AN EXAMINATION OF EXISTENTIAL FAITH

in the writings of

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

In the Department of
Philosophy

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BROCK UNIVERSITY
April 2005

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my first teacher of Kierkegaard, Dr. Dennis Hudecki, for sparking my interest in this great philosopher. I also would like to acknowledge my second teacher of Kierkegaard, Dr. John Snider, who taught me a very different version of Kierkegaard. Thanks also to Dr. Hunter Brown, who taught me how to look at faith “reasonably”. Much gratitude to my advisor, and friend, Dr. David Goicoechea, who practiced patience while I finished this thesis, as well as providing me with yet a third interpretation of the Fragments. Thank you Dr. Ric Brown for editing my thesis and providing many thoughtful comments. And final thanks, to Mark and Noah, for their love and continued support.
Abstract

This thesis takes seriously the proposition that existentialism is a lived philosophy. While Descartes' proof for the existence of God initially sparked my interest in philosophy, the insights of existentialism have allowed me to appropriate philosophy as a way of life. I apply the insights of Kierkegaard's writings to my spiritual and philosophy development. Philosophy is personal, and Kierkegaard's writings deal with the development of the person in his aesthetic, ethical and religious dimensions. Philosophy is a struggle, and this thesis, reveals the existential struggle of the individual in despair.

The thesis argues that authentic faith actually entails faith. The existential believer has this faith whereas the religious believer does not. The subjectively reflective existential believer recognizes that a leap of faith is needed; anything else, is just historical, speculative knowledge. The existential believer or, the Knight of Faith, realizes that a leap of faith is needed to become open in inwardness to receive the condition to understand the paradoxes that faith presents. I will present Kierkegaard’s “Analogy of a House” which is in essence, the backbone of his philosophy. I will discuss the challenge of moving from one floor to the next. More specifically, I will discuss the anxiety that is felt in the very moment of the transition from the first floor to the second floor. I will outline eight paradoxes that must me resolved in order for the individual to continue on his journey to the top floor of the house.

I will argue that Kierkegaard’s example of Abraham as a Knight of Faith is incorrect, that Abraham was in fact not a Knight of Faith. I will also argue that we should find our own exemplars in our own lives by looking for Knight of Faith traits in people we know and then trying to emulate those people. I will also discuss Unamuno’s “paradoxical faith” and argue that this kind of faith is a strong alternative to those who find that Kierkegaard’s existential faith is not a possibility.
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Chapter 1

Introduction
1.1 Overview

The intent of this thesis is to inform the reader as to what an existentially enlightened, authentically free, human being can be. Søren Kierkegaard wrote many philosophical texts and many of them he wrote under pseudonymous authorship. Why would he do this? At one point he claimed it was because he did not want to take responsibility for what was written in them; at other times he takes full responsibility for all of them.¹ Kierkegaard wants his readers to reflect on what they have read; he does not want to present a theory and have us assume it is correct. His presentation then, is one of "indirect communication".

Kierkegaard has something to communicate to us but he will not present it to us as purely prescriptive. He is more like a Buddhist who tells us that we must meditate to achieve enlightenment. Kierkegaard believed that his method of indirect communication would help humankind to grow in its spiritual personhood. His method is Socratic because Socrates questioned his friends; he did not present the answer or the "truth" to them. Jesus also taught like Socrates; he taught only in parables or aphoristic proverbs because he wanted his followers to come to understand Him through faith. It is no surprise then that Kierkegaard gives us his philosophy through indirect communication.

¹ Kierkegaard talks at length about his authorship in his book The Point of View for My Work as An Author: A Report to History.
Kierkegaard’s message of “enlightenment”, is a way to live life responsibly, spiritually, fully, happily, and authentically. As I have mentioned, Kierkegaard wrote many books, most of which can be disconcerting to read because he often uses a different writing style and a different style of reasoning. He wants us to read what he has written and reflectively arrive at our own conclusions. James Collins writes that we can only make inferences about what Kierkegaard’s message was. “Being a hundred years removed from Kierkegaard, we sometimes make inferences from his stated position which he himself would not admit.”

In this thesis, I will take Kierkegaard’s philosophy as a whole and glean from it the parts having to do with the path to spiritual happiness. I intend to make his indirect communication less indirect by presenting my interpretation of how to be a fully actualized, happy, spiritual human being, or as Kierkegaard would call it, a “Knight of Faith”.

There are benefits of a less indirect kind of communication. There are many people who do not have the time or philosophical training to read Kierkegaard and understand the full thrust of his philosophy. There are also many people who are living stagnant (religious) lives who desire deeper spiritual growth. There are people who have serious questions about their faith but have no resources to know how to begin questioning the issues in religion. Further, I think that indirect communication is beneficial only for philosophers, but it is not beneficial for the general public; philosophy

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should be accessible to all people so all can benefit from it.\(^3\) I propose that my thesis will help others start down their paths to spiritual and personal growth by being exposed to one of the greatest thinkers in history.

To my dismay, many philosophers present utopian theories about what an ideal person or society should be like. These philosophers often tell us what is wrong with the world and the way the ‘system’ works. Their solutions are lacking in practicality to such an extent that I often wonder if there is meaning in studying it. For example, we study Plato’s “Philosopher King” in the Republic or Nietzsche’s Overman in Thus Spoke Zarathustra? The Philosopher King and the Overman can perhaps save society and make the world a wonderful place to live; but the trouble with these theories is that there will never be a Philosopher King or an Overman. These thinkers give us grandiose ideas of how things could ideally be but there are very few practical applications of these utopian dreams.

Philosophy has such an important role in the development of our culture that it should in fact be practically applicable. For example, J.J. Rousseau gave the message of freedom and possibilities, which lead to a historical revolution. Peter Singer gave the world a radical message of changing our attitudes about human rights and animal rights; his thoughts aided the global community to evolve to a more enlightened civilized world. Also, the feminist thinkers gave a voice to the activists of the past that has made the road to equality a possibility. The list of great thinkers evoking positive change continues.

\(^3\) It is my opinion that philosophy should in fact be taught in every school in Canada starting in the lower levels of secondary school. In France, philosophy is taught as a compulsory subject from the 9th grade until the graduating year. Is it any wonder that the French have produced such brilliant thinkers?
Unfortunately, with the existential thinkers, it can be difficult to find a positive meaningful system that leads to existential happiness. This is why I find Kierkegaard’s philosophy appealing; he does give us a coherent system of positive existential and spiritual growth that can be practically applied.

The beauty of Kierkegaard’s philosophy is that the ideal he presents is attainable. The unfortunate thing about Kierkegaard is that he likely thought that what he presented was not really attainable. It appears that Kierkegaard himself did not attain the status of Knight of Faith because he could not go the final distance in his personal development. But just because Kierkegaard did not live up to his philosophy, does not mean it is a “far-fetched” ideal. Becoming a Knight of Faith is possible for everyone if that is his chosen goal. I do not think that Kierkegaard thought that there were actual Knights of Faith in his time, but I will show by the end of this paper that it is possible to become one.

I intend to complete four tasks in this thesis. First, I will present an overall analysis of Kierkegaard’s philosophy. Second, I will indicate how Kierkegaard’s philosophy is not as indirect as he may have wanted it to be. Third, I will show how Kierkegaard’s philosophy is not a utopian dream; it is attainable in each of our lives. Finally, I will defend the thesis that existential faith is the only valid kind of faith because it actually entails the notion of faith.

1.2 Faith, Reason and Why It Matters

The topic of Faith and Reason has always interested me, even long before my formal study of philosophy began. For much of my life, I was in despair regarding the
issues of faith, authenticity and happiness. From early childhood I attended a Pentecostal church; there were both positive and negative consequences in being involved with this religion. When I first studied philosophy in university, I began on a radically new path of questioning that ultimately has taken me out of some of that despair. My study of philosophy has enabled me to come to an understanding of how I can put faith and reason together.

Allow me to recount my first experience with the Pentecostal church. I was six years old and my mother’s friend, Maureen, had invited us to attend a church service with her. The music was lively and the atmosphere was enjoyable until Maureen fell to the ground at the front of the church. (As a six-year-old child, I believed that Maureen had died and the man at the front had killed her.) She lay there on the floor and it continued; everyone else around her was falling as well. I remember feeling shocked and my mother explained to me that it was God’s way of healing them. Later I came to understand this religious experience as being *slain in the spirit*.

A second impressionable experience: Frank, a man in our church afflicted with schizophrenia, was *regularly* prayed for to have demons “cast-out” of him (the demon/disease of schizophrenia). The demons appeared to be cast-out of him because Frank would shake and vomit into the trashcan.⁴

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⁴ The first thinker to spark my interest was Descartes who gave us the Ontological and Cosmological arguments for God’s existence. This was the first time in my life that I had ever been exposed to a logical justification of God’s existence. Before this moment, I was resigned to thinking that I was not supposed to question God’s existence ¹ I thought it was a sin, some kind of a doubt. After having studied philosophy of religion at length, I can now conclude that it was the best test of my faith, to be able to put my faith under serious scrutiny and still come out of it believing in God; this has strengthened my faith and spiritual walk.

⁵ Perhaps there were too many demons in Frank because he had them rebuked out of him on a regular basis.
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These are two examples of the contradictions that have perplexed me. The first is a contradiction because Maureen died of breast cancer a few years later even though God was healing her. Frank’s healing was also a contradiction because his healing was never “real” or permanent even though it appeared as if he were being “healed”. There are other contradictions as well. For instance, when I was an adolescent, I witnessed a girl, Linda, get healed. Before the healing, she was in a wheel chair, and she was deaf. One night, at a church service, the congregationalists were standing around her in a circle and they were either touching her or stretching out their hands in prayer towards her. There was a commotion at the front of the sanctuary and Linda emerged leaping and shouting. Years later, I saw Linda in a wheelchair and using sign language again. How is one to understand why God would “take back” a healing?

Linda’s healing was significant to me because I had been praying to God for many years to show me a sign that He actually existed. When Linda was healed, I understood that as a definite sign that there truly was a God. When Linda got “unhealed”, I understood that as a sign that perhaps there is no way to know anything about God. When I realized this, I began to deeply question everything the pastors said and did.

The pastors were also contradictions that perplexed me. The first pastor I knew, his wife divorced him for another man. When he remarried (which is against church doctrine), there was an incident whereby he poured gasoline over his new wife and threatened to light her on fire. He then served time in a penitentiary for attempted murder. A few years later, the next pastor’s wife also divorced him for another man.
This pastor then stole a large sum of money from the church by means of fraud and then abandoned the church. Oddly, the next pastor committed the same fraudulent act.

It became difficult for me to listen to the fundamentalist teachings of these men without harboring a deep sense of skepticism. They preached that lying, cheating, stealing, divorce, fornication, adultery etc., were wrong. They also preached about the evils of trivial things such as movies, dancing, rock music, smoking, drinking, drugs, excessive jewelry, “making out”, Halloween, Easter bunnies, Christmas trees, women wearing pants, studying mythology or religion etc.

The biblical justification which they gave for all of these prohibitions was

Philippians 4:8

Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.6

The “rule of thumb” to know whether something was secular and of “the world” or not was to ask yourself if it was a Godly thing that you were doing or thinking. Or you could ask yourself, “If the rapture happens when I am sitting in this movie theatre, would Jesus take me with him?” The answer would certainly be no, he would not take me with him.

The first set of prohibitions, The Ten Commandments, is justifiable because the prohibitions were commanded in the Bible in Exodus 20:13-17. But the second, more trivial, type of rules were difficult to accept as being offences warranting eternal punishment. But the pastors would continually break the Ten Commandments while

preaching about trivial misdemeanors and iniquities. It was difficult to listen to them with an open heart.

When I first started my serious quest for answers, I went to my youth pastor, Pastor Mike. (An exemplar of a Christian minister.) To the majority of my questions he answered, "I don't know Suzanne." He would then pray for God to send me the answers, but unfortunately, they did not appear.

As I grew older, church became increasingly more difficult to attend. We were supposed to feel content "walking-with-the-Lord". I did not feel content, in fact I felt the opposite; I was in despair and the people surrounding me appeared to be unhappy as well. For example, my mother determined that she would not re-marry because the church did not acknowledge divorce, and hence, re-marriage was still adultery. My mother did not wish to be an adulteress, so she remained alone (still to this day). The contradiction that arises is that she would make proclamations about her joy in "walking-with-the-Lord." He was her "bridegroom," He kept her company, He fulfilled her. This is what she testified to in church, but what no one saw but my siblings and myself was how lonely and sad she was in actuality.

I found it difficult "to be happy walking-with-the-Lord". In church they taught us the "Luke-Warm Christian Rule of Thumb." "You must be 100% Christian, not 60%, or not 40%. If you are 40%, you are certainly walking with the devil. If you are 100%, you are certainly walking with God, and if you are 60%, you are still walking with the devil because you are not 100% right with God." I thought this rule of thumb was the most influential rule that I was ever taught. We can see how absurd this rule/argument really it.
Is there any one person who can be 100% walking with the Lord? Yes, Jesus, our exemplar of how to be a perfect Christian. He was perfectly loving and perfectly sinless. Human beings cannot be perfect because only God can be perfect. Hence, we are all sinners because we are not perfectly “walking-with-the-Lord.” Since it is not humanly possible for us to be perfect Christians, we will always be unsuccessful in our attempts to be good Christians because this rule does not allow for any derivation from 100%.

This religion was so strict in its irrational thinking that it produced an overly anxious young person for the majority of her life. I tried exhaustively to meet the expectations of the Christian ideal. I attended church four times a week; I sang solos; I led the song services and I was the church pianist. I was actively involved with the youth group and I tried to pray unceasingly. I did not go to movies; I did not listen to rock music; I did not have sex; I did not drink alcohol and I did not smoke. However, I felt that I was not a good Christian\(^7\) and this caused me to feel guilty. I knew that at anytime, the \textit{rapture}\(^8\) could come and I would not be ready; I would be left here on earth devoid of God's holy presence\(^9\).

\(^7\) This feeling of guilt is the plight of the Knight of Infinite Resignation. He gives up everything thinking that he will become closer to God by doing so. But when he realizes that this is not necessary, he will take a leap of faith into trusting God and become a Knight of Faith.

\(^8\) The second coming of Christ whereby the dead in Christ will rise, and the living will be taken up with the Lord to Heaven.

\(^9\) This is the teaching of the \textit{Book of Revelations}. \textit{Revelations} teaches about the end of the world—Armageddon. I was taught to recognize the “signs of the times” such as debit cards and driver licenses that could be scanned. These things are a sign of the times because they are leading us towards one currency and one global government, which will ultimately be run by the anti-Christ. \textit{Revelations} also teaches that once Jesus has come back to earth the “dead in Christ will rise”, He will take them up with him to heaven and also, he will take the Divine presence of God with Him. I can recall a film shown to other children and myself when I was about 10 years old. The film depicted the event of the rapture and tracked the lives of a few poor souls left behind. They would not take the “mark of the beast” (which was to get an information tattoo with banking information, health care information, etc.) When these people were eventually caught,
The preachers informed us that we were not good Christians because each Sunday there was a new sermon on how we were sinners in yet a different way. They would say such things as: “You will not get into heaven if your thoughts are not perfectly pure, loving and longsuffering”. “You will not get into heaven if you have lustful thoughts or masturbate.” “You will not get into heaven if you don’t lead others to the Lord—how many people did you witness the Word of the Lord to this week?” “Remember, you will be rewarded in heaven for the number of people you lead to Him.” They justified this type of preaching by saying that they were not afraid to step on the congregationalist’s toes like other religions, but instead, they were willing to “trample on our feet” in order to help us attain the Christian ideal.

I was taught that the afterlife is the ultimate goal and that believing in God would save us from an afterlife spent in hell. My question was “How are we to have a loving relationship with God, if our motivation to believe in Him entails fearing an afterlife in hell?”

I agree with Nietzsche, who explains that we should live for this life. We should affirm the life that we are living now. If I want to be a good person, I should be good because I value goodness. I should not be good just because I am afraid to go to hell. Perhaps, when I die and God does have a “checklist”, and I was good because I was afraid of His wrath, God would know my true heart. It would not matter about all of the good deeds I have done because I did not truly value goodness in my heart.
The point I am attempting to convey with these examples of contradictions is that the lessons and rules I was taught lacked reason. They wanted us to accept commands on “blind faith;” they took the following verse from the book of John literally: “Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.””\(^{10}\)

They also took the verse literally, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”\(^{11}\) In other words, we should trust in God and he will lead the way. However, I think that faith without reason will lead one down a confusing path. God gave us reasoning skills so why would He ask us to abandon them? On the other hand, I also think that a person reared with just reason and no faith (or emotion) will be led down an empty path that will also lead to doubt and confusion. I will briefly look at this opposite possibility of a person having reason with no faith.

Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times* is a novel about two children raised with only reason and no religion or emotion. This book is a critique of the period of time known as the Industrial Revolution, at the end of the 18th century.\(^{12}\) The Enlightenment was a period of time when Reason was held as the highest value. Society rid itself of religious uncertainty and instead appropriated the “hard cold facts” of mathematics and science. In *Hard Times*, the father, Mr. Tom Gradgrind, raised his children according to a “system”

\(^{10}\) John 20:29

\(^{11}\) Psalms 119:105

\(^{12}\) Although *Hard Times* is a novel, I am using it to prove a point because Dickens is highly acclaimed to have captured the spirit of the times. Since I do not have the testimony of anyone actually raised like this, I think it is suitable to use Dickens as an accurate source.
of pure reason, logic and fact. His children grew up to be cold and reserved adults. Mr. Gradgrind says the following about his daughter: “You are not impulsive, you are not romantic, you are accustomed to view everything from the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation”\(^{13}\). They did not seem to care about such sentiments as joy, humour and love.

But Louisa, the daughter, did in fact have sentiments that were repressed. When she exclaims her dismay about how she was brought up without affection etc., her father thinks to himself that he has done an excellent job. When Louisa is exposed to a man for whom she has passionate feelings, her repressed emotions and feelings come to the surface and she leaves her husband because she is confused. She tells her father how miserable she is and the father recognizes the error of his system.

The correlation between Louisa and myself is that we both have multiple forms of repression as a consequence of a lifelong imbalance of faith and reason. Also, we both felt empty, confused, and in extreme doubt of everything we had been taught. We both turned in an opposite direction to try to figure out how to go about living our lives. The reason I find this correlation significant is because reason and faith need to be balanced. By figuring out what Kierkegaard says about combining faith and reason, we can potentially achieve a happy, balanced, fulfilling life and be confident in our beliefs.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis will be set up in seven chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which provides a framework for the thesis. The second Chapter entitled "Either the Aesthetic Life or the Ethical Life," will serve to define the first two (of four) stages of existence. In this chapter I will present Kierkegaard's "Analogy of a House" which is in essence, the backbone of his philosophy. This house has three floors: the basement, the first floor, and the second floor with two levels. In this first chapter I will define and explain each floor in detail. Moving up from floor to floor is a challenge; each level presents its own difficulty.

In the third chapter entitled "Anxiety in the Moment of Transition from the Ethical Floor to the Second Floor: The First Leap of Faith," I will discuss the challenge of moving from one floor to the next. More specifically, I will discuss the anxiety that is felt in the very moment of the transition from the first floor to the second floor.

The fourth chapter entitled "Reconciling the Paradoxes on the Second Floor," will describe exactly how we are to exist on the second floor and how to push on to the second religious level that brings happiness and faith. There are eight paradoxes outlined in this chapter: The Learning Paradox, The Erotic Paradox, The Absolute Paradox, The Typhonic Paradox, The Offence at the Paradox, The Paradox of the Contemporary Follower, The Paradox of Temporality and The Paradox of the Follower at Second Hand. This chapter will outline the differences between the Knight of Infinite Resignation and
the Knight of Faith. Each paradox presents a challenge for the Knights: they must recognize or resolve each paradox in sequence in order to move to the second floor.

In the Fifth Chapter entitled “The Misunderstanding of Faith,” I will discuss the misunderstanding that “fundamentalist-religious” people have with faith and how an “existential faith” is a more authentic kind of faith that should be embraced by all true Christians. I will argue that the faith of “fundamentalist-religious” people does not actually entail genuine faith and that the faith of the existential believer does in fact entail genuine faith.

The Sixth Chapter entitled “The Knight of Faith” will outline what it is like to live as a Knight of Faith on the second floor. I will examine the practicality of this stage. I will argue that Kierkegaard’s example of Abraham as a Knight of Faith is incorrect, that Abraham was in fact not a Knight of Faith. I will also argue that we should find our own exemplars in our own lives by looking for Knight of Faith traits in people we know and then trying to emulate those people. I also will argue that in order to be a true follower of the God-man, we should follow his teachings and examples and try to emulate him as well as being open to emulating the people we admire.

The seventh and final chapter will be my Conclusion. In the conclusion I will discuss Unamuno’s “paradoxical faith” and argue that this kind of faith is a strong alternative to those who find that Kierkegaard’s existential faith is not a possibility.

To begin, I will look at Kierkegaard’s The Sickness Unto Death; it is here that he gives us his vision of the house.
Chapter 2

Either the Aesthetic Life Or the Ethical Life
"I am a sick man...I am a spiteful man. An unattractive man. I think that my liver hurts. I don't know a damn thing about my illness. I am not even sure what it is that hurts."

Fedor Dostoevsky

2.1 The Levels of the House

According to Kierkegaard, all humans exist in one of three stages of existence. These stages are the aesthetic (priority to bodily/worldly values), the ethical (priority to ethical values) and the religious (the individual in this stage can live in both of these contrasting modes at the same time). Each stage is a lifestyle that we each choose to live. We make choices based on the values of each level. The key to living in a particular stage is what we decide to hold as a priority in our lives. In his book, The Sickness unto Death, Kierkegaard makes an analogy between these stages and a house.

Imagine a house with a basement, first floor, and second floor planned so that there is or is supposed to be a social distinction between the occupants according to floor. Now, if what it means to be a human being is compared with such a house, then all too regrettably the sad and ludicrous truth about the majority of people is that in their own house they prefer to live in the basement. Every human being is a psychical-physical synthesis intended to be spirit; this is the building, but he prefers to live in the basement, that is, in sensate categories. Moreover, he not only prefers to live in the basement—no, he loves it so much that he is indignant if anyone suggests that he move to the superb upper floor that stands vacant and at his disposal, for he is, after all, living in his own house.¹⁴

The aesthetic person lives in the basement, the ethical person lives on the first floor, and the religious person lives on the second floor. The religious person lives in

"Religiousness A"; he is a Knight of Infinite Resignation. There is a second stage to the religious; the person in "Religiousness B" is a person who has reached the second floor but can (return to) live in the basement, the first floor and the second floor all at once. This person, a Knight of Faith, lives in faith and by the end of this thesis we will know how Kierkegaard arrives at Religiousness B. But first I will start by explaining what the basement or the aesthetic stage is like.

We can find information on the aesthete in Kierkegaard's book *Either/Or Part I*.\(^{15}\) (Part I is about the aesthetic stage and Part II is about the ethical stage.)\(^{16}\) If one were to read the "Seducer's Diary" which is in Part I, one could possibly conclude that Kierkegaard was advocating the aesthetic life. As mentioned, Kierkegaard wrote under various pseudonyms. Why he did this becomes clear here. Part I. is written from the viewpoint of an aesthete proving why life can be lived happily as an aesthete. Kierkegaard writes it from the aesthete's perspective so that the reader will fully be able to understand fully and possibly relate to this lifestyle and see its shortcomings.

2.2 The Aesthetic Stage

In the aesthetic stage of existence, the aesthete is interested in the immediate moment with immediate gratification or satisfaction. His priorities are bodily/worldly values such as: sex, money, power, pleasure, food, literature and the arts, sweets,

cheesecakes, manliness, ambition, pea soup, command, enhanced psychological states, status, material goods, and comfort, etc. Just because these are bodily values, it is not to say that they are wrong, or more specifically that the pursuit of them is wrong. Kierkegaard remarks that there is nothing wrong with bodily values, and each of us exists as humans so we need, and it is natural to crave, human things. In the Concept of Anxiety, Kierkegaard writes the following about sensuality:

We do not say that sensuousness is sinfulness, but that sin makes it sinfulness...every such individual has an historical environment in which it may become apparent that sensuousness can signify sinfulness. For the individual himself, sensuousness does not signify this.¹⁸

There is nothing wrong with being a sensual being or desiring sex or other temporal things; it is only that we are in some way conditioned to think that sex, or the pursuit of sex, is wrong. I will return to this shortly, but we will continue to focus on what the aesthetic values are.

The aesthete wants to keep life interesting and he wants to avoid being bored. He needs to keep refreshing his hedonism in order to be continually satisfied. In Either/Or', "Rotation of Crops" Kierkegaard presents the "rotation method" to explain one way to keep rotating our pleasures so we will not get bored.

Kierkegaard begins "Rotation of Crops", by making an analogy. He wants us to look at children. When they are having fun, they are not bored and they are not bad. But

¹⁶ Part I is the Either part of Either/Or and Part II is the Or part. This means literally, either one lives aesthetically or one lives ethically.

¹⁷ Note: some of these values listed were found in note 1, p. 641 of E/O Part I.

when they are bored, they become unmanageable. Kierkegaard rightly concludes that
boredom is corruptive. The analogy here is between the bored child and the bored
aesthete. Like the child, the aesthete must keep himself occupied—constantly happy,
otherwise he will become corrupt.

The following argument proves that the aesthete must keep himself amused. If
boredom is the root of evil and if it can be avoided only by amusing himself then he
ought to amuse himself. This argument is sound and Kierkegaard is now able to form a
definition of "boredom." "Boredom rests upon the nothing that interlaces existence; its
dizziness is infinite, like that which comes from looking down into a bottomless abyss."

Boredom rests on the feeling of the nothingness that makes you feel dizzy. By
"nothingness" I think that Kierkegaard is referring to the feeling of existential anxiety
about not knowing what one’s purpose in the world is, or the meaning of one’s existence.
The aesthete deals with this feeling by not dealing with it. He ignores it and tries to busy
himself with other things so he does not have to think about it and feel the hollowness of
meaninglessness.

In order not to deal with the cause of his boredom, some aesthetes implement the
method of "rotation of crops". Kierkegaard’s second analogy in this essay is the farmer’s
rotation of crops method whereby the farmer continually rotates the crops in order to
assure that the soil remains healthy. Like the farmer rotating his crops, the aesthete can

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21 E/O Part I, p. 291
rotate his pleasures. Kierkegaard’s example: if the aesthete were bored living in the
country, he can move to the city until he gets bored again. He can then move to a
different city, etc. But the rotation method goes even deeper.

The aesthete can prepare himself for potential problems. He can forget bad things
that have happened to him; he can avoid committing to any solid plans in case he might
not enjoy the activity. Or if he does commit to something that he does not end up
enjoying, he can create an excuse and leave. He can also develop a skilled “forgetfulness”
that he will be able to use in any situation. “I said I’d bring the dip? Oh I forgot; hand me
a piece of cheese”. In other words, the aesthete has no concern about his past and does
not reflect on his future.

The aesthete must also guard against forming friendships because the friend is
“not a necessary other, but a superfluous third.”22 Friends are superfluous because they
require things of the aesthete. The aesthete is reconciled to having to listen to them
complain; he has to pretend to be interested in their interests that he dislikes. He has to
lend them money and help them move and he has to give them presents on birthdays and
Christmases. This all must be avoided because it will lead to boredom and unnecessary
stress for the aesthete. The commitment will make him unhappy because eventually it
will “put him out;” hence it will not be in his best interest. More importantly, the aesthete
should never get married because it (marriage) would commit him for eternity. The
aesthete ought not to commit to marriage because there are problems that will inevitably

22 E/O Part I, p.295
arise and the marriage could end in divorce which is the worst case scenario because “a divorce involves all kinds of problems”.

Kierkegaard notes though, that just because the aesthete should not marry, this is not to say he should avoid sex. His advice here is to fall in love but then when you feel the infatuation faltering, break it off. In that sense the aesthete will feel courageous and feel all the better about himself. In “The Seducer’s Diary,” Kierkegaard writes the diary of a man who elaborately plans the seduction of a young woman, Cordelia. The man, Johannes, has no plans to wed this girl but it interests him to make her love him and want him freely. It also interests him to watch how she reacts when he is cold to her.

In “The Immediate Erotic Stages,” also in Either/Or, Kierkegaard writes about Don Juan or Don Giovanni who is a seducer of many women. He is an expert aesthete; he rotates his sexual conquests rapidly and skillfully. While he is with one woman, he is working on seducing the next woman. When he becomes bored with the first woman, he moves on to the next.

Kierkegaard also has one aesthete guard against taking an official post, or rather, any position having to do with public office or management. “The law under which one slaves is equally boring” The aesthete should keep on top of political matters in order to be up to speed with his society; in this way he will have an advantage, but overall, the aesthete must rotate his soil to keep everything new and different.

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23 E/O Part I, p.296
24 E/O Part I, p.298
Finally, in "Rotation of Crops," Kierkegaard teaches that the aesthete must always be in control of his moods. He should practice prudence so he will always be in control and he should be able to sense a particular mood in advance so he can estimate its effect on others. (The best mood to be in to keep oneself amused is to find amusement in arbitrary things. Kierkegaard's suggestions include, reading only the third part of a book, or finding an unusual characteristic of a boring person and focusing on that.)

We have seen then, that Kierkegaard has taught us some key lessons in being a successful aesthete. An aesthete should first, always seek the interesting. Second, avoid the boring. Third, especially avoid commitments such as friendship, marriage and public office. Fourth, always practice moderation and learn to keep control of his moods. If the aesthete abides by these rules, he will be able to avoid being bored and hence be able to avoid coming to terms with the root of his boredom.

We have all heard of examples describing aesthetes. We have read about them in books, seen them in movies, and we probably all know of some in our lives. For example in the movie, The Thomas Crown Affair, both main characters are aesthetes. Even the advertisement for the movie builds up how exciting the aesthetes are:

Thrill-seeking billionaire Thomas Crown loves nothing more than courting disaster—and winning! So when his world becomes too stiflingly "safe," he pulls off his boldest stunt ever: stealing a priceless painting—in broad daylight... Catharine Banning...every bit as intelligent, cunning and hungry for adventure as he is... skillfully leads him into a daring game of cat and mouse that's more intoxicating—and dangerous—than anything either of them has ever experienced before.  

The aesthetic lifestyle is always made to seem exciting and desirable.

I have heard it said, and seen it written numerous times, that Kierkegaard thought that most of the human race exists in the basement as aesthetes. He did say this (as referenced above) but I hold that this is an incorrect assessment. I believe that most of the human race exists on the first floor of the house. I will now explain the ethical floor and then we will be able to assess if in fact, most people exist as either aesthetic or ethical.

2.3 The Ethical Stage of Reflection

The clearest way to describe the difference between the aesthetic person and the ethical person is to illustrate the differences in what they hold as a priority. As we learned, the aesthete prioritizes bodily values, values of this world. The ethical person on the other hand, gives priority to ethical values. Ethical values are values such as love, commitment, goodness, honesty, generosity, kindness, etc. The ethical person gives priority to these values but the ethical person still pursues temporal values because there is nothing inherently wrong with them but it is a matter of balancing the two. The ethical person lives a life of reflection, he or she is always reflecting on the decisions he makes that will affect his ethical lifestyle.

As I mentioned earlier, Kierkegaard claims that bodily values are normal and healthy. It is perfectly normal to desire sex, wealth, and power etc., just as it is perfectly acceptable to pursue these things. However, what makes the ethical person different from the aesthete is that the ethical person, while in the pursuit of temporal values, will give priority to the ethical. For example, if a woman has a career in communications management, and she has a husband and children, and she sits on various boards and
committees, she has many commitments. She is pursuing worldly values because she likes earning money and she likes being recognized in the communications industry; she also likes the power and status of her management position. We can also see that she is ethically minded. She is committed to the care of her family and she is interested in earning a healthy wage so they can be comfortable. But there will be times when her worldly values will come into collision with her ethical values. Her child could become ill the night she is to receive a prestigious award; what does she do? She could hire a nanny and partake in her moment of glory or she could stay home and keep the commitment of care to her child. She would choose in this case to stay home because of her commitment to ethical values. This is not to say that the person in the ethical stage cannot and will not make mistakes. The woman could hire a sitter and receive the award but it is likely that she would realize she was making the wrong decision and feel guilt.

Living on the first floor then, is how the ethical person chooses to prioritize on a day to day basis. Now we can ask about what goes on inside of the ethical person. Since he is coming to learn about the root of his boredom, this must produce some anxious and unsure feelings. He might wonder how exactly to live a meaningful, moral life while still enjoying himself. He might wonder how exactly to plan his life responsibly, and this will be stressful.

2.4 The Moment of Transition from the Basement to the First Floor

What inspires the aesthete to move up to the ethical first floor? Why would he choose to abandon his carefree interesting lifestyle for a life of commitment to ethical
values? There must be a defining *moment* in the aesthete’s life, a *moment* of transition whereby something happens to “waken him” to the ethical. What makes him stop ignoring the source of his boredom?

Kierkegaard explains that there is a *moment* in the aesthete’s life that will help move him from one stage to the next. This *moment* will occur when the aesthete comes face to face with a life changing experience or decision. In the *moment*, the aesthete recognizes that there is a root to his boredom and by ignoring it and trying to amuse himself, he has just pretended to be satisfied with his life. In the *moment*, he recognizes that bodily values alone cannot fulfill him; he needs more. He needs love, trust, understanding, kindness; he needs to receive these things and he needs to give them. There are countless literary examples that exemplify this exact moment.

For my first example, I will look at the contemporary novel, *Where The Heart Is*. In this novel, the main protagonist is Novalee Nation and her “dead-beat” boyfriend is Willy Jack Pickins. Willy Jack is the character I am interested in for this illustration; he is a notable aesthete. When Willy Jack found out that seventeen year old Novalee was pregnant, he decided to move to California because his cousin had told him that if he got a factory job in California and had a “purposeful accident,” (like having a finger sliced off) he could claim compensation and then he would not have to work; he could just live on the beach. On route to California, Willy Jack abandoned Novalee when she went into a *Wal-Mart*. Willy Jack then picked up a fourteen year old girl and got caught by the police and he had to serve jail time. While he was in jail, he wrote a good song, and when he had served his sentence the song became famous and Willy Jack enjoyed his fame.
When his money was spent and there was no longer any fame, he became depressed and started drinking.

Depression and self-destruction were the beginning of the moment for Willy Jack. In a drunken stupor, he stumbled in front of a train and his legs were amputated. While recovering in the hospital, all he could think about was the state of his existence: Where had he gone wrong? Why had he lied to Novalee when she asked him if he could feel the heart beat of the baby? Why did he say no, why did he not want to feel reality?

Willy Jack was experiencing the moment of transition at this point, but he needed his moment to be defined—he needed to tell Novalee that he had lied all those years ago.

“You remember the last day we was together?”
Novalee nodded.
“You asked me if I wanted to feel the baby and you put my hand on your belly, but I said I didn’t feel nothing. You said that if I tried, I could feel the heart.”

Can’t you feel that tiny little bomp... bomp... bomp?

“I said I couldn’t and tired to pull my hand back, but you wouldn’t let me”.

Feel right here... that’s where the heart is.

Willy Jack’s face was streaked with tears, but he didn’t wipe them away. “I lied, Novalee. I lied to you.” “I said I couldn’t feel it, but I did. I felt that baby’s heartbeat. I felt it as sure as I could feel my own. But I lied.”

“Why?”
“Lord, I don’t know, Why does anyone lie? ‘Cause we’re scared or crazy, maybe just because we’re mean. I guess there’s a million reasons to lie, and I might’ve told that many but not like that. I guess there’s always that one lie we never get over”

“What?”
“Oh, maybe you don’t know about it yet. Maybe you never told a lie so big it can eat away a part of you. But if you ever do... and if you get lucky... you might get a chance to set it right. Just one chance to change it. Then it’s gone and it never comes again.”  

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The moment for Willy Jack came in his recognizing the severity of his lie and coming to terms with having ignored his feelings about it. For some aesthetes the moment is experienced when hitting “rock bottom” like Willy Jack. For others the experience could be that of another person performing a total selfless act of charity and kindness that so affects the aesthete that he is moved to the point of changing his life. For some aesthetes it is the experience of actually falling in love. For example we can again use *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

Thomas Crown and his nemesis Catherine Banning fall in love and they have a terrific decision to make; they must decide to trust each other. For these two aesthetes, it was previously thought by both of them that to fall in love was impossible because it involved the ability to trust another person. They both knew they would have to come to terms with their inner demons and open up with one another.

Experiencing the moment because of falling in love, might not be as dramatic as Catherine and Thomas; this past year, a student gave me an example of his friend whom I will call Ray. Ray was a young man, who had a wonderful job and was independently wealthy. He had a large house, two sports cars and a whirlpool on his porch where he entertained many women. He loved his lifestyle; he thought he had an ideal life. He did not want to “settle down” and have a family because that would not be fun; it would cause him stress. But, he met a young woman, fell in love with her and asked her to marry him in a matter of months. My student tells me that in retrospect, his friend cannot believe that he thought so negatively about committed life. He is now happy and satisfied in a way that is much deeper and fulfilling than his previous bachelor life. Ray’s
experience is perhaps a common occurrence in many people’s lives. I think falling in love is a common catalyst for the moment.

### 2.5 What Makes the Ethical Person Unhappy?

We might think that the ethical person would be happy on the first floor. After all, he is living a good ethical life. But, there is a still a deep inner conflict going on in the ethical person. He thinks that his chosen lifestyle is indeed the correct path to take. He is always being honest and fair and good but when he looks around he sees people, for example at work, being not so fair and honest and good, and they seem to be getting ahead. The aesthetes are getting promotions before him; they are getting raises instead of him. The ethical person asks in frustration, “Why is it that the dishonest people get ahead and the honest people are left behind?”

The ethical person will become resentful of his situation. He will be frustrated and he will feel anxiety. He will ask himself questions like “Why do I bother?” “What is the purpose of doing the right thing?” “What is the purpose of my life?” “What is the purpose of my existence?” etc. He becomes more and more anxious about these things until he realizes that he cannot keep living on the first floor; he needs help to push on with his personal and spiritual development. He realizes that he must enlist the help of the Eternal, of God. This moment is a “leap of faith” because the individual places hope and faith in God; he cries out that he cannot live life on his own, he needs God’s help. This notion of an anxious moment needs to be explored in much greater detail so I will devote the next chapter to explain this kind of anxiety.
2.6 Chapter 2 Conclusions

We have learned that humans exist in different stages of existence; more specifically, we have learned about the first two stages—the aesthetic and the ethical. I would like to return to my question of whether most humans exist in the basement or on the first floor.

I think that we all start out in the basement; when we are born, all we desire are bodily things: food, warmth, comfort, etc. But when most of us become self-aware and conscious of others and our effects on others, we experience a transition from the basement to the first floor. But there are some aesthetes that do not ever move out of the basement. There are some aesthetes that need that epiphany kind of moment to get them to the first floor. Further, I think that many people do not advance to the second floor, even "religious" people. But I will discuss that later.

In summary, we have learned in this chapter how to grow as a person. For Kierkegaard, the aesthete can either choose not to grow and remain in the basement, or he can choose to appropriate the moment and move on to the first floor. On the first floor, he can live a responsible ethical life; he can even have religious values and commitments. But there comes a time when the ethical person will feel anxious about his life and once he decides to enlist God’s help, he will be in the moment or will be taking the first leap of faith. I will next discuss the anxious moment of moving from the ethical to the religious.
Chapter 3

Anxiety in the *Moment* of Transition from the Ethical Floor to the Second Floor

The First Leap of Faith
“We are alone, with no excuses... man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.”

Jean-Paul Sartre

3.1 Why Are We Anxious?

The moment or the first leap of faith from the ethical stage to Religiousness “A” is a revelation for the ethical person that he does not understand the world as much as he thought he did. He feels confused and anxious about his own existence. He feels that he needs a teacher to lead the way, to absolve his confusion. The question now is how can he make sense of reality and his existence? Can this type of thing be taught? In the moment, he experiences a great deal of anxiety by trying to sort out these questions.

Recall the intent of this thesis is to enlighten the reader of what an existentially enlightened, authentically free, human being can be; the intent of this chapter is to enlighten the reader about how to start on that path. The ethical person has already learned how to move from living in the basement to living on the first floor and he knows what it means to live on these floors. But, with all of the possibilities in the world, he has many choices to make about how to live his life and this will make him anxious. Kierkegaard can help to guide him and help him cope with the anxiety he feels about having this freedom to choose his own path.
Kierkegaard defines "anxiety" as the "dizzying effect of freedom"; that is, when something threatens our freedom, we feel distress and even panic. He explains:

Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. Further than this, psychology cannot and will not go. In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty. Between these two moments lies the leap, which no science has explained and which no science can explain. He becomes guilty in anxiety becomes as ambiguously guilty as it is possible to become. In anxiety there is the selfish infinity of possibility...  

Historically, we have studied freedom within the context of politics. But in our contemporary Canadian culture, and other developed cultures, we have a comprehensive understanding of our rights and freedoms. Now that we understand that we are free, politically speaking, we must question our freedom on a more ontological level—what does it mean to be free?

Kierkegaard answers this question in the entirety of his philosophical works, but I will begin with what I think to be the beginning, viz., studying his theory of anxiety. It is through anxiety that we become existentially aware of ourselves and our responsibilities.

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27 CA, Pp.60-62

28 CA, p. 61
3.2 The Term and Definition(s) of Anxiety

The etymological root of the word “anxiety,” *angustiae*, means narrowness or constriction, a breakdown of orientation. This means that a person experiencing anxiety cannot cope with what is happening in his life; even worse, he cannot accept his situation because he sees no way out of it. Anxiety can also occur in this sense when a person has too many things/possibilities to contend with and he feels an overwhelming inability to keep his life under control. We can see how this characterization of anxiety can fit for the person living on the first floor. He is overwhelmed at his ethical possibilities and feels that he cannot handle life all on his own. This anxiety is what throws him into the moment of seeking God for help.

In the English language, we typically understand “anxiety” as a mind-state resulting in panic or some type of physiological response. Freud outlined four types of anxiety: Loss of a desired object, Loss of love, Loss of identity and Loss of love for self. Freud explains that anxiety is a reaction to an increase in tension when there is a threat to either the body or the psyche.

*Angst*, for Kierkegaard, is a state-of-mind that is more connected to despair; it may not necessarily involve a physiological response because we are always in this despair (the root of boredom); for the most part, we choose to ignore it, which is why it does not feel like “anxiety” in the traditional sense. Jean Vanier in his book *Becoming*

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Human. explains that loneliness can only ever be covered over, it never fully goes away. Likewise, Angst can be covered over, or avoided, but it never goes away.

There is also Heidegger’s term “dread” which Gelven believes is a superior translation because “dread” allows us to “reflect upon our own stark and terrifying existence”. Frankly, I do not think that “dread” describes the phenomenon correctly because it entails an ominous, austere and deeply negative quality that I do not think Kierkegaard would agree to.

Kierkegaard uses the Danish term angst or angst which has been translated as dread, anxiety, foreboding, afraid, fear, and agony. I do not think that any of these English works adequately translates what Kierkegaard is trying to convey but, as Beabout explains, using the word anxiety appears to be our only solution because if we used the term angst, it would be a transliteration, not a translation. Using anxiety is preferable because the term “anxiety” can be refined in its meaning.

3.3 Anxiety vs. Fear

As I pointed out, when I included an excerpt from Freud, psychologists in Kierkegaard’s day and even much later did not talk about anxiety in the same sense as

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Kierkegaard. They approached it as a “fear about something” i.e. Freud’s example of “fear of losing something.”

Kierkegaard explains that anxiety is not the same as fear.

The concept of anxiety is almost never treated in psychology. Therefore, I must point out that it is altogether different from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite, whereas anxiety is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.  

Fear is ephemeral and it fears a definite object. Anxiety, on the other hand, is prolix, (drawn out over a long stretch of time) perhaps even more than prolix, it is always with us. For example, I could fear such things as being bitten by a dog, small spaces, guns, water, airplanes, heights, etc. Fear then, is a feeling of threat about a particular object or situation. Traditionally, I think it has been the case that we speak about fear as if it were anxiety, and we speak about anxiety as if it were fear.

We should look more closely at the distinction between fear and anxiety. Heidegger asks: “What is the difference phenomenally between that in the face of which anxiety is anxious and that in the face of which fear is afraid?” The answer is that anxiety is not threatened by entities in the world, whereas fear is threatened by entities in the world. We will inquire about anxiety’s existential significance in order to answer the question ‘what is anxiety threatened by?’

What threatens us has no determinate character and holds no place in physical space, it is no “thing” and it is no “where” even though it is oppressively close. It

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34 CA, 42

35 Ibid. 42

36 B&T p.230-231
threatens our own existence. When we are threatened in this manner, all of the objects of
the physical world become irrelevant and our whole system of meanings will collapse.
This collapse is the beginning of the moment for the ethical person.

3.4 Anxiety, Guilt and Adam

In his book, The Concept of Anxiety, Kierkegaard discusses anxiety about sin and
death. Kierkegaard says that we are anxious about our guilt. The ethical person, while
living the ethical life, begins to feels anxious when he realizes that he needs God's help.
He feels guilty about his aesthetic desire; he feels that he cannot pursue his desires and
love God at the same time. He believes that his passions are sinful and he feels that he is
living a sinful life. The ethical person feels that there are prohibitions that limit his
freedom. These prohibitions cause him to feel anxiety and he feels guilt because of these
prohibitions. This overwhelming feeling of guilt is what causes the ethical person to feel
anxiety. Kierkegaard says that sin becomes annulled when it is overcome\textsuperscript{37}, but the
ethical person cannot comprehend this.

Kierkegaard uses the biblical figure of Adam to illustrate this anxiety over sin,
guilt and death. Before Adam sinned by eating the prohibited fruit, he would have
experienced a feeling of anxiety because of the prohibition (even though he had no
knowledge of sinfulness). But after Adam disobeyed, and consequently sinned, he
immediately became full of awareness of his sin, and he felt anxious. Adam was the first

\textsuperscript{37} CA, p.15
sinner, and Kierkegaard says that sinfulness came into Adam when he sinned.38 Likewise, when the ethical person realizes he is a sinner, sinfulness comes into him.

Kierkegaard likens the notion of innocence to ignorance. When Adam had no concept of sin, he was in fact ignorant of sin and so he was innocent. Likewise, the aesthete is ignorant of sin; it is as if he were dreaming, "the spirit in man is dreaming."39 On the other hand, the ethical person loses his innocence when he feels guilty about his sin. "Just as Adam lost his innocence by guilt, so every man loses it in the same way."40 Kierkegaard says that this moment of recognizing one’s own guilt and anxiety is pivotal, "That anxiety makes its appearance is the pivot upon which everything turns."41

This pivot is the moment when the ethical person leaps in faith into Religiousness A. Kierkegaard says that until this point, the ethical person is a combination or synthesis of both the psychical and the physical, but the pivot occurs when he becomes spirit as well. "Man is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical; however, a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit."42 The moment of transition occurs here when the ethical person reflectively posits the reality he is living in sin, that he is guilty and that he needs the Eternal spirit to complete him. At this moment

38 CA, p.33
39 CA, p.41
40 CA, p.35
41 CA, p.43
42 CA, p.43
he feels alone and he feels the full significance of his own finitude and sin and he feels anxious.

3.5 Anxiety and Death

The existential significance of the moment which is revealed through anxiety is that this type of reflection will result in the ethical person realizing the finitude of his existence; he realizes that he is going to die. Gelvin describes this experience as follows: "The strangeness of this feeling cannot be compared to any other form of human experience...but in death, or in the awareness of the meaninglessness of existence, one is aware of something quite unlike any experience".43

The ethical person no longer feels comfortable in the physical/temporal world so his goals are now different, new, and unique. He now has a choice: what should he do with these possibilities? He now understands what it means to be authentic and he can either turn away from his authenticity or appropriate his possibilities. Because of this, he will realize he is anxious and he will now feel uncomfortable in the temporal world.

In his journal from 1842, Kierkegaard writes: "Anxiety is an alien power which grips the individual, and yet one cannot tear himself free from it and does not want to, for one fears, but what he fears he desires."44 Anxiety occurs when the ethical person is anxious about living in his world. The ultimate anxiety is anxiety concerning death; this is not the fear of the physical pain of dying but the anxiety of no longer having the

43 HB&T p.116

44 SKJP I, 94
freedom to be alive. Kierkegaard tells us that in anxiety, there is a simultaneous attraction and repulsion. The ethical person at the same time wants his freedom and he wants to actualize his potential but he is at the same time frightened by his non-being, his death.

There are two types of anxiety happening to the ethical person. The first is his anxiety over how to responsibly fulfill his possibilities and the second is his anxiety about dying and not being able to fulfill his possibilities. When the person on the first floor begins to question his mortality and his freedom in this way, it is then that he needs God’s help to get him out of anxiety. Getting out of anxiety with God’s help will be discussed in the next chapter but for now we will continue discussing anxiety.

The ethical person does not want to live in a meaningless way but he is anxious about the possibility of death, or rather, his impending death, so he must make a decision to move further along on his path to authenticity.

Anxiety is the catalyst for the ethical person to be able to recognize his freedom. The ability to see that he is free is a catalyst for him to make the choice to move to the second floor.

Heidegger tells us that anxiety is a strange and “uncanny” experience that a person feels when his usually significant world seems to no longer hold any significance. Things the ethical person once found familiar and comfortable will seem unfamiliar and uncanny. This experience of anxiety presents to him the challenge of reflecting upon his own existence. Even when he does not wish to have this type of thought or feeling, even when he tries to ignore it, it is still lurking and exuding its presence.
Kierkegaard considers anxiety to be a positive catalyst to finding truth, faith, God, freedom and authenticity; it is the essential catalyst for the *moment* that is the first leap of faith. The ethical person will leave his anxiety behind and leap into God’s refuge.

### 3.6 Chapter 3 Conclusions

We have seen in this chapter on anxiety that the ethical person feels anxiety when he first realizes that he is a sinner and he feels guilty about being a sinner. He comes to recognize that up until this point he has being living in ignorance and that he has been lacking the third element of his being, spirit.

The person in the ethical stage also ends up feeling anxious when he begins to question his existence. He reflectively sees that there are too many possibilities because he is free. He asks himself “What do I do with this freedom?” Kierkegaard calls this kind of anxiety the “dizzying effect of freedom.” The ethical person also becomes anxious because he knows that his freedom can be taken away by death at any moment. The ethical person feels overwhelmed; he feels that he cannot cope.

The ethical person must be in a highly reflective state of mind to experience anxiety. What was familiar for this person is now both unfamiliar and uncomfortable. This kind of anxiety makes the ethical person question his very existence and this questioning leads him to feeling that this unseen threat viz., is suffocatingly close. The ethical person’s whole system of meaning collapses. This collapse is in fact a positive turn because it forces the ethical person into reflection about his own life.

45 “Uncanny” is translated from the German “unheimlich” which means “not at home”.
...
We can see now that anxiety is a catalyst for positive change and growth for the ethical person. It is the catalyst for the moment, for truth, and for authentic freedom.

This is the moment for the ethical person; he has a choice to make. He can either return to being comfortable and simply remain on the first floor for the rest of his life, or he can push through the moment and, with God’s help, he can climb up to the second floor. Now that we understand what the moment or the leap of faith is and how it is brought about from the first floor to the second floor, let us now examine the second floor of Religiousness “A.”
Chapter 4

Reconciling the Paradoxes on the Second Floor
“Man approaches God most nearly when he is in one sense least like God. For what can be more unlike than fullness and need, sovereignty and humility, righteousness and penitence, limitless power and a cry for help?”

C.S. Lewis

4.1 The Second Floor

There are two “rooms” on the Second Floor. The first is “Religiousness A” and the second is “Religiousness B”. The person in Religiousness A is the *Knight of Infinite Resignation* and the person in Religiousness B is the *Knight of Faith*. The goal or aim of the person on the second floor is to come to accept the many paradoxes that have always troubled him.

Kierkegaard lists eight essential paradoxes in his book *Philosophical Fragments*. The ethical person must first understand the learning paradox; this will permit his transition to the second floor. The Knight of Infinite Resignation must then accept the next three paradoxes. Once having accepted them, the Knight of Infinite Resignation will then recognize that yet another *leap* or *moment* is needed to get to the final level of Religiousness B. In this second leap of faith, the Knight of Infinite Resignation must accept the final four paradoxes. Once the person in Religiousness A has accepted all of the paradoxes, he will be a Knight of Faith. It is essential to note that the Knight of Infinite Resignation is typically referred to as a Christian. Kierkegaard calls this kind of Christianity, Christendom. The “real” Christian is the Knight of Faith. The Knight of
Faith lives a true Christian lifestyle whereas the Knight of Infinite Resignation only thinks that he is living a Christian lifestyle. To begin, we will look at the first paradox, The Learning Paradox.

4.2 The Learning Paradox

The ultimate paradox of thought is "to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think."\(^{46}\) How are we to figure out the root of our anxiety, when we do not understand, or know what to ask? Or rather, if we are trying to discover the meaning of our existence, and we know God is somehow the meaning, but we do not know God because He is God, then how do we figure this out?

In Plato’s quest for truth he presents us with the "Learning Paradox." The paradox is, 'If I do not know the truth, how can I seek it? And, if I do not know it, how can I learn it?' In the *Meno*, Socrates presents this paradox by trying to "teach" a boy a geometry lesson. But, the boy is perplexed, and admits that he does not know the answer. Socrates reflects on the boy’s distress to Meno.

Observe, Meno, the stage he has reached on the path of recollection. At the beginning he did not know the side of the square of eight feet. Nor indeed does he know it now, but then he thought he knew it and answered badly, as was appropriate—he felt no perplexity. Now, however, he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer, he doesn’t even think he knows.\(^{47}\)

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Indeed, this is a paradox. If the boy does not know the answer, how can he seek the answer, and if he does not know how to seek the answer, then how can he ever learn the truth? Socrates says that he can resolve this paradox with recollection, and the Socratic teacher will be the occasion for the Socratic learner to recollect, hence, the learner will learn the problem and then know how to solve it.

The teacher will perform two paradoxical tasks. The teacher will teach the learner the condition for learning the truth, and the teacher at the same time, will be the actual condition for the truth. Kierkegaard looks at Socrates, whom he admires, and tries to use the Socratic kind of teacher in his philosophy but ultimately he finds that Socrates’ attempt fails so Kierkegaard has to make some changes.

Socrates asks: “can virtue be taught?” And he answered “all learning is a matter of recollection.” Therefore the truth is not learned but it is in the learner. It is through recollection that the learner can know that the truth is inside of him. The learner can recollect by questioning himself in order to bring-out the truth. The Socratic teacher may ask the learner questions in order to draw this knowledge out of him but the teacher cannot give him knowledge because it is already in each of the learner.

Kierkegaard constructs his critique of the Socratic learning paradox in the following way:

I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without knowing it, in the same instant that moment is hidden in the eternal, assimilated into it in such a way that I so to speak, still cannot find it even if I were to look for


49 Meno, 81A
it, because there is no Here and no There, but only an *ubi\que et nusquam* (everywhere and nowhere). 50

Kierkegaard finds some conflicting elements in Socrates’ theory. We should assume that there is a moment of transition from untruth to truth. In other words, if the Socratic pupil has eternal knowledge inside of him and it is suddenly brought out of him, there is a transitory moment. Kierkegaard is interested in this *moment* and he thinks that there is more to it.

For Socrates, the truth is already known, so the Socratic teacher is a teacher who is an occasion for recollection of this knowledge 51 and a transition takes place when the learner understands that he possesses the truth. In this transition, or this *moment*, the learner has to decide whether he goes further in recollecting the truth. In this *moment*, the learner becomes aware of his re-birth. The learner’s previous state was ‘not to be’ and his state now is ‘to be.’ The problem here is, how could the learner possess knowledge of eternal truths if he was in a state of not-to-be?

On the other hand, Kierkegaard’s model of the teacher is different. Kierkegaard’s teacher cannot be an occasion for the learner recollecting the truth because he cannot possess the truth without having first received the condition. Kierkegaard’s teacher provides the occasion and the condition for understanding the truth: “The teacher must bring it to him, but not only that. Along with it, he must provide him with the condition for understanding it.” 52 Kierkegaard believes that the learner cannot, have possessed the

50 PF, p.13
51 PF, p.14
52 PF, p.14
truth inside of him, not even unknowingly. For Kierkegaard, before the learner came to truth he was in untruth. There is no point reminding a person of the truth if it is not inside of him so there is a need for a different type of teacher.

Kierkegaard suggests that the ethical person look to God as his teacher; more specifically, the God-man\textsuperscript{53} as his teacher. This kind of teacher is Kierkegaard’s conception of how the Christian obtains knowledge, and how the teacher is the one who enables him to obtain knowledge. Kierkegaard names this teacher a savior, a deliverer and a reconciler.\textsuperscript{54}

The teacher is the \textit{occasion} for the realization that the ethical person is in untruth; and the teacher provides him with the \textit{condition} for understanding the truth.\textsuperscript{55} There is no human being that is able to both give the learner the truth and provide the \textit{condition}, only God is able to do this. The teacher thus enables the ethical person to have the “consciousness of sin”; He allows him to realize that he is in untruth and this untruth is sin.

The teacher, then, is the god himself, how, acting as the occasion, prompts the learner to be reminded that he is untruth and is that through his own fault. But this state—to be untruth and to be that through one’s own fault—what can we call it? Let us call it sin.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} The God-man is Jesus; the Eternal (God) and the Temporal (Human being) incarnated into one being.

\textsuperscript{54} PF, p.17

\textsuperscript{55} The condition is in us; it is our ability to be able to ask about the truth

\textsuperscript{56} PF, p.15
God is therefore the savior who enables the learner to recognize the truth and to let him recognize that he is in untruth; it is here that he must make a decision to either continue on in his quest for truth or to remain resigned in ignorance.

This decision, this transitory moment, is significant because this moment changes the ethical person’s life; it is the moment of his rebirth. “In the moment, a person becomes aware that he was born, for his previous state, to which he is not to appeal, was indeed one of “not to be.” In the moment, he becomes aware of the rebirth.” The act of deciding to stop living in untruth and to start living in truth is repentance.

We have seen that to accept the Learning Paradox, the learner will recognize that the God-man is the teacher to teach him the truth and He is, at the same time, the condition for the truth. Once the learner has made this leap into trusting God to be the teacher and the condition, he has moved fully into the second floor of the house to Religiousness A. The ethical person can now see that he has not previously possessed the truth and he can now realize that he was in sin by not recognizing his untruth. But now that he has accepted this paradox, the person in Religiousness A can repent by trying to learn the truth from the God-man.

4.3 The Erotic (Love) Paradox

One of the first things for the Knight of Infinite Resignation to learn is how to love. Through learning about the relationship between God and himself, he will be able to

\[^{57}\text{PF, p.21}\]
come closer to the truth. Once again, Kierkegaard looks at the Socratic teacher to see if there is anything that he can distill from Socrates’ philosophy.

The Socratic teacher is an occasion for the pupil to understand himself and likewise, the pupil is an occasion for the teacher to understand himself.\textsuperscript{58} The Socratic teacher “stands in a reciprocal relation, inasmuch as life and its situations are the occasion for him to become a teacher and he in turn the occasion for others to learn something.”\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, the pupil and the teacher do not owe each other anything; it is an equal relationship.

On the other hand, Kierkegaard looks at the God-man as the Teacher and finds that the relationship is not equal or reciprocal because God does not need the pupil to understand Himself; He moves himself; He does not need help; “the god needs no pupil in order to understand himself.”\textsuperscript{60} Love is what moves God to help the learner and for this, the learner owes God everything but God has nothing to learn from the learner so how is this to be an equal relationship? The relationship “does not have an equal reciprocal relation to the occasion... The moment emerges precisely in the relation of the eternal resolution to the unequal occasion.”\textsuperscript{61} This is the \textbf{Love Paradox}; how can there be an equal relationship between the eternal God and the learner? Kierkegaard says that

\textsuperscript{58} PF, p.24
\textsuperscript{59} PF, p.23
\textsuperscript{60} PF, p.24
\textsuperscript{61} PF, p.25
the teacher and the learner can only be made equal through love, so love must be the goal.\textsuperscript{62}

The Teacher has perfect understanding; if He did not, He would not be God/Eternal. Kierkegaard says that unhappy love is when two lovers are unable to have each other.\textsuperscript{63} The teacher and the pupil love each other and it is an unhappy love because they are unequal. They are unable to have each other and they are unable to understand each other.

The unhappiness is the result not of the lovers' being unable to have each other but of their being unable to understand each other. And this sorrow is indeed infinitely deeper than the sorrow of which people speak, for this unhappiness aims at the heart of love and wounds for eternity.\textsuperscript{64}

This is the paradox: the relationship is unequal, unhappy and they cannot understand one another but they want to be equal and happy with each other. If this paradox cannot be resolved then the Knight of Infinite Resignation remains resigned to living a life distanced from his love, the Teacher/God-man and unable to move on to the equal reciprocal relationship in Religiousness B.

Love is what can resolve this unhappy paradox. For example, (erotic) love between a man and a woman is triumphant if it unites equal with equal. But if love unites two unequal parties, for example, intellectual differences will make understanding

\textsuperscript{62} PF, p.25
\textsuperscript{63} PF, p.25
\textsuperscript{64} PF, p. 26
impossible between two people, then they will be deeply unhappy because they are unequal.65

Love finds a way to create real equality; Kierkegaard gives us the example of the King and the Maiden Tale to illustrate how this happens.66 A king falls in love with a poor maiden and decides to marry her; they are of unequal status. The king can bring her up to his level and she can either pretend to be his equal, or she can always be grateful and humble. A moment occurs when "a concern awakened in the king's soul."67 On one hand he is doing the girl a favour. She will always be grateful but the king wonders if the girl will be truly happy. The king wonders if the girl could forget, but if she forgot and acted bold, would she not be driven into secret sorrow? Would she not be happier if she were married equally?

Either way the king and maiden remain unequal. This love can be compared to the love between God and the pupil. "The learner is in untruth, indeed, is there through his own fault—and yet he is the object of the god's love."68 God wants to be the teacher and help the learner to be brought to the level of understanding and if this does not happen, "the love becomes unhappy because they are unable to understand each other."69

65 PF, p.27
66 King and Maiden Tale found on Pages 26-27 of PF.
67 PF, p.27
68 PF, p.36
69 PF, p.28
The Socratic unity between the teacher and the pupil is brought about by an ascent. The pupil forgets his misunderstanding and is brought up to the level of the teacher. This kind of unity cannot become happy according to Kierkegaard. This unity would indeed be the death of love.

The solution Kierkegaard offers is that the teacher should make a decent. In order for unity to be effected, the god must become like this one. He will appear, therefore, as the equal of the lowliest of persons. But the lowliest of all is one who must serve others—consequently, the god will appear in the form of a servant.

This means that the servant will suffer like a human, he will: “suffer all things, endure all things, be tried in all things, hunger in the desert, thirst in the agonies, be forsaken in death…” Any other kind of love would be a deception. In other words, God descended as the “God-man” to earth to be able to suffer as a human would suffer. By suffering, the Teacher is able to understand what it is to be a human and the human is able to relate to the Teacher. They can now love one another as equals because of the sacrificial descent of the Teacher. But this explains only how the Teacher can understand us; we now must look at how the Knight of Infinite Resignation’s understanding will come into collision with the vast unknown of the Eternal.

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70 PF, p.29
71 PF, p.31
72 PF, p.32
73 PF, p.33
4.4 The Absolute Paradox

If the Knight of Infinite Resignation is going to know something about God, he must first come to know that God is different from him, absolutely different. If God is absolutely different from a human being and a human being is absolutely different from the god—how is the understanding to grasp this? This is the task in Religiousness A; the Knight of Infinite Resignation must be able to recognize God as being completely and absolutely different; this is the Absolute Paradox.

Kierkegaard asks,

But what is this unknown against which the understanding in its paradoxical passion collides and which even disturbs man and his self-knowledge? It is the unknown. Therefore, let us call this unknown the god.74

God is absolutely different from the Knight of Infinite Resignation but his reason cannot grasp this, hence his reason is essentially colliding with the Unknown. How can he fully grasp what is absolutely different if he is absolutely different from God? This indeed is a paradox. “The paradoxical passion of the understanding is, then, continually colliding with this unknown.”75

Only God can help the Knight of Infinite Resignation accept this paradox and He became a human being so that the Knight of Infinite Resignation could understand Him. The absolute paradox is reconciled when the Knight of Infinite Resignation is able to

74 PF, p.39
75 PF, p.44
realize the absolute difference between himself and God and when he can relate to Him
or love Him absolutely because he understands Him as a human.

4.5 The Typhonic Paradox

Kierkegaard begins chapter three of Fragments by engaging in the discussion of
what humans are. He gives the example of the Typhonic Paradox. In Plato’s Phaedrus,
Socrates admits that after studying men for so long, he is not clear about himself.

I want to know...about myself. Am I indeed a wonder more complicated
and swollen with passion than the serpent Typho, or a creature of a gentler
and simpler sort, to whom Nature has given a diviner and lowlier
destiny?76

He wondered if he were more like the monster Typhon? or if he were more of a good and
friendly person? It is thus a paradox when humans feel that they are two things at once.

We are made up of colliding opposites and trying to understand these opposites
wills a collision.77 Are we angels or beasts? or both? We are good at times and bad at
other times. We are finite and infinite; we have physical bodies that will die yet we also
have a soul that will live eternally. We are particular and universal; we have a unique
personality, but we are universally human. We are free and necessary; we are free in that
we have rights but we are necessary because we are subject to laws and regulations.

Plato has answers about what we are; we are tripartite: a body, soul and spirit. But
Kierkegaard thinks that harmonizing these collisions is not as easy as Plato would have it.
We have to take care of each side of ourselves; we can in despair make bad choices to

escape the collisions, but the Knight of Infinite Resignation will attempt the overwhelming task of making sense of these collisions with the Teacher’s help.

To this point, we can see that this path is the traditional path of typically religious people, not just Christians. This path has encouraged the Knight of Infinite Resignation to question his beliefs and to learn how to worship God as Absolutely Different than himself. Practically speaking, the Knight of Infinite Resignation would lead a life of rejecting worldly/bodily pleasures; he would give up everything in order to get to know the Divine. The Knight of Infinite Resignation would fashion himself after the example in the Bible about Jesus’ disciples. The disciples were required to give up their families and the things they loved in order to make an absolute commitment to their Lord. This is what the Knight of Infinite Resignation does in order to feel complete in his spirituality viz., he tries to sacrifice worldly pleasures in order to feel like he is making a sacrifice to God.

I gave up adolescent pleasures such as dances, rock music, movies, drinking, smoking, sex etc. in order to be a good Christian, in order to please God. My motivation was the absolute adoration of the Divine. I thought that if I did not participate in worldly things that this would please God. But this left me feeling resigned. (Resigned to a life of unhappy sacrificing of things that I did not feel to be wrong.) I was resigned to a life of repressed desires thinking that it would be worth it in the end, or that I would someday feel complete when I was good enough, when I had given up enough. Kierkegaard is correct then in claiming that this is the traditional lifestyle of Christians in Christendom.

77 PF, p.39
Kierkegaard asks if this was really the message that Jesus was preaching? Did Jesus want us to live repressed, unhappy lives just in the hope that we would be rewarded in the afterlife? Kierkegaard answers no; Jesus wanted us to be happy and to love each other. There is more to living the Christian life than living by a prescription of rules and regulations that oppress human nature. Kierkegaard does have a solution; there is one last step that the Knight of Infinite Resignation can take in order to become a Knight of Faith but this will only happen when the Knight of Infinite Resignation is unsatisfied and unhappy with his relationship with God.

4.6 The Offence at the Paradox—The Second Leap

We have learned how to make the first leap to the second floor by understanding the Learning Paradox. Next we learned how the Knight of Infinite Resignation must reconcile the Learning, Erotic, Absolute and Typhonic Paradoxes. But there will come a time when the Knight of Infinite Resignation understand God as absolutely different than himself and he will come to another realization that he is still in fact unhappy. If the encounter is not a mutual understanding, then the relation is unhappy. Experiencing this unhappiness is an offence at the Paradox.

Not to be mistaken, offence is not a paradox, it is offence AT the paradox. Offence is when the understanding thinks the paradox is absurd. The Knight of Infinite Resignation continually affirms that he cannot understand the paradox and accepts this paradox on faith. But the offence has an advantage—it spurs us on to see the difference more closely.
Kierkegaard describes what happens when the Knight of Infinite Resignation no longer wants the happy union and instead he takes offence at the absolute paradox. "If the encounter is not in mutual un-understanding, then the relation is unhappy."\textsuperscript{78} We must understand that offence is caused by the reason's collision with the paradox. Offence is outside of the paradox; it is the non-reconciliation of the paradox. The understanding thinks that the paradox is absurd but at the same time the understanding understands this.

Active offence\textsuperscript{79} is an act of faith. The Knight of Faith will always know why he is offended and knows that he cannot reconcile this paradox or understand it fully. "Active offence is always weak enough to be incapable of rearing itself loose from the cross to which it is nailed or to pull out the arrow with which it is wounded."\textsuperscript{80}

If the Knight of Infinite Resignation remains offended, he does not move to Religiousness B. But if he can appropriate this offence, he has successfully made the second leap of faith. Kierkegaard's The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air offers some practical advice for how to appropriate the offence.

4.7 The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air

The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air is perhaps the most beautiful, poetic and spiritual work of Kierkegaard. It is calming and it provides much needed direction. At this point in Kierkegaard's writing career, he is becoming less indirect and in fact

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\textsuperscript{78} PF, p.49

\textsuperscript{79} PF, p.50

\textsuperscript{80} PF, p.50
more prescriptive. This is important since we need to know how a Knight of Infinite Resignation can be in the right state of mind to receive the “moment.”

Kierkegaard presents the Lily and the Bird as our teachers; their lesson is for us to learn silence, to learn how to be silent. Knowing how to speak eloquently is indeed an advantage but that is not to say that being silent is a disadvantage. This lesson in silence is relevant to our study of repetition. While learning about silence, we can clearly see how the process of becoming a Knight of Faith includes silent contemplation and prayer.

Kierkegaard quotes the biblical verse, Matthew 6:33: “Seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness”. He teaches that the way to the moment is through silence. The Knight of Infinite Resignation has studied and tried to reason about his feelings but when he needs to move to the next level, he needs to seek God in a new way; he needs to seek God’s grace. Kierkegaard says that he cannot idly chatter with God because He is Infinite Wisdom and the Knight of Infinite Resignation knows nothing. In Religiousness A, the Knight of Infinite Resignation must come to God in fear and trembling: “Only in much fear and trembling is a human being able to speak with God, in much fear and trembling.”

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82 L&B P.334
4.8 The Paradox of the Contemporary Follower

If God had never come to earth as a human being, everything would have remained Socratic. But God did come, as the God-man and the God-man provides the condition for the Knight of Infinite Resignation to understand the truth, or to reconcile the paradox. It is God then, who provides the condition for the moment.

God provides the condition for the Knight of Infinite Resignation, but how Kierkegaard asks, can the Knight of Infinite Resignation understand the paradox? He answers, "when the paradox and the understanding happily encounter each other in the moment." What is this happy passion? It is faith. The element of faith is what differentiates Kierkegaard from Socrates. The learner owes Socrates nothing. But for Kierkegaard, the Knight of Infinite Resignation owes God everything. This can only be expressed in faith. Thus the object of faith is the unification of the contradictions in the paradox. Faith is not knowledge, it is an act of will; it is an act of understanding. We must understand that faith clings to the teacher and the object of faith is the teacher himself, not his teachings.

Kierkegaard asks, how does a learner become a follower or how does the Knight of Infinite Resignation become a Knight of Faith? When the Knight of Infinite Resignation, in untruth, receives the condition, he must receive it in the moment, and in that moment, he knows that he has received it from the Eternal Teacher. Therefore God opens the Knight of Faith’s eyes and the Knight of Faith can now see God’s glory.

83 The definition of truth will be fully explored in Chapter Five.

84 PF, p.59
through the "eyes of faith." (The contemporary follower/Knight of Faith does not have to have actually met the teacher, which is why the teacher lets the Knight of Faith see him with "eyes of faith"). Faith therefore is a paradox because God gives the Knight of Faith the condition or the understanding to use faith, and the contradiction is that faith is still his own.

4.9 The Paradox of Temporality

The Offence at the Paradox is the moment of transition from Religiousness A to Religiousness B. The Paradox of the Contemporary Follower explains how God gives the condition of faith. The Paradox of Temporality explains what it is like to live as a Knight of Faith in Religiousness B or on the 2nd Floor of the house.

The Knight of Faith experiences an ontological change when he enters the second floor. This change is not in his essence but in his existence.\(^{85}\) The Knight of Faith was in a state of non-being and he has now come into a state of being. When he was in a state of non-being, he was but mere possibility. The Knight of Faith has come into being and he is now actuality. Kierkegaard says that the change from possibility to actuality is a suffering\(^{86}\) and indeed we have seen that the spiritual journey for the Knight of Infinite Resignation was in fact difficult. Kierkegaard emphasizes that this change must occur in

\(^{85}\) PF, p.73

\(^{86}\) PF, p.74
freedom. "The change takes place in freedom. All coming into existence occurs in freedom, not by way of necessity."\(^ {87}\)

The Knight of Faith does have a history, a past, but since he has come into existence in this new way, his past has the ability to change. He now has the ability to look at his past in a new way; he can actually change his past. Since the Knight of Faith exists as a more enlightened person, he can look back into his past and view the events differently. For example, he may have experienced abuse in his childhood and he may have always resented his abuser. The Knight of Faith has the ability to change his past by viewing this abuse differently. Perhaps he could look back in time and see his abuser through the eyes of compassion and come to forgive the abuser. His past then changes because he no longer has resentment when he thinks about that period in his life.

This is not to say that the Knight of Faith must comprehend everything in his past because that is impossible. But at every moment the Knight of Faith has the ability to review his past and change it while living in the present. Therefore, the Knight of Faith’s past is no more important than his present or his future. His ability to live in his past, present and future in a new way in each moment is what allows the Knight of Faith to move about all three floors of the house simultaneously.

The ability to live on all three floors at once is Kierkegaard’s notion of Repetition: behold all things shall be made new. “The dialectic of repetition is easy, for that which is

\(^ {87}\) PF, p.75
repeated has been—otherwise it could not be repeated—but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new."^{88}

In Religiousness A, there was a great deal of “giving-up” or letting go of earthy things. The Knight of Infinite Resignation felt he had to make sacrifices of temporal, worldly things in order to relate to God in an Absolute way. He had to learn to love the Absolute—absolutely. In order to do this, he had to give up the relative. For example, Kierkegaard himself thought he had to give up his one love, Regina, in order to devote himself fully to God’s work. Kierkegaard felt that he could not love God absolutely if he had attachments to relative worldly loves.

Now that the Knight of Faith has made his way past the Offence, he knows how to love God absolutely and he can now return to the relative/temporal realm and love the relative—relatively. He will love the relative in a brand new way. He will live his life in a new way: each moment will be lived on all floors of the house at once. He realizes that he can enjoy earthly pleasures or even embrace ethical dogma because he can see them for what they are viz., relative/temporal. He always knows that there are two realms: the eternal and the temporal. He knows how to live in both realms comfortably and appropriates this into his daily way of living.

The Knight of Faith now has a new understanding of his freedom as a Christian and how to make all things new. The Knight of Faith lives a happy life on the second floor. “Repetition therefore, if it is possible, makes a person happy…”^{89} Kierkegaard

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^{89} Repetition, p.131
says that once a person can live in repetition it "is an indestructible garment that fits closely and tenderly, neither binds nor sags." 90 In Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard reiterates his praise for repetition. "For it is great to give up one's desire, but greater to stick to it after having given it up; it is great to grasp hold of the eternal but greater to stick to the temporal after having given it up." 91

4.10 The Paradox of the Follower at Second Hand

The Knight of Faith has now reconciled the paradoxes. He now can see that the object of his faith is the teacher and not the religious teachings. In other words, Jesus, the God-Man, is the object of his faith; faith is not a belief in religious dogma. The Knight of Faith must only look at the God-Man as an exemplar and look at the God-man's direct teachings for guidance.

The Knight of Faith then, lives his life in Religiousness B by living on all three floors of the house at once following only the teachings of Jesus and not the dogma of Christendom. He is now a follower of the God-Man; he is no longer a learner.

4.11 Chapter 4 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have seen that there are two levels on the second floor:

Religiousness A and Religiousness B. In his book Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard outlines eight paradoxes that must be resolved. The first five paradoxes (The

90 Repetition, p.132

Learning Paradox, the Erotic Paradox, The Absolute Paradox, The Typhonic Paradox and the Offence at the Paradox) provide the Knight of Infinite Resignation with hierarchical steps to take in order to move upwards in his spiritual climb towards becoming a Knight of Faith. The final three paradoxes (The Paradox of the Contemporary Follower, The Temporality Paradox and the Paradox of the Follower at Second Hand) provide the Knight of Faith with the final steps he must take in order to live in repetition on all three floors of the house at once.

The key element for becoming a Knight of Faith is moving beyond the offence he feels towards God. This is the moment for the Knight of Infinite Resignation. The Knight of Faith learns to love the Absolute—absolutely and to love the relative—relatively. This is repetition: living on all three floors of the house at once.92 Once the Knight of Faith has learned these things, he is no longer a learner, but a follower of the Absolute. He is now a Knight of Faith. Once the Knight of Faith has become a follower, he has a new kind of understanding in repetition. “Repetition is the watchword in every ethical view.”93 In other words, the Knight of Faith understands that dogma underlies every ethical view and that living in repetition is like a password that allows him to understand the dogma underlying everything. Now that this is understood, the Knight of Faith no longer thinks of these dogmas as Absolute but instead appropriates them relatively.

92 For further readings in the “double movement leap of faith” see David Goicochea’s paper “The Moment of Responsibility” in Philosophy Today. Fall 1999 pp.211-225

93 CA, p.18
The natural text is not visible in the provided image.
The following chapter will delve further into the issue of understanding religious dogma as relative and having existential faith in the God-man as opposed to having religious faith based on purely dogmatic "truths."
Chapter 5
The Misunderstanding of Faith
5.1 Kellenberger’s Three Models of Faith

In his article “Three Models of Faith,” James Kellenberger presents a study of the “Three models of faith”. The first mode is “biblical” and the other two modes are “existential”. Kellenberger uses Søren Kierkegaard and Don Miguel de Unamuno as the representatives of “existential faith” (or “absurd faith” and “paradoxical faith” respectively). He shows how Kierkegaard’s and Unamuno’s different accounts of faith, and biblical faith relate to rationality.94

I am interested in the notion of “existential faith” because that is the kind of faith that enlightened existential beings (those who question and do not blindly believe) need to have in God despite all of the seemingly rational evidence against Him in our modern world. “Existential faith” is a more foundationally justifiable faith than “biblical faith” even though the former is based on uncertainty.

It is the intent of this chapter that the enlightened person will understand that uncertain faith is not only possible but, according to Kierkegaard, it is actually a more passionate faith in God. One just needs to look at the promise written in the Bible: “Blessed is he that believes but does not see,” to understand that this type of faith is uncertain.

Kellenberger says that there are “two truths” about the nature of faith. It is essential to have an understanding of these “two truths” to be able to understand the distinction between certain and uncertain faith. The first is that “faith requires certainty

94 In the conclusion of this thesis, I will expand on the paradoxical faith of Unamuno.
on the part of the believer."\textsuperscript{95} The second is that "serious faith requires uncertainty."\textsuperscript{96} The "second truth" is an uncertain belief in God, an existential belief in God.

Kellenberger gives the example of Job who says "I know my redeemer liveth!" Job is a "biblical believer" because he is certain. The existentialist's affirmation, on the other hand, is, "It cannot be, all reason is against it: yet I believe!"\textsuperscript{97} What this implies is that the biblical believer's faith requires certainty and the existential believer's faith requires uncertainty. In other words, Job's belief is certain and he sees the matter (God's presence) as certain, whereas the Existential believer is not certain and he does not see the matter (God's existence) as certain. Job does not have to choose his faith whereas the Existential believer does.

Kellenberger distinguishes between two types of Existential believers. There is the "Absurd believer" and the "Paradoxical believer". The Absurd believer, which Kellenberger thinks is Kierkegaard's believer, believes in God but believes in Him against all reason. "Absurd" believers believe by overcoming their doubt and uncertainty by an act of will. They choose to believe, and do believe, in the face of their own doubts and in the face of no evidence or even negative evidence against there being a God. They strive to believe and succeed. The very heart of Absurd faith is this "striving in the face


\textsuperscript{96} 3MofF, p.321

\textsuperscript{97} 3MofF, p.322
of uncertainty." Kellenberger answers that this is the second model of existential faith, viz., "paradoxical faith."

"Paradoxical believers" do not have faith "yet they try with every fiber to believe, and so affirm the faith they do not have. Their cry of faith is 'I cannot believe. God have mercy upon me!'" The Paradoxical believer, like the Absurd believer, chooses to believe, and tries to believe, but the difference is that he cannot believe. The irony of this kind of faith is that the paradoxical believer does in fact have faith; his faith is in his very striving to believe. Kellenberger explains that for Unamuno, "true faith is 'agonic' faith. It suffers in doubt; yet its very strength is born from its struggle within the "gimlet of doubt.""

Kellenberger concludes that the relationship between rationality and existential faith is different from the relationship between rationality and biblical faith. "Absurd and paradoxical faith are held against all reason. They are, then, frankly and assertively irrational—irrational in the sense that they are not grounded in support and shun support." He claims that existential believers provide "internal justification for their irrationality; for them, the passion of faith's commitment is proportionate to the uncertainty of what is believed."

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98 3MofF, p.323
99 3MofF, p.323
100 3MofF, p.323 (See footnote 55)
101 3MofF, p.324
102 3MofF, p.324
Religious-believers and Existential-believers are concepts that I will now borrow from Kellenberger. They have provided me with a framework that I will use for the remainder of this chapter.

5.2 Christianity and Christendom

Kierkegaard makes a distinction between Christendom and Christianity. A person living in Christendom is a person who thinks he is living the true Christian life when in Kierkegaard’s opinion, he is not. Most “Christians” live in Christendom instead of true Christianity. True Christianity for Kierkegaard is living as a Knight of Faith.

In this chapter, I will name the Christian living in Christendom as a “religious-believer” and the true Christian, an “existential-believer.” Throughout the chapter, I will focus directly on the difference between how these two believers live in faith. By the end of the chapter, we will be able to see that the religious-believer is still in Religiousness “A” and has not made the second leap of faith; he has not experienced offence at the paradox because the offence is not an issue, not an offence for him. On the other hand, it will be demonstrated that the “existential believer” has made the leap to the second floor.

5.3 New Definition of a Religious Believer

“Religious believers” are those who feel that faith is a belief in a god that they have not met personally. But when we look at faith from a different point of view, we
can see that faith and belief are two very different things. The difference between the two is essential to understanding what faith really is. Throughout this chapter, I will use the Pentecostal\textsuperscript{103} religion as an example of religious believers and I will use the terms “existential faith” or “existential believers” to stand for persons who have existential faith in God.

Religious-believers are believers who believe in God but do not actually have existential faith in God. This sounds harsh, but when we look at what faith actually is, we will be able to see how faith is not entailed in the belief of religious believers. Religious believers are like natural theologians who look at the world around them and are able to conclude that God exists. Pentecostal religious believers see God as a self-evident reality in their spiritual lives. They see God perform miracles; they experience speaking in tongues, and they see the Holy Spirit moving in their lives. None of this is wrong but it is not existential faith.

Religious believers see God as self-evident. There is no mistake in their minds; they do not question what they see. This is a “belief-that” God exists. “Belief-that” means that it is a belief, based on evidence, that something exists. For example, I believe that my computer exists because I can see it; it is evident to me that it is a presence in my life. Likewise, the religious believer believes in God in the same manner. Perhaps their belief is more abstract and deep. A better comparison would be, I believe that China exists although I have never seen it. I have some proof for this because I am wearing a shirt that says “Made in China”. This is a good piece of evidence that China exists even

\textsuperscript{103} I use the Pentecostal religion because that is the religion that I am most comfortable talking about with
though I have never been there personally. Likewise, the religious believer has never seen God personally, yet he takes God's handiwork as a valid sign for God's existence, like a stamp that says "Made in China" except that God's stamp might say "I am the Alpha and Omega".

On the other hand, "existential believers" are believers that have true authentic faith. This is a "belief-in" which is a belief in something when you have never seen it or experienced it. The existential believer does not see a stamp that says, "I am the Alpha and Omega." In fact, when he looks around he sees no concrete evidence of God. He sees no reason to believe that a God exists when God is not evident; it simply is not rational for him to believe. But he does believe because he has true existential faith. He has faith in God despite the fact that his reason is telling him otherwise. It is faith when one believes in something when there is no rational evidence for it.

The intent of this thesis is to explore this notion of existential faith. I will look at Kierkegaard's philosophy to demonstrate how his ideas follow my thesis that existential faith is the only authentic kind of faith because it alone actually entails the notion of genuine faith. I believe that the best way to explore this claim is to look at the notion of truth first because truth and faith are interrelated. Kierkegaard says that the definition of "truth" is a "paraphrasing of faith".

Kierkegaard argues for "objective uncertainty" as a model of faith. I think it is an excellent model because only uncertainty can lead to true faith. If one has objective

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any kind of authoritative knowledge.
certainty, why would one need faith? No “leap of faith” would be needed because what he believes is apparent and certain.

To assist in proving this thesis, I will examine a section of Kierkegaard’s, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (hereafter referred to simply as the *Postscript*) wherein I will examine closely Section Two of Chapter Two entitled, “Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity”. The next section will explicate the nature of subjective truth and how it is related to faith.

**5.4 Definitions of Faith and Truth in the Postscript**

We will now look more closely at the attributes of faith in the *Postscript*. I will begin by looking at the components of the definition of “truth,” “an objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness.”\(^{104}\) We will look at what “objective uncertainty” is, at what “holding fast” means, and most especially, what “passionate inwardness” is. We will then look at how truth and faith are related to inwardness or subjectivity.

Throughout this chapter, Kierkegaard compares objective reflection and subjective reflection. Objective reflection is the way of speculation (wherein there is no truth, there are only approximations) whereas subjective reflection is the way of truth. Regarding subjective reflection, Kierkegaard says, “To subjective reflection, truth becomes appropriation, inwardness, subjectivity and the point is to immerse oneself,

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existing, in subjectivity.” The way to objective truth “goes away from the subject.” Objective reflection leads to abstract thinking like mathematics and historical knowledge; it leads away from the subject. On the other hand, subjective reflection turns towards the subject; it is inward and it is in this inwardness that we will find the truth.

Kierkegaard emphasizes the existential being or the “existing person” as he calls it. He says that the “knower” is an existing person in this temporal world and because he is not the “Eternal” or God, he cannot identify objectively with the truth; he cannot have objective certainty about the Eternal because only God can have that kind of certainty. The knower must realize this and appropriate or hold fast that the objective truth is outside himself and he will never know it; he will never have that certainty. This is not to say that the existing knower will not have any type of certainty. The existing knower can have subjective certainty in “the moment” In the moment of passion, he can obtain subjective certainty.

Kierkegaard says that all knowing pertains to existence. Passion then is, “existence at its very highest—and we are after all existing persons”. This means that we can have knowledge about things in existence, our existence, but it is an indifferent knowledge because it does not require passion or inwardness. We cannot have objective knowledge about the Eternal because the Eternal can only be known subjectively.

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105 CUP, p.192

106 “(Faith) occurs when the understanding and the paradox happily encounter each other in the moment, when the understanding steps aside and the paradox gives itself, and the third something... is that happy passion to which we shall now give a name... faith”. (Philosophical Fragments, p.59)
We can obtain subjective truth about the Eternal only through subjective inward reflection. "Subjective reflection is its search back and inward into inwardness. At its highest, inwardness in an existing subject is passion; truth as a paradox corresponds to passion, and that truth becomes a paradox is grounded precisely in its relation to an existing subject."\textsuperscript{107}

To explain the question of truth and subjectivity, Kierkegaard uses the example of the knowledge of God. If we objectively reflect upon God, we reflect on whether or not this is the true God. But we cannot achieve this kind of knowledge in "all eternity" because God is a subject and can only be known subjectively in inwardness. If we subjectively look for God, we can find Him by relating ourselves "in such a way that the relation is in truth a God-relation."\textsuperscript{108} This means that we find subjective truth in relating to God.

In the moment that one realizes that one will never find God in the objective sense and gives up trying to understand God objectively (and turns to reflect on God inwardly), one will, in passion, find an understanding of God. For example, if one asks objectively about immortality and one asks subjectively about it, then the question is: where is there more truth? Or, who has the most certainty? Kierkegaard answers: "certainty of immortality is rooted in subjectivity; the other is immortal and therefore struggles by

\textsuperscript{107} CUP, p.189-190

\textsuperscript{108} CUP, p.199
contending with the uncertainty."\textsuperscript{109} This answer is important because Kierkegaard stresses that the subjective knower can have a subjective certainty about eternal things.

Kierkegaard now turns his discussion to the difference between what the person asks who objectively reflects, which is "what" and what the subjective knower asks, which is "how it is asked"? The objectively reflective person is concerned only about the categories of thought whereas the subjectively reflective person is concerned only with inwardness.

This inwardness or "how" is the "passion of the infinite and the passion of the infinite is the very truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth."\textsuperscript{110} This passage is significant because Kierkegaard is telling us that the truth can only be found subjectively. It can only be found by looking inward. The truth is not something we can find empirically or objectively. He goes further and tells us that in subjectivity, there lies a decision, whereas in objectivity, there only lies untruth. (This "decision" will be explored shortly.)

Kierkegaard's definition of "truth" is: "An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness."\textsuperscript{111} He explains, "Objectively he then has only uncertainty, but this is precisely what intensifies the infinite passion of inwardness, and truth is precisely the daring venture of choosing the

\textsuperscript{109} CUP, p.201

\textsuperscript{110} CUP, p.203

\textsuperscript{111} CUP, p.203
objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite.”\textsuperscript{112} In other words, because we know that we are objectively uncertain of the infinite, we can, in the passionate moment, hold fast that we are objectively uncertain and make a choice to inwardly find subjective truth.

Kierkegaard illustrates this with an example of when he looks around to try to find God and sees good things as well as bad things. He sees wisdom and onimpotence as well as evils in the world. These things do not lead him to an objective certainty about God; they add up to an objective uncertainty.

What I find important or relevant at this point in the exposition are some of the words that Kierkegaard uses to define truth. For instance, he says that we must choose objective uncertainty and this involves a choice that is daring; there is a decision to be made in subjectivity and there is risk involved. “Choice,” “daring,” “decisions,” and “risk.” These words are highly subjective. They do not involve objective certainty. It is now easier to see how truth and faith are interrelated because words such as choice, daring, decisions and risk are appropriate words to describe faith. Kierkegaard says that truth is the “paraphrasing of faith.”\textsuperscript{113} He defines “faith” as holding fast to objective uncertainty.\textsuperscript{114} He explains,

Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually

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\item \textsuperscript{112} CUP, p.203
\item \textsuperscript{113} CUP, p.204
\item \textsuperscript{114} CUP, p.204
\end{itemize}
see to it that I hold fast to the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am out on 70,000 fathoms of water and still have faith.\textsuperscript{115}

We now know that truth is objective uncertainty, hence faith is continually appropriating that uncertainty; it is constantly holding fast to it. We can now see how the subjective knower can reconcile the paradox\textsuperscript{116}. According to Kierkegaard, this is how truth becomes the paradox. By the God-man coming, we can know the eternal truth or vise versa, the eternal truth can relate to the existing person.\textsuperscript{117}

Let us now examine those words that were mentioned previously. Kierkegaard says that without risk, there is no faith and the more you risk, the more faith you can have. The more objective reliability you have, the less inwardness you have. Hence, the more you risk, the deeper your inwardness can be.\textsuperscript{118} With risk, a decision is required.

Kierkegaard says that for the existing individual, there is no objective truth; there are only approximations. (Recall that God is the only being who can have objective certainty.) Subjective truth is available to us if we choose it. We could spend our time searching for objective truth but that would leave us in “untruth”. The “decision” to be in truth, is “designed specifically to put an end to that perpetual prattle about ‘to a certain

\textsuperscript{115} CUP, p.204

\textsuperscript{116} There is no human being able to provide the learner with both the truth and the condition for the truth, only God is able to do this. Hence this is a paradox because the god and the Teacher, the God-man, are able to provide both the condition and the truth.

\textsuperscript{117} CUP, p.209

\textsuperscript{118} CUP, p.209
degree.'" Kierkegaard is telling us that we can choose to remain in speculative thought where there is no truth, or we can choose the task of faith.

The task of faith is to appropriate the improbability of the paradox and to hold fast to it with passionate inwardness. Faith actively relates itself to the improbable and constantly holds fast. The understanding despairs at the improbable but faith makes despair decisive. "But to believe against the understanding is a martyrdom; to begin to enlist the understanding a little, is a temptation and retrogression." This is a powerful statement that Kierkegaard makes to end his explanation of faith. He is advocating that we will, at some point, have to let go of our reason that tells us that the paradox is improbable; instead we should hold fast to the inward subjective truth that faith will give us.

5.5 A Spiritual Walk with God Through Faith and Understanding

Kierkegaard discusses how we can have a spiritual relationship with God in truth.

(Our) inwardness is conditioned by the actual breakthrough of inward deepening that corresponds to the divine cunning that God has nothing remarkable, nothing at all remarkable, about him—indeed he is so far from being remarkable that he is invisible, and thus one does not suspect that he is there although his invisibility is in turn his omnipresence.122

119 CUP, p.221
120 By improbability I understand Kierkegaard to be talking about the improbability of the Eternal and how we hold fast to our objective uncertain beliefs about God.
121 CUP, p.233-4
122 CUP, p.245
Kierkegaard explains that God is a mystery and he should remain that way because if we were to have some sort of revelation about God, then we would not be in an inward relationship with Him because no faith would be required.

God cannot be communicated to us directly. This means that another person cannot tell us directly about God and the truth; no one can “hold our hand” and lead us directly to God. “Direct communication about what it means to exist and about inwardness will only have the result that the speculative thinker will benevolently take in hand and let one slip along with it.”

5.6 A Critique of the Religious-Believer

Recall that at the beginning of this chapter, I made the distinction between a religious believer and an existential believer. I can now compare this distinction with the distinction that Kierkegaard makes in the Postscript between the objectively reflective person and the subjectively reflective person. I equate Kierkegaard’s speculative objective thinker with the religious-believer and his inward subjective knower with the existential-believer.

The religious believer is a speculative thinker because the religious believer has looked at the world around him and found speculative knowledge about God. This knowledge, however, is only an approximation but this believer thinks that his knowledge about God is objective. But he cannot have a genuine relationship with God because he is not inwardly holding fast to uncertainty. On the contrary, he feels that he is certain

\[123\text{ CUP, p.250}\]
about the Eternal. The Eternal is not a probability for the religious believer; it is a reality. Kierkegaard says this kind of believer is despairing because he is relying on his understanding to find God. But our understanding will never let us find God because, as Kierkegaard says, God is a subject and can only be known subjectively.

On the other hand, faith allows the existential believer to be brought out of his despair and makes him decide to hold fast to his objective uncertainty. He follows the way of subjective truth by taking a risk and making a decision to believe in the improbable or the absurd. This believer realizes that the eternal cannot be known with objective certainty and that the eternal cannot be communicated directly to him.

5.7 Chapter 5 Conclusions

Kierkegaard has shown us that faith is a belief in the mystery of God. My aim in this chapter has been to prove that only authentic faith actually entails genuine faith. The existential believer has this kind of faith whereas the religious believer does not. I reviewed Kierkegaard’s Postscript to compare his ideas with Kellenberger’s. In the Postscript, Kierkegaard looked at the difference between a person who reflects objectively and a person who reflects subjectively. I will highlight the essential points of this chapter briefly.

Kierkegaard would say that any knowledge that the religious believer has is inconsequential; it is contingent knowledge. The religious believer cannot have faith in the paradox. If something is completely evident, there is no need to make a leap of faith. Likewise, the person who reflects objectively has only speculative knowledge.
Kierkegaard says that faith is not knowledge because knowledge is either of the eternal or of the historical. The objectively reflective or religious believer can only know the historical; he cannot know the eternal because he does not have existentially authentic faith.

The subjectively reflective or existential believer recognizes that a leap of faith is needed. In the moment when he realizes that objective knowledge cannot be obtained about the eternal, he becomes open in his inwardness and subjectivity to receive the condition to understand the paradox. This leap can only be completed in faith. Therefore, this faith is existential faith because it entails genuine faith; anything else is just historical, speculative knowledge. Chapter Six will now explore what living in this kind of existential faith is like, in a practical way, as the Knight of Faith.
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Chapter 6
The Knight of Faith
“Human maturity comes as we begin to bring our heads and our hearts together.”
Jean Vanier

6.1 A Practical Look at the Knight of Faith

We will now take a more practical look at what it means to be a Knight of Faith. I believe that philosophy should be practical in the sense that it should give us some kind of guidance or insight into human experience. Existential philosophers excel at telling us that life is meaningless and why it is meaningless and that we are free to make our own path, but few of them offer viable solutions to this meaningfulness. I think many people have lost hope in existentialism today; they call it dark and depressing because they think the existentialists have failed to say, ‘yes, life seems meaningless and without objective universal truths, but here’s a reason to go on living.’ I do not find existentialism dark. I try to find the hope that the existentialists offer. What is troublesome is that most of their solutions seem to fail or to lack ethical responsibility, e.g., Nietzsche, Sartre, and Camus.

My passion for Kierkegaard’s ‘system’ is that he gives a solution that is useful.

However, I will point out some flaws in Kierkegaard’s philosophy because I find his ‘system’ not to be as practical as I think it could be. And, I will offer my own ideas as to how it could be made more useful.

While writing this thesis, I found that Kierkegaard’s Knight of Faith was becoming synonymous with Nietzsche’s Overman and Plato’s Philosopher King. In other words, becoming a Knight of Faith seemed to be an unattainable goal. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard’s theory is so full of merit that I will support it while amending it.
Kierkegaard (Johannes de Silentio) gives us Abraham as his exemplar of a Knight of Faith. But I am convinced that Abraham is not the exemplar that we should look to. I also think that Kierkegaard’s theory of the Contemporary Follower is flawed because it is in fact difficult to relate to the God-man.

In the latter part of this chapter, I will look at some contemporary examples to see if we can find a Knight of Faith in our modern day heroes. Looking at people in our world to find a Knight of Faith and being unable to find one, I will make the proposal whom we should look to the people we know, love and admire to find a Knight of Faith. I will show that we can find exemplary characteristics in those that we know. We should not be looking for a perfect person because we will never find him.

6.2 Fear and Trembling

In Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard (Johannes) presents Abraham as a Knight of Faith. I intend to show that Abraham was not a Knight of Faith. After examining the definitions that will be given for a Knight of Faith, we will be able to see that Abraham does not meet the three criteria. It would therefore be illogical to conclude that Abraham was a Knight of Faith. To begin, I will give a brief exposition of the story of Abraham from Genesis 22.

At a very old age, God told Abraham that he would be the 'father of many nations'. Abraham and his elderly wife, Sarah, had a child named Isaac. When Isaac was a young teenager, God commanded Abraham to go up on the mountain and sacrifice Isaac. As Abraham was about to kill his son, he spotted a ram that was to be used for the
sacrifice and Isaac was spared.

A Knight of Faith is one who is, 1) "indistinguishable from the proverbial man-in-the-street, visibly at home in the world and attentive to all life's details." The Knight of Faith, 2) "has nothing remarkable about him, and he looks and acts like a 'tax collector'." A Knight of Faith is also one who, 3) gives up everything but believes that he will receive it back again. He is every moment making 'the movement of faith'. In Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard explicitly states that "the movement of faith must be made continually on the strength of the absurd." Abraham cannot be a Knight of Faith because he does not meet the criteria.

I will begin with the Knight of Faith being 'indistinguishable from the man-in-the-street'. Abraham is extremely distinguishable from the ordinary man in the street. He is an icon, a remarkable biblical figure with whom most people are familiar. The problem with Abraham being a Knight of Faith is that this story of Abraham's sacrifice is a "one-time" event. It does not tell us anything about Abraham's day to day activities. It is not documented if Abraham was 'attentive to all life's details', as a Knight of Faith would be.

Secondly, Abraham was willing to give up everything and he did have the belief that he would receive it back again (for this particular event). Abraham's situation is so unique that it can only be used as an example of what the extreme might be for a Knight of Faith. Kierkegaard gave a better example of the "regular guy" who was in love with

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126 F&T, p.67
the princess and knew he could never “have her” but still tried and hoped nonetheless. This example is more fitting because it is not one isolated event. The “regular guy” incorporates this desire into his everyday life unlike Abraham who only had this once in a lifetime dilemma.

Lastly, The Knight of Faith is at every moment making the movement of faith. Hannay explains this movement of faith:

There is no faith without prior resignation. Faith is sustained only on one of two essential requirements of resignation. These are, first that there is something in the world that a person wants in the strong sense expressed by saying it means 'the whole world'; secondly, that in renouncing the possibility of attaining this thing, the person does not give up the wish and try to forget it. Thus, resignation is not abandoning one’s heart’s desire; on the contrary, it is retaining the interest but at the same time accepting that nothing on earth will permit it to be satisfied, for it would be absurd (humanly impossible) to believe otherwise.127

Hannay also defines Kierkegaard's notion of faith as believing something is possible even is it is not humanly possible.128 Abraham qualifies as having made a movement of faith. God meant the whole world to Abraham and Abraham would do anything for Him. When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham did not put it out of his mind because he had faith in God's promise to make Abraham the father of many nations. The point here is that yes, Abraham made a movement of faith, but a Knight of Faith makes these movements every moment. As mentioned, this event with Abraham was a "one-time" event. We do not know how Abraham reacted on a moment to moment basis. Abraham was asked by God to do a bizarre thing and Abraham acted on faith, but this

127 Kierk. P.73
128 Kierk. P.74
does not make him a Knight of Faith. Kierkegaard said that Abraham did not doubt: "he did not doubt, he did not look in anguish to left or right, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers." This was regarding the sacrifice of Isaac but in fact, I can think of two significant examples whereby Abraham did not act in faith and did in fact, doubt God.

The first occurrence is when Abraham and Sarah were travelling newlyweds. A caravan was nearing them and Abraham feared that the leader of the caravan would kill Abraham and take Sarah to be his wife (because Sarah was extraordinarily beautiful). Abraham pretended to be Sarah’s brother and the problem was solved. Abraham lacked faith at this time because God had already promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations with Sarah. Therefore, Abraham doubted God’s promise and it is evident that he did not act in faith because he lied to the caravan instead of trusting in God.

The second occurrence is when Sarah had passed child-bearing age; Abraham once again doubted God’s promise to make him the father of many nations. This is evident because Abraham pro-created with Sarah’s handmaid. I am not claiming that the Knight of Faith cannot make mistakes, but this is not the issue at hand. The issue is that we only have limited knowledge as to Abraham’s moment to moment attitude concerning faith and the evidence points to him acting in faith only in the Isaac incident, not the others.

There is one last point that I must make about the requirements of the Knight of Faith. Abraham is required to make a sacrifice, to suspend the ethical and to give up his son. In Kierkegaard’s characterization of a Knight of Faith, he nowhere mentions that the
Knight of Faith must sacrifice, or give up anything, or that he has to suspend the ethical. In so far as this is asked of Abraham and not the Knight of Faith, I find it illogical to conclude that Abraham was a Knight of Faith.

Abraham, as Valore says, represents faith. His actions stand beyond understanding.\(^{130}\) Collins states that Abraham was "supported by utter faith in god and his promise. This faith lead him on."\(^{131}\) I agree with these two statements; Abraham does represent faith and was lead by faith. To answer the question; if Abraham is not a Knight of Faith, what is he? I answer, Abraham was an extraordinary man, who was being tested by God in the most unusual way and because he passed this test he is an excellent example of a man acting in faith.

In summary, Abraham cannot be a Knight of Faith because he does not meet the three criteria. He is not 'indistinguishable from the man on the street', in fact, he is a very distinguished individual. The second criterion is to be visibly at home in the world and attentive to all life's details. We really have no idea whether Abraham was like this or not. The third criterion is that the Knight of Faith is every moment making the movement of faith. Once again, we do not have this information about Abraham. We can only base our conclusions of Abraham from this one 'documented' incident. The Knight of Faith is supposed to be a day to day way of life. Abraham's situation is out of this day to day realm.

\(^{129}\) F&T p.55


\(^{131}\) MofK, 91
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It is unfortunate that Kierkegaard gives us Abraham as a prime example of a Knight of Faith. Kierkegaard did not say in his descriptions of what a Knight of Faith was, that the Knight had to make a sacrifice, suspend the ethical or to give up anything. Abraham was required to do these things, thus making him very different from a Knight of Faith. For this one bizarre incident of having to sacrifice his son Abraham is an exemplar of faith, but he is not a good example of a Knight of Faith. We will next look at more recent examples to see if we can find a contemporary Knight of Faith.

6.3 Contemporary Examples

An example of a Knight of Infinite Resignation may be the popular superhero—Spiderman. Spiderman believes that he has a special curse/gift and that he must be resigned to a certain lifestyle. He believes that he cannot live a “normal” life. He feels that he cannot tell anyone about his secret abilities. Spider-man never tells MaryJane his secrets and he refuses to have a life with her because he thinks that he needs to sacrifice worldly pleasures in order to be a focused superhero.

As I have already mentioned, Kierkegaard lived his life much the same as Spiderman did. He was resigned to a life of sacrifice. He cancelled his engagement with Regina because he felt guilty about indulging in a relationship with her when he knew he had a “calling” to be a writer. Why is it that Kierkegaard never lived his life as a Knight of Faith but he had a theory about how to become one? This issue has always troubled me intensely. Why did Kierkegaard live his life as a virtual hermit, devoid of many aesthetic pleasures for the most part of his life? Did Kierkegaard write a theory about a Knight of
Faith because he was envisioning a better way of life for himself, a less oppressive one? Perhaps Kierkegaard thought that becoming a Knight of Faith was an ideal that could not be achieved? Or perhaps Kierkegaard thought that the Knight of Faith was attainable for regular people and he lived his life in a constant state of personal disappointment because he could never make that final leap of faith?

Can we then find any contemporary examples of a Knight of Faith? Using the three criteria previously listed, I cannot think of a contemporary example. I first looked at famous people like Mother Teresa and Ghandhi, the obvious examples of modern day faith heroes, but they do not meet the criteria of being the “everyday man-in-the-street.”

I also thought that the protagonist Owen Meany in John Irving’s *A Prayer for Owen Meany* came very close to being a Knight of Faith. I soon realized that his peculiarities also exempted him from the category of being “undistinguished.”

Despite not being able to find a “real” Knight of Faith, I still feel strongly that it is entirely possible to become a Knight of Faith. I believe that I could not find a Knight of Faith because that requires a judgement on my part. I do not have the authority to judge whether or not someone is or is not a Knight of Faith because being a Knight of Faith is a way of life, and I cannot judge anyone’s personal faith relationship with God. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether a particular person is a Knight of Faith or not.

Fortunately, not being able to find a “real” Knight of Faith has no impact on a person becoming a Knight of Faith.

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It seems as if we are left with the God-man as our only exemplar. But as I have alluded to, this is problematic. The God-man lived 2000 years ago in a time and culture very different from our own. How then do we follow his example in a practical way? It seems unrealistic to think that by studying the Bible, we will be able to know what to do and how to live. It seems impossible to comprehend that we could establish a personal ethics based on an exemplar we have never met.

What I propose is that once the Knight of Faith has made the second leap into Religiousness B, he should follow the dogmatic teachings of Jesus, His message of love, but also look for his own exemplars that have Knight of Faith characteristics that he wishes to emulate.

For example, I look at exemplary people in my own life. In my role as an educator I have always reflected on my own professors who have traits that I continuously try to emulate when teaching my own students. In other roles in my life such as mother, wife, student, scholar, and citizen, I try to emulate other mothers, wives, students, scholars, and citizens that I admire and wish to emulate and learn from. I take all of these exemplars and their particular traits and I now have many exemplars to follow as well as using the teachings of the God-man as a guide.

6.4 Chapter 6 Conclusions

The intent of this chapter has been to present a practical overview of what it means to be an authentic Knight of Faith. Kierkegaard's vision of the Knight of Faith appears to be unrealistic because it seems to be the case that no Knights of Faith exist.
When I examined Kierkegaard’s prime example of Abraham, I found that Abraham did not fit the three-fold criteria of what it means to be a Knight of Faith. The Knight of Faith needs to be a) Indistinguishable from the proverbial man-in-the-street, b) Nothing remarkable about him and c) He needs every moment to make the movement of faith. Abraham was distinguishable from the man-in-the-street; he was in fact very remarkable and he in fact did not make the movement of faith in every moment.

Since Kierkegaard’s own example of a Knight of Faith was not a Knight of Faith (by his own criteria), I attempted to look at contemporary figures. Locating Knights of Infinite Resignation was an easy task but finding a true Knight of Faith proved impossible. I instead suggested that we could amend Kierkegaard’s philosophy by finding exemplars in both the God-man, and people we admire with Knight of Faith qualities. We should try to emulate that which we admire in these individuals. We should follow these people as well as the teachings of the God-man and this is what will help us become Christians, or Knights of Faith.
Chapter 7

Conclusion
“The self is our life’s goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality”
Carl Jung

7.1 Unamuno’s “Paradoxical-Believer”

I believe that it is possible for an individual to become a Knight of Faith. Some individuals will be unable to make the final leap into existential faith because they cannot achieve objective uncertainty. This is not to say that one should abandon the goal. I think Unamuno offers us a favorable alternative; Kellenberger calls Unamuno’s kind of faith, “paradoxical faith.” Thus, there are three types of faith, the Religious Believer’s faith, the Existential Believer’s faith and finally the Paradoxical Believer’s faith.

The paradoxical believer is a believer who has no self-professed faith in God but wants to believe in God. This is the paradox; not having faith, but wanting it. Unamuno will tell us, and I agree, that this person wanting faith actually has faith and does not know it. The paradoxical believer resides in the same realm as the existential believer because he is a subjectively reflective thinker; he is not an objectively reflective person because he has no objective proof about God’s existence or about God’s nature. The paradoxical believer is likewise open to subjective understanding of the paradox. Where these two faith believers differ is that the paradoxical believer does not feel that he has acquired the understanding of the paradoxes; he is in limbo. Unamuno will enable us to have a deeper understanding of the plight of this believer.

For Unamuno, there was a war taking place between his intellect and his feelings for the whole of his life. He felt that we should look at life in a wholistic way; we must
include our feelings because we are composed of much more than our ability to reason. "(Philosophers) philosophize not with reason only, but with the will, the feelings, with the flesh and with the bone, with the whole soul and the whole body."\textsuperscript{133} In fact, Unamuno urges that feelings are more central to human beings than knowledge.

Knowledge for the sake of knowledge does not make any sense but our desire to continue to exist does make sense. Unamuno says that we all yearn for immortality and this yearning can hinder us from living our lives to the fullest; if we are always thinking about the afterlife, the life that we are living now will pass us by. "Our hunger for God, our thirst for immortality, of survival, will always stifle in us this pitiful enjoyment of the life that passes and abides not."\textsuperscript{134}

Unamuno does not believe in reincarnation; what he \textit{wants to believe} is that if he died and did come back he would be himself/be conscious and he wants to continue the same life he is now living with the ones around him that he loves.

Unamuno's basic philosophy is that we are fundamentally creatures of feeling and our deepest, most basic feeling is that we want to survive death. But, the greatest tragedy of life is that we all die. All love is tragic too for this reason because every person that we love will eventually die and this will cause us tragic despair. We sometimes think that we have faced the inevitable fact that we are going to die, but in our hearts we are crying, "I don't want to die; I don't want my spouse to die; I don't want my child to die!"


\textsuperscript{134} TSL, p.44
Unamuno claims that if we only have hope in Christ, we will be miserable because Christianity (the Christianity of Christendom) is the belief in immortality: “all religion has sprung historically from the cult of the dead—the cult of immortality.”

Unamuno also says that Christianity desires an afterlife; Christianity “springs from a definite yearning for another life.” In the Bible, Jesus says, “He who believes has everlasting life” but, for Unamuno, this is not enough because his reason tells him otherwise.

According to Unamuno, there are individuals who do not need proof of God’s existence, but there are other more learned, intellectual people who need rational justification. Modern Christians have accepted the rational arguments of God’s existence, but the problem is that we have gone from belief, to belief-that we can prove God’s existence. As soon as rational arguments about God’s existence are produced, someone is likely to disprove the argument. For example, Hume destroyed rational arguments for God’s existence. Hume made us skeptical of everything we have tried to reason and even the original faith we once had. Reason tells us that there is no convincing proof of God’s existence.

What happens then when rational arguments can disprove the things we believe? What happens when we are all left skeptics? Unamuno offers the following argument.

1. Faith cannot be rooted in reason; faith for Unamuno is rooted in feelings not reason. 2.

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135 TSL, p.40
136 TSL, p.59
137 John 3:16
Rational proofs and life can sometimes stand in opposition to one another. 3. Rational proofs do not satisfy the desires of our hearts so we must eventually let go of them at some point. 4. Unamuno concludes that we must face the fact that we are going to die; we should stop pretending otherwise we should stop lying to ourselves because it is not possible to be at ease with dying.\textsuperscript{138}

One would think at this point that Unamuno has left us in a dark skeptical place. We could ask, “Why bother doing anything noble at all? What difference will it make it if we just die?” Unamuno says that we can either choose to follow our reason which will lead to skepticism or we can follow our feelings which will lead to a belief system. Or perhaps we can combine the two.

We read stories from the Old Testament and we are prone to thinking that they are too far fetched for reason. But then we hear things like “believe in me and receive eternal life” and we want to believe the New Testament stories because we want what they promise. We will never know for sure if any of these stories are true, therefore our reason and our heart will always be in conflict.

Unamuno’s solution is to “will to believe” that when he dies, he will not just lie dead, he will \textit{will to believe} that he is going to live eternally. He explains, “Faith is believing what we have seen. Believing what we have not seen, no! but creating what we do not see.”\textsuperscript{139} How did we get to the point of believing in one God who will give us eternal life? Unamuno provides a small historical analysis.

\textsuperscript{138} TSL, p.33-36

\textsuperscript{139} TSL, p.186
We like to give personalities to inanimate things, for example, a child does not want his mother to sew a teddy because it will hurt the teddy, or we plead to a volcano to not blow up as if it were a human. Likewise, we give gods personality, for example, the spirit of water and the god of fire. And eventually we gave the one God of all creation a personality. We came to see the universe as being alive so we needed to appeal to it. We want it to have meaning and purpose—so it will allow us to keep living. It will allow us to keep living if we are faithful to it. Unamuno says that we can feel God revealing Himself to us if we desire to feel it.

Wishing that God may exist, and acting and feeling as if He did exist. And desiring God’s existence and acting conformable with this desire, is the means whereby we create God—that is, whereby God creates Himself in us, manifests Himself to us, opens and reveals Himself to us...I believe in God as I believe in my friends, because I feel the breath of His affection, feel His invisible and intangible hand, drawing me, leading me, grasping me; because I possess an inner consciousness of a particular providence and of a universal mind that marks out for me the course of my own destiny.¹⁴⁰

Why would we affirm this?

Human beings want meaning and purpose and to believe in God is to wish that God exists. In short, we create God because we want Him to exist. Belief does not know that there is not a God so belief creates a God and adds a reality and lives as though it is really in existence.

According to Unamuno, the heart of Christian yearning is that we believe that Jesus exists. Did Jesus actually rise from the dead and perform miracles or is this just a story? These “stories” are 2000 years old but Christians still believe them. It is

¹⁴⁰ TSL, p.196
understandable that humans would create God for meaning, but why would Christians believe the Bible stories and teachings?

Christians believe in the stories because according to these stories, God saves them from eternal death. Jesus saves and gives eternal life so we believe that He existed. Unamuno asks if this is a crutch? Freud would tell us that, of course, this is a crutch, a negative one. Freud would tell us that we should derive our answers from science so we should not rely on our urge to lean on this crutch. Unamuno answers that yes it is a crutch but a positive one.

Unamuno reiterates that we are creatures of feeling and hope, and we want a god to guarantee us immortality. It is unreasonable yes, but that is what drives humans to believe. Those of us who are Christians make God exist. God is not actually in reality but we create Him from our desire for Him. Unamuno defines faith as an act of will; “it is a movement of the soul towards something that makes us not merely comprehend life, but that makes us live.”

Unamuno teaches that belief in God is passionate “(belief) necessitates passion, anguish of mind, doubt, uncertainty, and even despair.” Uncertain faith is not only possible but, according to Unamuno, it is actually a better, more passionate, faith in God because it is uncertain and irrational. Faith then is “faith in hope; we believe what we hope for.”

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141 TSL, p.191
142 3Moff, p.321
143 TSL, p.200
Kellenberger calls Unamuno’s believers “Paradoxical-believers.” They do not have faith “yet they try with every fiber to believe, and so affirm the faith they do not have. The Paradoxical believer chooses to believe, and tries to believe, but cannot. His faith is his striving to believe.” Kellenberger explains that, for Unamuno, “true faith is ‘agonic’ faith. It suffers in doubt; yet its very strength is born from its struggle within the “gimlet of doubt.”

Unamuno’s short story, “San Manuel Bueno, Martyr,” best exemplifies the faith of a man who was a paradoxical believer; he had no faith but desperately wanted it. Don Manuel was a priest in the small village of Valverde de Lucerna. The villagers were completely enamoured with him, intoxicated by him, and worshiped him as if he were a living saint. San Manuel loved his parishioners and he performed a multitude of beneficent acts. “His life consisted in salvaging wrecked marriages, in forcing unruly sons to submit to their parents, or reconciling parents to their sons, and, above all, of consoling the embittered and the weary in spirit; meanwhile he helped everyone to die well.” When his parishioners heard his voice, it was as if they were hearing the voice of Jesus. “If it were only to hear him and see him at the altar, where he appeared to be transfigured, his countenance lit from within.” San Manuel kept very busy helping people and preparing for masses but he wrote little and spent little time alone by himself.

144 3MofF, 323
145 3MofF, p.323
147 SanM, p.215
The curious thing about San Manuel is what he did not believe in. He did not believe in the devil even though he cured the bedeviled. He did not believe in Hell and he thought Heaven was the beautiful things in nature like the mountains and the lake. But worst still, he did not believe in God. These non-beliefs made him deeply sad. A close friend said that San Manuel was too intelligent to believe everything he taught. What did San Manuel believe? What was the truth for him? Why did he do saintly work?

I am put here to give life to the souls of my charges, to make them happy, to make them dream they are immortal—and not to destroy them. The important thing is that they live sanely, in concord with each other, and with the truth, with my truth, they could not live at all. Let them live. That is what the Church does, it lets them live. As for true religion, all religions are true as long as they give spiritual life to the people who profess them, as long as they console them for having been born only to die. And for each people the truest religion is their own the religion that made them...And mine? Mine consists in consoling myself by consoling others, even though the consolation I give them is not ever mine.  

It gave San Manuel’s life meaning to give meaning to the lives of others; he thought it was better for them to believe something rather than nothing, religion was opium for the people. San Manuel’s opium was his “mad activity” of teaching others how to live to feel the meaning in life.

What I find important in this story is the narrator’s reflection on San Manuel’s faith after his death. “Don Manuel, and my brother, too, died believing they did not believe, but that, without believing in their belief, they actually believed, with resignation

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148 SanM, p.238

149 SanM, p.247
and in desolation." 150 San Manuel thought he did not have faith when in fact he did. He had paradoxical faith, as Kellenberger would call it. He truly desired faith but his reason disallowed it. The teachings of Unamuno tell us that indeed San Manuel had faith because he wanted it.

What I find enlightening in Unamuno’s philosophy is that there is this third kind of faith, Paradoxical Faith, for those who find that even Kierkegaard’s path is one they cannot take. Perhaps reason will not allow you to reconcile the paradoxes or perhaps reason will not allow you to find objective uncertainty. In this case, if you want to believe in God but feel that you cannot, then it is reassuring to look at faith in Unamuno’s way. If faith is hope, and you have hope, then it is reassuring to know that you have faith after all, even when you thought you did not.

7.2 Summary of Thesis

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated that humans live in different stages of existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Chapter Two introduced us to the first two stages, the aesthetic and the ethical. The aesthete lives in the aesthetic level when he is born and, when he becomes self-aware, he makes a transition to the first floor. The aesthetes who make this transition require a moment to get them to the ethical stage. Kierkegaard claims that there is a choice to either remain in the basement or to appropriate this moment and move up to the first floor. On the first floor, the ethical

150 SanM, p.261
person lives a responsible life until there comes another moment (of anxiety) when he realizes that he can grow further and enter the religious realm.

In the Third Chapter, we further analyzed the anxiety that the ethical person experiences while living in the ethical realm; we learned why this anxiety is a catalyst for the moment of transition from the ethical to the religious. The ethical person feels this anxiety when he begins to question his very own existence; he asks “What do I do with the freedom that I have been given?” and “What do I do with all of these possibilities?” Eventually, the ethical person’s whole system of meaning collapses but this will be a positive event because it forces the ethical person into authentic reflection about his existence. Anxiety, then, is the catalyst for the moment because in this moment of anxiety, the ethical person has a choice to make: he can either remain in the ethical or push on through the moment and make the leap of faith to the second floor, or Religiousness A.

In Chapter Four, the eight paradoxes that the religious person must work through in order to move from Religiousness A to Religiousness B were examined (The Learning Paradox, The Erotic Paradox, The Absolute Paradox, the Typhonic Paradox, The Offence at the Paradox, The Paradox of the Contemporary Follower, The Paradox of Temporality and the Paradox of The Follower at Second Hand.). The first five paradoxes must be resolved by the Knight of Infinite Resignation on the second floor of the house in Religiousness A. The final three paradoxes must be resolved by the Knight of Faith in Religiousness B. The Knight of Faith will be able to live in repetition by living on all three floors of the house simultaneously. The Knight of Faith learns to love the absolute
absolutely and to love the relative—relatively. He understands that religious dogma is relative and he appropriates it relatively.

In Chapter Five, I argued that authentic faith actually entails genuine faith. I contrasted the faith of an existential believer with the faith of a religious believer. The religious believer (a person in Christendom or a Knight of Infinite Resignation) has objective faith, that is, he looks around himself and thinks that the world is beautiful, and that God must be the designer, and that must be objective proof for God’s existence. Therefore, the religious believer’s faith does not actually entail genuine faith (a belief in something with no objective proof). The existential believer, on the other hand, thinks that the world is absurd yet believes in God in spite of its absurdity; he has no objective proof of God’s existence so his faith actually entails genuine faith. The existential believer or the Knight of Faith realizes that a leap of faith in needed and he becomes open in his inwardness to receive the condition to understand the three final paradoxes.

In Chapter Six, I presented a practical overview of the Knight of Faith. It is important to be able to visualize a path, or a way of life, to aim towards. I looked at Kierkegaard’s example of a Knight of Faith, Abraham, and I found that Abraham was not an actual Knight of Faith. I found that it was in fact impossible to determine whether or not anyone was a Knight of Faith. I think that it is entirely possible for anyone to become a Knight of Faith and I suggested that instead of looking at the historic Abraham or Jesus, we should look to the people we know who have traits of a Knight of Faith. No one person will have all of the perfect qualities that we think a Knight of Faith should have so we should look at qualities we admire in different people and try to emulate their traits
collectively in our own lives. In addition, we should follow the God-man’s teachings—in that manner, we will still be contemporary followers but also allow ourselves to be open to learning from other people we admire. In this way, we can learn how to live as authentic Knights of Faith.

7.3 Thesis Conclusions

Collins criticizes Kierkegaard by stating that he has only used his own experience to come up with his theory of the three stages of existence.

Kierkegaard did not take his triple division ready-made from such sources (Hegel and Schleiermacher). Rather, it seems to have been forced upon him by reflection upon his own experience. Such an origin makes us wary of generalizing the doctrine of the three spheres beyond certain special historical circumstances, but it also tempers the charge of artificiality and triadic mesmerism which is sometimes brought against it. An examination of Kierkegaard’s early papers and journals reveal that, for a long time, he groped about in quest of the leading principles under which he could organize his literary studies, his extensive observation of human characters, and the lessons of his own life.¹⁵¹

In an existential philosophy, one’s personal experiences are what one has to draw upon. In attempting to figure out real meaning despite the absurdity of life, we need to “let go” of hard fast objective systematic philosophies that lead to relativism. Aristotle has been long praised for looking at the world around him and making observations. Kierkegaard too, looked introspectively at his own life and gave us a theory of meaningful existence.

Existential faith, as Kierkegaard conceives it, has had tremendous influence on many thinkers from different philosophical schools. Arguably, Heidegger’s project would not have been possible without Kierkegaard’s insights into anxiety. Jean-Paul Sartre’s

¹⁵¹ MofK. p.46
debt to Kierkegaard is substantial though he develops an atheistic position. Postmodern thinkers such as Levinas, Bataille, Blanchot and Derrida have made extensive use of Kierkegaard’s ideas and observations. Authors such as John Updike have also profited from Kierkegaard’s literary genius.

Developing all of these connections and how they have proliferated would involve investigations beyond the scope of this thesis. Kierkegaard passionately argued for the Individual and I wish to close by drawing attention to how Kierkegaard’s writings have assisted me in my personal and spiritual growth.

Descartes’ proofs for the existence of God are what initially sparked my interest in philosophy. My personal and spiritual struggles are what inspired my many questions in the area of philosophy of religion. But it is the philosophy of Kierkegaard that has provided the many answers that have made lasting impressions on me. Kierkegaard’s philosophy has allowed me to appropriate philosophy as a way of life.
Bibliography


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Unamuno, Miguel de, “San Manuel Bueno, Martyr” (pp.205-267) in Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, Regnery Publishing, Inc., Washington:


