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İMANA SİÇRAYIŞ, NASIL VE NİÇİN?

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Öz: Bu makalede Kierkegaard'ın çeşitli metinlerinde "imana sıçrayış" olarak ifade ettiği hususun olası farklı kullanımlarını tartışmaya açıyorum. İlk bölümde epistemolojik ve pratik bağlamı ayırt edebilmek adına önemli bir ayrıma odaklanıyorum: ve bir olguya ve bir kişiye iman etme arasındaki farkı vurguluyorum. İkinci bölümde bu sıçrayışın ana hatlarıyla nasıl gerçekleştiğine ilişkin bir inceleme yürütüyorum: Bu sıçrayış neye tekabül ediyor? Böyle bir sıçrayışın ön koşulları nelerdir? Bu sıçrayışta bulunmak nasıl bir karaktere sahip olmak anlamına gelir? Bu ve benzeri sorulara ilişkin cevapları ele aldıktan sonra Kierkegaard'ın özellikle Hristiyan dini için uygun gördüğü bu kavramsallaştırmayı özgürlük ve aşk kavramlarına doğru da açmanın mümkün olup olmadığına ilişkin bir tartışma yürütüyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kierkegaard, İman, Akıl, Etik, Din Felsefesi

LEAP TO FAITH, HOW AND WHY?

Abstract: In this paper, I discuss the possibility of the different usages of the notion of leap to faith that is found abundantly in Kierkegaard's writings. In the first part I focus on a significant distinction between faith-in and faith-that to differentiate between an epistemological and a practical context. In the second section I discuss the mechanism of the leap; what does the leap consist of? What are the requisite conditions for such a leap? What kind of a character ought one to perform it? These questions then led me to a discussion of whether we could envisage something beyond Christianity to which this conceptual framework might apply, and I especially focus on freedom and love.

Keywords: Kierkegaard, Faith, Reason, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion

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1. Introduction

In *Fear and Trembling*², Kierkegaard puts forward the notion of a 'teleological suspension of the ethical', through his interpretation of the story of Abraham. In *Philosophical Fragments*, he investigates the means of going beyond what he calls "Socratic rationality". He argues that, to find eternal happiness, one must embrace the paradox of Christianity. Some commentators claim that Kierkegaard's position, when taken seriously, is irrational and misologicistic (Allison 1967: 432). Others try to bring out the "rational" in Kierkegaard by pointing to the role of understanding and imagination in relation to the paradoxical (Ferreira 1994), Westphal 1996). It is safe to assume that no matter which side you take on this debate, one of Kierkegaard's main points is that there is more to human existence than Reason (see Evans 1989, Schacht 1973, Friedman 1982).

My goal in this paper is two-fold: the first is to understand how the concept of leap to³ faith functions in Kierkegaard's three main texts (namely CUP, *Fragments* and *Fear and Trembling*) in order that one might understand how one is supposed to suspend the ethical⁴. As we shall see, for Kierkegaard, suspending the ethical is the requisite condition of being in faith, which can only be accomplished by a leap. My second aim concerns the practical implications of the leap to faith. I shall investigate whether the leap to faith is an ethical requirement and whether we have good reasons to think of it as such.

Let us start with the concept of faith, for it is integral to get a sense of this concept so that we might understand what suspending the ethical means. The ordinary usage of the concept of faith, cannot be restricted to the religious aspect of life. Faith can, indeed, be found in everyday contexts. There seem to be many uses of the word faith that pertain to social, political, subjective as well as religious aspects of human life. Concurrently, there are many ways in which the word "faith" is used; it can refer to a religious system (e.g. Christian faith), it can refer to a disposition or an attitude or a *state* of one's mind.

I shall clarify this concept by proposing two kinds of uses for the concept of faith, namely *faith-that* and *faith-in*, so that we might see how Kierkegaard's usage differs from the ordinary usage. Having "*faith-that*" points towards a strong conviction or an unshakable belief about a situation, which may or may not be directly accessible to human cognition,

² The discussions about Kierkegaard and his pseudonymous writings are beyond the scope of this paper. For the sake of simplicity I treat Climacus's and Silentio's writings as Kierkegaard's own. For the sake of arguments, I will also take these writings and the arguments therein at face value; I will return to the discussion of the seriousness of these writings towards the end of the paper. As for shorthands, I use CUP for *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, FT for *Fear and Trembling* and *Fragments* for *Philosophical Fragments*.

³ As Alastair Hannay points out in his Introduction to CUP, the notorious phrase "leap of faith" is nowhere to be found in Kierkegaard's writings. I use this phrase to stress the point that for him, faith is not a means (something which helps along with the leap) but rather an end (something which one leaps to).

⁴ This is equivalent to getting out of Socratic rationality and any universally accepted ethical norms and rules that may follow from such rationality.

such as the existence of God; while *faith-in* implies something more fundamental about *trust, hope, and action*.⁵

Now, what does *faith-in* entail? Taken as something more than ordinary trust, *faith-in* seems to implicate a strong sense of “hope”. Having *faith-in* another person, suggests that I have a special kind of trust, which commits me to rely on that person entirely. “I have faith in you” means that one is, in some sense, *more than sure* that the person in question will be able to do what he intends to do or is required to do. But what does it mean to be more than sure? There seems to be an implication of transcendence in this phrase, a kind of “going beyond” our ordinary ways of conduct. However, being more than sure involves a risk; just because we are sure, doesn’t mean that things will go as planned, e.g. we might be mistaken in having *faith-in* someone.

The other usage of faith that I propose, namely *faith-that*, seems to point towards a different kind of “going beyond”. This pertains to an epistemological problem; no matter how smart or wise or knowledgeable we might be, there are going to be things or states of affairs that remain unknown to us. It is this abundance of unknown things in the universe that may lead one to have *faith-that* there is a perfect being, for instance, which is responsible for orchestrating how the entire universe functions⁶. We may, of course, deny all this and be content with the fact that there are things unknown.

Most literature on Kierkegaard’s concept of the leap to faith focuses on this epistemological aspect of the leap. One core issue is the extent to which our will plays a role in having faith. Quanbeck argues that Kierkegaard is committed to what he calls “direct doxastic voluntarism”, which means that the subject has significant control over her beliefs (Quanbeck, 2024, 548, see also Venkataraman 2018). Other scholars insist that in order for the condition of the leap to faith to occur, we need some divine assistance and hence they subscribe to a more indirect kind of voluntarism with regard to belief (see Ferreira 1994 and Westphal 1996). Since my focus will be on the ethical issues implied by the leap, which emphasizes the aspect of responsibility, I shall assume that Kierkegaard subscribes to some version of direct doxastic voluntarism.

Kierkegaard’s usage of the concept of faith, brings together the abovementioned usages of faith and thereby go beyond it. On top of these two kinds, I propose that Kierkegaard brings forth a third one, and that is being *in-faith*: “The investigating subject...must either be in faith and convinced of the truth of Christianity and of his own relation to it.” (Kierkegaard 2009: 19). This quote points toward the main elements involved in suspending the ethical as well: being in faith is about being convinced of the truth of Christianity and of having a certain relation to that truth.

Before going further into what these two elements may entail, let us point out what is common in all three usages of the concept of faith. It seems clear that they all imply a

⁵ Indeed, etymologically speaking, faith comes from the Latin *fides*, which means trust.

⁶ This is, of course, a Kantian point in that “leaving room for faith” requires restricting the “jurisdiction” of Reason, so to speak.

certain relation to the unknown, to what is “Other”⁷, and a risk-factor (precisely because there is no direct access to the Other, so your attitude towards it always carries a risk) and a kind of “going beyond”, whether in terms of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics or existence.

The best way to distinguish between ordinary beliefs and faith is to think within a religious context, as Kierkegaard himself chose to do. This is because religion always pertains to what is (supposedly) beyond human cognition and ability. To be a member of a certain system of faith is, basically, to view the nature of the whole universe from a certain perspective and to act by certain laws or doctrines. Religious systems offer explanations for the mysteries of the universe, such as its origins or meaning. Taking a glance at the history of mankind reveals that this kind of metaphysical view grounds a lot of subsequent beliefs about immortality, heaven, hell, and the general conduct of one’s life, including ethical convictions, prayer, responsibility, punishment, worship, and so on.

Religious life, in the usual sense, is led with reference to a holy being. What is it that makes a being holy? Religions postulate something other-worldly, something miraculous, some perfect and eternal being that is the total answer to everything that remains unknown in the universe. A typical deity is a being which is higher than humans in every respect, with perfect ethical conduct, with the purity of the soul, access to the utmost good, and most of all, the direct knowledge of what remains unknown to human beings. It is safe to assume that we require a kind of faith-*that* because we don’t *know* or don’t have access to this big Other.

With each religion, we find definite rules and practices which govern certain aspects of the general conduct of society. The practice of sacrifice, for instance, *serves as a bridge between the sacred and the non-sacred* (Akal 2012: 145 -my translation). People of the same faith sacrifice something that is important or dear to them (in ancient times people were sacrificed as well as animals. Animals are still sacrificed today). Religious sacrifice is a way of showing gratitude to a holy being or beings, and a way to ensure that those beings will be benevolent and providential in the times to come. This kind of trust is implicit in the ordinary usage of the concept of faith.

However, one must point to the fact that this is not the way in which Kierkegaard regards the religious. For him, one does not get to know the secrets of the universe when one has faith. Prayer is not about asking God to give us some advantage or benefits, nor is it asking for the good of the community. In Kierkegaard’s view, what is Other remains as Other, but with faith, one changes his/her attitude towards the Other. ‘Faith is not a kind of knowledge, nor is it an act of will’ (Kierkegaard 1962: 76-77). What is it, then?

Kierkegaard speaks of a struggle which is required to be *in-faith*. As he writes: “If I wish to stay in my faith, I must take constant care to keep hold of the objective uncertainty, to

⁷ I wish to avoid romanticizing this concept of the other, I shall refer to it in terms of events or beings that are simply unknown.

be 'on the 70,000 fathoms deep' but still have faith." (Kierkegaard 2012: 72). This sentence suggests that faith is a kind of state which one finds oneself in. However, this state is never permanent and never finished, so faith becomes a constant strife throughout one's life. Being in faith is also an inward state, it has less to do with universally practiced religious doctrines than being personally committed to a sense of "responsibility towards the Other/towards God" even in the face of apparent contradictions⁸.

Here's the catch: When it comes down to a specific action, or to how one is supposed to lead one's life, we all have faith-*in* "something" or faith-*that* something is the case, a higher order of things. We already judge our actions, as well as the actions of others, according to some higher principles of morality. We all have concepts or beliefs or people or things which are most dear to us, and which we would never compromise. Surely there must be parts of our culture and our convictions that we can never give up, no matter what, e.g. love, friendship, human rights, integrity, welfare etc. This suggests that we all have a system of values *embedded*, so to speak, within each of us and that it shapes our character as well as our actions. We all have a limit where the questioning of values simply comes to an end. So, what would the leap enable us to do, on top of what we are already capable of?

Kierkegaard suggests that the system of values that are embedded in us, which we have acquired through our practical reason, is not enough to reach eternal happiness. As Richard Schacht (1973: 308) points out, "Man, for Kierkegaard, is a being whose most profound desire is for what he calls "an eternal happiness" - an extremely intense ("infinite") happiness, which is in no way dependent circumstances, upon external and which therefore cannot be shaken by the loss of anything finite". Therefore, the leap to faith requires that one leaves the common sensical understanding of values behind. This is also the sense in which the suspension of the ethical is "teleological"-it is supposed to bring the existing individual to its ultimate completion, i.e. eternal happiness.

Now, why make this leap to faith? What exactly is eternal happiness? Would the leap to faith provide a specific kind of freedom, a new kind of subjectivity that is emancipated from all outer determinations and the "embedded values" of society? Is it the case that only the total rejection of my entire value system could set me free? How does one make *that* move? And what remains when we do make it? Let us now turn to the mechanism of the leap to answer these questions.

2. The Mechanism of The Leap to Faith

Before we discuss the reasons why one could choose to leap to faith, it is important to discern what exactly the leap consists of. Kierkegaard lays out the basic mechanism of the leap to faith in many ways throughout his writings. In *Stages of Life*, we see the three modes of existence of the subject, going from the aesthetic, to the ethical and to the religious. In *Philosophical Fragments*, we see a contrast between the Socratic attitude towards the unknown and the Christian inwardness as a step beyond the Socratic way

⁸ I shall return to the concept of "objective uncertainty" and contradictions in the next part.

of life. In *Fear and Trembling*, we see the story of Abraham as the epitome of the leap to faith.

What does the leap involve? Leaping implies a sudden move from one place to another. In one sense, when we leap towards faith, we leave Reason behind. This is what provides the break from the universal and, concurrently, the ethical. One motif we often find in Kierkegaard is his intention to carry his readers beyond the Hegelian rational spirit (hence his frequent satire of the Hegelian system). For that reason, he points toward an act that cannot be understood by Reason alone, but requires something further, something that immediately pertains to the existence of the single individual.

Now, what is it that awaits us on the other side of the leap? The state of being in-faith. However, understanding the leap itself is crucial. Let us consider two phrases that play a significant role in Kierkegaard's writings: the infinite resignation and the dying away from the self. Through this inspection, we shall see that what awaits on the other side of the leap is a different kind of self, a new subjectivity.

Kierkegaard gives us the structure of the leap to faith in terms of a passage from non-being to being. This transition happens in the Moment. There are two components to the moment: infinite resignation and eternal condition. The infinite resignation is the duty of the subject, whereas the eternal condition can only be given by God. As Kierkegaard (1962: 19) puts it: "The Teacher, then, is the God and he gives the learner the requisite condition and the truth". It is important to notice that the leap itself doesn't constitute being in-faith. The leap is the first requirement, and one can do the leap without necessarily going into a state of being in-faith. The opposite, however, is not possible.

What exactly is dying away from the self? In Kierkegaard's (1962: 39) own words, "he who is begotten by a progressive dying away from self, of him it becomes increasingly clear that he can less and less be said to be begotten, since he only becomes more and more reminded of his existence". This "self" is, of course, the rational self, the self which accepts the system of values and the ethical convictions of his/her society. As Stephen Mulhall (1994: 59) puts it: "In dying to immediacy, dying to the world's absolute valuation of its relative goods, one is asked to die to the self."

In this death of the self, the ethical becomes a temptation for the person of infinite resignation. At the critical Moment, one wants to return to the universal, where values and meanings are guaranteed and where one knows for sure how one is supposed to act. However, one cannot wish to win all without risking all. The man of infinite resignation, thus, marches onward even in the face of apparent moral or rational contradictions, holding fast to the 'objective uncertainty' that lies in the Other. What is unknown here is precisely God's role in the Moment. It can never be known beforehand whether God will give the eternal condition. You must do your part in infinite resignation.

The perfect example of the leap to faith (or, the Moment of transition) can be found in the story of Abraham. However, immediately there is an obstacle: we really can't

understand what Abraham does. Kierkegaard brings us as far as the infinite resignation of Abraham because that's the point where the ordinary person can go. It is also the point which can be communicated via language. Beyond that lies being in-faith. And that state can only be reached with the help of God and only the person who reaches it has access to it.

This is clear from the fact that, in the Moment, "Abraham cannot speak" (Kierkegaard 2013: 206). Because language itself would imply a relation to something external, something universally accessible that bridges the inner (subjective) and the outer (objective). Being in faith requires that one becomes extremely internal to the point that the outer is not relevant anymore. This is why there is constant objective uncertainty in this critical situation. What is objective, loses its objectivity, so to speak.

At the Moment, Abraham is struck with the most powerful contradiction of emotions: His love for his son and his faith in God. Even if one gets a sense of what kind of conflict this is, the paradox itself cannot be put into words. Let us consider the risk involved here in terms of objective uncertainty. If Abraham knew for sure that Isaac would live, what he did would not have been a sacrifice and, hence, would not have been a leap at all. Precisely by risking everything, Abraham ends up with eternal happiness and he is rejoined with his beloved son. In this context, too, Abraham's sacrifice is a relation between the sacred and the non-sacred. But the relation itself has been internalized; Abraham relates to himself eternally-or he relates to the eternal in himself-a relation which only God, as the infinitely Other, can guarantee.

From these examples, one can see that the leap is not arbitrary, i.e. there is a certain method to it. As Friedman (1982: 165) explains, "The leap of faith is specifically and exclusively a movement from morality understood as rational command to religion understood as paradoxical promise". In that regard, the leap requires a certain amount of preparation, going through specific phases in life and struggling with difficulties. It requires that one becomes a person of perfect ethical conduct: only for the ethically self-mastered individual can there be a suspension of the ethical. The leap of faith is not the decision of a morally weak individual who finds himself in a difficult spot and seeks to resolve his difficulty by arguing that morality does not apply to him.

This brings us to the point of singularity about the leap. It is not the case that each person is 'eligible' for being tested in faith. It may even be the case that Abraham was the only human being that ever existed in faith. Kierkegaard (2013: 68) points to this singularity in this way: "I would begin by showing what a pious and God-fearing man Abraham was, worthy to be called God's elect. Only upon such a man is imposed such a test". This means that the story of Abraham is unique, it will never happen to someone else in the same way again; that's why one can't derive a universal "lesson" from it, but one can admire the dedication; the infinite resignation of Abraham. Therefore, after the leap, you find an individual in faith and you find faith in the individual: "For faith is this paradox, that the particular is higher than the universal" (Kierkegaard 2013: 108).

The point is to give up that which is most dear to you, and only through that very act of resignation, reuniting with the very thing that you have given up. This paradox is precisely what faith is. The important part on the side of the subject is resignation. As Kierkegaard (2013: 94) explains “The infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has no faith; for only in the infinite resignation do I become clear to myself concerning my eternal validity, and only then can there be any question of grasping existence by virtue of faith.”

Thus, the leap to faith is not arbitrary and it is certainly not about conducting your life as you please. Here, the ethical is “suspended” which implies that it will be “resumed” at some point. The ethical resumes precisely after the “Moment” in which the infinite resignation is made and a person is in-faith. In other words, one doesn’t really change the way one acts, but one changes the general perspective on how to act. Every action has a new meaning after the transformation. What is important is the relation we acquire towards our values and towards what remains unknown; the Other.

The message of the story of Abraham is very clear here: The reward of letting that which is dearest to you go is precisely getting it back in such a way that you wouldn’t have been able to be reconciled with that thing in this very special way, had you not sacrificed it. In other words, faith changes the very mode of reconciliation, by carrying you to a higher level of subjective experience. You become a different person, you start to see your ordinary existence and experience in a different light. So, a kind of submission is required to become a different person. You must literally “let go” in an immediate fashion. This immediacy implies that there is no mediation, no operation of our reason, no reflection, etc. at the Moment of this life-altering action. And that is how you can truly unite with the one you love.

Crucially Abraham’s decision is not the result of a long reflection upon competing reasons, nor is there any necessity that forces the decision out of him, so to speak. As Jamie Ferreira explains, “the conclusion is not the issue of a continuous movement; it is not the gradual or cumulative product of, nor compelled by, any reasoning process” (Ferreira, 1994, 390). This means that the decision can not be predicted by referring to antecedent maxims, reasons, actions or even character. If this were possible, one would be able to explain it rationally.

Now, what do we submit ourselves to, so that we become a different person, or, ideally, a knight of faith? We have thus analyzed the leap in terms of infinite resignation. However, this will not suffice. As I’ve mentioned before, one of the key elements of being in faith for Kierkegaard (1962: 137) is that one accepts the truth of Christianity as well as one’s relation to it: “It is well known that Christianity is the only historical phenomenon which in spite of the historical, nay precisely by means of the historical, has intended itself to be for the single individual the point of departure for his eternal consciousness, has intended to interest him otherwise than merely historically, has intended to base his

eternal happiness on his relationship to something historical." Can we transpose the leap to faith to other historical or moral phenomena?⁹

3. Conclusion

As Merold Westphal points out "'the leap" is a generic category referring to all qualitative transitions, of which the transition to faith is but one specific example" (Westphal, 70, 1996). Thus it is possible to use the conceptual framework that Kierkegaard provides in different contexts.

The key question is, then, why would we want to leap "beyond the universal/common sensical"? Is it to find eternal happiness? But what would a subjectively existing person do with eternal happiness? Wouldn't it be quite a meaningless sort of happiness if it was eternal? Wouldn't we become indifferent to it? Perhaps we only want the promise of eternal happiness and not fulfillment. Similarly, we may not want to suspend the ethical, but we may want the ability to do it.

As I have stated before, for Kierkegaard, there is no triumph of faith because it is never finished. How, then, do we come across eternal happiness? Perhaps we don't. Perhaps all we do is strive for a promise, leaping away from the universal to the very core of our existence, only to find that we need to leap again. In that sense, eternal happiness may act as a regulative idea, in the Kantian sense. It seems that we need to leave behind Reason to find ourselves as existing subjects. But what good is existence if I don't have the means to make sense of it?

Instead of constantly trying to make sense of life, Kierkegaard invites us to experience it. As Johnson puts it, "objectivity is a wrong turn because to take the stance of objectivity towards one's own life is to refuse to live it" (Johnson, 1997, 165). The gamble, then, is this: Here's the ultimate promise, the promise of eternal happiness. Are you willing to make the ultimate sacrifice? From a rational point of view, one would have a risk-calculation of sorts. Subjectively, however, one might want to "go beyond" what is ordinary for the sake of the ultimate promise.

Besides, no matter what I think or how hard I think, deliberation only works to a certain extent. At one point, I just must decide and act. The leap is like a test of trust among a group of friends or colleagues. You close your eyes and just let go of your body, and you are confident that the people around you are going to hold you before you hit the ground. Normally, this act would be considered irrational and harmful, just like Abraham's sacrifice. But this kind of resignation allows you to make that leap, and you are rewarded for doing so. Abraham gets his son back. You get to know the feeling of having faith-in other people.

Notice the risk factor here as well. We do not know whether the people around us are going to save us from falling. They might be pulling a prank on us. Still, we let go, we

⁹ What is important is that there may be other notions besides Christianity, such as love or freedom, that may instigate the leap itself and that is what I discuss in this last part.

submit ourselves to a test where we make a sacrifice. If we keep thinking about the risks involved, if we keep calculating all the possibilities, we may never be able to make the move, we will be stuck with deliberation.

In terms of action, religion presupposes a free self. Denying this would seem to pose an objection to Kierkegaard; if we were to argue that there is no free-self, that we are all predetermined by our culture, our physical/genetic composition, our family, our place in history and if it is established that what makes us a subject is the intersection and overlap of all these external effects; we might say that the leap itself is something determined, therefore is a continuation of the universal. In that case, there won't be any real choices in life, no real either/or situation. However, this is precisely Kierkegaard's point: that we are not free to begin with and that is why we need to go beyond.

There is a sense in which the leap itself is bound to the problem of freedom. Even if I produced my own principles for my actions, what would autonomy mean if that same I was a construct of the outside world all along, with its embedded values and inherited ethics? Is there a way for me to transcend the boundaries of this society that I'm living in? When we look from a historical perspective, we can see why Kierkegaard struggles with the concept of Reason so much: it is the symbol of what is common in terms of philosophy at that time. It would be helpful to keep in our minds the famous Hegelian idea that "everyone is a child of their time". Kierkegaard wants to put forward another way of philosophizing, which brings the subject above what is common and historical. This can only be done through a break with universality and historicity. What is left after the leap, is the existing human individual.

Is this human individual free, in every sense of the term? Let us remember what Kierkegaard says about faith: it is never finished. Can we not say the same about freedom? it is never finished, one must keep working on it, discovering new ways in which one is unfree and trying to transcend ever-new limits. Still, the existing human individual is beyond our grasp at the moment; we are still in language, still trying to examine the limits to human thought. Near the limit, within the proximity of an absolute Other, one finds another purpose for which the leap may prove to be useful, and that is love.

Does love necessarily require an object? Or is it a relation one has within oneself? Isn't love also beyond reason? Aren't we tempted to leave behind our ethical convictions for the sake of love? True love, like faith, seems to be based on a contradiction, a paradox. An impossible, paradoxical reconciliation of the lover with the paradoxical Other, the beloved. Think about the overwhelming feeling of hope that you carry inside when you are in love. In a sense, the status of the beloved is similar to the status of God. You can never know whether that person is a figment of your imagination or an infinite source of external power that can decide your whole fate. It is both inner and outer in a sense. And true love, just like faith, is bereft of any mediation. This is where you get close to the story of Abraham. Here, love involves sacrificing everything without expecting something in return. It is at this point that the external object of love becomes irrelevant—the unity with the beloved becomes internal. "Love finds its satisfaction within and not

without" (Kierkegaard 1962: 30). How can we relate to the eternal through loving someone? By relating to love itself, or through loving love itself.

We rarely find true love in this world. Similarly, freedom is seldom found. Should we just give it all up and be content with what is finite? I think not. There is a sense in which we act in this world, strictly convinced that we are, indeed, a free self, that we do have free will, and that we can create our laws for action. We go on in this life as if we have a private self that is safe from the influences of the outside world.

There is always room for recreating yourself, becoming someone new, someone authentic maybe, because there always remains something unknown and undetermined, both within us and outside us. It is this unknown Other which enables us to invent ourselves anew, this Other is the ground for new determinations insofar as something always remains undetermined.

As long as we live, we are, at every point, becoming something. We do this by choosing and acting. Not all our actions are rational or calculated. It seems clear that chance, emotions, contingency, and even contradiction is involved in becoming who we are. This is what gives us the potential for being free. What is required is a decisive act, a leap from the common to the unknown. Still, one cannot help but think about the risk involved here. Freedom doesn't come cheap if it comes at all.

Kierkegaard thus gives us the possibility of suspending universality, reason, society, language, the ethics for the sake of love and freedom. Turning that possibility into actuality is up to us. Should one make the leap? A passionate relation to the Other-one that is beyond universality-is where the possibility of true freedom and true love lies. This is what could instigate a move such as a leap to faith. Alas, everyone must decide for him/herself whether one is willing to make the move. What I did was, simply, to lay out 'the problem'.

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