strive, seeing us as almost independent of God. We are dependent only insofar as we cannot by ourselves reach moral perfection. And so, grace makes up for this deficiency, i.e., the idea of grace – which is an idea of revelation – is 'useful.' (7:37; 7:9) We are saved, providing that we play our part. Fremstedal writes: 'The point seems to be that he who makes progress receives God's grace so that he attains perfection and happiness.' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.201) As we have seen earlier, Kant's concept of grace borders on that of an Augustinian view. But the reason it sits on that border is precisely because there are limits to what Kant can say within the confines of a rational language. Kant cannot easily enunciate the idea that we could be relieved of all responsibility. God's grace is, in effect, a necessary part of Kant moral faith, even if morality in itself does not necessarily need the idea of God. Morality might be able to live with the idea that we will never be perfect, but that there are certain things that we ought to

do in order to preserve the rational kingdom of ends. Nevertheless, Kant wants to introduce divine grace into the equation in order to aid us in our thinking. If God is a useful idea, then it makes sense that divine grace is too. What we lack, morally speaking, is made good, i.e., made intelligible to reason, by the idea of God's grace: 'Unlike the ethicist, Kant does not believe that we can deserve happiness or save ourselves' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.203), even if he must emphasize our role in striving in what he says. The goal of perfection cannot be reached within the confines of rational morality, and so, morality extends itself into religion in order to point towards the singularity that is perfection. For Kant, something more – that is to say, an idea that extends the reaches of the language of a moral faith – is needed, and he finds divine grace to be that very thing.

But what about the divine figure at the centre of Christianity itself? Palmquist wants to say that 'theologians *may* refer to Jesus as divine by identifying his *disposition* as exemplifying the "archetype of perfect humanity".' (Palmquist, 2012, p.421) What we essentially see here, in terms of language, is the equating of 'moral perfection' with that which can be called 'divine.'[50] This is – although not clearly and definitively – separate from saying 'is God.' Perhaps Palmquist's title ought to have asked: 'Could Kant's Jesus be Divine?' Kant's Jesus could be God, but only the God of the pure religion of reason, not the God of a revelatory faith that relies upon more than just the moral element (e.g., miracles and resurrection). If the archetype of perfect humanity has, for Kant, a divine origin – this being his best explanation for the fact that we cannot say why we have such an in-built archetype – then, when we see an actual example of such, that exemplar must too be of divine origin. But, to reiterate, it is another thing to say "Jesus was God." It is no surprise to find that Kant avoids explicitly naming Jesus when considering the idea of the archetypical perfect human. But Palmquist asks: 'Has Kant demonstrated that a sufficient "space" exists, within the religion of bare reason, for…Jesus's divinity…in a philosophically respectable way?' (p.434) Certainly, we can ask this question: "Is Kant's Jesus, Christianity's Jesus?" But, there is a more fundamental question to be asked first: "Who is

[50] As Palmquist says, 'the ideal of a perfect (and therefore, divine) disposition.' (Palmquist, 2012, p.429)

saying 'divine'?" From Kant's perspective, Jesus is divine from the point of view of the ideal of moral perfection; from the perspective of the Biblical theologian, or, a mainstream Christian (whatever that is!), Jesus is believed to be divine, and from this belief, i.e., from his example, our moral actions are to be derived. It is a question of whether morality or faith (one could say reason or faith) takes priority.

Clearly, for Kant, a reason-first position takes priority before any concrete example. For Kant, what counts is not whether or not we want to think of Jesus as the God-man, but that if we choose to do this, we ought to only focus on what is intelligible to reason. We should not include in our thinking those elements that transgress the boundaries of reason. If we say "God-man" it can only be on the basis of Jesus as exemplifying perfect humanity – as surpassing what is actually the case with respect to humans. Kantian 'divinity' does not extend beyond anything further than that which is, in reality, impossible for the ordinary human. There is always a reason-first perspective being taken, in that, reason sets the standard. If some human happens to meet that standard, then they can be considered divine. In not naming Jesus directly, Kant wants to preserve the reason-first perspective. We ought not to learn morality from Jesus, but to have an innate, rational knowledge of right and wrong that does not necessarily rely upon a concrete exemplar such as Jesus. We can legitimately ask if he does not in fact dismiss the Jesus of Christianity, replacing him with a Kantian one? In taking away the idea of Christ as Saviour (as atoning for our sins), does he not steal away something essential to Christianity? If we are to 'consider him only human' and the 'value of his example' (Pasternack, 2015, p.497), then is this appraising, judging, and rejecting? Yes, but only if one is positioned in the outer sphere.

Setting aside these valid concerns, what else should we expect of Kant in terms of what is sayable? He cannot venture a statement about Christ that transgresses the limits of reason. One can certainly take the view that he oversteps and 'opposes' (p.498), rather than merely corroborating, a core element of Christian faith. To say that, for example, Abraham was mistaken, is surely an appraisal. Whatever does not 'fit' must be interpreted in such a way as

to make it fit in *some* way, i.e., so that it is intelligible. And so, the Christ that Kant describes is as specific an iteration as that of the God named for moral faith. Kant cannot dismiss the figure of Christ, and so, he must 'read' [Christ] symbolically.' (p.500) That is, he must interpret Christ from the perspective of the moral ideal. If the concrete example of Jesus is to have worth in a system of religion that relies not upon experience but on reason alone, then Jesus acts as a regulative symbol, i.e., as performing a function for our striving towards an ideal. For Kant, Jesus as incarnate God is 'one of those symbols of faith.' (Palmquist, 2012, p.431) We need such an exemplar only insofar as it adds to what is already an impossible task for us. That is, our going it alone in terms of our moral perfection. Jesus, in these terms, is a 'supporting example.' We can only 'believe' Jesus to be divine (within reason), rather than 'assert' his divinity (as God, beyond what reason can say). Whereas the Christian might be able to say: "Jesus is God", the most a faithful Kantian can say is: "Jesus is divine, insofar as he exemplifies the perfect moral being." The latter is a position of 'symbolic belief' (p.437), or, faith in Christ as a symbol of reason.

Does Kant go further than he needs to with respect to holding 'fragments of…revelation…up to moral concepts' (6:12)? Again, what constitutes 'out of bounds' is entirely dependent on the stance one takes. The strict rationalist might want to argue that there was no need for Kant to want to venture into the area of religion in the first place, let alone into territory that seems to defy rational expression. Even the philosophical theologian might be critical of Kant's attempt to interpret on the basis that the results of his endeavor are bordering on the implausible. The Christian might simply be offended by his efforts. Pasternack asserts that 'despite [Kant's] protests to the contrary, the actual body of Religion…goes well beyond the boundaries he sets out for philosophical theology.' (Pasternack, 2015, p.487) Perhaps Kant ought to have confined the sayable to that which is most obviously related to reason. I think he comes closest in his accounts of grace, and, ironically – given the obvious room for criticism from the revelatory position – in relation to Christ as the exemplar.

Fundamentally, but understandably, he tries to say too much.[51] Why does Kant go to the lengths he does in order to make some elements of Christianity 'fit'? O'Neill asks: 'Surely a work on the religion of reason should invoke particular tales and traditions only as examples of lack of reason.' (O'Neill, 1997, p.294) One could respond by saying that reason ought to be able to explain as much as possible before it exhausts its own limits. But, in attempting to translate the symbolic into the intelligible (the Fall, temptation, salvation, evil, the Incarnation, etc.), we can legitimately ask if Kant already has in mind the idea that Christianity is the closest religion to the ideal, before showing it to be the case. Is it just a cover? O'Neill asks: 'Does the activity of interpreting particular texts suggest some covert, if very indeterminate, assumption that they have some authority?' (p.299) Although this points to a separate inquiry, I think that we cannot rule out the possibility that the apparent desire to say more than is warranted has more than just the need of reason as a motivation. Certainly, the need to give expression to faith is amongst them.

[51] 'These include putative miracles and revelation, ecclesiastical rituals, and the multitude of doctrines about the supersensible such as the nature of our existence in the afterlife, the Trinity, the properties of angels and demons, and so forth.' (Pasternack, 2015, p.491)

Chapter Three: Kierkegaard's Faith

3.1 Kierkegaard's Response to Kant's Moral Faith

As outlined in the introduction, this chapter is designed to bring to light the way in which Kierkegaard – through the pseudonymous texts – can be viewed as responding to Kantian moral faith. As we shall see, the relation between what one of the pseudonyms refers to as the 'three existence-spheres: the esthetic, the ethical, the religious' (*SLW*, p.476), is such that the ethical acts as a kind of fulcrum, or lens through which the outer stages may be viewed. The design of the narrative, as explained in the introduction, is built around statements to be found in the pseudonymous texts, given in mainly chronological order with respect to Kierkegaard's literary output. However, in the case of two of the pseudonyms (Judge William and Johannes Climacus) – who appear in earlier *and* later works – their respective accounts are given in one place. There will inevitably be some overlaps in the different accounts, but the aim is to show how these pseudonyms respond to Kant's expression of the ethical, and in most cases, to his view of religious faith. We shall let the pseudonyms speak for themselves as far as possible. For clarity, I have divided what follows in terms of some of the named characters of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous output.[52]

3.1.1 The Aesthetic Young Man ('A') – The Seducer – Judge William ('B')

The pseudonymous individual, who is the aesthetic subject of the Seducer's Diary in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, views the ethical as burdensome insofar as it places one under a moral obligation.[53] For him, it stifles personal satisfaction. It is 'hard, angular, an unending ennui.' (*E/O*, p.305) We get a view of the ethical as having uniformity and conformity at its core – as boring, because, in his view, individuality is sacrificed in an ethical commitment such as marriage. The notion that something like love should, in effect, be conceived of in terms of a duty to the 'whole human race' (p.320) is ridiculous to him. What he fears is the kind of '[l]imitation' (p.374) that is imposed upon the individual by the ethical.

[52] Some others will appear for the first time in later sections and chapters.
[53] *E/O*, p.299.

He does not see the ethical as something that is inherent to the self, because he does not conceive of the self in rational terms.

In response, Judge William – who also appears in *Stages on Life's Way*, speaking from the perspective of 'A Married Man' (*SLW*, p.87) – extols the ethical as it is played out in marriage, because it offers a permanence and stability that is lacking in the aesthetic life. But further to this, the judge gives us a view of the ethical that is Kantian[54] insofar as the idea of duty – that is, our playing our part in a greater whole – is connected to the idea of 'divine providence.'[55] (*E/O*, p.389) Like Kant, he also subscribes to the idea that it is not possible to say why one should want to fulfill a duty, except to say that it 'is so inexplicable in its immediacy that it must be attributed to a deity.' (*SLW*, p.102) He asserts that one cannot allow oneself to be stifled by the thoughts of the consequences of one's actions. The outcome is merely 'a symbol of finiteness.' (p.110) Something purer must underscore one's thinking. For the judge, it is the thought of duty and love (with the help of God) that informs his life-view. Ethical duty to the other is in turn a religious commitment, even if there is a distinction being made between the ideal of impartiality in Kant's view of the ethical, and that of a deontological perspective of love as 'preferential.' (*E/O*, p.414) Judge William's concept of the ethical, as it pertains to a relation to the other, points in the direction of, but does not attain that kind of impartiality that is, the ideal of Christian, agapic love.[56] And yet, it is a view of the ethical as 'holy and good' (p.470) – ethical duty is a 'spiritual relation with a God who is

[54] He gives us a somewhat overt reference to Kant's essay 'What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking' when he writes: 'The first thing I must do now is orient myself and particularly you in the essential characteristics of marriage.' (*E/O*, p.399) For Kant, there can be no knowledge of God. It is important to him that, in speaking of duty in theological terms, one is merely pointing in the direction of the divine, without claiming certainty as to the existence of the divine. Judge William's narrative has a similar tone to it. In the essay Kant writes: 'But now there enters *the right* of reason's need…for presupposing and assuming something which reason may not presume to know through objective grounds; and consequently for *orienting* itself in thinking…in that immeasurable space of the supersensible, which for us is filled with dark night.' (8:137) Later on, Judge William admits that there might be something 'wrong' (*E/O*, p.414) in referring to a concrete example, i.e., his own marriage. This echoes Kant's desire to avoid speaking about the moral prototype in terms of 'any example from experience.' (6:62)

[55] *E/O*, p.471.

[56] He speaks of '[s]piritual love' (p.414) that 'shows no partiality.' (ibid.) For him, marriage can only really point 'beyond itself.' (p.415)

spirit.' (*SLW*, p.100) Duty has 'the stamp of the eternal' (*E/O*, p.393). It is the way in which one can strive towards fulfilling one's 'need for the eternal.' (p.506)

At the end of *Either/Or*, the Jutland priest expresses the higher religious ideal, to which Judge William's view of the ethical points. The hope that springs from fulfilling our God-given moral vocation is that we may strive to get beyond 'self-love' (p.600) in order to perfect ourselves, and, in this way, to love God: 'the joy in which you triumph over yourself and over the world…your song of praise, your worship.' (p.606) Judge William says that what the aesthetic young man lacks 'entirely, is faith' (p.389) in the ethical as the route to God. It is 'through the universal…in this common humanity' that one comes into a 'relationship with God.' (*SLW*, p.164) He speaks of 'love's…relation to the ethical, to religion' (*E/O*, p.392), but like Kant, he takes the view that the ethical and religious are 'different spheres.' (p.413)

By introducing the idea of love into the sphere of the ethical, Kierkegaard intentionally wants to point beyond the Kantian view. There are some real life experiences that contradict the ideality of ethics. Judge William's view of the ethical is a modified Kantian view, in that, it considers no other end, other than the end that is love.[57] Arguing against the claim that the ethical is monotonous in its constancy, the Judge stresses the security and stillness to be found in such a commitment.[58] For him, the ordinary is the extraordinary[59], and yet we can say that it would be truly extraordinary to find someone capable of fulfilling the ideal of Kant's supreme principle of morality. Ultimately, although he wants to emphasize the reality of lived experience[60], he shares with Kant a view of freedom as being the core starting point from which we should speak of the ethical, and one that is a divine gift.[61] Duty is not to be conceived of as

[57] The Judge says that 'it is wrong…to want to marry…for any other reason than that one loves.' (*E/O*, p.420)
[58] *Ibid.,* p.466-467.
[59] 'The truly extraordinary man is the truly ordinary man.' (p.586) In contrast, de Silentio – a pseudonym we will meet shortly – wants to say that Abraham was the truly extraordinary man, and that by virtue of faith and not the ethical.
[60] We should not 'disdain the existence, the reality, in which God has placed' (p.537) us. The ethical way of life is not to be considered 'abstractly.' (p.545)
[61] 'So it is freedom I am fighting for…for either/or. That is the treasure…this treasure is deposited in your own inner being: it is an either/or which makes a man greater than the angels.' (p.490)

something outside of me, but something that is inwardly ordained as an 'eternal duty.' (*SLW*, p.111) Kant wants to say that it is the rational being's faculty of reason that ordains this. The important point, for both Judge William and Kant, is that it is something that the properly oriented self generates, rather than viewing duty as merely a set of external 'directives.' (*E/O*, p.546) Although the ethical is viewed by him as being in a relation to the divine – and hence that his faith has a moral basis – he nevertheless takes a similar position to Kant with respect to the priority of the ethical over the religious (morality does not need the idea of religion…). The spheres are related, but separate. He writes: 'The ethical is so incorruptible that if our Lord himself had been obliged to allow himself a little irregularity in creating the world, ethics would not let itself be disturbed.' (*SLW*, p.155) Judge William's view is a 'religious point of departure.' (p.162) It is confined to an expression of faith and love which has a particularly Kantian ethical concept as its ground. This life-view could be said to be (to borrow somewhat from Kierkegaard) that of an ethico-religious knight of rational faith. There is courage in this life-view, with no finite guarantee other than that of a proper disposition towards God through moral faith, played out in a lived experience of dutiful love.

3.1.2 Johannes de Silentio

Fear and Trembling is the work in which Kierkegaard most acutely challenges any notion that our relationship to God, or, faith in God, can be expressed in purely ethical terms. The pseudonym – Johannes De Silentio – points to the inadequacy of wanting to convert the contents of that faith into 'conceptual form.' (*FT,* p.5) De Silentio sees faith's greatest pitch manifested in the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Kant wants to dismiss the story of Abraham as a 'myth', because it does not square with reason. If Abraham proceeds with the sacrifice, he is deemed to be a murderer from the point of view of the ethical. De Silentio's account seeks to challenge the idea that reason has both explanatory and prescriptive power when it comes to faith. For de Silentio, a purely moral faith does not adequately meet the standard of a truly individual faith in God. There is something more to the religious disposition than just moral content.

Kant's faith relies upon divine grace insofar as it makes up for the deficiency that exists in relation to our achieving moral perfection. But de Silentio wants to provoke the thought that real faith is something even more challenging, in that, it asks us to transcend purely rational thinking.

Kant attempts to derive moral faith purely and abstractly from practical reason, and so, no analogy by example is necessary. He maintains that 'to try to realize the ideal in an example…is not feasible, and even has about it something nonsensical.' (B598) The absolutely 'transcendent' (B579) concept of the ideal can never be given in an example according to Kant. The ideal of reason is just that: an object (as an idea) that is 'to be found only in reason'. (B606) His project in the *Religion* book is quite clear, in that, its aim is to show how a practical faith is possible through a religion that has morality (and hence reason) as its ground, with the 'ideal of moral perfection' (6:61) as its regulative principle.[62] Even if it might be possible, from the perspective of moral perfection, to encounter a human being who comes close to the ideal, a rational faith does not need to be able to point to such an exemplar. We ought not to worry about dismissing Abraham in this regard. However, de Silentio wants to point to that specific exemplar of faith, in fact, the 'father' of faith: Abraham. He gives us a 'test case' for Kant's religion experiment. It is presented as a temptation by God for Abraham to do something morally wrong, i.e., to kill his own son. Abraham is incapable of giving rational expression to his decision to say yes to God's command, and de Silentio also expresses his own inability to understand Abraham so that he might be in a position to make a formal declaration over the latter's actions. Silence is a key theme in the work, but this idea as it relates to reason and faith will be dealt with in more depth in chapter eight. However, what we can provisionally say is that de Silentio's ethical self is muted – he cannot speak because the language of reason and morality is insufficient. It cannot explain his faith in God.

A universal moral system, at least according to Kant, arises by virtue of the commonality of our rationality. But, Abraham is presented as the individual with a faith that transcends the ethical (rational) community. De Silentio's

[62] See 6:6; 6:8; 6:108.

reading of the ethical view of what constitutes transgression is the individual wanting to appeal to some other source in order to guide action. He writes: 'As soon as the single individual wants to assert himself in his particularity over against the universal, he sins and only by acknowledging this can he be reconciled again with the universal.' (*FT*, p.46) By 'universal', he understands that to have a meaning – which we may note agrees with Kant – in which the ethical is 'in force at every moment' (p.46), and for every rational being equally. However, Abraham acts not for the sake of the law of a reasoned universally applicable morality, but for the sake of God's command and for himself, in order to prove his faith *in God*.[63] There is a shift in *telos* for Abraham. His faith is not in the ethical, but in God.

For de Silentio, Abraham's is a higher expression of faith. That is, higher than a purely ethical faith: 'Faith is exactly this paradox, that the single individual is higher than the universal.' (p.47) Not only this, but he 'is justified over against the latter not as subordinate but superior to it.' (p.48) Abraham acts in faith out of duty to God, but de Silentio is quick to attempt to show how Kant's concept of faith is built upon an essentially tenuous and limited relation to, and need for the idea of, God. That is to say, one in which rational morality does not necessarily need the idea of a higher being, and yet, one in which the positing of God as our moral lawgiver somehow makes up for our deficiency in relation to the highest good. In the *Conflict of the Faculties* Kant spells out his view of the pure religion of reason as that which operates on the basis of 'duties…as divine commands' (7:36), manifested in a reason-derived morality, rather than as 'divine revelations.' (ibid.) The idea of God derives from this systematic way of thinking, and serves the purpose of motivating the human to act morally. De Silentio points to a problem in this. If that is the case, then the relation to God is essentially an artificial one in which God is an almost supplemental concept. We should remind ourselves of the fact that Kant begins his *Religion* book by stating clearly that morality does not need the idea of God for it to be a coherent system in its own right. De Silentio challenges Kant's

[63] *FT*, p.52.

morally derived religious faith on the basis of its somewhat ambivalent concept of God by saying:

> The ethical is the universal and as such the divine. It is therefore right to say that every duty…is a duty to God, but if no more can be said, then one is saying as well that I really have no duty to God…in the duty itself I do not enter into relation to God…The whole existence of the human race rounds itself off in itself as a perfect sphere and the ethical is at once its limit and its completion. (*FT*, p.59)

De Silentio argues that Abraham's faith is such that his relation to God takes priority over his relation to the ethical. The former relation 'colours' his relation to the latter. It would be easier to disregard the more extreme contention with which we are presented when de Silentio says that 'the love of God can cause the knight of faith to give his love for the neighbor the opposite expression of what duty is ethically speaking.'[64] (*FT*, p.61) But, we are intentionally being provoked into attempting to think ourselves into the 'paradox of faith' (ibid.) in order to show how thinking ethically is not up to the task of understanding true faith. We will return to this theme later on. Kant is clear, however: If the action cannot be justified by moral faith, it is unholy.

In the purely ethical sphere, the Kantian rational agent is called to act on the basis of a proposition that is rationally, and not experientially, derived. The inflexibility of the command of reason[65] does not escape de Silentio's attention, for is all too aware of the disjunction between the movement of faith and that of ethics. He maintains that it is a pointless exercise to argue with ethics, but he also levels criticism at its essential ideality, in that, in its purest concept, it is divorced from lived experience. He says: '[I]t does not appeal to experience, which of all ridiculous things is about the most ridiculous…it places a huge responsibility on the frail hero's shoulders.' (*FT*, p.75) Acting according to the categorical imperative would maintain Abraham's rightful place in the kingdom of ends as a free rational being, but he would as a result have failed the test of

[64] De Silentio points us to Luke 14:26 in relation to the absolute duty to God. It is his contention that the passage 'should be taken as frightfully as possible' (*FT*, p.63): 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple.' (Luke 14:26)

[65] 'Reason by itself and independently of all appearances commands what ought to happen…inflexibly commanded by reason.' (4:408)

God and relinquished his faith and trust in God as being able to bring about the impossible. Abraham does not will that everyone should perform his action – or, to put it in Kantian terms, he does not 'will that it become a universal law.' (4:421) – and hence the emphasis by de Silentio is on the individual as a 'knight of faith' (*FT*, p.32) who courageously performs a higher task of faith. Kant does recognize the fact that, in reality, human beings choose to act as other than purely rational beings, but that the 'footpath of freedom' (4:455) is the only one that the proper use of our reason can take. In contrast, de Silentio says that the knight of faith is 'the one who goes faith's narrow way.' (*FT*, p.58) In terms of the moral law, Abraham has failed – he has willed for evil (4:437) and in the eyes of a moral faith he is neither 'holy' (6:128) nor sanctified. He cannot even claim to defend his action as the Romantic tragic hero, where the sacrifice might have been towards some greater good as a 'higher expression of the ethical.' (*FT*, p.51) Not only this, but Kant would say that, as a potential *telos* for morality, God would also fail to reach the standard. (4:443) God's command is unintelligible from the point of view of a reasoned morality. From reason's perspective, God's command is an incitement for Abraham to 'infringe' (4:457) upon his 'intelligence' and his 'proper self.' (ibid.) It might seem to be a 'divine miracle' (6:87), but there is no doubt, the story is 'directly in conflict with morality' (ibid.), because there is nothing in it that leads 'back to the…pure rational system of religion'[66] (6:12), and hence is demonic for Kant. De Silentio would argue the opposite – for him, Abraham, as the knight of faith 'who expected the impossible' and 'struggled with God' (*FT*, p.13), is 'great by a purely personal virtue.' (p.52)

As we will come to expect, the emphasis for Kierkegaard must be on the individual self in relation to faith. In chapter five, ideas in relation to the self will be more fully developed. For now, as it pertains to a systematic treatment of faith such as we find in Kant, we can at least point to two major emphases here.

[66] 'I can…start from some alleged revelation…and, abstracting from the pure religion of reason…hold fragments of this revelation, as a historical system, up to moral concepts, and see whether it does not lead back to the same pure rational system of religion [from which I have abstracted].' (6:12)

Firstly, the idea of the primacy of the individual over the universal, and secondly, the idea of faith as a pure and unquestioning belief in anything as possible through God, even that which is absurd to rational faith. We are presented with Abraham as the religious individual who transcends a collective notion of faith that has reason and morality as its ground. His faith bypasses the ethical[67], renouncing the ethical in a fatal leap (*salto mortale*). De Silentio asserts that we are as such denied access to understanding Abraham's trust in God in terms of the universal. His actions are unjustifiable from the ethical point of view. From Kant's perspective, 'Faith…is trust in the attainment of an aim.' (5:472) But Abraham's trust in God surpasses that absolutely.

The narrative in *Fear and Trembling* is such that Abraham simply believes in the absurdity of the proposition that God can bring about the impossible. That belief can only be concretized when, in his willingness to surrender to God, reason and the ethical are set aside. For Abraham, God is not an object of reason but of faith. In the account, he is the exemplar of a non-rational believer who does not 'persevere'[68] with their reason. For Kant, lack of certainty as to God's existence is the 'true abyss' (B641), and for de Silentio too, we are separated from faith's object by 'a yawning abyss.' (*FT*, p.17) For the latter, if any connection to God is to be made possible, it cannot be made by virtue of either the ethical or a purely moral faith. Abraham's own moral power is what causes the inevitable tension within him that might hold him back from faith. It is not the case that 'the ethical should be abolished' (p.61), but rather, that the ethical expression of faith fails to adequately capture the true essence of faith which is an absolute trust in God.

Both Kant and Kierkegaard agree that the attempt to employ reason in the understanding of those tenets of faith that clearly transgress the ethical, that is to say, rational sphere, is problematic. De Silentio reaffirms Kant's assertion that all use of reason finds its endpoint in the supernatural, by saying that 'faith begins precisely where reason leaves off.' (*FT,* p.46) Kantian faith prevents one from leaping 'over the wall of ecclesiastical faith.' (7:24) But, for Kierkegaard,

[67] *FT*, p.99.
[68] Kant writes of the 'the natural course taken by every human reason, even the most common, although not everyone perseveres in it.' (B612)

faith proper does not begin until reason is left behind. And so, the respective accounts of what constitutes faith are at odds. Abraham's faith is non-moral; Abraham's God is not the God of the religion of pure reason.

3.1.3 Johannes Climacus

Kant's moral faith is posited on the basis of practical reason, whereas theoretical reason – or, the 'transcendental use of reason' (A823/B851) – can form a concept of the Ideal of reason. Kant attempts to confine faith to an expression in terms of the moral relation to God. In both *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Johannes Climacus can be interpreted as responding to Kantian faith. On Climacus' reading, Kant's moral faith could be accused of being a 'subterranean way to Christianity.' (*CUP*, p.25) Indeed, Climacus goes as far as to say that 'scholarly deliberation' (p.29) does not *lead* to faith. What is missing is that truly subjective element that is the proper 'condition of faith.' (p.29) Kant is cognizant of the inadequate role that facts ultimately play in terms of living one's life as a Christian. So, he at least wants to see what might be a plausible answer to the question: "[W]hat does Christianity mean for me as a rational being?" by answering: "One ought to live morally in order to be in a faith relation with the divine." What is proposed by reason, as Kant says, is more than just opinion, but neither is it posited as knowledge.[69]

For Climacus, '[F]aith is not a form of knowledge' (*PF*, p.76), and so he can say in this regard – responding as it were to Kant – that '[T]o have an opinion is both too much and too little for [his] uses.' (p.6) He is being ironic when he says that having 'an opinion presupposes a sense of ease and security in life.' (ibid.) The whole point, for him, is that when it comes to faith, the question is not one of objective, but subjective, truth in relation to Christianity. And yet, Climacus acknowledges a type of subjectivity to be found in Kant, insofar as he sees being a subjectively oriented individual as involving a focus on the 'essential, the innermost, freedom, the ethical' (*CUP*, p.135) – an orientation in which

[69] 'In the transcendental use of reason, on the contrary, to have an opinion is of course too little, but to know is also too much.' (A823/B851)

having 'a covetous eye on the outcome' (ibid.) is to be avoided. He interprets the Kantian 'good heart' as that 'innermost secret' (*CUP*, p.141) that is 'the individual's…private theatre where God…is the spectator.' (p.157) However, he wants to subvert the Kantian idea of the priority of a universal ethic, over and above the ethical task faced by the individual. That is not to say that the ethical is undermined, nor the idea that the ethical is a way of coming into a relationship with God.[70] Rather, he wants to say that the emphasis ought to be on what it means for the individual, contra any rational deliberation over the universal significance of one's actions.[71]

Therefore, given that the ethical is a component of a lived faith, and given Climacus' argument, it is no surprise to find that he seeks to show that a universal moral faith is but an 'analogy' (p.569) of faith. There is some common ground to be found in both Climacus and Kant with respect to the idea of becoming 'blessed' (p.582) and 'holy' (6:128) by virtue of an inner ground through which one comes into a relationship with the divine. And Climacus echoes Kant's assertion that morality in itself does not need religion or the idea of God, in that 'the ethical is always somewhat distanced from the absolute God-relationship.' (*CUP*, p.489) But for the former, Christian faith exceeds a moral articulation of faith absolutely. Moral faith is to be surpassed. There is a higher truth to be grasped by the striving Christian. Kant is not explicitly concerned 'about the truth of Christianity' (p.15). And on this point Climacus and Kant are in agreement. Even if we can see that the attempt to say something of universal import is not too far removed from Climacus' idea that the task of faith 'will pertain to everyone in the same way' (p.17), it must be emphasized that Kant is concerned only about how a universal rational subject can relate to it in an objective way. One might want to posit faith on the basis of practical moral (ethical) reason – which nevertheless, for Kant, does not pretend to be

[70] Actions pertain to 'the individual's becoming immersed in himself and in his relationship with God.' (*CUP*, p.144) Climacus still wants to maintain the Kantian idea that it is through the ethical that one nourishes one's 'possibility-relationship with God.' (p.156) Acting for the sake of just acting is 'contempt for the holy.' (p.341)

[71] 'The ethical is inwardness, and the smaller the range in which one sees it…the better one sees it…that it pertains to all human beings is in a certain sense none of his business, except as a shadow that accompanies the ethical clarity in which he lives.' (p.143)

knowledge – but one cannot escape the need for belief. For Climacus, Christian faith is more than mere opinion insofar as it appeals to the individual as subjective. But it is less than opinion insofar as true belief does not seek the same kind of 'ground' that is a driving force for reason.[72]

For Climacus, the subjective religious individual can passionately assert: "the Incarnation is truth"; for Kant, the objective – that is to say, rational – religious subject can say: "Christ is the exemplar of the perfectly moral, on the basis of my limited knowledge." Or, to put it this way, the latter can only say that which does not offend reason. Kierkegaard, as Climacus, goes back to Kant's faith in order to bring to light the more essential question as to the truly subjective, rather than the objective, relation to the object(s) of faith in Christianity. In choosing to make his case in *Philosophical Fragments* through an appropriation of Socrates, he wants to show that Christian faith is more than just a question of a universal philosophy in relation to 'moral matters.'[73] (*PF*, p.13) Socratic revelation from within – through which one might come close to knowledge of the divine[74] – stands in contrast to Christian revelation which is given to us, and is to be accepted entirely on faith. Kant's honesty with respect to faith at least arises out of a desire – like Socrates – to take away the 'stupid notion' (p.25) of any possibility for a metaphysical knowledge of God. And Climacus agrees with Kant with respect to the 'folly' (p.49) of such a project.[75] Kant attempts to show what can be intelligibly said (in rational terms) with respect to faith. In his morally focused view of our faith-relation to God, he shares in the same kind of goal for universally applicable 'narrowness of principles' (p.29) that Climacus ascribes to Socrates. In doing so, Kierkegaard is

[72] In discussing the 'Appendix to the Dialectic and the Canon of Pure Reason', Rauscher writes: 'Kant presents a schematic of ways in which human beings can take something to be true, which can be read independently as an analysis of justification of belief…The first stage, having an opinion, occurs when someone takes something to be true, conscious that the grounds for it are insufficient both subjectively and objectively. The second stage, believing, occurs when the grounds are subjectively sufficient but objectively insufficient. The third stage, knowing, occurs when the grounds are sufficient both subjectively and objectively…Unfortunately Kant is not precise in his definitions of the terms "objective" and "subjective."' (Rauscher, 2010, p.306)

[73] *PF*, p.13.

[74] 'In the Socratic view…self-knowledge is a knowledge of God.' (*PF*, p.14)

[75] Echoing Kant, Climacus writes: 'Whether we call existence an *accesorium* or the eternal *prius*, it is never subject to demonstration.' (p.50)

repeating the same kind of questioning of the 'sovereignty of reason…as a response to "the little Socrates" of Königsberg, Immanuel Kant' (Beiser, 1987, pp. 24-25) that has its origin in Hamann's response to the latter.

Climacus is clear: Any approach that seeks to posit faith in terms of a practical 'knowledge' of God, undermines the true character of faith that is 'passion.'[76] (*CUP*, p.11) He echoes de Silentio's statement in relation to the relation between reason and faith as a limit point.[77] But what he wants to show is that reason too is passionate with respect to that which is beyond its grasp. If it is natural for reason to want to know as much as it can, it is no surprise to find that it might also overextend itself in this regard. It might want to say more in relation to faith than it ought. As he writes: 'the Reason cannot advance beyond this point, and yet it cannot refrain in its paradoxicalness from arriving at this limit and occupying itself therewith.' (*PF*, p.55) In this way, reason invites upon itself the offense that will be the natural outcome of its encounter with that which goes beyond its limits. In chapter two we saw the extent to which Kant stays within the boundaries of reason in speaking about faith. Climacus wants to say that reason will always be unsatisfied in finding such limits. There will always remain the 'incitement' (ibid.) to say more, regardless of any distinction to be made between an apophatic or cataphatic theological appropriation of an object of faith such as the Incarnation.[78]

I am not proposing that Kierkegaard's fideist claim as to the limits of reason in relation to faith is a specific response to Kant at every turn. But it is clear that some of the pseudonymous individuals want to respond to any attempt to transgress the boundary line between reason and faith, in order to show that true Christian faith cannot be reduced simply to just its moral content. Kant can only conceive of Christ's special standing – that is to say, his being absolutely different from ordinary human beings – in terms of that which reason can understand within its own limits. This is what Climacus means when he says that reason 'conceives 'only such an unlikeness within itself as it can conceive by means of itself.' (ibid.). Kant (ideally) cannot say any more than he is permitted

[76] *CUP*, p.33.
[77] De Silentio says that 'faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.' (*FT*, p.46)
[78] *PF*, p.55.

(by reason) to say. But Climacus asserts that, in order to be true to faith in Christ as God, man's absolute unlikeness, rather than some partial likeness, ought to be acknowledged. And furthermore, that reason cannot arrive at that knowledge by itself. It must be given by God.[79]

3.1.4 Vigilius Haufniensis

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Vigilius Haufniensis offers us a broadly Kantian view of the ethical. He says that '[e]thics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions.' (*COA*, p.16) However, he asserts that as soon as a metaphysical, ideal, appropriation of the idea of sin – which is a core theme in his text – is attempted in terms of the ethical, it cannot include the idea of the subjective individual who is anxious and in need of repentance. Whilst the subject of sin is not a major theme for our purposes, and although it will be touched upon in chapters four and five, we can nevertheless make some brief observations as to what kind of response to Kantian moral faith is to be found in this particular pseudonymous view.

Vigilius contends that if ethics attempts to include the concept of sin in its system, it must also permit the idea of 'repentance' (p.17), and in doing so, it loses its essential ideality for ethics. He writes: '[I]n actuality, the whole interest of subjectivity steps forth, and now metaphysics runs aground.' (p.18n) There is a core idea being re-expressed here, namely, that of the ethical being transcended or surpassed by the religious ideal. Vigilius harks back to *Fear and Trembling,* reminding us (in his own interpretation) that the demand of an ethical ideal is challenged by that of the religious ideal. For him, Abraham realizes the religious ideality in his willingness to actually kill Isaac to prove his faith to God. Abraham's faith can produce a real outcome, contra what Vigilius says is the character of the ideality of ethics, i.e., its impossibility. We can say that Vigilius is in a position to appreciate an ethical pronouncement on Abraham's actions, because he regards the ethical as concerning itself with 'accusing [and] judging.' (p.22) Abraham – according to moral faith – chose for evil. In Kant's view, man is innately evil insofar as our freedom to choose is what brings about evil as the

[79] *Ibid.,* p.57-58.

transgression of a moral law that is *a priori* within our reason. Vigilius seems to be reiterating this idea when he says that ethical sin is conceived of in terms of the human race as a 'deeper presupposition' (p.19), rather than in terms of something that 'belongs only accidentally to the accidental individual.' (ibid.) He uses the word 'selfishness' (*COA*, p.77) as a translation of that which Kant sees as getting in the way of purely ethical behavior. Kant tries to make sense of the idea of original sin in the *Religion* book, but Vigilius says that the introduction of the idea of sin into the system of ethics is its own downfall, because sin is a 'category that lies entirely beyond its reach.' (p.19) In other words, it is only in Christian ethics that sin finds its proper expression.[80] In that context, presumably Vigilius would find it permissible for Kant to include the idea of sin in his system of religion insofar as that system – whilst leading inevitably from the ethical – brings to light the relation between Christianity and rational religion. For Kant, sin is reduced to that which is not of a moral faith, i.e., sin against the supreme moral principle of reason, or, as Vigilius calls it: selfishness.

The theme of the individual self, as opposed to the idea of universal 'man', is a recurring theme in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts. We will continue to encounter this trope in various forms. Vigilius responds likewise: there is no value in speaking in terms of selfishness unless one first acknowledges the 'particular' (p.78) self. The ethical task ultimately comes down to a question for the individual: "What is the good?" Knowledge of the self, rather than knowledge of the universal ideal, must be the starting point. Even if it is possible to speak of human freedom in abstract terms, the question of good and evil is a concrete rather than an abstract one for the individual.[81] For Vigilius, the ethical question, in its truest form, has a spiritual dimension to it. Rational ethics might want to disregard the religious element. And, like Kant, it might want to dismiss something like the story of Abraham on the grounds that Abraham must have been mistaken in relation to the origin of the command, or

[80] *COA*, p.21.
[81] *Ibid.,* p.111n.

even that the story is 'a piquant poetical fiction.' (p.117) Yes, it was *in* the ethical sphere that Abraham's trial took place, but Vigilius wants to emphasize both religious spirit and individuality as central to the question of the ethical. That is to say, a Christian ethic. Kant's religion of pure reason only gives a partial statement of faith.

3.1.5 Quidam – Frater Taciturnus

In 'Quidam's diary' (*SLW*, xi) – *"Guilty"/"Not Guilty"* (*SLW*, p.185) in *Stages on Life's Way* – we find a narrative that as such continues beyond that articulated in *Either/Or*. For this pseudonym, the choice either/or is one of conflict between the ethical and the religious. He is torn by virtue of believing, unlike Judge William, that the choice to be made is between the ethical and the religious. Quidam's view of the religious is such that the relationship to God transcends the temporal. Essentially, he takes the view that, in order to be a fully religious individual, the finite must be sacrificed. In his view, he cannot have it both ways. What he is faced with is question of follow-through that is marriage considered as a religious duty – what Judge William sees as the proper response to a divine gift.

Quidam mirrors the Jutland priest's statement at the end of *Either/Or* – that in the eyes of God 'we are always in the wrong' (*E/O*, p.597) – by drawing attention to the fact that the only presupposition he clings to is that which opposes the arrogance of thinking 'that a person is himself always all right.' (*SLW*, p.195) His is an absolute humility with respect to God. However, his religious disposition goes well beyond a purely ethical faith in God. The ethical – not unlike its treatment in de Silentio's account of Abraham's – is characterized as that which is part of Quidam's 'spiritual trial.' (p.313) He does not have enough faith to marry his beloved. That is to say, he does not have faith in the ethical as the route to becoming pleasing to God. His is a faith-relation to God that is absolute.[82] We are presented with a conflict between a 'higher' (p.338) expression of the religious, and that of an ethico-religious concept of faith. He is

[82] A 'life-view' (*SLW*, p.342) in which the individual 'must have his absolute idea *in mente*.' (ibid.)

not yet a knight of faith – a theme to be developed further in the final section of this chapter – but he is a 'soldier stationed at the frontier' (p.195) between the ethico-religious and the religious. Compared with Judge William – whose view is from the perspective of the ethical – Quidam's is a spiritual perspective. His 'relationship with God' (p.225) – but take note, one that surpasses a purely ethical faith – takes priority. The ethico-religious position by no means escapes his attention. He readily acknowledges that it is possible to hold to a (Kantian) moral faith in which one's ethical relation to the other, i.e., being selfless with respect to others is viewed as having divine sanction.[83] He interprets a rationally-derived relationship to God as one in which 'one has…won God for intrigue.' (p.231) But, Quidam is torn between ethical duty conceived of in terms of a moral faith that has its *telos* in reason, and the kind of religious individual that he aspires to become, whose *telos*, like Abraham, is in God.

For Quidam, the ethical cannot serve the purpose of mediating his relation to God. His relation to God cannot merely be one of an ethical 'God-pleasing' (p.310) that takes place in the relation to another human. Quidam *wants* to live his life at the highest pitch of religious expression, but cannot emulate the movement of faith of the religious exemplar. And he believes that this involves bypassing the ethical in favour of a direct relation to God. He echoes de Silentio in this regard: 'every individuality who solely by himself has a relation to the idea without any middle term (here is the silence toward all others)…if the idea is God, then the individual is religious.' (p.231) In fact, he also reiterates de Silentio's charge as to the ridiculousness of the ethical when it is exposed as placing a huge responsibility of equal duty to every other on the shoulders of the single individual. Quidam writes: '[I]f…literally speaking, I had a duty to all people, I would be the most troubled person in the whole country'[84]. (p.276) He points to a problem that he sees in Kant idealization of faith. Namely,

[83] 'I think of God as one who sanctions solicitude's calculation if a person does not have his own welfare in mind but someone else's.'; The relation to God is in this way conceived of as 'purely ethical-religious obligations, abstractly understood.' (*SLW*, p.230) He is clear as to the origins of such a moral faith, reading Kant's ethical formula as that which seeks to eliminate a concern for the outcome in order to get to a pure principle for action: 'An ethical commitment cannot be discharged by any calculation of probability but only by assuming the ultimate possibility of responsibility.' (p.394)

[84] As Climacus puts it: 'every human being, on the other hand, is too heavy for me.' (*PF*, p.6)

that in reality the ordinary human being is faced with the individual task of discovering how to live 'ethically-religiously.' (p.344) Quidam is in this respect caught between two spheres, with no other solution to the problem except to take a leap of faith in either direction. That is, to place his faith in either the ethical or in God.

In the final section of *Stages*, Frater Taciturnus leaves us with an open-ended question as to whether or not the ethical is that which leads 'into the religious.' (p.435) Essentially, he does not know where the source of religious passion is to be located. Is it in the ethical, or in God? But, he affirms the idea that the passion of faith has its center in the inner life of the individual.[85] For Kant, the ethical inevitably leads to the religious question, and to the need for God. Whatever positives he might point towards in terms of the validity of an ethico-religious disposition, Taciturnus nonetheless believes that a systematic treatment of the religious will never fully account for faith. It may be the case that the deficiency in a rational moral faith is in not 'knowing where the religious really is located.' (p.452) In Kant, religious faith is an 'addition' to the ethical. Quidam's religious passion is not located in the ethical, for if it were, he would not be so conflicted. He would find that 'quietness in the fulfilling of a modest duty.' (p.260) Ultimately, Taciturnus confirms the (Kantian) idea that the ethical and the religious are separate 'existence spheres.' (p.476) The ethical sphere, in being characterized as a lower sphere of 'transition' (ibid.), is surpassed by the religious. Kant wants to articulate a faith that is confined to the inner sphere of pure reason. For him, there is no transition other than from morality to (rational) religion. In Taciturnus we hear yet another echo on the theme of the unbearable nature of a strict, reason-derived moral system. He believes that, whereas the demands of ethics can never be fully met[86], the religious life is one that can be followed, presumably because the great demands of rational ethics have been 'left behind.' That is to say, that in the religious, one's *telos* is in God, and in God's (reasonable) demands.

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[85] 'The religious outcome, indifferent toward the external, is assured only in the internal, that is, in faith.' (*SLW* p.442)

[86] Taciturnus says that 'this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt.' (*SLW*, p.476)

3.1.6 Anti-Climacus

Kant is interested in what Anti-Climacus refers to in *The Sickness Unto Death* as 'the ethical aspect of Christianity.' (*SUD*, p.5) Kant's approach is not one that seeks entirely to mediate faith abstractly – what Anti-Climacus calls scholarly indifference[87] – but he does want to express faith in a rational way. The question we might ask is as to whether or not Kant wants to subsume faith into reason. I think that Kant himself makes this clear. There is a sphere of reason that lies at the core of Christianity, and the sphere of revelation that lies outside of it. In other words, there is more to religious faith than just the rational aspect, and Kant is clear that his perspective is that of reason. Again, we hear a common theme repeated by Anti-Climacus with respect to faith: faith is an individual and lived, rather than a universal and abstract, concern. He writes: '[I]t is Christian heroism…to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, alone before God…but it is not Christian heroism to be taken in by the idea of man in the abstract.' (p.5) To the extent that Kant's faith is concerned with 'the self whose criterion is man' (p.79), Anti-Climacus wants to say that this is only a partial representation of faith. True Christian faith for the individual is such that God is criterion.

One might be able to posit sin in terms of moral faith, i.e., in terms of the ethical, but Anti-Climacus asserts, like Vigilius, that the relation between sin and faith belongs more properly to Christianity which 'reshapes all ethical concepts.' (p.83) When he says that '"[W]hatever does not proceed from faith is sin"' (p.103), he does not mean it in the same way as Kant does, because his is a Christian, in contrast to a purely moral, faith. The thrust of Anti-Climacus' definition of sin essentially puts everyone under sin, no less than in Kant's account, because the ideal seems to be practically impossible. That is to say, the reality is that man generally can only register what is obvious, specific, and momentary. How could he even begin to register a whole life's worth of sins? Kant would concur with this idea: *that* is the remit of the divine.

[87] See *SUD*, p.5.

Although it is Kant's aim to seek a universally applicable account of man's rational nature, commonality with respect to properly moral behavior, and the possibility of a relation to God via morality, he does not deny that the relation to God is ultimately an individual moral vocation. In his view, it is the individual heart that has renewal and rebirth as its possibility, but it is a perspective of sin that is defined by what ethical reason commands, and one that seeks to universalize rather than individualize. In the ethical sphere, a judgment is made on a single action. Both Kant and Anti-Climacus reiterate the idea that it is only God who can judge an entire life, and only God who can see into the heart of a human. Anti-Climacus calls this the 'human being…in his transparency before God.' (p.124) But, Kant's rational faith cannot make intelligible the idea of the forgiveness of sins, only the idea that divine grace somehow makes up for the deficiency in our striving towards the highest good. For Anti-Climacus, despair in relation to sin points towards (Christian) faith.[88] That despair is lacking in Kant's account of faith is an indication that it is not the highest expression of faith, which, for Anti-Climacus, is Christianity.

In Kierkegaard's time, when science was continuing to make strides forward in the belief that it could discover the most important truths, there was a sense in which the individual was posed with the decision between religious belief and unbelief to a larger degree than before – the idea that '[o]ne *ought* not to believe what one has insufficient evidence for.'[89] (Taylor, 1989, p.404) Kierkegaard was writing about, and responding to, what he saw as a decline in faith, and against a merely superficial, taken-for-granted attitude to being a Christian. From his perspective, one ought to be honest about oneself as a Christian, rather than just blindly accepting its teachings without much thought given over as to what one is really faced with in terms of faith. His emphasis upon individuality does not promote some kind of withdrawal into self-preoccupation, but can be seen as part of the Romantic shift towards wanting to give expression to a belief in 'something greater…the world, nature, being, the

[88] *SUD*, p.116n.
[89] We might here be reminded of the opposite of this, iterated in the epigraph at the start of the Introduction.

word of God.' (p.427) If we are to talk about morality and/or faith, then, for Kierkegaard, it ought to be expressed in personal terms. We ought not to abstract the individual out of lived experience.

Kierkegaard was responding to the expression of Christianity of his day that seemed to be pointing more and more towards the secular rather than the sacred. This was a time that 'was in general more pious and more concerned about the state of religion…But the faith which emerged…[had an] intense practical concern.' (p.399) It is in this light, perhaps, that Kierkegaard can be seen as responding to a Kantian faith, which has at its core a concern for morality. Like Kant, Kierkegaard questions the notion of an unshakeable 'metaphysically realist understanding of truth.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.12) They both agree that although we might not be in a position to know God, we can be in a position to know something about the ethical component implied by religious faith. Kant is engaged in the search for an absolute truth with respect to faith, and he posits this through morality. For Kierkegaard, this does not go far enough. We ought instead to embrace 'contingency and transience and abandon the…search for…absolute truth.' (p.15) Rational thinking ought to embrace the limitations it has regarding what it can say about faith – which of course Kant does. But Kant also wants to claim some form of position of authority (truth) with respect to his pure religion of reason.

Johannes Climacus' is not so much an argument against what reason can do, as much as one against making the mistake of thinking that it is capable of being absolutely 'self-confident.' (Evans, 1992, p.106) That Kant seems in some places to want to overstep the boundary in his concept of faith perhaps exemplifies such overreaching. Kant said that he wanted to limit reason in order to make room for faith. However, what he actually did was to limit what is understood by 'faith.' Kierkegaard returns to Kant in order to elevate reason to a higher understanding of itself. That is, in order that it should realize its deficiencies with respect to making Christianity fully intelligible. The whole point for Kierkegaard is that an ethical reading of it is an incomplete one. It is an error, for example, for Kant to maintain that a moral faith does not necessarily need a real-life example of a perfect moral being. And worse still that he should

find himself incapable of affirming Christ's divinity. Kant's religion of pure reason is conceived of in ideal, moral terms. However, a rational investigation of faith, which operates on the basis of the limits of reason, essentially becomes speechless with regard to a crucial tenet of the Christian faith.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, a subjective view of the ethical is emphasized. That is to say, a view in which individuality is central to the question of ethical truth. For Climacus, '[P]ersonality is a moral status one works to attain.' (Mooney, 2008, p.860) The question as to truth is essentially a question that relates directly, or, one could say, springs from, the goal of becoming a particular kind of individual – "What am I, and what may I become?" The moral lens, through which Kant posits a moral faith in God, does not adequately bring into focus the problem of the individual who must first address the issue as to what starting point they are coming from individually. The attempt to abstract away from the experience of the individual is, for Climacus, both a mistake, and an unrealizable goal. It is not possible to be absolutely and objectively 'disinterested' (McCombs, 2013, p.36) in one's thinking about what it is to be human. Although Kant posits that interestedness ought to be kept at bay, he acknowledges that, in reality, it is unavoidable. Kierkegaard does not seek to avoid this fact. Climacus says that 'Truth is Subjectivity' (*CUP*, p.189) and we can read him as saying that I cannot begin to transform ethically unless I first know myself. This is the kind of 'interestedness' that is lacking in Kant's account. That is, being honest about who one is, before one can be in a position to think about who one wants to become. Evans says that 'The lack of such truth would mean a lack of humanness.' (Evans, 1992, p.28)

When Climacus says that truth is subjectivity, he does not mean that the truth is relative. He means that when it comes to the ethical and religious spheres, the whole person – 'the emotional, passionate nature as well as the intellect' (Rudd, 1993, p.55) – needs to be taken into account, and not just to the objective part, as one finds in Kant. Religious thinking ought to consider the individual rather than the universal. Or, as Mooney puts it: 'A general disquisition on religion can't be existentially successful.' (Mooney, 2008, p.865) For someone like Climacus, truly 'substantive religious beliefs…can only come

through subjectivity' (Rudd, 1993, p.62) Although Kierkegaardian subjectivity 'bears a strong resemblance to…"practical reason"' (McCombs, 2013, p.3) – and in this respect, we can see Kant's influence – for Kierkegaard, I ought to posit the ethical in such a way that appeals to me as a whole person – as a thinker who is passionate and imaginative – rather than from the perspective of 'propositional, doctrinal, or detached knowledge.' (Mooney, 2008, p.863) The question ought to be one in which I am concerned with what is *livable* ethically, rather than the (essentially unattainable) ideal. It involves a personal commitment to how I ought to live.

Climacus' call to individual subjectivity with respect to God is very close to Kant's idea of subjectivity, insofar as each 'subject' is personally responsible, and 'under the eye of…a watchful God.' (p.866) Whilst Kierkegaard wants to provoke our becoming in a more obvious way – addressing us from the first-person perspective – he echoes Kant in terms of freedom and responsibility. *We* must follow through; the responsibility is *ours*. The question of our ethical becoming, or, formation, on the road to the religious ideal, is conceived of as the becoming of a subjective, responsible, individual. This is in contrast to a cold, universal view of the ethical. But, like Kant, 'freedom always runs like a red thread through Kierkegaard's thinking.' (Green, 1992, p.149) It is what essentially leads to the question of God. In both philosophies, freedom and the ethical are the media of transition to religious faith. As Climacus says: 'But freedom, that is the wonderful lamp. When a person rubs it with ethical passion, God comes into existence for him.' (*CUP*, p.138)

Kierkegaard echoes Kant's emphasis upon the inward state and motivation as that which is the highest indicator of one's moral worth, seeing freedom as an essential component of our thinking about faith. Although the ethical still has its proper role to play, Kierkegaard wants to say that one's relation to God – as a relation which is much greater than that conceived by Kant as originating in duty – cannot be removed from the consideration of what one ought to do when faced with a moral decision. The ethical is a 'pervasive feature of human existence' (Evans & Roberts, 2013, p.213), and it is, for Kierkegaard, a part of the journey to the religious stage. But, it is not the entire

picture of what it means to be human. One is forced into having to consider one's self as one relates to one's fellow human beings *and* to God. Kant's influence is clear in terms of the emphasis upon duty, but Kierkegaard raises the issue of how we are to accommodate a faith that sees duty to God as the priority.[90] Kierkegaard wants to provoke us into questioning a view of faith conceived of in merely ethical terms.

In Abraham's case, de Silentio emphasizes that God's command was a trial. It is a *personal* test. In other words, it is not that it ought to become a new law or rule that one should kill one's son in order to prove one's faith. Abraham's faith is something beyond the reaches of what can be intelligibly spoken of in a purely rational and ethical language. Perhaps de Silentio and Climacus are concerned that we ought to keep the distinction between faith and reason clear, precisely because, as human beings, we are so good at this process of 'blurring the lines.' (Westphal, 2014, p.146) Such is the composite nature of what it means to be a real (and not an ideal) human. The ideal goal for Kant may well be the preservation of that *either/or* between a rational and revelatory faith, but Kierkegaard wants to say that the reality of human existence is not so clear-cut. For the latter, the ethical is not annihilated in religious faith. It is 'an essential element' (Evans, 2006, p.211). But, it is surpassed by a higher expression of faith that is a complete trust in God.

In broad terms, Kierkegaard inherits from Kant the idea that the ethical is that aspect of humanity which is central to our attempt to relate to God. Green calls this the 'Kantian-Kierkegaardian insistence that the ethical is the primary mode of approach to the religious.' (Green, 1992, p.132) Like Kant, Kierkegaard sees reason as an important facet of our being, even if there is a question for the latter as to 'whether reason is to be rejected or affirmed in the ultimate affirmation of God and truth.' (McCombs, 2013, p.80) Where Kant's faith leaves off is perhaps the starting point for Kierkegaard's view of faith.

[90] How, for example, do we take account of a 'local' (Rudd, 1993, p.133) moral system such as the specifically Christian religion, with its own particular beliefs? Kant tries to take account of it, i.e., to make room for Christianity. But that which is nonessential is dismissed on the basis of whether or not it conforms to a purely moral faith.

Westphal describes Kierkegaard's Religiousness A – which 'is not the specifically Christian religiousness' (*CUP*, p.555) – as the 'religion of Socrates' (Westphal, 2014, p.208) In it, we find that (1) there is a religion of immanence which is grounded in reason; (2) it operates without the need for revelation; (3) God is an idea/ideal, rather than a 'personal' God; (4) a perpetual striving, task-oriented, and freedom based faith is posited; (5) resignation is part of the process of faith. If Westphal is right, then clearly Kant's religion of pure reason is therein described. It too is not specifically Christian, notwithstanding the fact that it is a partial translation of Christian beliefs into a rational language.

However, the distinction between Kierkegaard (as Climacus) and Kant becomes clearer. For the latter, the pure religion of reason (Religiousness A) is the ideal religion, to which Christianity comes closest; for the former, the rational (and ethical) character of Religiousness A is a necessary step, or, pre-cursor, to becoming a true Christian. It is the distinction between immanent and transcendent faith, which is then played out in contrasting expressions by Kierkegaard.[91] The ground condition (Religiousness A) must be present in order for a fully-fledged faith (Religiousness B) to be possible. In this way, Kierkegaard is going back to Kant in order to reform that way of thinking about faith. He wants to correct Kant: there is more to religious faith than just the ethical element. Kant knew this, and acknowledged it. However, given the constraints he imposed, he could not explore what Kierkegaard felt to be absolutely necessary in terms of a more extended (proper) expression of faith.

Religiousness A is the ethico-religious stage. In it, Kierkegaard views the self as relating absolutely to an ideal, and relatively to that which has been subsumed. In other words, the individual relates to a religious ideal, and the ethical becomes something relative. The ethical is still present but there is a higher *telos* for the individual. Judge William's stage of existence points towards the religious, but he is still tethered to a finite ideal, i.e., marriage. He is an exemplar of how Kantian duty, as a way of relating to God, might be played out

[91] The two sections that conclude this chapter – on resignation and the knight of faith, respectively – are a part of Kierkegaard's project in this regard.

in real terms[92] as 'self-choice and personal individuation.' (Green, 1992, p.94) In other words, the existing individual is the focus, but what informs that existence is the ethical. However, a subtle distinction must be made. For Kant, the ethical is the proposed *telos* for the possibility of coming into a relation to God, in which the ethical is most certainly not 'relative.' And so, it would be more correct to say that Kantian faith is part of the initial stage of Religiousness A.

In Kantian faith, the rational agent is the source. As Elrod puts it: '[T]he individual's ideality is a matter which he himself discovers and presents, as it were, to God as his understanding of who he is and what he ought to do.' (Elrod, 2015, p.160) In contrast, for Kierkegaard, God is the source who makes faith possible. For Climacus, Christianity is *more* than just the ethico-religious. The ethical, and the ethico-religious, are merely stages on the route to truly becoming a Christian. Kierkegaard wants to remove the Kantian limitation on what is to be named as 'faith.' That is to say, that faith belongs to more than just the inner sphere of reason that posits 'the self [as] divine' (Elrod, 2015, p.204), insofar as the morality that underpins it does not (apparently) need the idea of God. In fact, what Kierkegaard wants to do is to subvert a reason-first concept of faith. Kant might want to say that someone's moral beliefs ought to inform his or her religious beliefs. But Kierkegaard wants to reverse this. The ethical and religious are in an inevitable relation to each other, but the contrast between Kant and Kierkegaard is one of *priority*. Kant says: "Put your trust in your own abilities, act rationally and morally, and with the help of God – if he exists – you can all together hope to become pleasing to Him"; Kierkegaard says: "Put your trust absolutely in God, get over your reason – this is about more than just ethics – and be a truly Christ-like individual."

Kierkegaard's thinking about the high ideal of faith is a response to Kant's 'dark view' (Green, 1992, p.159) of the human condition. That is to say, in Kant, there is a disjunction between what we are really capable of – morally speaking – and what ideally ought to be the case. Kierkegaard wants to correct Kant's Pelagian idea of grace in order to give expression to a faith that is more in

[92] For Kant, 'duty comes first. But duty is not opposed to well-being. It presumes concrete human goals.' (Green, 1992, p.93)

keeping with the Christian Augustinian model. Grace is a part of Kant's religious thinking, but the idea of divine grace is far weightier in Kierkegaard's account. Kant wants to say that it is incorrect to assert that the moral disposition that we find within us comes about 'as the influence of another higher spirit.' (7:58) Kant says that '[T]his call comes to the human being through his own reason…perhaps it awakens him only to stir himself and strive toward a good life (like one whose powers are merely dormant and not extinct).' (7:47) It is something that we discover *for ourselves* as rational beings. And yet, Kant seems drawn towards greater possibilities with respect to the role of the supernatural in the principle of grace when he says: 'the human being, being by nature dead in sin, cannot hope to improve by his own powers, not even by his moral disposition.' (7:55) Kierkegaard does not have to be so constrained in his speaking about grace. Climacus responds like St. Augustine, by saying that the condition of faith – as something that exceeds a moral relation to God – can be lost, and can only be awakened by God.

Grace in Kierkegaard exceeds Kant's interpretation which is necessarily limited in scope. In both accounts, the route to God is 'narrow, difficult, rigorous, and strenuous' (Walsh, 2009, p.142), and one in which resignation and sacrifice are prerequisites. Kant's concept of religious faith only goes so far, because he believes that the relationship to God can come about as a result of the proper (rational) disposition of the subject. But, both Kant and Kierkegaard take the view that an inward change is what is most essential for this striving to take place. They differ in terms of what drives that motivation for change, and indeed very much so in terms of whether or not it originates within the human being, or in God's grace. For Kant, religious striving is an endless project; similarly, but more explicitly expressed, is Kierkegaard's view that, the more one strives to be like Christ, the more one realizes just how far from being like God we really are. We are absolutely unlike Christ in the most essential way.

Kant tackles the metaphysical questions that relate to faith, and that cannot be answered by theoretical reason, in terms of practical reason. In formulating a faith that begins with the question of what I ought to do, Kant

paves the way for Kierkegaard's appropriation of the ethical as an existential question that is crucial to our progressing to the religious stage. Evans writes: 'Kierkegaard's aim was to show that those metaphysical questions that are linked to religious faith are real questions that human beings must answer…as Kant had argued already…that need to be approached from a point of view that could be called practical…or existential.' (Evans, 2006, p.47) Even if it is possible to interpret Kierkegaard's appropriation of the ethical in Hegelian rather than Kantian terms[93], it is true to say that Kierkegaard wants to point to the fact that the ethical does not adequately 'solve' every single test or trial that a human being might encounter, not least when 'a clash of duties' (Rudd, 1993, p.146), or the belief system of a religion comes into conflict with it. The more one delves into the pseudonymous texts, the more it becomes apparent that Kierkegaard's view of the ethical is 'saturated with Kantian assumptions'[94] (Green, 1992, p.88) as part of a consistent polemic with the kind of metaphysics that purports to offer 'final and certain knowledge' (Evans, 2006, p.50) with respect to human experience. When Kierkegaard attacks the notion of finality, he is not just responding to Hegel, but also to Kant. *Either/Or* presents us with one view of the ethical. It is 'but a single foray into the varied terrain of the ethical.' (Mooney, 2008, p.860) Even if there is an emphasis upon social roles[95] in Judge William's account of faith, there is still a clear sense in which his views on duty as a relation to God springs from a Kantian account. In his own mind, the Judge is fulfilling the ideal of a sovereign kingdom of ends, from which religious faith as part of 'the Christian community' (Rudd, 1993, p.100) emanates. De Silentio's concept of the ethical is 'broadly Kantian.' (Malesic, 2006, p.455) In a broad sense, Kierkegaard's idea for the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* relates to the

[93] See: Evans & Roberts (2013); McCombs (2013); Taylor (2000); and most notably, Westphal (2014), for positions that emphasize the relation to Hegel's concept of the ethical. However, Kosch (2006, p.86) points to the fact that in a text such as *Either/Or*, the Judge's concept of the ethical is an admixture of the Kantian and Hegelian. And Stewart maintains that: 'When one conceives of Kierkegaard's purported "polemic" with Hegel in terms of their different conceptions of the nature of philosophy, the result is that the polemic is not with Hegel *per se* but with all of modern philosophy, which he represents' (Stewart, 2003, pp. 650-651) – or, what Furtak calls the 'prevailing model of philosophy' (Furtak, 2010, p.99) of Kierkegaard's time.

[94] Green contends that Kierkegaard is 'deeply influenced' (Green, 1992, xvi) by Kant.

[95] Judge William can be interpreted as representing the 'ethical complacency of decent husbands, good judges, or competent clerks.' (Mooney, 2008, p.873)

systematic and universal which concerns itself with uniform moral duties. Kant's 'focus on intention…is a major point of contact between Kierkegaard's ethics and Kant's.' (Green, 1992, p.48) But regardless of the details of why they differ, the point is *that* they differ. The point being, that the ethical is played out in real experience. This opposes the idea of the ethical that Kant proposes, in which it is viewed as an unbendingly universal system. Simply put, there is *some* view of the ethical to be found in each of Kierkegaard's texts because it is central to his thinking about faith. Given that each pseudonym speaks from a particular perspective, we should not assume that there is one overriding concept of the ethical.

From the Hegelian perspective, the statement that the 'single individual is higher than the universal' (*FT*, p.47) can be viewed as being directed against the 'established order' (McCombs, 2013, p.54) – a polemic against what Kierkegaard saw as the mass mediocrity of society. However, it is still possible to read it in Kantian (and not Hegelian) terms, because, de Silentio's meaning is not 'that there is no intelligible truth that stands over all people.' (ibid.) Kierkegaard can be read as affirming Kant's ideal of universal truth, even if he wants to go beyond it with respect to faith. This interpretation neither undermines Kierkegaard's criticisms with respect to what is deemed to be truth by the collective, nor does it seek to deny that Kierkegaard's view of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* is given Hegelian expression. Evans and Roberts (2013) disagree that the ethical as portrayed in *Fear and Trembling* is Kantian, and that the polemic is with an Hegelian view. But, in their conclusion (Evans & Roberts, 2013, p.228), their description of Kierkegaard's view of the ethical as a relation to God cannot absolutely exclude a Kantian reading. If Hegel used 'Kantian language as well' (Evans, 2006, p.215), then we are permitted to go back to source, as it were, in order to make the contrast in expressions of faith in Kant and Kierkegaard clearer. The crucial point being made by Kierkegaard is that faith cannot be simply reduced to a merely ethical expression as one finds in Kant. As Evans says: '[It] is not that faith is opposed to morality, but that genuine religious faith cannot be reduced to a life of moral striving, or completely understood using only the categories of a rationalistic morality.'

(p.210) Revelation by a personal God is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian, but it is surplus to requirements in Kant's faith.

Finally, in what way may we interpret Kierkegaard as responding to Kant's ethical expressions regarding the figures of Abraham and Christ respectively? In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard wants to challenge and destroy any notions of complacency in faith. Mooney writes: 'Moriah breaks up the ethical, the human world, and also shatters the divine.' (Mooney, 2008, p.877) The text emphasizes that the divine is capable of bringing about the impossible, and that Abraham has absolute trust and faith in such a God. To this extent, the divine is not shattered. What is shattered is the divine as construed by a purely moral faith. Kant's 'God' disintegrates. Abraham 'knew full well that his son would not die.' (Palmquist & McPherson, 2009, p.481) He relied upon God's earlier promise to him. We might say, God 'had form' in this regard: God had already brought about the impossible in Isaac. By 'knew', we understand this not to mean 'certainty' in the sense of theoretical reason, but rather, to *know* on the basis of trust in God's ability to bring about the impossible. In this respect, the 'faithful heart' surpasses Kant's idea of the good heart. Kant and Kierkegaard might share some common ground with respect to the moment of conversion in faith, in which there is a 'a kind of rebirth' (6:47), or 'New Birth' (*PF*, p.23) occurring in 'a single act' (6:74), or 'Moment [of]…decisive significance' (*PF*, p.24). But Abraham's 'moment' transcends the idea of a merely rational revolution of the heart. His fate, and Isaac's, is entirely in God's hands.

The textual tensions are a way of testing the kind of certainty that might be ascribed to the ethical. It tests 'the depths of ethical personality.' (Mooney, 2008, p.877) Perhaps Kierkegaard thinks we might be moved closer to true faith, or, rather, that the wayward 'smug and comfortable' (Green, 1993, p.193) Christian would be made suitably uncomfortable in their reception of Abraham. We must take into account that this is an extreme view of the relation of the ethical to faith. But Kierekgaard's point is that we – or more specifically, de Silentio – cannot understand faith in purely ethical terms. The 'attempt to make intelligible the conception of faith' (Evans, 2006, p.210) is not possible. For Caputo, *Fear and Trembling* is a deconstruction of the ethical, in which there is

'a passion for transgression' (Caputo, 1997, xix) of the moral law. Kant finds it easy to dismiss Abraham, but Kierkegaard uses the story as a point of departure in order to undermine not only Kantian moral faith, but also our attempt to articulate a secure response to Abraham.

If the ethical is, in reality, impossible to fully realize, then, why can't the ethical be suspended for faith? We bypass the ethical for selfish reasons, and sometimes, for a greater common good. So why not for faith? Obviously, we have good reasons for not wanting to murder for faith. Not only is Kierkegaard concerned 'with the flesh and blood individual as he exists' (Rudd, 1993, p.83), but he also wants to say that the Kantian morality cannot be made into one's 'absolute' (Westphal, 2014, p.75) *telos* in matters of faith. Ethics is still valid, but there is a shift in *telos* for Abraham. Kant's moral faith aims for some level of certainty, at least in terms of what is morally plausible or reasonable. In contrast, that Abraham was uncertain (rather than 'mistaken') is not negated, but in fact upheld. He entertains the 'possibility of the thought that God is not love, that God is evil…[he] dared to…look the impossible in the eye, conquering…through faith in the changelessness of God's love.' (Podmore, 2012, p.85)

Kierkegaard's project in *Fear and Trembling* requires 'a leap into a whole new way of thinking that goes beyond…[Kantian] reasoning.' (Palmquist & McPherson, 2009, p.478) That is, thinking from the perspective of faith in revelation, as opposed to reason. What Kierkegaard wants to emphasize is the not-knowing and uncertainty of the movement of faith. Kantian faith is morally justified. But, in contrast, Abraham has an 'unfathomable confidence' (p.483) in God which goes beyond a merely ethical faith. He is not morally justified, but he believes with the confidence of a transformed faith in the impossible. His faith is justified on the basis of an absolute trust in God's power. Hence, we cannot think ethically if we are to understand Abraham's movement of faith. We may not be able to talk in rational terms about Abraham. We almost certainly would not be able to do as Abraham did. Cognizing and understanding faith from without is one thing, but taking the leap of faith for yourself is an entirely different matter. For Kierkegaard, we can understand faith to require an Abrahamic level of trust in God, as opposed to a faith in mere reason.

Green says in relation to *Fear and Trembling* that 'ethical readings of this book not only miss important features of the text, they render its argument internally incoherent.' (Green, 1993, p.191) But I think that this is precisely the trap into which Kierkegaard wants us to fall. It is the resultant lack of clarity, lack of being able to find one's 'way out' through purely rational means that Kierkegaard wants to provoke – to find ourselves out on '70,000 fathoms' (*CUP*, p.204), uncertain as to how we are to make sense of Abraham as the father of faith. How could a man willing to do that be such a father? Kierkegaard calls into question the ability to interpret it from the point of view of reason. That so many have engaged with the text, as Kierkegaard himself predicted[96], is an indication of the misguided attempt to understand the text in a pure and rationally guided way. When Kierkegaard refers to the possibility of it being translated into 'foreign languages', we might also consider that a rational language ought to be considered under the category of that which is foreign to the language of faith. It might not be a specific response to Kant, but moral reasoning certainly comes under the canopy of a rational language that hopes to understand Abraham's actions. One message to be taken from *Fear and Trembling* is that the *language* of ethics cannot justify Abraham's actions. For Kierkegaard, philosophy ought not to be so certain of itself. He welcomes the kinds of 'interpretive invention and creative misreadings' (Green, 1993, p.204) with good reason, in order to bring to light the limits we face in what we can *say* about Abraham. We will return to this point in the final chapter.

What of the figure of Christ? For both Hamann and Kierkegaard, the Incarnation is 'the most important event of all time, for through it God communicates unitively with man.' (German, 1981, p.83) He is the central figure of Christianity, and, for many, Jesus' divinity is a core belief. For Kant to avoid this in his explication is perhaps indicative of what Climacus finds reprehensible in philosophical theology: the attempt to 'eliminate from their versions of

[96] See *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vols. I-VII, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967-78). Entry no. 6491 (vol. VI): Kierkegaard writes: 'once I am dead, *Fear and Trembling* alone will be enough for an imperishable name as an author. Then it will [be] read, translated into foreign languages as well.'

Christianity those elements that logically differentiate it from pagan thought:…most importantly, the incarnation.' (Evans, 1992, p.170-171) But, we should not be so harsh. Kant must – and does, for the most part – stay within the limits of the rationally sayable. Kant is not in a position to give expression to the idea of Christ as both God and man in a way that does justice to the ordinary Christian understanding. As Betz says: 'Kant could not conceive of [such] a God.' (Betz, 2004, p.295) A rational articulation with respect to Christ in those terms, and indeed in relation the idea of Christ as Saviour, is not possible for Kant. The fact that Climacus emphasizes the historical aspect of Christianity is a further problem for a moral faith that has as its ground a principle derived abstractly, i.e., away from experience. Some common ground might be possible with respect to Christ conceived as divine on the basis of his being the most perfect moral exemplar.[97] But, Kierkegaard's Christ is not just our teacher in this regard, but *the* Teacher. He is the divine historical figure of 'promise' (Green, 1992, p.74) that is absolutely external to everything human. Simply put, for Kierkegaard, Christ is God – our 'Saviour' (*PF*, p.28) – and absolutely beyond our understanding. Hence, Kierkegaard gives expression to Christ as 'The Absolute Paradox.' (p.46) For Kant, God is an 'expression of human ideals and needs.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.2) But, for Kierkegaard, God, and Christ are more than just useful ideas. More broadly speaking, Kierkegaard views a rational faith such as Kant's as predictably constricted on an existential, conceptual, and linguistic level. In essence, his response to Kant's faith, whilst acknowledging it as containing something of value, is to say that it is *not* 'really an authentic one.' (7:48)

3.2 The Knight of Infinite Resignation and the Categorical Imperative

The purpose of this section is twofold. Firstly, to show how Kierkegaard's idea of 'resignation', as that first step in the 'double movement' (*FT*, p.105) of faith, i.e., resignation-faith, can be related to Kant's principle of morality, the categorical

[97] Walsh (2009) says that Kierkegaard's view of Christ as the prototype for human perfection is like that of Kant.

imperative. The claim here is not to show that they are identical, but rather to show how something viewed as essential to faith – notwithstanding the difference between Kant's moral faith, and that expressed by Kierkegaard through the pseudonyms – is being expressed in different ways. Secondly, this section serves as a necessary first step in advance of a discussion of the movement of faith that is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

The aesthetic young man of *Either/Or* points to Christ as having taken on the ultimate responsibility in the most tragic way, i.e., in bearing the sins of the world in totality. Can we call Christ, then, the divine tragic hero, who, in the kenotic act of dying, sacrifices his divine nature? That is to say, that he *resigns* that human part of self in commending his spirit into God's hands. His 'end or completion' (*E/O*, p.142) is in God the Father. One must not stretch the analogy too far. But it gives us a sense in which the idea of resignation to the world is an integral part of Kierkegaard's thinking with respect to the first part of the 'double movement.' When Christ rises again, he is transformed. He, like Abraham, receives the world back again. But of course the emphasis in Abraham's story – in contrast to Christ – is more on the external sacrifice rather than on the sacrifice of self. Nevertheless, reduced to a basic concept, the idea of having to sacrifice *something* for faith is important.

The actions of the tragic hero of antiquity place him outside of a strict ethics, and yet still inside the ethical domain – one could say, in limbo. He is culpable, ethically guilty, but not 'guilty absolutely' (p.143), and so he remains the tragic hero, because we factor in other things about him into our judgment of him. In other words, we can understand why he made the sacrifice, because he is not entirely to blame for having had to come to that point. The young man calls this 'properly tragic guilt in its ambiguous innocence.' (p.144) The tragic hero has resigned the world he once knew, believing his actions to have been inescapable, necessary, and for the greater good. He suffers the pain of resignation, but there is some comfort in being able, in some way, to justify his actions. In contrast, Christ's sacrifice, or *resignation*, 'is absolute suffering because the action is absolutely free.' (p.149) The act is freely performed, with

only humanity in mind. Christ does not consider himself. The act is utterly selfless and self-sacrificing, with no justification other than "Thy will be done."[98]

The aesthete writes of Marie Beaumarchais in Goethe's *Clavigo* (pp. 175-187), that whilst she remains outwardly calm having resigned herself to being abandoned, inwardly she is sorrowful and restless. She entertains the possibility that he might yet return, and her continued love, though mixed with hatred, remains a secret. She is resigned, but has faith in something yet possible, perhaps even the impossible. Her way of coping with the loss – the fact that the world no longer offers her what she wants – is to resign herself. Later on, he characterizes Donna Elvira, who has invested everything in Don Giovanni as her whole world, as having 'lost heaven when she chose the world.' (p.192) She made the mistake of seeking happiness in the purely finite. She too resigns herself to her loss, and sees that 'the soul too needs nourishment.' (p.192) There is something that proceeds from resignation. Faust too makes the mistake of investing in the world, and attempting to find spiritual meaning in 'an immediate life that can renew and strengthen.' (p.200) He fails to make the movement of resignation, for he restlessly[99] seeks for happiness in the world. He is 'the apostle of empty enthusiasm.' (p.231) The seducer - for whom there is a particular 'categorical imperative – Enjoy' (SLW, p.72) – points to the need for a struggle[100] in relation to the object of one's love, but there is a drive for control rather than a willingness to resign. Stoic resignation, on the other hand, is a measure of individual 'resilience' (*E/O*, p.235), such that each experience (of comfort or pain) can be equally 'forgotten.'

There clearly remains the question as to what is left over once the movement of resignation has been made. Is there contentment? Having made the ethical movement of self-sacrifice with respect to the categorical imperative, what next? Although one might indeed make that self-sacrificial and rational decision to set aside one's own needs for the sake of ethical duty, would one be guaranteed a good outcome for oneself? Are there absolute guarantees in having made the ethical movement? To be at complete rest with this kind of decision,

[98] See Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42.
[99] *E/O*, p.231.
[100] *E/O*, p.296.

something else must enter into the equation. It is no surprise to find that Kant introduces the idea of God as providing that kind of resting point. In other words, like Kierkegaard, the idea of resignation – in whatever form it is expressed – must necessarily be followed by the religious thought.

Judge William contends that, even if it is not possible to 'calculate consequences' (p.389) entirely, one is nevertheless in a position to resign oneself to 'divine providence.' (ibid.) That is to say – like Kant – he believes that in resigning oneself to duty, one comes into a relation to God. We can call this an ethico-religious resignation, i.e., resignation within the sphere of what can be proposed rationally and ethically. Furthermore, he believes that, in the ideal Christian marriage – that is to say, ideal from the perspective of the ethico-religious – there is a total 'self-surrender.' (*E/O*, p.414; 522) Each other resigns, or, sacrifices, their own self for the other. He refers to 'the resignation needed to enter a marriage…self-denial.' (p.418) For him, the ethical individual is 'higher', because she has submerged her self – 'done away' (p.526) with 'differences.' (ibid.) But, he believes that such a person's individuality remains, even when they have chosen in favour of the ethical.[101] In this way, the principle of morality is played out in real terms, and, according to him, it has within it a spiritual element. It is resignation with no other 'purpose' (p.417) in mind, other than fulfilling one's ethical duty to give expression to love in a way that respects the divine in marriage. Of course, this is a very particular take on love and marriage, but it is clear that resignation is characterized as part of the movement towards the religious.

In this view – a Kantian one – resignation to the principle of morality is what is asked of us (as rational beings) in our striving, with God's help, towards perfection.[102] If the aesthetic young man despairs over the world, it is – the judge contends – because he has not yet made the required movement of resignation in which happiness and contentment in this life is made possible through ethical duty, as a means to spiritual liberation. (p.520) According to the judge, the

[101] Their 'aesthetic qualities remain, it is just that they become ancillary and are preserved for that very reason.' (*E/O*, p.527)
[102] 'The religious aspect leaves it as though to God to look after the whole world, the intention makes it ready in union with God to strive for itself, to acquire itself in patience.' (*E/O*, p.434)

young man is mistaken. The choice is not to 'either let go of love – or believe in God' (*SLW*, p.163) but only the resignation or letting-go that is required in the selfless act. For the judge, resignation to the principle of morality is a 'resolution…[in which] he will, through the universal, place himself in relationship with God.' (p.164) Resignation is a signpost that, for Kierkegaard, always points towards a further movement. At the end of *Either/Or*, the Jutland priest's sermon points in that direction, but nevertheless contains the idea of a sacrifice to 'righteousness…though it has no reward.' (*E/O*, p.599) In order to become the religious individual, one must first practice resignation. However, the religious to which he points is one in which guarantees with respect to this life are surpassed by the promise of Christianity. But that is not to say that this life and this world are to be disparaged.

Quidam wants to be like that kind of religious individual who Vigilius Haufniensis says 'disdained the temporal as immediate and turned toward himself and toward the divine.' (*COA*, p.102) The former believes that he must endure the pain of resigning an earthly good such as the love of another in order to love God. That is to say, his resignation must be an extreme either/or. He may be a 'religious genius' (p.102), but he is not yet a knight of faith.[103] For Quidam, resignation is a stumbling block to be overcome, rather than a stepping-stone to faith. Nevertheless, quoting Hamann[104], his resignation is a dying to the world in order to be saved: *'Periissem nisi periissem.* [I would have perished had I not perished].' (*SLW*, p.194) But, rather than resigning himself to a life of duty as a way of coming into a relation with God, he believes that what the religious requires of him is an absolute resignation of the worldly. His view of the latter is that it is a 'shortcut' (p.206) to faith. It brings one into a closer relation to God. Quidam's opinion of Kant's positing of morality (and hence the categorical imperative) as leading into the religious would no doubt be that it is that kind of 'intermediate' (p.225), and therefore, indirect, way of relating to God. It is not

[103] In the next section of this chapter we will see the way in which the knight of faith – who has nevertheless made the first movement of resignation – differs from Quidam's view of the religious ideal.

[104] The Hongs reference this quote (*SLW*, p.706) as coming from Hamann's letter to Johann Gotthelf Lindner, May 2, 1764.

that he sees such as lacking in value. But it does not put one on the 'fast track' to God.

His belief is that the finite can offer no relief in this regard. The world and life are simply to be endured. His spiritual relation to God requires an absolute 'infinite resignation' (p.236) to the world. His view of resignation is an extreme one in which the ideal can only be achieved by divorcing himself from 'actuality.' (p.351) If his is an unattainable religious ideal, then it seems be a mirror image of the kind of ideality required of the rational agent in terms of the dictates of a supreme principle of morality. That is to say, that they are both unworkable in reality. One would have to suffer the dire consequences of renouncing the world so absolutely to the point of self-destruction. Quidam's is a particularly lopsided (ideal) view of the resignation-faith relation. Taciturnus essentially says that it is a skewed view that lacks religious wisdom: 'the religious person is the wise…but the person who sees one side of the religious is a sophist.' (p.485)

Although he does not name it directly, Climacus also gives expression to the idea of resignation as that which leads to faith. Given Climacus' emphasis on 'becoming'[105] (*CUP*, p.73) it is no surprise to find him characterizing resignation as a 'progressive dying away from self.' (*PF*, p.39) The reference to Luke 14:26 on page sixteen of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* appears as part of an echo in relation to the idea of the sacrifice (resignation) of that which is ordinarily viewed as the object of happiness, i.e., one's family. Climacus' reading is that if one is to become fully Christian, then one must first be willing to make the kind of movement in which one 'hates father and mother.' (*CUP*, p.16) If one does not read this in an extreme way, one can say that the idea here is that what brings about one's eternal happiness, over and above the immediate happiness that the world can offer, must first involve an act of resignation. From the Kantian perspective, one must act towards the other uniformly and with impartiality. Resignation is for sure a supreme act of inward 'endurance' (p.266) for the individual. For both the Kantian ethical subject, and Kierkegaard's individual, it

[105] This theme of 'becoming' will return in later chapters.

is an 'ordeal' (p.266) in which one chooses to forego what is naturally important to the self: one's loved ones, self-concern, a guaranteed outcome, etc.

Climacus spells out the fact that the individual is incapable of carrying out the ethical command. (p.266) But, in both Kant and Kierkegaard's respective expressions of the idea of resignation as leading inevitably to faith, the difficulty of achieving the ideal first part of the double-movement is not denied. Kant says that the reality for human beings in relation to the categorical imperative is that 'it very often does not happen' (4:388) that they should act strictly according to the imperative. In truth, humans do not 'easily…make it effective…in…life.' (4:389) So why try at all? Climacus and Kant want to say that, even if there is no guaranteed finite outcome, what counts in such an act of resignation, in which the individual 'annuls possibility' (*CUP*, p.339), is that one has in mind a higher good. In terms of an infinite outcome, a relation to God is made possible. Resignation, when it has something higher than finite experience (possibility) in mind, is an 'eternal decision' (p.341n) within the individual. There is some greater happiness to which one aspires when one makes the movement of resignation, whether it is expressed in terms of the categorical imperative, or directly as 'resignation.' In both Kant and Kierkegaard this movement is essentially a holy act. That is to say, it turns out to have a religious significance.

In de Silentio's account of Abraham's religious transition (or, leap), it is difficult to separate the movements of resignation and faith. He ascribes greatness to Abraham on the basis of opposites: 'that power whose strength is powerlessness…that love which is hatred of oneself' (*FT*, p.14); Abraham 'acknowledges the impossibility and at the same moment believes.' (p.40) According to de Silentio, this double-movement occurs 'in a single moment' (p.68), 'in the twinkling of an eye.' (p.69) Analogously, when one releases something from one's grip, one's hand is in the same instant open. De Silentio equates 'infinite resignation' (p.40) with 'acknowledging the impossibility.' For him, faith is not possible unless one has first resigned. If we want to separate the double-movement out, then, we can at least point to resignation as prior to

faith[106], as a disposition in which Abraham gives up on what is only humanly possible, and in which the sadness and pain of life is renounced.[107]

De Silentio's 'knight of infinite resignation' (p.35) (expressed through the story of a youth who cannot attain the love of a princess) acknowledges the impossibility of a situation, and accepts that reality. Overthinking merely staves off this kind of movement, even if it is through thinking that one arrives at that crucial moment. It is a moment in which one's 'single wish' (p.36n) – in which one has placed one's hope for happiness – is given up on the basis that it is impossible. One accepts the pain that results in making that kind of sacrifice, because it is right that one should face the impossibility in the eye, and admit defeat with regard to what is possible in life[108]. Sometimes – and de Silentio highlights this in the examples of the tragic hero – one must sacrifice something precious to the self for a greater good. This is not to say that Kierkegaard's idea of resignation and the Kantian movement that is implied by the categorical imperative are identical. Far from it. Indeed the example of the tragic hero as a knight of infinite resignation who sacrifices his offspring for the greater good no doubt causes a serious problem for a strictly Kantian morality, even if that knight can be somehow justified under ethical categories.[109] However, there is certainly some common ground regarding the idea of sacrificing that which is a (natural) object of importance for the self. Kierkegaard uses the example of love, precisely to bring out the passionate nature of such a movement, in contrast to the kind of rational disposition that underscores the high ideal of obedience to the principle of morality. But, in both accounts, there is something more that follows on from such an initial movement, that is, faith. As de Silentio says, it is only after one has first made the movement of resignation that there can be any

[106] Abraham's movement of faith is one in which 'The last stage he loses sight of is infinite resignation. He actually goes further and arrives at faith' (*FT*, p.30); 'Faith…presupposes resignation.' (p.40)

[107] 'He empties the deep sadness of existence in infinite resignation…he has felt the pain of renouncing everything.' (p.34) The need for God in Kant's account of faith arises by virtue of a resignation to the impossibility of moral perfection in merely human terms. Our failed efforts in this regard is perhaps what de Silentio has in mind when he refers to a finite 'anxious training.' (p.34)

[108] 'In infinite resignation there is peace and rest and consolation in the pain.' (*FT*, p.38)

[109] 'The tragic hero still remains within the ethical…in a higher expression of the ethical.' (p.51)

'talk of laying hold on existence by virtue of faith.' (p.39) Both Kant and Kierkegaard want to say that when one has tried everything within one's powers to bring about some highest good, but – through thinking – one acknowledges that it is impossible (resigns), then one must necessarily appeal to a higher power.

Kant's proposed ground for morality is driven by what Rudd would call the goal of the 'Disengaged View.'[110] (Rudd, 1993, p.1) If Kant's system of morality is a gravitating towards a disengaged and detached disposition for the rational agent, then, his religion project can be viewed a kind of re-attachment to experience. One is attached to, and yet detached from, the world. Kant's philosophy of the ethical, and of religion, is not an absolutely disengaged view, in that, it still posits some kind of community in which the individual rational agent might ideally exist. In obeying the categorical imperative, one resigns, insofar as one renounces 'everything outside of our power.' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.203) Kierkegaard and Kant share common ground in what they have to say in relation to this expression of resignation. Fremstedal says that resignation is a way 'to relate…to what is perceived as being valuable.' (p.207)

So, what of value is being 'resigned' in the respective accounts? In Kant, what is valuable is duty itself in the form of the categorical imperative, because nothing in experience can be appealed to if it is to be a fully rational movement. What is resigned in Kantian faith is that which falls outside of the imperative conceived of as a way of relating to God. In Kierkegaard, that which has most value is the idea that one's highest happiness is only possible through God, even when that seems impossible. And so, for him, anything that falls outside of this must first be resigned. For Kierkegaard, resignation is *away* from the idea of what might be possible, and *towards* the idea of the impossible. They both view the 'ethical requirement…[as having] an unconditional (categorical) nature.' (p.206) In order to make the ethical movement of resignation, everything of

[110] Rudd describes 'this conception of ethics [as] the most radically disengaged one that has ever been conceived.' (Rudd, 1993, p.11)

experience must be categorically renounced. But, for Kierkegaard, there is more to faith than just the act of resigning.

In the Kantian view of the possibility of relating to God, choosing in favour of the supreme moral principle is the task of resignation that must be continually (endlessly) renewed in order to stay on that narrow path. Elrod says: 'The event which makes resignation possible, choice, must be repeatedly accomplished if resignation itself is to be continually expressed.' (Elrod, 2015, p.152) The knight of infinite resignation's 'giving up', and the Kantian ideal of the sacrifice to be made in favour of the categorical imperative, can both be viewed as being analogous. As Westphal says: the knight of infinite resignation is 'perhaps an analog of Religiousness A in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.' (Westphal, 2014, p.34) If we are permitted to view Kantian faith as close to that Kierkegaardian stage, then we are also justified in reading the claims of the categorical imperative as involving a similar claim to Kierkegaard's concept of resignation. Both involve sacrifice, but the sacrifice is not purposeless. In both, a relation to God is the outcome (or, purpose) of resignation: 'The "initial"…task is to resign, in infinite resignation…all finite goods as goals' (p.211) in order to then make it over the threshold of faith.

Of course, for Kant, the relation to God is a strictly moral one. Nevertheless, a consciousness of God is posited. For Kant, the idea of God serves as a regulative one. But, this can be interpreted in Kierkegaardian terms as God requiring resignation of us in order to come into a relation to Him. Westphal says that this view of the relation to God (Religiousness A) is very like that of Kant. (p.34) In both views, the finite is recognized as playing an inevitable role, i.e., it cannot be ignored – we are finite beings who live in a finite world. For Kant, there is resignation present in the ideal of obedience to the categorical imperative, in that, one is urged to renounce finite relations and ends in relating absolutely to the moral law. It is a step in the direction of Religiousness A when Kant posits the relation to God as arising out of the (unrealizability of the) principle of morality. His concept of religious faith is close to that of Religiousness A, in that it includes the idea of resignation as a 'dying away from immediacy…attachment to finite, worldly, relative ends' (Walsh, 2009, p.43) in

order to come into a relation with God 'indirectly…by becoming aware of one's inability' (p.42) to bring about one's eternal happiness solely by oneself. But, for Kierkegaard, resignation precedes the movement of faith, in which there is a shift in *telos* away from the finite (ethical) towards God. And so, we can say that Kierkegaard's idea of resignation extends beyond that of Kant.

Although the core idea of resignation 'involves the renunciation of all finite relations and ends as absolute' (Elrod, 2015, p.145), in Kant, one relates to God as the ideal, from a finite perspective, having renounced finite ends. In contrast, Kierkegaardian resignation comes first, but faith is only complete when a further 'movement' (*FT*, p.26) – that of the knight of faith – is made. Kierkegaardian resignation goes beyond that of Kant, in that, there is a recognition of the 'limitations of the ethical life.' (Evans, 2006, p.217) The categorical imperative is practically unworkable.[111] It is 'based on…a requirement…so infinite that the individual inevitably falls short.' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.205) Kant's moral faith is a resignation to a 'moral hope…[in] Providence.'[112] (p.204) But just because we might be capable, does not mean that it is realizable: ought might imply can, but can does not imply is. However, in Kant, it is not an absolute resignation into God's hands – an idea which is tethered to that of Pelagian grace. Each person 'must…so conduct himself as if everything depended on him.' (6:100) In contrast, Kierkegaard is closer to an Augustinian concept of grace, in that, he views man as completely inadequate with respect to fulfilling 'the ethical task.' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.206) For Kierkegaard, although the ethical is a worthwhile goal, it is an impossible task. It must also be sacrificed. Something far greater is possible – that for God everything is possible.

Westphal says that, in *Fear and Trembling*, the 'representative of the ethical sphere is the tragic hero' (Westphal, 2014, p.79), and not the knight of infinite resignation. However, an alternative reading is possible. The Christian religion has a moral component, and so Kant is justified in wanting to give

[111] The reality is that 'it very often does not happen.' (4:387-388)
[112] As Kant puts it, 'a work whose completion cannot be hoped for by human beings but only from God himself.' (6:100)

expression to a moral faith, as a way of relating to Christianity. One can take the view that the ideal rational moral agent in such a moral faith is analogous to the knight of infinite resignation. As we have already seen, Westphal maintains that the knight of infinite resignation is analogous to Religiousness A, which he says is close to Kant's expression of faith. Resignation is something that is core to Christianity as the religion that comes closest to the ideal. It must first be present in order for faith to be possible. And so, we are permitted to view the representative of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* in Kantian terms. Westphal's firm view is that when de Silentio refers to the ethical he is talking about Hegel's view of the same. I do not disagree with this reading, but it still remains the case that Kierkegaard wants to say something about the incompleteness of a purely systematic and rational (ethical) account of faith, of which Kant is also a representative. Just because de Silentio does not explicitly identify the knight of infinite resignation with the Kantian ethical sphere does not rule out the possibility for interpreting it in this way.

The theme of going beyond the ethical is maintained throughout Kierkegaard's pseudonymous output. For de Silentio, this is what constitutes greatness. In terms of resignation, Abraham's readiness to sacrifice is the greatest precisely because he loves Isaac. If he were not prepared to do so, it would not be the greatest sacrifice. The same can be said of Abraham's love of the ethical: 'in order for there to be a sacrifice, the ethical must retain all its value.' (Derrida, 1996, p.66) As de Silentio says: for Abraham, 'the ethical had no higher expression than family life.' (*FT*, p.99) In both Kant and Kierkegaard's accounts of faith, self-sacrifice is clearly involved: 'it is the gift of death one makes to the other in putting oneself to death.' (Derrida, 1996, p.69) That is to say, one can read Kantian resignation in existentialist terms, as a movement that requires self-sacrifice. Both de Silentio and Climacus give us an account of resignation as a prerequisite to an ideal faith. In the act of resignation, the finite becomes relative, and God becomes the absolute *telos* for the self before God. Having given up the finite, all that remains is the self related to God. This is what Climacus means when he talks about resignation and the choosing of the self as a step towards an absolute relation to God. As Elrod says, 'resignation

heightens the consciousness of oneself as a task.' (Elrod, 2015, p.148) The self is laid bare. The ethical goal of becoming a subjective individual includes a shedding, or, movement of resignation, in which one loses 'oneself to find oneself.' (Mooney, 2008, p.874)

Exemplars who do this call us to such a sacrifice of self. However, Abraham only points in the direction of Christian self-sacrifice, because his sacrifice still involves a much older belief in the sacrifice of something external to (apart from) the self. Kant essentially wants to dismiss Abraham as an exemplar of faith, and he is not alone in this respect. Kosch asserts that 'in order to survive the terrain of faith the reader must eliminate [Abraham], along with every other example.' (Kosch, 2008, p.77) However, what we might take from such a view is that Kierkegaard is attempting to point us towards a New Testament view of resignation that focuses more on the idea of self-sacrifice where Christ is the new exemplar. Mulhall writes: 'the maturation of faith that the ordeal symbolizes is precisely a shift…[to the] idea of sacrificing oneself…by imitating [God's] self-sacrificial nature.' (Mulhall, 2001, p.383).

The reality for the (Kantian ideal) ethical is that, when it comes to something like love, real people do not live with an absolute duty to *every* other person. We exist in relationships at the expense of those other human beings who lie outside of our closest circles. In other words, we make a sacrifice – we make a movement of resignation – with respect to the less significant other. Derrida writes: 'I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others.' (Derrida, 1996, p.68) This sacrifice of the universal ethical, in the face of the reality of lived experience, cannot be justified rationally: 'I can never justify this sacrifice, I must always hold my peace about it…for I have nothing to say about it.' (pp. 70-71) Although the idea of resignation precedes faith in both accounts, in Kierkegaard's there is a higher expression of resignation that surpasses that of Kant. And the highest form of resignation is that in which the beloved Other is God.

One could say that Kant's moral faith is 'stuck' at the stage of resignation, but pointing towards Kierkegaard's view of faith. Kantian resignation via the

categorical imperative, which then extends to moral faith, is on a spectrum, and one in which it is not entirely removed from revelation and Kierkegaardian faith. Kant observes the entire (inner and outer) sphere of (the Christian) faith in order to see how it can be made intelligible. For Kierkegaard, there is simply more to religious faith. From Kierkegaard's perspective, Kant's *Religion* only looks like the beginning of becoming truly religious. The outer sphere of revelation cannot be so easily dismissed, because its content speaks to the whole person, and not just to the rational faculty.[113] Nevertheless, the (Kantian) idea of losing confidence (faith) in one's abilities to bring about the highest good, and then gaining it back through hope in God's grace, can be viewed as a prototype for Kierkegaard's double-movement of faith. In establishing religion within the boundaries, but also including the idea of grace, Kant places himself on the borderline between a rational and revelatory faith. And so we are warranted in attempting to interpret Kant from Kierkegaard's perspective. Kant's expression of resignation-faith occupies a 'middle ground between the first and second ethics.' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.214) It prepares the way for Kierkegaard's thoughts on the matter.

In closing this section, we are teetering on the boundary between resignation and faith in terms of what we say next. Abraham's leap transforms his resignation into happiness with this life. His leap is but a moment – the twinkling of an eye, the fullness of time, a decisive moment – but one that transforms him forever in the way that he views the world he regains. He remains 'in the finite and simultaneously…[relates himself] absolutely to the absolute…and relatively to relative ends.' (*CUP*, p.422) He lives in resignation, but at the same time he is transformed by faith. He no longer holds out for highest happiness in only ethical terms, even if he 'hardly seems focused on *his own* eternal happiness, or even on *eternal* happiness at all.' (Davenport, 2008, p.882) The parallel with Kant can be drawn. That is, in the idea that one's relation to the ethical, which ought to remain properly focused, is transformed

[113] 'In Kierkegaard the first part of the double movement (i.e. resignation) belongs to natural (immanent) religiousness, whereas the second part belongs exclusively to revealed (transcendent) religion (Judaism and Christianity).' (Fremstedal, 2012, p.211)

by one's relation to God, i.e., transformed by faith in a higher power. There are no guarantees in terms of the outcome of adhering to the categorical imperative, and neither is such an ideal actually realizable.[114] Trust in God to make up the difference is required.

As we shall see in the next section, Abraham receives back the ethical. Abraham is prepared to give *every*thing up in order to gain *every*thing back. Resignation is a movement which points to something more, even if the goods of this life retain their relative value. Davenport says: 'infinite resignation…is not a stable stopping-point…it naturally orients the individual agent towards the religious.' (p.900) For both Kant and Kierkegaard there is a need to resign ourselves to a higher power in striving for an ideal life. That is, in their respective accounts, resignation and faith are bound together. It involves 'an infinite trust…that our ethical striving has an ultimate meaning that we cannot give it.' (p.897) The view that one must *absolutely* renounce the world in order to achieve eternal happiness, combined with the absolute need for God's grace, is faith at the extremity. Kierkegaard wants to make faith difficult, or, to remind us that, if we are to become truly like Christ – whose kingdom is not of this world – then, we must be willing to give up the world. We must acknowledge the world as a gift from God, but at the same time be willing to sacrifice it. McCombs says that this 'seems like a recommendation not only of irrationalism, but even of fanaticism.' (McCombs, 2013, p.87) But there is more that Kierkegaard wants to say in relation to the twofold movement of faith, of which resignation is just an initial disposition. Resignation, and the world, both become transformed by faith.

3.3 The Knight of Faith: A Difficult Task

This final section is a discussion in relation to Kierkegaard's idea for the movement of faith as distinct from resignation. Both Kant and Kierkegaard have something to say to us regarding the relation between the finite world and the idea of God. But as we shall see, Kierkegaard wants to go beyond Kant's limited

[114] 'A pure ethical intention cannot be premised on any certainty of victory because…[it] does not actualize itself in temporal existence.' (Davenport, 2008, p.889)

view of faith, confined as the latter's is by what can be made intelligible to reason. For Kierkegaard, there is something about faith that is absolutely transformative in relation to the finite. In his view, any thinking about faith must go beyond the purely systematic. In the three chapters that follow, we will see the ways in which Kierkegaard expands his thinking in relation to what the challenges and difficulties are for the individual in faith. This final section will close with some thoughts in relation to the difficulty of faith as presented to us by some of the pseudonyms. But now to the first subject of this section, namely the 'movement of faith'. (*FT*, p.26) Before we say what de Silentio's 'knight of faith' (p.32) *is*, and in order to make some distinctions with respect to the relation between resignation and the movement of faith properly understood, it makes sense to firstly say what he *is not*.

The knight of faith has made a movement of resignation, but he has not just 'withdrawn from the outside world to watch over a hidden treasure.' (*E/O*, p.174) He does not divorce himself from actuality like an 'apostle of sorrow' (p.221) who remains in the pain of resigning the world. Neither does he merely resign himself to duty as a way of securing contentment and a relation to God, even if he shares with such a character some of the traits that seem to be required in such a movement: 'humility…patience…constant acquisition.' (p.458) He freely resigns, but he does not – like Judge William – choose his own self in terms of a moral vocation in order to become 'greater than the angels.' (p.490) There is a transformation within him, but it is not one in which his former state is posited as having been a state of 'non-being.' (*PF*, p.21) That is to say, what he was previously does not lose its value. He does not hate 'father and mother' (*CUP*, p.16), even if that thought – as a 'hatred of oneself' (*FT*, p.14) – was an essential part of his act of resignation. Abraham's movement of faith is not 'isolating, separating…polemical' (*CUP*, p.582), even if, in the act of resignation that preceded his leap, he had to 'exclude everyone else.' (p.582) He is not exempt from having to continually believe, no more than he can expect to have somehow shaken off 'the perils of solitary thinking.' (p.70) He has not eliminated the uncertainty and riskiness of faith.

Ironically, although he is named as the father of faith, his 'irregularity' (p.259) with respect to the ethical places him beyond our reach (comprehension, intelligibility). That is to say, he is not an exemplar of faith that can be safely emulated. His is neither a faith that is directly recognizable[115], nor cognizable. His is not an anxious faith, for he does not confine himself to thinking of his self in purely ethical terms. But neither does he disdain the temporal. He does not try to avoid the challenge that the ethical requirement poses. Nor does he make his decision an easier one by becoming 'spiritless' (*COA*, p.117), and hence shirking from the fact that his is a spiritual trial. And he does not become that 'religious genius' (p.102) who continues to turn his back on the immediate world in order to secure for himself some kind of everlasting, and yet finitely contained, glory in the eyes of the faithful.

For Abraham, faith does not constitute a simple disjunction between 'either let[ting] go of love – or believ[ing] in God.' (*SLW*, p.163) And so, he is not disturbed by those kinds of 'religious crises' (p.216) that prevent Quidam from making the proper movement of faith. Abraham does not negate 'something so intermediate' (p.225) as the love he has for Isaac, his family, and the world. He is not 'indifferent towards the external' (p.442), even if the external world is that which had to be sacrificed in resignation. Quidam is mistaken in thinking that Abraham's suffering – as someone who might be an example of one of Quidam's 'religious prototypes' (p.258) – is what defines his greatness. Abraham, as the knight of faith, is not a suffering 'religious hero.' (p.454) As the knight of faith, Abraham is neither in a state of offense nor despair in relation to God's command. He is not without belief in the impossible; he is not without hope in a good outcome. He does not 'struggle with the world' (*FT*, p.13), but he struggles with God insofar as he must repeat a movement of faith in which he must trust in Him. In this regard, he 'does not come to a standstill in faith.' (p.109) He does not give up on his humanity. He does not believe that he is in the process of sacrificing everything, including his freedom, 'wisdom…hope…love.' (p.13) His is

[115] As Climacus says, 'take away direct recognizability, and faith is in the right place.' (*CUP*, p.600)

not a faith in which his eyes are fixed on some 'future life' (p.17) after death[116] – a state of despair in which he would want to dispense with the world. He does not cling to the idea of that which has been resigned, i.e., finite loss. That is not where his focus lies. Although resignation has been a necessary part of the double-movement of faith, he does not deny the worth, or, goodness, of the finite world. He does not seek to escape that 'everything' (p.34) which he had to first renounce and sacrifice. In the proper movement of faith – paradoxically – Abraham does not 'renounce anything.' (p.41) His noble courage is not 'purely human.' (ibid.) He is unintelligible in purely human terms, and yet – again, paradoxically – 'no human being is excluded' (*FT*, p.59) from the possibility of making such a movement.

Why is he none of these things? What is it about Abraham's movement of faith that is so hard to understand? That is, what is it that makes the proper movement of (the knight of) faith so difficult, and so incredibly great? He is not an exemplar, and yet he is an exemplar. That is to say, he is *not* an intelligible exemplar to reason: "how can such a severe example possibly serve as a universal ideal?"; on the other hand, he *is* an intelligible exemplar to faith: "if I make faith everything, then anything is possible." The knight of faith is perhaps an unattainable ideal. We ordinary humans can only aspire, not to be like Abraham through murder, but to work towards that level of belief: 'For if one makes faith everything…it is only by faith that one acquires a resemblance to Abraham, not by murder.' (p.25)

De Silentio gives expression to a crucial thought, and Anti-Climacus spells out clearly that which is 'decisive' (*SUD*, p.38), for faith. The latter says that 'with God everything is possible' (p.38); the former says that 'for God everything is possible."[117] (*FT*, p.39) The core of Abraham's movement of faith is

[116] 'He did not believe that he would be blessed one day in the hereafter.' (*FT*, p.30) This distinction certainly sets Abraham's faith (specifically as the 'knight of faith') as standing apart from the Christian faith. However, a further investigation as to the distinction is not within the scope of the stated aims of this thesis.

[117] I will not attempt to fully tease out the distinction between saying '*with* God' as opposed to '*for* God', except to say that it is one in which there is a different emphasis for Anti-Climacus, i.e., with respect to the self as a self before God. And so, '*with* God' can be interpreted in light

an absolute belief that God will provide – that the impossible will somehow happen – where reasoned thinking says otherwise. It goes beyond the thought that perhaps God will just withdraw the command at the last moment. Abraham believes that what God has already promised to him will nevertheless come about. What he no longer struggles over is the idea that he must trust God wholly in this regard. When we hear de Silentio say that Abraham 'believed for this life' (p.17), we are presented with the idea that, having first resigned everything, in faith the finite can take on new meaning. The finite retains its importance[118], but at any moment one ought to be prepared to let it go. Paradoxically, this life becomes even more precious than before. Such a 'prodigious' (p.19) leap of faith is surely a difficult movement to make. It is absurd to reason to think that the impossible will come about, and yet, for de Silentio it is through thinking the impossible that one's world becomes transformed. He calls this transformed view of the finite as 'laying hold on existence by virtue of faith.' (p.39) One might be said to be courageous when one renounces the world, but the most difficult movement to perform is, for de Silentio, one in which one renounces the world but in that same moment believes that one will retain it.[119] Perhaps it would take a 'lifetime' (p.108) to master such an ideal.

It might be easy to think about faith as Kant lays it out in moral terms. A ready made vehicle – in which 'one travels to perfection…in good company' (*COA*, p.117) – might offer an easy solution to the question of how to make room for faith, but the difficulty of fulfilling the ideal does not disappear. The Climacean narrative – in contrast to that of de Silentio – moves to a consideration of individual faith in relation to Christianity. Nevertheless, there is a consistent theme in Kierkegaard's account of faith. In whatever way it is

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of his discourse. As we shall see in chapter five, his point is that the self is fully developed only when it conceives of itself *with* God in mind. For de Silentio, Abraham is the greatest because he primarily 'considers God' (*FT*, p.31) rather than his own self. The expression in relation to sacrifice is an external one, in contrast to Christian self-sacrifice.

[118] As De Silentio puts it, 'the finite tastes every bit as good to him as to someone who never knew anything higher.' (*FT*, p.34)

[119] 'A purely human courage is required to renounce the whole of temporality in order to gain the eternal…But it takes a paradoxical and humble courage next to grasp the whole of temporality by virtue of the absurd, and this is the courage of faith.' (p.41)

expressed, he wants to emphasize the difficulty of faith for the individual. For de Silentio, faith is marked by 'difficulties' (*FT*, p.26); it is a 'lifelong task' (p.5), a struggle (p.13); it takes 'courage' (p.41); it is 'a trial, a test' (p.62). For Climacus, it is 'equally difficult for every human being in every time and place' (*PF*, p.134) to live in such a way - believing that one owes everything to God, and yet retaining one's 'confidence' (p.38) in the world. It would surely require great 'strength' (p.70) to decide to live one's life exactly like Christ. However, the true feat would be to continue to live one's life as it is, but utterly transformed in one's view of the world – renouncing and receiving the world in the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye. One would become that knight of faith who regards the world 'with the eyes of faith' (p.128), but like all seeing, one must continually remain focused in this regard. Climacus spells out the lifetime-task character of faith, because his is a focus on the process of 'becoming a Christian.' (*CUP*, p.381) For him, the difficulty of faith is such that one must continually register the 'uncertainty' (p.55) that is integral to belief. Taciturnus says that the difficulty of faith is in 'continually [lying] out on the deep.' (*SLW*, p.444) Nevertheless, both Climacus and de Silentio agree that the difficulty of faith resides in being somehow able to 'have [one's] daily life in…the infinite and yet go on living.' (*CUP*, p.86n) If we combine the two accounts of the difficulty of faith, then we can say that the view is of a finite world that will always be a challenge to faith, but one in which the finite is to be embraced with an absolute faith in God.

In faith, one is 'the same, and yet changed, and yet the same.' (p.286) This is the contradiction of existence that is to be achieved in a life lived in faith. Climacus writes: 'truly to exist…simultaneously to be eternal, far beyond it, as it were, and nevertheless present in it…in a process of becoming – that is truly difficult.' (p.308) Understanding this contradiction – these 'extreme opposites' (p.354) – is part of this difficulty. But the knight of faith does not make the mistake of shirking from that task by staying in a state of anxiety, offense, and despair. He does not simply 'endure contradiction.' (*SLW*, p.366) He 'must go

through' (*COA*, p.174) them[120], facing the impossible with God in mind, but never running away from the fact of his 'humanness.' (*CUP*, p.493) One might not be able to recognize such a knight of faith, because, as far as the world can see, he looks 'just like everyone else.' (p.410) What we can never see (understand, make intelligible, etc.) is the result of his transformation – an absolute trust in God. Externally, his life goes on just like every other, for he receives back the world in its entirety. As the judge writes: 'when the understanding stands still…to have the courage…to believe the wondrous…to return to actuality.' (*SLW*, p.122) For the knight of faith who has already made the leap of faith it is not a question of either/or, but of both/and. And to reiterate, part of this difficulty is the fact that the knight of faith cannot speak to us in such a way as to be able to make intelligible such a 'both/and' belief in the world and God as unified. Such 'hope in the possibility of help…by virtue of the absurd, that for God everything is possible' (*SUD*, p.71) cannot be made intelligible in purely rational terms. In this respect, the non-believer and believer alike share in the difficulty of faith, but from opposite perspectives.

In the next three chapters we will see the ways in which Kierkegaard thinks of the individual as being involved in the difficulty of religious faith. We shall see there a more detailed exposition in relation to themes that have surfaced in what has gone before – freedom, choice, anxiety; the possible, the eternal, the impossible; the self; offense, and despair. But it is essentially against the backdrop of the idea that faith is a difficult task that Kierkegaard wants to expand our view. That is, we are invited to consider faith, as it relates to those categories, as something that goes beyond a 'firm and fixed' (*CUP*, p.35n) view, such as one finds in Kant's account. The leap of faith is, for Kierkegaard, a far more difficult task than that expressed in purely rational terms. For the knight of faith, attachment to, and detachment from, the world, are both preserved. For Kierkegaard, this is one of the contradictions of faith. Comparatively speaking, resignation in itself is an easier movement to make. What counts as crucial in

[120] 'To become a Christian…is a matter of winning faith through despair and offense.' (*CUP*, p.372); 'In the case of spiritual trial one must go through it…go straight toward it, trusting in God and Christ.' (*COA*, p.174)

the knight of faith's relation to God is 'The *readiness* to relinquish all.' (Rudd, 1993, p.156) [emphasis mine] One might indeed be blessed with good fortune in life. One might never have to face a serious life challenge. But, for Kierkegaard, what counts is 'a willingness to believe in the face of difficulties' (Evans, 1998, p.110) if and when they arise. And so, there is very much a sense of acceptance in being a knight of faith. One must be willing to welcome life's trials, secure in one's faith. This disposition – again, contradictorily – is a coming to rest in uncertainty. As Derrida says: 'Our faith is not assured, because faith can never be, it must never be a certainty.' (Derrida, 1996, p.80) He sees this as one of the morals of the story of Abraham as presented to us by Kierkegaard: in order to trust in God fully, Abraham's need to know must be resigned, and uncertainty must be embraced. That is to say, in order for his leap of faith in the impossible to occur.

Kierkegaard wants to say that the leap of the knight of faith leads to a transcending of religious suffering and guilt. Despair and anxiety are annulled if the correct movement of faith beyond both the ethical is made, because a transcending of everything that is worldly must first be made if anything is to be received back. What results is, according to Kierkegaard's overriding narrative, an individually oriented relation of the self to God. In New Testament terms, that relation is to Christ as one's personal saviour. Kierkegaard's knight of faith is: '[U]tterly normal, rigorously detached, wholly committed: this is the paradox of the life of faith.' (Shakespeare, 2015, p.198) He is wholly invested in the world, but also detached from it. The knight of faith sees – with the eyes of faith – that both the positive and negative things of life are temporary, because they are temporary in terms of the eternal.

So, why invest in the world at all? Because, what it means to be human is to be absolutely human: to love, to fail, to achieve, to hope, to long for something more than that which the finite world and self can offer. To deny one's humanity in this regard is a failure to grasp that one is human. This is why, for Kierkegaard, the ethical is not annihilated in the leap of faith. Believing that there is an eternity in store, and the promise of an eternal happiness beyond this world, does not reduce the importance of this life for the knight of faith. The

immanent is 'the most certain thing of all' (p.199), and so, in keeping with the natural desire for certainty, it is to be embraced as fulfilling that desire: "Embrace all the certainty that the world can offer you: your self, family, community. Endeavour to become the best a self can become, but know that it is just a stepping stone." To grasp that there is more than the finite is to embrace a faith in something that transcends the finite. Kierkegaard's knight of faith is of the world and yet not of the world. In that mode of being, attachment to the world is vital, but detachment consists in recognizing it as temporary, insofar as one is absolutely owing to God.

However, to live this kind of life is not to be viewed as 'an impressive work of genius, virtue, or belief.' (p.198) Like the ideal of Kantian morality, it is *possible* for *any* person, regardless of the difficulty of making such a movement. But the difficulty in making the movement of the knight of faith is one that transcends even that of the ethical ideal. De Silentio doubts that there are, or have been, many knights of faith such as Abraham and Mary. In relation to Abraham, we should on this point give a sigh of relief: "Thankfully not. If that is what faith is, then I must decline." The story of Abraham, as portrayed by de Silentio, is a provocation. It is meant to shake us out of a complacent appropriation of what faith is. What the person of faith must negotiate, in reality, is two worlds, or, two possible ways of looking at the world. Mary may have borne Christ, but she still did so as every flesh and blood woman having a child[121], and she was not simply 'a fine lady who sits in state and plays with an infant god.' (Rudd, 1993, p.76)

De Silentio makes a 'dubious' (McCombs, 2013, p.23) excuse for not being able to make the final movement of faith (beyond resignation). We ought to read between the lines in order to see that there is an intentional emphasis on the difficulty of faith. Kierkegaard emphasizes the difficulty of faith as involving a necessary tension. It is a constant process of becoming where the individual exists in that borderline space between competing elements – e.g., temporal and eternal, ethical and religious, resignation and faith, etc. Faith, for Kierkegaard, is an active engagement in dialectical tension. It is no surprise to find Kierkegaard

[121] *FT*, p.57.

drawing attention to that which will create tension: freedom and choice, the possible versus the paradoxical, the stages of existence and the task of becoming, offense, despair, the centrality of Christ the Incarnation, and the sayable versus the unsayable. Nowachek says: '…at the very heart of Kierkegaard's account of Christian existence is the notion of tension…one of Kierkegaard's main aims…is…to invite his readers…to view this tension as itself something sacred.' (Nowachek, 2014, p.884) The difficulty of faith – contra any notion that faith can be abstractly and objectively simplified[122] – is something that Kierkegaard (as Climacus) wants to promote. Climacus writes: '[M]y intention is to make it difficult to become a Christian, yet not more difficult than it is…it is equally difficult for every human being to relinquish his understanding and his thinking and to concentrate his soul on the absurd.' (*CUP*, p.557) He pushes the boundaries in order to draw us out of our complacency with respect to 'understanding' faith. The thorn in the side of any systematic treatment of faith is the individual as subjective, and so, he wants to bring back into focus the difficulty of faith as that individual experiences it. For Climacus, 'Faith is not a form of knowledge' (*PF*, p.76); for de Silentio, it is a 'task [which] is sufficient for a lifetime.' *(FT*, p.108) What we ought to do is to embrace the tension and difficulty – the 'pain of resignation' (*FT*, p.40) – in order to make the route to faith a possibility: 'to strive is to make the continual effort to stave off static categories of being, and rather to embrace the process of becoming as it unfolds in the pursuit of truth.' (Nowachek, 2014, p.893) We ought to be restless in this regard. The 'life of faith' is, for Kierkegaard, one of 'sacred tension.' (p.894) But there is some resolution in embracing this tension. He wants us to embrace the fact that faith comes about as a result of a life-changing event; a moment of decisive significance; a jolt; a disturbance; a decision; a test; a leap; a revelation. It is something that leaves us speechless.

As we have already seen, Climacus argues that 'Faith is properly made the most difficult of all…that is, equally difficult for all.' (*CUP*, p.596) So why does de Silentio proclaim that he finds the story of Abraham so difficult? De

[122] Climacus says that 'if Christianity is essentially subjectivity, it is a mistake if the observer is objective.' (*CUP*, p.53)

Silentio ought to stop talking about faith, and just make the movement himself, but he keeps on talking, almost 'incessantly.' (*FT*, p.100) He makes it the most difficult thing to do in order that he can 'evade the task of having faith.' (McCombs, 2013, p.28) Not only does Kierkegaard want us to consider that the difficulty of faith is in a relation to understanding and thinking, but it becomes readily apparent when we begin to give expression to faith in (any) language. We can talk about faith at a conceptual level incessantly, speculatively, and systematically. However, we still come back to the most central questions: the how and why of faith that pertain to the individual.

Chapter Four: Kierkegaard and the Individual – Freedom and Possibility

4.1 Freedom, Choice, and Anxiety

In *Either/Or,* the view of 'A' – the aesthetic young man – is a portrayal of the kind of existential angst that arises when one realizes that one is faced with a real possibility, and the responsibility that comes with following through on one's desires. The anxiety arises when faced with an either/or for action. It is an anxiety about one's fate. At some stage we pose ourselves the question: "What is the meaning of life – surely not to just make a living and then just die?" And so, we are confronted with the question of how to live a happy life. This inevitably leads to the task of choosing in favour of such a goal. In the *Diapsalmata,* there is a hint towards something beyond the purely aesthetic view. That is, that there is everything to be gained in taking a life-risk – a leap of faith beyond 'playing it safe.' However, the aesthete shirks from this kind of decision. He believes that it does not matter whether one chooses the 'either' or the 'or' – there will still be regret over the path not taken. What he fails to realize is that his choices and actions have eternal ramifications. He is not yet spiritually conscious.

In the Preface, Eremita questions the notion that it is possible to live one kind of life consistently. The reality is that we fluctuate between the two kinds of life in question, i.e., the aesthetic and the ethical. The choices we make in life in relation to how we live have implications for our eternal being. One could say, as with Kant, that one cannot change the fact that one has done 'X', but only hope that God will see that one has had a change of heart. The Young Man is an archetypical representation of a stage of existence in which anxiety arises out of a realization that choice is part and parcel of what it means to be an individual with freedom. As such, one stands apart from the crowd. The anxiety and distress of the aesthete is borne out of a belief that, as an individual, he is isolated. However, he is paralysed by the thought of the responsibility that goes hand in hand with his striving to be a wholly authentic individual: 'To be isolated is always to assert oneself numerically; when you assert yourself as one, that is isolation.' (*E/O*, p.140); 'Our age…is more melancholy and hence deeper in

despair…melancholy enough to realize there is something called responsibility…So while everyone wants to rule, no one wants the responsibility.' (p.141)

He points to Christ as having taken on the ultimate responsibility in the most tragic way, i.e., in bearing the sins of the world in totality. Christ, then, is the divine tragic hero. His free choice, as with Abraham, is to commend his spirit into God's hands. That is to say, his *telos* – as 'end or completion' (p.142) – is in God. He goes on to say that a key component in ancient tragedy is the idea of the suffering of the tragic hero, and not just what arises as a result of his actions. The actions of the tragic hero of antiquity place him outside of, and yet still inside the ethical domain. He is in limbo, as it were. He is culpable, ethically guilty, but not 'guilty absolutely' (p.143), and so he remains the tragic hero, because we factor in other things about him into our judgment of him. In other words, we can rationalize his choices, because he is not entirely to blame for having had to come to that point. 'A' calls this 'properly tragic guilt in its ambiguous innocence.' (p.144) We might say that there were mitigating circumstances. The tragic hero is a product 'of his age, of his nation, of his family, of his friends.' (p.144) Only in this way, holistically, can we view the individual, not as some pure and freestanding purely rational subject. 'A' thinks that we should judge the tragic hero's decision for action with mercy and understanding, in the same way that he thinks God ultimately judges us. Ethics is, for him, far too rigid. It is black or white in its judgment, and far too concerned with the singular moment in its pronouncement of sin against the ethical. The judgment of God comes at the end of a life, and looks upon the whole life rather than on just one consciously sinful act. Kant views our relation to God in a similar way, in that, only God can judge an entire life with respect to the ethical. Anxiety 'is a reflection.' (p.152) It has thinking as appropriation and assimilation as a factor. This introduces the ethical question in relation to one's actions. Anxiety is the 'gradual' (p.153) coming into consciousness.

So, what is the point of all this talk of the tragic hero, of his suffering, of his the relation to the ethical, and then of Christ? Kierkegaard's aim is to show us that the aesthete can contemplate these ideas, but what is missing is follow-

through. The project of becoming a self cannot get off the ground without the decision to act. The kind of anxiety that is present in the aesthetic stage – when there is but a glimmer of something beyond the horizon of the immediate – is an anxiety over the most basic realization: that one is an individual who has freedom, and therefore, one who is faced with the ability to choose. When the finite world is found to be lacking, how am I to give my life meaning if I am invested only in the world and what *it* has to offer?...'for people's lives consist not of food and drink alone, the soul too needs nourishment.' (p.196)

As the isolated individual, one is faced with oneself, and not just with 'the necessary other.' (p.236) For A, the decision to marry exemplifies a loss of freedom, self and individuality. He stresses the importance of self-sufficiency. The problem in relations with others, as he sees it, is that the 'other' must be considered. Hence, it is easier not to develop these kinds of bonds, but merely to hold on to their possibility. That is to say, when one does not commit, one has nothing to lose and everything to gain. Potential, it seems, is enough to sustain oneself. In *Crop Rotation* he warns against any kind of commitment that will make one just like all the rest: 'One simply becomes Mr Anybody.' (p.238) The aesthete desires diversion for diversion's sake. Becoming static in terms of concretizing one's situation is to be avoided at all costs. Boredom is anathema to the aesthete. Choices are made, but there is no singular goal or commitment other than the goal of self-satisfaction in the most immediate way. The individual at the centre of the *Seducer's Diary* ('Johannes') is a caricature of the aesthetic brought to excess. He makes every movement except that of follow-through, i.e., commitment. From his own perspective, anxiety energises him. It is something beautiful, in that, the struggle to possess the object of his passion, i.e., the woman ('Cordelia'), brings him to the highest pitch of which he is capable. The prize is in his sight, and every choice he makes is towards winning her. However, it is only really the pursuit itself, and every twist and turn of decision, which sustains his interest. Ultimately, he does not want to follow through with a commitment to her.

The ideal for which he strives goes beyond the ethical idea of love and duty. His idea of love is that it should be spiritual in nature rather than that of

moral 'obligation.' It should not be borne out of a duty to the other person, contra what Kantian ethics would say. He sees the ethical – which has uniformity and conformity at its core – as boring, because it strips the individual of their individuality. The aesthetic individual can enjoy life purely from his or her own (sensual) perspective; the ethical individual is part of a collective that promotes conformity. He does not want the commitment that marriage brings, because, for him, it is in the convention of marriage that the erotic is lost. As he says later, he is 'looking for immediacy.' (p.318) He views marriage as undermining this kind of immediacy between two individuals, in that, marriage results in a focus upon families, and upon the kind of ethical obligations to the other, such as respect and duty, that arise from such an arrangement. For him, the sphere of love ought to be insulated from the prying eyes of the ethical world. He sees it as ridiculous that the immediacy of love should be adjudicated from the perspective of the universal, and arrogant that personal relations should simply be reduced to concern for duties. (p.320) Johannes has the aesthetic as his *telos*. His selfish concern is for the aesthetic enjoyment of what is ultimately merely a project of self-gratification. Cordelia, abandoned, is collateral damage. He is capable of talking the talk. He can speak ideally of the bride, of her beauty and anxiety on her wedding day, that is to say, humanly frail, and yet, beautiful, hopeful, and placing her faith in a good outcome where there are no guarantees. To him, it is 'the most seductive' (p.368) kind of thought. It is that kind of moment in an individual's life that is pregnant with the most meaning, that is most existentially charged. But, it is a fatal leap that he is not prepared to make.

Judge William – or, 'B' – as representative of the ethical view, responds by contending that what the young aesthete lacks most is the follow-through required for marriage and commitment to the other, being only interested in 'the first rapture of love."[123] (p.384) B is certainly curious as to what seems to be a

[123] In comparison to some of the other pseudonyms, Kierkegaard's treatment of the concept of love is expressed in a more philosophically developed way by Judge William. As a representative of the ethical pointing towards the religious, the Judge can be viewed as holding an in-between position on love. Whilst he wants to call into question the aesthetic view of love – *eros*, or 'self-love' (*WL*, p.7) – he also maintains that erotic love is not annihilated in an ethical love of the other. The Judge's view of the latter kind of expression of love points in the

duality in A's nature. There is both a depth and superficiality about him, innocence and wisdom, rational seriousness and irrational impetuosity. However, according to B, he misunderstands marriage, and can never hope to understand it as long as he simply views it from the outside: 'As for marriage, you have always remained simply an observer. There is something treacherous in wanting only to observe.' (p.385) There is, for B, permanence in his marriage. In contrast, he argues that A's life movements are fleeting and impermanent, concerned only with what can be experienced in the here and now. There is a constant unease in the latter's way of living. He has not yet made a definitive life-choice. From an ethical perspective, he wants to say that A's deeds are only ever really motivated by what they can offer him. The good that he might seem to do for others is only ever rooted in a desire to make others look upon him positively, but also in what it might offer him in terms of what he prizes most: food for thought alone. 'A' is self-absorbed, with a sense of superiority. One might even say that he has a 'god-complex.'[124] In a perverse way, A has tried to rationalize his own behavior as in some way educating the other to love's highest pitch. He is not as such concerned with the consequences of his actions, except as they ultimately relate to him and to his experiences.

For B, freedom comes at a price, and there is an inevitable risk in the moment of decision. In the case of marriage, it is the risk involved in becoming absolutely disclosed to the other person. It requires strength and commitment to submit to what must necessarily be a repetition. Life cannot always be a series of wonderfully interesting diversions. However, one does not simply arrive at some point of rest in which everything has been finally conquered. B affirms one of the core elements of the ethical, namely, striving as a 'constant acquisition.' (p.458) In the ethical, one is perpetually faced with decision and follow-through. For B, the most charged example of the decision/dilemma for an individual (the

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direction of Christian, unconditional love: *agape*, or 'Christian love…[in which] everyone is the neighbor…[in which] the equality of the eternal [is] preserved.' (*WL*, p.44) As the Judge says of his project, he 'tried there to show that marriage was, by virtue of the ethical, precisely the aesthetic expression of love.' (*E/O*, p.569) He points in the direction of the religious idea of love, but he still wants to hold to the idea that the aesthetic contains something of value in this regard.

[124] 'I seem to detect signs in you of wanting to play at being a little Zeus.' (*E/O*, p.385)

either/or) could be summed up as the one that relates to good and evil.[125] The aesthete believes that there will always be regret no matter what path one chooses. The implication is that what counts is self-satisfaction. B asserts that one must orient oneself towards a particular goal, rather than just following one's immediate instincts out of a sense of mere finite self-gratification. In short, one should be a fully thinking being with respect to one's life. Committing to a particular decision for good or evil is essential, and hence the most important decision of all, because it has eternal implications. The world would be utterly chaotic if everyone subscribed to a belief that "It doesn't matter either way, do what you want." B believes that making ethical choices that are concretised in actions are essential to the development of personality. One cannot remain static, merely thinking and preparing for the 'perfect' moment. There is always the potential for a 'fresh start' – the rebirth of a new man. (p.483) One must make mistakes in order to work one's way to the ideal.[126] B puts it to A: 'Either…live aesthetically or…live ethically.' (p.486) It is a choice that points in the direction of the divine,[127] but one that is entirely within the capabilities of human endeavor. The choice is a real one, that is, 'the reality of choosing.' (p.490) This is what is at stake, existentially speaking, and not merely a kind of diversionary mind-game. The task is choosing 'to be oneself' (p.491) in orienting oneself ethically. That is to say, that the ability to choose is acknowledged as paramount, and not just something to be dismissed out of some aesthetic indifference. The future, as opposed to the aesthetic condition of merely living immediately and 'constantly in the moment' (p.492), is of utmost concern for the ethically oriented individual.

In *Fear and Trembling*, we encounter Abraham facing a terrible choice. His spiritual trial or test consists in God asking him to do something morally wrong. De Silentio characterizes Abraham's turmoil and anxiety over the results of his actions – the consequences for himself, Isaac, his family, community, and

[125] *Ibid.*, p.477.
[126] *Ibid.*, p.486.
[127] *Ibid.*, p.490.

for his and Isaac's faith in God. He points us to the ultimate *kind* of decision that faith asks of us, though thankfully not to the same extreme degree as that asked of Abraham. There is something to be sacrificed in choosing. Something is given up, not merely in the mind, but in reality as well. An individual and active commitment is that which is required.[128] Abraham is confronted with his own freedom. He is personally responsible. It is the 'urge to assert himself as the particular' (*FT*, p.46) contra what universal morality would prescribe. His anxiety is a necessary condition for being tested. Otherwise it would not be a trial. In other words, the ethical is a necessary precondition. That is to say, the ethical choice is presupposed. Furthermore, and in a Kantian vein[129], de Silentio points us to the fact that in choosing, Abraham must have some internal guiding principle, or, *telos*, in order to make his decision. In terms of choosing his *telos*, his anxiety is over what that ought to be, i.e., either his duty to ethics, or to God. He is a finite human who is confronted with a decision that, in the ideal, must be made on the basis of his whole person. That is to say, in terms of not just the finite aspects of his being, but also out of a consideration for his eternal being and his relation to God. The potential for being torn between the ethical and the religious still exists. Even if he must first make the movement of resignation – becoming disengaged and detached from the finite – that is not to say that the finite is negated. His act of resignation, as the first part of the double-movement of faith, is not merely a conceptual exercise. The finite – to be first resigned – is a concrete and tangible concern to him. But, in order to retain the finite, he must choose to trust God. That is to say, his decision has God as *telos*.

The motto at the start of the *Philosophical Fragments* reads: "Better well hung than ill wed." We can interpret Climacus as saying that one must be prepared to take personal responsibility for one's decisions, thoughts, and life-view, rather than blindly becoming a part of something of which one is not convinced. Better to have the courage of conviction, and risk being wrong, than

[128] *FT*, p.21.
[129] *Ibid.*, p.55.

to be just one of the herd.[130] One's freedom is an asset not to be squandered. However, the narrative points in the direction of the error of deciding against the truth of Christianity. This error is the active decision to forfeit the possibility of faith. This is the downside of having freedom. Not only do human beings have the freedom to choose, but also the capacity to have faith. In both Socratic and Christian terms, ignorance of the truth is defined as sin. When Climacus says that, in choosing to give up the possibility for having faith, one is 'unfree[131] and bound and exiled' (*PF*, p.19), he means that one is choosing to be in sin with respect to the truth. One is freely choosing to remain trapped in sin. The question that he ultimately wants to answer is as to whether or not it is possible, having given up one's potential for faith, to then free oneself from this state of being entirely on the basis of one's own efforts and choices.[132] We have freedom, but limited capabilities on every level. We can certainly choose to be skeptical about something, but can we just as effortlessly simply *decide* to believe? Christianity confronts the individual with a 'crucial…decision…so significant that it is fearful.' (p.117) That is to say, it comes from outside of the self.[133]

The *Concept of Anxiety* gives us a more focused view of the anxiety that each individual faces, regardless of his or her situation in history. There are essential questions and problems in relation to the human condition with which we are all confronted. Vigilius wants to say something about the problem of anxiety from a universal perspective that is derived from what we find in our actual experience of the world, or, from the perspective of 'a king without a country.' (*COA*, p.8) But, given that he believes the individual to be sovereign, free, autonomous, and responsible, his narrative is polemical with respect to a systematic interpretation of the individual. He wants to say that neither logic nor ethics can ultimately solve the problem of individual choice, because the idea of sin – which is central to the narrative – is its own concept, and, properly

[130] *PF*, p.6.
[131] See St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans*.
[132] *PF*, p.21.
[133] In chapter six we will see how Climacus deals with the decision from the point of view of the either/or of offense versus faith.

belongs to a religious interpretation.

He points out the ways in which sin is insufficiently understood. In the aesthetic, whether in the comic or tragic, the sin (the error) is unresolved – it is not overcome – it is left suspended. The fool is oblivious to their error, and we laugh at the sin committed because they know no better (the sin is nonessential and annulled); the tragic hero commits the error, but is forgiven by virtue of the greater good, and we marvel at the sacrifice made (the sin endures). A metaphysical appropriation of the concept of sin is coldly dispassionate and impersonal, in that, it is concerned only with 'dialectical uniformity and disinterestedness' (p.15), rather than existing as a problem for the individual to overcome at a really human level. Psychology wants to observe sin as a 'state' (p.15) of being of the observed. Contrary to those perspectives on sin, he wants to argue that sin is that which is constantly being negotiated by the struggling individual who is free, and by virtue of that freedom, is utterly responsible for their actions, hence the struggle. It is always in flux as that which is to be actively overcome. The mistake of characterizing, contextualizing, observing, and assessing sin in terms of aesthetics, metaphysics, and psychology is that of trying to capture it. Sin is an individual possession, rather than something to be placed neatly in a category. It is not to be conceptualized in terms of the universal, but in terms of the single, particular individual and their relation to God.[134] The ethical interpretation of sin may come close to finding a firm footing, but it ultimately lacks the requisite earnestness and honesty with respect to lived experience. That is – at least in the realm of Kantian ethics – it is far too ideal to be workable. The view of sin in that system has an apparently rational ground that is somehow divorced from the idea of anxiety: ethics purports 'to bring ideality into actuality.' (p.16) However, from an individual point of view, in sinning for the first time, the individual actualizes that possibility. Anxiety necessarily accompanies decision. Once innocence is lost, (as Kant would also say) it is lost forever, and it is the individual who is personally responsible for the loss, because innocence is that quality that belongs to the individual originally. The copybook is permanently blotted as it were. The stain cannot be

[134] *COA*, p.16.

erased. Anxiety, unless it finds resolution in something, will not come to rest, because we are perpetually confronted with our freedom as decision-makers.[135]

Vigilius has in mind the idea that man consists of the 'psychical…the physical' (p.43) and the 'spirit.' (p.43)[136] The spirit is that which unites the other two, but it is also that which provokes the anxiety in man, i.e., 'it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body.' (p.43) For him, spirit and anxiety are inseparable. One could restate this as saying that our awakening as conscious human beings naturally includes the anxiety that goes hand in hand with our freedom. We are as such ensnared by freedom; it is not something that we can remove. The essence of freedom is not so much that we can choose in favour of one action over another, but is something more fundamental. That is, that we have capability in itself.[137] Anxiety is therefore, in its most reduced form, 'the dizziness of freedom…which…looks down into its own possibility.' (p.61)

Within the constraints of what is actually possible for a human who is living in the world that has strict physical laws, there are always an infinite number of possibilities by virtue of our freedom. Anxiety arises because of our sense, on a much deeper level, that there are endless choices we could have made, over and above the one choice we have concretely made. In turn, it increases in proportion to the challenges posed to us by the sensible world.[138] As we become more evolved in terms of what is possible for us as humans, and more aware of, and more capable of, effecting change in the world, so too does that anxiety. Anxiety over the future is the temporal expression of our anxiety from an eternal perspective. In terms of our freedom, for which 'the possible is the future' (p.91), we are inevitably in a state of anxiety. Anxiety over the past, therefore, makes no sense. We would say instead that our state would be one of repentance. We cannot change what has happened, notwithstanding the fact that we might worry that something we have done might be repeated (or that some consequence might arise as a result of some past action. But of course, in that case, what we are really experiencing is anxiety over some possible future

[135] *Ibid.*, p.42.
[136] *Ibid.*, p.48.
[137] *Ibid.*, p.49.
[138] *Ibid.*, p.64.

event). In section two of this chapter, the concept of the eternal will be investigated in more detail. For now, it is enough to say that what Vigilius wants us to consider is the individual realization that we are not just a body that exists within the constraints of time, but that in our freedom and possibility, comes the realization that we have an eternal spirit, and with it the anxiety that we are responsible for our own eternal being.[139]

There is, for him, no anxiety in spiritlessness, in that, the individual is oblivious to what they are lacking or denying. There is hollowness to their activity – the bliss of their ignorance. But, he says that anxiety is there…'waiting…hidden and disguised.' (p.96) Viewed through the lens of Adam's sin and fall from grace, Vigilius sees the human being beginning as a dreaming spirit not yet quite aware of its possibility. God's command prompts Adam to posit something outside of himself: his freedom, and good and evil. Suddenly he becomes a questioning individual. With his transgression comes sinfulness. He is in a state of anxiety in that, in being forbidden by God, his freedom, and the possibility for choosing not to obey the command resulting in punishment, is posited. Nothing has taken place yet. No decision has been made. When he does decide, one would imagine that the anxiety – which is essentially an anxiety over the unknown – would somehow be resolved. In that situation he would know the outcome in a real way. He would be in sin, but at least the anxiety would be dispelled. What was initially a possibility has become a reality. But, Vigilius says that neither anxiety nor possibility has been canceled. There still remains a question for Adam: "What next?" The anxiety that once existed in relation to the unknown now becomes an anxiety over what can be known, i.e., an anxiety borne out of knowledge. Adam has moved away from a state of ignorance, but anxiety has not disappeared, because there still lingers the question of what is the 'good', and whether or not one has chosen correctly for a 'good outcome' at every subsequent moment. This question is an issue over which we ought to be anxious.

However, he stresses the importance of this question as it relates concrete existence, rather than abstract reasoning on the matter. What 'ought'

[139] *Ibid.*, p.197.

to be the good, i.e., what reasoning might abstractly posit as the 'good' does not necessarily inform freedom as it actually exists in the real world.[140] It might be rationally intelligible to always tell the truth, but it might lead to a greater evil in a given circumstance, where, for example, the result of my rational choice might lead to the death of a loved one. He is concerned about freedom as something that is not just merely 'an object of thought…a meaningless reflection' (p.111-112n) Evil is not merely the 'not good.' This is contra what we have seen in terms of Kantian ethics, i.e., that whatever is deemed to be a transgression of the ethical is sin. Vigilius is always pointing us in the direction of a more proper home for the idea of sin. That is, the religious. From the point of view of the individual who is of the temporal world, and as such, who moves from point A to point B in time (and so on until death), there is a constant change of state in relation to good and evil, by virtue of freedom that is always present. Man does not sin 'by necessity.' (p.112) He is infinitely free in relation to choices. There is always the option to choose for good. Anxiety will always remain as long as there is the question as to what constitutes the good, and as long as one is faced with a choice in relation to action. There is perpetual repetition of the possibility for sin. The wish to turn back time, the consideration of the possibility of the sin recurring, or, worse still, the possibility of sinking deeper into a further state of sin, simply exacerbate the problem because those dispositions 'exclude repentance.' (p.201) We naturally look backwards and forwards, and we are anxious over both. One could say that we never quite get to repentance because we are preoccupied with trying to change the past, and preoccupied with the unknown future.

Vigilius asserts that anxiety can never be removed as long as one makes the mistake of thinking that the solution to the problem is within merely human capabilities. From the Kantian perspective, there is always the possibility for the complete change of heart with respect to the moral law. That is not to say that the past can be obliterated, but at least in theory, the revolution of the disposition can be permanent. One could say that there always remains the

[140] *Ibid.*, p.111.

possibility to press the reset button in order to try again. Ethics is concerned with the particular instance of sin against the moral law.[141] But, as Kant says, man is not capable of taking account of every instance in which he has transgressed the moral law – only God can judge a life in its entirety. Not only is Vigilius concerned about sin as the actualizing of one's freedom contra the good, but also with the state of sin that is the result of *thinking* in relation to sin (anxious thinking). He is essentially talking about the propensity towards not honestly facing up to the actuality of the sin that has taken place. For him, it is a kind of death for a human being never to have experienced anxiety, or to have been so consumed by it that one is engulfed by it. There is, for him, the right way to be anxious. The greater the anxiety, the greater the being. That something is possible, or rather, that 'all things are equally possible' (p.156) by virtue of my being free, is the most frightening thing of all. We can never know what is around the next corner. There is a comfort in what is actually immediate for us, because it is the tangible. The unknown possibility is what frightens us most.

In *Stages*, Judge William reiterates the idea that it is through reason, rather than instinct and inspiration that one resolves to act.[142] The goal – duty, with marriage as an ideal example – must be in mind from the beginning. Otherwise, in 'thoughtlessness' (*SLW*, p.106), one is at the mercy of the merely immediate, the sensual, erotic love, and potentially, seduction. Marriage is the concretization of the ideal. For him, it is the follow-through that is willed on foot of the ideal that brings about a consolidation that 'sets the individual at rest within himself.' (p.108) That reason has been to the forefront in terms of arriving at a prescription for what one ought to do is (apparently) a guarantee as to one having chosen correctly. To choose in favour of merely erotic love, rather than in favour of marriage, makes no sense to reason, because the rationally derived ideal is always that to which one ought to strive. Otherwise, it would not *be* the ideal. Furthermore, Judge William wants to emphasize that it is also an error to

[141] *Ibid.*, p.114.
[142] *SLW*, p.102.

focus on the probable result of one's decision, other than concern for whether or not one has had the ideal always in mind, that is, to allow the ideal to guide one's being in the world. One cannot expect an external party to aid one in that kind of decision that is the resolve to marry. Socrates' response was to say: 'Marry or do not marry – you will regret both.' (p.156) Judge William says that Socrates' response is really saying: "You are asking a stupid question. Nobody but you can answer that question." The decision is entirely a personal undertaking.

Quidam has a 'resolute soul' (p.195) in relation to the woman who is the object of his desire. However, he is no mere seducer who is simply interested in the immediate experience. He is at that point where he is willing to take a leap into marriage, with no guarantees, but he contemplates with 'religious presuppositions' (p.195) in relation to the question of whether or not to marry. That is, when we consider what has been posed to us by Judge William in relation to marriage, this individual is faced with the question of resolving to marry with the ethical and the religious in mind. It is, however, not merely a question of the proposition: 'Marry or do not marry, you will still regret it' that we hear at the start of *Either/Or*, but a question of 'Marry her or do not marry at all.' (*SLW*, p.195) It involves a singular decision that can only ever be made once in a lifetime.[143] Anything short of that ideal will lead to a misplaced resolution to marry. If there is anxiety on his part, it can only be said to pertain to whether or not he is capable of meeting the demands of the ideal of marriage when considered as a religious duty.[144]

However, he thinks seriously about the decision, but these 'rigorous exercises' (p.196) in thinking persecute him. It is 'a sleepless and thousand-tongued reflection that…throws everything into confusion.' (p.196) In him, there is a turmoil that stems from an inability to be absolutely sure. He is free to choose, but his freedom, his rational thinking, and his awareness for the possibility of acting irresponsibly – even if it extends out as far as positing the decision to marry in terms of an ethical relation to God – are the source of his

[143] *Ibid.*, p.197.
[144] *Ibid.*, p.195.

anxiety over the right thing to do. He understands that marriage requires becoming fully disclosed to the other person, but he is not willing to do that. He is trying to find a way to resolve an impossible problem. On one hand, he wants to treat his beloved in a rational and ethical way, without reasoning the possible outcome.[145] But, this is impractical, because there are real repercussions. He believes that his love of this one woman is a gift from God, but he struggles 'with God and [himself].' (p.201) It is a struggle with the ethical and religious dimension that love and marriage poses.[146] Thinking holds him back, but this prodigious reflection that contemplates everything leads to a lack of action. He is paralyzed by thought. The possibility of her saying "Yes" fills him with fear, because that would thrust him into a world of ultimate responsibility. He fully realizes that what is required is action, and not wanting to 'write or to appeal to any third party.' (p.207) It is an individual decision that takes personal 'honesty…conviction…resoluteness of choice…[and] trustworthiness.' (p.207) His state is one of a perpetual, exhausting[147] anxiety in relation to this possibility. Fulfilling the duty of marriage as a paradigmatic[148] way of relating to God would no doubt lead to a 'quieter happiness in life…that quietness in the fulfilling of a modest duty.' (p.260) But, he cannot decide. He teeters on the edge of decision, paralyzed by thinking, and suspended in anxiety.

The emphasis in the Preface to the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is upon the individual's 'little fragment' (*CUP*, p.8), rather than on a disengaged,

[145] *Ibid.*, p.201.
[146] In contrast, whilst the Judge certainly sees love as a divine gift – marital love as 'made in heaven' (*E/O*, p.412) – what he cannot comprehend is Christ's agapic love of humanity. That kind of love 'surpasses all understanding.' (p.390) Within the limits of the ethical, he views love as having a divine origin, but that it can only be played out as 'preferential' as opposed to 'spiritual love.' (p.414) In contrast, it is (surprisingly) the Seducer who makes a point of more openly acknowledging the contradiction of the kind of 'self-annihilation' (p.339) required in loving the other fully. He can see that this idea of love can be expressed in a religious way as a sacrifice in which one is in a relation to 'the God to whom I belong.' (p.341) He can even see that there is 'a difference between a spiritual and a physical eroticism…[that] Plato really understood love.' (p.351) The Judge would not expect such a loathsome character as the Seducer to grasp what he in fact grasps, i.e., the idea that love can have a higher expression than the merely aesthetic.
[147] *SLW*, p.240.
[148] This on the basis, of course, of Judge William's specific representation – presented to us by Kierkegaard as a paradigm – of a way of relating to God, i.e., through marriage.

universally held point of view. Climacus wants to take full personal responsibility for the view that he is about to expresses. Ultimately, this work centers on the question of the way in which it is possible for an individual to properly become a Christian, and what that task entails. The choice to be made by the individual is that of relating to Christianity 'personally.' (p.21) It is a necessary component for 'the possibility of faith' (p.27) that this should occur within the context of freedom, or one could say, assent. One must choose to be open to it in the first place. For the individual who might ask: "What does it mean for me?" the essential element is that of 'decision' (p.21), regardless of the objective 'facts' that are available. It is an individual path which necessarily involves 'the perils of solitary thinking' (p.70) rather than a view of the individual as a mere appendix to the intellectual projects of skepticism, idealism, the historical, and speculative thought. These are, he says: '…a delusion…an illusion…a phantom.' (p.81) Choosing Christianity is something to be done by a flesh and blood person, not some abstract concept that is part of some systematically expressed whole. The 'category of decision' (p.99) is a prerequisite for the leap into faith. What counts is not the thinking that precedes the leap, but the leap itself: the decisive moment of choice. The challenge for the individual is to assent to being released from a situation in which they are entirely caught up in the 'pain and crisis of decision.' (p.129)

Abraham's leap of faith was one in which he chose to believe God's promise to him. That is to say, 'he accepted…in faith.' (*FT*, p.15-16) If we are to speak in terms of freedom and action, then, we can say that his leap was an act of acceptance. He willingly allowed and embraced his belief in God's promise in order to carry our God's command. Like Agnes in the story of the merman, he is 'willing to follow…trustingly abandons [himself]…absolutely believing…[he] entrusts [his] entire destiny' (p.82-83) to God. God made a promise to Abraham with respect to fathering a great nation, and now it was time for Abraham to play his part in that deal. His 'act of letting go' (*PF*, p.53) is Abraham's 'contribution.' (p.53) An active commitment to faith is needed if one is to receive

one's 'daily bread.'[149]We are presented with a dramatic instance[150] of the leap of faith in Abraham's story, but what we are asked to consider is that the decision to believe is one that requires perpetual effort, because we are always free to think otherwise.[151] As Vigilius says: 'Every state is posited by a leap…every such repetition is…a new leap.' (*COA*, p.113) The leap of faith is a 'free act…of will' (*PF*, p.102) in which doubt is repeatedly overcome. Climacus casts a doubt over whether or not faith can ever be regained[152] when one chooses not to exercise it, and so the leap is a task that 'is sufficient for a lifetime.' (*FT*, p.108), because it involves a continual 'resoluteness of choice' (*SLW*, p.207) – a 'decision'[153] (*CUP*, p.21) in the absence of a firm conclusion.[154]

Ferreira maintains that it is a mistake to read Climacus as ruling out 'the role of human activity in the acquisition of faith.' (Ferreira, 1990, p.64) Even if faith is viewed as a miracle and a gift, there is still an individual who must recognize the miracle (or not), accept the gift (or not), and make the leap of faith (or not). Climacus is committed to 'free, responsible, human activity in the acquisition of faith.' (p.66) But, for Kierkegaard – more generally speaking – to believe ourselves as capable of faith without the help of God is an error. Judge William's view of transformation – one could say: of the leap of faith – is one that is posited within the boundaries of human capability and possibility, and with the *idea* of God in mind. To this extent, it is a Kantian view of ethical transformation, i.e., of what is possible with respect to an ideal. In contrast to Abraham – who must first resign the finite world, or, the ethical, prior to his leap of faith – Judge William's faith has a character that is closer to something of the will, rather than of passivity and renunciation.

Within the limits of the finite, the highest expression of 'existential actualization' (Elrod, 2015, p.198) comes about for the Judge by virtue of 'choice in the ethical stage.' (p.198) Within these limits, he knows what is possible, or,

[149] *FT*, p.21.
[150] *PF*, p.53.
[151] CUP, p.341n.
[152] *CUP*, p.16.
[153] *CUP*, p.99.
[154] *PF*, p.104.

he at least posits an ideal that is achievable. However, what Kierkegaard wants us always to consider, is that there is more to being human than a mere striving for an ideal that is bound by finite considerations. His point is that, when one acknowledges that the ideal self is only truly possible with the help of God, this is the beginning of the truly religious life-view. This is what constitutes a true leap of faith. Kant starts upon this path in his expression of moral faith. And like Kant, Kierkegaard believes freedom to be a fundamental starting point in the acquisition of faith. But unlike Kant, he does not want to limit how we speak of freedom to purely ideal terms. And so the Judge points us in the right direction. For him, we only come to fully 'choose' ourselves when we exercise our freedom in real terms. That is, when we stop thinking and speculating – as the aesthetic young man does – and start acting, ethically. For him, we can only attain 'self-knowledge…in the existential actualization of freedom rather than in rational speculation.' (p.200) Freedom, and the ethical choice, are, for Kierkegaard, stepping-stones to a religious life-view that transcends a faith conceived in purely finite terms.

Climacus certainly does not want to say that the role played by the individual in the acquisition of faith is merely a passive one, but neither is it 'the direct result of a deliberate decision.' (Ferreira, 1990, p.64) It might be more properly understood as lying somewhere in between – as a transition that 'would have to be said to be both active and passive at the same time.' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.27) As de Silentio puts it: one might not be in a position to pinpoint 'how one *entered into* [faith] or how [faith] *entered into* one.' (*FT*, p.5) [emphasis mine] Ferreira wants to argue that, rather than being a passive state, the transition to faith is one in which 'our eyes are opened but our free activity is still needed.' (Ferreira, 1990, p.74) One can decide to be open to the idea. But, 'being open' isn't, strictly speaking, either definitively passive or active. For Climacus, the passion of faith is an *a priori* condition of being human, i.e., given by God, just as much as not only reason, but also the other passions[155] that are a necessary part of our makeup. We do not 'choose' to be *capable* of love, anger, hate, etc. That is,

[155] Climacus makes a point of characterizing reason as a passion: Reason's 'demands of passion' (*PF*, p.55); 'Reason, in its paradoxical passion.' (p.59)

faith is not something that we can will to be present, as if we are 'radically self-sufficient' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.22) in that regard. But, we have freedom, and can therefore choose to *allow* love, anger, hatred, etc. Climacus essentially makes a distinction between the capacity to have faith, and the decision to *allow* faith. The distinction is one of passivity over activity. I think that it is in this context that Climacus wants to say that 'Faith is not an act of will' (*PF*, p.77), i.e., the will is not actively active. It is not that there is no activity. There is a choice involved, but it is the *act* of: letting go, suspension, willing to not-will. It is willing, but not volitional 'will-power.' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.88) Fundamentally, in freely choosing to reflect upon oneself as more than just finite, that choice in itself 'constitutes a change.' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.69) The leap of faith is therefore not an absolute passivity. It requires a very basic decision on our part – that of active surrender. The *move*ment of faith is such that choice and passion are engaged in a dialectic, and hence the movement of faith is a transition – a qualitative change, a *process* of becoming, in which one freely allows faith to transform oneself. As such, the leap of faith – viewed as 'this act of letting go [which] is surely…a contribution of mine' (*PF*, p.53), and more specifically, 'when the Reason sets itself aside' (p.73) – is still ultimately an 'activity.' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.10) The leap of faith might not even involve a singular and decisive moment – such as one finds in de Silentio's account of Abraham's movement of faith – but might in fact be more of a process of qualitative change and growth. That is, *allowing* to see oneself as one is in order to become someone new. Or, as Anti-Climacus wants to say, acknowledging oneself as a self 'before God.' (*SUD*, p.5) Ferreira describes it as 'a shift in perspective, an increased vision…The choice of self is indeed a leap, but it is an imaginative leap of self-understanding more than it is a deliberate decision.' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.70)

4.2 The Possible, the Eternal, and the Impossible

The aesthetic young man in *Either/Or* observes that 'it is only through opposition that the object of desire is possessed' (*E/O*, p.43); '…the doubter often the most religious.' (p.44) What we see here is a pointing away from the notion of what is possible for me as a human being with freedom, to a position in which

one says: "That is impossible, it could not be so, I cannot register that thought, etc.". The aesthete cannot even come to rest with respect to what is possible, because his thoughts over the multitude of possibilities that are implied by his freedom keep him in a suspended state of anxiety. Not only this, but in failing to follow through on the kinds of commitments that are within his possibilities, he is left feeling powerless in the grips of an uncertain fate. He is a doubter, but his doubt is confined, in that, it is limited to thoughts of what is merely finitely possible – mere appearances being mistaken for the truth - rather than the kind of doubt that might lead to a faith in the impossible[156]. He craves something to give his life meaning, but he cannot even get off the ground, because in order to make the possible a reality, he must actualize. He is paralyzed by his thoughts, and sinks into inaction. He makes the possible into an impossibility for himself. He says: 'My soul is faint and powerless…My soul has lost possibility. Were I to wish for anything I would not wish for wealth and power, but for the passion of the possible, that eye which everywhere, ever young, ever burning, sees possibility.' (p.56) There is, however, a glimmer of hope to be found in A's discourse in relation to the musical erotic, with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as the focus of his thoughts. He professes his lack of knowledge with respect to music. Through his sense of the greatness of Mozart and his music as that which has an eternal quality – something that will speak to humanity forever – he imagines a 'realm' (p.76) unknown to him, but says that he 'should still be able to form some conception of it.' (ibid.) There is something that is a possibility, but he cannot yet grasp what it might be. Be that as it may, there is value in knowing not-knowing.[157] When one realizes the limitations that are naturally implied by one's possibilities, this is an opening up to a something 'more', of which one can only have a sense.

The author of the *Seducer's Diary* is that individual who is prepared to go a step beyond the mere thought of possibility. That is, he does follow through to a degree. He attempts to engineer situations in order to experience the immediate rush of a sense of control over his environment, and over the woman

[156] *E/O*, p.45.
[157] *Ibid.*, p.77.

who is the object of his desire. There are so many possibilities that he can contemplate, so many possibilities for sensual enjoyment. We might say that he is 'doing it for kicks, for the sheer hell of it.' He acknowledges that there are things over which we have no control, and hence he is frustrated when things do not go in a particular direction. Believing in his own powers and capabilities, his take on what is deemed 'impossible' is regarded by him as the object of a game in which he will prove the impossible to be wrong: he will possess her. He does need the idea of something higher than his own abilities in order to get what he wants.[158] When his engineering of the situation has come to its highest pitch, i.e., when she loves him, he retreats. For him, the impossible is also that for which he is unprepared to make a sacrifice, namely, his own selfish desires. Loving another fully requires 'self-annihilation' (p.339), or, the giving up of the love of one's self. He is not willing to live out what he sees as the impossible contradiction of love. The only thing that one who truly loves can be said to possess is, paradoxically, being so wholly given over to the other: In love, I own only my lack of ownership. He writes: '...it is a contradiction that he can own something who does not own himself.' (p.340)

Judge William's response to A (as opposed to the Seducer) is to say that there are serious implications in having lived a life of 'wasted possibilities.' (p.390) This is most especially made tangible with respect to the love of another, because the Judge is convinced that this is the possibility for becoming pleasing to God.[159] The ethical is the possibility for coming into a relation with God. It is

[158] *Ibid.*, p.269.

[159] However, the Judge's position on love is not as straightforward as it seems. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard – communicating with us directly as himself – is clear in terms of the distinction between erotic and agapic love. He wants to say that one cannot talk about human love without acknowledging that the original 'spring' (*WL*, p.9) of all love is God. In the Christian view, God's love is unconditional; we are all owing to God's unconditional love. Christ, 'who spared nothing…gave everything…gave [himself] to save all' (*WL*, p.3), showed what unconditional love – 'that love-sacrifice' (*WL*, p.3) – could be. God's love, or, the origin of all love, though hidden from us, must be believed. That is to say, we must have faith in love. In this way, Kierkegaard connects faith to love as ultimately a love of God, or, God's love for us. In the same way that we must have faith in God, we must also have faith in love. So, we can say that earthly love, but most especially unconditional love, is the way in which we relate to God (in faith): 'we must believe in love.' (*WL*, p.16) In this respect, the Judge seems to be on the right

that through which a sense of the eternal is possible in our finite lives. For him, we are as such partially the makers of our eternal fortune. What the young man does not grasp is that, as 'the epitome of all possibility' (p.391), he has within his power the possibility for not only ruination, but salvation too. He is stuck in his thoughts. Everything is a perpetual possibility, but that is the extent of it.[160] The judge characterizes the 'eternal' in terms of the temporal.[161] Using the example of first love, he says that it: 'has in itself the twofold character of presupposing itself back into all eternity and forward into all eternity...the unity of freedom and necessity.' (p.404) I interpret this as saying that everything has necessarily led up to that moment. In hindsight, what has occurred looks like an inescapable inevitability; the future in relation to the moment of first love is 'up for grabs.' More is yet possible. Everything is part of the infinite whole, but it is an immediate whole, that of the finite world. For the Judge, the eternal is available to us immediately. There are some things, such as love, which has 'the stamp of the eternal' (p.393), that need to be experienced immediately in order to come into contact with the eternal.[162] He proposes that there comes a point when a person seeks for something beyond the immediate. This is the most significant moment in which the individual spirit is transparent to itself.[163] As he says: 'the

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track. As finite beings, we are confined to giving expression to our love of God in a finite way, i.e., in our unconditional love of the other.

Although the Judge's view of the ethical is close to that of Kant, in which there is the idea of 'sincere…self-renunciation' (*WL*, p.4), he nevertheless wants to make a claim as to the 'meritousness' (*WL*, p.4) to be attached to love conceived in terms of duty. Nevertheless, in Christian agapic terms, Kierkegaard wants to say that 'to love is a duty.' (*WL*, p.24) But there still lingers something of self-love insofar as there is something in it for the Judge: the confirmation of his 'eternal validity.' (*E/O*, p.499) Perhaps Kierkegaard might even accuse the Judge of having a cynical view of love, and that, if that is what his idea of love is, he might as well 'give up believing in love' (*WL*, p.5) If his significant other dies, can she not simply be replaced by another in order to fulfill his divinely-expressed duty to God? The Judge's view does not seem to fit entirely into the idea of unconditional love, insofar as he does not entirely deny himself in his relation to the other. His 'Christian love abides' (*WL*, p.8), but his preferential love abides only for as long as she is alive! As Kierkegaard puts it (and perhaps it is *he* who should be accused of a cynical view of love): 'Death cannot deprive you of the neighbor, for if it takes one, life immediately gives you another.' (*WL*, p.65)

[160] *E/O*, p.391.

[161] The view that, temporally speaking, the eternal is 'possibility or the future.' (Walsh, 2009, p.95)

[162] *E/O*, p.422.

[163] *Ibid.*, p.509.

personality wants to be conscious of itself in its eternal validity.'[164] (p.499) On one hand we see in Judge William's life-view a Kantian framing of the ethical (through the lens of love, and then marriage as dutiful follow-through) as the way in which it is possible to come into a relation to God. However, we also see something in that view that opposes Kant's thinking, in that, Judge William wants to say that experience (the sensual world) is essential to forming a concept such as that of the eternal, and it is in this context that we can make sense of his 'position' with respect to love.

De Silentio, speaking against a nihilistic view of life, maintains that it is not the case that all human beings live in a merely immediate way, guided only by 'dark passions' (*FT*, p.12), and with a sense of 'insatiable emptiness.' (p.12) The fact is, that people do have a sense of something greater than just their finiteness. He calls this an 'eternal consciousness.' (p.12) He likes to think that every human being asks the same kind of question: "What is the meaning of life, what will give my life meaning?", and that this kind of consciousness of something greater than the immediate world is something that binds us together in our shared humanity. He does not want to deny that people can find fulfillment and achieve greatness 'by expecting the possible' (p.13), where being human is defined in immediate terms as merely 'a sensuous and psychical being.' (p.71) But it is also evident to him that greatness results when one develops a consciousness of the eternal, albeit in terms of what is possible in this world, but with one's eye upon the bigger picture. This is the kind of disposition in which one lets go of the notion that the goods of the finite world can ultimately offer one true happiness.[165] This is the way in which I can manifest an awareness of the eternal: 'I become transparent to myself in my eternal validity.' (p.39) However, he wants us to consider that Abraham's greatness is such by virtue of his expecting 'the impossible' (p.13) – that he could kill Isaac, but that he would return home with his son alive, and that, contrary to everything that his reason might tell him, he would be blessed with happiness in this world as a result of

[164] *Ibid.*, p.499.
[165] As we have seen in chapter three, this is what he calls infinite resignation.

his actions. The concept of the 'impossible' is characterized by de Silentio as that which is 'absurd' (p.28) to thought. It is something that is beyond rational assessment.[166] It goes beyond the probable. Most central to this idea is that 'for God everything is possible' (p.39) 'Impossible' is a merely human perspective that is posited by virtue of our limitations *qua* human.

In *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus' main question, 'How far does the Truth admit of being learned?' (*PF*, p.11), is essentially one that centers on what is possible for a human being to know. His narrative is ultimately directed towards the question of whether or not Christian truth can be attained by human endeavor alone. He uses the example of Socrates in order to bring out the difference between a belief in the rational transformation of the individual out of ignorance with respect to a truth[167], and the belief that the truth – more specifically, Christian truth – is something that is impossible for a person to acquire by themselves. It must be given by God. In effect, the possible and impossible are brought into focus from the perspective of knowledge. However, he also wants to remind us that Socrates held onto the belief that it was through the development of knowledge that one came into a relation with the eternal, i.e., with the god.[168] In Socratic terms, the concept of the eternal is something that is formed from the perspective of rational explanation and truth seeking. The acquisition of truths that are within the capacities – that is to say, possibilities – of every human being, are universal ones that are independent of time and history. They are eternal truths. As Climacus writes: 'The temporal point of departure is nothing…because in my eternal consciousness there is neither here nor there, but only an *ubique et nusquam*.' (p.15-16) Ultimately, his use of the Socratic notion of the possibility for truth acquisition has the intention of inviting us to think about the truth of Christianity as something that lies beyond the compass of what constitutes knowledge. It is beyond what is possible for a human being who uses only their rational faculties. It is impossible up until that point, because it is not something that can be willed by an

[166] *FT, p.29.*
[167] *PF*, p.15.
[168] *Ibid.*, p.14; 29.

individual – 'he will not be able to set himself free…and no captivity is so terrible and so impossible to break.' (p.21) But, with God all things are possible. The moment of 'decisive significance' (p.21) in which the impossible becomes actual is the moment of Christ. In the Incarnation, the temporal moment[169] is 'filled with the Eternal.' (p.22) Temporally, Christ is the high point – the 'Fullness of Time.' (p.22) The moment of Christ 'is really decisive for Eternity.' (p.72)

One could characterize the moment of Christ as that in which the possible, eternal, and impossible converge. Climacus says that in becoming a man, God creates the possibility for us to become more like him. We can relate to him, because it is only through what is possible for us, i.e., our understanding of what it means to be a human, even if that is a limited understanding, that this relation is possible. In this way, the arrival of Christ has an 'Eternal Purpose.' (p.30) If we view it as impossible, that is only because of the ways in which our thinking is necessarily limited. That said, the impossible is a necessary thought for us, lest we think that we are capable of becoming a god ourselves. That is, our thinking of the impossibility of God having become a man, that this did occur, preserves God's infinite distance from us and furthermore, that it occurred in an incomprehensible act of absolute love for us.[170]

Climacus raises doubts as to what is possible for us as limited, and yet eager, seekers of knowledge. If a purely philosophical and scientific knowledge of 'what man is' (p.47), and rational knowledge of God, are our criteria for truth-acquisition, then we will be sorely disappointed. That is to say, there can be no final resolution in this quest. Having arrived at an impasse with respect to the finite, we are naturally drawn towards posing a question to ourselves as to our eternal nature and our relation to something unknown to us that might possibly lie beyond the earthly.[171] Climacus points us in the direction of Christian truth as that which makes these kinds of ultimate questions answerable. In order to bring about what is impossible for man to achieve on his own, 'man needs the help of God.' (p.58) The concept of the impossible, or, that which is absurd to thought, is brought into even greater focus in terms of the paradox of the

[169] *Ibid.*, p.76.
[170] *Ibid.*, p.31.
[171] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

Incarnation, and in relation to the possibility of offense at Christianity. However, Kierkegaard's treatment of these ideas will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter six.

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Vigilius essentially interprets a Kantian view of what is possible for human beings. That is, that we have within our capabilities the possibility for realizing the ideality of ethics.[172] However, he highlights the impossibility of this task in reality. It is all very well to have the ideal as a goal, but there is clearly a conflict between that ideal and what can be said to be truly possible for a person to achieve.[173] The ideal character of metaphysics as that which is 'disinterested' is in opposition to what is actually possible for real human beings, and not just mere rational subjects. He reminds us that in *Fear and Trembling* the demands of an ideal ethics is challenged by the example of the esthetic, and that subsequently, the religious ideal (as evidenced in the story of Abraham) goes beyond the ethical as the 'ideality of actuality.' (*COA*, p.17) Abraham realizes the possibility of a religious ideal in his willingness to actually kill Isaac to prove his faith to God. The notion of sacrifice in the esthetic realm, and de Silentio's subsequent treatment of sacrifice in the religious realm, serve to show how both those realms can produce a real outcome, contra what Vigilius says is the character of the ideality of ethics, i.e., its impossibility. The Kantian ethical ideal is characterized as perpetuating the difficulty by rationally proposing the possible, but forever keeping its realization out of reach, so demanding is its core principle. As we have seen in section one of this chapter, anxiety is indicative of an awareness of freedom. For Vigilius, we are closer to saying something of real truth about freedom when it is conceived of not merely in an ideal way, but in a real way in which possibility really is possible, i.e., actualizable.[174] The promise of Christian salvation is that which is deemed to be impossible from our finite perspective. However, Vigilius says that when our eternal salvation is presented to us as a real option in terms of the way in which we ought to live our lives, we no longer need to worry over the

[172] *COA*, p.16.
[173] *Ibid.*, p.18.
[174] *COA*, p.42.

multitudinous possibilities of the temporal future that make us dizzy with anxiety. In this way, through Christianity, 'possibility…is left behind' (p.53), because a single route from here to eternity is concretized.[175]

Viewed conceptually, Vigilius says that not only is man composed of psyche and body, but he is also 'a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal.' (p.85) Temporally speaking, the 'present' cannot be captured because it is always a passing moment.[176] He says that 'the eternal…is the present in terms of an annulled succession.' (p.86) In other words, when time conceived of as a series of infinite fleeting moments is disregarded, what we are left with is an eternal moment that is outside of the categories of past, present, and future. Perhaps one can think of this as akin to a 'freeze-frame' or 'snapshot' in time. We are here speaking of the eternal non-temporally, as something that is outside of time. He equates this concept of the eternal moment with 'spirit', and he refers us to St. Paul's idea of the moment as a twinkling of the eye.[177] There is something more to man than just the temporal psyche and body. There is an eternal spirit.[178] Vigilius says that the 'pivotal' (p.90) eternal moment is that of Christ, in which the temporal concepts of past, present, and future, disappear, and in whom eternal (spiritual) salvation is now possible. If the eternal is posited as something that is external to man, then one is thrown back into a state of anxiety in which one is concerned only for what is immediately and finitely possible. There always remains a tension between the eternal viewed as something beyond, and the present. He wants to say that denial and fear of the eternal are evasions. It is a 'putting off' of the ultimate question as to what my relation to the eternal is. It is a denial of the eternal in me. Being caught up in 'the moment' (p.152), that is to say, the moment conceived of merely temporally,

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[175] *Ibid.*, p.84n.
[176] *Ibid.*, p.86.
[177] Vigilius is clearly thinking of Plato in this regard. He writes: 'What we call the moment, Plato calls τὸ ἐξαίφνης [the sudden].' (*COA*, pp. 87-88) For Vigilius – who is thinking in Christian terms – the moment of Christ is the sudden, decisive, temporal 'blink of the eye' (p.87) in which the eternal God is manifested in time. In this way, the temporal, conceived of in terms of the eternal (God), is distinct from the abstract notion of time that Vigilius sees as characteristic of the Platonic view of *exaiphnes*: the sudden moment in time, where time – as past, present, and future – and eternity, 'were conceived equally abstractly.' (*COA*, p.88)
[178] *Ibid.*, p.88.

is a denial of eternal spirit.[179] However, he argues against a purely ideal, abstract concept of the eternal in man. Rather than escaping us as something that is beyond the temporal – as imaginary, dreamlike, or metaphysical, in which the temporal is somehow subsumed into a system that proclaims 'the pure I, the eternal self-consciousness' (p.153) – he emphasizes the importance of the temporal. The temporal world 'is permeated by and preserved in the eternal.' (p.154) The real world is the place in which one looks after one's eternal being.

In his preface to "In Vino Veritas" in *Stages*, William Afham does not deny that it is possible to look back upon one's life in old age with the wisdom of hindsight. That is, to be able to seize upon something of the eternal. However, for him, the error lies in coming to an assessment on the basis of the temporal details of one's life in the form of memories of events. What is more crucial is a reflection upon the most important, timeless kind of questions: "In what way have I been/am I in relation to my eternal nature? To what have I been/am I truly committed at the deepest level?" He points in the direction of a concept of the eternal that is non-temporal, but that is not to say that it is not coloured by the temporal and finite. It is still a concept of the eternal that is related to one's actions and commitments in life.

In the speech given by Victor Eremita, what we see is a life-view that is concerned primarily with an ideal (in this case, the ideality of woman as that which inspires the genius, hero, poet, and saint). The essence of what Eremita is saying is that it is through the 'striving and aspiring' (*SLW*, p.60) for ideality that a consciousness of the eternal comes about. This disposition espouses the belief that it is better to hold on to the ideal rather than to follow-through in reality, in this case, by entering into marriage. That is to say, the eternal is conceived of as a perpetual or suspended possibility. However abstract the thinking is, his concept of the eternal is still confined to a striving that takes place in terms of the finite world, i.e., in terms of possibility. Conceptually speaking, it is a finite-eternal life-view. Nevertheless, he points towards the possibility of becoming conscious of the eternal as that which goes beyond the immediate world. This is

[179] *Ibid.*, p.152.

the positing of spirit.[180] Johannes the Seducer is similarly inclined towards idealization, but his *modus operandi* is that of being caught up in a repetitious cycle of immediate enjoyment. The thought of the woman as ideal is merely a 'whim' (p.73) in order to enjoy and seduce. The motivating force for the seducer is possibility in relation to the idea of woman. For him, possibility is the 'eternal source of infatuation.' (p.77)

Judge William's *Reflections on Marriage* is a reiteration of what can be found in *Either/Or*. He reminds us that our spiritual relation to God is played out via marriage conceived in terms of an 'eternal duty.' (p.111) In this way, a finite-eternal, spiritual relation to God is posited.[181] It is a disposition towards God in which one has, as it were, one's feet in the finite world, but one's gaze upon the eternal. The only way in which an eternal relation may be actualized is via a finite decision to marry. To do otherwise would either to be wholly invested in the sensual, turning one's back on God (the eternal), or, wholly invested in the eternal, turning one's back on the world (the finite). In his view, striking the right balance is possible in marriage. There, the eternal is given concrete expression. It is, as such, temporalized. This is grounded in the belief that a 'person is simultaneously temporal and eternal.' (p.112) The Marriage unifies these two human facets. It is a decision 'for eternity.' (p.173) The two aspects are mediated in the ethical-as-religious. Quidam echoes this concept of the eternal. He is poised to make the kind of temporal decision (to marry) that Judge William posits as a way of coming into a relation to God. That is, his concept of what constitutes the eternal is grounded in 'religious presuppositions.' (p.195) However, he cannot free himself from the grips of finite possibility for long enough in order to actualize the eternal relation. He cannot assent to the idea that it is through the finite that this relation to the eternal can be realized, even if he can grasp it on a conceptual level. He writes: 'I have lived only intellectually…The eternal, a relationship with God, a relationship to the idea – this stirred my soul, but I could not grasp something so intermediate [as a love-relationship].' (p.225) His eye is on the purely eternal idea. He has a 'sense

[180] *SLW*, p.65.
[181] *Ibid.*, p.100.

of the infinite' (p.410), but he believes that finite possibility can offer no relief in this regard. As far as he is concerned, he cannot be in a proper relation to God *and* in a relation to another human being. There is a conflict between the finite and eternal that is impossible to overcome.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus is more explicit than in the *Fragments* in his presentation of the two main ways in which a relation to the truth of Christianity might be conceived. Namely, either objectively or subjectively. In the former, the emphasis is upon what can be claimed to be true from a historical or philosophical perspective. It is a relation that is concerned with truth viewed in terms of what is finitely possible, verifiable, or at least rationally plausible and coherent. The latter has at its central idea the individual relating to Christianity 'infinitely, personally, impassionedly…to this truth concerning his own eternal happiness.' (*CUP*, p.21) If one must speak of possibility in relation to the eternal, then, for Climacus it is only in the subjective realm that 'the possibility of faith' (p.27) is in itself a possibility. He shares with Vigilius a conceptual understanding of the human as a 'synthesis of the temporal and the eternal.' (p.56) He believes that it is only when one is passionately, infinitely, and personally committed to Christianity, that consciousness of the eternal is fully present, and spirit is truly alive and expressing that synthesis.[182] However, in asserting that man is composed of the temporal and eternal, there is an inevitable possibility of conflict between those dual elements.[183] This is what potentially gives rise to offense[184] at Christianity: being faced with the choice to believe the impossible, the absurd, and the paradoxical. Conceptually, however, the impossible is for Climacus a necessary category for the transition to true faith. One must undergo an 'ordeal' (p.266) in relation to a faculty of one's humanity.

Although Kant wants always to maintain that acting according to the moral imperative is rationally possible, he does not deny that, without some concept of the eternal (albeit expressed in rational terms) it is less probable.

[182] *CUP*, p.56.
[183] *Ibid.*, p.233.
[184] This will be one of the subjects of chapter six.

That is another way of saying that it is in effect practically impossible to attain that ideal. Climacus is more explicit in this regard: the ethical is, in effect, an impossible 'infinite requirement.' (p.266)[185] Both viewpoints entertain, with different degrees of emphasis, the idea that, without God, human beings are confronted with the impossible. In Kant, what is implied is limited possibility with respect to the task of becoming pleasing to God, but he does not posit it as impossible. At least in theory, living according to the categorical imperative is something that is possible for all rational beings. Climacus asserts that the task of existing in the finite world, and yet 'simultaneously to be eternal' (p.308) is the most difficult task,[186] and 'equally difficult for all.' (p.596) What we can observe in both ways of thinking about our relation to the eternal is an ideal, or, a goal of perfection. Implicit in the idea of such an ideal, however, is that of the impossible. For Climacus, the challenge posed by Christianity is that it provokes one to ask: "Is that kind of ideal of faith possible for me? Is belief in the impossible something that I can follow-through with? Is understanding Christianity something that is possible?"

Anti-Climacus says that man has a dual nature: he is of the world – finite, temporal, mind and body – but also is of the 'infinite…eternal.' (*SUD*, p.13) His treatment of the concept of despair is one of the subjects of chapter six, and in the next chapter we will also see how his thoughts play out in terms of what it means to be a 'self.' However, we can provisionally say that, for him, despair is the state of being in the individual that is the result of either an outright lack of awareness of the eternal and its possibility, or, an imbalance of being with respect to the dual aspects of man, the synthesis of which is 'spirit', and for whom the solution to the problem of despair must include an acknowledgment of God. In one of these states of being[187] there is no acknowledgment of anything other than what can be 'established' (p.14) by human beings themselves, or, one could say, what is finitely possible. The eternal aspect of the self is thus unrealized. Once the eternal aspect has been posited, a relation to some higher

[185] *Ibid.*, p.266.
[186] *CUP*, p.308.
[187] *SUD*, p.13.

eternal consciousness that is responsible for a human coming into being is also posited, without whom the full realization of the eternal part of being human is impossible.

Anti-Climacus says that, in abstract (p.14) and conceptual terms, the fact that man has within his capabilities the 'possibility of this sickness' (p.15) can be viewed as a positive indication of a level of sophistication in the human. If man did not have a dual character, despair would not be possible, because the kind of questions in relation to something more eternal in him would never arise in any human being.[188] But, it is a poisoned chalice. It is not enough in itself to be eternally conscious. That I should actually find myself in a state of despair, as an individual, is an eternally serious matter. Anti-Climacus' view is that an eternal consciousness, and the possibility of being in despair, are human pre-conditions. They are *a priori* possibilities.[189] He goes on to say that a human being's possibilities must necessarily have limitations, but that an imbalance in the direction of possibility is problematic. In this situation, possibilities are not actualized, and the list of possibilities for a person in this state grows and grows, without any follow-through in reality. What is missing is the acknowledgment of 'one's limitations.' (p.36)

One often hears someone described as 'delusional' in relation to what they are capable of. They want to be the case what can never be the case, or, they brood in 'hope/fear or anxiety' (p.37) over something that could never come to pass. What he means is that there are a set of possibilities that are part of our being (necessity). When we devote all of our energy to focusing on possibilities, without any actualization, we are in despair. We should be focusing on what is actually possible for us to achieve. The argument here is, in essence, that we are born pre-disposed to a certain set of possibilities. Positing anything more, or less, is a mistake that puts us in a state of despair. The solution to our ineptitude is, for Anti-Climacus, a grasp of the fact that 'with God everything is possible' (p.38), even the impossible conceived of as that which lacks possibility from our limited perspective. When there is an imbalance in the direction of what is necessarily

[188] *Ibid.*, p.21.
[189] *Ibid.*, p.22.

the case, this is akin to a fatalistic view of one's possibilities. One is resigned to what occurs, or one assumes that the world is predictable and transparent. Anti-Climacus calls this the 'miasma of probability.' (p.41) The panacea for despair cannot be found within the finite realm of finite possibilities, that is to say, 'within the category of the human self, or the self whose criterion is man.' (p.79) It can only be brought about by becoming eternally conscious, and furthermore, conscious of oneself as 'existing before God.' (p.79)[190] This is only a possibility when construed as a possibility 'before God.' (p.83) That is, with God acknowledged as the source of one's eternal possibility.

How might we think of the leap of faith in terms of the possible, the eternal, and the impossible? Although clearly confined to a particular life-view, even the seducer can grasp the fact that a leap is a 'transition' (*E/O*, p.327) in which something 'eternal remains' (p.327), over and above that which is finite and temporal. For Judge William, the leap is the most significant 'moment' (p.509) of all, in which one is conscious of the way in which one lives one's life as having an 'eternal validity.' (p.509) It is a moment of realization in relation to the spiritual significance of a properly motivated life. Abraham believes and is eternally young.[191] The leap places him outside of the temporal and finite. Even when he receives back that world, he is eternally transformed[192], but he is that by virtue of his leap towards believing in the absurd and impossible. His life in relation to God has been, and continues to be, a 'perpetual leap in existence' (*FT*, p.35) in which he is eternally conscious of God's continued promise to him, and believes 'that for God everything is possible.' (p.39) In the leap he confronts what is impossible from the human perspective.[193] Otherwise, there would be no leap to be made. However, Abraham's leap is considered by de Silentio to be the greatest, because it goes beyond that kind of movement of resignation of the world in which one might hope to 'gain the eternal' (p.41) by giving up on the worldly. Abraham's leap – a leap that is a double movement of resignation and

[190] *SUD*, p.79.
[191] *FT*, p.15.
[192] *Ibid.*, p.34.
[193] *Ibid.*, p.40.

faith – secures for him both the eternal *and* the possible (finite/temporal), and all by virtue of the impossible.[194] As the diary writer observes, the religious disposition is one in which the eternal is absorbed 'into temporality's resolution.' (*SLW*, p.322) Abraham believes for *this* life.[195] For Climacus, the temporal moment of Christ is 'filled with the Eternal.' (*PF*, p.22) The leap that the Christian is called to make is one in which the impossibility of the eternal God made finite – what Frater Taciturnus describes as a 'non posse' (*SLW*, p.440) – is to be believed.

In the *Interlude* from *Philosophical Fragments* (*PF*, pp. 89-93), Climacus gives us his view of 'the possible.' (p.89) Essentially, it is one that prioritizes possibility over actuality. He attempts to subvert the metaphysical perspective which prioritizes 'actuality over possibility' (Kearney, 2004, p.929), and which designates God as that which is impossible. From the human perspective – of course, the only possible perspective we have – God's coming into existence, i.e., when the 'possible becomes actual' (*PF*, p.89), can be a cause of offense. That is to say, the idea that God as 'the possible…reveals itself as nothing in the moment it becomes actual.' (p.91) By 'nothing' is meant nothing that defines the God as especially different from any other human. Climacus' narrative points to the idea that our limited view might in some cases yield an interpretation of the Incarnation as a kind of demotion of God's being, having come into existence in human form. Climacus wants to say that the change that occurs in God's coming into existence 'is not a change in essence but in being.' (p.91) Christ comes into being just like any other human. But, God – as possibility – is unchanged; He is 'all that he is able to be.' (Kearney, 2004, p.937) As Climacus puts it: 'such a being [God], is precisely what possibility is…[God's] coming into existence is a transition from possibility to actuality.' (*PF*, p.91) Kearney maintains that the possible is the 'portal to faith' (Kearney, 2004, p.948), through which the idea of God finds focus. Ferreira says that 'it is imagination which…gives us access to 'possibility.' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.85) And so the impossible necessarily arises in our

[194] *Ibid.*, p.41.
[195] *FT*, p.17.

thinking about God. Kierkegaard clearly saw these categories as essential components in his view of faith in God, but in a way that goes beyond the metaphysical reliance upon actuality. His idea of 'eternal consciousness' is the aiming towards a possibility that can neither be verified nor denied outright. And in this respect, Kant is pointing in the same direction as Kierkegaard, even if the expression which 'aims at a transcendent meaning – called God' (Kearney, 2004, p.931) takes on a different form in the respective accounts.

For Kant, (the limits of) reason finds some point of rest in the unverifiable idea of God, whether from the theoretical or practical perspective. Kant offers us one possible meaning of the idea of God, and one that is limited to what can be conceived of as possible from the perspective of reason. There, 'God' is confined to a moral space. It is the God of Kantian reason, and one with essentially only one possible meaning. For Kant, the idea of the impossible essentially only relates to what is impossible in relation to human striving towards moral perfection. And yet, in Kant's moral faith, there is belief that the impossible will somehow occur – that our deficiency will be made good by God, that the highest good will come about. But the impossibility of the story of Abraham, and the idea of Christian resurrection, are a stretch too far for Kant's idea of the impossible. In his view, 'there is no such condition for understanding the "possibility" of Isaac's living…despite the requirement that he also be sacrificed.' (Davenport, 2008, p.886) That kind of faith cannot be made intelligible. In Kant's moral faith, the human is viewed as having a kind of divine potential – the possibility for becoming pleasing to God. Through Christ, God comes closer to us in the form of that which is humanly impossible – the most perfect moral being. In this way, the question: "What may I become?" takes on a new, religious, meaning.

Kierkegaard, who emphasizes individual becoming possibility as the route to faith, can nevertheless be viewed as inheriting something crucial from Kant. That is, the idea that the possibility of our coming closer to God is the kind of 'eschatological banquet' from which 'no one is excluded.' (Kearney, 2004, p.952) But Kierkegaard goes further in emphasizing the impossible. In Kierkegaard's movement of faith, there is tension in relation to thinking the

impossible, which can only find release in resignation to, and then belief in, the possibility of the impossible coming to pass. For him, 'the impossible is an impassioning impetus…the impossible is the passion of decision.' (Caputo, 1997, p.50) In Abraham's moment of decision, the impossible thought is necessary in the encounter with God, and in this way is his 'battle' (p.63) with the impossible event-full. It must be said, however, that in relation to the discourse with respect to actuality versus possibility, Christianity nevertheless presents us with the idea that from Christ's humble beginnings, death, and resurrection – what Kearney describes as divine 'possibilising' (Kearney, 2004, p.940) – comes the ultimate possibility of salvation. That is, from the actuality of Christ being born a man comes the highest of possibilities, even the impossibility of our redemption. But, for Kierkegaard, actuality always has divine possibility as its source. For God, everything is possible, even the impossible. (Mark 10:27) From possibility comes actuality; from actuality comes the impossible.

Chapter Five: Kierkegaard and the Individual – Lower and Higher Expressions of the Self

In the preface to *Either/Or*, Eremita speaks of the 'secret' (*E/O*, p.27) state of an individual, against the notion that the inner being of an individual is directly related to what is outwardly manifest.[196] We come into contact with the other, but what we can never fully grasp is the self of the individual that lies within. He even proposes as possible that the two sets of discovered papers might have had only one author. What we are potentially asked to consider here is as to whether or not it is possible for anyone to live an entirely aesthetic or ethical life. That human beings live 'through both kinds of experience' (p.36) of the world is closer to the truth.[197] Struggling between opposed ways of living in and viewing of the world is constitutive of what it means to be human.

The aesthetic young man desperately seeks after something greater than what he views as the absurdity and superficiality of life, the ridiculousness of 'being busy in the world.' (p.46) There is a longing within him for something more spiritually fulfilling, and yet, his self is an 'enigma' (p.47) even to him. He is searching for some 'higher expression' (p.53) that will give his life meaning, beyond experience and the sensible world, but his doubt prevents him from seeing that something might fulfill that need.[198] He is unlike a Don Giovanni, whom he deems to lack 'reflection and consciousness.' (p.104) He is able to observe the ethical as that reality which adjudicates in terms of sin and guilt. For him, it has a religious dimension.[199] It transcends the aesthetic, in that the details of one's actions are judged rather than the underlying state of the self. It is objective insofar as it is concerned with the individual as belonging to a 'network of relationships.' (p.157) In contrast, he views himself as a subjective individual, but one that is alone to the extent that he is not ethically oriented.

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[196] *E/O*, p.27.
[197] Later on, 'A' echoes this view. He essentially says that Don Giovanni is like a 'stock' character 'who epitomizes the totality.' (*E/O*, p.95) In the real world there is, in contrast, 'the great dialectical unity which embraces life under both aspects.' (ibid.)
[198] *Ibid.*, p.53.
[199] *Ibid.*, p.147.

In *Shadowgraphs*, his characterization of Marie in Don Giovanni also describes him. He is in a state of reflective sorrow, but self-sufficient, in that, he takes refuge in himself alone. Unlike Magrete in Goethe's *Faust*, whose disposition points to one of faith and hope, he is too proud to live with a religious humility because his thinking prevents him from wanting to be confronted with the *salto mortale* posed by a relation to God. Like Faust, he is a 'doubting soul.' (p.200) He is searching for something in life to fill the sense of emptiness that consumes him. He wants to find something that has both a spiritual and a sensual dimension. He wants to find spiritual meaning in the sensual world.[200] But, like Faust, he is cynical with respect to the possibility of attaining that kind of happiness in life, because in the sensual world those kinds of goals are only momentarily possible. His constant effort to amuse himself does not sate his desire for something higher, but he is aware of what is required in order to lift himself out of this state. He knows that the result of wanting always to be stimulated by the immediate, sensible world – what he calls 'enthusiasm's blind and blaring emptiness' (p.231) – is that it 'keeps a person out of the world of spirit.' (p.231)

He can grasp the fact that one can begin to find rest and contentment in the simpler things in life.[201] However this view is tinged with a stoic belief that no one moment is more important than the other.[202] He sees that he ought to be content when he has let go of a particular experience.[203] The downside is that, if nothing is significant, then there is nothing that is special. He is concerned with an inner resilience, in contrast to what he sees as the negative of always wanting to allay boredom by filling one's life with more and more experiences. He pushes this notion of self-resilience a little further in relation to friendship. What he wants to say is that, although friendship plays a role in life, it is one of those facets of life that should be viewed just as stoically.

What we can observe from what he says is that a change in perspective eludes him, even if he has a sense that there is the possibility for something

[200] *Ibid.*, p.200.
[201] *Ibid.*, p.233.
[202] *Ibid.*, p.234.
[203] *Ibid.*, p.235.

higher in order to give his life a meaning that will bring about his happiness. He literally cannot help himself. He is locked into a particular perspective on life. It is ultimately one that is self-centred. He has 'no faith in the game of happiness or the fortune of fools' (p.212), preferring rather to be uplifted by pondering the misfortunes of life. But, there is an honesty to his being, in that, he wants to look these misfortunes in the face as something character-building. Inner-resilience is for him a prized possession. In *The Unhappiest One* he inverts the idea that unhappiness in the world is a negative state. He does not fear death because he believes that it is only in death that happiness comes. That said, these thoughts are not borne out of religious conviction, but out of a sense of being released from the sorrow of the world. Yet, in Kierkegaard's portrayal of the aesthetic young man we are pointed towards an alternative.

The Seducer is the epitome of the aesthetic who (at least from the point of view of the ethical) craves immediate experience, motivated by a skewed view of self-reflection. He is concerned with following through on the goal of 'living poetically' (p.248), but it is absolutely for his own self-gratification. The highest goal for him is what reality can offer him in order to feed his predilection for poetic reflection.[204] He pretends to be a lover, but he is a fraud. His true intentions are 'incognito.' (p.261) The significance of the diary is that not only did he get to enjoy the seduction that took place, but also more importantly, it allows him to reflect upon its details after the fact. He does not dwell upon the deeper consequences of his actions because he believes that, at the end of the day, one's 'soul is a riddle.' (p.272) In this way he lacks true self-consciousness, or, conscience. In his observations of the woman he shows his hand in terms of what he prizes most. That is, reflection, albeit a self-reflection that is limited to what immediate enjoyment has stimulated in him.[205] The kind of inwardness that he holds in high esteem is that which is preoccupied with reflection upon immediate experience. For him, this is the way in which one develops as a person.[206] The ethical is boring to him. It lacks the thrill that enlivens the heart, which ought to be a constituent part of the game of love.

[204] *Ibid.*, p.249.
[205] *Ibid.*, p.273.
[206] *Ibid.*, p.280; 299.

He egotistically believes that he is instilling in his beloved a truer knowledge and experience of love than those who merely go through ethical motions with respect to love. In a perverse way, he believes himself to be bringing about an 'educative influence' (p.327) upon her in the ways of love. The passion that he seeks to awaken in her is, for him, a higher expression of what others only half-experience. His reflection is geared towards a concept of ideal aesthetic love as categorical, energetic, and total, as opposed to 'an indefinite, hazy picture' (p.314) that is but a 'half-measure.' (p.314) He is akin to the ancient God of love who does not himself love, but merely inspires, or, as is the case with this seducer, deceives the other into falling in love. The ethical is too limiting for him. It is a challenge to his poetic, reflective concept of love. He asks: 'What does love fear? Limitation.' (p.374) The only thing that remains after his scheme that is of value to him is the abstract notion of love as 'the eternal…longing…bliss.' (p.376) Perhaps the seducer in the diary is simply an experimental expression by the aesthetic young man who imagines what he himself could be. However, there is an awareness on his part of something as being amiss. He asks: 'What if everything in the world were a misunderstanding, what if laughter were really tears?' (p.44), to which Judge William's response is: 'do you really laugh when you are alone?…whether you find this lonely laughter satisfying?' (pp. 584-585)

Judge William's authoritative response, expressed in the form of a treatise on marriage (but from his own individual experience), is an attempt to argue that marriage is 'precisely the aesthetic expression of love' (p.569) because of its ethical standing. One could rephrase this as saying that the ethical is the medium through which some higher expression is attained. He grasps the fact that whilst A is outwardly one thing, there is also an awareness of self, and a need for something to give his life meaning that has yet to be fully developed.[207] Judge William says that what A lacks 'entirely, is faith.' (p.389) Although there is always a pointing towards the religious stage[208], when he speaks of faith it is not

[207] *Ibid.*, p.384.
[208] *Ibid.*, p.392.

entirely clear whether or not his use of the word faith is just confined to a faith in the validity of the ethical construed in terms of one's role in family and society.[209] His view[210] of the religious dimension of the ethical is a Kantian one. God's nature, and his love for us as unworthy, is 'incomprehensible.' (p.390) It goes beyond 'all understanding.' (p.390) There will always be a struggle against the sensual, but one must always try to keep in mind that the ethical – in this case formulated in terms of love and marriage – is the way in which one relates to something higher. It has 'the stamp of the eternal.' (p.393) Furthermore, at the end of one's life God will judge one's actions, and whether or not one has acted with the correct disposition, which is always a possibility for us.[211] A marriage undertaken out of a sense of expedience only has 'the appearance of being moral.' (p.397) It lacks a sense for the greater ramifications of taking that kind of step.

The crux of the matter, for Judge William, is that Christianity offers the most eternally focused concept of marriage: a religious love, in which 'rational reflection ends.' (p.399) His Kantian take on the Christian ideal is that in which the lovers *refer* their love to God.[212] The message is clear: the ethical is the way in which the self can relate to God. He says that the religious, ethical, and aesthetic, are 'different spheres' (p.413) that are contained within each other, but there is a Kantian sense in which the religious sphere is the one that contains the other two. He subscribes to the idea that the concept of love – more specifically the idea of a one-time-only first love – can be expressed in these different spheres, but that they all resolve to one basic idea in relation to the self. Namely, that of a total 'self-surrender' (p.414) in the ethical (as marriage) that is part of a greater religious framework, viewed ideally.

Judge William argues that love and marriage are aesthetically beautiful precisely because they have an ethical and religious validity.[213] He thinks that

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[209] *Ibid.*, p.389.
[210] In a possible nod towards Kant, he says that he must 'orient' (E/O, p.399) his thinking in order make his case for the validity of marriage: 'The first thing I must do now is orient myself and particularly you in the essential characteristics of marriage.' (*E/O*, p.399)
[211] *Ibid.*, p.390.
[212] *Ibid.*, p.411.
[213] *Ibid.*, p.414.

this view of the aesthetic surpasses the young man's merely sensible and immediate concept of it, but it still a view that is ultimately concerned about what is achievable in finite terms. Marriage is a higher expression of the self that is possible in reality, and higher because it is ethically justified, but that is not to say that it gets as far as an ideal concept of love that 'shows no partiality.' (p.414) The best we can hope for is to be as selfless as possible. He views the proper marriage to be equally ethical (selfless[214]), religious (unreflecting[215]), and aesthetic (beautiful). It is ethical because the individual must consider no other end, other than the end that is love.[216] It is an ideal to be lived out from the individual perspective, but it is an ideal, and therefore has the universal in mind. He writes: 'The more the singular and the universal permeate each other, the more beautiful the love. The great thing is not to be the singular…but in the singular to possess the universal.' (pp.428-429)

His thinking in relation to the self clearly displays a Kantian influence, in that there is an emphasis upon having a singular *telos* (love) as one's motivation.[217] However, that *telos* cannot be given rational expression. It cannot be shown why it ought to be the ground for one's decision to marry, but he is clear in his assertion that a purpose behind marriage other than love would make the venture 'immoral.' (p.416) Whilst he thinks like Kant in relation to our shared striving towards God, our ultimate lack of knowledge with respect to the divine, and a religious positing of God's grace as aiding us, he emphasizes the individual 'process of becoming' (p.438) of the self that is effected by an ideal[218], such as marriage is. Marriage is an 'external expression' (p.471) of one's relation to God, in whose providence one trusts.[219] However, Judge William goes beyond Kant in being more expressive with respect to the self. If there are struggles, then, they are internal ones, or, 'inward specifications' (p.463), through which one develops as a person.[220] But that is not to say that they are not practiced or

[214] *Ibid.*, p.418.
[215] *Ibid.*, p.428.
[216] *Ibid.*, p.420.
[217] *Ibid.*, p.470.
[218] *Ibid.*, p.452.
[219] *Ibid.*, p.471.
[220] *Ibid.*, p.463; 467.

realized in one's day-to-day activities. As such, what Judge William is essentially saying is that it is through the ethical (marriage) that one is edified. He responds to A's claim that the repetitious humdrum of marriage[221] represents the death of the individual self. He sees the young man's life-view as driven by superficiality, and by a need for constant stimulation and unrest in order to feel alive. He contends that there is a higher expression of self that is possible, and that it is one in which the individual can find depth and contentment.[222] It is 'the true joy of being ordinary[223]' (p.572), rather the 'vain joy of being uncommon.' (p.572)

However, there is a requirement of the self that is an integral part of this kind of becoming, and that is the activity of disclosure. If happiness and contentment is what one seeks, then, for Judge William, this is attainable in marriage as the ethical. In the ethical, one cannot remain hidden to the other.[224] The hiddenness that the young man seems to prize so much is to Judge William merely a deception: a childish game of 'hide-and-seek' (p.479) that leads nowhere. It is possible that, in constantly adjusting oneself in order to manipulate situations for one's own temporary amusement, one might never come to know one's true self fully. A higher expression of the self is possible when one realizes that the immediate world can only offer so much. This is the moment in which the person comes to an understanding of himself or herself in terms of spirit, and not just as a finite and temporal being.[225] Knowing oneself in this way is, for Judge William, both the 'goal' (p.549) and the 'beginning.' (p.549) It is the essential starting point for an ethical life in which the universal ideal is only realized in choosing and acting, but it is an ideal that the individual can discover, i.e., it is inwardly coherent to the self. The young man fears being subsumed into the universal ethical because, as an aesthetic individual, he prizes his life as being 'based on difference.' (p.526) But the point that Judge William attempts to make to him is that what really counts is the kind of inward change within the context of the ethical that leads to a contentment not attainable in

[221] *Ibid.*, p.466.
[222] *Ibid.*, pp. 466-467.
[223] *Ibid.*, p.586.
[224] *Ibid.*, p.480; 582.
[225] *Ibid.*, p.499; 509.

the aesthetic alone.[226] He identifies such a failure to reach this level of self-awareness as the source of the young man's 'melancholy.' (p.499) But, on the upside, his melancholy is a sign of an evolving self.

In the closing sections of his response to the young man he cites the example of his friend, the priest in Jutland. His characterization of him leads us to consider that there is a yet higher expression of the self that is possible, namely, the religious stage. What is notable is that he is described as essentially having an outward character that belies a more 'serious soul' (p.593) within.[227] It is as though we have returned to both the young man's question about laughter, and to Eremita's sentiment at the opening of the work. That is, to the idea of a secret self in contradiction with what the world sees. In the case of the priest, laughter too is a mask for a deeper inner disposition, but not one of sorrow. His is one of humility, obedience, trust, and openness to God. It is one of faith, through which restlessness and anxiety can be resolved.[228] As soon as we hear the words of the priest's sermon, some of his inner self becomes disclosed to us. This we can interpret as a reiteration of the idea that it is through the ethical that the self can hope to reach its highest expression in the religious. The thought that edifies is that we can never reach, but only ever strive for 'perfection.' (p.600) In this respect, the self can be said to have a moral vocation.[229] The transition to the religious is one that must include the ethical project for the self of overcoming self-love[230] and love of the worldly.[231]

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[226] *Ibid.*, p.527.
[227] *Ibid.*, p.593.
[228] *Ibid.*, p.597.
[229] *Ibid.*, p.602.
[230] And so, it seems that, for the Judge, unconditional love extends only as far as the idea that the beloved – as a gift from God – is to be loved unconditionally. He has not reached the fully religious stage in this regard. Again, the Judge seems to be pointing in the direction, but not quite fully reaching a fully formed expression, of Christian love in which *eros* is absolutely transformed into *agape*. He does not love every other equally, even if he loves his beloved unconditionally. However, if Christianity does not posit an annihilation of self to the point of loving the other 'more than oneself' (*WL*, p.18) or 'more than God' (p.19), then the Judge's concern for marriage as a way of coming into a relation to God seems to be a legitimate form of self-love. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard wants to interpret erotic and agapic love in such a way as to bring the former closer to the latter. The Judge seems to be making the requisite kind of transformation from *eros* to *agape* that Kierkegaard describes. The latter writes: 'if there is one other person whom you in the Christian sense love as yourself or in whom you love the neighbor, then you love all people.' (p.21)
[231] *E/O*, p.606.

De Silentio wants us to consider Abraham as the exemplary father of faith who renounced his ethical self, the world, family, and the immanent, in order to become a religious one. He does not do this *through* the ethical, but by transcending it. He cannot be considered as a tragic hero, because that kind of description belongs to the ethical realm. For de Silentio, Abraham is that self who is 'greater than everybody' (*FT*, p.13) because his love of, and faith in, God as being able to bring about the impossible, transcends all else. The aesthetic realm has its tragic heroes who can be deemed to be great. In the ethical, one can achieve a certain type of greatness by being as selfless as possible. But de Silentio wants to say there is an expression of the self that is yet higher.[232] It is one in which one must relinquish those assets that most human beings cling to so dearly: power and control over life, self-reliance, and knowledge, earthly hope and love.[233] It is a giving up of the immanent self in order to become a self who is entirely in God's hands.

As we have seen in chapter three, resignation is viewed as a crucial step towards true faith. In the context of this chapter, what we see is a view of the self in which its highest expression comes about when the lower stages, i.e., that of the aesthetic and the ethical, have been passed over. That is Abraham's 'trampoline leap' (p.30), in which he 'pass[es] over into infinity.' (p.30) His trial – the struggle with the ethical – highlights the need for the self to be passionately[234] engaged in order to make the movement of faith. In other words, faith cannot be lazily acquired, and it cannot be properly made from a merely rational and intellectual perspective, or, from a perspective in which the immediate is the only yardstick by which the self is to be understood. Becoming a religious self is something that de Silentio thinks is within our capabilities, no matter how difficult the task.[235] For Abraham, it was a lifetime task for the self – 'the highest' (p.27) expression of which the self is capable. His individuality is defined not by his relation to the world, and then to God, but by his relation to

[232] *FT*, p.13.
[233] *FT*, p.14.
[234] *Ibid.*, p.19.
[235] *Ibid.*, p.59.

God first and foremost. Abraham cannot achieve the highest expression of self with only the ethical as his *telos*. The self has a far higher destiny available to it, but it comes at a price.

The broader message is clear in de Silentio's treatment of the story of Abraham: the idea of the individual self, and the real challenge that faith poses to that individual, are a more honest way in which we ought to speak of faith, even if it comes into conflict with our rational thinking. There is more to being a self than that which can be conceived of within aesthetic and ethical categories. In his leap of faith, Abraham is a self who is in a subjective dialectical relation to God. He has untethered himself from an objective dialectical relationship with the world, which is essentially what the ethical relation is. Abraham's action is performed in isolation. As de Silentio says, he 'has simply and solely himself.' (p.69) He has all the qualities of the single individual who is tormented by choice, freedom, anxiety, thinking, the ethical, sorrow, despair, and the ultimate loneliness that is his lot in going through the test posed by God. It is a test of his belief that, as an individual before God, cannot be expressed in language to the other. In this respect, his subjective individuality is closer to the aesthetic. The crucial difference is the transcending of, or passing through the ethical, via the trial, in order to become the subjective religious self. To put it simply, he is a self that is defined as more and by more than merely that which pertains to the temporal[236] and finite-eternal. His individuality, which is defined by his faith, is in a higher expression[237] of what it means to be a self than that which is posited by the ethical universal. He exists in that which de Silentio deems to be the 'highest passion' (p.108) possible for an individual self. Namely, faith.

In *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus points to a knowledge that surpasses what is purported to be the easily understood, the rational, or - echoing de Silentio[238] - the 'ease and security' (*PF*, p.6) of living one's life in such a way that it is defined by the ethical.[239] What Climacus points to is the

[236] *Ibid.*, p.71.
[237] *Ibid.*, p.47.
[238] *Ibid.*, p.66.
[239] *PF*, p.6.

possibility for a higher expression of the self that has as its focus 'the realm of spirit.' (p.6) More broadly interpreted, it is possible for an individual (like Climacus) to set himself apart from the herd, and to give expression to his life through something more than the ethical. It is a private undertaking in which one is willing to take a personal risk in entertaining the kind of thought that might well annihilate something that is of value to every person: one's reason.[240] However, it is the kind of thinking towards which an individual might inevitably be drawn. Namely, a consideration of the self in relation to death[241] and the question of something unknown that transcends this world. In other words, thinking that is fuelled by a consciousness of the eternal.

We could rephrase his opening question as really asking: 'How far can *I* get with respect to knowledge of the Truth?' If I define both my self, and my relation to God, purely in terms of what can be known, then Christianity will most certainly be a challenge to that view of my self and God, and the relation between the two. In other words, there will be a disjunction between my faculty of reason and that which is also a human pre-condition or capacity, i.e., the essential 'condition for understanding the Truth' (pp.18-19) of Christianity – 'this passion: *Faith*.' (p.73) He does not want to undermine the Socratic belief that the highest expression of the truth within the confines of the finite and rational world is marvelous to behold. Indeed, it can bring about much good in the world, and can enhance the lives of every human being. But he also wants to go back to Socrates in order to move away from a purely systematic view of the human, reclaiming a view of the self as that of the individual in relation to the other.[242] The most appropriate way to relate to Christian truth is as a whole self, rather than as a self conceived in purely systematic terms. He interprets Socrates in such a way as to use him as a starting point, but also in order to go beyond him.

In the Socratic view, the individual is in a process of acquiring self-knowledge with the aid of an other. In acquiring self-knowledge one obtains 'knowledge of God' (p.14) and thereby comes into a relation with the eternal.[243]

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[240] *Ibid.*, p.6.
[241] *Ibid.*, p.6.
[242] *Ibid.*, p.12; 13.
[243] *Ibid.*, p.29.

This is a kind of two-step manoeuvre for the self. However, it is one that is confined to the finite, and therefore the individual is posited as a self in finite terms who happens to come into a relation to God in the process. The problem with that view of the self and its capacities is that, when it comes to Christian truth, the Socratic idea of self-knowledge as a route to knowing God runs aground. In other words, one cannot arrive at the truth of Christianity as a self-contained, self-sufficient, rationally oriented, self. Not only that, but one cannot even will oneself into that kind of knowledge.[244] It requires a higher expression of the self in which what is normally conceived of as self-development through knowledge acquisition must be set aside. Climacus goes back to Socrates in order to say that what is required is a humble acceptance of one's ignorance with respect to the truth of Christianity. Acquiring it cannot come from within the self. It can only be given by God. What is given is the ability to become self-consciousness of the sin of being a self that is in exile from the truth.[245] It is a truth that only Christianity can provide – an eternal truth about one's eternal happiness. In becoming wholly self-conscious of this, Climacus says that the self undergoes a qualitative change. The person 'becomes another man…a man of different quality, or as we may call him: *a new creature*.' (pp.22-23) The self undergoes a rebirth, or, what he calls a 'New Birth.' (p.23) He emphasizes that this transition is an absolutely personal one in which the self comes to a realization that Christ is the only source of this change.[246]

Vigilius is concerned for the individual as a sovereign[247], free, autonomous, and responsible self, whose primary goal is the task of 'taking care of himself.' (*COA*, p.7) That is not to say, selfishness, but rather a development of self towards an ideal goal of perfection. The broader point is that each individual faces the same essential questions regarding the human condition, regardless of history and tradition. The primary focus of his account of anxiety is a concern for the way in which it is related to the issue of sin. However, he wants

[244] *Ibid.*, p.19.
[245] *Ibid.*, p.23.
[246] *Ibid.*, p.24.
[247] *COA*, p.8.

ultimately to say that sin is only of true concern for an individual self from the perspective of the religious, rather that of aesthetics, metaphysics, psychology, and ethics. What is implied is that a religious view of the self surpasses these perspectives.

In the religious view of sin, there is something crucial at stake for the self. Sin can indeed be characterized in aesthetic terms: underplayed in the comic; overplayed in terms of the dramatic hero. Metaphysical and psychological appropriations of sin are confined essentially to an objective viewing from 'the outside' in conceptual and observational modes respectively. But what Vigilius wants to emphasize is that the religious view of sin is the only legitimate one, because it properly posits the struggling individual who is free, and by virtue of that freedom, as utterly responsible for their actions. It is a courageous and continual task for the self[248] who is striving towards the religious ideal. The mistake of characterizing, contextualizing, observing, and assessing sin in aesthetic, metaphysical, or psychological terms, is that of trying to capture it. But the concept of sin cannot be neatly categorized through a universal understanding. It is solely a concern for the self viewed in religious terms.[249] This view is a more honest one, in that, its 'earnestness' (p.15) derives from its recognition of the whole self, and not just certain aspects of what it means to be a living human being.

An ethical take on sin seems to come close. Vigilius uses the word 'selfishness' (p.77) as a translation of that which Kant sees as getting in the way of purely ethical behavior.[250] In the latter's terms, sin is conceived of in terms of transgression against the moral law. However, Vigilius denies that it can find a firm footing. He says that ethics purports 'to bring ideality into actuality.' (p.16) Notwithstanding the fact that it posits ethical perfection as a possibility[251], it is in reality an impossible, practically unrealizable task. It therefore lacks the requisite earnestness in relation to sin as a real concern for the whole, and not just the ethically conceived, self. With a fixed notion of sin as a religious

[248] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[249] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[250] *Ibid.*, p.77.
[251] *Ibid.*, p.16.

category, he contends that if ethics attempts to include the concept of sin in its system, it must also permit the idea of 'repentance' (p.17), and in doing so, it loses its essential ideality. The introduction of the idea of sin into the system of ethics is its own downfall, because sin is a 'category that lies entirely beyond its reach.' (p.19) This 'beyond' is that realm which transcends the ethical, and in which the concept of sin as it relates to the subjective self can be spoken of without recourse to a rational construct. Vigilius is clear in relation to the insufficiency the ethical in this regard, because, as he sees it, it does not posit the self correctly. There is a higher expression of the self that must first be acknowledged if one is to be in a position to talk about sin.[252] It is beyond a systematic interpretation, because the fall into sin is an 'individual' (p.37) loss of innocence. It concerns 'me', where the 'I' is understood as a synthesis of mind, body, and spirit. In this ideal, one rises, as it were, out of a merely finite awareness of self, to a level in which one grasps – through a religious understanding of one's sin – that one has a spiritual dimension. The Christian ideal is one in which this dimension of the self is an absolutely necessary component. One cannot truly express one's self as Christian if one is spiritless.[253]

He asserts, however, that every person contains the potential for becoming a truly religious self[254], and that the task is to figure out how to become a self who embraces all aspects of what it means to be such a self.[255] For him, only faith can resolve the issue of sin, and so, fulfilling selfhood can only reach its highest expression in faith, and more specifically, in the Christian faith. There is no fooling God when it comes to the earnestness required of the self.[256] One has not even got off the starting block when there is intellectual laziness, denial, and lack of personal conviction in relation to the self.[257] What counts is the earnestness of that secret part of the self that cannot be appropriated in the outward, and which is related to the eternal[258] in a way that surpasses other

[252] *Ibid.*, p.78.
[253] *Ibid.*, p.95.
[254] *Ibid.*, p.105.
[255] *Ibid.*, p.105.
[256] *COA*, pp. 211-212.
[257] *Ibid.*, p.138.
[258] *Ibid.*, p.151.

assessments of the eternal in man.[259] This is a 'soundness of…spirit.' (p.150) For Vigilius, it is only in terms of the religious, i.e., faith, that one can legitimately speak of anxiety over sin, and hence, of the self in its highest expression.

Upon mature recollection, as it were, William Afham (in his preface to 'In Vino Veritas' in *Stages*) says that, as far as the rest of the world is concerned, there is a self that remains 'hidden and secret, solitary, and thus immune to any profane knowledge.' (*SLW*, p.12) That is, there is a spiritual dimension to every human being that is inaccessible to others. He drives home the idea of recollection as a self-awareness and reflective power of the individual. In light of the title – *In Vino Veritas* – we can interpret him as saying that one can *distill* a truth that is essential to and for oneself. As he writes: 'The wine press of recollection…everyone must tread alone…Inasmuch as one is always alone with recollection, every recollection is a secret.' (p.14) William's assessment of the aesthetic young man is that he is the kind of individual who is self-sufficient, for whom life is a project of self-discovery, self-actualization, and self-governing. He seeks refuge in his thinking, and detaches himself from the external world.[260] In contrast, he sees Johannes the Seducer as merely interested in the titillating experience of possibility. However, we must remember that, as a character who is representative of the ethical view, he is as such judging the external in order to say something about the subjects of his observations. In this respect, and from his own perspective, he contradicts the idea that the inner self can be known by an other. But, at the same time, and from our perspective, he confirms that, in speaking, something of the self is disclosed to us, not least his own.

We now move to the speeches in *Stages on Life's Way*. What 'self' is revealed by each of the speakers? For the young man, the ideality of love of another person is 'ludicrous' (p.32) and 'comic.' (p.34) An intellectual perspective posits a contradiction: love as the sacrifice of self-love. It is not that the young man cannot appreciate beauty, nor be moved by the poetic. It is that his intellect – what thought can lay hold of for itself – is his most prized asset.

[259] He discusses the 'eternal in man' (*COA*, p.153), and the differing ideas in relation to it: (a) denial (b) abstraction/temporality (c) temporality/imagination, and (d) the metaphysical.
[260] *SLW*, p.21.

He is faithful to his thought first and foremost. Eremita is a self who is interested in love from an abstract perspective, that is, as an intellectual ideal. For him, the ideal loses its ability to inspire when it is finitized in a concrete act of union. He has a self that uses the ideal as a motivation to strive, but never to fulfill in reality.[261] To that extent, the ideal thought of loving another is merely a means to a perpetually unfulfilled end. This characterization of self is one which points towards a consciousness of something eternally out of reach, but it is not the kind of eternal consciousness that is a relation to God. He is a self who can grasp the *idea* of spirit as a consciousness of the eternal, but he is ultimately confined by a finite-eternal view. He holds to the view that 'spirit cannot be expressed immediately.' (p.65) It is beyond the grasp of the self. It is thinkable, but not actualizable. To the Fashion Designer, superficiality, sensuousness, frivolity, and the outward display, are the only things that are sacred to the self.[262] The Seducer is disposed in the same direction. His injunction is: "Enjoy your self"[263], and do so at the cost of another as many times as is possible. He is an ethically reprehensible self, who is utterly self-absorbed in the most negative sense.

Judge William's manuscript reveals a self that believes in marital love as a concrete expression of the ethical that has an eternal religious significance. He calls this the 'divine element in marriage.' (p.91) For him, faith in marriage is analogous to faith in God.[264] It is through the worldly, that is, the ethical, that the self expresses itself in faith. Hence we might say that it is a finite-eternal faith. It requires some leap beyond reason, evaluation, and calculation, but those elements must come first. That is to say, it cannot be so easily undertaken in a purely categorical and systematic way, notwithstanding the need for clear, reasoned, and ethically considered thinking. In his account, it is only in this way that a man (in the specific sense) achieves authentic selfhood[265], because he equates authenticity with an ethically grounded spiritual relation to God. It is

[261] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
[262] *Ibid.*, p.71.
[263] *Ibid.*, p.73.
[264] *Ibid.*, p.91.
[265] *Ibid.*, p.93.

only in this way that a 'higher expression' (p.100) of the self is achieved.[266] God, and our relation to him, is posited as spirit, but it is concretized through duty, which he believes to be played out in a real way in marital love. Being this kind of self surpasses that of both an Eremita (who views love as an unattainable ideal), and a Seducer (who merely treats love as capricious enjoyment)[267], in that, the 'right' kind of thinking is being employed.[268] Judge William believes that the self finds fulfillment in realizing the ideal goal, in that it gives concrete expression to the self as both temporal and eternal.[269] Through the union with another the self thus becomes unified, and this is in turn a union with God.

Quidam is a self poised on a precipice. As he sees it, the conflicting choice is between a life of marital love and that of living as a single religious individual. Through the symbolism of Frater Taciturnus' account of the discovery of Quidam's manuscript, and in the words of the latter, we are presented with the idea of a self that has an exceptional inner depth. The allegorical description of the deep and 'inclosed' (p.187) lake (which I think represents both faith and the single individual), in which the sealed box containing the diary is found, prompts us to consider that faith ought to be

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[266] *Ibid.*, p.100.
[267] *Ibid.*, p.102.
[268] But is it clear that all of the pseudonyms send a consistent message in their respective accounts of love? Kierkegaard is certainly not unambiguous in this regard. We receive mixed-messages, but this should be no surprise to us. In the way that love is characterized by the aesthetic young man - and indeed by Quidam - love ought to have a subjectively oriented passionate character. Given that faith, too, is characterized by both Climacus and de Silentio as passionate, and that the Judge sees love as the way of coming into a relation with God, it is difficult to make sense of the latter's more sober view of love as duty, which he himself characterizes as beautiful 'monotony.' (*E/O*, p.455) The kind of passion that is required for both love and faith are missing in the Judge's account. However, perhaps this is precisely Kierkegaard's point. Only in the Christian view of love does love become clearest to us. *Becoming* a Christian takes passion. It involves the need for, e.g., passionate reason. But, sustaining the life-view that is faith has a different character. If love of the other is to endure – that is to say, if it is to have the kind of eternal significance that it has for the Judge – then it must be constant, reliable, and built upon agapic 'fidelity or friendship to each other' (*WL*, p.29), rather than upon erotic passion. Like the distinction between the 'setting aside' of reason, or the ethical becoming 'relative', that is not to say that erotic love and preferential friendship have no value. Rather, Christianity *dethrones* – rather than annihilates – 'erotic love and friendship…the love based on drives and inclinations, preferential love, in order to place the spirit's love in its stead, love for the neighbor.' (p.44)
[269] *SLW*, p.112.

understood from the perspective of the solitary individual self[270], rather than that of the ethical, organized religion[271], or any abstract interpretation by reason. Otherwise, one will struggle to appreciate faith as a concerned task for the self.[272] Frater Taciturnus says that 'metaphysical…abstraction' (p.476) only 'exists' insofar as it is played out in actually existing. Contra the broader (Hegelian) 'idea of being finished' (p.463), the individual self, as imperfect and striving, is the thorn in the side of any system that posits finality independently of the lived experience of faith. Ultimately, it is the self that is confronted with the choice in relation to becoming a Christian: believe, or deny.[273] On the surface, it only seems that faith is an easy task. But, the movement of faith is far from that. In it, I am 'out of my depth', and yet it offers the self the possibility of coming to rest in faith.[274] In order for the self to reach the highest expression of religious faith the ethical goods of life must first be resigned. In the case of Quidam, it is the promise of happiness that both marital love and the religious life offer that is the source of his struggle. He is a self in conflict. In order for religious salvation to occur, the self must die to the world.[275]

In his own words, Quidam contemplates the choice before him with 'religious presuppositions.' (p.195) However, he is not yet, but only the possibility of, a 'religious individuality.' (p.257) He is close to that ideal, but cannot make it over the threshold of faith entirely. He is at the cusp of such a movement. His thinking keeps him suspended in the despair that results from wanting so desperately to follow-through on love, but that also wants to bypass earthly duty and earthly love in order to come into a relation to God. Although they awaken his religious consciousness[276], he cannot make the same movement as the 'religious prototypes.' (p.258) He is a deep thinker, who, instead of allowing himself to make the leap into marriage, consciously chooses 'the religious' (p.222) as his goal. He recognizes that a relation between the self and

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[270] *Ibid.*, p.463.
[271] *Ibid.*, p.187.
[272] *Ibid.*, pp. 492-493.
[273] Echoing Peter's denial of Christ, Taciturnus communicates indirectly, writing of 'a bittern, that secret voice in the solitude, [that] repeats its cry three times.' (*SLW*, p.188)
[274] *Ibid.*, p.188.
[275] '*Periissem nisi periissem.* [I would have perished had I not perished].' (*SLW*, p.194)
[276] *Ibid.*, p.439.

God can be posited in terms of an ethico-religious duty, but, for him, that does not go far enough. He is willing to risk moving beyond the security of a universal and rational account of love and happiness, to a belief in self-fulfillment through a personal and devoted relation to God. There are no guarantees that his beloved is the 'right' one, and he cannot see how it is possible to devote himself fully to both her and God at the same time. For him, there is an expression of faith available to the self that surpasses the ethical.[277] In this regard, he does not want to settle for second best. The struggle he experiences is 'with God and [himself].' (p.201)

Essentially, what he fears is the loss of self that is implied in marital love conceived in terms of ethical duty. He views the self as sacrosanct, and the ethical as a threat to its religious possibility, because he believes that the whole self must be disclosed in the ethical. The irony is, however, that his thinking is in itself indicative of an ethical decision. That is, he cannot escape the fact that he is a self who is considering the ethical implications of marrying for the wrong reason. He thinks it *wrong* for him to enter into marriage when he does not believe that it is the highest expression of faith available to him. His honesty prevents him from taking the safe and easy[278] route to God's favour. He considers his beloved in a selfless way. For him, God approves of this kind of selfless relation to an other[279], but he believes that 'purely ethical-religious obligations, abstractly understood' (p.230) are ultimately a humanly engineered[280] and insufficient path to faith. He is outwardly ethical, but he is guided by an ascetic religious inner existence. The self alone in relation to God must ultimately take priority, and it is only in a personal way that the self can be said to communicate with God.[281] That is, through self-awareness, self-questioning, self-searching, and self-consciousness. As he writes: 'the religious crises are *my* task.' (p.261) [emphasis mine]

[277] *Ibid.*, p.357.
[278] *Ibid.*, p.260.
[279] *Ibid.*, p.230.
[280] *Ibid.*, p.231.
[281] *Ibid.*, p.316.

However, he is a self with a disposition that stops short of a faith in which thinking is left behind. His goal is always '*in mente*.' (p.342) The religious goal he can understand. It is that highest expression of the self, and not the self expressed in worldly terms, that gives his life meaning.[282] For him, 'it is spirit that gives life.' (p.396) Or, to put it as Frater Taciturnus does, the religious is, for the self, the 'sphere of fulfillment.' (p.476) However, the latter is critical of any attempt to abstract oneself out of existence. Perhaps Quidam is guilty of this, in that he fails to fully acknowledge 'the claim life has…upon his human *you*.' (p.483n) Perhaps his is a lopsided view? – a one-sided religious sophism that points in the direction of the religious[283], but one that fails to appreciate the task for the self as that of a perpetual becoming, rather than the reaching of an ideal.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus wants to say that a reason-derived knowledge of the world and the self can only ever be fragmentary.[284] From a systematic perspective, the individual self is, as it were, 'crumbs' to that system. However, he asserts that it is this only apparently 'insignificant traveler' (*CUP*, p.5) – that is, the single individual self – that has significance in relation to a truth that can never be fully appreciated by that which seeks to universalize. There is a higher expression of self which goes beyond what is normally regarded as coming under the ethical categories of obligation and the 'permissible.' (p.6) He does not deny that it is possible to attempt to relate to Christianity in such an objective way. For him, however, this higher expression can only be achieved subjectively. That is to say, only when the self is passionately engaged with, and conscious of, Christianity as that which offers the individual eternal happiness.[285] This personal relation to God is one in which the natural inclination towards seeking something concrete[286] in attempting to understand Christianity in terms of a purely historical, factual, and/or ethical way, must be set aside. It is only in this way that faith can reach

[282] *Ibid.*, p.365.
[283] *Ibid.*, p.485.
[284] Referring to a quote by Plato, Climacus says, 'it is the scrapings and shavings of argument, cut up into little bits.' *(CUP*, p.3)
[285] *CUP*, p.21.
[286] *Ibid.*, p.35n.

its highest expression in the individual.[287]

Rather than seeking objective truth, it ought to be a question for the self: "What does this truth mean for *me*, and how am *I* to appropriate it?" Relating to Christianity as a passionately concerned subjective self is a 'truer' (p.56), and therefore, 'higher' (ibid.) expression of what it means to be human. In other words, it is a more authentic expression of the self, as opposed to a view of the human as a 'fictive objective subject.' (p.81) He says that it is the task of the subjective individual to 'clearly and definitely express in existence the essentially human.' (p.356) The process in which the self is involved is that of 'becoming.' (p.73) We can see why 'infinite interest' (p.16) is one of the descriptors he uses in relation to the activity of the subjective self when engaging with Christian truth. In it, the self is perpetually[288] in a state of becoming. This process is happening 'as long as one is existing.' (p.92) However, this kind of striving is not goal-oriented, in that, the focus is on the process, and not on some impossible final moment in which one becomes God. He writes: 'the *way* is the truth, that is, that the truth is only in the *becoming*, in the *process* of appropriation.' (p.78) [emphasis mine]

The ideal for the religious self is one in which the individual is wholly invested in lived, temporal and sensible experience, and in the experience of eternal consciousness as faith in Christ.[289] Climacus writes: 'To have his daily life in the decisive dialectic of the infinite and yet go on living – that is the art.' (p.86n) That would be to live in such a way that one's finite and temporal life were perpetually infused with an eternal consciousness, and not just, as Climacus says, where the latter manifested on special occasions. However, there is a deeper message here too: that a concept of the self that attempts to abstract away from what a single, individual, human being in its wholeness actually is, is a confusion and dishonest arrogance.[290] An inevitable part of this wholeness is that place where the individual intersects with the world and people around him. That is, the ethical. Climacus does not want to deny that the ethical is a crucial

[287] *Ibid.*, p.27.
[288] *Ibid.*, p.86.
[289] *Ibid.*, p.308.
[290] *Ibid.*, p.124; 493.

part of what it means to be a self. From what we have seen in chapter three, he thinks like Kant does with respect to the ethical. It is in the 'theatre'[291](p.157) of the ethical that one can concretely come into a relation with God. It is through the ethical that one nourishes one's 'eternal life' (p.154), or, as he says, one's possibility-relationship with God.' (p.156) At best, however, the ethical is a posited but ultimately uncertain route to God's favour. There are no guarantees. This is why he stresses the idea of 'becoming' a self, rather than that of a final goal, because, in the context of knowledge (the ethical), a relation of the self to God can only ever be indefinite.[292] However, there is for him something more to being a self than the objective relation, namely, the inwardness of subjectivity in which the individual becomes 'immersed in himself and in his relationship with God.' (p.144) This, I think, is what is meant by a 'personal' relation with God, or Christ as one's 'personal' saviour.

Climacus' is an existentialist view of Christianity. For him, the person who is engaged in the act of reflecting upon his or her own subjectivity finds truth in doing that. That is to say, the whole point is to 'immerse oneself...in subjectivity.' (p.193) Climacus is not talking about empirical truth, or even idealistic truth, but simply about what the subjective individual *qua* subjective individual who is of real concern to their own self can say is true specifically for and from that perspective. This of course is essential if any human being is ever to maintain a belief (faith) in something that is beyond finite proof, such as Christianity. It is not the desire to confirm facts, but the deep-seated need of every existing individual to answer a question such as: 'What does this mean for *me*?"[293] It is impossible to be absolutely objective as a thinker when one is engaging with the questions that preoccupy living human beings like 'you and me.' (p.350) The passion[294] of faith is underscored by the idea that the individual is only ultimately capable of relating to the divine when the subjective self is engaged in a becoming. This is a transcending of the merely 'ethical and ethical-religious...essential knowing...of the knower.' (p.198) For the religious self, faith

[291] *Ibid.*, p.157.
[292] *Ibid.*, p.177.
[293] *Ibid.*, p.193; 269; 350; 351.
[294] *Ibid.*, p.200.

goes beyond knowledge. There is, for Kierkegaard, a higher truth being expressed, and striven towards, by the religious self, and that is the truth of Christianity. As he says in the Appendix, 'Only the truth that *builds up* is truth for *you*.' (p.252) It is in this context – that of the subjective self in a higher relation to God – that the word 'truth' ought to be understood. That is, 'subjectivity, inwardness, is truth.' (p.209)

That there is something higher for every self to strive for is immediately present to us in Anti-Climacus' title – 'for Upbuilding and Awakening.' (*SUD*, p.1) The subject of despair as it relates to the self will be dealt with in the next chapter, and although it is almost impossible to entirely separate out his discussion of self from that of despair, we can at least attempt to focus on the former for the purposes of this chapter.

The presupposition that Anti-Climacus makes, is that becoming a Christian – in the most properly balanced way – is *the* highest expression of self that is possible. Furthermore, we should also note from the outset, that Anti-Climacus – as a pseudonym – is representative of such a self, and so what he says of the self comes from (an imagined) first-hand experience. His message is for the individual, and his prefatory remarks are clear regarding the context in which the task of becoming a Christian must be thought: 'It is Christian heroism…to venture wholly to become oneself, an individual human being, alone before God, alone in this prodigious strenuousness and this prodigious responsibility; but it is not Christian heroism to be taken in by the idea of man in the abstract.' (p.5) In other words, "Be the best self you can be, by living as a Christian, always acknowledging that you are ultimately a self before God." For him, this highest expression is achieved by the whole person. That is, by a self that self-acknowledges its temporal, eternal, and spiritual being fully. This kind of '[e]arnestness' (p.6) is a prerequisite for the endeavour. Logically speaking, therefore, anything short of the ideal is a lower expression of self. It is with this in mind that Anti-Climacus gives us an account of the ways in which the self can be thought of as being in despair: from a self that is absolutely oblivious to that fact, to a self who actively dismisses Christianity as untrue. In order to talk about a self 'in despair', we should first look at what he understands by a 'self.'

Although he believes that the self is dual in nature – that is to say, of the world (temporal, finite, mind and body), but also 'infinite…eternal…necessary' (p.13) – one is only truly a 'self' when one is *aware of* and actively *engaged in* the relating of the dual aspects of being. This activity is indicative of 'spirit.' Hence, a whole self is mind, body, and spirit. It is only with this kind of consciousness of self that one can then begin to speak of acknowledging a higher spiritual source of self, i.e., God. In contrast, the self might exist, but only with limited consciousness, insofar as what little thinking is present is merely a reaction to what is sensed in experience. If the self thinks of itself as being merely finite - as 'only as psychical-physical synthesis' (p.25) – then a consideration of God as eternal doesn't even arise. In this state, consciousness of self only extends as far as reliance upon 'sensate categories.' (p.43) The individual is said to be unconscious of their self 'as spirit.' (p.44) The aesthete revels in experience and enjoyment for experience's sake, where beauty and truth are only conceived of in terms of the sensual world. As such, their self is just another *thing* that is part of the fabric of time and space. This kind of person is concerned with 'externalities.' (p.53) One might even get as far as understanding one's self as having an eternal component. However, if this understanding is limited to a merely temporal definition, in which, for example, one might strive to be 'remembered for eternity', or one might think of one's self as having a certain 'continuity over time' (something essential that lasts as long as one is living), then one cannot be said to be a self who grasps the 'eternal' in the fullest sense.

A consciousness of self in which the individual is engaged in abstract conceptualizing in relation to their self as infinite is a step too far. There is a kind of detachment from the world involved here, and more crucially, a 'severing…from any relation to a power that has established it' (p.68), i.e., from God. Essentially, this is the kind of person who believes entirely in their own abilities, and who believes realizing their 'infinite' self to be possible. However, it is only a realization of their infinite self within the bounds of the finite. It rests upon the belief that the self can be fulfilled without recourse to God. It is a belief in the power of one's self as being capable of self-actualizing in the direction of an abstract ideal self. He points to 'stoicism' (p.68) as a description, in the broad

sense, for this kind of life-view: that there is a 'bigger-picture' to life, but one that excludes any divine involvement. He wants to say that this is a misguided and illusory view. One might seem to be becoming a master of one's self in relation to the immediate world, but this is merely illusory: '…building only castles in the air…the basis of the whole thing is nothing.' (p.69) This is a self that rules out the possibility for relation to anything that is greater than the self. It stops short of the proper movement in relation to the eternal, i.e., the movement of faith in something greater than the self: namely, God. This kind of person denies 'Hope in the possibility of help, especially by virtue of the absurd, that for God everything is possible.' (p.71)

The stage of selfhood that approaches a readiness for the Christian ideal is what he calls that of an 'inclosing reserve.' (p.63) In this state, the individual is conscious of the non-temporal eternal aspect of their self, but they are in denial with respect to the potential it offers. On the surface, they might seem to be transparent to all: '…dressed like others, wearing ordinary outer garments.' (p.63) They might seem to be caught up in all of the earthly concerns in which everyone else is caught up. But the kind of person that he is talking about is that person who holds back on disclosing what is truly at the core of their being, namely, a sense for their eternal (infinite) self as that which conflicts with the immediate. There is a sense here of a kind of withdrawal from the world and yet still being in the world. This kind of person has a 'deeper nature.' (p.64) They often long for solitude in order to cope with this deep awareness of the eternal. For him, this longing for solitude is a sign of something more fundamentally precious: '…a sign that there still is spirit in a person and is the measure of what spirit there is.' (p.64) The person of inclosing reserve is aware of his or her own weakness, but they have only admitted this to themselves. They cannot yet fully see the way out of this state. They are teetering on that boundary between the immediate and the eternal. They are almost fully conscious of what is needed but they have not made the leap of faith. They might throw themselves entirely into the immediate world and its activities in order to forget what they deeply sense, but they can never hope to forget what really lies within them – a consciousness of their eternal self as beyond the merely finite.

In this kind of individual, the self exists in a state of religious longing. He calls it a 'poet-existence verging on the religious.' (p.77) There is resignation to the idea of something greater than the 'I' and the world in which the 'I' finds itself, i.e., God. However, instead of living life with an absolute faith in God, there is a poetic relation to the idea of God. This is a kind of poetic melancholy over what can never be attained. God is somewhere out there, but forever out of reach. He is poeticized. He has an emotional effect upon that individual, but the focus is still on the self of the individual and upon what they cannot attain. That is to say, that they cannot become one with God. If there is hope in this kind of being, then it is a hope for what will happen after they die, rather than a hope for this life. They are on the borderline between the resignation and faith, but they are unwilling to give up this longing.[295]

For Anti-Climacus, the eternal aspect of self must have the requisite spiritual dimension as a relation to God. The good news, however, is that according to Anti-Climacus every self has the potential for realizing their dual nature fully, but only in Christianity. It is every human being's 'destiny…to be spirit.' (p.22) He believes that we all have such a spiritual vocation. The proper goal ought to be becoming 'decisively and eternally conscious as spirit.' (p.26) What one was, is, or will be in life, in terms of the immediate (gender, possessions, status, etc.) is of no significance in relation to one's eternal spirit. He confronts us: "*You* are responsible for your *self*. Becoming a properly developed Christian *self* is always a choice that *you* can make." The bad news is that despair is indicative of this destiny. It is, at least initially, inescapable. It goes without saying that in his view the ideal situation for a self is not to be in despair. So, how is this highest expression of the self attainable? Perhaps the question really ought to be "Is it attainable?" Unfortunately, the fact that despair is so prevalent is an indication that the full realization of self in relation to Christ's promise is a great rarity.[296] The self will always struggle with becoming whole, bearing in mind what that task entails.

[295] *SUD*, p.78.
[296] *Ibid.*, p.26.

He gives us a conceptual account of the self, that makes certain presuppositions, but one that ultimately points towards individual decision. Lest he should be accused of thinking about the self in a purely abstract way, one might say that everything still points to choice, and the question of what *I* ought to do as an individual in order to become whole. He says that the 'self is freedom.' (p.29) Consciousness is integral to any notion of self and freedom: 'The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self.' (p.29) The responsibility lies with the self. One can only become a self by consciously acknowledging one's finite and infinite aspects, but this can only be wholly realised 'through the relationship to God.' (p.30) I have described this earlier as the realization of one's spiritual vocation. In this way, the self becomes 'concrete.' (p.30) This is a 'becoming.' (p.30), and anything less than this is to be less than a whole self. There is some kind of transformation taking place in the relating of finitude and infinitude to God. Anti-Climacus and Kant have at least one idea in common here, and that is the idea of a progressive becoming. They latch on to the idea of the human as responsible for, and therefore capable of, instituting their own becoming. In Kant's case it is the idea of *becoming* pleasing to God. However, in contrast to any possibility for positing a relation of self to God on the basis of reason, Anti-Climacus wants to say that the self only becomes whole when God is acknowledged as being able to bring about even the impossible.[297] So, the highest expression of self can only come about when the movement of faith in God includes 'losing the understanding' (p.38) with respect to what is possible under God. Paradoxically, part of the process of becoming a whole self involves the resignation of a part of what it means to be a human self. Faith in God is the only way in which the self can reach its highest expression, and for faith to occur something must give way. The individual only becomes an authentic self when he is 'conscious of existing before God, by becoming a human self whose criterion is God!' (p.79), but always falling short of absolute perfection.

[297] *Ibid.*, p.38.

In terms of selfhood, the leap of faith is a transition to becoming 'a new creation' (*FT*, p.34) and is one that must be constantly renewed in the life of faith. In this respect, the leap does not lead to a 'standstill'[298] (p.109) for the individual who is always involved in becoming. And so, in this context, we can say that the leap is a *becoming*, or change[299], in which the Christian disciple believes in the truth offered by Christ.[300] Frater Taciturnus observes that the diary writer makes a gradual transition in which he becomes 'more and more religiously absorbed.' (*SLW*, p.426) The leap is a 'metamorphosis' (*SUD*, p.60) with respect to becoming eternally conscious. Leaping is thus a transformative transition[301], but for Climacus it is a process that requires the constant nourishment of 'daily acquiring the certain spirit of faith.' (*CUP*, p.55) In this transformative leap the finite is not abandoned. It is now embraced in a different way. What has changed is the individual's understanding of himself or herself in relation to the eternal. They can be in the world but not of the world. Their life becomes a living 'testimony' (p.395) of this new relation. The feat to be performed in such a leap of change is in being able - like Abraham who returns from Mount Moriah transformed – to live fully in the world[302], wholly conscious of one's relation to God, and yet at the same time, 'dying to immediacy.' (p.499)

Westphal writes: 'Who does more than Kierkegaard and the authors he creates to call attention to the leaps involved in human existence, including the leap to religious faith…to clarify the alternatives, making as clear as possible what is involved in such choices?' (Westphal, 1996, p.78) The leap to a new self, and the idea of selfhood more generally speaking, is a theme that resounds constantly in the pseudonymous texts. We are presented with the stages of existence in the aesthetic and ethical, and stages within those stages. But always in mind is the assertion that selfhood reaches fulfillment in the leap to the religious. The view that reason must be ejected in order to reach the religious

[298] *FT*, p.108-109.
[299] *Ibid.*, p.23.
[300] *PF*, pp. 22-23.
[301] *COA*, p.85; *CUP*, p.12.
[302] *CUP*, p.506.

stage is a misreading of what Kierkegaard wants to say. Rather, the most crucial use of one's reason, thinking, and understanding, is that which leads to an understanding of one's self. This is a rational goal. For Kierkegaard, faith is only achievable 'in understanding oneself.' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.157) And so, his emphasis upon selfhood – manifested intentionally in the form of the pseudonyms – is absolutely central to his message. The understanding and 'choosing of oneself' – as one finds in Judge William's discourse – is the 'development of spirit' (Elrod, 2015, p.126) in the individual, who 'understands himself as a task.' (p.126) This ethical view of the self involves a striving towards an ideal. In the case of the Judge, it is a striving towards the ideal of marriage – as an example – conceived of as a duty. However, just as the aesthetic is subsumed into the ethical (and so becomes relative) so too is the ethical subsumed into the ethico-religious stage (and becomes relative). For Anti-Climacus, Christianity makes the meaning of 'self' clear to an individual, and it gives them the means by which they can transform themselves into that kind of self. The transition between Religiousness A and B is one in which the task of self-understanding and self-actualization in the sphere of the ethical is retained, but brought to a higher level of expression in existing as a self before the Christian God.

Evans wants to say that it is not that Kierkegaard undervalues selfhood and relations to others that fall outside of a faith in God. Kierkegaard sees the 'power of those relations' (Evans, 2006, p.272) as something authentic in terms of the self. However, for Kierkegaard there is a higher vocation for the self than that which is confined to a finite conception, and it is one that binds us as humans. Self-knowledge is more than just a Kantian realization of one's rational and ethical self. There is more to being a self than 'an awakening to one's own potential as a rational agent (*à la* Kant).' (Betz, 2012, p.78) The ethical expression of self is certainly a necessary part of the journey to complete selfhood. This 'practical standpoint' (Davenport, 2013, p.232) is, for Kant, something that is inherently human (or, given) rather than humanly generated. In other words, we are moral selves with a moral vocation. The self is posited by Kant as a being who is called to devote himself 'to something noble beyond himself.' (p.233)

Kantian moral faith finds its expression in Judge William who is an ethically-religiously oriented individual. He defines himself in terms of his ethical commitments but he is not yet at the highest stage of religious existence. His concept of self, whilst pointing in the direction of the religious, is still tethered to a concept of faith that is ethically construed. He chooses to become a self that has attached to it the possibility for being judged (ethically) on the basis of what that 'self' ought to be: as a father, he ought to be X; as a judge, Y; etc. As such he might remain a 'self [who is] permanently divided. (Elrod, 2015, p.251) In contrast, although family life is the highest expression of the ethical for Abraham, it is not what wholly defines him as a self. He ultimately defines himself by his relationship to God, over and above his role as father, husband, and leader. Through his faith in God he becomes a unified self. He wills one thing, and is transformed as a result. Abraham is the prototype for an individual, rather than a communal, faith in God.

The ethical – viewed in terms of the individual's role in family and the wider community (Hegel) – clearly has an organizing function, and de Silentio does not deny that it has its place. The main point of *Fear and Trembling*, as Westphal (2014) sees it, is that there is the possibility for a higher expression of what it means to be an individual over and above an ethical view of that of the individual's role in family and the wider community. But we can respond to this by saying that, whilst the idea of a higher (highest) expression of self is clearly a core contention of Kierkegaard's message to us taken as a whole, the reality of what it means to be an authentic self is one in which conflicting life views often co-exist within the individual. We do not necessarily find ourselves adopting a singular and absolute life-view and just staying there. However, something more crucial arises from Kierkegaard's account of faith in *Fear and Trembling*. Abraham *believes* the impossible, but he still *knows* that when he returns home his obligations to his family and community maintain their continuity. But, having made the leap of faith, the ethical – which is still present – is forever transformed, or, subsumed by faith. For Kierkegaard, the ethico-religious stage is 'getting there', in that the requisite depth of ethical consciousness is present. But it is limited insofar as the self's relation to God is posited in terms of

universal moral duty, rather than as one of a uniquely personal, individually authentic, absolute indebtedness to a personal God.

What is also emphasized (in *Fear and Trembling*) is the essential character of faith: a personal 'encounter' (Evans, 2006, p.221) with God that 'can provide a new self, a new identity, and a new understanding of the purpose of human existence.' (p.221) For Anti-Climacus, the self is 'spirit.' It is the activity of relating the elements of what it is to be a human being as a whole. Such a self has a 'reflexive structure.' (Davenport, 2013, p.235) It involves a higher level of self-awareness – what Davenport calls a 'higher-order relation' (p.235) – and one that is brought to life through an absolute recognition of one's indebtedness to God. For both de Silentio and Climacus 'faith is…part of our identity…this passion is related to a decision about who I am and how I should live my life.' (Westphal, 2014, p.177) Like Kant, the question of faith is a universal one for all of humanity to ask, but Kierkegaard wants to emphasize the character of faith as one of a solitary leap for the individual. Climacus is prepared only to risk his 'own life' (*PF*, p.5); Abraham is the 'single individual…[who] keeps to himself.' (FT, p.47) Even Christ is left alone in Gethsemane, and prompted to ask why no one would keep watch with him. (Matthew 26:40) Kierkegaard is trying to provoke us into a kind of turnaround in our thinking about our shared experience as humans. Namely, into seeing single individuality as the 'rational ideal' (McCombs, 2013, p.56), rather than universal expressions of what it means to be a self. However, Ferreira interprets Climacus as saying that there is no break with 'human existing, but an accentuation of human existing.' (Ferreira, 2010, p.21) Individual selfhood is always the focus of Kierkegaard's attention, but he does not deny that there are some things that can and ought to be said about humanity in universal terms.

German cites Hamann, translating him as saying that 'Man is not a stable, secure, established entity; man is a becoming.'[303] (German, 1981, p.121) As part of the world which is 'a process' (p.121), so too is man in a process of becoming. In terms of the leap of faith it can be viewed as a 'transition' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.65)

[303] Cited by German from: *Hamanns Schriften*, ed. by F. Roth, 7 Bände, Berlin, 1821-5, VI, p.127.

to a new self, but that is not to say that there are no decisive moments. De Silentio certainly presents us with such a moment. However, whilst there might indeed be an inspirational moment of realization or decision, there is still the possibility for a leap of faith that is 'a qualitative transition'[304] (p.74) to a new self – to a higher self-awareness – rather than a singular moment such as one finds in de Silentio's description of Abraham.

Abraham's double-movement of resignation and faith is transformative. He might have gained back the world entire, but he is a new man – a 'transformed person.' (p.67); he is both of the world and not of the world. But his leap of faith is not a movement *out* of existence. His double-movement of faith indicates a qualitative change of self. He still remains in the finite world, but there has been a transition, a break, and a movement to a different way of existing as a self in the world. It is a movement that carries him over the threshold of a being-between, in which his religious 'existence transcends finitude.' (Carlisle, 2010, p.180) The double movement of faith – as characterized in *Fear and Trembling* – involves the 'renunciation and restoration of finite, worldly existence.' (p.185) In that movement of faith the self is transformed inwardly, but it is not a movement out of the world. Rather, for the self who properly understands his or her own selfhood, the promise of faith is the possibility for becoming 'blissfully happy *here in the world*.' (*FT*, p.30) [emphasis mine] But, like Hamann, who asserts that 'Self-knowledge is the most difficult and the highest'[305] (Betz, 2012, p.78), Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors emphasize that the task of becoming a properly oriented self is a truly difficult one to perform.

[304] Westphal, too, writes of this idea of transition, positing that 'in the wider context of Kierkegaard's authorship, "the leap" is a generic category referring to all qualitative transitions, of which the transition to faith is but one specific example.' (Westphal, 1996, p.70)

[305] Taken from a letter from Hamann to Kant (cited by Betz) originally in: Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. I, ed. Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955-75), p.374.

Chapter Six: Kierkegaard and the Individual – Offense and Despair

6.1 Offense

The main purpose of this section is to give an account of the way in which some of the pseudonymous individuals characterize what can be a possible reaction to some of the content of faith. Namely, offense. That this question is brought into focus is indicative of a broader response to the Enlightenment view of reason's assessment of religious faith. At the start of *Either/Or*, the sentiment behind Eremita's inscription essentially asks: "Is Reason alone 'holy'?"[306] Whilst this kind of polemic is to be found in varying degrees throughout the works in question, the most sustained argument regarding the relation between offense and faith is to be found in the Climacean works (*Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*).

We must first ask as to what it means to be offended, or more precisely, what is being offended. In one sense, an offense is a transgression or violation of a law; in another, to be offended is to be insulted by something that seems to constitute a disregard for something precious to oneself. For Kierkegaard, the major players in this power play are reason and faith. In this regard, the answer to the question: "Which one is the offended?" depends entirely on the viewpoint. Is reason (or faith) the offender or the offended? Perhaps that question can be set aside for now, and so too the question as to the way in which 'reason' is understood. In the interim we can look at the way in which the relation between the two is portrayed in the eyes of the relevant individuals, and from what is said, to form some picture of what is meant by 'reason.'

In *Either/Or*, the aesthetic young man's faculty of reason is ultimately unsatisfied. For him, his thinking is an unavoidable passion that never finds resolution.[307] Rather than something that is coolly objective, his thinking derives from his 'innermost soul…his heart.' (*E/O*, p.72) He understands the Incarnation, not with his head but with his heart – our commonality with Christ from the

[306] *E/O,* p.25.
[307] *Ibid*., p.53.

point of view of his human aspect.[308] He talks about the experience of understanding 'at a distance' (p.122), 'not from coolness but from love.' (p.122) In other words, one cannot divorce one's thinking from the fact that one is also a sensing human being with passions. Thinking – or we might say 'reason' – is also one of these passions. In order to really understand something that pertains to being human, one 'must try to probe inwards…[with a]…special eye.' (p.174) If the 'riddle' (p.390) of Christ is to be solved, then even the example of the young man has something to teach us in this regard, for what is required is not the 'cold, calm light of reason' (p.324), but passionate thinking.

However, his faculty of thought is ultimately his downfall because thinking about love as contradictory and 'ludicrous' (*SLW*, p.32) is not the same as actually taking a leap into it. Judge William says that the understanding inevitably meets a wall when it wants to 'explain or think through love.' (p.120) It cannot, and then it thinks that falling in love is a ridiculously inexplicable notion. In this way, one becomes a 'rueful knight of reflection.' (p.122) For him, the example of love is the way in which one comes close to faith[309], but it can only come about when reason allows itself to take a back seat in order for belief to act as the motivation for follow-through. The more the intellect is engaged the further away one is from faith. He writes: 'Precisely when the understanding stands still, it behooves one to have the courage and the heart to believe the wondrous and, continually strengthened by this vision, to return to actuality and not just sit still and want to fathom it.' (p.122)

Quidam, too, engages in 'rigorous' (p.196) thinking in relation to both the ideal of love and of the religious.[310] But, the whole point is that his thinking – whilst it is a necessary component of his becoming, or, pointing towards, the religious – ultimately prevents him from achieving either goal. It is 'a sleepless and thousand-tongued reflection' (p.196) that ultimately leads nowhere. He is like a parachute jumper poised at the open door – 'ready to leap' (p.242) – but paralyzed by a reason which never ceases in its attempt to think upon

[308] *Ibid*., p.74.
[309] *SLW*, p.125.
[310] He contemplates with 'religious presuppositions.' (*SLW*, p.195)

everything.[311] He can hold to the idea of an exemplary religious individual[312] with a childlike reverence, but the 'paradigm' (p.258) escapes his understanding. As Judge William would see it, the mistake that he makes, by virtue of his reasoning, is that he thinks he must sacrifice an ethical relation (marital love) in order to reach the religious stage.[313] But the point is that one cannot avoid the fact of a relation to another human being. If one attempts to abstract oneself out of existence one fails to realize both the ethical *and* the religious. The broader point is that reasoned thinking about faith does not lead to an actual experience of faith, no more than reasoned thinking about something like love leads to actually loving an other.

Frater Taciturnus wants to draw a distinction between thinking and understanding in relation to an ideal. He views the loss of understanding as essential to having religious faith. In relation to the finite, understanding is possible, but not in relation to the infinite.[314] Thinking is always possible in relation to an ideal, but thinking ideally about love and faith at the same time leads to a conflict in thought. The understanding meets a problem that cannot be solved. One cannot have it both ways, because in this way of thinking, i.e., in an ideal way, one ideal surpasses the other. For him, understanding is excluded when it comes to faith because faith's object is beyond the finite world. The religious ideal is posited as superior but he leaves it as open-ended question as to whether or not the ethical 'helps [one]…into the religious.' (p.435) Either way, he views human reason – whether we say *thinking* or *understanding* – as necessary in order that the 'possibility of the religious can break through.' (p.430) For him, the religious is superior precisely because it is a higher passion. That which goes beyond the understanding has, in this view, a greater worth. It is one thing to exercise one's reason, with the goal of finding a limit with respect to one's understanding and finite knowledge. But the individual who lives acknowledging faith as going beyond reason does not expect certainty at all.[315]

[311] *Ibid*., p.212; 240; 313.
[312] *Ibid*., p.257; 258.
[313] *Ibid*., p.313.
[314] *Ibid*., p.424.
[315] *Ibid*., p.444.

No less than the challenge of *actually* living ethically – as opposed to a concept of the ethical that attempts to abstract away from the experience of the individual – the lived experience[316] of having one's rational faculty challenged by faith is a necessary one.

The priest's sermon at the end of *Either/Or* reminds us that we must honestly embrace the fact that our thinking will remain 'restless' (*E/O*, p.597) unless we become humble through faith.[317] He points to rational ethics as never really achieving finality in its pronouncements over right and wrong, and to reason as being endlessly engaged in the doubting and testing process.[318] He wants to say that we should not allow ourselves to become so offended in and by our thinking that it acts as an insurmountable stumbling block to our relation to God. Wrestling with our thoughts in relation to God is part and parcel of what it means to have faith.[319]

In relation to *Fear and Trembling*, we can try to say something about the possibility of offense from Abraham's perspective, although we are clearly not talking about offense at Christianity. However – and I think this is part of what Kierkegaard is also trying to say of us responding to the story of Abraham – we can also observe the way in which de Silentio himself reacts to the story. Is he offended? If he is, then he is on the way to faith, that is, if faith is viewed as requiring a collision between reason and a content of religious faith. If he is not offended, then he is outside of the possibility of faith, in that, he is merely observing the story in a partially detached way. That he chooses to remain silent in his pronouncement over Abraham indicates an agnostic position that is possible, but one that points in the direction of both offense and faith. What we are forced to consider is that a purely rational view of Abraham leads to one conclusion. It brings into focus the possibility for offense in relation to Abraham's faith, as a way of making us think about the limits of reason with respect to faith. In other words, the task of faith is a difficult path to take. One must be as such 'primed' in order to understand the content of faith in a way

[316] *Ibid*., p.486.
[317] *E/O*, p.597.
[318] *Ibid*., p.601.
[319] *Ibid*., p.599.

that goes beyond reason. One cannot make the movement of faith without first having one's reason seriously challenged. All the better that we should shudder at the thought of the story, and be entirely offended by the ethical implications. Kierkegaard's de Silentio is the provocateur, through whose observations of detached admiration for Abraham we are invited into becoming offended, in order to shake us from the 'security of the universal' (*FT*, p.66) in which rational intelligibility reigns.[320] Rational thought that attempts to smooth off the rough edges of faith by conceptualizing it [321] (abstracting away from individual experience) in order to somehow make it more palatable to reason – is a denial of that which is necessary for faith, i.e. offense. Faith proper requires a passionate fear and trembling before the story rather than a detached response.

De Silentio presents us with the possible ways in which Abraham might have failed to realize the movement of faith. But what is important for the purposes of this section is to note that his thinking is what prevents him from truly believing. His offended reason, which in some way or another questioned the ethical, and hence rational permissibility of the command, was in each case a stumbling block to faith. Both Abraham and de Silentio – and by extension, any rational being – must be offended, and must then set aside reason in order to come to an understanding of faith. Our becoming offended at what we deem to be Abraham's 'folly' (p.14) – his belief in the absurd, and the impossible – is inevitable, because reason can come to no other conclusion regarding the paradox that motivates Abraham's decision [322], i.e., the paradox that, in suspending the ethical, a single individual could become higher than the ethical.[323] That we cannot understand the story of Abraham is precisely the kind of conflict with rational thinking that is needed. In the conflict that is the *salto mortale*, the casualty is reason. De Silentio believes that the more faith one has in one's rational abilities, or, the more intellectually advanced one is, the more

[320] *FT*, p.99.
[321] 'Even if one were able to convert the whole content of faith into conceptual form, it does not follow that one has comprehended faith, comprehended how one entered into it or how it entered into one.' (*FT*, p.5)
[322] *Ibid*., p.48.
[323] *Ibid*., p.58.

difficult is the task of faith.[324] What counts is the way in which the individual subsequently reacts to being offended. The greater the offense, the greater the leap there is to be made. The collision with the absurd thought, and thinking about the impossibility of a rationally acceptable outcome to the scenario, is a necessary step in the right direction.[325] Ultimately, what is required is not cold, detached, and pure rational reflection, but passionate thinking[326] which registers the offense in order to move forward to faith.

Vigilius says that speculative reason tends towards 'reconciliation.' (*COA*, p.10) It tries to smooth off the edginess that is faith's challenge. In Kant, ecclesiastical faith and pure moral faith are mediated by reason. Only those contents of ecclesiastical faith that can be made reasonable through the lens of the supreme moral principle can be 'reconciled.' The example of reason trying to make sense of the concept of original sin points to something that goes beyond rational explanation. It is dismissed as 'a myth' (p.32), because that which defies human understanding is an offense to reason. But, man's desire for the 'forbidden' (p.40) fruit from the tree of knowledge cannot be shaken off. That tree keeps bearing fruit. Unless one finds resolution in something other than the endless but natural inclination towards knowledge-seeking, one will never sate the anxiety that results. Rational scrutiny of the idea of the 'eternal in man' (p.153) – where eternal consciousness is a prerequisite to faith – might well end up in a 'mockery' (p.152) of faith, because it cannot account for it in any rationally meaningful way. In this way, reason can be said to be in 'denial.'[327] (p.152)

Anti-Climacus does not initially spell out the relation between reason and faith that is offense. However, given the overall context of his treatise – which in broad terms asserts that despair is the result of a denial with respect to some aspect(s) of the self (temporal, eternal, spirit), and of God – we can see

[324] *Ibid*., p.26.
[325] *Ibid*., p.31.
[326] *Ibid*., p.35; p.59.
[327] *COA*, p.152.

from the outset that offense is implied when reason is actively involved in trying to reduce lived experience only to that which can be accounted for by reason. Denial of one's eternal nature, for example, is 'reductionism…ethical narrowness and limitation.' (*SUD*, p.33)

He sees as crucial the belief that everything is possible with God[328], even the absurd[329], and so reason's offense is an integral part of the despair that is the state of denying this. For him, true faith involves 'losing the understanding in order to gain God' (p.38), and this might be an offensive thought with which reason must come to terms. Furthermore, given that it is also possible to use one's reason in order to attempt to abstract one's self away from experience, and to attempt to look at despair (and offense) from a purely conceptual and detached point of view, this, according to Anti-Climacus, is to be in defiant denial. We could say that offense is implied in the act of reason's attempt to detach from what ought to be viewed as a whole rather than a partial self. He is more explicit when he asserts that 'the possibility of offense' (p.83) at some of the contents of the Christian faith is a prerequisite for an individual truly becoming a Christian.[330] Otherwise it is not faith proper. That is to say, a rationally grounded faith does not go far enough, because reason wants to stop short of the offense that arises in facing the paradoxical and absurd elements of the Christian faith. The latter is an offense to some, because in crucial ways it transgresses that which can be made intelligible to reason[331] (the forgiveness of original sin, Christ as dying for our sins, Christ as the paradox – the God-man, Abraham as the father of faith, etc.), including what can be said about man's spiritual possibility.[332] A 'cold' faith does not meet the proper level of expression. It is precisely 'passionate…offense' (p.86) – or one could say, passionate reason – that is necessary for the proper movement of faith. The trial of reason is the way in which one becomes an extraordinary Christian individual. Offense is first to be embraced in order to move forward into faith. To shirk from it is to turn one's

[328] *SUD*, p.38.
[329] *Ibid*., p.71.
[330] *Ibid*., p.83; 84.
[331] *Ibid*., p. 95; 98; 129n.
[332] *Ibid*., p.83.

back on the latter.[333] For Anti-Climacus, the most offensive form of sin and despair is the offense of actively asserting Christianity to be a lie.

Climacus characterizes the relation between reason and the paradox, and the possibility for offense at the latter, as arising from a failure of the former to understand. By paradox, we are here talking about Climacus' view of the paradoxical nature of the Christian faith: that God not only became man in the moment of Christ – which is also to say that the eternal was paradoxically revealed to us in historical time[334] - but also that he chose to condescend in a humble[335] form out of an incomprehensibly unequivocal love for us, and yet, that he was also absolutely unlike us.[336] The odds are stacked against what is a natural expectation of the faculty of reason, i.e., to understand this compound of paradoxical elements. Offense is essentially the result of human reason struggling to understand the moment of Christ.[337] Climacus makes a distinction between passive and active offense, but for the purposes of this section I simply want to look at offense from the broader perspective of how he views the relation between reasoned thinking and the object of offense, which we can say is ultimately a relation between reason and faith.

Far from being cold and objective, he wants to persuade us that reason in itself is a passion[338], especially when it encounters something like a paradox. One is naturally and passionately driven by one's reason in trying to find the limits of what can be known, in order to come to a 'final answer' with respect to a "How?" or a "Why?" Of course, the problem with actively searching for that kind of limit, i.e., the limit of reason, is that, once it has been found, the belief that reason can know *everything* is thereby dismantled in the very process of discovery. Reason's passion is therefore a paradoxical one[339]. He writes: 'the paradoxical passion of the Reason is aroused and seeks a collision; without

[333] *Ibid*., p.116n.
[334] *PF*, p.30; 76.
[335] *Ibid*., p.39.
[336] *Ibid*., pp. 58-59.
[337] *Ibid*., p.42.
[338] *Ibid*., p.55.
[339] *Ibid*., p.46.

rightly understanding itself, it is bent upon its own downfall.' (*PF*, p.48) It is a misunderstanding of the faculty of reason to view reason as anything other than just another human (and therefore limited) faculty. If, using our reason, we cannot definitively know *everything* about what it means to be a human, and yet we *are* human, how can we expect to know or understand *anything* about God? We are expecting too much of ourselves in that kind of endeavour.

He takes an ironic view of man's attempt to engage in thinking that purports to be a 'transcending' (p.46) of the self by using a faculty of the self (reason) that is in itself limited. The attempt to find and understand something that is beyond reason's capacity to understand, using one's reason, is a paradoxical attempt[340] that is about as doomed as the goal of trying to see something invisible. That it is a natural tendency merely points to the error in believing that reason ought to be the arbiter of what constitutes the 'absurd' and the 'paradoxical', because a rational view will always necessarily be a lopsided one. Rational thinking would never naturally arrive at a concept of God which included the contradictory idea that God could be wholly divine and yet wholly man[341], i.e., the idea of Christ. But, if reason's aim is to find 'something that thought cannot think' (p.46), why act so surprised when it is found?[342]

What we see here in Climacus' thinking is something that is geared towards saying that rational thinking needs to include a greater sense of humility with respect to the contents of faith. That offense is a possible reaction to discovering the paradoxical is, in Climacus' view, primarily an indication of a lack of understanding with respect to reason's own limit. Rational thinking that posits the need for the 'act of letting go' (p.53) of reason in order to understand faith is a presumption on reason's part. That is to say, the view that reason is in control in terms of limiting itself in order to make room for faith. However, Climacus views this kind of positing as a sign of the required passion that is needed. It is a facing up to the fact that the truth posited by Christianity is not something that can be grasped in terms of the kind of knowledge that naturally occupies rational truth seeking. As he says, 'Faith is not a form of knowledge.'

[340] *Ibid*., p.55.
[341] *Ibid*., p.55; 63n.
[342] *Ibid*., p.65.

(p.76) He does not deny that one can come to a formulation of faith in terms of 'ethical-religious' (*CUP*, p.198) knowledge, but this is for him merely an 'analogy' (p.569) of faith, even if reason clearly maintains a role. In Kant's ideal religion of reason, the limit of reason is acknowledged, and so too are those contents of revelation that are beyond that limit, and hence incomprehensible. However, Kant posits a relation to God that is within the bounds of what a human being is capable of and can understand. Climacus' view of true Christian faith is that it is a relation to that which is beyond the limit, but crucially the relation is *towards* that which offends reason. For him, faith made intelligible is not truly faith. He writes: 'Faith belongs essentially in the sphere of the paradoxical-religious…All other faith is only an analogy.' (p.569)

No amount of rational reflection upon the truth posited by Christianity in terms of knowledge will lead to faith, because the individual who is 'infinitized in reflection' (p.116) will forever postpone a decision with respect to that truth. This is not a position that is trying to endorse some kind of relativism with respect to facts – a 'lunacy' (p.195), or 'delirium of inwardness' (p.196) – but one that is stressing the importance of the individual self as a guide for what can be said to be coherent truth *for* that individual regarding that which goes beyond the finite. When one willingly gives up the prospect for rationally understanding the content of faith, he says that reason is in a 'happy' (*PF*, p.61) relation to the paradox, or, in relation to the object of faith. One could say that reason's passion is sated in embracing its own limit[343], or, that faith is naturally implied and given assent by reason. If understanding is a goal for reason, then let it be happy in the knowledge that the paradox cannot be understood.[344] Saying: "But it is absurd" is merely a natural but limited observation of reason in the act of enabling its own downfall. In this state of affairs, the 'unhappy love of the Reason…may be characterized more specifically as Offense.' (*PF*, p.61) It is the very nature of that which is paradoxical and absurd that it is so.[345] The absurd thought is part of what it means for an individual to have faith, i.e., to

[343] *PF*, p.59.
[344] *CUP*, p.218.
[345] *PF*, p.65.

believe the impossible and paradoxical.[346] It is a 'marker' for faith.[347] It is what defines faith from reason. To protest, or, to be offended by the paradoxical, is akin to blaming fire for its ability to burn. In other words, in Climacus' view, Christ – or more broadly, Christianity – does not, or perhaps, ought not to, pretend to be intelligible to reason. The issue of offense is entirely our fault and responsibility. When Christ is asked: "Are you, then, the Son of God?" his response is: "You say that I am." (Luke 22:70)

Part of what it means to become Christ-like is to let go of worldly goods, and one of those goods is purely rational thinking. When reason points its accusing finger at the paradox of the Incarnation, four other fingers point back at itself. This is the absurdity[348] of reason's 'misunderstanding' (*PF*, p.64) of both itself and Christ. What must be understood is that offense is a necessary trial to be undergone and passed through in order to become a Christian.[349] Uncertainty is constitutive of 'the certitude of faith.' (*CUP*, p.432) The point being asserted is that true Christian faith has as its object something that is absolutely outside of what can be thought from a human perspective. The relation to God cannot originate in the individual (as one sees in Kant's concept of faith). It is paradoxical because, although one is relating to God as absolutely outside of what can be appropriated by a human, God, as 'everything…infinitely everything' (p.561), is 'within the individual.' (p.561) In effect, the fact that we have the faculty of reason, and therefore the propensity to be offended, is part of our being designed for faith. In this way, Climacus maintains that Christianity, as the absolute paradox, is 'a perfect fit' (p.230) for passionate human reason.

If doubt is to be overcome, then what it requires is the 'final conclusion' (*E/O*, p.203) that is the leap of faith. For Kierkegaard, it is not a movement in which – like the seducer – reason is thrown 'overboard' (p.292), but one in which reason is gently set aside. That is, when reason knows its proper place. That is not to say that the leap in relation to reason's offense is not a struggle. It

[346] *CUP*, p.211.
[347] *CUP*, p.262; 432.
[348] *PF*, pp. 64-65.
[349] *CUP*, p.372.

certainly takes courage to believe against the understanding.[350] But, like the Judge in speaking of marital love, what is emphasized is a leap of faith in a good outcome in which there is 'as little 'why' as possible.'[351] (*E/O,* p.415) The intellectual position must recede into the background if the leap is to be made and if offense is to be overcome. Reason is preserved[352] but 'comes to rest' (p.521) in the leap of faith. That which is 'preposterous' (*FT*, p.17) to reason is the impetus for the passionate leap.

Climacus paints reason as passionately striving, and so offense can only be overcome with a passion higher than that of reason. For him, becoming a Christian must necessarily involve offense.[353] Although he does not give us an explicit characterization of offense in relation to the impossible, de Silentio points to it as that which must be acknowledged. In other words, like Climacus, he believes that the passion of reason is absolutely necessary to the leap of faith.[354] Offense in the face of the impossible[355] should come as no surprise to reason, because 'faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.' (*FT*, p.46) One must 'let go' of the offense to one's reason when confronted with the 'Paradox' (*PF*, p.72) of Christ. In the leap, reason finds repose in being 'set aside' (p.76) in such a confrontation. Analogously, that one might arrive at some kind of offense at the idea of love is, for Judge William, merely an indication that reflection must come to a standstill in order for a leap into love to be made possible.[356] For faith, uncertainty does not carry with it the kind of offense that is so natural to reason. The leap positively embraces 'the dialectic of uncertainty' (*CUP*, p.55), which, from reason's perspective (at least in the way it is characterized by Climacus), is an offense to the goal of understanding and knowing. It is the passion of the leap which is an embracing of 'the very tension in the contradiction' (pp. 385-386) – the 'repulsion of the absurd.' (p.611) The true

[350] *FT*, p.41.
[351] *E/O*, p.415; 428.
[352] *Ibid*., p.512.
[353] *CUP*, p.372.
[354] *CUP*, p.568.
[355] *FT*, p.40.
[356] *SLW*, p.122.

calling of faith is not the attempt to resolve the issue of offense, but the embracing of it as a necessary stepping-stone to belief.

Kant says that reason is concerned only with itself. Anti-Climacus wants to say that this kind of concern needs to be set aside. That is the leap of faith. This is the way in which man is to become extraordinary. It is the way in which it is possible for him to transcend that rational aspect of his nature. It is this kind of 'passionate…offense' (*SUD*, p.86) [or, passionate reason] that is necessary for the movement of faith. One can only become that kind of extraordinary Christian individual by doing the extraordinary thing – that thing which is seemingly impossible. The leap is *away* from offense, and *towards* faith in 'Christianity…[which] must be believed and not comprehended.' (p.98) For Anti-Climacus, the greatest sin comes about as a result of an active form of offense in which Christianity is denied as false.[357] To be counted as blessed, offense must be transcended, and that can only come about in letting go of the natural desire to comprehend the incomprehensible. The paradox of the incarnation is a challenge to our thinking, and so too is the fact that God chose to humble himself in such a lowly way. To perpetuate this natural inclination is to perpetuate the 'possibility of offense.' (p.129n) Only a leap will solve the problem.

Evans interprets Climacus as saying that becoming a truly authentic Christian involves a 'retreat to commitment' (Evans, 1992, p.176) having experienced offense as 'part and parcel' (p.172) of the route to faith. One commits to faith despite the inevitability of offense. His reading of Climacus' narrative with respect to the contradiction of the Incarnation is that we essentially cannot fathom how a human could be morally perfect. The Incarnation 'thus appears contradictory to us because it goes against our experience as sinful creatures.' (Evans, 2008, p.1030) We experience a contradiction in thinking that we can relate to Christ (as human) and not relate to him (as morally perfect, and hence divine) at the same time. Kierkegaard wants always to remind us of the limits of reason with respect to that which goes beyond possible knowledge. For Kant, pointing to an example of the divine is

[357] This is 'Sin against the Holy Spirit.' (*SUD*, p.125)

'nonsensical' (B598); in Kierkegaard, the nonsensical finds itself re-expressed as the absurd – the example of the Incarnate God of Christianity. Kierkegaard is not prevented, as Kant is, from pointing directly to Christ. In fact, from the perspective of the thinking Christian, he must.

Kierkegaard's pseudonyms emphasize the absurd content of faith in order to enlighten reason with respect to its limited perspective. The most important fact that reason must learn about itself is '[the absurd's] opaqueness to human reason.' (Davenport, 2008, p.886) The real absurdity for Kierkegaard is in wanting to, or believing that reason can, articulate in a rational way that which goes beyond the limits of what can be said by reason. That is, to think the thought that cannot be thought, and to give expression in language to that which goes beyond linguistic expression. In attempting to do this, reason becomes irrational. We could never assimilate the Incarnation like all of the other things we know (that are intelligible to us). As Evans says: 'even after the god has revealed himself, what is revealed is something that is discontinuous with our existing stock of knowledge and beliefs.' (Evans, 1992, p.75)

But Kierkegaard is what Evans calls a 'responsible fideist' (Evans, 2008, p.1022), insofar as he does not want to deny *some* role for reason in faith. It is one in which religious beliefs are held to be reasonable, as opposed to purely rational, or even irrational. A responsible fideist – and it is clear to me that Hamann also fits this description – claims 'that reason is limited and/or defective in certain ways…what is called "reason"…is…in need of critical scrutiny.' (pp. 1022-1023) Reason is never emphatically portrayed as being in absolute opposition to faith at every turn. For Kierkegaard, a more responsible view of reason is one in which, having recognized reason's limits, we ought not be so quick to make a pronouncement with negative connotations over that which goes beyond our knowledge as being 'absurd.' That kind of automatic pronouncement is 'the heart and soul of offense.' (p.1031) Opening up to a more honest appraisal of reason itself is an opening up to the possibility for/of faith. Such is the character of what Climacus says is reason 'happy in its relation' (*PF*,

p.81) to the paradox[358] of the Incarnation, or, one could say, faith. Rather than rejecting, in offense, that which is absurd to reason, the opportunity to embrace the fact that reason cannot appropriate everything is made possible. That is, the 'space' for faith is opened up. The moment of the Incarnation is, for Kierkegaard, one in which I am presented with the 'choice about whether to recognize my own limits' (Evans, 2008, p.1034), i.e., the limits of my reason. That is, the choice of either offense or faith.

What is Kierkegaard saying about reason? Reason both wants and does not want to know its limit. Primarily, it makes the mistake of thinking that it is capable of an absolutely objective viewpoint. For him that just isn't possible. There is no God's-eye-view for reason. It wants to discover its limit, and this is an expression of reason's belief in its own is capacities. On the other hand, it does not want to discover its limit because that would be the discovery of its incapacity. In this regard, reason is not impartial. And so, for Climacus, offense is natural for reason. From the perspective of reason, the limit is 'out there' to be discovered. But the fact that Christianity is already there is an affront to reason, because, as far as reason is concerned, reason is *a priori*.[359] Climacus' idea is that

[358] Walsh clarifies the etymological root of the word 'paradox' as from the Greek: *para* (beyond) and *doxa* (opinion). Paradox is not to be confused with 'a formal or logical contradiction.' (Walsh, 2009, p.117) "Christ was God" may present us with a contradiction, but not necessarily a logical one. The reason for this is that we cannot pretend to fully *know* what a man is, nor what God is. However, we can assert that a "married bachelor" is a logical contradiction. Walsh says that Climacus' understanding of paradox (in *Fragments*) is not that which is (incorrectly) ascribed to the idea of a logical contradiction. The idea of the paradox is something that is natural to thought, rather than something that is logically repulsive. In this light, Walsh says that Climacus 'stands squarely in the Kantian tradition.' (p.117), insofar as Kant, too, included a discussion of the ways in which reason naturally engages with the contradictory, i.e., with problems that cannot be solved, such as the antimonies of reason. Evans also says that Climacus' use of 'contradiction' is broad and loose. Faith is not being defined as consisting of 'belief in a logical contradiction which is recognized as a logical contradiction.' (Evans, 1992, p.87) Climacus does not mean 'logical contradiction' but something closer to an 'incongruity.' (p.100)

[359] Viewed in this light, one can see why it was important for Kant to want to abstract away from experience, and to attempt to establish a rational faith that did not *rely* upon an already-established religious 'system' such as Christianity. Kant deviates from Climacus' view because in the latter account the individual self cannot bring about the change of heart. A 'union…through the god's decent' (Evans, 1992, p.53) is made intelligible by Kant in terms of Christ as the most perfect moral being. It is something that can be understood using our rational moral faculty. Christ appears as an equal, but the apartness of his being is made intelligible on the basis of his perfection. Perhaps we can say in this regard that Kant partly 'dodges' offense. But, only partly. For, as we have seen, he cannot avoid interpreting some of the tenets of the

there is the possibility for a 'happy' outcome for reason in willing its own downfall. In submitting to its own limits with respect to knowledge and understanding of the paradox of Christ, reason is 'resurrected, transfigured, and perfected.' (McCombs, 2013, p.163) The idea that reason somehow bestows, permits, or *makes room for* faith is out of the question. Rather, reason must resign itself to faith which is higher. Reason is in this way perfected by faith, and is as such relocated as a 'subordinate element.' (p.78)

For Climacus, to take offense at Christianity is irrational. If one is rationally capable of establishing the limits of one's reason, then it is irrational to deny that which goes beyond rational thought. But there is something else being implied by Kierkegaard (echoing Hamann), and that is a calling into question the notion that reason is capable of establishing its own limits in an absolutely objective way in the first place. In this way reason is both affirmed and undermined. Like Hamann, he simply wants to put reason in its proper place. From the perspective of language, reason finds its limit in a very real way when it attempts to articulate an interpretation of the paradoxical elements of faith. This is why I think the question of language is so central to the discussion of the relationship between rational and non-rational views of faith.[360] I want to say that language is a 'meeting place for reason and the revelation of the god…where reason recognizes its own limits.' (Evans, 1992, p.91)

Evans translates Kierkegaard's position with respect to the importance of uncertainty for the movement of faith as 'the human capacity to resolve…objective uncertainty and arrive at a conviction' (Evans, 2006, p.61) In other words, inherent to faith is the idea that reason can somehow transcend its natural propensity to *know*. To want to abstract away from the experience of

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Christian religion in such a way that reads as a form of offense. That Kant sees Christianity as coming closest to the ideal pure religion is grounds for offense from the point of view of other religious traditions. As we have seen in chapter two, Kant seems already to have subscribed to the 'uniqueness' (p.55) of Christianity, but he is limited in terms of how he can articulate a response to the idea of the Incarnation. He can avoid neither offending nor offense entirely.

[360] Evans contends that Climacus can only begin to express these thoughts in language because 'he is one of those who have received the condition from the god' (Evans, 1992, p.42), i.e., that Climacus is already a Christian. And that only a true believer could fully understand his words.

uncertainty is, for Kierkegaard, simply missing the point.[361] Climacus and de Silentio want to invite us into that kind of 'paradoxical tension' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.67) in thinking that is a necessary pre-cursor to faith. As Westphal says: offense involves 'dialectical tension.' (Westphal, 2014, p.153n) The reality for the experiencing individual – as opposed to the idea of an abstract 'self' – is that she must maintain a tension between all kinds of 'opposites "in combination"…not mediating or resolving them into a synthesis.' (Ferreira, 1991b, p.71) There can be no resolution for thought, but more importantly, in Kierkegaard's view there *must* be none. Uncertainty is absolutely necessary to the movement of faith. Or, as Caputo puts it somewhat enigmatically: 'faith without faith is precisely – faith.' (Caputo, 1997, p.63) Imagination is our way of coping with the 'tension' (Ferreira, 1991a, p.13) that is present when we encounter the paradox.

Ferreira's reading of Climacus is that this kind of thinking brings about 'a qualitatively different awareness.' (p.35) It does not come about as a result of facts and increasing evidence. Rather, it is the uncertain and paradoxical nature of something like the Incarnation that provokes in us a 'shift in perspective.' (p.97). What Kierkegaard describes as the setting aside of reason is expressed by Ferreira as 'imaginative surrender' (p.85), and reason's collision with the paradox of Christ as 'engagement' (ibid.). In this way, Kierkegaard is interpreted as saying that what is crucial is that thinking ought to be re-oriented. Kierkegaardian faith, when expressed by Climacus as the opposite of offense, does not promote blind acceptance, but rather, rational suspension in the face of reason's encounter with the paradoxical.

6.2 Despair

Whilst there are expressions in relation to human despair to be found in most of the pseudonymous works, the subject of despair receives its most extensive

[361] Hamann was influenced by Hume's position of doubt, viewing it as 'a kind of faith against the Enlightenment' (German, 1981, p.110), which purported to be certain. For Climacus, doubt is a prerequisite for, and an integral part of, faith. In this respect Kierkegaard inherits from Hamann the view that reason needs to be 'corrected.' When it embraces the experiential need for uncertainty, reason can be said to be healthy. (p.110)

treatment in Anti-Climacus' treatise in *The Sickness Unto Death*. In essence, as we shall see in briefly looking at what he has to say on the subject, all forms of despair point to a particular solution, i.e., a properly balanced religious self. This is Anti-Climacus' major presupposition, that is, that becoming the most ideal Christian self is the *only* route out of every possible form of despair.

The fact that his discourse is in the form of a treatise, which attempts to look at the subject in a conceptual and systematic way, is of note in itself. The reason I say this is that when one considers the possibility that Kierkegaard in many ways returns to Kant in order to go beyond the idea of the possibility for conceiving faith in rational terms, one can see that the concept of despair – as a state of being which is rather of concern to a subjective living individual – is yet another gap left unfilled by Kantian thinking. In other words, despair is an existential question, but that does not rule out the possibility for thinking about it as something that pertains to every living human that exists 'under God.' As Kant sees it, one can arrive at a rationally plausible universal concept of moral faith in God. He does not deny *some* rational concept of divine grace. Ultimately, for him, a purely rational faith is within the scope of the human conceived in rational terms. Perhaps the idea of despair is missing in Kant's philosophy of religion because, given the idea that a moral faith somehow brings the idea of God to practical 'completion', despair over one's limitations as a human being doesn't deserve specific treatment. Kant's overriding concern is for what reason can posit, rather than the existential question facing a real individual. Anti-Climacus' systematic account can be viewed as attempting to make up for the deficit in Kant's account of religious striving towards the ideal. We will come back to Anti-Climacus a little later.

In *Either/Or* the portrait of the young man is clearly one of an individual who is in despair with respect to the disjunction that he sees as existing between his thinking (in terms of what is possible) and the reality of living. For him, life is a perpetual tragedy in this regard, and in his limited view all life is ultimately tragic, regardless of how much the world thinks of itself as evolving. He does not deny that what is considered tragic in one epoch isn't necessarily considered so

in another, but he wants to say that there is something essential and timeless with respect to the human condition.[362] What he really despairs over is a sense of something greater than the finite world. It eludes his grasp, and this thought disturbs him. He is spiritually inarticulate[363], but what is worse is that he is aware of this fact. Not even the goods of the world can lift him out of despair, let alone the thought of something beyond this world as being able to do that. He has 'no faith in the game of happiness…[believing] in nothing but misfortune.' (*E/O*, p.212) To have been born is the greatest misfortune of all. Only in death can despair disappear, and shudder the thought that one could not die and be without that hope, because he truly would be 'The Unhappiest One.' (p.211) Ironically, the young man is able to point indirectly to Christ as the epitome of the unhappiest one who is yet the happiest one for having died to the world, but also *for* the world. But the young man is so blinded by despair, and consumed by his thinking, that the right kind of becoming like Christ is beyond his ability. He can think about, but not understand, Christ.

The Judge sees this kind of disposition of 'melancholy' (p.394) as dispelled by living the ethical ideal of marital love. In this way, one is actively and courageously taking responsibility for oneself as both obedient and hopeful in relation to God. To despair is to live a life that fails to realize one's potential in this regard. Rational thinking – that is, ethical-religious thinking – can have no place for despair, because despair will hold one back from living out that kind of ideal.[364] The Judge's assessment of the aesthetic stage of existing is that the person who lives aesthetically is already in despair. They search for fulfillment in the immediate things of the world. However, the purely immediate simply cannot fill this gap in their lives. Becoming conscious of the 'nothingness of such a life-view' (p.502), or, becoming conscious of despair, is a higher level of existing. The young man's thinking is indicative of this higher form of despair. He is on the brink of change. It is the realization that the world is truly

[362] *E/O*, p.139.
[363] *Ibid*., p.45.

[364] *Ibid*., p.394.

insufficient, and yet his actions haven't caught up with his thinking. When he is alone with himself there is the despair of knowing that the immediate is nothing: 'the nothing of despair.' (p.504) His dissatisfaction with the world, that is, his despair, is actually an indication of a 'soul…who feels a need for the eternal.' (p.506)

The Judge characterizes despair as an essential pre-condition for that letting-go that is needed in order to make the leap into an active, ethically construed faith. It is expressed as a kind of heroic resignation of the world. It is not that the external world causes the despair. The despair is something that comes about internally in the individual. The immediate world still remains an object of love – or, the finite world still offers one happiness – but it is no longer a means to an end. It is an end in itself: 'for the world shall become beautiful and joyous to you once more, though you now look at it with different eyes…your spirit, now liberated.' (p.520) For the Judge, despair is a choice, but in choosing it one is actually choosing that which comes about as a result of it, i.e., spiritual realization.[365] The right kind of thinking about, consciousness of, and embracing of despair that leads to choosing to surrender the self – which is what he sees as the ethical goal – is the solution to getting beyond despair.

In the final proposed scenario of the *Tuning Up* section of *Fear and Trembling*, de Silentio wants us to consider that Abraham's despair – visible to Isaac in seeing his father's clenched left hand – is merely a preparation for true religious faith. Had he fully believed, that is, been absolutely convinced that with God the impossible would come about, his despair would not have been present and hence visible. That there is the possibility for putting one's hope in something greater than the finite world is an indication that despair is not the end of the story. There is something on offer that transcends a limited view of life as 'a bottomless, insatiable emptiness' (*FT*, p.12) that ends in despair. This is not to say that sorrow and despair in life are not a part of what it means to be human. But, if one is tricked into thinking that the resolution to despair only comes about in an afterlife, one misses the point of faith. That is, that the

[365] *Ibid*., p.515.

solution is something that is possible in *this* life, if one is prepared to first make the movement of resigning and 'renouncing everything' (p.34) in the belief that finite existence (and hence despair over it) is not the whole of what it means to exist. The solution to despair over life is the possibility of hope and faith while one is living.[366] The knight of faith overcomes the despair that is constitutive of the first movement of resignation, by making a further movement – that of absolute faith in God. Faith is therefore the only solution to despair, and yet despair is a necessary condition for faith.

To be in denial, or wrong, and worst case, to be absolutely ignorant[367] that one has been born with the potential for faith (the 'condition' (*PF*, p.19)) in relation to the most important truth, that is, the truth of Christianity, is to make a fatal error – to be in sin[368], according to Climacus.[369] However, that human beings possess the faculty of reason (which seeks its own limits) is most certainly no guarantee that the potential for faith will be exercised. The mistake that can be made is to believe only in the power of reason. The 'understanding [then] despairs' (*CUP*, p.225n) only over that which transgresses its own boundaries. He calls this the 'immanence of the ethical despair.' (p.262) One therefore despairs over one's limitations in that regard, and makes the wrong decision in becoming offended by that which lies outside of the scope of reason. Although he contends that both despair and offense are necessary for becoming a truly faithful Christian[370], his point is that one cannot arrive at the truth of Christianity using one's human resources. It must be given by God, which is to say (as Anti-Climacus does) that everything is owing to God, including the human condition for faith. When it is presented to humanity through Christ there is no excuse. The truth is there for the taking. Then, one is either faithful to the truth, or one is 'outside' (*PF*, p.19) of it. There can be no middle ground. It is the same black or white choice that we see expressed in relation to offense:

[366] *FT*, p.17.
[367] *PF*, p.17.
[368] *Ibid*., p.19.
[369] *Ibid*., p.19.
[370] *CUP*, p.372.

either offense or faith. Climacus does not use the language of despair in the *Fragments*, but as will become clear later, Anti-Climacus will say that denial and ignorance of the truth of Christianity all come under the category of being in despair.

Vigilius' 'Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation' (*COA*, p.1) on anxiety in relation to sin, lays the groundwork for Anti-Climacus' specifically 'Christian Psychological Exposition' (*SUD*, p.1) of the problem of despair. In the former's account, there can be no hope for an end to anxiety if one is not first conscious of oneself as in sin, and if one fails to grasp Christianity as offering redemption – the only possibility for overcoming sin. If there is despair then it is the despair of thinking that there is no way out: that one is somehow doomed to sin 'as if there were nothing to do.' (*COA*, p.174) One fails to grasp the fact that, in the choice to sin, there is also the choice not to do so. Hence the anxiety that comes with the realization that one is responsible.

In Anti-Climacus' account, there can be no hope for an end to despair unless one comes to a total consciousness of what it means to be a self who is absolutely trusting before God (but more of that later). Vigilius prepares the way for Anti-Climacus' account of despair by saying that, from a finite perspective, one might well be able to postpone anxiety by avoiding the kind of finite temptations that lead to being in a state of sin, but that is not faith. One of the Abrahams[371] in *Fear and Trembling* finds resolution in relation to God's ethical temptation by finding a finite solution, i.e., by avoiding God's command and sacrificing the ram instead. *That* Abraham would find some relief in relation to his anxiety by being in a position to speak about how the sacrificial ram was his 'way out' of the problem.[372] However, he is without joy for not having been able to follow through in absolute faith. The Abraham whose hand is clenched in *despair* is closer to the movement of faith because he is poised and ready to sacrifice his son. Essentially, this points to the limitations of an ethically construed notion of sin, i.e., sin against the ethical. This merely postpones a greater task for the individual – that of becoming a person of faith. What is

[371] In the *Tuning Up* section of *Fear and Trembling*, a number of scenarios are played out. Hence the reference here to 'one' of the Abrahams.
[372] *FT*, p.100.

lacking is the kind of spirit that is the prerequisite for the kind of spiritual trial that is necessary for a fully-fledged faith. He writes: 'The most effective means of escaping spiritual trial is to become spiritless.' (*COA*, p.117); 'in the case of temptation the right thing may be to contend by avoiding. In the case of spiritual trial…go straight toward it, trusting in God and Christ.' (p.174)

Quidam clings to his despair, because he is conscious of the fact that it is indicative of a struggle between an ethico-religious and a purely religious choice. To him, this 'inclosing…depression is [his] pride, [his] honor, [his] inspiration.' (*SLW*, p.197) It is to be preserved at all costs. His despair is a marker for a consciousness of the eternal, and he is fully conscious of being 'in a quiet despair.' (p.200) What he contemplates is his spiritual relation to God, and this, for him, surpasses any merely finite expression of such a relation. Some level of spiritual fulfillment might possibly be attained in loving an other, and certainly some form of resolution to his thinking upon the problem before him. He sees that such a move is a sacrifice of self, but his ultimate concern is for a loss of his spiritual self. This he sees as implied in what ought to be an absolute devotion to his beloved. In his view he cannot be both, because the religious ideal that he contemplates is one of an absolute devotion to God that completely leaves the goods of the finite behind. In other words, he does not have the faith of an Abraham who, because of his willingness to let go of thinking in order to believe the absurd and impossible, in turn received back everything finite. That kind of 'religious [prototype]' (p.258) eludes his understanding. He is thus suspended[373] in despair. But, that despair – which Frater Taciturnus contends is not given enough consideration in a purely metaphysical appropriation of faith (p.446) – is something that has an 'essential significance' (p.454) in relation to an individual's religious faith.

Given that Kierkegaard's pseudonyms point to offense and despair as being essential to developing true religious faith, it is not inappropriate to point to a parallel between them in terms of the way they are spoken about by

[373] *SLW*, p.261.

Climacus and Anti-Climacus. One can perhaps make a distinction between active and passive despair following on from Climacus' similar account of offense. In coming into being as undeveloped selves with given conditions and propensities we have a faculty of reason, which in turn implies the propensity for faith. For Climacus, it should be no surprise to us when we are offended by Christianity. He sees all offense as ultimately 'in its deepest root passive.' (*PF*, p.61) We cannot escape from this possibility. In essence, what we can say about Anti-Climacus' view is that despair too is part of what is given in our coming into being, but only if we assent to the label of 'despair' as that which is the name for anything short of the ideal of becoming a fully developed religious self. In other words, we are none of us born as a fully developed religious self. Given the parameters of his thinking, and his view of what constitutes being 'in despair', he would no doubt view despair as also 'in its deepest root passive.' It is in the context of this underlying idea that he sets about making distinctions in relation to the various ways in which despair can be latently present or manifestly obvious. The bad news therefore is that despair is an essential condition of what it means to be a human; the good news is that it is only in coming to an awareness of oneself as eternal, and being in despair, that the 'possibility of this sickness' (*SUD*, p.15) becomes the possibility of faith. In this respect despair is both 'an excellence [and] a defect.' (p.14) Whether passively or actively, being in despair/despairing is an indication of the 'eternal in a man' (p.21), and hence of the possibility for faith. Unfortunately, however, the ideal might never be reached: it is after all 'The Sickness Unto Death.' (p.1) However, that depends on what one understands by 'death.' Some hope is presented to us at the end of Anti-Climacus' *Preface*: 'despair is interpreted as a sickness, not as a cure…and yet the cure is simply…to die to the world.' (p.6) So, might a cure be possible in this life?

In his Introduction, Anti-Climacus goes straight to the heart of the matter as he sees it: Christ is the cure for spiritual sickness and for spiritual death. With Christ, that is, when one becomes a true Christian, the spirit lives, and lives on after death – that is the hope offered by Christ: eternal life. Without Christ, the spirit is in despair, and upon dying, the spirit dies and with it the

possibility for dying to the world. In raising Lazarus from physical death, Christ gave him the possibility to die to the world. In this respect, the spirit in despair has the 'sickness unto death.' Death is a temporal moment; despair is a state. Whereas physical death cannot be so easily avoided, despair can be eliminated at any moment in time. For the Christian, physical death is 'only a minor event.' (p.7) Without the knowledge of Christ, man is in this state of despair without even knowing it. He is oblivious to what is the most fatal thing of all: not to have knowledge of Christ. In ignorance he mistakenly reckons the negative things that are of the world as being most detrimental to him. The Christian has the knowledge of 'a greater danger' (p.9) – that which is fatal for one's eternal being: never having known Christ's love, and never having been saved by him. The central point of Anti-Climacus' use of the story of Lazarus is not so much that he is raised from physical death, but that Christ is central to his becoming a new man. So, the worst thing of all would be to be a living person whose self is spiritually dead.

God's plan for us, in bringing us into existence with the propensity for faith, is that we should become a self that is conscious of itself totally: as finite and infinite, possible and necessary, with spirit, and before God. But this is a balancing act because there will always be a tension between these elements within the self. His view is that faith is the only cure for the sickness unto death.[374] According to Anti-Climacus, if the individual fails to become the ideal religious self, that is, if they fail to become conscious of themselves as being both temporal and eternal (where 'spirit' is the synthesis, i.e., the becoming conscious), and absolutely owing to the Christian God, then they are in despair. Like a cancer, despair can only be 'rooted out' (p.14) when one has (1) posited one's self, accepted one's self as not *just* finite, but as also something eternal (in the correct sense), and (2) acknowledged that one is entirely owing to a greater 'power.' (p.14) This is the ideal goal for the self, i.e., a self lifted out of despair by faith alone. In despair, there is a 'misrelation' (p.15) in those crucial elements of self – an imbalance that can be skewed in different directions. He asserts that,

[374] 'The opposite to being in despair is to have faith.' (*SUD*, p.49)

rather than being a rarity, despair is a universal condition of humanity[375], but that it is every human being's 'destiny…to be spirit.'[376] (p.22)

From the perspective of the self[377], he reduces despair to three possibilities with respect to consciousness, because as he sees it consciousness of self is a prerequisite for faith. Being fully conscious of one's whole self is to fully exist.[378] One cannot live fully in faith until this is achieved, and therefore despair is inevitable if a self-consciousness that leads to faith is lacking. He distinguishes between:

1. A lack of consciousness of oneself as a self: This is the 'impotent' (p.15), unconscious, absolutely passive despair[379] of a pre-individuated being who does not recognize that they have a self that is distinct, and hence it is *inauthentic* despair.[380]

2. A consciousness of oneself as only a finite self in an immediate world: There is 'some reflection' (p.54) on the part of the individual, but despair is mistakenly ascribed to the merely immediate and is therefore not a true reflection of what despair is. He writes: 'Here there is no infinite consciousness of the self, of what despair is, or of the condition as one of despair.' (pp. 50-51) For him, it is 'despair in weakness' (p.54), or, 'Despair over the earthly.' (p.56) There is a sense for something lacking that causes immediate despair, or despair over the immediate, but the will to get to the real truth about the self as eternal is absent. Although one might be conscious of despairing over something earthly, Anti-Climacus says that the ground of this despair is ultimately 'despair of the eternal and over oneself.' (p.60) One makes the mistake of thinking that one is powerless, that things just necessarily happen, and that one's destiny is beyond one's control. One resigns oneself to being 'inarticulate.' (p.41) Reflection might even progress as far as despairing over the weakness of the self in this regard, but ultimately it is a denial of the eternal aspect of the self. Surrounding the self with the goods

[375] *Ibid*., p.26; 22.
[376] *Ibid*., p.26; 102.
[377] *Ibid*., p.79.
[378] *Ibid*., p.29.
[379] *Ibid*., p.21.
[380] *Ibid*., p.13; 42.

of the finite world, being outwardly busy and 'successful', and allowing oneself to become just 'a number' (p.33) of the secularized herd engrossed in worldly aims, is merely avoiding the issue of despair. This kind of self is inert and 'hollow' (p.150) and lacking in the right kind of despair.

3. A consciousness of oneself as a finite self with freedom, and of the possibility for some expression of the eternal within the finite: This kind of self 'only works himself all the deeper into deeper despair' (p.14) in the search for an eternal meaning in the finite. In this state, consciousness of the self, of the nature of despair, and of one's own state as despairing, is elevated. It is almost as if one is looking at oneself in an impartial way. AC calls this 'defiance.' (p.67) By 'willing to be oneself', he means that kind of person who is engaged in abstract conceptualizing in relation to their self, the infinite, and their despair. There is a kind of detachment from the world involved here, and more crucially, a 'severing…from any relation to a power that has established it.' (p.68)

Withdrawal from the finite world in order to find some kind of transcendent, abstract self is for Anti-Climacus an unhealthy fantasy. What is missing is the acknowledgment of 'one's limitations' (p.36), that is, one's finitude. Despair is still present because there is an imbalance towards the infinite: 'The self, then, leads a fantasized existence in abstract infinitizing or in abstract isolation, continually lacking its self…an intoxication.' (p.32) It is a belief in the power of one's self as being capable of self-actualizing in the direction of an abstract ideal self. Although there are signs of a spiritual consciousness, the self is limited to a belief that 'in willing to be itself' (p.73) despair will eventually be overcome. The prospect of something existing outside of the self (God) that could raise it from the trials and tribulations of life is abhorrent to the person who wills to be his or her self, because that would be to steal away their power. They would rather be resigned to the pain that the world brings than to admit that there is something beyond the world that offers more hope.

However, what ultimately drives Anti-Climacus' thinking is a Christian theological view of despair in which it is equated with sin. To lack knowledge of, or to be in some form of denial (whether through weakness or defiance) in

relation to, Christ, is to be in sin. The Christian tenet of original sin proclaims that every human comes 'under sin.' (p.101) So, in terms of despair as sin, is there hope for one who recognizes the Christian God? Anti-Climacus wants to say that *if* there is knowledge of the Christian way of life as an option for the individual, and a consciousness of the eternal in which the individual relates to the Christian God, i.e., Christ, *but* there is denial present (either through weakness or defiance), *then* the despair is all the more 'aggravated.' (p.77) This is sin. Obviously, becoming conscious of oneself as 'existing before God' (p.79) is a major step in the right direction. He posits a correlation between consciousness of self and consciousness of God. The higher the consciousness, the greater the despair. But ultimately, in order get closer to the ideal (religious) self, one's obligation must shift from one's self to God – from 'self-willfulness…[to] obedience to God.' (p.82) That is, to become the kind of self that Christ says one ought to become, rather than the kind posited by the despairing self and the world.

Anti-Climacus asserts that, from the Christian perspective – which for him is the correct one – it is a mistake to think about despair and sin in any terms other than in a Christian context. For the individual who has a consciousness of the eternal, an idea of God, and who nurses a religious longing: be wary. It is not enough to have a merely poetic concept of, and relation to, God[381], and to be obsessed by one's despairing in this regard.[382] This is not yet the right kind of despair because an absolute faith in the Christian God as a real power in one's life is absent. For the individual who identifies himself or herself *as* Christian: be just as wary! It is an error to wallow in one's sinfulness; to despair in thinking that there is no way out. This is to deny the hope offered by Christianity, because it is a denial that for God everything is possible, even the forgiveness of sins. It is a kind of arrogance and self-centredness to want to despair over one's sin. Rather than despairing over one's powerlessness, one ought instead to focus on God as being able to bring about the seemingly impossible. For the individual who denies either the possibility or the need to be

[381] He calls it a 'poet-existence verging on the religious.' (*SUD*, p.77)
[382] *Ibid*., p.78.

forgiven, or who actively declares Christianity to be untrue, Anti-Climacus says that this is indicative of the kind of offense, despair, and sin, that fails to lead to faith.[383] It is all the more indicative of sin and despair, when there is a concept and knowledge of the Christian God. The highest pitch of sin and despair is that state of self in which Christianity is both denied and actively professed to be false. For Anti-Climacus, this is 'Sin against the Holy Spirit.' (p.125) It is sin and despair at its maximum.

For Kant's religion of pure reason, whatever is not of a moral faith in God is sin. Does this faith require of the individual that he should therefore take offense at that which goes beyond the limits of rational thinking? Despair certainly seems to fit the description of something that is non-rational. Whilst there is a distinction between passive and active offense, it is not clear as to whether or not it is overtly active in Kant's view. On one hand, he feels in a position to be offended at the story of Abraham; on the other, he avoids the attempt to view Christ in any terms other than that of the moral sphere. In the latter the offense is closer to that of passive denial. He does not include the concept of despair in his investigation of faith because his concept of self is confined to the rational sphere. Despair is in this respect non-rational, in that it falls outside of a faith that is a belief primarily in the capabilities of a rational being *qua* rational. In other words, because he believes (practical) reason to be capable of arriving at faith, there is no need to consider the human being as lacking in any way other than the ability to effect the highest happiness. For him, when one slips on the route to becoming pleasing to God there is always the possibility for constant renewal and re-birth, always the possibility for a change of heart. One should not dwell on one's failings, but see it as an opportunity for progress. Reason can posit God, and grace, as making up for this human deficiency. If, in Kant's view, anything that is not of a moral faith is sin, then presumably so too is human despair. So, for both Kant and Anti-Climacus, despair is sin. The distinction between the two lies in the fact that despair is unnecessary for a rational faith, but in the latter it is essential, precisely because

[383] *Ibid*., p.116n.

the self is defined as more than just rational. Assumed in both accounts is a subject who has the potential to will a change. The starting point in chapter four – that of an investigation into Kierkegaard's emphasis upon freedom as constitutive of faith – remains here a core idea.

Anti-Climacus' concept of 'authentic despair is formulated' (Theunissen, 2005, p.15) in terms of willing. He sees willing as grounded in an awareness of a self that is doing the willing. For him, despair is highest – one could say, most authentic – when one is actively in denial with respect to what Theunissen refers to as the three '*hypo*theses' (p.4): man as a synthesis, as having a self, and as originating in God. Despair is in a higher expression when God is acknowledged, but when there still remains: weakness, defiance, refusal, disobedience, pride, and denial that forgiveness is possible. One is in a 'qualitative, not quantitative' (Westphal, 2014, p.250) state of despair. One is closer to faith in this regard.

Michelle Kosch argues that, for Judge William, despair is the result of denying that one is 'a morally responsible agent.' (Kosch, 2006, p.86) For him, despair arises by virtue of 'a passive or fatalistic attitude toward one's existence…characterized by the denial of the claims of ethics.' (p.86) The real root of despair that the Judge wants to point out to the aesthetic young man (and us) is the mistake of viewing 'himself as a spectator in life rather than a participant in it.' (p.92) This is powerlessness, or rather, a denial of power that culminates in despair. However, in choosing to believe that he is not responsible for what happens to him in life, the young man cannot deny some level of freedom because he has made at least *that* choice. As such, he makes a minimal decision. But, as the Judge says, 'there is despair and [then there is] despair.' (*E/O*, p.502) Even if the young man can be said to be exercising *some* level of will in choosing to believe that he is not responsible[384], nevertheless it is only an impotent willing. There is only the decision to actively believe that one lacks possibility. It is not yet the kind of Anti-Climacean despair that is necessary for faith.

[384] As the judge says: 'despair one cannot without choosing to do so' (*E/O*, p.513); '…one cannot despair at all unless one wants to' (p.515)

According to Kosch, it is the aesthetic young man's fundamental state that is 'the prime candidate for the psychological aspect of despair.' (Kosch, 2006, p.93). The will is at its weakest point of all. The Judge's idea of 'choosing oneself' can therefore be understood more clearly. That is, in terms of choosing for freedom, responsibility, and possibility. This choice, for the Judge, is what staves off despair. When one chooses one's self 'not in one's immediacy, not as this contingent individual, one chooses oneself in one's eternal validity.' (*E/O*, p.513) One chooses to do justice to what being a fully-fledged human is, at least according to the ethical view. It is the choosing of the ethical self as opposed to focusing on that which is external to the self. In Kantian terms, it is the ethical self that has at its core that which distinguishes us as humans: our freedom. Kosch gets to the fundamental (Kantian) root of the Judge's view in relation to despair: 'The "choice of oneself" is in the first instance a choice of oneself as agent.'[385] (Kosch, 2006, p.94) For Anti-Climacus, despair is the result of our failure to reach our highest destiny, which ought to be to 'will to be directly what we are.' (Theunissen, 2005, p.5) In this pseudonym's view, what we are already – that is, our *a priori* being – is a synthesis of mind, body, and spirit, and a self before God. But, to borrow from Judge William's language, when we fail to reach our ideal it is because we fail to choose ourselves fully.

However, it must be pointed out that the ideality of Anti-Climacus' account of despair is in itself a message to us as to the failings of thinking ideally about faith. From someone like Climacus' point of view, faith is to be lived. It is a process of becoming. Conceptualizing faith – and I think that it is clear that Anti-Climacus' 'rigorous' (*SUD*, p.5) 'treatise' (p.6) is highly conceptual – does not necessarily make the task of faith any easier. Theunissen is not blind to the fact that his strict analysis of Anti-Climacean despair might be missing the point. He begins his preface by directing our attention to the fact that Kierkegaard

[385] Kierkegaard is inviting us into our own possibility for escaping despair when we engage with the pseudonymous text in the correct way. In asking *us* to choose (either/or) in favour of one life-view over another – even if one can argue that it is not possible to finalize this decision – Kierkegaard essentially confirms the fact of our freedom *to choose*. In terms of the use of the pseudonymous 'opposites' (the aesthetic young man v. the judge), perhaps the starting point being emphasized is not so much *what* we are to choose but *that* we can. If we do not realize this basic fact, then no exit from despair is possible.

himself wondered as to whether or not Anti-Climacus' treatise is 'to be used at all.'[386] (Theunissen, 2005, vii) Anti-Climacus' account sets us up for a no-win scenario. It is a 'prefabricated schema.' (Theunissen, 2005, p.38) in which we are all – as less than the ideal – in an inevitable state of despair, whether cognized or not. But, as with de Silentio's account of faith, the difficulty of reaching the ideal is always emphasized. Abraham makes the movement of faith and thereby realizes the ideal. That is to say, he frees himself from despair by trusting in God completely. In this respect, de Silentio's account presents us with the father of faith who is the prototype for Anti-Climacus' ideal Christian.

Kierkegaard wants to argue against any view of faith that excludes the concept of despair in its discourse. Contra Kant, to view one's self in purely rational terms would be to seek after 'an inhuman existence…[in] an impersonal collective.' (Theunissen, 2005, p.19) Kant grounds faith on morality that has freedom as its ground. And in this respect, freedom and responsibility are not denied in faith. But, for Kierkegaard, there is more to faith – there is a higher ideal. And so the difficulty of despair is given expression in a way that rightfully acknowledges it as constitutive of the process of coming to faith. In both Kant and Anti-Climacus' view of faith, the human is posited as having the capacity to ask: "What is this more-than-the-finite that I need in order to realize the ideal?" For Kant, we need the idea of God in order to fulfill what our reason posits as our moral vocation implied by our freedom. But he does not talk about this need in terms of despair, presumably because he believes that it would be irrational to do so.[387] For Kant, it is more rational to attempt an answer to the question "What may I hope?"[388] However, Kierkegaard's response would be to say that *not* including the concept of despair is a mistake, precisely because – contra Kant –

[386] Westphal echoes this view when he says that Anti-Climacus' characterizations are 'ideal types based on all too common stereotypes.' (Westphal, 2014, p.248)

[387] McCombs writes: 'For…philosophers who have studied their Kant…the idea of despairing over one's ethical and religious weakness is foreign to a philosophical way of thinking.' (McCombs, 2013, p.171)

[388] Wood confirms this view in his interpretation of Kantian faith: 'the choice of finite rationality to remain rational while confronted by its finitude, the choice of sober hope rather than wild despair.' (Wood, 1970, p.250) Green reads Kant as essentially saying that, rather than despairing, we ought to hope that our struggling is 'testimony to the revolution in our disposition…hope that for God…this…struggle bear[s] witness to the innermost quality of our wills.' (Green, 1992, p.66)

'by ourselves, we do not summon up the will to being ourselves.' (Theunissen, 2005, p.21) We might will to be a self in a limited way in Kant's account. But, for Kierkegaard, a more advanced view of selfhood and despair is necessary to a proper articulation of religious faith, not least in terms of both *how* we talk about it, and as to *what* can be said. Kierkegaard wants us to consider that we ought to develop a 'changed stance towards self and world' (Taylor, 1989, p.454) in order to 'overcome dread and despair.' (p.454) Selfhood is – like so much else in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous output – key to his concept of despair.

De Silentio wants to say that Abraham transcends despair and sorrow by virtue of his leap of faith. In that movement, 'there is no song of lament.' (*FT*, p.14) For him, God's promise was a promise for this life.[389] He did not have to become that kind of 'stranger in the world' who 'lives in the finite, but…does not have his life in it' (*CUP*, p.410) that Climacus speaks about. Nor does he cling to despair with 'pride' and 'honor' (*SLW*, p.197) like Quidam. Abraham does not, like him, lack conviction with respect to the possibility of religious fulfillment co-existing with the worldly. His is not an 'inclosing' (*SLW*, p.197) faith which separates him from the world in that way. No, Abraham's leap of faith is a leap beyond that kind of despairing, 'for his remaining in finitude has no trace of a dispirited, anxious training…he has the confidence to delight in it as if it were the most certain thing of all.' (*FT*, p.34) We certainly encounter conflicting views with respect to the possibility of happiness in this life versus an 'eternal happiness.' (*CUP*, p.15) Climacus echoes the Christian idea of the individual as having 'an interest with which he hates father and mother'[390] (p.16) Anti-Climacus says that the cure for despair is 'to die to the world.' (*SUD*, p.6) But one point is made clear: in *true* faith there is *no* despair.

So, what will convince the person who is content with an ethical life-view into making the movement towards religious faith? I offer a very modest response to this question, but one that arises from what Kierkegaard himself proposes. Kierkegaard's project is essentially a wager, with no guarantees. The

[389] 'Abraham believed…that he would become blissfully happy here in the world.' (*FT*, p.30)
[390] See Luke 14:26

wager is this. If he presents faith in the right way (if the linguistic form is appropriate), and if his reader is properly attuned – that is, if they are at the right stage of existence – then maybe they will make the leap of faith. Whilst he affirms the ethical, ultimately he wants to call into question the idea that the ethical in itself offers certainty and hope. In contrast, Kant wants to say that if we are being rational then moral faith makes perfect sense. The leap from a purely ethical life-view to that of moral faith might be an easier one to make, if we are thinking rationally. But, for Kierkegaard, it is not faith proper. For him, the person of faith is out on 70,000 fathoms with respect to their faith. But they are *also* out of their depths in terms of communicating faith in a way that can be understood. They might even be absolutely *mis*understood. In this way, Kierkegaard makes faith the most difficult movement of all. There simply are no guarantees that meaning will be effected, and that the person who lives within the purely ethical sphere will see the religious life-view as something of value. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard makes the attempt to communicate faith. Rather than viewing the question we have asked as being left unanswered by him, we should rather see it as precisely his point. No person can convince the other to faith. That is a journey to be made alone, though one might endeavor – as he does – to inspire the other to such a movement. We will return to this question in the opening and closing sections of the final chapter.

Chapter Seven: The Role of Language – Part I

7.1 Individual expressions: Pseudonyms and Style

Viewed broadly, the two philosophical perspectives on faith that we encounter in Kant and Kierkegaard indicate a contrast in emphasis with respect to the individual who is at the centre of religious faith. In Kant, the individual is reduced to a rational agent; in Kierkegaard, the individual, as a concept, is expanded out into a variety of possible perspectives, or, stages of existence. As has already been made clear, this thesis focuses specifically on Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings, and on what understanding of faith is conveyed by him through these voices. It should be clear by now that this choice is justified insofar as it is in these works that we are afforded the opportunity to experience that kind of richness of individual perspective that is so central to what Kierkegaard is really about with respect to the task of having faith. In this section I will offer some thoughts in relation to both the use of pseudonyms, and the role that style has in these works, whilst acknowledging here that before we begin we already know that these 'individuals' are not actually real. There is still a Danish philosopher lurking in the background, but that is not the concern of this thesis.

7.1.1 Pseudonyms

For Kierkegaard, the pseudonym is a representation of the individual who stands out from the universal herd. They are presented to us in order to provoke our 'development' (*E/O*, p.119) towards some goal, although, as we already know, that goal is that of becoming a religious individual. Perhaps the voice we hear will provoke in the reader the kind of thinking and emotional states that are, in Kierkegaard's view, necessary for this kind of becoming. We are invited to imagine ourselves in, or even to react against, the kind of experiential states in which we find the pseudonym. Above all he wants to inspire us, and to shake us into the kind of passionate engagement with living that is a necessary starting point for our development as individuals. The advantage with such an approach

is that we can, at least initially, observe the imagined individual from a position of 'comfort' (p.310) without any preliminary risk involved. There is nothing yet at stake. We meet the pseudonym in the text, and why should that frighten us? Of utmost importance to this approach is a belief in the ability of each one of us to understand what is being spoken, precisely because it is spoken from the perspective of the first-person.

As individuals ourselves, we are 'equipped with the necessary prerequisites for understanding' (*PF*, p.32) the human condition from that perspective. The pseudonym 'speaks as the single individual to the single individual' (*COA*, p.16), and Kierkegaard communicates with intention in this regard. If he is to provoke the kind of passion that is required for our becoming then he must carefully 'choose his individual.' (p.56) In *Stages on Life's Way*, Hilarius Bookbinder can be interpreted as essentially saying that if there is to be any point to writing and communicating then it should speak to me: '…what indeed is the use of being able to write if one cannot read what one writes.' (*SLW*, p.4) We all, in some shape or form, to lesser and greater degrees, make our way through life meeting the same kind of questions and struggles over existence. We can say of Kierkegaard's project of carefully constructed pseudonyms the same as Hilarius' hope for the collection presented to us – that it 'might be able to benefit his fellowmen.' (p.6) But, in order for this to be successful, we must come to the texts with our individuality – our 'self' – always in mind. We must adopt the right kind of stance.

However, it is not Kierkegaard's aim to say that systematic thought and systematic expression are to be denied. Far from it. That kind of communication is a part of what we are as human, and he does not avoid using the kinds of pseudonymous voices that want to speak to us in such an ordered and meticulous way. But, as we have seen elsewhere, his issue is with the role that such thinking and expression has with respect to faith. Be that as it may, the lines are never quite clear-cut when we are engaging with the pseudonym. We encounter the constructed individual who, just like a real living person, cannot be so easily 'categorised.' They are often a hazy, indeterminate other who is a

'compound of something of the esthetic [and] of the religious' (p.304), of the ethical and the religious, but never exemplifying an absolutely singular life-view.

From the point of view of language, the individual is dispersed in more than just one way of expressing himself or herself, but there is an underlying religious theme at play in some of the 'higher' pseudonymous expressions, and one that shows Kierkegaard's debt to Hamann. Namely, the idea that it is through the individual, in language, that God communicates with and through us. As Frater Taciturnus writes: 'when God speaks he uses the person to whom he is speaking, he speaks to the person through the person himself.' (p.316) The emphasis is always upon the individual person. This is the home in which God-talk properly belongs. If there is meaning, understanding, and an interpretation of the message encountered to be appropriated, Kierkegaard's hope in the first-person approach is, in essence, the enabling of the self to be inspired into a becoming that goes beyond the limits of what one already is. There is the potential to transcend one's current state. For Taciturnus, 'metaphysical…abstraction' (p.476) only 'exists' (ibid.) insofar as it pertains to the individual. If we are to think at all about existence, then, echoing Hamann, we must always keep the actuality of our being in mind, and this includes the actuality of language.[391] The individual ought to 'respect the claim life has…upon his human *you*.' (p.483n)

Far from being 'shavings' (*CUP*, p.3) to the system, the view espoused is that the individual viewpoint is the only legitimate one for faith. The fragmentary view is all that is really possible. One can never pretend to be capable of taking a bird's eye view from nowhere. Although it may not make a dent in terms of expressions of 'epoch-making significance' (*PF*, p.4), nevertheless, the individual 'little fragment' (*CUP*, p.8) is significant *for* the individual. For Climacus, there is something that is more fundamentally essential in the individual 'dialectical' (p.11) expression that goes beyond what is deemed to be rationally and systematically derived 'certainty of knowledge.' (ibid.) Climacus says that one can relate to Christianity's truth objectively and

[391] Taciturnus points towards the fact that the where and when of one's existence underlines one's thinking. This is evident in his contextualizing of the Greek mode of thinking in terms of the '…location…language…art…people.' (*SLW*, p.484n)

subjectively, but the method of expression via the pseudonym implicitly stresses the voice of the latter who is engaged in a 'process of becoming' (p.73), rather than that of a systematic, objective observer who is looking for facts. For him, truth for the individual resides in the becoming, and so we can say that, for Kierkegaard, the expression of 'the way' (p.78) must be couched in an approach that emphasizes that individual perspective.[392] That is to say, there is always an individual movement required in order to get past that limiting inner sphere that Kant proposes as the intelligible route to God. Living authentically as a religious individual is fundamentally a solitary mode of being, and Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonym is a kind of immersion therapy. The whole point is to 'immerse oneself…in subjectivity.' (p.193) If one is going to speak about faith, then it ought to relate to the existing individual.[393]

The pseudonyms are brought to life by their Danish creator in order for us to see that the process of faith must involve passion, over and above abstract thinking. They speak to 'you and me' (p.350) about 'the essentially human.' (p.356) The way in which he does this is through a suitably rich tapestry of language – the 'breadth' (p.357) of expression in 'the poetic, the ethical, the dialectical, the religious' (ibid.), and using transparently human, albeit constructed, voices, just as one finds in Scripture. Hamann argues in favour of a more wholistic human experience of God, as opposed to purely rational conceptualization. His idea of faith is one in which the human being embraces the fact that there are some things that simply go beyond analysis. Yes, he agrees that we can extract the positive moral content of some of the stories of scripture, but he also maintains that scripture needs no further translation. It speaks to human passion in a way that requires no exegesis.

Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonyms – and hence the distancing of his own self – removes the immediate possibility of our reacting directly to him. He can play with ideas and language in a way that can communicate meaning and passion, that might ordinarily 'sound strange, ludicrous, disgusting in the mouth

[392] See also *CUP*, p.193.
[393] Climacus speaks of 'immortality, faith, the paradox, and other such concepts that are essentially related to existing.' (*CUP*, p.269)

of a particular factual person' (*CUP*, p.628) If one reads the work as being by the pseudonym, one is in a better position to avoid both the presupposition one might have in relation to Kierkegaard, and the question of his philosophical relation to the pseudonym. Climacus wants us not to be concerned too much about who he is, or what his own opinion is. Evans says that he is 'an elusive, if not downright devious author.' (Evans, 1992, p.10) His 'detached perspective' (p.11) on Christianity is presented to us in contrast to the true Christian who is actively engaging with the challenge posed by faith. The pseudonym can be viewed as 'a key to interpretation' (Mooney, 2013a, p.192), and not necessarily Kierkegaard's view. That does not rule out the attempt to say that he did in fact hold those views and make those kinds of distinctions. Alternatively, however, one can just approach the texts as they are, in terms of what they say, and leave the question of authorship out of the discussion. There is of course a natural tendency for us to want to know something about the author, and especially so when there is personality in the expression by virtue of the style – the letter-form, the diary, etc. These concerns aside, what we can say is that the use of the pseudonym primarily emphasizes the centrality of the individual who gives expression – whether it is reason, faith, offence, disbelief, or silence, etc., that is being communicated.

However, even if the use of the pseudonym communicates the importance of individuality, *that* individual is ultimately inaccessible to me except in respect to what they say[394] : 'In the case of the pseudonyms…the I who speaks…is…fictional…The pseudonyms seem at once to establish and to deconstruct the I-Thou context for communication.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.79) Nevertheless, they are creations, even if the creator is fundamentally ambiguous and obscured from view. Although language can be functional, routine, and

[394] A move such as the revocation that Climacus attempts at the end of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* might be viewed by the post-modernist as the 'death of the author.' From the perspective of the other to whom one communicates – or, for me as *interpreter* – what I encounter is not the author but the form and content. I am thinking here of Roland Barthes' 1967 essay: 'The Death of the Author.' Barthes writes: '[W]riting is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.'(Barthes, 1977, p.142); '…the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.' (p.148)

habitual, it can also be creative. In the latter form, it mirrors the ambiguity, or one could say, the process in which the individual is engaged: the creativity of becoming a self. The individual as creative and creator cannot be dismissed as unimportant to the message of the text, even if they elude total appropriation. And so we can say that the author is not 'dead'[395] entirely, in that, the meaning that arises by virtue of language can never be fully divorced from the contingent, the historical, and the temporally situated individual who is necessarily always a part of a given tradition, even if they have since disappeared from view. We already know that the pseudonym is not real, but that does not undermine a core point of Kierkegaard's. That is, the need to prioritise the individual perspective in any philosophical discourse about the contents of lived experience.

In his own way, Kierkegaard wants to deconstruct the way in which philosophy and theology ordinarily speaks about faith. It is not that Kierkegaard wants to deny or disassociate himself from the views expressed in the pseudonymous texts. It is rather that he wants to point to the complicated and ambiguous nature of the self, and more importantly, of the self in relation to the object of faith. We cannot *simply* refer to "Kierkegaard's view of faith" in an absolutely systematically clear way, but that is not to say that there is no thinking person behind the expression that we encounter, even if we can never point directly to Kierkegaard as the other. As Caputo writes: 'This "other" is not reducible to language nor is it something which can shake loose from language as if it fell full blown and wholly constituted from the sky.' (Caputo, 1997, p.17) Perhaps when we want to refer to Kierkegaard's philosophy we ought to write "Kierkegaard" and not Kierkegaard, or, better still: ~~Kierkegaard~~. Individuals are also thinkers, but as subjective, their thinking has existence as its basis. The pseudonym that speaks to us, no more than a real individual, cannot be easily tied down to a particular or certain interpretation of that imagined individual. This tone of uncertainty is in keeping with how we ought to view the whole task of faith. However, the tension between the pseudonymous views, and the implied tension with the original author who lurks behind the different voices, is

[395] Again, in reference to Barthes' idea.

a true representation of the ambiguities we all face in our encounter with the other. Human life-views are rarely, if ever, only confined to one stage of existence. That the kind of language expression and thinking within an individual pseudonym can shift around, is indicative of the fluidity, reality, and blurred lines involved in what it means to be human. Neither Kant nor Kierkegaard are only ever *about* one thing. And, no more than living, all writing and reading is perspectival. In what we read we are invited into a particular perspective.

The kind of attitude that is the subtext of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship is one of humility generally, but religious humility more specifically. So often do we hear the pseudonym proclaim from the outset that they are not a philosopher, even if we are inclined to not so much disagree, as to want to say that we are unclear (or even in disagreement with each other) in this regard. For him, humility was precisely what was lacking in the philosophy of his day, in that, it regarded itself 'as a linguistic or cognitive totality, self-sufficient and thereby immune from anything outside it.' (Westphal, 1996, p.63) He wants us to ask ourselves if we are so sure about what we are and aren't. And the pseudonyms are the perfect way to achieve what is necessary for edifying us in this regard. That is, our becoming aware of the ambiguity of life and of our own personal uncertainty. There is good reasoning behind this approach. We can never know the other fully, not least because every individual self is an enigma to itself, perpetually changing and becoming some other self. If Søren Kierkegaard speaks through the pseudonyms, it is only to whisper in their ear. If we are offended by, or despair over, any of the pseudonyms, then all the better. We ought to be confronted if we are to make any headway in faith viewed as the task of a lifetime. Mooney calls Kierkegaard's pseudonymous approach as dodging 'stable representation, the sublime unsettling.' (Mooney, 2013b, p.61)

The goal of becoming a Christian is an ideal that 'perhaps will never be [realised]' (Carlisle, 2010, p.171) because individual existence is always a becoming. It is always a 'being-between.' (ibid.) However, it is a mistake to think that these idealized individuals have little of the real world about them. Absolute balance and wholeness are not necessarily the natural state of a human

being, and neither is an extreme disposition in which the individual exists with a 'single-minded devotion.' (McCombs, 2013, p.182) However, I think that, taken as a whole, the pseudonyms point to the fact that even within a single individual there can be many possibilities, many competing states, dispositions, thoughts, feelings, etc. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard would perhaps accuse us of being half-hearted and unwilling to make the correct kind of movement that his faith requires in dismissing the ideal out of a sense of its impossibility. The pseudonyms are held up to us, and speak to us, in order that we should at least begin to question ourselves in relation to faith. That is not to say that first-person deliberations can necessarily go far enough. That is to say, beyond mere knowledge of the individual self in order to get to a universal truth. In order to get close to this goal, what is required of the subjective individual is 'imagination…as a faculty of awareness or perception.' (p.206) What is to be imagined is the ideal that one might possibly become.

Through the pseudonyms, Kierkegaard wants to explore what level of truth is possible for a person at a particular stage. The highest truth for him is the truth of Christianity. However, as Rudd points out, Kierkegaard's treatment of the stages of existence are an 'idealized' (Rudd, 1993, p.26) account of what is possible. The reality is that the stages are not clearly demarcated. Pure and abstract thinking about existence – about flesh and blood humans – is a wholly ridiculous idea to Kierkegaard. A God's-eye-view is simply not possible for a human being. It is irrational to think that it is, not to mention arrogant. In other words, an absolutely systematic view of human existence is impossible. Kierkegaard is exemplary in his multi-faceted expressions of existence, and, taken as a whole, closer to representing the many ways in which human beings choose to express themselves in relation to existence. The pseudonyms are like 'test areas', where the individual is brought back into focus in order to shed light on the limitations and possibilities of existence, and for the ethical and religious stages to be made truly meaningful, i.e., for the existing individual.

Objective thinking clearly has its place, and Kierkegaard 'never denies the validity of thought.' (Elrod, 2015, p.22) Elrod says that 'Pure thought is a theoretical and detached kind of thinking which characterizes the spectator of

existence.' (ibid.) But this view from nowhere is for Kierkegaard an impossible ideal. He reads Kierkegaard as saying that abstract and systematic thinking is essentially dishonest for not openly declaring it to have 'no relation to existence.' (p.23) If there are universal concepts in Kierkegaard's thinking, they are not derived abstractly but 'from man's concrete, lived experience.' (ibid.) They are derived *by* an existing individual who does not pretend to have a view from nowhere. The Kierkegaardian single individual is that element in the 'system' that undermines the system itself, because the individual – far from being ideal and complete – is always striving. Ultimately, the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of a living human that must negotiate the kind of life-questions that cannot be ignored. Personal decisions must be made. Kant posits a relation to God that is derived from a rational position as a 'secure pure, abstraction.' (German, 1981, p.60) That is, away from experience and away from the sensible. Hamann disagrees with this kind of attempt: 'He is determined to be a bodily part of a divinity who communicates with and became flesh himself.' (p.61)

Kierkegaard's polemic is similarly inclined towards a reinstatement of the importance of considering the relationship to God from the perspective of the individual self as a living being rather than an abstraction. God communicated with man in the form of the Incarnation, and so we ought to respond in faith as flesh and blood human beings who are more than just rational minds. Becoming a self involves the kind of subjective (and not abstract, objective) thinking that is necessary for being actively involved in the kind of things that pertain to what it means to be human: loving, striving, hoping, despairing, thinking, dying, etc. Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonym is an attempt to so distance himself in order that the message being conveyed should be appropriated separately from our supposed 'knowledge' of him as the individual 'Søren Kierkegaard', and from the historical situation in which he found himself. The historical is contingent, and what Kierkegaard wants to say is that thinking – most especially rational thinking – will *always* find itself to be limited and deficient in terms of what it can then say about faith, regardless of the historical setting. That is to say, that thinking about faith in a systematic way is not conducive to real faith. Thinking is not 'off limits.' It is a part of our make

up as humans. However, there is a distinction to be made between thinking *about* individual subjective faith in an objective way – from the outside looking in – and that of the thinking *of* that individual who has already 'received the condition [of faith] from the god' (Evans, 1992, p.42) – who thinks from the inside looking out. Evans interprets Climacus as saying that knowing what Christianity posits is not the same as understanding it. Being able to think about it (as Climacus does, and wants *us* to do) is not the same as acquiring its truth. For that to happen, one needs God, and an understanding that acknowledges that one cannot understand!

So how might we understand someone like the pseudonymous de Silentio? Westphal (2014) asserts that the ethical that is being referred to in *Fear and Trembling* is Hegelian. One can certainly adopt this position, and the fact that other authors (Green, Lippitt, Mooney) take the ethical in Kierkegaard to be a more definite relation to Kant does not escape Westphal's attention. However, there are viable reasons for wanting to read Kierkegaard as responding to Kant, notwithstanding the fact that (as has been touched upon in chapter three, p.111n) one can read him as responding to systematic philosophy more generally. Firstly, in order to understand Kierkegaard more fully, one must go back further than Hegel, not least because the problem of a limited, i.e., purely ethical, moral, and rational, faith, is clearly of great concern for Kierkegaard, even if he wants to affirm ethico-religious faith as a point of departure. Secondly, it is clear that Kierkegaard is part of a tradition of response to Kant that has its beginnings in that of Hamann (and Jacobi). And Kierkegaard resurrects some of those same arguments with Kant. But, my view of the ethical in Kantian terms is part of a broader context that is really concerned with the relation between the ideals of systematic and non-systematic language expressions on the subject of faith and reason. This is not an attempt to tar every version of the ethical with the same brush. There are clearly differences between Hegelian and Kantian concepts of the ethical. But one cannot deny the fact that in both Kant and Hegel's accounts of the ethical there is systematic thinking in relation to the human being. In the context of the expression of faith, this is my target, as it were, or, what Westphal calls the kind of expression of 'a pure reason that inhabits "the view from

nowhere,"…an ahistorically universal truth to which…every individual is responsible.' (Westphal, 2014, p.44)

In a reading of the ethical in Kantian terms one still arrives at a core message in *Fear and Trembling*. That is, the primacy of the individual and the relating to God of that individual. With that in mind, Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonym makes absolute sense in terms of his emphasis upon subjectivity rather than objectivity when speaking about faith. When the pseudonym proclaims that he is not a philosopher, and that he writes without authority, what he wants us to consider is that objective thinking – and the kind of language that is often the conduit for such expression – is not necessarily the only way in which an understanding of faith is possible. In broad terms, his conviction is that systematic thinking and writing are not the only medium for giving expression to the human condition. The pseudonym may be a more appropriate way in which to speak to humanity, but that is not to say that within a single expression (the pseudonymous text) we will not also find an admixture of the subjective and objective. In the latter type of expression the goal of the objective view is what Westphal calls 'certain and final knowledge, the philosophical touchstone of philosophical modernism from René Descartes to Hegel.' (Westphal, 1996, p.67) Kant wants to talk about Christianity objectively. But Kierkegaard wants us always to consider what it means (what its implications are) for 'me'. It is the difference between objective faith and subjective faith: 'Whereas the objective thinker seeks to understand the concrete abstractly, the subjective thinker…[strives] to understand the abstract concretely.' (Walsh, 2009, p.38)

The spirit of Romanticism was essentially that of individual originality. The individual, *qua* individual, and especially the poetic one, ought to offer something unique to humanity. Self-expression is a vital facet of what it means to be human if one is not to be swallowed up into the universal herd. Kierkegaard is intentionally exemplary in respect of emphasizing subjectivity over objectivity. For him, 'subjectivity is both first-person and whole-person.' (McCombs, 2013, p.187) McCombs says that he 'seems to have sacrificed rational evaluation on the altar of subjectivity' (p.182), and that this is essentially an

imbalance or bias on Kierkegaard's part. What we are invited to do is to attempt to think, and see the world, as the other might. The core message is: think like an individual in order to get to the truth, most specifically the truth of faith. If we are to be truly rational beings, then it is irrational to want to put objectivity on its own on the pedestal of truth and knowledge. McCombs writes: 'Kierkegaard prioritizes paradoxical and holistic reason over merely theoretical reason…because he judges it to be the most effective means to the most adequate cognition of the highest things.' (p.219) His intentional use of pseudonyms serves to highlight the importance of individuality. As humans, we can 'recognize the possibility of other types of personality.' (Davenport, 2013, p.233) Being human is much more than any systematic view can hope to encapsulate. We are not all equally the same in terms of our level of development, spiritual or otherwise. For Rudd, Kierkegaard's 'literary method…is a more authentically existential way of philosophizing than writing formal treatises.' (Rudd, 1993, p.20) But, that is not to say that he does not also employ abstract language.

Kierkegaard goes back to Kant in order to go beyond him. For Kant, the ethical is the way in which we relate to God, but what was essentially missing – by virtue of the fact that his religion project was driven by a concept of reason framed in universal terms – was that element that Kierkegaard saw as so crucial to us being able to say anything about our religious existence. Namely, individual experience, or, the self. When Kant asks: "What can I know?", "What ought I do?", and "What can I hope for?", the emphasis is upon 'know', 'ought', and 'hope.' Kierkegaard wants to put the emphasis on the "I" as it relates to those goals, that is to say, upon the self. Kierkegaard does not reject thinking. Reflection is necessary. But the thinking ought to be about one's self as it relates to God. For Kierkegaard, thinking subjectively has primacy over objective thinking when it comes to our relation to God. Therefore, subjective expression gets closer to the truth than any objective expression can hope to achieve. That is not to say, as Evans points out, that Kierkegaard denies the possibility of saying something from an objective position. (Evans, 1998) But, Kierkegaard does want to deny that objective thinking can get to the truth of faith in a way

that does it justice. For Kierkegaard, faith requires passion and individuality, not a cold and objective eye.

Although he constructs imaginary characters, he is, in essence, attempting to communicate in a way that speaks to the reality of individual life. The core of what he is about is honesty towards the human condition. Kierkegaard's emphasis upon the individual, and on a holistic view of faith as it pertains to lived experience, would seem to rule out the possibility that the pseudonyms were a superficial or unimportant literary device. Why do we have a 'metaphysical need for identifiable authors' (Mooney, 2013b, p.59) when it comes to philosophical thought? Why is it important that I know something about the person who is speaking to me? Mooney points to Kant's assertion that reason has a natural need to get to an ultimate source: to get to the 'truth.' However, Kierkegaard intentionally wants to make it difficult for us to do this, precisely because getting to the absolute truth – especially the Truth of Christianity – is denied to ordinary understanding, and especially denied to mere reason.

It is through engaging with the other that understanding faith and existence through language becomes possible. When he voices a possible viewpoint, Kierkegaard wants us to engage with a particular, albeit pseudonymously constructed, other. That is to say, we are invited to engage with another way of looking at the world. Taking Rudd's estimation of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, the former points to what he sees as the latter's view of the 'social character of language.' (Rudd, 1993, p.51) Without this character, the child would never learn to communicate with the parent. Rudd says that '[t]he knowledge of language is an inherently participative knowledge.' (p.42) At the core of this is the assertion that we cannot divorce the self from language. We are always engaged, at some level, in an interpretation of what the other is saying, but that is not to say that we ought to perpetually start from scratch in our appropriation of what the other says. In other words, there is the expectation of continuity of expression, even if we must also be ready to be pulled up short when the other says one thing but means another. We ought to be ready for the rug to be pulled from underneath us, as it were. However, we

are ultimately engaged with the other in the context of the activity of sharing meaning, notwithstanding the fact that we can neither respond directly to the non-existent pseudonym, nor to the now dead Kierkegaard and Kant.

At some level, every form of language expression is a response to, or interaction with, someone or something. It is fair to say that Kierkegaard's pseudonyms are 'personae rather than disguises.' (Westphal, 1996, p.8) And of course we *can* make much of the relation between Kierkegaard and the pseudonym, but when Kierkegaard *assigns* his individual in order to speak to us, we are presented with a distinctive, or, *signature* way of looking at the world. Ultimately, we have nobody to point to, to blame, and to criticize, because what Kierkegaard wants us to do is to point a finger at ourselves on foot of what is said. The ethically minded Judge William pronounces upon the aesthetic young man. But, who is he to judge? Abraham, as free, has nobody to blame for what he agrees to undertake. The message is clear: faith is *your* task as a living individual, regardless of what reason and the ethical might desire or need to say on the matter.

Betz says that Hamann's point in the *Cloverleaf of Hellenistic Letters* is that the common language of the Bible, and its expression through different authors, is 'an example of the Holy Spirit's kenotic condescension to the idiosyncrasies of human history.' (Betz, 2012, p.118) It is in this way that the divine is manifest. Bearing in mind the influence of Hamann that is so apparent in Kierkegaard's writing and thinking, it is no great surprise therefore that he should want to 'play out' this kind of Biblically-inspired way of relating faith to others in the form of the pseudonym. There is always a sense in which the pseudonyms – regardless of the 'stage' in which they primarily exist – point towards the need for a transformation or becoming with respect to religious faith. For Kierkegaard, the self is inextricably linked to the expression no matter how disengaged the language used might seem to indicate. Like Hamann, he wants to say that the individual behind that which is said can never absolutely 'disappear' – the 'I' can never be totally abstracted out of existence. If Kierkegaard's view of God-talk is 'rooted in…the single individual's God-relationship' (Walsh, 2009, p.51), then it makes sense that an individualistic

rather than universalistic form of communication is more suited to the expression of such a relation. It ought to be expressed in a way that is engaged rather than disengaged, precisely because it seeks to deal with those emotive aspects of human nature that are not purely rational. Hence, it is really only through the pseudonymous voice that Kierkegaard sees the passion and challenges of faith as being most properly articulated.

Hamann held the view that the title of a work is equivalent to the author's signature. (German, 1981, p.23) In this way, the self can never be divorced entirely from the expression – my signature is unique to me even if someone else shares the same name. This idea points us towards the distinction between form and content. Notwithstanding Hamann's assertion that 'the *language of writers* is a dead language in relation to the *language of conversation*' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.24[396]), one can make the point that Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonymous 'voice' comes closer to the 'spoken' word. That is to say, it is personalized, and 'characterized by richness…and…peculiarity of…idiom.' (O' Flaherty, 1952, p.24) And so we will move now to a discussion of the style and form of Kierkegaard's approach in order to see how his concern for the individual is played out in language.

7.1.2 Style

Some of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms profess to not belonging to the kind of systematic and critical philosophy of which Kant is a representative. And Kierkegaard would no doubt relate the forms in which he presents his thoughts to those kinds of 'slips' and 'scraps' (*E/O*, p.31) to which Eremita refers in regarding the papers of 'A', or those Climacean fragments and 'shavings of arguments.' (*CUP*, p.3) That is not to say that Kierkegaard's style of writing is all about 'lyrical effusions' (*E/O*, p.31), but rather, that in contrast to a persistently systematic and 'uniform' (p.30) style – as one finds in Kant's main writings – Kierkegaard uses a variety of devices in order to make an impression upon us, with blurred lines in order to keep us on our toes. We ought to profess faith

[396] O'Flaherty cites from: Hamann, J. G. (1824). *Schriften*, vol. II, Friedrich Roth and Gustaf A. Wiener (eds.). Berlin, p.205.

from an individual perspective – rather than *document*, as in the 'language of abstraction' (*CUP*, p.301) – in such a way as to appeal to the heterogeneous nature of human experience. Like understands like. As the aesthetic young man writes: 'On the whole, letters are and will always be an invaluable means for making an impression… the idea that the real person is the author of the letter creates a natural and easy transition to reality.' (*E/O*, p.349) And so, in Kierkegaard we encounter such variety: the treatise style, letters, diaries, the sermon, the lyric, reflections, speeches, the theoretical exposition, the inquiry etc. On a more specific level, he uses irony, allegory, aphorism, analogy, allusion, metaphor, epigrams and inscriptions. The list is almost endless. On a deeper level, there is something of the essential and spiritual that remains after the poetic utterance. That is, insofar as the poetic is able to 'inflame the passion' (p.111), it affects the individual in a way that speaks directly to their humanity in a holistic as opposed to a limited way. It has the potential to appeal to not only one's thinking, but also more importantly to the passions. For Kierkegaard, language ought to be richer in form if it is to stand apart from the kind of language that merely 'describes actuality.' (*SLW*, p.30)

Kierkegaard, like Hamann before him, offers a way at looking at the world from a philosophical perspective that is not in keeping with the standard philosophy of his day. Whilst his style is in keeping with the Romantic tradition, from the point of view of mainstream philosophy, he too was out of 'fashion.' (*CUP*, p.6) His style transgresses what is deemed to be 'permissible.' (ibid.) His poetic style is not merely his way of fitting into the literary tradition. Rather, it offers the potential for a 'rich yield' (*SLW*, p.187) with respect to our becoming in relation to faith. As an astute observer of the human condition, Kierkegaard manages to bring to life, through the combination of the pseudonymous voice and a variegated style, his observations of the human condition, as it were, 'fresh from the water, wriggling and sparkling in the play of their colors.' (*COA*, p.55) And yet, ironically, for all it can do, there is a recognition on Kierkegaard's part that poetic style and expression, as a part of language expression in general, can only play a 'fragmentary' (*E/O*, p.150) role. If we are incomplete, that is to say, in a process of becoming, we cannot expect that our language expression should be

anything but a mirror for that 'work in progress.' If we are to be thoughtful in our expression of faith, then in order to come closer to God, our ascent – even if we never get there – is only a possibility in the 'murmur of winged words.' (p.302) Contrary to the concerns of Judge William with respect to the use of poetic language, one can say that Kierkegaard does not simply pluck his words 'out of thin air.' (p.386) He is not merely concerned with 'the immediate.' (*SLW*, p.105) What he wants to say to us in his use of poetic forms of expression is careful and intentional, and not merely done for the sake of the immediate experience of hearing the words and marvelling at their beauty. For him, there is simply more than one way to be convincing; more than one way to 'orient'[397] (*E/O*, p.399) one's thinking about deeply important human goods such as faith and love.

If it is fair for Judge William to say that a human relationship should never be a merely 'intellectual pursuit' (*SLW*, p.155), then it is also fair to say that human relationships, and our relation to God, ought not to be expressed in a way that is limited to what reason can posit. As Climacus says: 'Objectively the emphasis is on what is said; subjectively the emphasis is on how it is said.' (*CUP*, p.202) One could ask as to what kind of poetic discourse might convince the irrationalist to become more rational in their thinking. Would it be possible? Or, is Kierkegaard's style only designed for inspiring one to move away from the notion that faith cannot be appropriated by mere reason? That said, the reverse might also be a question for us too. Anti-Climacus points to such a question in relation to 'form.' (*SUD*, p.5) How can an 'exposition' be appropriate for the expression of something that is meant to be 'for upbuilding'? An exposition, or 'treatise' (p.6), is a form usually associated with rational inquiry. How can his be both? That is, both 'rigorous…and…upbuilding.' (p.5) We could translate this question as: how can a language expression inhabit both the poetic religious and the systematic? The problem is in thinking in terms of a duality in this regard, and it is something that will make an appearance in the final chapter. However,

[397] In a nod to Kant, the Judge writes: 'The first thing I must do now is orient myself and particularly you in the essential characteristics of marriage.' (*E/O*, p.399)

the question as to what stylistic form is *more* appropriate for God-talk is a valid one.

Anti-Climacus – as a spokesperson for Kierkegaard's ideal religious individual – gives us his opinion on the inadequacy of an overbearingly disengaged language style, and one that he sees as doing little to inspire one to faith: 'There is a more formal style that is so formal that it is not very significant and, once it is all too familiar, readily becomes meaningless.' (p.6) Something as crucial as the question of faith ought to be addressed to us in such a way as to have a real meaning for us. The expression that presumes an erudite and scholarly audience can only ever hope to convey meaning to those who understand the language. Paradoxically, the greater the formality the less universal appeal is possible, because the audience that can understand becomes smaller and smaller in number. That kind of approach is meaningful for only a few. But then again, can *every* human being appreciate and find meaning in poetic expression? When it comes to someone like Hamann and Kierkegaard we are certainly no more assured in our understanding. However, part of the meaning that both Hamann and Kierkegaard want to emphasize is precisely that sense of not-knowing. In what follows, I will return to Hamann in order to shed more light on the way in which this 'first-responder' to Kant's philosophy of reason can be seen as influencing Kierkegaard's style of communication.

For Hamann, the poetic language of Christianity is expression in 'a new tongue and a holy style.' (*Cloverleaf*, p.38) He believed that language generally has a religious root: it is a response to God and his creation. Natural language, and the poetic, is closer to being able to communicate the essentially human. As he writes: 'Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction.' (*Aesthetica*, p.63) For him, the divine is manifested in the common and poetic language of Scripture in the 'medium of the different personalities of its authors.' (Betz, 2009, p.118) He viewed language as the mysterious outer sign of an inner being, emphasizing the fact that language, as 'fundamentally poetic' (Betz, 2012, p.125), is an expression of that behind which

lies something more divine. Language has its origins in imagery, in that our primitive ancestors gave expression in an outward form to that which could not be seen. It is with this in mind that he sees humanity as having 'the ability to express an invisible nature through a visible form…to shape the world by the words of our mouths.' (ibid.) For him, all language is translation, but he viewed some language expression as more inspired and inspiring. For Hamann, abstract philosophical expression is less inspired because it only offers a narrow view. It cannot adequately express the mysterious because that falls outside of its aims.

Viewed from the Kierkegaardian perspective, faith cannot be so neatly categorized and systematized into a universal grammar. If the uncertain character of faith is to be communicated, it must be done in such a way as to appeal to that individual *qua* individual, even if it is as such 'an individual *view* of the general' (Frank, 1990a, p.153), i.e., of Christianity. What Kierkegaard wants to say to us is that, with respect to faith, the individual's expression of his or her world cannot and does not pretend to offer a total picture of the world that is guaranteed and certain. We can never understand the world in its totality because we can never have a view-from-nowhere. All that can ultimately be preserved, as it were, is the self in relation to God. Belief, *qua* belief, can never be anything but uncertain. Although active striving for the ideal of faith is what is required, nevertheless, thinking about, and the poetic expression of, 'the idea of subjectivity' (McCombs, 2013, p.111), is necessary for keeping one's faith alive. The right kind of language expression plays the role of helping to refresh one's religious commitment. It is made possible in the 'inexhaustible…fertility of expression.' (*CUP*, p.260)

The ways in which the pseudonyms speak to us work together in attempting to point us in the right direction, i.e., in the direction of the religious. That is to say, the often shifting style is an intentional device that is utilized in order to unnerve us. We ought to be always searching, questioning, and unsure of ourselves. True faith for Kierkegaard does not require of us that we should be certain. Rather, uncertainty is a necessary component for faith. This is the kind of meaning that bubbles under the surface of Kierkegaard's literary style. Context, form, content, and the voice of the pseudonym, act in a unified way in

order to effect that kind of meaning for us. It places us in the 'right' frame of mind. Frank writes: 'The practical conveyance of meaning…into a given context…allows for the emergence of individual, or situational, meaning.' (Frank, 1990b, pp. 267-8)

For Hamann, the fact that God revealed himself through ordinary human events in the medium of an ordinary, and yet, 'poetic' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.12), 'natural language' (ibid.), serves to highlight the inappropriateness of a rationalistic and abstract language in the communication of the contents of faith. Revelation is for all to understand because it speaks to 'the peculiarities of the multifarious activities of man.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.25) It can be understood by all and not just a select few (as in critical and systematic philosophy). For example, the parable works in a unified way. It relays a deeper message, but it still retains contact with the sensible world, in that, the message is couched in a language that speaks to the ordinary, emotive aspect of the individual. O'Flaherty writes: 'So intimately is language bound up with life, and so faithfully does it reflect.' (ibid.) It is clear that Hamann maintained a theological understanding of language in its diversity. (O'Flaherty, 1952, xiv) He believed that 'the glory of being human consists in [the] ability to be creative.' (German, 1981, p.4) Hamann believed that it is through language, and more specifically through *creative* language, that human beings 'communicate creatively with God and other humans in time.' (p.30) Creativity in language is a 'sign of his communication with God.' (p.157) O'Flaherty calls this 'its imaginative and affective force.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.20) We are not talking about the invention of new words in a sterile philosophical environment, but about the creative use of that which is already available to us – new 'sense-units of language, new phrases.' (p.21) For Hamann, the real goal of language is to convey meaning. But the mechanical and outward workings of language are not the highest concern.

These ideas of diversity and creativity of expression are played out by Kierkegaard in his use of the pseudonym, in opposition to the impersonal, dispassionate treatise style. A rational approach to the use of language might have as its aim the 'purification' of that language by imposing an unnecessary strictness upon it. Hamann's assertion that it is not possible for the individual to

stand 'outside' of the world (*Metacritique*, p.217) is part of his wider argument against reason's self-proclaimed capacity to occupy a view from nowhere. He is striving against the 'process of depersonalization' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.45) of his time. For Hamann, writing style is 'an expression of…living.' (German, 1981, p.1) The individual who is giving expression in language functions on many different levels. It therefore makes sense to Hamann that language can manifest in different forms. It can serve to mirror the labyrinthine and fragmentary nature of what it means to be human. Communication that draws upon different stylistic forms and literary devices is, in Hamann's view, the perfect complement to the diversity that is contained within the individual self: the straightforward, unique, ironic, metaphorical, allegorical, illusory, paradoxical, contradictory, ambiguous, comical, serious, ugly, offensive, beautiful, etc.

The world is diverse. We, as individuals, share the world, but we have different – and more importantly, changing – perspectives, traditions, histories, genders, affiliations, thoughts, emotions, etc. Kierkegaard explores these 'multiple metaphysical possibilities' (Mooney, 2013b, p.66) by 'taking up a multiplicity of genres.' (ibid.) His approach, in which poetic richness of expression is dominant, acts as a mirror for the richness of individuality. If it is to mean something to me as an individual, then, it ought to speak to me using language that appeals to me *qua* individual. Because language is a human endeavour, it is essentially 'alive' and evolving. It is that by virtue of its relation to the passage of time because we too are changing and evolving: I am no longer the self that I used to be. There are no guarantees that in giving continued expression to my thoughts they will remain absolutely consistent. Therefore, we ought not to expect that it could ever be possible to give expression to what man is about via a form of language communication that is abstract, if the very subject is itself becoming, evolving, and non-abstract. This is why Kierkegaard's own style is in keeping with his belief in the importance of being honest when one is philosophizing about existence. Giving expression to existence is 'part of the act of experiencing.' (German, 1981, p.140) And so, if one is to be true to oneself as a becoming individual, then one ought to give expression to that becoming in the most appropriately full (and honest) way. Conversely, Kant's

deflationary style gives us a rational account of how we might understand the world and ourselves. But, we cannot escape the fact that it is through language and from language that this meaning is presented to us.

No more than Hamann, Kierkegaard's 'unruly' (Frank, 1990a, p.166) style defied the philosophical writing conventions of the Enlightenment, but he believed that an individual style offers a fuller and richer account of what it means to be human, over and above the solely rational. It is a 'surplus element that *exceeds* propositional meaning.' (Frank, 1990b, p.264) There is more to be communicated than just content, in that the form and style say something essential as well. That is, when it comes to Kierkegaard, there is truth to be found in the form and style as well as in the content. The *method* of the communication is as crucial as the *what*, because it points to this aspect of changing and becoming. This is not to say that some things are not constant and 'reliable', or, universally 'true.' But, from the perspective of the individual, life is a constant process of change. For Kierkegaard, to assume that the system is finished, and that something final can be said about man, is missing the reality of lived experience. Mooney writes: 'An outpouring of genres…carries an existential lesson…an…embrace of temporality…Change is a bracing condition to live out and replicate in literature.' (Mooney, 2013b, p.67)

If it is true to say, then, that a philosophical work's content cannot be divorced from the individual expression in order to get to a 'transparent insight' (Frank, 1990a, p.146), what we might observe is that it is a more onerous task – that is, *if* one has it as a goal – to separate style and content in Kierkegaard. Perhaps it is easier to do this with Kant, by virtue of the fact that there is certainly much less of the existential and individual character to overcome, even if there still remains the challenge of trying to understand the content. Hamann makes a distinction between poetic and abstract language. The former is 'any imaginative and affective use of a historical vernacular' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.16); the latter, is 'non-imaginative and non-affective terminology produced by the ratiocinative process.' (p.17) However, the reality (for the philosopher) is that one gravitates towards one over the other rather than communicating purely in one way: 'In practice, neither the ideal of pure poetry nor the ideal of pure

mathematics is attainable for the philosopher.' (ibid.) In other words, 'truth' does not have one single form of expression – what is true for the poet is as valid a truth as that of the philosopher. We are not here talking about truth in terms of relativism, but merely pointing to the fact that there is no single, definitive *way* of speaking the truth 'correctly.' Perhaps the distinction is more properly expressed as a question in relation to which style of expression is more *successful* in communicating in relation to individual experience. In Hamann's terms, the poetic is a far superior mode for religious expression than any rational, systematic, and reductive approach to the contents of lived experience could ever be. Kierkegaard saw in Hamann's style the profundity and honesty of lyrical expression. They both believe that a dispassionate language concerned for the universal cannot adequately accommodate individual faith. They both maintain that standard philosophical language, in comparison to poetic expression, ought not to be viewed as being, as Manfred Frank says, 'more compelling for truth.' (Frank, 1990a, p.146) Kierkegaard's style, no less than Hamann's, is a move away from the philosophical standard of his day, but that is not to say that it cannot communicate the kind of truth to which we are invited.

7.2 Language at the limits

If language is to be in any position to represent faith – where faith is understood as pertaining to the spirit – then, if one believes that language concretizes[398], i.e., it is immediate and sensible, and hence 'outside' of the realm of spirit[399], the question arises as to how one ought to use language for that purpose. At the very least, what must be acknowledged is that language is limited in this respect, even if it can mediate the sayable and the unsayable.

In order to be able to make a case for marriage as an ethical-religious goal, Judge William makes that task workable by confining his language to that

[398] *E/O*, p.68.
[399] Language is ultimately excluded from the realm of the spiritual unknown by virtue of the fact that 'when spirit is posited, everything that is not spirit is excluded.' (*E/O*, p.77)

of a conceptual understanding. He orients[400] his thinking and talking in such a way as to appeal to the sphere of intelligible discourse. But should we talk about love in such a way, even if we can? Essentially, he realizes that there is indeed a limit to *what* we can say, but that does not prevent us from wanting to say *something* all the same. It is, for him, a question of negotiating the inexpressible and the expressible.[401] In his opinion we can negotiate the topic but only if we put some limits on our language. He believes in the power of language as 'an excellent means for expressing what I have to say in the world' (*E/O*, p.583): that it communicates something with universal appeal. For the aesthetic young man, music is the most ideal form in which something as abstract as spirit can be expressed.[402] What he wants to discover are the furthest 'boundaries' (p.77) of language that come closest to such an ideal. That there is a boundary is the important point here.

However, what Kierkegaard wants to say against such a view, is that a language which attempts to say something in a way that approaches abstract ideality – 'at the moment when everything sensual is negated in it' (p.78) – is not a truly honest way of confronting the limits of what can be said, and especially not when it comes to faith. To put it more simply, we ought not to talk about faith abstractly in order to smooth over the edges so that its difficulty recedes. Although language is itself a part of the immediate, it can only *reflect* it and not 'apprehend it.' (p.80) To believe that we can apprehend faith in language is therefore going well beyond a limit that already exists in relation to the immediate, of which we have but a fragmentary[403] understanding. For Kierkegaard, the best way in which to reflect the limit is to bring it to light specifically through that which challenges us most in this regard. Namely, our reason and thinking, in which, when thinking about God, 'language fails, and thought is confounded.' (p.221)

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[400] *Ibid.*, p.399.
[401] 'So it is with true love. It is not something speechless, abstractly inexpressible, but neither is it something soft, ungraspably indefinite.' (*E/O*, p.470)
[402] *E/O*, p.77.
[403] *Ibid.*, p.150.

When de Silentio says that he must remain silent about Abraham, what he is really saying is that he cannot say something in Abraham's defence from the point of view of practical reason in the form of the ethical. But this does not rule out the possibility that he can talk about Abraham. Kant's solution to 'saying *something* about Abraham' is clear: it ought to be read as a myth if one is trying to look at Abraham from an ethical perspective; or, that Abraham must have been mistaken: it could not have been the voice of God. He can only talk about Abraham, and justify what is going on in the story, in terms of mythical rather than literal significance. To do otherwise would be to more explicitly admit that the limits of reason and rational language cannot accommodate the story of Abraham in such a way as to meet the demands of an explanation that will 'save' Abraham. He cannot be mediated or understood by the universal in positive terms. The limit of reason, which is at the same time the limit of language, places a limit on such a goal.[404] Kierkegaard's aim is to highlight the limits of what can be said, i.e., of what can have universal appeal. The paradox and the unintelligible[405] are consistently and repeatedly kept in the foreground. But there is a deeper point here. This incessant attempt to speak about Abraham, of which we can certainly accuse De Silentio, sends us a clear message: no matter how hard you try, you will always fail in language to appropriate faith, even if you 'go on talking incessantly day and night.' (*FT*, p.100)

William Afham says that when one tries to capture the essence of 'holy' (*SLW*, p.18), inward, spiritual 'stillness' (ibid.), no more than love, it 'vanishes…once there is speaking!' (ibid.) More specifically, this occurs when the limits of what can be said have been reached: 'when his speech has reached its high point' (*SLW*, p.35) If the lover speaks, and attempts to give reasons, it is as if he is speaking 'in tongues…he has fallen in love.' (p.36) Eremita believes that that which pertains to the spirit 'cannot be expressed immediately.' (p.65) For Quidam, written language can only go so far in terms of expressing what is one's 'innermost meaning.' (p.386) For Taciturnus, there is no one language that is

[404] 'Abraham cannot be mediated…he cannot speak. As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not do that, then no one can understand me.' (*FT*, p.52)
[405] *Ibid.*, p.62.

'adequate to express difficult thoughts.' (p.489) But this also perhaps provides some hope, in that, even if there is no one perfect language, then *some* attempt might be acceptable and reasonable. Is it then a question of what language is *most* appropriate?

Kant cannot risk talking about the Incarnation, given the constraints of a rational language; Kierkegaard's subjectively oriented individual can, precisely because the paradoxical is part-and-parcel of what is accepted in (the passion of) faith. Or: 'Without risk, no faith.' (*CUP*, p.204) *Saying* it is a personal risk, and one that does not put the other in jeopardy. For the Christian individual in faith, Christ is their personal saviour; for Kant, he is the perfect moral exemplar for a universal rational faith. In these contrasting ways of giving expression we see the limits of language at play. In the latter, there is a positing of knowledge from within the limits of reason, where the emphasis is upon '**what** is said' (p.202); in the former, '**how** it is said' (ibid.) is entirely related to what becoming a Christian means to 'me', where meaning and truth do not have knowledge (posited or otherwise) as their ground. For Kierkegaard, the expression in language of religious themes ought to reflect that we cannot ultimately *know*: that we must resign ourselves to believing with faith in 'the absence of a conclusion.' (*CUP*, p.289) The problem of finding the 'right words' is a reflection of 'the ultimate difficulties…about how we relate ourselves to faith from day to day.' (p.419) In other words, language is in a direct relation to the trials of faith. Or, language itself is on trial. The expression of faith in language, no less than the existential challenge, is part of this leap of uncertainty.

Climacus' concept of what faith is (and Kierkegaard's generally) relies upon the idea of contradictory opposites: 'revelation is marked by mystery, eternal happiness by suffering, the certitude of faith by uncertainty, easiness by difficulty, truth by absurdity.' (p.432) Nonetheless, from the point of view of language expression, his concept of faith is (paradoxically) intelligible. That is to say, one can understand what he means when he says, for example, that the truth of Christianity is that it is absurd. Ambiguity is part of the flexibility of language, and it is entirely appropriate, in that, it reflects 'the lack of an end, the

absence of a result' (p.442) which is constitutive of 'the religious life.' (ibid.) It negotiates the border limit of language with respect to the unknowable. This kind of language embraces its own imperfection whilst at the same time acknowledging that, as an 'abstract medium' (*CUP*, p.444), it can never reach the fullness of expression that is lived experience. There are some things that we experience that are beyond iterability.

So, how does Climacus manage to express the absolutely paradoxical, given that it 'expressly declines all explanation' (p.562)? He replies to this problem by saying that his aim is to 'present' (p.570) rather than to 'explain the issue.' (ibid.) *We* are invited to experience, in part, the difficulty of faith, of which language is a part. For the limit to be experienced fully, the articles of faith ought not to be procured through merely childlike concepts. The paradox out to be utterly challenging in the way it is expressed: not as that of the contradiction between God's glory and his being born as a weak and lowly human, but as the paradox that God came into existence at all; not as his having suffered, but that he chose to come into existence with the intent of suffering. The language used ought not to make it easy to 'accept [and]…appropriate' (*CUP*, p.611) Christian faith. Through the words of his pseudonyms, Kierkegaard provokes us into being so challenged, in the hope that, rather than being ambivalent or neutral, we should find ourselves so repulsed by the absurd, jolted by the 'incomprehensibility' (ibid.), and that we should be moved towards faith.[406]

Kierkegaard wants to preserve 'the gulf of qualitative difference between God and man' (*SUD*, p.99) by employing language that does not have as its aim the goal of (as Anti-Climacus sees it) trying to 'merge' (ibid.) with God through a philosophical or merely poetic language that pretends to have all of the answers in relation to faith. We are not limitless in any regard, and not least when it comes to language. De Silentio wants to say that faith does not have a cognitive origin, and so if we are to speak out of faith there is an immediate tension present between language and thinking. Given that cognition and language are

[406] *CUP,* p.611.

so inextricably bound, we should not be surprised that our speaking about faith will be necessarily limited. And so, something like the absurd, which 'does not belong to the distinctions that lie within the proper compass of the understanding' (*FT*, p.39), will necessarily be difficult to make intelligible. If it could be made intelligible in language, that would be a contradiction. De Silentio wants to say that Abraham's faith and mystery is that kind of content of faith that 'cannot be communicated universally.' (6:137) What this is also saying is that our capacity to understand, and hence, verbalise thoughts about, Abraham, is limited. We are at the limits of language when we want to say something about Abraham's faith, but it is important to say that we are not limited when we want to say something about him *within* the limits of reason and morality.

Kant says of the supernatural that 'all use of reason ceases precisely with it' (6:53), and so we seem to have two options with respect to language: either, to say nothing on the matter of the supernatural, or – if we are to say something – to say it in such a way as to be true to the limits of what can be said. In other words: to say, and yet not to say. Kant maintains that 'to try to realize the ideal in an example…is not feasible, and even has about it something nonsensical.' (B598) He therefore cannot talk about Christ as the Incarnation because in the language of the rational – which is necessarily concerned with *sense* rather than non-*sense* – the idea of the God-man is beyond that language limit. De Silentio's account highlights the story's absurdity when viewed through the lens of a '[p]ure reason [that] is in fact concerned with nothing but itself.' (B708) Through the idea of the absurd, faith as a paradox, the individual as higher than the universal, powerlessness as power, the paradox of love, and the contradiction between the ethical and religious expressions of the story, we are invited to experience the limit of our language and thinking head on. It is Kierkegaard's contention that if we are going to talk about faith – which, for him, goes beyond the kind of solvable 'questions that pure reason poses' (B723) – then the language we use ought not to shirk from the fact of its own limitations. It ought to mirror rather than to try and overcome those limits.

The idea of God is a concern for Kant, and he attempts to orient his thinking in order to say something about that idea as a useful (regulative) object of reason. It functions as a linguistic expression of 'what must remain unknown.' (Firestone, 2009, p.16) Given that we can neither escape the fact of language, nor our limitations in this regard, we are faced with the question – perhaps with Kant's attempt in mind – as to what form of language can adequately express the unknown. Derrida thinks that in order to do this we must strive to transcend 'ordinary language.' (Derrida, 1989, p.79) He, like both Hamann and Kierkegaard, believed that language is incapable of adequately expressing the 'interiority' (Derrida, 1996, p.63) of the individual in faith who traverses the territory of the impossible. The idea that everything is possible for God, even the impossible, is 'a central theological tenet for Kierkegaard.' (Walsh, 2009, p.74) It underscores his discourse in relation to both the Incarnation and 'the very substance of his concept of faith.' (ibid.) The approach he takes – that is, his use of language – points always to the impossibility of adequately speaking about that which is impossible from our limited perspective, but possible for God. The contradiction of *our* saying 'possible for God', given that such a statement goes beyond what we can know, highlights the limits of what we are in a position to meaningfully say.

It is an indication of our desire to know that we might want to think that there is a 'truth' that is independent of language. As limited, we can only ever have partial knowledge. Language therefore can only ever represent a partial truth. It is part of the 'radical temporality of the human condition' (Westphal, 1996, p.115), and an inescapable part of the argument against the claims of an impartial, rational, and systematic view of the human. However, we must also acknowledge that a subjective, partial, non-rational, and unsystematic expression is therefore also a limited perspective in relation to the whole truth. Objectivity, and the kind of truth that arises out of it, has its place. But truth as it pertains to the individual in faith is a different matter. Kierkegaard capitalizes on this ambiguity in language. It is precisely our limits, of which language is a part, which Kierkegaard always wants us to confront. He interprets truth as relating to passion, conviction, and 'inner integrity' (p.118) in order to subvert a

rational expression of what constitutes truth. He wants us to embrace 'contingency and transience and abandon the…search for…absolute truth.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.15) A 'truth' that speaks more to the *actual* experience of the individual's limitations with respect to thinking the impossible could be said to get 'closer to the truth' *for* the individual. To speak philosophically about religious faith is to abstract away from faith as it is lived. We think that 'we know how to speak…that we understand…[but] nothing is less pre-assured.' (Derrida, 2002, p.3) Kierkegaard wants to maintain that faith is precisely this uncertainty, and therefore we should not be surprised by the fact that our talk about faith should be limited: we should be tongue-tied.

Carlisle reads Kierkegaard as saying that if we are to nourish our 'spiritual health' (Carlisle, 2010, p.173), then we ought to keep alive the idea that not everything should be transparent to our thinking. Strictly speaking, we should not therefore be in a position to speak that which goes beyond our understanding. That is, not everything ought to be wholly expressible in language, or at least not in language that views itself as rational. We should seek to 'preserve the difference between the finite and the infinite, the determinate and the questionable.' (ibid.) Why should we want to *know* and *explain* everything away? Kant asserts that reason has such a need and he posits the limits of reason. In effect he posits the limits of what he believes to be a rational language. However, there is always some remainder that cannot be articulated with respect to faith, and he does not shirk from this fact. In this context, Kierkegaard's characterization of reason as passionate is a decisive move. He, like Hamann, wants to undermine the mythological view of reason as being dispassionate, cold, clear, and objective. Rather, reason is characterized as having a passionate desire to master the challenge of paradoxical thought. What for Climacus is the 'downfall' (*PF*, p.48) of reason is for Kant the 'limit of reason.' For the most part, Kant knows when to be silent in the face of the paradoxical. For him, that which goes beyond the limits of reason is a constant concern, but what he can say of that which goes beyond can only be expressed from the perspective of what *is* sayable by reason. He finds it possible to speak of the Ideal

of reason as arising from reason, but which cannot be justified as certain knowledge; he can speak of the thing-in-itself, even if it is beyond knowledge.

Like Hamann, Kierkegaard wants to emphasize, but in a more explicit way, the deficiencies of reason with respect to that which is of greatest concern for him, i.e., faith. Green sees Kant as anticipating Kierkegaard, but that the former does not *name* the encounter with the unknown in the same way as the latter. Green writes: 'Kant does not **call** faith a "leap"...Nor would he **call** the content of faith "paradoxical" or "absurd." Nevertheless...this "faith of practical reason"...[is] always uncertain movement beyond the sphere of possible knowledge.' (Green, 1992, p.58) [emphasis mine] Kant can only point in the direction of a faith that goes beyond reason, but he cannot enter into a language with respect to that which goes beyond his limit to the extent that Kierkegaard does. For the former there is no 'value' (p.168) in overextending what can be intelligibly said.[407] In effect, Kant wanted to trace the limits of the language of "reason" with respect to faith, but there are no guarantees in relation to what is expressed within those confines. Perhaps he can be accused of being irrational or unreasonable for thinking that the foundations of his concept of faith are absolutely solid. But, does he think that? After all, his *Religion* book is an 'experiment.' Is he testing reason, or testing faith, or perhaps ultimately testing the limits of language? We can certainly take the view that Kant realizes that rational language cannot accommodate the idea of the God-man, and that by not speaking about that central tenet of faith he somehow preserves it. He leaves it to the sphere of revelation. For him there can be no question of speaking about Christ in terms of his divinity, no more than he can talk about the Triune God in any terms other than that of morality and practical reason. The idea of miracles is a serious stretch for Kant, and ultimately (inevitably, I think) expressed in an unconvincing way, given the constraints of his religious language.

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[407] 'Kant was…willing to make use of some "revealed" Christian conceptions to the extent that they were compatible with our "natural" moral experience…however, Kant saw no moral value in the idea of a historical divine savior…The idea of a superhuman God-Man…provides no nourishing moral example on which those who are merely human can draw.' (Green, 1992, p.168)

However, the whole point for Kierkegaard is that it is not possible to say *anything* about Christ in terms of reason. One must simply believe with a faith that goes beyond the possibility for both rational expression, and historical understanding. We cannot know what God is, and we have only a partial understanding of what man is. To conceive of the Incarnation as a logical contradiction isn't even a possibility for our thinking, and understanding how the utterly transcendent God could come into existence in history is just as much beyond our comprehension. It is no surprise that the figure of Christ is often implied, rather than explicitly named, in many areas of the pseudonymous works. This is not to deny that, in speaking about God, one cannot choose to do so from an 'onto-theological' (Derrida, 1989, p.79) perspective (such as Kant does). However, there will always be a limit to what can be said: 'its ultimate failure is no less necessary.' (ibid.)

Kant makes a distinction between 'reason' and 'understanding', and Climacus most often uses 'the understanding' when he is discussing the relation of 'faith and the intellect.' (Evans, 2010, p.206) But, viewed more broadly, the desire of rational thinking to make a distinction between reason and understanding says something about the way language operates when it is involved in the realm of the unknown. Evans (I think rightly) sees that making a distinction between reason and understanding cannot eliminate the tension between faith and its other. Whether it is the reason or the understanding matters little. The Incarnation 'is essentially incomprehensible to humans.'[408] (pp. 206-207) Kierkegaard is interested in the way in which a human being as a living individual can become a Christian. Does the ordinary human being (not that a philosopher is an extra-ordinary one!) ponder the great distinction between reason and the understanding? I think that he would answer in the negative. In making distinctions between things like 'reason' and 'understanding', or, 'practical' and 'theoretical' reason, it is true to say that this is an aid in terms of clarifying our thinking about the world. There is nothing

[408] Evans says that 'there is no reason to think that Kierkegaard believed that the distinction between reason and the understanding has any important bearing on the question of how faith is related to the human intellect.' (Evans, 2010, p.207)

questionable, *per se*, about having this goal. It is a part of what one can loosely call the rational approach. However, in making such distinctions – or, in establishing limits in language – this approach, from Hamann's perspective, shows reason up for what it is. That is, of being incapable of arriving at a concept of 'the whole' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.5), precisely because it is always seeking to divide in order to conquer. In other words, reason can only ever offer a partial and fragmentary view of the whole of existence because the language of reason is concerned with limits. In contrast, Kierkegaard's approach is to make explicit the tension that exists within the attempt to talk about faith, the paradox of the Incarnation: the God-man. The 'incongruity' (Evans, 2010, p.211) is essential to his expression. When one says 'God-man', one already has some idea in one's head as to what those two words *possibly* mean. And so it is not a contradiction to say 'God-man', precisely because, amongst the other things that one might think about God, that God might be able to turn himself into a man for some purpose is a possibility. It does not have to be logically sound in order for it to be intelligible, much to the dismay of those who would want every expression in language to reach that level of purity.

In the *Religion* book, Kant wants to translate some of the key concepts of the Christian religious faith into a rational language. Some tenets of faith would require a leap into the outer sphere of revelation where the rational no longer has a stable foothold. Kant is understandably unwilling to make that kind of leap in language. Morality 'extending itself' into religion is Kant's rational leap. Morality may not need the idea of a higher being, but if there is to be an ideal of (practical) reason, then faith in that object must only have its grounding in morality. And so his God-talk is confined to an attempt to translate *for* reason, and *with* good reasoning behind that approach. However, for Kierkegaard (like Hamann), the claim that purely rational God-talk is possible at all is an 'egregiously irrational…delusion.' (McCombs, 2013, p.35) Kierkegaard confronts an Enlightenment view of the sayable by drawing attention to the paradoxical in a way that shows up the limits of what can be said. Contra the idea that Kierkegaard is an irrationalist, and notwithstanding the fact that the autonomous nature of reason can be legitimately called into question, I agree

with Evans when he says: '…it can hardly be irrationalism to suggest that reason has limits, and that one should try to recognise those limits.' (Evans, 1998, p.14) Both Kierkegaard and Kant are in agreement in this respect. But, in presenting us with the idea of the thought that cannot be thought, Kierkegaard is playing with us. He wants to make it so difficult to understand the paradox that we cannot even think ourselves into it. He wants to disorient us. The point here is that, in order to capture the unintelligibility of the paradox in language – which nevertheless aims to concretize *some* thought – the way in which he expresses the problem is designed to provoke in us a sense of confusion. To make it absolutely intelligible in language would in fact be self-defeating.

Kierkegaard 'plays…limit games' (McCombs, 2013, p.174) with language in order to make us think that we can think the thought that cannot be thought, precisely to make us experience the fact that we cannot do that. In his pointing our thinking in the direction of the unintelligible, the contradictory, ambiguity, the paradox, offense, and the thought that cannot be thought, Kierkegaard wants us to experience the limits of language head on. Such an experience is for him a prerequisite to the leap of faith. Religious expression which engages with the impossible – that is to say, with the limits of language – is honest, in that, the impossible is the 'only real experience' (Caputo, 1997, xx) that is possible for us in relation to that which goes beyond the finite world. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard deconstructs (rather than destroys) the ethical in order to unnerve our sense of ease with respect to faith. He wants us to experience 'a passion for the impossible' (xix) in the kind of language that seriously struggles with making Abraham, and hence faith, intelligible.

Both Kierkegaard and Kant emphasize the 'hypothetical character' (Frank, 1990a, p.153), or, uncertainty of faith, but it is true to say that it is more explicit in the former's approach. The language of faith, if it is to be true to the character of that faith, ought not to want to strive in a language that seems so certain of itself. Kierkegaard wants us to 'find ourselves' out on those 70,000 fathoms, and in order to achieve this he must coax us into experiencing the limits of language. Unlike Kant's systematically tight and rigid style,

Kierkegaard's approach embraces the gap between sense and sign, because faith is not compelled to say anything with absolute certainty. His characterization of reason functions in such a way that it draws attention to the ways in which a human being actually thinks, rather than just appealing to some high-minded abstract conceptualization. We are actually prone to confusion when presented with paradox. Even Kant realised that reason can lead to contradictory conclusions. Kierkegaard gives reason a certain character within language. That is, one of uncertainty, partiality, and sometimes, one of confusion. He echoes Hamann: reason simply does not stand outside of language as if there is some view from nowhere. It is represented as that which has 'some descriptive content' (Evans, 1998, p.22) rather than as the pillar of normative truth seeking. It is this descriptive mode, which, in Kierkegaard's crafty hands, always points to the limits of the language itself.

Chapter Eight: The Role of Language – Part II

8.1 Communication

Language serves to reveal something to us of the 'inwardness' (*E/O*, p.27) of the individual, even if that inwardness can never be wholly communicated. The question for Kierkegaard is as to what form of communication is most successful in reaching, or at least approaching, the goal of stretching 'the soul.' (*SLW*, p.489) If we are searching for and receptive to finding out what, for Kierkegaard, is the greatest truth there is – the truth of Christianity – then he wants to aid us in an indirect way into stumbling upon it, like Eremita who finds the papers of A and B as if by accident. But then again, nothing Kierkegaard writes is 'by accident.'

The 'scraps of paper' (*E/O*, p.31) of 'A' remind us of the contradiction between what seems on the surface to be less important material, and what is subsequently found to reveal inner worth. Eremita says that these shorter scraps seem to be 'preliminary glimpses' (ibid.) of something greater. But Kierkegaard's hope for us is that, through the indirect communications of the pseudonymous texts, we can join with him in the view that the aesthetic and ethical glimpses are but a prelude to the 'twinkling of an eye' (*FT*, p.69; Corinthians 15:52) of faith. From the point of view of systematic philosophy, the form of communication that he favours might be like a 'shabby coat' (*E/O*, p.76), 'unworthy trifles' (*PF*, p.32), or 'impoverished' (*SLW*, p.489), but that does not mean that there is not a significant truth to be conveyed in this way. That we should find impurity in language – a point that Hamann levels against Kant's purportedly pure systematic account of reason – is not for Hamann a weakness. It is merely a cloak behind which lies the Spirit of God. For Hamann, given that God humbled himself to become man, the divine is manifested through merely imperfect human language as 'part of the unity of the divine revelation.' (*Cloverleaf*, p.39) It is the essence of Scripture that it should not be so easily appraised and understood, and by extension, when we talk about faith, the mysterious – which

is an inherent part of God's communicating with us – should be a feature of our language.

Kierkegaard wants to pull the wool over our eyes for a good reason. He wants to make us 'wiser' for having been 'deceived' in such a way. (*SLW*, p.88) Although veiled[409], and sometimes ambiguous[410] and obscure, there is still a sense of ownership and disclosure in this kind of language. The pseudonyms are often found to openly express the fact that they take full responsibility for what they have to say. But the main intent is to get the reader to take personal responsibility for coming to an understanding. For Kierkegaard, faith ought to be imparted like the whisper of a 'gentle breeze' (*E/O*, p.168), a 'murmur' (p.302), an evocation: that it is to say subtly, rather than directly.[411] It is conveyed in words that do not necessarily place it transparently under the category of the ethical. That is to say, not every form of language is instantly intelligible as it might be in what, for example, De Silentio refers to as the disclosure of the universal.[412] Rather, the result of this kind of faith-talk is that we ought to *suspect* rather than *grasp* what is meant. And so a form that steers away from 'lucidity' (p.256) is more appropriate if it is to speak to us in a special way. A special kind of language is needed in order to adequately (but partly) convey the contradictory: 'sweet sorrow', 'passionate reason', 'the sound of silence.' In order to speak to the richness of human experience it ought not to be communicated in a language which merely 'describes actuality' (*SLW*, p.30), because matters pertaining to the spirit 'cannot be expressed immediately.' (p.65) If there is something of the direct about Kierkegaard's indirect communication of faith, it is that it is *directed* at the individual, but with no guarantees that the reader will be properly 'attuned.' (*E/O*, p.403)

Anti-Climacus' self-professed 'rigorous' (SUD, p.5) approach to the subject of despair is, in his opinion, a direct communication.[413] He views poetic

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[409] *E/O*, p.173; p.249.
[410] *Ibid.*, p.308.
[411] As the Aesthetic Young Man says, 'men say the divine voice is not in the rushing wind but in the gentle breeze, but our ears are not made to pick up gentle breezes, only to gulp in the din of the elements.' (*E/O*, p.168)
[412] *FT*, p.71.
[413] 'The condition of the person in despair can be described directly.' (*SUD*, p.30)

language as the kind of expression that 'must contain the reflection of the dialectical opposite.' (p.30) We might say of Kant that he 'speaks like a book' (*E/O*, p.312) in a formulaic way rather than naturally as a person might ordinarily speak (from the heart). But there are no guarantees that he might not also be misinterpreted.[414] Abraham answers Isaac in the 'form of irony' (*FT*, p.105), not because he is being deceitful, but because there is no direct way of communicating his faith and trust so that it is intelligible to the other, i.e., his belief in the paradoxical and absurd: that the impossible can be brought about by God. In order to communicate the divine, Vigilius says that, like Socrates, one must 'talk in secret.' (*COA*, p.134) The description that Taciturnus gives us in relation to finding the diary is ripe with metaphors of inclosing, concealment, and secrecy. The 'sigh from below' (*SLW*, p.188) and the coarse, but 'secret voice' (ibid.) of the bittern that 'repeats its cry three times'[415] (ibid.) are consistent with Kierkegaard's view of the 'right' kind of language communication for giving expression to religious faith. If the message to be appropriated is worth finding out, then it ought not to be too easy and transparent.[416] Quidam – who is on the cusp of the religious stage – prefers to 'express [himself] indirectly' (*SLW*, p.248) in order to provoke uncertainty.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus offers some direct observations with respect to indirect communication. If we are vague as to whether or not he is a Christian, then this is part of Kierkegaard's indirect aim. In every respect, Climacus is a spokesperson for the indirect. Kierkegaard 'choose[s] his individual' (*COA*, p.56) with intent. Climacus says that the book is entirely about him, and as to how he, as an individual, is to become a Christian. That there might be a reader who wants to make something of the book, well…that may be a 'superfluous' (*CUP*, p.618) notion. He is the spokesperson

[414] The inscription at the start of 'In Vino Veritas' is translated as: 'Such works are mirrors: when an ape looks in, no apostle can look out.' (*SLW*, p.8)
[415] Matthew 26: 69-75.
[416] The manuscript is concealed in a locked palisander box, wrapped in oilcloth, 'with many seals.' (*SLW*, p.189) Palisander, or, rosewood, is associated with spiritual healing and inner beauty.

who speaks to us about the 'what' and 'how' of becoming a Christian – and in this respect is apparently communicating with us in a direct way – but as with all of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings we ought to be on our guard. Not only is there a possibility that Climacus is indeed a Christian, but also that Kierkegaard may not necessarily subscribe to Climacus' views on indirect communication. What a perfect position in which we are placed! – ripe for perfecting ourselves. That said, the same kind of themes and thoughts that can be found in other places are repeated in the words of Climacus, and so we can form some kind of judgment in this regard. But we should also ask if it might be possible to speak objectively about faith and still be in a subjective relation to it? Is it necessarily a case of either/or? That is, can an individual relate to faith both objectively and subjectively? I will return to this question later.

Climacus sees in Lessing's style a distinction between 'keeping up with the thought' (p.69) with which one is engaging, and that of what one might call 'keeping up appearances.' The point here is that one does not have to communicate in a conventional way in order to get one's point across. The outward expression is the 'window-dressing' for something more essential that lies beneath. He invites us into the contradiction to be found in directly communicating what one ought to *do* in order to *become*: 'the way is the truth, that is, that the truth is only in the becoming, in the process of appropriation.' (p.78) But the expectation that others will appropriate the truth by virtue of my giving expression to it contradicts the espoused sentiment of what is said. This is the beautiful kind of knot that language creates for us when we try to speak about faith. There is for him a desire on the part of the individual to give expression to the eternal, but he maintains that this cannot be manifested 'in a direct form' (p.73), because the kind of uncertainty[417] that is essential to the process of faith is incompatible with '[d]irect communication [which] requires certainty.' (p.74) Climacus even goes as far as to say that it is 'irreligious' (p.75) to attempt to do that using direct, objective, language. He acknowledges that direct communication arising from objective thinking has its place, but that it is

[417] *Ibid.*, p.88.

inappropriate when it comes to religious expression.[418] If one truly wants to communicate the thought 'that a person's God-relationship is a secret' (p.78), there is inevitably a contradiction in relation to the attempt to give expression to a thought about not giving expression! So, it must be done using an 'illusive form' (p.83), through 'indirect' (p.242) communication viewed as the most appropriate way to appeal to inwardness.[419] The narrative must lead the reader to coming to their own conclusions about faith, rather than coming out with it in a direct way. It is a way of coaxing them towards faith – 'the conscious, teasing revocation of the communication.' (p.263)

Kierkegaard is not in the business of proclaiming something as knowledge to be appropriated. It is no surprise therefore that he mentions Hamann (p.249) as an influence upon him. Hamann's style of communication is wholly reflective of his belief in the impenetrable nature that is the inwardness of the subjective individual. Every word is 'concentrated.' (p.250) The meaning, as with the individual self, is not outwardly graspable. One must come to one's own conclusions as to what the essential message is, but one must also be comfortable with the fact that one might never 'know.' If anything, this form of communication does not assume that the reader is a 'knower' (p.277) or a 'nonknower.' (ibid.) What the indirect communication simply assumes is that the other to which it is directed is an individual rather than a purely rational subject. Its aim is not to convince, impress, or instruct in a way that leaves little or no room for rejecting that which is communicated. If it has a goal, then it is to challenge the reader into becoming a truly subjective, inward-looking individual, who ought to think for themselves, be true to themselves, and to strive for something greater than merely finite, rationally posited knowledge. For Kierkegaard, abstracting away from experience, and then attempting to 'communicate this in direct form as information…means that one is lying.' (*CUP*, p.281) He views indirect communication as a more honest way of speaking about faith for the individual. His maxim with respect to how we ought to

[418] *Ibid.*, p.76n; p.79.
[419] *Ibid.*, p.252.

communicate faith is: 'take away direct recognizability, and faith is in the right place.' (p.600)

Hamann believed that a person's innermost beliefs are 'always a partial mystery to others' (German, 1981, p.6), that is, partially revealed to the other person through language. For him, language is an expression of that behind which lies something more divine. Hamann writes 'Speak that I may see you!' (*Aesthetica*, p.65), but there is more to the person than that which can be appropriated immediately. The expression is only a partial representation of the inner world of the individual, i.e., that which has an 'inner integrity' (Westphal, 1996, p.118) for the individual. The outer expression is imperfect in this regard. The individual is 'like a text…[with] multiple layers of meaning.' (Evans, 2006, p.264) It is the very nature of what it means to be human that different aspects of being – of which language expression is but one – are a kind of 'mishmash.' (McCombs, 2013, p.63) Hamann insists that if one is writing about something that is ultimately mysterious, i.e., beyond what reason can posit as 'knowledge', then the form of communication should be a true reflection of that mystery. Perhaps Climacus is really a Christian but in a guise that proclaims otherwise. Perhaps not. That cannot be fully asserted. But this too is one of Kierkegaard's assertions. One doesn't necessarily grasp immediately that the other whom one encounters is a person of faith. Even if one gets a sense of such through their communicating, and even if it occurs indirectly, there are simply no guarantees for the observer in this regard.

If the text is a reflection of the author's thoughts at the time of writing, then, when Hamann says that he had a difficulty in understanding what he had written after the fact (German, 1981, p.95), this is like saying that he no longer knows his previous self. In this context, the author, or, *that* self, has 'died.' It is true to say that something of the individual is always present in the 'diction, syntax, idiom, and turns of phrase.' (McCombs, 2013, p.117) And, from the observer's perspective, interpretation relies upon the text, a limited knowledge of the individual and their historical context, and one's own viewpoint. But the individual is in a constant state of becoming. And so when I communicate I am attempting to capture something that is essentially fleeting. There is definitely a

sense, for example, in which Kierkegaard as Climacus shifts from indirect to direct communication at the end of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. There the communication becomes a little clearer in terms of what is expected of the religious individual in relation to their reason, in the context of the daily striving of a life led in faith. That Climacus communicates in a direct way regarding indirect communication may be 'a contradiction' (p.118), but the point is that human beings *are* inconsistent.

Climacus does not assert that direct communication is invalid. However, what drives Kierkegaard's approach is a Hamannian belief that the attempt to rationalize existence in direct and objective language does not face up to the fact that, at some level, truth is 'at its heart a partial mystery' (German, 1981, p.160) to human beings. The words communicated are only a reflection of a truth for the subjective individual. There is some underlying reason for the utterance, over and above the 'correctness of the said.' (Westphal, 1996, p.118) In other words, communication reveals something of that which the individual holds to be 'truth' for himself or herself. It communicates something indirectly to us, i.e., something else *behind* the words. If the truth is to be found, then it lies somewhere behind the mere expression. This is what underscores Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication.

For Hamann, language can 'both deceive and reveal.' (Betz, 2012, p.232) It is 'the double-edged sword of all truths and lies.'[420] (ibid.) Abraham's indirect response to Isaac creates a tension by virtue of its indeterminate character. It points to something yet unknown and unquantifiable: to something of the future. In this context, his vague communication is appropriate. It both deceives and reveals. It must, because Abraham genuinely does not *know* what will happen. For Kierkegaard, faith is not a form of knowledge. Both Climacus and de Silentio can be interpreted as wanting to keep us in 'offended' mode, unsettled, and uncertain of ourselves in order to highlight the kind of realization of ignorance that prepares us for the leap. The use of paradox and the idea of the absurd indirectly bring about an awareness 'of the task of subjectivity'

[420] Betz cites from: Hamann, J.G. (1955-75). *Briefwechsel*, vol. VI, Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel (eds.). Wiesbaden: Insel, p.108.

(McCombs, 2013, p.153) that is wholly constitutive of the task of faith. That is, the task of engaging with the paradoxical and absurd content of faith.

Kierkegaard presents us with the words 'leap' and 'passion' in relation to faith. These would seem to be contradictory terms: the volitional versus the uncontrollable. We have a rational desire to understand, to make intelligible, and to get to the 'truth' of what he means. One reading would say that he is confusing the issue by making it unnecessarily difficult to grasp. In another reading, this is precisely his (indirectly employed) intention, insofar as we are invited to untie the knot for ourselves. The contradictory is so much a part of what it means to be human generally, but, more specifically, it is a key component of the vitality of language. He highlights the negative elements of lived experience (such as anxiety, sin, despair, conflict, offense) in order to bring into focus (in silhouette) the 'solution' to these human passions: faith, hope, and love. For example, hope is implied by Anti-Climacus' discourse on despair; Climacus' account of reason's collision with the paradox, and the offense that is possible, implies faith; Abraham's fear and anxiety are necessary for faith to come to light. This approach – essentially an indirect one – is in keeping with his concern for both the way in which faith had been so easily explained away, and the way in which being a Christian had apparently become such an 'easy' task in his lifetime. He wanted to reclaim for faith the difficulty that is necessary for such a qualitative leap to take place.

The mode of expression, which leaves one uncertain as to whether or not a certain position is being promoted or demoted, is clearly favoured by Kierkegaard. For him, it is a more apt way of communicating the ambiguity and heterogeneity of lived experience. He provokes us into actively engaging with the pseudonymous texts, on the assumption of course that one reads them all. Unfortunately (or fortunately) for us, he does not say all of what he wants to say in one place. That would undermine the point being made via his method of communication. Kierkegaard wants to highlight the fact that things are rarely wholly transparent when it comes to the individual. McCombs writes: 'his writing does not narrowly focus on logical arguments, but puts together imaginative analogies, lyrical expressions of moods and emotions, polemics

against inaction, rhetorical encouragements to action, and dialectic.' (McCombs, 2013, p.67) Indirect communication creates a barrier to understanding, but it may also 'evoke a higher mode of awareness' (p.151) in the reader when thinking is provoked into colliding with that which cannot be grasped. In coming to realize that one is ignorant and dependent, a 'genuine form of self-knowledge…and mysterious wisdom' (Betz, 2012, p.81) is achieved. This stands in contrast to the Enlightenment view of knowledge as being only possible through reason.[421] The expectation is that the person who meets such a barrier naturally wants to get past it.

When one enters into a literature tradition – or, more specifically, into philosophical discourse – there is a sense in which there is an 'acceptable' way in which something ought to be expressed. But what about the exception to the rule?[422] In this regard Hamann was ground-breaking. *Socratic Memorabilia* was Hamann's 'first experiment in indirect communication' (Betz, 2012, p.65), and one that is borne out of the belief that one can neither communicate faith simply nor through reason alone. He sought to bring about illumination through the intentional darkness and obscurity of an 'intentionally "sublime" style.' (p.10), in an ironic inversion of the Enlightenment's claims as to the directly illuminating power of reason and the impersonal. For Kierkegaard, every individual is the exception to the rule. He communicates with us through, and must emphasize, indirect rather than direct communication in order to set himself and his message apart from a purely philosophical discourse on faith. Through the 'dark meaningfulness of art' (Frank, 1990a, p.166), that which transcends knowledge is communicated by both Hamann and Kierkegaard in a way that is free from the kind of predetermined 'rules' of the conventional philosophies with which they were engaging. Hamann saw the public appropriation of his writing as leading to the charge of 'nonsense' (German, 1981, p.2) in relation to his works. But, the mistake being made is to assume that when

[421] A wisdom 'inaccessible to the kind of pro-fane [sic] secular reason proudly espoused by the Aufklärer.' (Betz, 2012, p.81)
[422] Hamann's attitude to writing was that, although rules are necessary in order to make writing possible, they 'cannot be allowed to stifle the stirrings of spirit.' (German, 1981, p.17)

someone expresses something it ought to be *directly* intelligible.[423] Simply put, communication does not necessarily have to be direct and transparent in order for meaning to be communicated: 'Art…reminds the naive linguistic realist that reference and communication cannot be reduced to the function of transparency.' (Frank, 1990b, p.281)

The distinction between direct and indirect communication can be expressed as the difference between 'objective and subjective communication.' (Mooney, 2013b, p.71) One can perhaps express it as the difference between a communication that effects a change in my objective storehouse of knowledge, and that which effects a change in my self, or in my self-awareness. Even if Climacus has a one-sided view of indirect communication, thinking it to be more advantageous 'for the communication of subjectivity' (McCombs, 2013, p.114), there is method in his madness. Indirect communication might be puzzling[424] in contrast to a direct and authoritative communication which aims to instruct clearly – not that we are necessarily assured of any more clarity in the latter. But the former route certainly has the effect of both making us responsible for our own becoming in our trying to dig beneath what has been said, and in provoking the kind of uncertainty that Kierkegaard sees as necessary for any movement towards faith.

The many different forms in which Kierkegaard employs both indirect and direct communication (albeit primarily the former) – the diary, letter, dialectic, sermon, philosophical explication, satire, lyric, preface, postscript, poem, polemic, analogy, myth, fable, tragedy – act like mirrors into which we can gaze in order to provoke us into thinking in a certain way, even if (or rather, so that) we realize that it is our thinking rationally that prevents us from taking a leap of faith. We are encouraged to think from the perspective of subjective individuality – what Mooney calls our 'multiple metaphysical possibilities.' (Mooney, 2013a, p.199) That which a purely rational language thinks to be

[423] German reads Hamann as saying that 'true communication demands more than mere reasonableness.' (German, 1981, p.8) He cites Hegel's criticism of Hamann's *Socratic Memorabilia* for having been lacking in 'objective content' (p.12) as indicative of this kind of assumption.
[424] See McCombs' description of indirect communication (2013, p.114).

impossible to communicate is thought to be possible in an alternative type of communication. That is, through symbolic language. Metaphor, analogy, and other communication methods, enunciate 'the sayable' whilst meaning 'the inexpressible' (Frank, 1990b, p.288), in an attempt to iterate that which a dispassionate language concerned for the universal cannot adequately accommodate.

However, to take a view that communication is only ever one or the other is a mistake. Even if we see Climacus' (and Kierkegaard more generally) favouring of indirect communication, what we really encounter is a gamut of communication rather than distinct opposites. A case in point is the author of *The Sickness Unto Death*. One would expect Anti-Climacus – who is a pseudonymous characterization of a 'Christian to an extraordinary degree' (Walsh, 2009, p.120) – to employ language that is more suited to his perspective, i.e., that of faith. This is not the case. We are at fault in making this kind of assumption. His language 'heightens the paradox.' (ibid.) That is, he gives expression to the Incarnation using language that is related to reason. It is direct rather than indirect communication. Or rather, it is direct-indirect communication, in that, he directly communicates using indirect communication drawn directly from the bible and theological concepts. This serves to illustrate the fact that we ought to stop thinking in terms of either/or when it comes to the *how* of the saying, and to focus on the *what* as becoming meaningful for me, even if the use of the first-person perspective is a more vital way of speaking to me in the first place.

A communication that brings about a change in 'affect or virtue' (Mooney, 2013b, p.72) can no doubt be communicated in a direct way. Kant's rationally derived and objectively communicated moral faith might be able to effect a change in the self. But, at the same time, is it truly 'direct' communication? Do I grasp it easily? In Climacus' account of the 'condition' in *Philosophical Fragments*, this 'condition' (faith) is gradually brought into focus even before it is explicitly stated. A fact being asserted by Climacus is communicated in an indirect way. The text leads us along; it is pre-loaded. What I want to say is that the distinction between direct and indirect communication

is in reality a blurred one, and dependent on the horizon of understanding of the person receiving the communication. This is one of the ambiguities of language. After all, language has its seat in the human and is therefore necessarily ambiguous. It is changing, in flux, a process, and open to interpretation: 'Utterances are not definitively one or the other, subjective or objective. Some are neither.' (Mooney, 2013b, p.72) Communication – as Hamann would emphasize – can never reach that level of purity in which it is either one thing or another, even if the author clearly gravitates towards a particular form of expression. Contrary to Climacus' account, 'there is indirect communication in all direct communication.' (McCombs, 2013, p.117) Direct communication can sometimes be indirect, in that it might not always be clear to me. Conversely, something communicated indirectly might have a direct effect on me. There is a distinction to be made between 'indirect' communication and communication that is 'difficult' to understand, but I will not dwell on this point.

The key to understanding Kierkegaard's method is to see him as trying to inspire the individual into taking responsibility for a religious striving which has Christian faith as the ideal. The spiritual teacher does not communicate in a direct way. They practice 'restraint' in this regard. In the Christian parables one is invited to untie the knot of meaning for oneself. The idea being, that when one has done that for oneself, it carries more meaning and weight because one has actively discovered the deeper meaning being conveyed. One takes ownership of one's own becoming. Climacus sees indirect communication as the best mode of expression for inspiring an individual to change. When a person appropriates the communication for himself or herself, i.e., when it speaks to the whole self in a very personal way, it acquires a level of significance that goes beyond what is possible in the kind of direct communication that is a feature of much philosophical endeavour. That is, the kind of endeavour that is persuasion through proof, postulation, theorizing, positing, etc. Kierkegaard's aim is not to instruct, but to inspire and enable the reader to think for themselves in order to become their most potent self. It is made clear (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly) that the ideal to which we should all strive is that of the religious self.

Our appropriation of that as a goal 'was the main perlocutionary effect he wanted to achieve.' (Lübcke, 1990, p.36) Hamann's method of indirect communication (as in the example of *Socratic Memorabilia*) has a purpose like that of Kierkegaard. That is, to bring about a transformation in the reader. We are invited to 'become a new translation' (German, 1981, p.49) of our selves.

In essence, indirect communication is the art of enabling the other, through 'the art of dissembling' (Betz, 2012, p.69), to come to an understanding of something, or, to at least give them the impression that they have achieved that themselves. The phrase 'gentle persuasion' comes to mind. Hamann 'smuggles' in ideas (p.64) rather than imparting and instructing in a direct way. One could say that he sows the seeds in order that the reader can draw their own conclusions, He communicates in this way 'in order not to interfere with their reflections, but maieutically to assist them in their labor of understanding.' (p.71) Kierkegaard, too, sees that there is more than one way to convince the other. Solutions and answers are precisely not part of what Kierkegaard is about. In fact, as we have seen, contradiction and ambiguity are a necessary component of indirect communication because they force us to react and to decide for ourselves: 'It is the decision of the listener, which is the main thing…opening the listener's mind to the fact that he is a human being who has to decide for himself…The most one can do is to make it more difficult for someone else not to choose.' (Lübcke, 1990, p.33)

Who is the primary stakeholder in an indirect communication? Is it the person communicating or the recipient? Perhaps Climacus' revocation at the end of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is prophetic with respect to postmodernist deconstruction, in the sense that Kierkegaard wants to revoke not the message but the centrality of the author. If Climacus 'disappears' then all we are truly left with is the text. The irony, of which he is no doubt aware, is that once the text has been communicated it is 'out there' for all to see, even if it has been revoked. In the revocation the particular author wants to vanish in a puff of smoke, but of course no magician really disappears! In this kind of move (the revocation), the emphasis placed upon individuality by virtue of a pseudonymous life-view now shifts from that imagined other to "Me." It is now

my responsibility to 'own' the message of the text. This is the risk, or leap, that ought to be taken by every individual *qua* individual.

Kierkegaard's method can be interpreted as stirring the other to change, that is, to be affected by the words. He sees talking about faith as one of those 'situations…which call for… 'indirect' ways of using language' (p.32) for 'pragmatic' (ibid.) reasons. The *way* in which something is said has an effect upon us, regardless of the information being relayed. We are uplifted, depressed, angered, confused, provoked, challenged, hopeful, joyous, etc. Unlike the idea of a rational human who, as part of the universal ethical, is expected to respond in a prescribed way, Kierkegaard's indirect way of communicating to us is designed with our absolute freedom in mind. We can respond absolutely freely to what he has to say. Again, it is for *you*, the individual, to 'figure out what's going on.' (Mooney, 2013b, p.76) *You* are responsible for your becoming, but it is Kierkegaard who 'leave[s] us in a space of responsive freedom…ripe for change or consolidation…uncertainty or ignorance.' (p.75)

Clearly – and Kant pointed this out – we have a problem in relation to taking the bible literally. If we do, Kant says that either Abraham must be condemned or he must have been mistaken. The command cannot have come from God. Either that, or the story of Abraham is a myth. But are we all bound to understanding what has been said in a literal way? Are we not permitted to interpret on the basis of what meaning it has for us as living individuals in the 'now'? This is how Kierkegaard in general wants to respond: "*You* decide. Think for *your*self. What does it mean for *you*? But, choose wisely!" When we now read into Kierkegaard's indirect communication with us, it 'is not merely to engage in an antiquarian task but to open oneself to what a text can and should say to us long after its author is dead.' (Westphal, 2014, p.66) The form and content of *Fear and Trembling* may indeed act as a mirror for Abraham, who 'speaks in tongues' (*FT*, p.101), answering Isaac's question ironically. He cannot speak in such a way that he can 'explain everything' (ibid.) directly. But the point is that we should not expect to be able to explain Abraham's faith in a direct way. De Silentio's ultimate silence on the subject of Abraham points to a realm in which we are invited to draw our own conclusions. In contrast, Kant wants to draw his

thesis conclusions for us, as self-evident truths derivable through pure reason itself.

8.2 The Role of Language

So, what ideas do the pseudonyms offer us with respect to what can be said or not said when it comes to religious faith? How far can language hope to go? Or, must we ultimately become silent in this regard?

The aesthetic young man poses a question: 'Is my spirit to be forever tongue-tied? Must I always babble?' (E/O p.45) Although language is capable of ambiguity, the Seducer seems to think that the 'riddle' (p.272) of the soul can be somehow 'solved' (ibid.) in speaking. What is certain is that there is a question over language's capacity to give expression to the inward: to the holy, spiritual 'hiding place' (*SLW*, p.17) of the individual's inner world, or what Climacus calls 'the deliciousness of that solitary wellspring that is in every human being, that wellspring in which the god resides…in the profound silence when all is quiet!' (*CUP*, p.183) If a moment of inner transformation is to be possible, it demands silence rather than utterance.[425] Where speech is impotent, silence is powerful. This kind of impotence is expressed in the 'Oh, Well' (p.411) of resigning the finite world. The less that is said[426] 'the fuller it is with meaning.' (*E/O*, p.353)

At the extreme point, speech is absolutely out of the question. Abraham 'cannot speak' (*FT*, p.52) in such a way as to be able to communicate with ethical intelligibility.[427] From the perspective of the ethical, this puts him in trouble; from the perspective of faith, his silence is what creates the space in order for him to commune with God.[428] His inward relation to God goes beyond that which can be spoken intelligibly by him. The closest he comes is in responding enigmatically to Isaac. If he were to attempt to give reasons for his decision to a non-believer, it would be as if he were speaking 'in tongues.' (p.101)

Quidam points to the problem of how faith can be communicated to the

[425] *E/O*, p.316; *FT*, p.77.
[426] *SLW*, p.207.
[427] *Ibid.*, p.101.
[428] *Ibid.*, p.77.

other. Is any language between the believer and non-believer in this respect possible? He writes: 'Can one human being, then, not understand the other; is there, then, no equality in the religious?' (*SLW*, p.239) Similarly, Anti-Climacus – the over-idealized Christian exemplar of the religious stage – says of his diagnosis of despair that it is given in a language that 'only medical experts understand.' (*SUD*, p.5) Frater Taciturnus' view is that systematic philosophical language will never fully account for faith. It will fall short in not 'knowing where the religious really is located' (*SLW*, p.452), that is, in the 'interior being' (p.454) of the individual. That is not to say that one cannot be an 'enthusiastic' (p.486) observer who might desire to talk *about* faith. But, as De Silentio says, 'it does not follow that one has comprehended faith, comprehended how one entered into it or how it entered into one.' (*FT*, p.5) It might be tempting to think that talking about faith in such a way might lead to faith, but Climacus believes this to be a 'dubious…kind of temptation.' (*CUP*, p.26) We ought to give expression to our love of the other person[429], but how is someone to speak their faith to the other who does not believe as they do?

In the sections that follow, I will deal with three main ideas. Firstly, a view of Kant that will offer a different perspective on his need to speak about faith. Secondly, the themes of saying the unsayable and silence. Finally, I will offer some thoughts in relation to the way in which language can be seen as a unifying element in the apparent struggle over the question as to how faith can and ought to be communicated.

8.2.1 Kant and the Need to Say

I think it would be an unfair assessment of Kant to say that his effort to give expression to faith was 'unchristian.' (*SUD*, p.5) Rather, given his self-imposed limitations on what is sayable within the limits of reason, we can say that his moral faith is 'essentially Christian.' (ibid.) It is the attempt to say something about the core of Christ's teaching in a language that appeals to the rational sphere. Though idealistic – and we must acknowledge that Anti-Climacus, too, is

[429] *WL*, p.12.

an idealist – Kant's project falls within the description of a language construction which aims to concentrate on what it *can* say rather than on what it *cannot*. Kant cannot be described as being a merely curious and "indifferent" (ibid.) investigator of religion.[430] He finds Christianity to be enough of a concern to motivate him in wanting to say something, even if it is possible to view this move with some suspicion. That is, a question might linger as to whether or not he can entirely justify that move on strictly rational grounds.

There is nothing inherent to reason from which the specific concept of 'God' arises *per se*, but Kant wants to say something about that idea as that which is 'inferred.' (Allison, 2004, p.313) Human beings naturally want to make some inference as to, for example, the cause of the world. We naturally want to find 'closure' (ibid.) with respect to that kind of question. However, Allison says that, not only has Kant himself said that the Transcendental Dialectic is essentially a 'redundant' (Allison, 2004, p.307) exercise, but that other commentators have expressed a similar view. They would ask as to why Kant, having established the limit of knowledge as related entirely to possible experience, wants to say something about ideas that go beyond that kind of knowledge. To some, it ought to be 'dismissed as an embarrassment, unworthy of serious consideration.' (p.314) Kant's arguments display 'suggestiveness and…openness to theological inquiry.' (Firestone, 2009, p.31) There is no overtly and strictly rational reason as to why Kant *ought* to want to extend his system into the area of theology. But, from what have concluded at the end of chapter two, Kant's establishing of the limits of reason points to the need for a further statement with respect to some kind of closure for reason. That is to say, a rational expression of faith in that which strictly speaking goes beyond reason. Kant wants to circumscribe rational knowledge, but rational inquiry always seeks more. Although we cannot have any knowledge of God, he nevertheless wants to offer a perspective on – that is, he wants to *say* – why and how the idea of God is a necessary one for reason. In this way, he makes *room for*, and *sense of*, faith. In what follows we will explore a view of Kant's project as being absolutely

[430] *SUD*, p.5.

reasonable in terms of his desire to say what needs to be said with respect to God and faith.

For Kant, God is a necessary presupposition for the '*object* of morality.' (Guyer, 2006, p.230) One could say that the failure to get to a final ground in relation to the fundamental principle of morality – and in relation to the ideal highest good of happiness, which he conceives of as being in an 'exact relation with morality' (A810/B838) – is a need to be fulfilled. He can only resolve the problem of that which is beyond knowledge by saying something that goes beyond the strictly sayable, i.e., by saying something about, or, positing, God. If God is not posited and the gap is left unfilled – the question left unanswered – then the danger is that one might give up on striving towards the (impossible) ideal. As Guyer puts it: 'if one does not have reason to believe that this goal is possible, then it will be irrational to try to achieve it…that motivation would be weakened or undermined by the idea that what morality commands cannot be brought about.' (Guyer, 2006, p.236) Kant seems incapable of escaping the need to talk about God. He is 'unable to conceive of the human situation except theistically' (Wood, 1978, p.17), even if in his speaking he is necessarily confined to the language of 'the scholastic-rationalist tradition.' (ibid.)

Kant separates reason into the theoretical and practical in order to make clarifications with respect to knowledge, i.e., of what *is* and what *ought* to be knowable. That is, in order to be able to talk about God in a way that appeals to the philosophical tradition into which he speaks. But why must the idea that serves to regulate our behaviour necessarily be the idea of, and faith in, 'an extramundane and personal Deity' (p.25)? Rationally speaking, the concept of God cannot be grasped by the understanding because it absolutely goes beyond what can be appropriated by the understanding as reliant upon the sensible. But Kant had to show *why* God – the object of rational theology – should be included in the set of transcendental ideas. In other words, for Kant, it was necessary to speak – in a specific way – about that which strictly speaking is beyond the speakable. There is something 'reasonable' (Allison, 2004, p.321), or, 'pseudo-rational' (p.360) about Kant's desire to do that. Even if there is no strictly rational basis for naming 'God' specifically, nevertheless it is natural to want to

give expression to that which confounds us. Allison wonders as to how Kant can justify, on the one hand, wanting to show that it is rational to have a concept of God, and on the other, wanting to say that proving God's existence is a mistaken effort. But, reason is not *only* concerned about proof. And in the absence of a possibility for proof, it is reasonable – in fact, from Kant's perspective, *incumbent upon* reason – to want to posit God. Some ideas can be thought, even if it is impossible to prove them in terms of certain knowledge. For Kant, it is reasonable for reason to posit the concept of God. Otherwise his *Religion* project would seem to be an irrational move. He is not interested in wanting to make any presupposition about the existence of God as that which matches the ideal, but simply to ascertain, from the point of view of reason, that it is rational to hold such an ideal concept.

We see in Kant a struggle to make the incomprehensible rationally intelligible. The 'obscurities in Kant's account and perhaps…a certain indecisiveness' (p.440) say something to us. Kant does not *necessarily* need to make the transition to saying something about religious faith on foot of what he says in relation to morality. He could stop there, and acknowledge the ideality of the ethical. But it is reasonable for him to want also to have some 'icing on that cake' (ibid.) in order to make morality more palatable for something so central to human existence as religion. He is naturally engaged in wanting to push the boundaries of reason as far as it can go. It is reasonable for him to want to give expression to this 'highest interest of theoretical reason.' (ibid.) And crucially, both the gap in knowledge with respect to the ultimate ground of the moral law, and the impossibility of reaching the moral ideal, force him into speaking in religious terms.

So, how does he avoid jettisoning the idea of God, when the broader idea of 'purposive unity' might fulfill the same desire of reason? There is a language issue here. The fideist might say that there is something in the idea of obliterating the idea of 'God' that is potentially offensive. But one could also say that the idea of God is a ready-made idea that is available to reason for the saying. After all, as Kant maintains in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, philosophical theology has the privilege of being able to hold the contents of faith up to

scrutiny for its own purposes. I think that it is plausible to maintain that word usage in itself (as Hamann would no doubt agree) is absolutely hard-wired into what it means to be human, to such an extent that it does very much matter if one says 'God has wisely willed it so' or 'Nature has wisely so ordered it' (A699/B727)] According to Allison, Kant's claim is that one cannot divorce the thought that nature has purposive, systematic unity, from the thought that some supreme intelligence lies behind it. In other words, our reason craves the intelligible thought of an ultimate cause. This, I think, is the point at which Kant's argument inevitably comes to an unknown. There is no strictly cogent reason for naming 'God', but in the drive for the idea of a single, unique, intelligent, and rationally compatible object for reason to realize, Kant feels it permissible to name such an idea of reason. He does not dwell on this 'naming', because all that counts is that the ideal is an idea of reason that serves the purposes of acting as a regulative principle for reason in order that reason can pursue what it can in relation to given experience. Or, to put it as Kant does, 'reason is in fact concerned with nothing but itself.' (B708)

Kant is operating rationally in wanting to interpret Christ as the most perfect moral exemplar. The closest he can come to that which is challenging to reason – the idea of Christ's divinity – is in giving a reasonable account of that which can be interpreted as 'divine' from reason's perspective. But, to be clear, Kant is interested in protecting faith as much as reason from irrational claims.[431]

[431] In the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the first critique he argues against any metaphysical claims with respect to proving God's existence. In *The Conflict of the Faculties* he argues against the illicit and irrational use of reason by the biblical theologian in the interpretation of Scripture. And, in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics* – a polemic with both the scientist-turned-Christian mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg, and contemporary philosophers of metaphysics (see *Dreams*, editor's preface) – Kant critiques the position that claims to explain the phenomenal by appealing 'to immaterial principles' (*Dreams*, p.58) as 'bad philosophy.' (ibid.) He does not deny that it is possible to hypothesize a spiritual realm that lies outside of material existence. But that is different from claiming direct knowledge of the supersensible, which is – rationally speaking – impossible. The proper employment of the language of reason must be 'cautious' (p.61) in this regard. To believe that 'spiritual natures' (ibid.) – or, God – can communicate with us, or us with them (Him) directly, is 'abnormal' (p.71), a 'delusion' (ibid.), phantasmagorical, fanciful, and ultimately a state of being which 'indicate[s] a disease.' (ibid.) According to Kant, that which is rationally sayable with respect to God is strictly limited. He is concerned with what can be said universally. And so, with even just *that* in mind, fanatical and fantastical individual claims as to 'apparitions' (p.67) of 'actual sight and experience' (p.69), and direct knowledge of the supersensible realm, are incoherent. Individual revelation to a 'chosen' human makes no sense to reason. And the claim as to such

In this respect, we can view Kant as fulfilling a kind of obligation to 'honor faith' (Evans, 2010, p.205), but it is a recognition of faith expressed in a particular way. He can be viewed as epitomizing the need of reason to explain, even if involves the risk of going beyond the strictly rational. He needs the idea of God in order to make the project of rational morality, and the goal of the highest good, a reasonable proposition. Kant's transition to saying something about God *can* be viewed with the benefit of hindsight insofar as one might posit that Kant himself cannot escape the idea of God as *a priori* to his own project.[432] But we are being unreasonable if we do not take seriously the fact that Kant's aim is always to enunciate the sayable from reason's perspective. There is a rational progression to Kant's overall project with respect to what is sayable, and one that culminates in his *Religion* book. Just because Christianity only comes close to the ideal religion of pure reason does not mean that we ought to, or would in fact, give it up because of a sense of the impossibility of achieving the ideal. That Kant devotes his attention to Christianity is in itself indicative of the fact that he has not given up. In essence, our incapacity to bring about the ideal moral world – which we can say has been posited by reason, and hence, that reason has discovered a limit – makes room for God. This is in keeping with what Kant says in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e., that he has limited reason in order to make room for faith. Therefore, what he can say about God is limited to that which is of moral import, and 'that we have no basis for assigning any other properties to God.' (Guyer, 2006, p.233) He aimed to say as much as he thought rationally plausible, but what is important to note is the fact that, in what he wanted to say, the idea of God was for him the best way of saying it.

Kant is certainly responding to a tradition of thought about faith. He engages with 'Aquinas, Scotus, Descartes, Spinoza…Leibniz' as 'part of a tradition which goes back at least to Plato.' (Wood, 1978, p.28) As part of the tradition in which he worked, his expression of faith is in keeping with the kind

'direct knowledge of the other world can be obtained here only by losing some of that intelligence which is necessary for this present world.' (p.73) Kant does not mince his words!

[432] We touched upon this idea at the end of chapter two.

of complicated thinking that is characteristic of much of Enlightenment philosophical thought, which concerns itself with 'abstruse metaphysical doctrines.' (p.60) But this kind of detachment from, or, lack of 'affinity' (ibid.) with, the spiritual element of religious selfhood, is one of the reasons why Kierkegaard returns to Kant. That is to say, in order to correct that kind of linguistically confined view of faith. For Kierkegaard, there is something seriously amiss in that way of speaking about faith. Kant makes steps towards such an affinity in the *Religion* book. But, as Wood reminds us, it was not Kant's aim to posit the idea of God from any perspective other than desire of philosophical reason.[433]

Faith and reason both rely upon language, and in this way language can be said to mediate between the two. But even if it is possible to confine one's language in such a way as to honour the spirit of faith and reason respectively – and we echo Hamann in this regard – a more honest expression of faith is one that includes the role of reason. Although they offer us perspectives from different sides of the apparent divide, it must be said that both Kant and Kierkegaard do not take an absolutely one-sided view. Where Kant makes room for faith, Kierkegaard makes room for reason. Viewed from our perspective of hindsight, neither can fully escape the language of the other because both are speaking into a shared tradition that pre-dates them. They both want to affirm a relation between reason and faith that can be 'happy', given the *right* kind of rational thinking. Ultimately, they both agree that there is an inevitable relation between reason and faith, even if in a broader sense we can see the tension between philosophy and faith played out in their respective accounts. Although it is clear that Kierkegaard is influenced by Kant (as has been argued in previous chapters), from the perspective of linguistic expression, Kierkegaard wants to correct what he sees as Kant's misunderstanding of faith as arising from the latter's self-imposed constraints with respect to what is rationally sayable. And so we find in Kierkegaard's account a response which seeks to re-orient how we ought to, and *can*, talk about faith in terms of some of the same elements that were a concern for Kant: freedom, the ethical component of faith, religious

[433] *Ibid.*, p.62.

selfhood and subjectivity, God and divine grace, Christ, sin and salvation, etc. Kant affirms faith in God as a faith in that which cannot be proven, but that which cannot be so easily dismissed when one wants to say something about human experience. And neither does Kierkegaard deny the role of reason in coming to faith. The difference in Kant's account is that there is primarily a 'commitment…to express…in a rational, theoretical account of…belief.' (Wood, 1978, p.151) For Kierkegaard, there is much more to be said about faith, and a way in which it ought to be spoken.

Kant goes out of his way to avoid references to language in the three *Critiques*. (Forster, 2012, p.488) That is, he makes an attempt to articulate his thoughts using language that does not appeal directly to experience but to thought. In this regard, Kierkegaard's approach can be viewed as a counterbalance to Kant's aim. The idea of an experiential (and hence impure) relation between thinking and language would have been 'irrelevant or even inappropriate' (p.504) to the aim of critiquing *pure* reason. However, by the time Kant was writing the *Religion* book, he acknowledged language as a means to an end that allows us to cognize and think judgments. (p.489) Kant acknowledged, *in nuce*, that thinking is 'fundamentally linguistic.' (p.490) It should be no surprise that Kant, just like the evolving philosophical tradition of which he was a part, was also changing his view.[434] In light of this we can say that his newfound view about the relation between thought and language might offer us another perspective in helping to understand why he gives expression to those contents of faith that, strictly speaking, go beyond the rationally sayable. The question for Kant is as to how those thoughts ought to be spoken. Perhaps he partly abandoned the ideal of an absolutely pure expression for thought in recognition of the inescapability of language in relation to thinking – a language that cannot therefore claim to be anything other than imperfect, but absolutely necessary if one is to say anything about God. If reason is naturally concerned only with itself, and with finding its own limit, then it is also true to say that, as

[434] Forster contends that 'the dualism…that one finds in the three Critiques and the contrasting…doctrines…belong to successive phases of Kant's development.' (*Ibid.*, p.493)

part of that project, reason wants also to find – and push forward – the limits of what can be intelligibly articulated.

Kant certainly calls into question the possibility for thinking and talking about God 'in the dogmatic sense of traditional metaphysics.' (Firestone, 2009, pp. 26-27) So the question then is: what kind of language *is* appropriate? Firestone essentially makes the point that the question of God, and its relation to the limits of reason, is a concern of Kant's that is always present. If it can be thought, then there ought to be clear and rational thinking about it. For Kant, it is a 'meaningful' (p.29) idea. At a fundamental level, Kant's desire to say faith points to that which is common to all human beings. He essentially attempts to translate central religious concepts into a language that can be understood. In this regard his language seems to be appropriate to his aims. This is not to deny the fact that there are some core tenets of the Christian faith that are beyond what he can plausibly say from the *outside* looking in. That said, there are divided opinions *within* Christianity about some of those tenets as well. Kant wants to 'affirm that we must believe in a divine-human…figure' (p.146), and he makes an attempt to translate the idea of the Trinity, the resurrection of the dead, and the sacraments, into reason's terms. But he seems to traverse a fine line between rejecting Christianity and preserving it in the way he speaks about faith. He does not reject Christianity outright – and in this respect is ambivalent towards it: there is something of rational value in the Christian religion, but there are also elements that are non-essential. But, in wanting to contend that it is the religion that 'comes closest' to the ideal pure religion of reason, he can nevertheless be read as in some way rejecting Christianity insofar as it does not reach the ideal.

It is one thing to plausibly enunciate the idea of a perfect moral exemplar, but it is another thing to want to name him a 'divine-human', if by that we understand it to mean the 'hypostatic union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ.' (p.147) Kant seems to have accepted the idea of the divine-human without question. In contrast, the idea of the Incarnation is highlighted by Kierkegaard as a cause for concern for intelligibility. Nevertheless, Kant is drawn towards wanting to say something about the unsayable, even if it

is to reject some of the tenets of faith as going too far beyond the rationally sayable. In the general remarks of the four main sections of the *Religion* book he tests the limits of that language. Although he says that 'all use of reason ceases precisely' (6:53) with the supernatural, he chooses not to be utterly silent. And so he tries to make the idea of divine grace intelligible by positing it as something 'incomprehensible.' (7:43) We can hope to be 'relieved of all responsibility' (6:76), through an Augustinian grace in which God ultimately decides our salvation. Grace, miracles, and prayer are 'nonessential' (7:8-9) to reason, but are somehow 'useful in making up the theoretical deficiency…to satisfy a rational need.' (7:9)

One could take the view that Kant's project with respect to religion is yet another manifestation of the Enlightenment claim with respect to the autonomy of reason. Furthermore, we could cynically view it as expedient, self-preserving wordplay, when he describes 'contingent tenets of faith…as nonessential. But…not…idle and superfluous.' (7:8-9) Whatever about the arguments and distinctions one can make with respect to the level of rationality displayed in his attempt, what we can say is that, no matter how hard he tries, he cannot escape the limits of the sayable, even if we get a sense that he is trying to be reasonable. He is attempting to negotiate difficult territory using a constricted vocabulary. Kant is attempting to move within the limits of reason, and is therefore constricted in terms of the aim of translating some of the contents of the Christian faith. That activity is certainly a shift in perspective, but it is a shift nonetheless. Kant is translating and interpreting in order to overcome a barrier for the understanding. He is engaged in judging and assessing in order to see what (rational) merit there is in Christianity. The fideist will interpret such a move as a negative one. But for Kant there is only one legitimate interpretation. Even if we are permitted in asking as to whether Kant is translating a given faith, or producing a new one[435], we can still say that his concept of faith is ultimately *an* expression of faith. It is the expression in a rational language of those parts of Christianity that can be made intelligible to reason.

[435] 'Something of literature will have begun when it is not possible to decide, pace Kant, whether Jesus is an example of the Moral Law, or whether the Moral Law is an example we learn from Jesus.' (Caputo, 1997, p.52)

However, this opens up the question as to what precisely is required in order for faith to be faith. Certainly, the fact that Kant himself points to the sphere of revelation as that which also contains the pure religion of reason is an indication that he acknowledges that there is more to religious belief than just its rational element. His expression of faith is entirely informed by the language of the rational, even if at times he shows signs of wanting to make somewhat larger leaps. However, he is still ultimately locked in by the boundary wall of reason. The hope of appealing to ecclesiastical faith in a way that does justice to those key components of that broader religious belief system is certainly a questionable one. It is not the aim of my thesis to solve this problem, but simply to show that, just like every other attempt to say what faith is, Kant is necessarily bound by a particular language that is in turn bound to reason. To attempt to do this would perhaps be to continue where Kant left off. This is not a claim as to the priority of language over reason, or vice versa, but simply to say that the two are inextricably linked.

What is manifest in Kant's treatment of faith is just the same in any similar attempt: striving to say something about that which ultimately escapes our grasp as human beings. Divine grace, the idea of Christ as the most perfect moral exemplar, and moral hope on the basis of striving to be like Christ, are all expressed in rational terms by Kant. Their characterization by him can be understood in terms of the way that they relate to our reason. However, they all fundamentally come down to a question of belief in something that requires a leap beyond what reason can cognize. And isn't it just possible that, in warning the theologian against trying to transgress the boundary circumscribed by reason, Kant can be interpreted as protecting that sacred space that is occupied by revelatory faith? Kant asserted philosophy's right to hold contents of faith up to scrutiny, and that theology cannot be afforded a reciprocal right. But, in asserting the limits of reason with respect to those contents, the outer sphere of revelation is preserved.

Kant is only interested in attempting to say what is intelligible from the perspective of reason. We are getting into dangerous waters if we equate 'intelligible' with 'truth.' Perhaps it would be safer to say: being true to one's

reason. Or, true to what we can say using a rational language: a rational language that is compatible with rational thinking, and a non-rational language that is compatible with non-rational thinking. There is in reality no possibility for a single, uniform, agreed answer to the question: "What is faith?" Reason must be set aside for Kierkegaard's 'faith', but not for Kant. Faith is perspectival. But it is only because of language that we are able to say anything at all. As Firestone puts it in relation to Kant: 'the transcendental method…does not get us to knowledge of God per se, but does allow for answers in the form of a critically satisfying and transcendentally rational faith in God.' (Firestone, 2009, p.166) Simply put, the 'form' in which we posit answers to the question of God is always language-dependent.

Kant broaches the gap between the ideality of ethics, and the reality of what it means to be a human, in a rationally limited way in his 'experiment' with respect to Christianity. In essence, the Christian God is translated into the language of reason as the best object for the motivation towards ethical perfection; the idea of sin is translated in terms of the limited perspective of a rationally derived moral law. He does not venture into the unchartered waters of a discussion of the self. His project is systematic, distanced, and rational in its approach. He is concerned with what can be said universally in relation to rational man. In this respect he is interested in saying the sayable. However, we can view his project as a step in the direction of the kind of thinking that Kierkegaard explodes out into a fully-fledged investigation of the individual self and its relation to the Christian religious faith. One could say that Kant's approach is confined to the mind-body aspects of human nature, and just about touching upon the question of a relation to God that posits our eternal aspect. In contrast, Kierkegaard is concerned for what he sees as the fullest becoming. That is, the mind-body, and spirit, as the wholly unified self, made possible only in Christian faith. That these views of faith are expressed in different ways is both inevitable and inescapable. Or, perhaps, you might say that this is only the case by virtue of the way in which I have set up the argument? However, that is precisely the point.

Notwithstanding Kant's extensive articulation of the relation between reason and that which lies completely beyond it, he fundamentally arrives at a silent moment. He acknowledges that there is a sphere of revelation that lies beyond that of practical religion, and this domain of 'biblical theology' (6:9) is one that is not for philosophical theology to transgress. There are some things in Scripture that must remain 'incomprehensible to us.' (6:44) He acknowledges that, in terms of those contents of the domain of revelation, such as grace and miracles, reason is silent by virtue of the fact that they go beyond its proper scope. (6:52) And yet, he cannot remain silent. From the rational viewpoint, those mysterious contents of revelatory faith are mysterious by virtue of reason regarding them (6:138); for Abraham, the mysterious is accepted by relinquishing reason. However, we can still legitimately ask if Abraham's silence in the face of the absurd possibility, and Kant's ultimately 'modest' (6:89) but affirmative recognition of the limit with respect to the divine that must ultimately lead to reason's silence, are really all that far apart. That said, is silence a purely singular concept? In the hands of Kierkegaard it is given a particular character. It is this character of silence as it pertains to faith that is the subject of the next section. But first we must deal with some issues in relation to the attempt to say.

8.2.2 Saying the Unsayable and the Path to Silence

Are we caught between a rock and a hard place in attempting to communicate faith, as distinct from talking *about* it?[436] De Silentio's point is that Abraham *cannot* speak in such a way as to make his faith and trust in God intelligible to the other – to Isaac, to Sarah, to us. Even if the person of faith speaks, there is no guarantee that I will understand him or be moved to faith. The important point that Kierkegaard wants to make is that, whilst we might want to communicate faith, language is, as Derrida says, 'inadequate to the essence…of God.' (Derrida, 1989, p.74) It is this inadequacy that leads us inevitably to silence. Kant too must guard against saying anything about that which goes beyond rational

[436] See chapter seven, p.252, for a reminder of this distinction.

intelligibility, because 'apophatic…discourse…can only indefinitely defer the encounter with its own limit' (p.81), much and all as reason is drawn towards that limit. In his own way, Kant arrives at an inevitable point of silence because it is rational to acknowledge the limit of reason. Clearly, if one limits knowledge, as Kant attempted to do, then one is left with the realm of what can be known, and that which falls outside of it – of which the beginning is the realm of what ought to be the case. Beyond that is the realm of that which is absolutely beyond human knowledge. To be sure, Kant opens up the space for faith, but it is a faith in the *idea* only, as opposed to the reality, of God. We certainly have a passion for knowing. We are 'driven, impassioned, touched by *la passion du non-savoir*.' (Caputo, 1997, p.311) Whether or not one is a religious believer – whether or not one names 'God' in one's seeking – is, for Caputo, not the most important point to draw from Derrida's 'religion', even if Derrida questions whether or not there is an alternative to faith.[437] Human beings, regardless of the name put on it (that which is beyond knowledge, the unknown, the object of faith), live with limited knowledge, and hence live in faith insofar as the object that is unknown to us is for us a passion. Uncertainty, undecidability, and a passion for the impossible, are constitutive of what it means to be human.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard attempts to provoke our uncertainty. It is a disturbing of the kind of 'assurances…within which we comfortably ensconce ourselves' (p.5), that is, within language. For De Silentio there can be no closure, and neither should we find it. Abraham is De Silentio's 'construction', but Kierkegaard communicates with us. (If the epigraph at the start of *Fear and Trembling* communicates anything, it is that we ought to be on our guard for an indirect meaning, just as Isaac ought to have been wiser to Abraham's loving but ironic response) One message is clearly articulated throughout: the movement of faith is an absolutely solitary task for the single individual, regardless of what exemplars may or may not be available (or palatable) to us in order to guide us on that journey. The other more indirect message to us, delivered by the

[437] 'What alternative to faith, to the blindness and passion of faith, can there be, he asks, once one confesses the limits of knowledge?' (*Ibid.*, p.309)

messenger, de Silentio – who does not necessarily grasp what he himself conveys – is that the attempt to justify faith in language is self-defeating for language.

As Hamann might have put it, the root problem, which is part of reason's misunderstanding of itself, is in having an over-inflated view of language's (reason's) capacity in relation to communicating faith. We ought rather to find our speaking severely curtailed. Perhaps the epigraph ascribed to Hamann at the start of *Fear and Trembling* that speaks of the 'beheaded poppies' (*FT*, p.2) points to this sacrifice of language. The 'huge heads' (p.5) of reasoned thinking (of which de Silentio is a representative 'clever' (p.26) fellow) are soon cut down, and no match for the 'pious simplicity' (p.7) of the child of faith.[438] De Silentio consistently tries to understand Abraham. He is, as Lippitt says, 'not merely a detached admirer, but a highly *engaged* observer.' (Lippitt, 2008, p.90) However, this is precisely the problem and, paradoxically, also the right route to faith. By that I mean to say that the collision of passionate reason with faith, in which, through the attempt to reason and explain, there is the possibility of offense, there is also the possibility for faith.

We are invited to do the same. That is, to join both de Silentio and Abraham in their quest in the hope that we too will be silent. Our reflection is part of the road to faith; our language is on trial. We are invited into Kierkegaard and De Silentio's thought experiment in order to bring to light the inadequacy of thought and its expression with respect to faith. Kant realizes this, and so he can neither talk about Christ as the incarnate God-man of Christianity, nor about the Trinity as the Triune God of revelation. If ethics and rationality correspond, then perhaps we ought to be silent with respect to anything of faith that defies universal disclosure. Strictly speaking, it would be non-ethical to speak (assert) either positively or negatively – that is to say, to speak at all – about that which goes beyond rational knowledge. But speaking 'for the sake of speaking', and/or non-rational speaking, are clearly a part of the way in which we use language, even if – from a strictly rational perspective – such speaking might be viewed as superfluous. And it is plausible to think that we should already have come to a firm conclusion in relation to faith by now. But it seems

[438] See Matthew 19:14.

that we simply cannot refrain from talking about and communicating our faith. We are without a conclusion in this regard. Rationally we ought to remain silent, or at least we ought to seriously restrict faith talk: 'negativity ought to absolutely rarefy discourse.' (Derrida, 1989, p.84) However, this is not what happens in reality. Humanity does speak faith in large numbers. But in attempting to engage in God-talk we are immediately in trouble in terms of both the limits of *what* can be said, and the *way* in which we can hope to say it.

One could say that religious language attempts to negotiate the very nature of faith. That is, its uncertainty and ambiguity. Kierkegaard characterizes faith as the unsayable, the uncertain, and the non-assured. It is obscured from the point of view of reason. Even if one disagrees with the assertion that the message of *Fear and Trembling* is that Abraham as an exemplar must be eliminated if faith is to be a workable task (Kosch, 2008, p.77), one can allow the example of De Silentio's Abraham to fade into the background just enough for those other messages to come to light. Perhaps the subtext, controversially, is that Abraham ought to be left behind as an exemplar in order for us to be in any position to make the movement to Christian faith, in which this new movement is clearly and without ambiguity a sacrifice of the self and not the other. But the limits of language are not any less constrained. Whether it is Abraham or Christ, we still face the same problem: attempting to say the unsayable, and potentially having to submit to silence in the face of these objects of faith. If *Fear and Trembling* is 'about articulating what a life of faith may involve' (Lippitt, 2008, p.85), then it may involve the inability to give 'adequate' expression to that faith to the non-believer, even to the point of being able to say nothing at all.

As one approaches that moment at which saying something about the absolutely unknown is no longer possible, i.e., the moment of silence in the face of 'the ineffable' (Derrida, 1989, p.80), the expression becomes more symbolic, concise, and economical. Kierkegaard's approach belongs to this sphere, insofar as what we encounter is intended to provoke us into trying to understand the meaning behind the symbolism in his indirect communication with us. From his perspective, indirect communication – which can be viewed as approaching silence – comes closer to being able to communicate faith. It is a form of

communication which is 'inescapable' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.20) if one wants to engage in God-talk. For Kierkegaard, the essence of faith, like Derrida's religion, is the 'non-knowing' (Caputo, 1997, xxiv), and hence the emphasis in terms of language is upon the attempt to say and yet not to say.

Caputo reads Derrida as pointing to a problem in saying *something* about the fact that one can say *nothing* about the object of faith: 'the impossible situation in which negative or apophatic theology finds itself, of denying that it is possible to speak of God even while…it keeps on speaking.' (p.1) The contradiction is to be acknowledged, but is there a presupposition as to what 'saying' means? Does *saying* necessarily imply *asserting*? Elsewhere, Derrida talks about speaking for speaking's sake. We can say that giving expression is part of the 'working-through' of the problem of speaking faith. One might ask: "Why bother to say *anything* about faith then? Are we just speaking 'for the sake of speaking' (Derrida, 1989, p.75)?" However, there is some merit in speaking for the sake of speaking. It is in this way that expression is given to that which is beyond knowledge. We often speak of 'talking it through', 'thinking out loud', and 'getting it off one's chest.' There is *some* purpose to the act of speaking, even if I can never get to knowledge and certainty with respect to the subject of my speaking. Derrida writes: 'to speak for the sake of speaking…is not entirely to speak in vain and to say nothing. It is perhaps to experience a possibility of speech… (p.75); To speak for nothing is not: not to speak. Above all, it is not to speak to no one.' (p.76)

On the other hand, speaking about faith can be viewed as an evasion. That is, it 'endlessly defers' (Lippitt, 2008, p.88) or postpones the possibility of making the leap of faith, and maybe even closes off that avenue completely. As Climacus writes: '…wanting to understand it is a cunning evasion that wants to shirk the task.' (*CUP*, p.371n) So viewed, language – or, speaking as a way of understanding and making intelligible – in effect prevents one from leaping. Something like offense, for example – which prevents one from making the leap of faith – belongs to the realm of language and the ethical. There is a consistent narrative to be found in *Fear and Trembling* with respect to the barrier to faith that is created by rational God-talk. In *Philosophical Fragments*, offense – which

has its *telos* in the ethical, and hence in language – is characterized as both necessary for, and preventative of, the leap of faith. Simply put, speaking *about* faith isn't the same as *having* faith, even if it is a part of that process.

In *speaking of* the impossible, or, in *speaking through* the language of negative theology, or – more simply put – in *speaking*, one relinquishes silence. Silence is as much Abraham's armour as the knight of faith as it is an indication of his incapacity to give adequate expression to his trust in God. In the case of the ascetic who takes a vow of silence there is a visible and audible commitment to faith communicated. By 'audible', I mean 'silence' in the way that one might say: 'the sound of silence', 'silence speaks volumes', 'silence speaks a thousand words', or even 'the silent treatment.' (Who hasn't felt the force of *that* kind of silence?!) If anything, silence might have greater force, in that, it might be compelling for me. It might indirectly stir my curiosity. It might bring me to silence, at which point faith might possibly be given the space to change me. Silence is still a way of communicating. That is to say, silence is a category *of* language. It is defined *by* the latter. Ethically, Abraham is guilty in his silence; religiously – De Silentio says – his silence is condoned. But as with all expressions of faith, whether negative or positive, the relation to language, and hence the ethical, is inescapable. Abraham still stands in a relation to language, even if he is silent. Even silence cannot escape its relation to language, and so, one say that silence does not protect him entirely. Derrida wants to ask as to whether or not one is under obligation to the ethical before one has even spoken: '...is an obligation before the first word possible?' (Derrida, 1989, p.73) Yes, insofar as one might feel the pressure of the ethical[439] bearing down upon oneself to justify one's silence. But what if, like Abraham, one *cannot* speak in a way that is intelligible to reason? Am I obliged to testify? Kierkegaard's response might be to say: "No, it is a personal matter." But, Abraham cannot claim to cut himself off from the ethical entirely, just because he cannot and will not speak. His non-speaking is still in a relation to language and the ethical.

[439] 'From the moment I open my mouth, I have already promised…to speak to the other.' (*Ibid.*, p.84)

Abraham remains silent, but that does not mean that we cannot speak *about* faith or about that silence. It might be possible and permissible for De Silentio to make excuses for, or to understand, Abraham's actions. There is certainly a distinction between explaining Abraham, and Abraham himself being in a position where he is capable of verbalizing, and hence justifying his actions.[440] In other words, there is personal responsibility involved with respect to silence. With silence comes personal responsibility, and such responsibility is needed in order to engage with faith. This is the solitude of faith: 'Without risk, no faith.' (*CUP*, p.204); 'only the one who works gets the bread.' (*FT*, p.21) However, how are we to judge De Silentio's words when he says that Abraham is the greatest? De Silentio is far from silent. Any speaking on our part is open to an ethical judgment. One goes beyond the solitude of individual decision when one speaks. Possibilities are limited when one speaks *about* one's decision. Language expression is therefore, as De Silentio maintains, an ethical act. There can be a multitude of reasons for, and interpretations of, silence. But religious silence is posited as the most enigmatic, in that it highlights the inability of language to adequately convey faith: 'the religious silence of Abraham's faith occupies an esoteric space…beyond the merely poetic silence of silentio.' (Podmore, 2012, p.75) Kierkegaard wants to say that faith, precisely because it is faith, does not need to and cannot justify itself because that would be to appeal to something external to faith. However, please note, actions *belong* to the ethical sphere by virtue of their external character. From the point of view of the internal movement of faith, and its relation to language, if Abraham opens his mouth to speak he is thrust into the universal. We can interpret de Silentio's explanation of Abraham as saying that Abraham must keep the secret that he shares with God because he does not, and never can, have access to God's reasons. Silence is the result of a secret trust in God that is incommunicable to the other.

Abraham is incapable of lying, because to speak a lie presumes secreted knowledge. He does not know what will happen with respect to God's actions,

[440] 'So it seems that if Abraham cannot explain himself, that is not because he cannot be explained.' (Kosch, 2008, p.66)

and so he cannot speak. However, what he most certainly knows is what ethics will say. His silence is indicative of both a lack of knowledge *and* the presence of knowledge. This is why the ethical is a temptation. Abraham's knowledge is tempted in the trial of faith. He is absolutely uncertain because he is leaping. That is the nature of faith as Kierkegaard presents it to us. And so, Abraham is beyond the kind of knowledge that is necessary for justification and speaking to be possible, even if we are drawn towards attempting an explanation. Ultimately, if it is really faith, then nobody – not even Abraham – has access to the 'grounds of…justification.' (Kosch, 2008, p.70) As humans, we simply are not equipped for that. Our language leaves us tongue-tied. Kierkegaard's idea is that it is only when reason becomes silent that we are in a position to receive the gift of faith.

Kierkegaard views silence as 'a source of enormous power' (Strawser, 2006, p.62) rather than as something indicating powerlessness. Silence communicates something. Yes, Abraham is unable to speak, but that is only so because the non-believer is powerless to understand. His silence is a reflection of the incapacity of reason. Silence creates a space in order to communicate one's inwardness. It is saying without saying. It says: "Here I am, but all you can see is what is immediately sensible. Beyond that, I am unknown to you." Silence creates a space for the individual 'so that God's word can be heard' (p.56): so that the leap, as a possibility and choice, can be given the space to manifest itself. In *Fear and Trembling*, silence is given significance and importance. It is evoked in order to provoke us. Kant gives expression to that place of silence in the 'good heart.' It is that place which God only sees. That is, when one chooses to act not for the sake of appearances – which would be immediately sensible by others – but from a pure and silent motivation. Silence, in this respect, is literally the opposite of that kind of 'lip-service' which both Kant and Kierkegaard want us to avoid if we are to have a proper relation to the divine. Kierkegaard wants to evoke a memorable silence for us: to imagine silence. If we cannot be silent, how are we to hear?: 'silence, paradoxically makes communication with the other possible. Without it true communication is lost.' (p.63)

If a justification that has explanatory power is sought outside of what ethics and faith respectively might offer, then, if the story of Abraham is taken

literally, by the end of *Fear and Trembling* we are at a loss in this regard. That is, we are provoked into silence. If we cannot take a side and resign ourselves to saying one way or another whether he is a murderer (to ethics) or a believer (in God's demand for a sacrifice), then what alternative are we left with? In order to find an alternative – that is, to say something – we must interpret the story in a different way. A literal appropriation of the story leads down one of two paths. However, if we choose to interpret a broader message here, what we can say is that Kierkegaard wants us to reconsider our faith, in that, we are invited to at least take on board the idea that *something* must be sacrificed for faith. Is language, too, part of that collateral damage? Although De Silentio says that he cannot understand and make Abraham intelligible, he fails miserably in carrying out his professed silence on the matter. He attempts to explain Abraham as the knight of faith, but in the end, unless we are prepared to condemn or condone, we must remain silent. Kierkegaard is pointing out the inherent problem in what is a natural need of reason. We simply cannot let go of speaking about, justifying, and explaining Abraham. On the other hand, Abraham, unlike De Silentio, is genuinely silent. He has taken on the responsibility of faith. He has resigned the possibility for speaking in a language that appeals to the ethical.

Kierkegaard wants us to consider that we ought to stop and listen: to be silent. The ability to stop and listen is, as everyone knows, a valuable human trait. What does it accomplish? Silence maintains the possibility for dialogue. But also, rather than speaking in order to instruct, Kierkegaard sees 'silent speech', or, indirect communication – which approaches silence – as enabling the other to 'work it out' for themselves: to 'work out your own salvation.' (Philippians 2:12) Having spoken indirectly and economically to Isaac, Abraham remains silent. What little he says to Isaac is obscure. He might as well have said nothing at all. His expression, if there is any, is emotional (fear) and physical (trembling). There are no words to justify his fear and trembling, except if they relate to the ethical implications of his actions. Reason has left him and expression in an intelligible language is no longer possible. In not offering a direct pronouncement upon Abraham, Kierkegaard (as de Silentio) points us

indirectly to silence. Although we can (as De Silentio does) speak *about* silence, silence itself can 'only be communicated indirectly.' (Strawser, 2006, p.67)

The use of the pseudonym makes it harder for us to come to a complete assessment, but this is precisely the kind of silent space, or silent point at which he wants us to arrive: 'The…dialectical structure of Kierkegaard's writings embraces…and preserves…ambiguity, undecidability, and irreducibility.' (ibid.) Kierkegaard's provocation in *Fear and Trembling* is to being offended or silent. His project is a way of simulating, but not emulating, the kind of silence that is required if one is to be in any position to make a similar leap of faith. Abraham's withdrawal to Mount Moriah is itself an analogy for the withdrawal into a private and silent relation to God, in the same way that Moses retreats to Mount Sinai, and Christ is left alone in Gethsemane. Words that come closest to silence are the only possible ones if Abraham is to remain truthful to his belief and trust in God. The retreat to the mountain is also a retreat into a necessary silence. Ethics frowns upon such a silence, but faith expects it because the paradox does not expect anything less than reason becoming silent in the face of that which it cannot understand. Reason cannot understand this embracing of impossibility.

One of the messages of *Fear and Trembling* is that silence is the inevitable result of knowing that, no matter how hard one might try, language is incapable of explaining one's faith to the non-believing other, i.e., in such a way that the other would be capable of relating to what is said. In terms of religious selfhood, between a believer and a non-believer there is already an inequality present. In other words, silence does not *cause* the kind of inequality that is so questionable in terms of Kantian ethics – which Malesic says views secrecy as inaugurating 'an inequality between the secret-keeper and the one from whom the secret is kept' (Malesic, 2006, p.448) – but rather, it is part of the *effect* of such an inequality. Communication, as it were, breaks down. Abraham's silence is the result of not being able to say anything to the other that would instill the same trust in God that he has, i.e., that even the impossible is possible with God: 'the secret of Abraham's faith is…concealed (as a paradoxically 'impossible' possibility which cannot be adequately conveyed to 'the other').' (Podmore, 2012, p.70) The individual's relation to God is a silent place to which we are denied

access. That we cannot 'hear' anything can be translated as saying: we cannot make it intelligible to us. Abraham cannot communicate the fact that the absurd is no longer so to him, by virtue of his faith. He trusts in God rather than in the ethical. He cannot explain in such a way as to appeal to a rational understanding, because reason cannot make sense of the absurd and paradoxical proposition that the impossible could be made possible. It is the absurd only because of reason's perspective – what Climacus calls an 'acoustic illusion.' (*PF*, p.61) The silence that results from the encounter with the absurd and paradoxical is the opposite to a vocalized and ethically motivated expression of offense in relation to the story of Abraham.

The self is central to Kierkegaard's concept of faith, but it is also that which is to be sacrificed before God insofar as one is commending oneself into God's hands. In this respect, it is Climacus' opinion is 'that it must be the most difficult of all to become a Christian.' (*CUP*, p.619) Kierkegaard wants to reclaim the fact that faith is difficult, and so we should not be surprised that we should become silent in the face of those demands: '[before] the radical and anxious demands of biblical faith…[De Silentio] can…only fall silent.' (Podmore, 2012, p.74) In Abraham's dying to the immediate world, of which language is a part, language itself dies. It 'is as much the victim as Isaac.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.132) But, in gaining back the world entire and returning to family life, Abraham regains his voice as part of the ethical community – just don't expect him to be in a position to justify his faith to you! The inability to say the unsayable is an essential characteristic of faith. One would never know a knight of faith by his words, because, at least in the way the knight is portrayed by De Silentio, he could never say anything to justify our saying: "He is a knight of faith." Abraham's trust is an ideal, and that is why we cannot point to a knight of faith so easily. If Abraham has taken the leap by suspending his reason and believing the impossible, then he has also given up the capacity to speak. In other words, reason, and hence language, are suspended. We can say that the sacrifice of language is a part of Abraham's movement of faith: 'Abraham must sacrifice…'the ethical' order of communication…[it is] a sacrifice of speech.' (Podmore, 2012, p.81)

But what about the rest of us? It seems that, when it comes to faith, what is really impossible is staying silent. We simply need to *say*, even if it is in relation to the impossible, and even if that saying must come close to, or actually consist in, saying nothing in order to say something. It is absolutely a part of what it means to be human. However, this does not solve the problem of the relation between language and faith. That is, if we cannot refrain from speaking faith (speaking *from* a position of faith, and/or, speaking *about* faith), then what language *is* appropriate? I am certainly not alone in asking this question.[441] But perhaps we should take our cue from Hamann again. Rather than concerning ourselves with that which separates different attempts to speak faith – not that this issue is to be underestimated – we should try to look at this in terms a 'joint communication of the idiom' (*Metacritique*, p.213) of faith-talk. That is the subject of the closing section of this chapter.

8.2.3 Conflicting Expressions and the Unifying Role of Language

In language we are engaged in attempting to say something about our view of life. But we are also entangled in it too. It captivates us, but language also holds us captive, in that we can never quite get to the essence of faith using language. It is also true to say that a human being can hold conflicting life-views at the same time, and these characteristic ambiguities and contradictories are played out in both the way in which we communicate, and in what we say. Climacus takes the view that '[w]e are many things, we have many sides – and they can be at odds.' (Ferreira, 2010, p.12) Like Hamann, Kierkegaard wants to view the human self as a unity of many things – as a whole self – rather than just from one perspective: to 'be an enfleshed poet, thinker…historian, and priest.' (German, 1981, p.63) Man is not just a rational being, for example. One does not necessarily confine one's thinking, and hence one's language, to a singular mode of expression. It is reasonable to want to give expression to a particular perspective, such as the religious or the ethical, the subjective or the objective,

[441] Kosch also points to this important question. As she puts it: 'the specific problem of communication of religious content to non-believers.' (Kosch, 2008, p.76); Shakespeare asks: 'What language is appropriate in theological discourse?' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.19)

and the sacred or the secular. However, it is more reasonable to give a more honest and whole account of what it means to be a living individual who can and does want to communicate in many different ways. This, in contrast to the mythological goals of either a purely rational, or an entirely subjective, linguistic expression of faith.

Both Kant and Kierkegaard grappled with the issue of faith, but using different 'languages.' As Green puts it: 'For here was Kant…wrestling seriously with some of these same orthodox teachings…Kierkegaard…did not merely abandon Kant's philosophy but used [it]…to complete in Christian terms the project Kant had begun.' (Green, 1992, p.74) Kant's assertion in the *Conflict of the Faculties* was that the Biblical theologian ought not to call upon reason in order to bolster his or her claims. Walsh sees Kierkegaard as saying that in order to think about Christianity properly one must not approach it as an 'objective theologian.' (Walsh, 2009, p.26) Both Kierkegaard and Kant want to keep a clear divide between reason and faith. Kant asserts that the desire to know is a natural need of reason. The natural reaction to being told: "This cannot be made intelligible" is to want to understand. Kierkegaard relies upon this need. He plays upon this natural propensity in order to draw us out. His subtle message, which is the communication of the 'divine voice…in…the gentle breeze' (*E/O*, p.168), is that we will never know because faith is not a form of knowledge.

A view of language as being capable of expressing everything of course leads to an 'easy' pronouncement over Abraham. However, Kierkegaard wants to say that this is not the case. *Fear and Trembling* is as much concerned with a philosophy of the limits of language as it is with the thorny issue of the relation between ethics and religious belief. As such, he opens up the question as to what language is appropriate in speaking about faith. What we *can* say is that it is our ignorance with respect to the object(s) of faith that bind us firmly together. The divide can be viewed as a conflict within language, and in this respect we cannot entirely or easily separate reason and faith. Although they might be 'bound to one another by the band of their opposition' (Derrida, 2002, p.2), reason and

faith both rely upon language, and the tradition in which they are expressed.[442] It is in this sense that I want to recall Hamann's argument against Kant for having essentially perpetuated the wedge between faith and reason. If one limits reason in order to make room for faith, then a gap is maintained between the two, even if in 'making room' there is a sense in which faith is brought into the rational sphere. Hamann believed Kant to be mistaken in one crucial respect. That is, the belief that one can somehow escape from faith as it is actually experienced through some kind of pure language that posits, or at least gravitates towards, a form of knowledge.

Kierkegaard's style is closer to that kind of 'surplus element that exceeds propositional meaning' (Frank, 1990b, p.264), and is arguably closer to being able to communicate his understanding of faith in a way that brings about the desired effect. That is, to communicate with me as the significant other who cannot hold fast to faith with reasoned thinking. Kant's expression of faith is an attempt to work primarily within the realm of what Frank calls 'structuration.' (ibid.) That is, where the concern is for thinking and concepts, in order to give the approach universal import. Kierkegaard's emphasis is on the second realm of 'application' (ibid.) that focuses on the individual experience. He enunciates what can be said poetically and indirectly in order to emphasize the ultimate inexpressibility of faith. For him, it is something that cannot be spoken of in merely rational terms, i.e., in a rational language. Kierkegaard wants to break down the limits of language and meaning imposed by Kant. If there is indeed a need of reason to speak about faith, then the need to speak of the inexpressible in a rational language is somewhat removed in poetic language and imagery. Language is in this way partially freed. Kierkegaard can be viewed as exemplifying a poetic turn – one in which '[p]hilosophy…turns to poetry in order to fulfill its real mission.' (Frank, 1990b, p.291)

Kant might want to posit a faith that has universal meaning for reason, but he cannot escape the fact that it is the individual experience that is at the centre of any such relation to God. And Kierkegaard may want to say that the

[442] Derrida echoes Hamann: When one speaks of 'faith', one must deny neither 'heritage' (*Ibid.*, p.47) nor 'iterability.' (ibid.)

individual relation to God is what is of primary concern when it comes to faith, but he cannot escape the fact that the individual cannot divorce themselves so easily from the tendency towards thinking and conceptualizing. It is not simply a case of either/or, but of both/and. Kant's project might be one that seeks a universal view, but he cannot escape his own view of faith, which, ironically, is not a universal one. It is the 'manner in which the author linguistically expresses his unique view of the world.' (Frank, 1990a, p.148) That is, not everyone writes as Kant does, even if Kant attempts to master the mores of the philosophical discourse of his time. If Kant believed that he had uncovered the 'truth' about reason and faith, would he be willing to go as far as to say that *any* rational being could have arrived at this truth in an identical way? I answer, no. Rather, Kant's uniqueness is what produces the work, i.e., his particular view of faith. It is what effects the meaning.

As we move away from a systematically driven language to a form of expression such as that of both Hamann and Kierkegaard, this kind of rebellious language defies the rules and conventions of the philosophical trend of the time. The language can be identified more with 'the dark meaningfulness of art' (p.166), rather than with the 'light' of reason and its purported 'intelligibility.' However, neither Kant, nor Hamann and Kierkegaard – nor any of us for that matter – can escape language if we want to talk about faith. My ultimate aim in this thesis can be seen as wanting to reaffirm Hamann's view, in order to try to understand the relation between reason and faith as characterized by Kant and Kierkegaard as reducible to the question of language. This is not to deny the conflict in *what* is said. Rather, I want to say that content cannot be divorced from the individual expression – or, *style* – in order to get to a 'transparent insight' (p.146) which somehow stands independently of the expression. The way in which both Kierkegaard and Kant communicate with us is entirely a part of the meaning that is the effect of their language.

Striking the right balance, i.e., speaking to unity, is what is important for both Hamann and Kierkegaard. To be fully human is to express oneself in every way in which one can be said to be a human being. Hamann's view of the human

condition is a wholistic one. Abstract thought, communicated in language, is still ultimately the communication of a flesh and blood human being who is in a particular situation. There is no view from nowhere available to us. Steven Shakespeare echoes this point: 'There is no way of climbing outside our language and conceptual schemes to judge how successfully what we say mirrors reality.' (Shakespeare, 2017, p.9) Enlightenment philosophy, at least according to Hamann, thought it possible to separate thought and language. But for Kant's 'First and Best Critic' (Betz, 2004, p.291), 'Thought is…identical with…language.' (Forster, 2012, p.485) We can only think insofar as we have a language in which to think. I see the role of language as crucial for understanding that, ultimately, both Kant and Kierkegaard, no more than anyone who speaks about faith, are engaged in that challenge to speak about the unknown. What is not denied in this thesis, but rather highlighted, is the difference in the way that this unknowing is communicated. Derrida writes: 'what is at stake is language…the idiom, literality, writing, that forms the element of all revelation and belief, an element that ultimately is irreducible and untranslatable.' (Derrida, 2002, p.4)

If it is true to say our faith is not guaranteed, it is equally true to say that neither is our knowledge or our reason. Derrida wants to say that everything, and everything we speak, rests in some (generic) form of faith.[443] The distinction between faith and knowledge becomes blurred, but more importantly, neither stance should look upon its 'opposite' as if it were some kind of inferior 'game.' (p.40) Language is the common root of which Hamann speaks. It is the way in which faith and knowledge, or, faith and reason, can be 'thought together.' (p.48) Is reason – and by extension, rational language – something that can be separated out and away from the human being who is whole? Hamann says no; Kierkegaard affirms the role of reason in coming to faith. McCombs calls this 'holistic or humane rationality.' (McCombs, 2013, p.3) The way in which Kierkegaard represents reason forces us to think about what reason is really capable of, and about what role it plays in our lives. And when we observe the way in which Kant and Kierkegaard talk about faith, what we are really seeing

[443] 'The temptation of knowing, the temptation of knowledge, is to believe not only that one knows what one knows…but also that one knows what knowledge is, that is, free…of belief or of faith.' (Derrida, 2002, p.31)

are the limits of language: the attempt to negotiate difficult terrain. It is both an endeavour to understand and to be understood. Evans says that 'Pure objectivity may be a myth, as…[Kierkegaard] argues. But pure subjectivity may be mythical as well.' (Evans, 1998, p.111) Language is far from perfect, and yet it can be used creatively in order to negotiate the 'myths' of objectivity and subjectivity. The problem is in thinking of expression as being confined to either objectivity or subjectivity. Language is the only way in which we can articulate our relation to truths and realities that we can never know.

Hamann viewed 'language as 'at once the indispensable helper *and* seducer of understanding.' (Betz, 2012, p.231) Language and thought are coexistent, but it is a mistake to think that language has no limits in relation to what it can achieve. Kant wants to seduce us into thinking that we can understand faith rationally; Kierkegaard wants to help us in understanding that we cannot. Alternatively, Kant wants to help us to understand faith through a rational language; Kierkegaard wants to seduce us indirectly to faith. We are pulled in two directions, but ultimately, for Hamann, everything in this respect reduces to language which unites 'concepts and intuitions, understanding and sensibility.' (p.239) We simply cannot 'think apart from [language].' (p.244) In relation to Kant's *Preface* to the first *Critique,* Hamann asserts that the question Kant really left unanswered was as to how is it even possible for us to think.[444] Hamann's reply is simple: it is only with language, which is part of the sensible world, and which is *a priori*, that thought is possible. Hamann protested 'against the tendency of the rationalistic philosophers to destroy what he conceived to be the essential unity of existence.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.2) For him, I symbolize the external world in language; I express my thoughts in language. Language and thought are inextricably bound.

The indirect way in which Kierkegaard confronts us with faith, that is, in both form and content, is that kind of 'event *within* language' (Caputo, 1997, p.11) which invites us to think differently about not only how we relate to, but also

[444] Betz cites from: Hamann, J.G. (1949-57). *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. III, Josef Nadler (ed.), Historical-critical edn. Vienna: Herder, p.286. Hamann writes: 'So, a primary question remains: how is the ability to think possible? – the ability to think right and left, before and without, with and beyond experience?' (Betz, 2012, p.251)

how we speak about, the contents of faith. We cannot escape the language upon which we rely. Hamann's is a picture of the 'whole man' – sensing and thinking, perceptive and reflective, sensory process and rational process – who gives expression in language.[445] He is a pivotal figure because he saw that the real problem in speaking about faith is really the problem of not being able to escape language if we want to say something about the world and that which we *believe* to be beyond it. Language operates in such a way that it is 'concrete' (*E/O*, p.68), and in need of 'repetition.' (ibid.) in order for it to operate. Because it has a temporal aspect, meaning can (and does) evolve. But what remains constant is the need to give expression. Language is inescapable (unless of course one is forever silent). Derrida writes, echoing Hamann: 'Language has started without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God.' (Derrida, 1989, p.99)

If we are to communicate with each other in relation to faith, we most certainly meet the possibility for conflict in the challenge that exists *within* language. And hence there are no guarantees that the non-believing individual who invests all in the ethical will either understand, or be persuaded to, faith. Kierkegaard confronts us with the problem as to how someone might be convinced into faith, given that he believes the 'secret of faith' (*WL*, p.28) to be fundamentally incommunicable. Kant points to an interpretation – that is to say, language expression – that might be possible for the biblical theologian whose understanding might be illuminated or inspired in some supernatural way. (7:24) That is, in a way that remains hidden to reason. If faith, as Kierkegaard contends, does not belong to the rational, sayable realm of the ethical, then, what is the 'correct' kind of language (if any is possible) that will aid such a transition to faith? Malesic says of Kierkegaard that he is 'the perfect thinker to guide us through…the problem of how people acquire and communicate religious knowledge' (Malesic, 2006, p.454) – the art of how to say the unsayable. At the very least – in Kierkegaard's view – the correct use of language is that which speaks to 'me', and one that transcends a merely ethical-rational form.

For Hamann, abstract language does not adequately reflect the way in which human reason ordinarily operates. Such language fails to 'appeal to the

[445] See *Metacritique*, p.212.

whole man, i.e., to the emotions as well as to the intellect.' (O'Flaherty, 1952, p.48) The point is that expression in relation to lived experience is more adequately realized in that which is closest natural language. That is to say, where one can grasp meaning in a way that does justice to the dual aspects of being human: thinking *and* sensing, reflecting *and* perceiving, grasping relations *and* objects, the intellectual *and* the emotional. In that kind of language – the poetic being the epitome of natural language – one is in a better position to understand, because it speaks to one in a more real(istic) and unified way. Natural language is 'the key to revelation and reason…the gateway to the invisible…the point at which the encounter between the divine and human takes place.' (p.30) Influenced by Hamann, and motivated by Kant's limited concept of faith, what Kierkegaard indirectly asserts, in essence, is that an absolutely pure rational language is not only impossible, but also an inappropriate ideal when attempting to communicate faith. That is not to say that there is no such thing as rational language, or that one cannot attempt to speak objectively about faith. But he wants to echo Hamann – as I do – in saying that the limits of language should be more honestly acknowledged when we talk about religious faith. Ultimately, each language expression in relation to faith comes to a limit point that cannot be traversed.

Although we may 'have no language in common' (*FT*, p.29) with God that is not to say that we can only be silent. We do have a very deep need to speak the unspeakable. If we do not acknowledge that, as individual, the way in which we speak about faith is unique to our individual self, we can never properly begin to talk about communicating with each other about something as crucial as faith. We are potentially losing the ability to understand the other in faith because we are no longer really interested in what the other has to say when it does not fit with our own 'language.' Like Kierkegaard's aesthetic young man, we become spiritually 'tongue-tied' (*E/O*, p.45), forever babbling past each other.

An observation comes to mind, which has its source in something that strays outside the bounds of a strictly philosophical medium, but is nevertheless

a legitimate form of communication. In *The Unanswered Question*, Charles Ives attempted to represent in music 'The Perennial Question of Existence.' (McDonald, 2004, p.269) The programmatic nature of the piece is clear. Pitted against each other are the one who asks the question (the single individual), and the 'Fighting Answerers' (ibid.) who represent the incessant busy-ness that is the futile human struggle to find an answer to that question. The latter eventually turn to mock the very question they seek to answer. When the solitary one asks the question for a final time, all that remains is the silence of the druids in 'Undisturbed Solitude.' (p.270) Clearly, the question of the meaning of existence is not confined to an expression in written and spoken language alone, and the question is, for some, the question of faith. If Ives felt it possible to communicate this through music – often said to be a universal 'language' – then we ought to remind ourselves that, ultimately, notwithstanding the legitimate conflicts that we encounter with respect to reason and faith, what finally binds us together is language and the search for meaning within it.

The faith-reason relation's complexity is relayed through Kant and Kierkegaard's respective language styles. And contrary to the notion of a reduction to propositions, the persuasiveness of either account rests, in part, upon the value we place on the respective approaches. Philosophical argument aims to convince, but there are no guarantees for the persuasiveness of either approach. Style is symbolic of the 'impurity' of lived experience. It is through language that we experience the individual immanently as the communicating other. But there are no guarantees, when faith is being communicated, that the non-believer will necessarily come to an understanding, given that there exists a divide even for those within the sphere of faith. Perhaps if faith is to be, and to make itself, understood, then a re-evaluation of the way language is employed ought to be brought more into focus. This is not to evade answering a legitimate question in relation to what kind of language is appropriate for communicating, and in engaging in dialogue about, faith. To answer that question goes beyond the bounds of this thesis. But, a fundamental claim here is that before such a question can be answered, a more robust and enlightened analysis of the role of language, within the apparent conflict between rational and non-rational

perspectives on faith, needs to be fostered. This thesis aims to make a very small contribution in this regard.

Conclusion

This thesis began with an investigation into Kant's view of the faculty of reason and its limits, as to how he makes room for the specific idea of God (Chapter 1), and following on from this, how he inevitably conceives of religious faith (Chapter 2). But in the first chapter we see Hamann's response to Kant as guiding us along the right path with respect to something more fundamental to be considered. That is, an acknowledgment of the role of language. Essentially, the limit of reason in Kant's account leads to the need for religious thought, and in turn these limits constrict him in terms of what is sayable of faith. This prepared the way for understanding Kierkegaard's response to Kant, showing the way in which he takes Kantian faith to be a starting point, but only in order to go beyond such a view (Chapter 3). For him, Kant's is but an analogy of faith. There are key elements to faith that must be spoken. Kierkegaard expands our thinking about the existential challenges faced by the individual in taking the leap of faith (Chapters 4-6), in essence highlighting the ultimate difficulty involved in such a movement. Although there is a clear difference with respect to the form of expression in the respective accounts of faith – with a concern for the individual as one of the prime motivations behind Kierkegaard's style (Chapter 7) – ultimately, the question of the role, limits, and appropriateness of language in theological discourse becomes the focus of our appropriation of these differing approaches to that which might ultimately leave us speechless: the attempt to give expression to faith (Chapter 8). The thesis culminated with a view of linguistic expression as being of central concern to our deliberations over the faith-reason relation, pointing to the need for a greater appreciation of its role in our understanding of the apparent conflict between the two. The problem of the limits of all language in relation to faith is a shared one, and hence the conflict to be addressed is a linguistic one. In speaking faith there is always the possibility of becoming lost (to the Other) in translation. But silence ought not necessarily be the outcome of our attempt to communicate with each other from the spheres of reason and faith.

Charles Taylor writes: 'the Enlightenment and Romanticism…have made us what we are…our cultural life, our self-conceptions, our moral outlooks still operate in the wake of these great events. We are still visibly working out their implications.' (Taylor, 1989, p.393) The clash between a rational view of the world, and that which emphasizes the expressivity and uniqueness of the individual who transcends the merely rational, is manifested in what is called a conflict between reason and faith. And so, this thesis can be viewed as a significant 'working out' of this conflict in terms of two specific expressions of religious faith. Kant, and then Kierkegaard – who in their own way clashed with Christendom – can be interpreted as part of this trajectory towards a contemporary statement about the self in relation to faith. Both of them were acutely aware of the possibility of an atheistic outlook, and in both do we find a theistic response articulated from their own particular perspectives. But when we take a broader view – which this thesis does in a significant way – what we see in both Kant and Kierkegaard is a desire to show the faith-reason relation to be one that is a universal question of existence.

From a historical perspective, there is a clear way in which this thesis succeeds in bringing to light the specific way in which Kierkegaard is responding to Kant's thought about the relation between faith and reason. Unlike the relation to Hegel, which is often more explicitly enunciated by Kierkegaard – both within and without the pseudonymous texts – the relation to Kant requires a deeper level of excavation. There is a sense in which Kant's moral faith is an unspoken 'given' position to which Kierkegaard is responding. Historically speaking, making this relation clearer is vital in order to fully appreciate where Kierkegaard stands in the philosophical tradition. And the importance of Hamann's influence upon Kierkegaard is one that is never underestimated in this thesis, even if it is not always brought absolutely to the fore. The way in which we understand Kierkegaard's place in the philosophical tradition is conditioned not only by our knowledge of the nature and scope of his relation to Kant, but also by the way in which he can be seen as continuing a debate which began with Hamann, who was one of the first to respond to his Königsberg

contemporary. And in this regard, this work adds significantly to such an understanding.

From a philosophical perspective, although the view may be a controversial one, this thesis has shown that Kant's account of reason operates within a theistic framework. But there is something else at the heart of this matter to which this thesis directs us. Kant himself needs to use the word 'God' in the attempt to express the limits of reason. He doesn't in any way highlight the fact that this is a linguistic move performed in order to, literally, *come to terms* with the gap in knowledge with respect to the moral law. Perhaps for him it is a language game. But we can read Kant as indirectly acknowledging that need to express those limits in a specific way, albeit by virtue of shared language. Kant's expression of faith is symptomatic of the problem of speaking faith rather than curative. That is to say, rather than viewing Kant's use of the specific idea of God as a purely rational step in the attempt to fill the gap implied by the limits of reason, this move on his part is indicative of the inherent difficulty involved in *any* attempt to speak about the unknown. He must find a linguistic solution in order to move forward. And he is justified in making this leap insofar as *all* attempts to introduce an object of faith into one's speaking involves a linguistic risk. The problem of language is not simply a problem of communication between, for example, the theist and the atheist who, in dialogue with each other become incoherent to that other. In focusing upon the Kant-Kierkegaard and faith-reason relation, and in always paying attention to the linguistic element, a much deeper issue is uncovered. That is, that the problem of language is one for '*me*': in my articulating the world, even before the question of communicating with the other arises, I already have certain *a priori* internal commitments, but ones that arise from everything that makes me who I am.

Kant wanted to draw a clear line regarding who can legitimately speak about faith in terms of the rational. And this thesis does not want to deny the possibility of different linguistic outcomes arising from the distinction between rational and non-rational views of faith. But what it does want to show is that this distinction recedes when we recognize the extent to which we are all bound

by language in any attempt to speak faith. In working through both Hamann's and Kierkegaard's insistence upon the unity of lived experience, we arrive at this point in relation to language. Furthermore, we can say that the conflict, rather than being merely an abstraction, is manifested in an immediate way – that is, in language – when any attempt is made by the individual to *come to terms* with this conflict. Fundamentally, it is a conflict for the individual to address, because inherent to the attempt to come to terms with the possibility for rival views of existence is the question of language itself. Taylor says that the way we think today 'shows a confusing mixture of fusion, mutual influence, and rivalry among the different sources' (Taylor, 1989, p.412) of what has led to the modern self. In order for us to work through this kind of confusion, it is a contention of this thesis that a commitment to understanding the role of language in the apparent rivalry between reason and faith, in this specific way, can bring greater clarity to our thinking.

When we encounter the pseudonymous texts in Kierkegaard there might be a temptation to want to 'translate' the contents of those texts into something that – for wont of a better description – is more philosophically acceptable. Or, to put it another way, to want to reduce the contents to concepts and abstractions. This would not be a surprising move to make. And it is legitimate insofar as it is one way of approaching a philosophical text. However, one of the unique elements of this thesis – and indeed one that springs from both Hamann's argument against separating out that which is already unified, and from Kierkegaard's insistence upon maintaining a view which always has lived experience in mind – is that it avoids such a temptation. Methodologically speaking, there is always a concern for highlighting the way in which the individual pseudonyms interact with each other – the way in which faith and reason are in varying degrees emphasized in the respective accounts of existence. But a further crucial point underscores such an approach to the texts. The pseudonyms are always allowed to speak to us in the *way* in which they originally uttered their thoughts. This is not a case of integrity for integrity's sake, but rather a case that, in order to wholly understand what is being said, the *what* and *how* of expression ought to remain unified. It is not simply a case that

this thesis wants to point out the stylistic differences that are encountered in our speaking about faith and reason, as if style and form were an external consideration to be *applied* to the issue. Rather, the unique point being made is that the style and form of expression in itself moulds *how* we come to an understanding. It is part of our *coming to terms* with the apparent conflict between faith and reason. The problem over style and form in the attempt to give expression is not just an issue that is confined to faith and reason. But it has an important significance for our attempt to give expression to them, precisely because the style is the way in which we meet the limits. Or, the limits of reason and faith are manifested as the limits of language, of which style and form are an integral part. It is not simply a case of our applying the question of contrasting styles of linguistic expression to the faith-reason debate. The issue of *how* I am to speak faith is one unavoidably faced by every individual in the very attempt to speak it.

In comparison to the philosophical reception of both Kant and Kierkegaard, Hamann has received very little attention. That is not to negate the fine work that has been carried out in this regard. Those few who have chosen to bring to light Hamann's contribution to philosophy tend towards focusing upon the way in which he responded to his contemporaries. And this is warranted insofar as Hamann engaged with his contemporaries in a polemical way, inspiring others to a revised view of the pretensions of Enlightenment philosophy generally. As such, Hamann points *out* of the Enlightenment and *into* the Romantic tradition. Kierkegaard's relation to Hamann often receives passing reference in the secondary literature. In this regard, this thesis makes steps towards addressing this lack of focus. We can most certainly find something of value in our understanding of Hamann's direct argument with Kant, and so too with respect to the way in which Kierkegaard's thinking, and approach *within* language, is guided and influenced by Hamann. There are a number of lines of thought connecting Kierkegaard to Hamann. Amongst these are: the importance of the figure of Socrates for both modern philosophy and Christianity; the centrality of paradox and contradiction in religious thought; the mystery that is the subjective individual; and the hidden mystery of

Scripture and the problem of interpretation. But there are three initial points of intersection between Kierkegaard and Hamann that have been especially important for this thesis. Namely, the kind of argument which sets out to unseat Enlightenment thought by pointing out: the contingent nature of the attempt to rationally justify a reason-driven view of the world purely on its own terms; the inescapable problem of language as non-separable from thought; and an antagonism towards abstracting away from the lived experience of the individual. Following on from the last of these is a methodological approach adopted by Kierkegaard – and one that shows his debt to Hamann – in which there is an intentional and non-typical use of the first-person perspective, expressed in diverse stylistic forms, upholding the view that content and form, thought and language, are inseparable.

But Hamann points us further, and, in this respect, this thesis is instrumental in terms of the way in which it returns to Hamann's core thinking in order to pave the way for a re-evaluation of contemporary debates over the conflict between theism and atheism. The thesis restates the inherent problem of attempting to articulate the world as being fundamentally a problem of language expression, and points to the need for a re-appropriation of Hamann, over and above a standard reading of his philosophical input as one of merely historical significance. His thought is pivotal to the way in which we can begin to properly address this conflict. He deconstructs reason's view of itself, attempting to dismantle such a view via the problem of language. And, in this regard, he speaks into postmodern thinking. There is a sense in which a space now presents itself for an understanding of Hamann in terms of the linguistic turn in philosophy. Again, this idea is enunciated in some of the literature, but what is lacking in this regard is follow-up. If it is true to say that we now live in an age in which there is a religious re-turn – a return to the problem of how we ought to accommodate religious faith – then, given the way in which Hamann intersects with both the linguistic and theological, it seems appropriate for us to return to Hamann in order to understand the implications of his philosophy for contemporary post-postmodern readings of the theism-atheism debate. Contemporary philosophy might respond, for example, to the idea that he had a

theological understanding of language, by re-formulating this as a call for a linguistic understanding of the conflict between theistic and atheistic ways of looking at the world. This would be a natural follow-up to what is only opened up in this thesis.

Kant wanted to draw a clear line between philosophical and non-philosophical ways of understanding faith. But then – taking our cue from both Hamann and Kierkegaard who both straddle more than one sphere of expression – the question might indeed be one of what constitutes 'proper philosophy.' Perhaps further research, if it is to be true to what I see as a valid argument of everything implied in Kierkegaard's approach, might take an interdisciplinary route. If we are to understand the faith-reason conflict fully, then the linguistic element surely must point us in directions other than just that of philosophy: to the literary, sociological, and even the psychological dimensions of the problem, but potentially all within the context of language. Hamann and Kierkegaard both teach us that there is more than just one way of doing philosophy. Perhaps, in order to fully grasp the faith-reason relation as a problem for us all, the discourse must go beyond the boundaries of what is ordinarily understood to be 'philosophy'. As Climacus puts it so aptly, echoing Socrates: we ought to recognize ourselves as truly 'a more strangely composite animal than Typhon.' (*PF*, p.49) In order to understand ourselves fully – as conflicted – a greater understanding of language offers hope for a more fruitful approach to the ongoing theistic-atheistic debates in the contemporary world. This thesis points clearly in this direction, asserting the issue of language to be a central one for every individual who attempts to articulate both the sayable and the unsayable.

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Kierkegaard

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