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**Two Ways of Relating to Doubt
in Kierkegaard's Existential Anthropology**

Doctoral Thesis

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Declaration

Hereby I declare that I have written this doctoral thesis by myself, using solely the references and data cited and presented in this thesis. I declare that I have not been awarded other degree or diploma for the thesis or its substantial part.

Prague, December 30, 2024

Mgr. Anna Poláčková

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Poláčková', written in a cursive style.

“If you believe that you ‘gain everything,’
then not only do you lose nothing,
but the loss itself is a gain.

As the butterfly
gains by *losing*
the caterpillar’s chrysalis.”

Søren Kierkegaard
KJN 4, 292f / SKS 20, 292f, NB4: 11.

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PREFACE

Dubito, ergo sum.

Doubt represents a universally human phenomenon which every individual experiences in different forms and to various degrees. Some may praise the ability to doubt as a necessary quality which is immune to naïveté and does not only uncritically accept popular beliefs. Others may choose not to doubt simply because it exhausts them due to doubt's constant production of counterarguments. There are also those doubters who underestimate themselves, their abilities, talents, or even purpose. Some individuals resemble the doubting Thomas and demand proof of certainty in the religious realm of mystery. Some may be utterly paralyzed by doubt, unable to make any decision—especially if the decision seems big and possibly life-changing.

Kierkegaard considers all of the above mentioned “doubt scenarios” but provides a cohesive approach to skepticism in which doubt is an inherently dualistic phenomenon producing both sweet and rotten fruits in one's existence. On the one hand, the existential outcome is not reduced to fate or luck—it always stems from the way in which the individual relates to doubt. On the other hand, the personal experience of existential doubt is always extremely painful regardless of its outcome. What good can existential doubt bring, then? For Kierkegaard—not only a philosophical scholar, but also the Pietist subjective thinker—doubt used in the right way can meek an individual through the painful process of self-annihilation and make her receptive to the Good News, i.e. that the eternal God would unconditionally love a sinner and grant her salvation. The individual who genuinely recognizes that in front of God she is capable of nothing at all, she will not face more humiliation, but rather experience the restoration and reconciliation of the spirit with God who established it in the first place. As such, the phenomenon of doubt in Kierkegaard's anthropology provides an intriguing theological reflection which is far from superlative religious experience and grandiose faith testimonies—rather, it seeks to deepen one's subjectivity and emphasize that to be a Christian means to be authentic and true to oneself “as if nobody else was looking”. Only in tribulations and solitude, one's motives come to light and her core beliefs are truly tested.

However, Kierkegaard's theological anthropology is not primarily about self-torment, self-abasement, and martyrdom—Kierkegaard's “saving doubt” carries mainly the

message of hope. The saving potential inherent in doubt—which can also deceive and drag one into existential despair—can be likened to the theological concept of *felix culpa*, known from the *Easter Vigil Mass* which origins date back all the way to the 5th century. In the *Exsultet* liturgical passage, worshippers praise Adam’s original sin for it enabled them to meet their Savior. They sing, “O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum méruit habére Redemptórem!”¹.

Thus, the Fortunate Fall offers an upside-down proposition that those who find themselves in the most loathsome situation can in fact be very close to salvation. To put it differently, even the most desperate situation or circumstance resulting from sin can become a “crucial tool for naming and engendering Christian faith”.² This dissertation’s ambition is to highlight this logical pattern of the Fortunate Fall by bringing forth doubt’s duality in Kierkegaard’s theological anthropology which carries the same saving potential. When the Dane pseudonymously writes that “the religious continually uses the negative as the essential form”³, it casts light on his understanding of faith, hope, and other positive religious categories—they are rarely separate from a surrounding cloud of anxiety, doubt, or despair. As opposed to the “positive religious categories”, doubt belongs to something which the Romantic poet John Keats classifies as a “negative capability”⁴—a negation which can determine the capacity for fostering essentially Christian categories. As such, saving doubt can be understood as the negative driving force which can give birth to the possibility of faith.

¹ *Missale Romanum (Roman Missal in Latin)*, 190. This line of the Easter vigil translates into English as “O Happy Fault, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer!”.

² Mahn, J. A., *Fortunate Fallibility: Kierkegaard and the Power of Sin*, 2.

³ CUP1, 524 / SKS 7, 476.

⁴ On December 21, 1917, Keats writes to his brothers George and Tom in his letter, “I mean negative capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason”. See Scott, G. F., *Selected Letters of John Keats*, 60.

I. FRAMING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The focal question of this dissertation revolves around the significance of doubt in Kierkegaard's existential philosophy. As shall be seen, the duality of doubt—or the two ways in which an individual can relate to one doubt—profoundly affects the trajectory of one's existence. As such, the theme of doubt will be studied within the scope of *becoming oneself*. For Kierkegaard, the self is a spirit which sustains the synthesis of ambivalent extremes while continually relating itself to both sides of the synthesis. Nonetheless, the spirit has not been established by itself but by another, the another being God.⁵ Thus, in addition to the spirit relating itself to itself, it also relates to this “another” who established the entire relation in the first place.⁶

When considering the process of *becoming oneself*—which for Kierkegaard eminently equals with *becoming Christian*⁷—it should be considered that Kierkegaard views the metaphysical world as consisting of two realms. One realm is that of God as an eternal being, the other realm is the temporal world of the earthly, i.e. the immanent.⁸ Since God is a full, eternal *being*, he does not undergo change and is thus exempt from the process of *becoming*. The process of *becoming* concerns the individual, as she exists in the temporal realm which constantly changes. While at first glance, it may seem that the two realms are strictly set apart, for Kierkegaard—as will be explored in later chapters—the God-man paradox represents the free decision of eternal God to merge with the temporal through the incarnation of Christ. In one of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard calls this paradoxical overlap a correspondence of the individual with God which represents a strange unity of two juxtaposed states of being—the temporal and the eternal, being and becoming, the fragile individual and the omnipotent God. Nonetheless, the correspondence can take place *only* when the individual annihilates herself completely and as such becomes reconciled with God.

As for the individual, she is said to be a spirit which continuously has to relate both to “the temporal and the eternal”⁹ and her nature, or essence, thus composes of both. Some liken this overlap to standing with one foot in the temporal *becoming* and with the other foot in the eternal *being*.¹⁰ Others illustrate the Christian interconnectedness of the

⁵ SUD, 13 / SKS 11, 129.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ This motif is thoroughly discussed by Kierkegaard notably in Chapter IV (§1, §2, §3) of his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*.

⁸ Davidshofer, C., “Being/Becoming”, 138.

⁹ SUD, 13 / SKS 11, 129.

¹⁰ Davidshofer, C., “Being/Becoming”, 138.

temporal and the eternal to being *in* the world but not *of* the world.¹¹ The task then, is to keep a balance between the two realms instead of existing entirely in either one or the other. As such, *becoming oneself*—used interchangeably with *becoming Christian*—is a process which culminates with the double movement of faith and takes place in deep inwardness so that the individual’s worth is not defined by the externals. Moreover, *becoming Christian* is extreme in its transition during which the individual suddenly goes from “[being] in untruth” to “receiving the truth” and experiences the change from “not to be” all the way to “to be”.¹² This transition is often portrayed by Kierkegaard, same as in the New Testament, as a special kind of rebirth.¹³

“[T]he person who already is cannot be born, and yet [s]he is born. Let us call this transition rebirth, by which [s]he enters the world a second time just as at birth—an individual human being who as yet knows nothing about the world into which [s]he is born, whether it is inhabited, whether there are other human beings in it, for presumably we can be baptized en masse but can never be reborn en masse.”¹⁴

Importantly, not every individual’s experience of *becoming oneself* will look the same—this aspect is related to the concept of contemporaneity with Christ which allows for an individual to relate to the God-man and personally get to know him in the present. This relationship with the God-man is thus deeply subjective and surpasses a mere historical knowledge of him. Nonetheless, one can be said for sure—for everyone, *being Christian* always means *becoming Christian* in the sense that once the leap of faith is taken, it is not a stagnant and static sphere of existence. On the contrary, *being Christian* is a process in which one has to continually renew her resolution to be a Christian and reenact the double movement of resignation and faith. Such *becoming* is characterized by series of repeated renewals within the highest existential sphere.

With respect to the above, the question of *becoming oneself*—*becoming Christian*—will be treated by a multidisciplinary approach. First, Kierkegaard’s conception of an individual with a fully formed self is exclusively Christian in nature, so methodologically, the question presents an overlap of philosophical and theological anthropology. While

¹¹ This Christian viewpoint stems from Jesus’ speech at the last supper before his crucifixion. He tells his disciples that they are not “of the world” but at the same time that they will “bear witness” to the world. See John 15.

¹² PF, 19 / SKS 4, 227.

¹³ The following New Testament verses can be given as examples. “[Y]ou have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” 1 Peter 1:23 (ESV); “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” John 3:7 (ESV).

¹⁴ PF, 19 / SKS 4, 227.

each of the disciplines is distinct in their starting points of analysis and viewpoints, they still overlap in that they study the *Anthropos*—theological anthropology studies the individual’s religious experience and philosophical anthropology studies what makes the individual human. Thomas, for example, views theological anthropology as a species falling under the genus of philosophical anthropology, and thus accentuates the natural overlap of the two.¹⁵ Wood in turn considers the overlap of theology and philosophy, and states that in the broadest sense, philosophy seeks to systematically use reason in order to “understand the most fundamental features of reality”, and theology seeks to study “God and all things in relation to God”.¹⁶ Thus, a significant overlap can be expected between the two fields of study—“God, if there is a God, is surely one of the fundamental features of reality, and one to which all the other features presumably relate”.¹⁷ The same principle can be assumed of philosophical and theological anthropology as well. If philosophical anthropology seeks to study what makes one human, then the fact that theological anthropology seeks to study one’s religious experience implies that the two disciplines do not necessarily oppose each other.

Considering the philosophical-anthropological aspect of this dissertation, the goal is to paint a picture of how the two different ways of relating to doubt can shift the course of one’s process of *becoming oneself* in Kierkegaard’s existential philosophy. Nonetheless, the process of one’s existential transformation will be considered both from a general viewpoint—the “format” which can be considered universal—and from one’s very own personal experience that is unique for each individual—in other words, the individual-specific “content” fills up the set “format” as described by Kierkegaard. Thus, the following chapters will include both “format-like” passages—be it doubt, faith, or despair—and specific examples given by Kierkegaard that illustrate the individual and not-to-be-generalized “content”—such as the famous story of Abraham’s sacrifice, but also Moses, apostle Paul, Job, or Faust. As such, the answers to the posited question will be carefully unraveled by digging deep in the studied corpus of Kierkegaard’s writings. This will be done via philosophical interpretation. The main premise concerning the two ways of relating to doubt appears explicitly in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, but the studied phenomenon is implicitly present in his other writings—although expressed

¹⁵ Thomas, O. C., “Theological Anthropology, Philosophical Anthropology, and the Human Sciences”, 141.

¹⁶ Wood, W., “Philosophy and Christian Theology”.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

in a different terminology—whether those written under Kierkegaard’s own name or those published pseudonymously. Thus, the philosophical interpretation will seek to point out the inner interconnectedness of the writings and provide a coherent view on the concept of doubt’s two possible existential outcomes. However, the main focus will be on Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, as they contain the clearest passages about the two ways of relating to one doubt in one’s journey of *becoming Christian*. It is precisely the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* that provide the most elaborate “content” of doubt, and which will serve as the main source for interpretation.

The already mentioned philosophical interpretation is to be understood as philosophical hermeneutics, for the method requires that the interpreter engages with “fusion of horizons and [gets, added by AP] in interpretative conflict”.¹⁸ First, this approach refuses to attempt at determining “the objective” inherent in the original text via general methods. Philosophical hermeneutics thus stands in opposition to the classical hermeneutical experience of the interpreter being “assaulted” by the text in order to get the objective from the text.¹⁹ Rather, it argues that interpreters will inevitably bring their own “fixed, subjective preconceptions to the text”.²⁰ Thus, the biggest task for the interpreter is to get in conflict with the studied text and her interpretation should combine discernment of the philosophical meaning but also the interpreter’s own ideas and thoughts. Nonetheless, as much as the discipline of philosophical hermeneutics does not approach text in the same way as classical historical hermeneutics, it does not necessary imply that they are incompatible. Quite the contrary, they can each enrich one another, for without historical hermeneutics, philosophical interpretation could easily get stuck in biased eisegesis, and without philosophical interpretation, historical hermeneutics might face the risk of the lack of reflexivity and scrutinizing the interpreter’s subjective perspective.²¹ The hermeneutical approach to interpreting Kierkegaard was employed by Paul Ricœur, notably in his 1963 essay *Philosopher après Kierkegaard* written to commemorate the 150 years after Kierkegaard’s birth. Rasmussen and Stewart point out that this essay was one of the first ones to criticize the labelling of Kierkegaard’s philosophy as falling under existentialism as a “unified school of thought” which started to emerge in France and

¹⁸ Sekine, S., *Philosophical Interpretations of the Old Testament*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

Germany.²² Nonetheless, Ricœur emphasized that Kierkegaard did form a new way of philosophizing which must be separated from the various early 20th century approaches to his writings. He proposed to study Kierkegaard with “le regard fixé sur l’exception”²³—one’s look fixed upon the exception. This approach implies understanding Kierkegaard not only as a mere exception to speculative tradition but also to existentialism understood as a 20th century appropriation. Moreover, this approach seeks to suspend Kierkegaard’s incommunicability of existence and focus on the philosophical and theological arguments. In fact, Ricœur viewed Kierkegaard as the religious poet posited outside of standard communication on the one hand, but also as a thinker who rationally engaged with philosophical-theological issues on the other hand. Thus, for Ricœur, the interpreter’s task is to discern “*how* the exception stands in relation to philosophy”.²⁴ This interpretative tension concerns Kierkegaard understanding himself as standing outside of all philosophy while at the same time, as Ricœur highlighted, many of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms—such as Constantine Constantius, Johannes de silentio, Vigilius Haufniensis, or Johannes Climacus—as philosophical authors.²⁵ As such, Kierkegaard’s relation to philosophy is problematic, for he stands both in it but outside of it at the same time.²⁶

In light of philosophical interpretation understood as such, the goal of this dissertation is not to provide an ultimate guide on *how to* read Kierkegaard. Rather, it seeks to engage with his writings in a way that deepens one’s subjectivity and confronts one’s own hiddenness, the interpreter included. The deepening of the reader’s subjectivity also involves subjective engagement with his texts—after all, Kierkegaard even challenges his readers to read the texts *out loud* to themselves. In his *For Self-Examination*, he encourages his dear reader²⁷ to read aloud so that she can “gain the strongest impression” that she has only herself to consider, not Kierkegaard who claims to be without authority, nor others who would only distract her—distract her from hidden subjectivity.²⁸ Thus, the aim is not to interpret Kierkegaard as objectively as possible but rather—same as was

²² Rasmussen, J. D. S., “Ricoeur: Kierkegaard, the Limits of Philosophy, and the Consolation of Hope”, 238.

²³ Here he quotes Karl Jaspers. See Ricœur, P., “Philosopher après Kierkegaard”, 308.

²⁴ Rasmussen, J. D. S., “Ricoeur: Kierkegaard, the Limits of Philosophy, and the Consolation of Hope”, 239.

²⁵ Ricœur, P., “Philosopher après Kierkegaard”, 308.

²⁶ Rasmussen, J. D. S., “Ricoeur: Kierkegaard, the Limits of Philosophy, and the Consolation of Hope”, 239.

²⁷ “Min kjære Læser!” SKS 13, 33.

²⁸ Preface to *For Self-Examination* written in August 1851. See FSE, 6 / SKS 13, 33.

already mentioned with regard to philosophical hermeneutics—to wrestle with the texts and bring one’s own subjectivity in just as Kierkegaard himself spurs each one of his readers to do. Therefore, this dissertation does not want to rest solely on a pure abstract level, but to consider the practical implications of Kierkegaard’s subjective doubt. Let the following quote from *Practice in Christianity* be a reminder of this.

“All modern philosophy, both ethically and Christianly, is based upon frivolousness. Instead of deterring and calling people to order by speaking of being despairing and being offended, it has waved to them and invited them to become conceited by doubting and having doubted. Modern philosophy, being abstract, is floating in metaphysical indeterminateness. Instead of explaining this about itself and then directing people (individual persons) to the ethical, the religious, the existential, philosophy has given the appearance [Skin] that people are able to speculate themselves out of their own skin [Skind] as they so very prosaically say, into pure appearance [Skin].”²⁹

Viewed from the big perspective, Kierkegaard’s writings are often very fragmentary, implicit, and sarcastically ironic, so seeking to provide a definitive picture of what it means to *become oneself* is impossible since additional explication will always be needed. However, Kierkegaard’s texts provide a profound insight into what it looks like to doubt in the right way, and how “saving doubt” can be a blessing in disguise as it helps the individual let her guard down and become nothing at all before God—which is the very prerequisite to the double movement consisting of infinite resignation and faith. As such, this dissertation seeks to provide a fresh outlook on doubt and thus expand the already existing works on Kierkegaard’s epistemology, doubt, and skepticism by other scholars.

The call for interpretation is also supported by Kierkegaard’s polynymity which will be discussed in chapter 1.1 (pp. 20-5). Therefore, this dissertation will consider the two-fold potential inherent in doubt during the process of *becoming Christian* in Kierkegaard’s existential anthropology. “Saving doubt” has the power to dramatically shift one’s existence toward the *subjectivity of faith*. Nonetheless, this dissertation will also philosophically interpret Kierkegaard’s writings with respect to the *subjectivity of reading*. Podmore considers this approach by Kierkegaard to his reader as having pastoral motives and theological precedents through which he seeks to turn us “toward an anthropocentric reflection on knowing God in relation to ourselves”.³⁰

²⁹ PC, 81 / SKS 12, 91.

³⁰ Podmore, S. D., *Kierkegaard and the self before God: anatomy of the abyss*, xiii.

Considering the theological-anthropological side of this dissertation, its importance lies especially in the “bottom-up” approach to studying religious experience. As Cameron points out, the traditional understanding of an individual as someone *burdened by original sin in need of divine grace* shifted and found its new center in the individual herself and her own understanding of religious experience.³¹ This also supports a more integrated way of studying God and the individual which does not strictly separate theology and anthropology. As a result, the concept of God is not isolated in an ivory tower and one’s own delicate religious inwardness is not orthodoxly ignored. Thus, the merge of theology and anthropology represents an attempt to unify the two in order to better understand one’s personal religious experience rather than to study solely God or any other “objective theological dimension”.³²

It should not be overlooked that Kierkegaard was not only a philosopher, but also a theologian. His theological views and personal piety were deeply influenced by the Lutheran-Pietist spirituality which he had been exposed to since childhood. The imprints are visible all throughout Kierkegaard’s authorial corpus, but especially in his admittedly Christian writings, *The Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* being one of them. As was already foreshadowed, the kind of spirituality which Kierkegaard adopted as his own very early on stems from both Lutheranism and Pietism. However, Pietism is a relatively broad umbrella term which encompasses multifarious religious groups and leaders, such as the early 17th century Johann Arndt, the late 17th century Philipp Jakob Spener but also the Moravian Brethren movement launched by Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf in Herrnhut. While the objective is not to identify which specific Pietist approach influenced Kierkegaard’s spirituality the most, it can be argued that historically, Kierkegaard and his immediate family had close ties with the Moravian spirituality, as they weekly attended the *Brødremenighed*—Copenhagen’s Moravian community.³³ Nonetheless, all Pietism is distinct for its conscious rootedness in the example of Christ, his opposition to the Pharisee-like legalism, and the emphasis on genuine personal inwardness. In addition, Pietism stressed the cultivation of *praxis pietatis*—putting into praxis the pious Christian habits. These often included writing hymns, missionary outreach, pastoral ministry, ecumenic efforts especially in retrieving the late medieval Catholic devotional books, but

³¹ Cameron, C., “An Introduction to ‘Theological Anthropology’”, 53-61.

³² Oviedo, L., “Theological Anthropology”, 2244.

³³ Barnett, Ch. B., *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*, 5.

also the issuing of edifying Christian literature.³⁴ Spener, for example, emphasized subjective reading of the Scripture which he considered impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit who illuminates one's mind and heart, but also the importance of true neighborly love over mere theological knowledge. Francke highlighted certainty of faith through a sudden conversion—or rebirth—via a painful “struggle over repentance (*Busskampf*)”.³⁵ Zinzendorf in turn warned against rationalism and the ambitions to gain religious certainty through reason and proofs. All of these motifs will be seen in the forthcoming chapters as they play an important role in the process of *becoming oneself*, especially with regard to doubt.

Lutheran Pietism stressed the “three solas”—*sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura*—justification of sins by faith and God's grace alone, as well as the importance of Bible as the living word inspired by God. Therefore, the traces of Lutheran-Pietism are left in Kierkegaard's thoughts, accentuations, and even his authorship style. The influence plays out in the way Kierkegaard wrote his upbuilding discourses resembling the small Christian books containing meditations on given biblical verses. Next, it should be mentioned that besides the Pietist literature ranging from Arndt's *True Christianity* to Spener's *Theological Reflections*, Kierkegaard's own library contained numerous *Erbauungsliteratur* books of the late medieval Catholic authors who later inspired the Pietists, such as Johannes Tauler with his writings on the *imitatio Christi* motifs, same as Thomas à Kempis who emphasized imitating Christ in his sufferings, but also biographies about Bernard of Clairvaux.³⁶

“Yes, indeed, pietism (properly understood, not simply in the sense of abstaining from dancing and such externals, no, in the sense of witnessing for the truth and suffering for it, together with the understanding that suffering in this world belongs to being a Christian, and that a shrewd and secular conformity with this world is unchristian) – yes, indeed, pietism is the one and only consequence of Christianity.”³⁷

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³⁴ Stoeffler, F. E., *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 9.

³⁵ Lindberg, C., *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 103.

³⁶ Barnett, Ch. B., *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*, 68-83.

³⁷ JP 3, 3318 / SKS 23, 486, NB20: 175.

Overall, this dissertation comprises of 3 main overarching sections consisting of separate chapters. So far, this opening section has sought to frame the research question methodologically—as it continues to unravel chapter by chapter, it will also consider the scope of the study, focusing on the nature of the Kierkegaard corpus under examination, as well as exploring the Kierkegaardian concept of doubt in relation to the history of philosophical skepticism. This section will be concluded by providing a synopsis of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* which will be primarily studied and referenced, but also a brief introduction of the other texts relevant for this dissertation, namely *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum est*, *Sickness unto Death*, and *Practice in Christianity*.

The second section will be the most comprehensive one, as it will entail the interpretative analysis of the duality inherent in doubt—first, it will introduce the concept of one doubt but its two possible existential outcomes, distinguishing them as “false doubt” and “saving doubt”. Next, the analysis will treat the concept of false doubt in an interpretative approach based on Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. The characteristics of false doubt will be exemplified on Goethe’s Faust as the embodiment of doubt in time—the story of Faust will illustrate what it looks like when doubt bursts into severe existential despair in the ethical existential state. The following chapter will consider the so-called “platform in between false and saving doubt” which is only to symbolize the decision-making process that takes place prior to the leap of faith—the decisions concern various events, circumstances, and dilemmas one faces when her existence has progressed and the individual experiences doubt. The decision-making process can always change the course and nature of one’s existence, and the *relating to* takes place with regard to the following phenomena: annihilation, offense, and God’s good and perfect gift (i.e. his unconditional love). One can turn annihilation outwardly towards all externalities, inwardly towards oneself, or towards God. The concept of offence is specifically tied to the God-man paradox, and one is either offended that the almighty God would become mortal human being, or she believes it—there is nonetheless no other option in between. The chapter will go on to explore what Kierkegaard calls the good and perfect gift which cannot be inspected by the doubter but rather accepted in complete self-annihilation. After thoroughly examining the crucial decisions which an individual must make on the platform between false and saving doubt, the other way of relating to doubt will be identified—that of saving doubt. Essentially, the saving doubt represents a deeply

subjective doubt which initially doubts, or cancels, everything on the external—i.e. the fleeting world—and then it is targeted at oneself until the self-doubting individual realizes that in front of God, she is capable of nothing at all. It is this very realization that makes the individual perfect for correspondence to God. That is also why Kierkegaard often repeats the words that “a human being is great and at h[er] highest when [s]he corresponds to God by being nothing at all h[er]self”.³⁸ Same as the key features of false doubt will be shown on the example of Faust, so the characteristics of saving doubt will be exemplified on the Old Testament story of Moses who, in Kierkegaard’s eyes, was “the weakest of the Israelites, capable of nothing at all”³⁹ and yet he was appointed as the leader to deliver Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. The last chapter of the third section will discuss the relationship between doubt and faith, respectively how they are mutually exclusive. In addition, the chapter will consider what faith *can* and *cannot* coexist with. On the one hand, the compatibles with faith are objective uncertainty, subjective certainty, the possibility of error, interest, resolution, spiritual judgement, and wonder. On the other hand, the non-compatibles with faith are doubt, objective certainty, disbelief, conclusion, speculation, experience, and the so-called flesh and blood. The very last chapter of section III will consider the Pauline term “good fight” which Kierkegaard uses to depict the nature of faith. According to Kierkegaard, the good fight demands that one continuously renews one’s resolution, upholds the contradictions inherent in Christian faith, keeps one’s eyes on God, and imitates Christ in his sufferings.

The final section will provide a conclusive overview of the main findings which have arisen from the interpretative analysis, and it will also reflect on the initially set objective of this dissertation, that is to map out the process of *becoming oneself* with regard to doubt.

³⁸ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 303.

³⁹ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

1. NATURE OF THE STUDIED TEXT CORPUS

Kierkegaard spoke to his readers under the guise of various pseudonyms who invited the audience to read and interpret the various writings in specific ways. Thus, this chapter will consider the characteristics of Kierkegaard's writings, but also his authorship style with special attention to his communication methods, figures of speech, and distinctive approach to the audience. The following section will introduce key literary sources for the analysis. This will be followed by an in-depth explanation of key terms to this dissertation, including a careful examination of the concept of doubt. This examination will be framed terminologically and situated within the broader context of Kierkegaard's understanding of the evolution of the *spirit* across his existential stages. The final part of this chapter will delve into thorough analysis of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, from which the two distinct types of doubts will emerge more clearly. This analysis will serve as a foundation for constituting a new reading of Kierkegaard's existential anthropology regarding the two ways in which an individual can relate to doubt, and how this relation can shift the course of one's existence. These findings will be further illustrated in the third section.

1.1 Maieutics, Direct and Indirect Communication

Kierkegaard took his distinctive communication style with his reader from the figure of Socrates, who became a model for his own way of conveying a message. Moreover, Kierkegaard did not hesitate to even identify with Socrates, admitting that there was something Socratic about him.⁴⁰ The maieutic way of speech is particularly significant for this dissertation in relation to the concept of knowledge. Socrates likens his maieutic method to midwifery but differs it in that it “is being practised upon men, not women, and in tending their souls in labor, not their bodies”⁴¹. Thus, the proper maieutic art is characterized by the ability to “test in every way whether the mind of the young man is bringing forth a mere image, an imposture, or a real and genuine offspring”⁴². Socrates claims to possess this quality but adds that he is unable to give birth to wisdom because there is nothing wise about him—he then justifies this by noting that God compelled him

⁴⁰ “It is, however, also characteristic of me that Socrates has made such a deep impression on me. There is something Socratic about me, one could say that.” KJN 6, 365 / NB14: 30.

⁴¹ Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes (Vol. 12)*, 150c.

⁴² *Ibid.*

to “act as midwife but has never allowed [him] to bring forth”⁴³. In the same way, Kierkegaard—through his maieutic communication—desires in a Socratic way to rid one of illusions, “to let empty knowledge starve [the learner]”⁴⁴, and indirectly guide her towards individuality by asking the right questions. Bearing the above in mind, a similarity between Socrates and Kierkegaard can be drawn. Same as Socrates did not consider himself to be perfect, Kierkegaard did not think of himself as a Christian worthy of imitation.

Additionally, Kierkegaard utilizes the motif of removing his readers’ illusions via a dialectical approach and gives two examples. First, Kierkegaard introduces a certain type of a reader who is oblivious to Christianity, and the Dane wants to lead her to knowledge. Second, he identifies another type of a reader who lives under a false illusion which must be removed. Kierkegaard states that the second reader cannot be communicated to directly in the style of “I am a Christian and you are not a Christian” but in the indirect form of “you are a Christian and I am not a Christian”.⁴⁵ The specificity of this indirect communication lies in the element of deception. The author’s deception consists of making statements with which he may not even identify. Kierkegaard does so for a very specific purpose—to lead his reader into the realm of religiosity and make her familiar with it. Here, too, he refers to the figure of Socrates, with the conviction that one can be paradoxically “deceived into truth”.⁴⁶ It should be noted that both the direct and the indirect communication must be understood here purely as a means to an end. As has been seen, Kierkegaard’s task is to make the reader aware of true religiosity.⁴⁷ Kierkegaard uses pseudonymity, which is maieutic at its core, as a tool to remove one’s illusions as the first step before the next—direct communication.

The following overview of Kierkegaard’s works illuminates the dual—but also premeditated—authorship. As for this dissertation, it should be kept in mind that the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* were written explicitly under Kierkegaard’s name, and they were intended to communicate directly to the reader.⁴⁸ Here again, the admittedly

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “There are two kinds of instruction. One is Socratic: to ask questions in order to starve out empty knowledge. The other is the opposite: the learner asks questions.” SKS 6, 200 / NB12: 104.

⁴⁵ PV, 54 / SKS 16, 36.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 53 / SKS 16, 35.

⁴⁷ EUD, Historical Introduction, xi-xii.

⁴⁸ “I am very literally and directly the author of, for example, the upbuilding discourses and of every word in them.” CUP1, 627 / SKS 7, 571.

authorial form has the same goal—to make the reader attentive to religiosity.⁴⁹

In addition, there is a distinct category of Kierkegaard’s texts—it is his journals, notebooks, loose papers, excerpts, commentaries, and sketches, many of which are now comprised in *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks (KJN)* as part of an English edition.⁵⁰ The *KJN* is based on Kierkegaard’s original writings—including the published and unpublished ones, but also those that were not intended for publication by Kierkegaard. A good portion of these works are now included in a 28-volume collection put together by the Søren Kierkegaard Research Center in cooperation with the Royal Danish Library. The *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter (SKS)* thus contains Kierkegaard’s texts in Danish and is also accessible online.⁵¹ In addition, many of the unpublished materials were included in the Danish edition of *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer (Papirer)* which was issued between 1909 and 1948, supplemented with additional volumes in 1960s and 1970s. Needless to say, there is a significant portion of the unpublished texts in the *Papirer* that are missing in the *SKS*, and hence they are also excluded from the *KJN*. *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers (JP)* is a more limited selection of the *Papirer* translated into English. Last, it should be noted that *SKS* is not identical with the older Danish volumes of *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker* (Søren Kierkegaard’s collected works, or *SV*) including his published writings, as well as the posthumously published writings.

Pseudonymous Writings	Admittedly Published Writings
	<p style="text-align: center;">1838</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>From the Papers of One Still Living</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">1841</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Concept of Irony: With Continual Reference to Socrates</i></p>

⁴⁹ PV, 52-3 / SKS 16, 34-5.

⁵⁰ After Kierkegaard’s death in November 1855, his nephew Henrik Lund took on the task of sorting through and compiling the great amount of manuscripts found in Kierkegaard’s apartment. The comprehensive, although not complete, posthumous inventory was later stored by Peter Christian, Kierkegaard’s older brother, and eventually it was entrusted to Hans Peter Barford, a Danish newspaper editor who, along with Hermann Gottsched, a German educator, published the writings for the very first time, Barford being the publisher and Gottsched being the main editor. See more of the Kierkegaard’s posthumously published journals and papers in *KJN* 1, vii-xi.

⁵¹ The *SKS* writings are available at <https://tekster.kb.dk>.

<p>20 February 1843 <i>Either/Or</i> Pseudonyms: Victor Eremita, A, Judge William, Johannes the Seducer</p> <p>16 October 1843 <i>Fear and Trembling</i> Pseudonyms: Johannes de silentio</p> <p>16 October 1843 <i>Repetition</i> Pseudonyms: Constantin Constantius</p>	<p>16 May 1843 <i>Two Upbuilding Discourses</i></p> <p>16 October 1843 <i>Three Upbuilding Discourses</i></p> <p>6 December 1843 <i>Four Upbuilding Discourses</i></p>
<p>13 June 1844 <i>Philosophical Fragments</i></p> <p>17 June 1844 <i>The Concept of Anxiety, Prefaces</i> Pseudonyms: Johannes Climacus, Vigilius Haufniensis, Nicolaus Notabene</p>	<p>5 March 1844 <i>Two Upbuilding Discourses</i></p> <p>8 June 1844 <i>Three Upbuilding Discourses</i></p> <p>31 August 1844 <i>Four Upbuilding Discourses</i></p>
<p>30 April 1845 <i>Stages on Life's Way</i> Pseudonyms: Frater Taciturnus, Johannes the Seducer, Judge William, The Young Man, Hilarious Bookbinder, Quidam</p>	<p>29 April 1845 <i>Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions</i></p>
<p>27 February 1846 <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> Pseudonym: Johannes Climacus</p>	<p>30 March 1846 <i>Two Ages: A Literary Review</i></p>
<p>Completed in 1847 <i>Two Minor Ethical-Religious Essays</i> Pseudonym: H. H.</p>	<p>13 March 1847 <i>Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits</i></p> <p>29 September <i>Works of Love</i></p>
<p>24-27 July 1848 <i>The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress</i> Pseudonym: Inter et Inter</p>	<p>26 April 1848 <i>Christian Discourses</i></p>

<p>14 May 1849 <i>Either/Or (Second Edition)</i> Pseudonym: Victor Eremita, A, Judge William, Johannes the Seducer</p> <p>30 July 1849 <i>Sickness onto Death</i> Pseudonym: Anti-Climacus</p>	<p>14 May 1849 <i>The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air</i></p> <p>19 May 1849 <i>Two Minor Ethical-Religious Essays</i></p> <p>13 November 1849 <i>Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</i></p>
<p>27 September 1850 <i>Practice in Christianity</i> Pseudonym: Anti-Climacus</p>	<p>20 December 1850 <i>An Upbuilding Discourse</i></p>
	<p>7 August 1851 <i>Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays</i></p> <p>7 August 1851 <i>The Point of View for My Work as an Author</i></p> <p>10 September 1851 <i>Judge For Yourselves!</i></p>
	<p>1855 <i>The Moment</i></p>

While the applicability of Kierkegaard’s opinions and thoughts on pseudonymity beyond the scope of his authorial corpus remains an open question, it can be said that his use of pseudonyms served as a means to create a new distinct personality.⁵² As Westfall points out, each of the created personas has the specific published writing officially ascribed to them and this carries consequences—thus, it is the recognition of those consequences that can provide a better understanding of the distinct nature of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms.⁵³ As such, Kierkegaard relates to the generated pseudonyms as to characters to whose “mouths” he has placed a “poetically actual individual[s] [...] by means of audible lines”, while at the same time Kierkegaard maintains an “even more remote relation than that of a poet who *poeticizes* characters and yet in the preface is *himself* the *author*”.⁵⁴ In addition, Kierkegaard maintains that his pseudonyms are “poetically actual subjective

⁵² Westfall, J., “Pseudonymity”, 153f.

⁵³ Ibid, 154.

⁵⁴ CUP1, 625 / SKS 7, 569.

thinker[s]”⁵⁵. To conclude, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms are poetic and subjective personas who are not fully real, but at the same time they are not altogether fictional—hence, the pseudonymity combines both positivity and negativity leading to the already-discussed maieutic communication which seeks to deceive the reader into truth.⁵⁶

With regard to the upcoming sections and chapters, this dissertation will respect Kierkegaard’s own “wish [and] prayer” to quote “the respective pseudonymous author’s name, not [his]”.⁵⁷ In order to follow through with this promise, whenever a writing published by Kierkegaard pseudonymously occurs in the analysis, the reference will first be made to “Kierkegaard’s spokesman”, followed by a consistent use of the specific pseudonym.

1.2 Upbuilding Discourses Held in Kierkegaard’s Right Hand

The Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses were published under Kierkegaard’s own name in six small volumes of two, three and four discourses in 1843 and 1844 (see the table above). Their publication was premeditated—each volume was published in parallel as a counterpart (or supplement) to the pseudonymous volumes.⁵⁸ This duality and symmetry are meant to represent the kind of mirrors in which the reader can see herself. That is also why Kierkegaard writes in *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*:

“I have given the world *Either/Or* in my left hand and *Two Upbuilding Discourses* in my right hand. But many have reached their right hand for what I held in my left.”⁵⁹

At first glance, the to-be-studied *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (*Atten Opbyggelige Taler* in Danish) might appear as homilies or short meditations resembling sermons. In fact, many of the upbuilding discourses often are either open up or closed by a short prayer. While they to some extent do resemble the Pietist books seeking to enhance one’s *praxis pietatis*, Kierkegaard’s upbuilding discourses are not meant to preach per se, but

⁵⁵ CUP1, 626 / SKS 7, 570.

⁵⁶ Westfall, J., “Pseudonymity”, 158.

⁵⁷ CUP1, 627 / SKS 7, 571.

⁵⁸ Pattison notes that Kierkegaard (but also his spokesman Johannes Climacus) emphasized that the upbuilding discourses were published as accompanying works to the pseudonymous writings. He adds that the upbuilding discourses were in fact published step-by-step with the exception of the *Three Upbuilding Discourses* (1943) who were launched on the same day (16 October 1843), just as the pseudonymous *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*. Moreover, Kierkegaard claimed that between 1843 and 1846, he continuously carried out a dual production of his esthetic works and upbuilding discourses. See Pattison, G., *Kierkegaard’s Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, theology, literature*, 16.

⁵⁹ PV, 36 / SKS 16, 21.

rather to upbuild. This seemingly subtle difference may appear to be marginal, but in the context of this dissertation, it is quite significant. The German term *die Bildung*—originating from the verb *ausbilden*—means “to form”, “to shape”, “to mold”, “to plastically create”, “to artistically model”, or “to bring someone up” and “to spiritually form someone”.⁶⁰ As such, it is related in meaning to the Latin *formatio*, which can also be used very specifically—for example, when a potter shapes a vessel out of clay.⁶¹ Linguistically, *die Bildung* resembles the term *das Bild*—German for “image” but also “mental image”.⁶² Some scholars, namely Gadamer⁶³, propose a correlation with the concept of *imago dei*, which denotes the understanding of an individual as created in the image of God. Thus, *die Bildung* understood in light of Christianity can figuratively imply a kind of cultivation of this image in an individual.⁶⁴ The prefix *op-* in the Danish word *opbygge* should also be noted, as it indicates an upward direction (*up-build* in English). A similar meaning of the word “upbuild” is preserved in English, for example in the English Standard Version (ESV), where it says in Romans 15:2: “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” This verse nicely illustrates that the education is to serve for spurring one on to growth, but it also presupposes an establishment of a foundation or building block. In his epistle, apostle Paul addresses Christians living in Rome and exhorts them to grow together.

Since Kierkegaard came from the Lutheran church tradition, he must have been familiar with the notion of sanctification, which corresponds to the notion of *die Bildung* in two respects. Before these two points are addressed, it is necessary to define the concept of sanctification as it was understood by German—hence Danish—Pietists of the time. The main contribution of Pietism in Protestantism was its emphasis on justification by faith as *fiducia*, not *assensus*. *Assensus* denotes intellectual knowledge, or assent to doctrinal truths, in which there is no change of heart and no improvement.⁶⁵ *Fiducia*, on the other hand, can be understood as personal faith, trust, or faithful devotion. It originates from

⁶⁰ Clark, M., Thyen, O. (eds.), “ausbilden”, 769.

⁶¹ Saeverot, H., “Bildung, God, and the Ethical School”.

⁶² Clark, M., Thyen, O. (eds.), “bild”, 817-18.

⁶³ Gadamer (2004, xii-xiii) was well acquainted with this concept and pointed out the connection between the early understanding of *die Bildung* and Christian mysticism, in which the supreme goal of an individual was to become the image of God or *imago dei*.

⁶⁴ Saeverot, H., “Bildung, God, and the Ethical School”.

⁶⁵ Delashmutt, G., *Early German Lutheran Pietism's Understanding of Justification*.

God's work within an individual's inner being. As a result of this divine work⁶⁶, the individual undergoes a transformative process which involves the "killing of the old Adam", symbolizing the overcoming of one's sinful nature, and the emergence of a new creation, signifying a renewed and spiritually transformed individual.⁶⁷ According to the Pietists, the very faith that justifies is also the faith that renews and sanctifies an individual. In other words, if there is no sign of sanctification, then there is no restoration and therefore no justification. Sanctification is thus a sign that one has been justified. The already mentioned Phillip Jakob Spener sought to describe the duality in a born-again Christian when he wrote that one is constituted of her "old self", marked by nature and sin, and a "new creation" in her, which is of God and is constantly being renewed.⁶⁸ This new identity has its origin in the image of God. The two natures coexist and struggle with each other in the earthly life of the Christian, but one's natural and corrupt self disappears with bodily death.⁶⁹

What then are the two points in which sanctification and *die Bildung* are similar? The first resemblance can be seen in the concrete template into which one is being molded. In the context of sanctification, it is the image of Christ into which the justified individual grows by faith. Kierkegaard's spokesman Johannes de silencio makes an important remark in *Fear and Trembling* with regard to the upbuilding—here he portrays education (Danish: *dannelse*; translated into English as *cultivation*) as follows: "What then, is education (*Dannelse*)? I believe it is the course (*Cursus*) the individual goes through in order to catch up with h[er]self (*indhente sig selv*), and the person who will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age."⁷⁰ Here, the peculiar use of "to catch up with oneself" points to an *external* form of one's existence which is being approached by the individual, just as the potter models the vessel into a particular shape. The second similarity can be seen in the unfinished process inherent in both sanctification and the Kierkegaardian *die Bildung*. *Becoming oneself* in the Christian sense is an incomplete process—in earthly life, one will never attain an identical likeness

⁶⁶ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:11-12; ESV.

⁶⁷ Delashmutt, G., *Early German Lutheran Pietism's Understanding of Justification*.

⁶⁸ Spener referred to 2 Corinthians 4:16 (ESV): "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." See also Way, S. W., *The Value of Theology: Phillip Jakob Spener's Doctrine of Sanctification*, 71-2.

⁶⁹ Way, S. W., *The Value of Theology: Phillip Jakob Spener's Doctrine of Sanctification*. 71-2.

⁷⁰ FT, 46 / SKS 4, 140.

to Christ, but she can only approach it and be built from the ground up (*up-build* in English, *op-bygge* in Danish).

The nature of an *upbuilding discourse*—etymologically based on *die Bildung*—can also be better understood in contrast with a so-called *deliberation* (*overveielse* in Danish), which is discussed in Kierkegaard’s Preface to the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. *Deliberation*, in contrast to the *upbuilding discourse* explained above, is meant to be provocative, ironic, comic, and turn the reader’s assumptions upside down.⁷¹ In Danish, *deliberation* has its root in the verb “to weigh” (*veje* in Danish). When something is weighed on a scale, there are two weights placed against each other. In a *deliberation*, the reader—standing outside the realm of Christianity—weighs between the finite and the infinite of the matter under discussion. *Upbuilding discourse*, on the other hand, assumes that the reader is Christian—either in the sense of Religiousness B, which is considered fully Christian in this dissertation, or in the sense of the ethico-religious stage of Religiousness A—and is meant to encourage and prompt the Christian virtues that the individual may already possess.

Indeed, traces of “the upbuilding” can be found all throughout Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. Pattison calls attention to various “representative types” inherent in the upbuilding discourses which stand for certain virtues or qualities.⁷² Those qualities can be both positive, e.g. faith, love, patience, or negative, e.g. doubt, envy, hypocrisy. Essentially, Kierkegaard portrays imaginary characters that represent various life stages or life perspectives. Pattison gives the examples of “youth”, “the experienced man”, “the concerned one”, “the one whose wish was denied”, “the humbled one”, “the believer”, “the one who prays”, but there are also instances when Kierkegaard invites his readers to enter in and put themselves in the fictional character’s shoes.⁷³ This can be exemplified on the following citations: “But how do you read this?”⁷⁴, “If you can imagine such a thing, my listener,”⁷⁵ or “Let us suppose that there was a man[.]”⁷⁶.

This might raise questions concerning the Dane’s relation to his audience. How much was he involved in his writings? The answer is not that straightforward. While Kierkegaard is

⁷¹ EUD, Historical Introduction, xvi-xvii.

⁷² Pattison, G., *Kierkegaard’s Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, theology, literature*, 152.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ EUD, 133 / SKS 5, 136.

⁷⁵ EUD, 383 / SKS 5, 366.

⁷⁶ EUD, 269 / SKS 5, 265.

authorially signed under all his upbuilding discourses, he nonetheless stays away from taking full accountability for the writings. This aspect plays itself out in Kierkegaard's rhetoric, specifically in him rarely using the "I" singular pronoun in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*.⁷⁷ Thus, Kierkegaard claims to be writing without authority.⁷⁸ In fact, his Preface explicitly states that a) his speeches are not sermons, since Kierkegaard as an author does not have the authority to preach⁷⁹, and b) his speeches are upbuilding, not educative, since Kierkegaard does not want to call himself a teacher⁸⁰. This authorial qualification is usually interpreted as an act of advanced self-reflection, or the humble acknowledgement that the Dane is not perfect and still has much to learn himself. Another widely accepted view is that Kierkegaard was not an ordained minister. It would be shortsighted, however, to omit another aspect which concerns Kierkegaard's renunciation of authority in the publication of all the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. This passage originally comes from the New Testament epistle of James, with which Kierkegaard was intimately familiar⁸¹.⁸² At the beginning of chapter 3, James writes: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."⁸³ In his journal, Kierkegaard wrote a note titled "Without Authority"⁸⁴, in which he mentioned a standard of measure that neither the God-man, i.e. Christ, nor the apostle need to fear, but Kierkegaard considers himself a mere wretch. He recognizes, however, that Christianity has been imprinted on him without merit of his own and this endowment—which presumably enables him to understand Christianity more deeply—should remind him to remain humble, since it is a deficiency rather than a blessing. The deficiency can be understood as the weight attached to his endowment—hence teaching—since he is subject to a more rigorous judgment. What can be seen here, then, are three meanings behind Kierkegaard's detachment from authority. First, the recognition that he himself needs to be educated, second, the fact that he is not an ordained

⁷⁷ In addition to this, Pattison points out to Kierkegaard's minimal use of his own voice. Instead, he opted for the first person plural—Pattison gives the example of "So shall we talk about the thorn in the flesh". See Pattison, G., *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, theology, literature*, 148.

⁷⁸ "[T]his little book [is] called 'discourses,' not sermons, because its author does not have authority to preach, 'upbuilding discourses,' not discourses for upbuilding, because the speaker by no means claims to be a teacher." EUD, preface, III/11.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Roberts, K. A., "James: Putting Faith to Action", 212.

⁸² This epistle is frequently referred to in his Christian—directly communicated—writings, such as the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* or *Acts of Love*.

⁸³ James 3:1; ESV.

⁸⁴ KJN 7, 101f / SKS 23, 101, NB16: 8.

preacher, and third, the awareness of the commitment and seriousness of Christian teaching as portrayed in the letter of James.

In this context, it is important to note that Kierkegaard gives Christ as the ultimate model for imitation, but there is one more example that he considers worthy of imitation. It is the New Testament figure of the sinful woman. His upbuilding discourse⁸⁵ entitled *The Woman Who Was a Sinner* revolves around the story of the adulterous woman who anointed Jesus' feet with precious oil at a banquet and washed them with her tears. Kierkegaard singles her out in his upbuilding discourse and likens her to a painting: "she is the symbol, like a picture", "[she] rests at his feet-like a picture", or "it is almost as if he [Jesus, added by AP] changed her into a picture, a parable".⁸⁶ The word *image*, however, does not correspond to the Danish original, which uses the term *Forbilledede*⁸⁷, translated as "prototype" or "model". In other words, this woman was transformed into an eternal *prototype* of the great love of Christ and the acceptance of forgiveness.⁸⁸ As for Kierkegaard, she became a model to serve as an example worthy of imitation.

⁸⁵ This upbuilding discourse was published separately in a copy of *Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays* in 1849.

⁸⁶ WA, 141 / SKS 11, 277.

⁸⁷ WA, 142f / SKS 11, SKS 11, 279.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

2. TERMINOLOGY

The upcoming chapter shall explore in detail how Kierkegaard understands doubt as such, its origin and development within one's existence. Nonetheless, before proceeding to the analysis itself, the specific terminology of this dissertation must be defined—specifically the philosophical tradition of doubt starting with Ancient skepticism, followed by Descartes, Hume, and Hegel. Next, Kierkegaard's epistemological doubt will be introduced with the emphasis on the key concepts of consciousness, interest, reflection and subjective beginning. The anatomy of doubt will be drawn from the *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum est* essay in which the underlying principles of doubt are clearly explained. This will lay the foundation for further exploration of doubt, especially when it becomes increasingly subjective, and it starts to concern the individual *wholly*.

2.1 Doubt

2.1.1 The Tradition of Doubt in Philosophy

Although the study of doubt in philosophy is not the focal topic of this dissertation, the evolution of how doubt has been approached by philosophers will be briefly outlined, as it helps better understand and frame the nature of doubting for Kierkegaard. As shall be seen, a fundamental anthropological shift has occurred in the early 19th century with Hegel, who perceived pure doubt as something intensely negative if left unattained on an abstract level. Kierkegaard, too, was influenced by this shift, and his understanding of the role of doubt in one's life is very distinct, differentiating from the traditional praise of doubt.

Beginning with Greek skepticism, the broad term encompasses two approaches to attaining knowledge—Academic skepticism and Pyrrhonism. In general, Ancient skepticism is characteristic first for its radical conviction that the suspension of assent and resigning to ignorance is not a sign of weakness but rather a virtuous intellectual achievement, and second for its systematic argumentation against the possibility of knowledge.⁸⁹ It was the school of academic skepticism, revolving around the Platonic Academy, which first introduced the concept of suspending judgement, or used

⁸⁹ Sedley, D. N., "The Motivation of Greek Skepticism", 10.

equipollence of equally strong arguments as a clever way to counter belief. The Pyrrhonian school of thought later took up those concepts and presented a triad of skepticism's principles. The first principle is the Epicurean *ataraxia*. For Sextus Empiricus—one of the foremost Pyrrhonists—*ataraxia* is the ultimate goal of good conduct of life and is thus the attribute of wisdom. It signifies “freedom from disturbance or calmness of the soul”⁹⁰. It is this indifference that marks *apatheia*—the next important concept—which denotes the “self-control by which one is able to resist emotions, passions and suffering”⁹¹. The third central principle of Greek skepticism is the already mentioned *epoché* or “the cautious attitude of suspending judgment and not yielding to first impressions”⁹². In other words, once judgement is suspended, *ataraxia* arrives. *Epoché*, then, requires giving up any decision because one does not have sufficient knowledge to make it. Thus, the opposite of *ataraxia*, *apatheia*, and *epoché*, is *interest* or something that interests one and attracts her to itself. Although interest is a universal phenomenon for all individuals and as such is an expression of freedom, according to the Pyrrhonists, interest gives rise to skepticism, and too much interest can hold one captive in unfreedom.⁹³ Thus, the Greek skeptics held that if there are two equally strong arguments in conflict with one another, the issue cannot be resolved but must be abandoned.⁹⁴ Needless to say, the concept of *epoché* will be further discussed in the upcoming chapter with respect to Kierkegaard's epistemology, as it bears some similarities with his view that doubt arises out of a concern, or an interest.

The second paradigm in the history of skepticism is contained in Cartesian methodical skepticism. At the beginning of his *Meditations*, Descartes sets for himself a goal to reach certainty in science and to let go of all his preconceived ideas—he seeks to reject all opinions that give him any reason to doubt. Moreover, he wants to do so by undermining the preconceived notions' foundation. There seems to be a double structure of the methodological doubt which corresponds with Rasmussen's view. First, Descartes undermines the sensualist theory via skeptical arguments, which Rasmussen classifies as the “argument of illusion”, the “dream argument”, and the “argument of the evil

⁹⁰ Massie, P., “Philosophy and Ataraxia in Sextus Empiricus”, 218.

⁹¹ Sokol, J., *Malá filosofie člověka a Slovník filosofických pojmů*, 274.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁹⁴ Equipollence denotes an “equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing.” See Annas, J., and J. Barnes, *Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Scepticism*, section 10.

demon”.⁹⁵ Second, Descartes turns skepticism against itself, which results in the emergence of profoundly new form of metaphysics. Rasmussen emphasizes that the first movement within the methodological skepticism is destructive, while the second movement is constructive, as it establishes a radically new metaphysical way of thinking, i.e. “cogito ergo sum”.⁹⁶ As a result, the new paradigm involves self-consciousness inherent in the *res cogitans* which becomes the adequate standard of knowledge. Rasmussen carries on in his explication of the Cartesian doubt by noting that as part of his *Meditations*, Descartes brings back the “argument of the evil demon” in order to warrant knowledge’s validity and objectivity—in doing so, Descartes comes to a conclusion that human reason is the source of knowledge and god “guarantees its ultimate validity”.⁹⁷

Broughton in turn calls attention to a general structure that all of the Cartesian arguments share—according to her, in each of the cases, Descartes forms a “skeptical scenario”, meaning that he constructs first a story about how he has adopted certain beliefs and then a story on which he illustrates how and why those beliefs are fallacious.⁹⁸ In this way, Broughton argues that Descartes’ skeptical scenarios tend to be causal or explanatory in their nature and one cannot resolutely rule out whether each of the scenarios is correct.⁹⁹ As part of his meditation, Descartes comes to realize that thinking is the indubitable proof of his existence, a solid foundation for which he had set out to search. As the approach of methodical skepticism itself suggests, Descartes views systematic doubting as a tool leading to the discovery of *res cogitans*, “a thinking thing”, as an *arche*, “the first principle”.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the above mentioned perspectives suggest that for Descartes, skepticism represents a skill which enables reason to conquer mere trust in one’s senses and thus gives an individual the freedom to discern true and false.

⁹⁵ Rasmussen, A. R., “René Descartes: Kierkegaard’s Understanding of Doubt and Certainty”, 11.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Broughton, J., *Descartes’ Method of Doubt*, 64.

⁹⁹ Broughton gives the following modern-day example. Imagine your current belief that you have shoes on your feet. You would usually believe this because you see and feel the shoes on your feet. However, imagine this, what if you incorrectly believe that you have your shoes on due to your brain being impaired by “persistent black bile vapors”? Understandably, you most likely have shoes on your feet, and you are sane, but upon reflection, the story cannot be completely ruled out. See Broughton, J., *Descartes’ Method of Doubt*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ “But *how* [emphasis added] do I know that there is not something different from all those things I have just listed, about which there is not the slightest room for doubt?” See Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 18.

Another type of academic dubiousness can be demonstrated on David Hume's radical skepticism through which he came to disregard any possibility of general knowledge that could be certain. Furthermore, he pointed out the various modes of reason and its limitations.

In his *Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume begins with dividing the perceptions of the mind into impressions (feelings) and ideas (thoughts). Once a certain type of impression is missing, the corresponding ideas are also missing. Immediately thereafter, he lists several basic principles of the association of ideas. First, all human ideas seem to be derived from impressions. Second, all distinguishable principles can be divided into thought and imagery. Third, possibility can be proven based on the principle of imagery. These principles led Hume to the conclusion that one can know something only with a certain probability through temporal and local relations. Moreover, the causal inference has the nature of belief—the inferred ideas must originally come from *somewhere*, and then the original impression must be examined. This belief is then reinforced by habit, passions, and inclinations. Hume goes on to say that “all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are derived from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures”.¹⁰¹ Book I of the *Treatise* is thus concluded in a radically skeptical manner with Hume writing that memory, senses, and understanding are all founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of one's ideas.

Importantly, Hume was a reader of Sextus Empiricus, a Greek Pyrrhonist, and he reacted to him in his writings. Fieser, for example, understands Hume's skepticism in the Pyrrhonian tradition as “skepticism involving the discovery of contradiction”—this refers to the “negative conclusions that skeptics come to at the end of an investigation” either due to their inability to reach any determinate conclusion, or due to the “fallaciousness of their mental faculties”.¹⁰²

In light of the above, Hume seemed to have viewed Pyrrhonism as a sequence of arguments leading to the adoption of a particular approach to all intellectual and practical problems. These arguments contain the conviction that rational explanations are of no help in solving given problems, for if two opposing arguments are opposed to each other, one cannot rationally decide for one or the other. Hume, however, had a reservation about

¹⁰¹ Hume, D., *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 183.

¹⁰² Fieser, J., “Hume's Pyrrhonism: A Developmental Interpretation”, 94.

Sextus' Pyrrhonism—the main drawback, he thought, was its incompatibility with everyday life. As a result, the human mind refuses to accept doubt, because doubt puts it in an uncomfortable position, and it is nature—not rationality—that protects one from skepticism. Popkin holds that according to Hume, one should adopt epistemological Pyrrhonism, not a practical Pyrrhonism, as it can be paralyzing in the daily life context.¹⁰³

The ultimate anthropological shift can be seen in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, specifically in the *Introduction*, but also in the passage *Freedom of Self-Consciousness; Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness*.

In his *Introduction*, Hegel presents the notion of skepticism understood as “self-consummating”, particularly as a path which “can accordingly be regarded as the path of *doubt*, or, more properly, as the path of *despair*”.¹⁰⁴ Pinkard points out to Hegel's play on the two words of *Zweifel* (doubt) and *Verzweiflung* (despair)—identifying the path of doubt with a path of despair—and interprets the negative self-consummating aspect of skepticism as “corrosive” and undermining everything, skepticism itself included.¹⁰⁵ As a result, skepticism appears to be negative of itself as it comes about as one-sided.¹⁰⁶ Pinkard goes on to say that on the one hand, the already-mentioned negativity is that of content, as it can be understood only *against* something else, i.e. some other content.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Hegel's term *Verstand* (the understanding) occupies itself with the various contrasts and once it comes across incompatible opposites, it either leaves one alone or finds a new contrast. As such, reason is characteristic for its dialectic nature.¹⁰⁸

In the latter section, Hegel describes a so-called *skeptical self-consciousness*, which is the actual experience of freedom of thought.¹⁰⁹ Such self-consciousness is the negativity of

¹⁰³ Popkin, R. H., “David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism”, 406.

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 52.

¹⁰⁵ Pinkard, T. P., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Guide*, 54.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Matějčková supports this claim by explaining that Hegel's dialectics come from the original verb *διαλέγεσθαι*. As such, dialectics represent a speech which is dependent on the “across” or “between” (*διά*)—and it is possible to put into practice only when there is a relation, i.e. when there is “another”. Matějčková thus specifies that dialectics must be also understood as the correct treatment of speech. In this way, dialectics is a path on which one seeks the truth. The path of dialectics is marked with despair—this makes the truth which is sought for not a “cheap truth”, but rather something which has to be thoroughly understood and proven. See Matějčková, T., “Hegelova spekulace jako odpověď na Platónovu dialektiku”, 27f. In this way, Hegel's dialectics can be understood as a continuation with Plato's method of dialogue during which it can lead one into truth.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 120.

all singular individuality and of all difference. Hegel also calls skepticism “*in itself* the negative, and that is the way it must exhibit itself”.¹¹⁰ By negation it creates a dialectical movement which is what Hegel calls an “absolute dialectical unrest”¹¹¹. This movement is what it is *for-itself*, and it orients itself according to ideality on which it acts and actualizes itself. This skeptical self-consciousness is a “perpetually self-creating disorder”¹¹², and it experiences itself as a self-contradictory consciousness. In skepticism, self-consciousness is at work and annihilates the other aspect of existence, but it also duplicates itself and exists to itself as twofold. Hegel famously calls this “state of consciousness itself as doubled”¹¹³ *the unhappy consciousness*. While to itself, the unhappy consciousness once exists as a singular instance, it eventually goes into a universal *self-equal self-consciousness*. As a result, this type of consciousness is tossed between one extreme of *self-equal self-consciousness* and another extreme of disordered consciousness.¹¹⁴ Importantly, it does not bring either of these two thoughts of itself into contact, and thus remains without unity. Prior to the doubling, the same happened between the master and the servant, i.e., two instances of self-consciousness. Even though the duplication of self-consciousness within itself is necessary as part of the spirit, there is no unity at this point.¹¹⁵ The consciousness is unhappy because it fails to unify the two elements of consciousness, meaning the individual consciousness with the absolute. Hegel depicts this constant self-contradiction of consciousness’ mutually exclusive essences without final unity as follows:

“If *equality* is pointed out to it, it points out *inequality*, and if it is reproached with the latter (about which it had just spoken), it quickly shifts over into pointing out *equality*. Its talk is indeed like that of a squabble among stubborn children, one of whom says A when the other says B, and then says B when the other says A. By being in contradiction *with himself*, each of them purchases the delight of remaining in contradiction *with each other*.”¹¹⁶

It can be concluded that Hegel’s concept of doubt always represents the way in which one cannot attain unity with herself on the level of pure thought—that is why Hegel stood

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 121.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid, 123.

¹¹⁴ “*At one time*, it has cognizance of its freedom as an elevation above all the disarray and contingency of existence, and *at another time* it again just as much avows that it is backsliding into *inessentiality* and wandering aimlessly within it.” Ibid, 122.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 123.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 122.

opposite to stoicism and skepticism. Thus, there is no value in empty freedom of one's inwardness; on the contrary, realizing true freedom can happen only outwardly, or in a worldly way. For one needs *the other* for self-recognition and this cannot be achieved on the level of thought. To become truly free, one must realize that freedom in the public sphere through experience. Only then can the original negative concept be transformed into its original form by means of realization. Therefore, Hegel sees a way out of skepticism not in a theoretical, but rather a practical solution.

What is the anthropological shift, then? For the Greek skeptics, Descartes, and Hume, skepticism is an inherent part of human nature, and it does not represent anything necessarily negative. The Pyrrhonists adopted a neutral approach in the form of suspended judgement, Descartes viewed doubting as a useful tool to attaining certainty, Hume supported radical skepticism on an epistemological, not a practical, level. For Hegel, however, skepticism is by no means anything praiseworthy. Contrarily, it is in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* that skepticism is an expression of intense negativity and thus denotes deficiency. Within the realm of thought one can never attain self-certainty, and in knowledge one cannot attain freedom. For theory, as Hegel points out, always ends at the abstract level of skepticism.

2.1.2 Kierkegaard and Doubt

First, it is important to linguistically note that for Kierkegaard, the notion of doubt and skepticism is identical. Kierkegaard holds—following the model of Greek skeptics—that skepticism, like doubt, arises from interest.¹¹⁷ One of the prominent texts in which Kierkegaard discusses epistemological questions most thoroughly is the essay *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*. Kierkegaard started writing this little book in 1843—which, however, remained unfinished—and it was later published posthumously. Moreover, many of Kierkegaard's concepts from this incomplete work reoccur in his *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The essay is written from the perspective of a young philosopher who naïvely attempts to seriously consider the Latin aphorism *De omnibus dubitandum est* (meaning “everything must be doubted”) which he had heard from his academic teachers. In contrast to an upbuilding discourse, this essay was written as a deliberation (dan. *overveielse*; see chapter 1.2) with

¹¹⁷ Brake, M., “Skepticism/Doubt”, 57.

the aim of provoking a reader who stands outside the religious stage of existence, while at the same time wanting to “deceive such a reader into truth” (see chapter 1.1), and with this intention it communicates to her indirectly.

At the beginning of his reflection, Climacus develops the idea that all philosophy begins with doubt. According to him, this statement is ambiguous because, on the one hand, it identifies doubt as the beginning of philosophy and, on the other hand, it identifies doubt as something standing prior to philosophy. This leads him to the realization that the sentence “all philosophy begins with doubt” belongs to the subjective beginning.¹¹⁸ The beginning of philosophy, therefore, cannot be philosophical wonder, for it marks an immediate determination which in itself does not reflect anything. As a result, such principle cannot produce any historical consequence. Doubt, on the other hand, breaks off that continuity as it polemicizes the preceding.

Consequently, Climacus considers three potential beginnings of philosophy: absolute, objective or subjective:

- a) absolute beginning: “that concept which is also the end of the system, the concept of absolute spirit”¹¹⁹;
- b) objective beginning: “the concept of absolutely indeterminate being”¹²⁰;
- c) subjective beginning: “the work of consciousness, by which this elevates itself to thinking or to positing the abstraction”¹²¹.

The subjective beginning interests Climacus the most as it signifies the moment when a non-philosopher became a philosopher. One can reach the same place both by *elevation* and by *doubt*.¹²² However, these two concepts cannot be identified, since their continuity—or movement—is quite different. Elevation, inherent in wonder¹²³, represents a positive principle, i.e., no historical consequence can be drawn from it with respect to the previous philosophy. Nonetheless, a historical consequence can be drawn from doubt, and therefore it is a negative principle.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 27.

¹¹⁹ JC, 149 / SKS 15, 41.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² JC, 150 / SKS 15, 42.

¹²³ See Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d: “For this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy.”

Johannes Climacus continues his reflection by asking himself what it means to doubt. He links the underlying capacity for doubt in an individual to consciousness. In this context, he provides the example of a child's consciousness, noting that it is not yet determined due to its immediacy. Now comes an important passage for this thesis: "In immediacy there is no relation, for as soon as there is a relation, immediacy is canceled. Immediately, therefore, everything is true, but this truth is untruth the very next moment, for in immediacy everything is untrue. If consciousness can remain in immediacy, then the question of truth is canceled."¹²⁴ Climacus goes on to find that immediacy is removed by mediacy, because it is the very mediacy itself that presupposes immediacy. In other words, immediacy can be understood as reality that is subsequently mediated by language as it expresses what is already presupposed. Johannes comes to this conclusion: "Immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality."¹²⁵

Thus, according to Climacus, the possibility of doubt resides within the realm of consciousness. Its essence lies in the contradiction caused by duplexity and also producing duplexity. Consciousness implies a *relation*, and the duplexity, i.e., ideality and reality¹²⁶, can be grasped in two ways: either reality can be brought into relation with ideality, or ideality can be related to reality. Immediately speaking, everything is true or real, respectively in reality as such and in ideality as such, but it is only when ideality is brought into relation to reality that possibility is born. Thus, consciousness arises only in the collision of ideality and reality.¹²⁷

Finally, the role of interest is to be discussed, beginning with Climacus' observation that consciousness is not synonymous with reflection. Indeed, reflection exists as a dichotomous determination, whereas consciousness is determined trichotomously. What is meant by "the third" is the interest of consciousness which makes doubt itself possible as it puts the two concepts in relation to each other. Doubt, then, emerges from interest, while reflection makes the relation possible and is thus disinterested.¹²⁸ Regarding the

¹²⁴ JC, 167 / SKS 15, 54f.

¹²⁵ JC, 168 / SKS 15, 55.

¹²⁶ Stewart proposes that the two terms introduced by Kierkegaard—reality and ideality—are meant to capture Hegel's contradiction between universality and particularity which is portrayed in Hegel's chapter "Sense-Certainty" in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See Stewart, J., *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 275.

¹²⁷ "Doubt arises through my becoming a relation between two; as soon as it ceases, doubt is canceled." Pap. IV B 10:2 n.d., 1842-43.

¹²⁸ JC, 170 / SKS 15, 57.

term *interest*, it is worth noting its etymological root—of which Kierkegaard was well aware¹²⁹—which derives from the Latin *interesse*, i.e. “to be between”. This only highlights the duality which the subjectively interested individual is conscious of. Climacus holds that mathematics, esthetics, or metaphysics represent solely a “disinterested knowledge” which presupposes doubt.¹³⁰ Consequently, doubt is necessitated by objectivity, yet its form transcends any objective thinking by incorporating an additional “third” component, that is interest. As a result, when interest is canceled, doubt is only neutralized—not at all conquered—and “all such knowledge is simply a retrogression”.¹³¹ Climacus acknowledges that the Greek skeptics saw a way out of doubt by transforming *interest* into *apatheia*. Nonetheless, this transformation into *apatheia* is not perfect either and does not exclude doubt altogether. Although all systematic knowledge is disinterested, doubt arises of interest, and so it is only a question of time when doubt comes to life since it feeds off of “everything else as its presupposition”¹³² but it can also occur as a result of seeking to reconcile ideality and reality.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus goes further and defines one’s existence with respect to interest. An existing individual is primarily interested in her own existence, which constitutes her actuality. However, actuality “cannot be rendered in the language of abstraction”.¹³³ Thus, it is actuality which represents the “inter-esse between thinking and being in the hypothetical unity of abstraction”.¹³⁴ Moreover, abstraction concerns both possibility and actuality but it falsely translates actuality into possibility—Climacus holds that abstraction’s “conception of actuality is a false rendition, since the medium is not actuality but possibility”.¹³⁵ This is the downfall of doubt as it abstracts everything, even actuality, and the consciously doubting individual is stuck in a vicious cycle, unable to emancipate from the sea of possibility. Climacus puts it in this way,

¹²⁹ Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes Climacus himself states that “[c]onsciousness is the relation and thereby is interest, a duality that is perfectly and with pregnant double meaning expressed in the word ‘interest’ (interesse [being between])”. JC, 170 / SKS 15, 17.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ CUP1, 314 / SKS 7, 286.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

“Actuality, existence, is the dialectical moment in a trilogy whose beginning and end cannot be for someone who exists, who qua existing is in the dialectical moment. Abstraction merges the trilogy.”¹³⁶

Therefore, at this point it can be summarized that:

- a) Doubt—or skepticism—arises from interest, as with the Greek Stoics.

The difference between cognitive thinking and doubting is that doubting involves interest. Cognition, as opposed to doubting, cannot deceive.

- b) The possibility of doubt arises in mediation.

There is no ratio in immediacy, so in the sphere of immediacy everything is true. Once there is a ratio, immediacy disappears, and truth becomes speculative.

- c) Doubt is trichotomous and falls into the realm of consciousness.

Consciousness is not the same as reflection, because in reflection everything exists as dichotomous. But consciousness presupposes reflection just as mediacy presupposes immediacy. Doubt is born the moment one relates to a dual determination. The possibility of doubt is thus contained in the duplicity of consciousness.¹³⁷

Following this model, it is understandable why Kierkegaard had many objections¹³⁸ to Descartes’ skepticism who was in search for a merely intellectual certainty. Descartes used doubt as a means to a set end which would become a foundation to test all his beliefs.¹³⁹ Kierkegaard objects to this intellectual basis for Cartesian skepticism and that there are no moral questions involved in his doubt. While Descartes writes in the first person, expressing his aspirations and anxieties, Kierkegaard criticizes this seemingly personal rhetoric. Kierkegaard argues that Descartes fails to genuinely question his own existence, a step that should logically follow from serious doubt. An excerpt from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is telling enough—here, Kierkegaard says that there is no particular individual René Descartes engaged in the process of doubting.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ JP 3, 2320 / Pap. IV B 14:6.

¹³⁸ Despite his disagreement with Descartes on skepticism, Kierkegaard still held him in high esteem for his *honesty* as he did what he set out to do; *modesty* in that his method was to serve only him, and *loyalty* since he did not question his faith. See also Kupś, T., “Kierkegaard on Descartes: Doubt as a Prefiguration of Existential Despair”, 23f.

¹³⁹ See also Rudd, A. J., “Kierkegaard and the Skeptics”, 74.

“The Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* [I think therefore I am] has been repeated often enough. If the *I* in *cogito* is understood to be an individual human being, then the statement demonstrates nothing: I *am* thinking ergo I am, but if I *am* thinking, no wonder, then, that I am; after all, it has already been said, and the first consequently says even more than the last. If, then, by the *I* in *cogito*, one understands a single individual existing human being, philosophy shouts: Foolishness, foolishness, here it is not a matter of my *I* or your *I* but of the pure *I*. But surely this pure *I* can have no other existence than thought-existence. What, then, is the concluding formula supposed to mean; indeed, there is no conclusion, for then the statement is a tautology.”¹⁴⁰

Kierkegaard’s take on skepticism can be understood in more depth in contrast with the already discussed Hegel’s introduction to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Rasmussen points out to Kierkegaard adopting Hegel’s distinction—including the linguistic resemblance—between doubt (*Zweifel* in German) and despair (*Verzweiflung* in German). The distinction concerns the scale of doubt, that is a moderate doubt which can be dealt with in everyday life and does not dramatically affect the individual, and a deeper doubt which can ultimately lead to science and truth.¹⁴¹ While preserving the Hegelian distinction to some degree, Kierkegaard nonetheless “simultaneously transforms the two concepts involved”.¹⁴² His complete turn of the two concepts’ content creates a new way of understanding doubt and despair by placing them in two different realms. On the one hand, doubt belongs to the sphere of reason and thought, while on the other hand, despair—understood as a progressed form of doubt—falls within the sphere of existence, will, and selfhood. Thus, objective doubt is the qualification of necessity as it operates on a theoretical level and is directed by thought. As such, this form of doubt indicates that one’s personality is not involved in the movement. Subjective doubt—or despair—is the expression of freedom as it results from an act of will. That is also why Kierkegaard’s spokesman Judge William mentions that “doubt is thought’s despair” and “despair is personality’s doubt”.¹⁴³ Bearing in mind that the Kierkegaardian concept of despair has not yet been introduced in more depth (it will be done so in chapters 2.2.6 and 3.2.2), this passage uncovers the differentiation of subjective and objective doubt. Terminologically, this dissertation will adhere to Kierkegaard’s notion of “saving doubt” and “false doubt” by understanding doubt as one phenomenon which can be approached in two ways, leading to two different existential outcomes. Thus, the term “doubt” will be used both

¹⁴⁰ CUP1, 317 / SKS 7, 288f.

¹⁴¹ Rasmussen, A. R., “René Descartes: Kierkegaard’s Understanding of Doubt and Certainty”, 14.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ EO2, 211 / SKS 3, 203.

for the objective, and the subjective forms of doubt, although the Either/Or II passage operates with the term “despair” in lieu of subjective doubt. After all, Judge William explains that he dedicated his time to find out how doubt is different from despair—he nonetheless seeks to explain the difference “in the hope that it will help orient and situate [the recipient of his letter, added by AP] properly”.¹⁴⁴ Although Judge William admits that he does not have the “virtuosity in playing with categories”¹⁴⁵, he emphasizes that the categorical difference between doubt and despair lies in “the significance of choosing”¹⁴⁶. The use of the terms “subjective doubt” and “objective doubt” will bear the same difference—while one can objectively doubt without choosing it, she cannot subjectively doubt without choosing it.

It can be concluded that skepticism on an abstract, or speculative level leads to a downward spiral out of which it is extremely difficult to emancipate.¹⁴⁷ When the process of doubting by thought starts to evolve and becomes more serious, i.e. involving interest, it is impossible to halt the doubt intellectually. For when one’s objective reason is stretched beyond its limits in the realm of intellectual skepticism, it undergoes a process of perpetual self-destruction within its own domain. That is why Kierkegaard notes that philosophers like Descartes doubted by the virtue of knowledge. The Greek skeptics, however, doubted by the virtue of will. Kierkegaard holds that namely Pyrrhonism excelled at suspending judgement not by theoretical reason, but via decision, or an act of will.¹⁴⁸ Since the possibility of error will always be present in one’s life, the solution for Kierkegaard is not a “conclusion but a *resolution* [emphasis added by AP], and thus doubt is excluded”¹⁴⁹. The exclusion of doubt in resolution will be further explained in chapter 5.1 (pp. 162-4). For the Ancient skeptics, the suspension of judgement served as a means to achieve practical life rather than theoretical knowledge—as was already mentioned, the skeptics thought that without the suspension of judgement, one could not go about her everyday life.¹⁵⁰ In a sense, the same practical approach can be tracked in Hume’s notion

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ EO2, 211 / SKS 3, 203.

¹⁴⁷ “Having to exist with the help of the guidance of pure thinking is like having to travel in Denmark with a small map of Europe on which Denmark is no larger than a steel pen-point—indeed, even more impossible.” CUP1, 310f / SKS 7, 283.

¹⁴⁸ PF, 82 / SKS 4, 281.

¹⁴⁹ PF, 84 / SKS 4, 283.

¹⁵⁰ “In Greece, however, attention was paid to what it means to exist. The skeptical ataraxia was therefore an existence-attempt to abstract from existing. In our day one abstracts in print, just as in print one doubts everything once and for all.” CUP1, 318 / SKS 7, 289.

that radical skepticism cannot function in the everyday life as it would leave one completely paralyzed.

2.2 Existential Stages in Regard with Doubt

It is important to understand one's existence as an inner experience that is highly variable and may undergo changes over time. Kierkegaard understands this development as a path to *becoming oneself* in the true sense and distinguishes what he calls the three stages of existence. These stages—which the Dane also calls existential spheres—do not refer to periods of life through which one consistently passes, but rather to existential paradigms that illustrate the problem of one's existential development. If one proceeds from one existential sphere to another, the previous stage or stages do not merely stay behind the individual on steps of a ladder but rather they are “absorbed and relativized”.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, the progression onto higher existential stages *may* or *may not* happen as the growth in existence is not guaranteed, but at the same time is available to everyone. Moreover, false doubt can have its toll on one's existence and prevent the individual from growing, but saving doubt can help one mature despite the hardships it brings.

Generally, Kierkegaard distinguishes between three spheres of existence: esthetics, ethics, and religiousness. One may voluntarily or unconsciously remain in the lower stages, but it is entirely up to one's free choice how her existence will manifest itself in concrete terms. The shift to the next stage of existence always happens by leaps with the active cooperation of the individual. It must be remembered, however, that the three stages are not meant to be approached encyclopedically, but rather as providing better understanding of Kierkegaard's very comprehensive existential philosophy of *becoming Christian* which is intricately contained in his writings.

This section will focus on the different stages of existence with respect to doubt. It shall be seen how the role of spirit intensifies with the progression of one's existence and with the acquisition of consciousness. The concept of spirit can be understood as a “conscious self-relation” or a specific kind of freedom that contains anxiety and duality. In essence, it exists as a contradiction—or contrast—between two opposites: finitude and infinity, temporality and eternity, possibility and necessity. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Vigilius Haufniensis notes that the synthesis of the temporal

¹⁵¹ Amir, L., “Stages”, 93.

and the eternal is not another synthesis but an expression of the first synthesis, according to which one is a synthesis of psyche and body held together by spirit.¹⁵² Each further movement of the spirit into the next existential stage requires a fuller, lived freedom, on the part of the actualizing individuality. It can be concluded that the individual exists based on the relationality between the opposites, and there is a recurrent progression of the spirit into still higher forms of freedom. At this point, however, it should be noted that the spirit is not fully active in all stages of existence, but its intensity is proportionately related to the degree to which the consciousness of the individual is present.¹⁵³ Since consciousness is closely related to the arising doubt, the relationship between growing consciousness and doubt is exponential—thus, the more consciousness and spirit increase, the more skepticism grows.

2.2.1 Esthetic Existence

Same as every existential stage, the esthetic existence can be understood as “life-view and life-development” which resembles the psychological development beginning as the infant’s immediate sense exposure all the way to respectfully acknowledging the existence of another as a mature spirit.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the esthetic¹⁵⁵ sphere represents the initial stage of the self’s development which can be likened to infancy.

Mark C. Taylor cautions against interpretations of the esthetic stage that restrict it solely to pleasure-seeking or mere objectivity, excluding any meaningful involvement of the individual. While the esthetic stage of existence can take on one of these forms, Taylor proposes understanding esthetics as composed of two poles—immediacy and reflection. While the immediate pole lacks decision and reflection as its condition, the reflective pole

¹⁵² CA, 88 / SKS 4, 392.

¹⁵³ SUD, 29 / SKS 11, 146.

¹⁵⁴ McDonald, W., “Aesthetic/Aesthetics”, 27.

¹⁵⁵ Ziolkowski highlights the distinct use of the term “aesthetics” in Kierkegaard’s philosophical-theological vocabulary and points out to its specificity in light of the early 19th century context. The term itself was coined by A. G. Baumgarten (1714-1762) in an attempt to establish a more rationalist-philosophical approach to the study of poetry and art. Essentially, Baumgarten presented art as a discipline which can be understood as preparatory to speculative knowledge but at the same time, he doubted their compatibility. Moreover, he believed that beauty was to be appreciated as a perfection which can be felt or perceived.¹⁵⁵ Although there is no evidence that Kierkegaard was a reader of Baumgarten, Ziolkowski points out that he must have been acquainted with his concepts to some degree through his study of *Vorschule der Aesthetik* by Jean Paul, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* by K. W. F. Solger, or through H. L. Martensen’s lecture on the History of Philosophy from Kant to Hegel in which he briefly mentioned Baumgarten. Kierkegaard adopted the term some 100 years later and innovatively adapted it to denote a stage of existence. See Ziolkowski, E. J., “Kierkegaard’s Concept of the Aesthetic: A Semantic Leap from Baumgarten”, 34-37.

understandably involves reflection, but there is no decision present either. As a result, Taylor argues, the absence of decision within the esthetic stage results into a grave consequence—the individual cannot be called an actual self, as self-conscious decision is the means by which the self is constituted.¹⁵⁶ Although no self-determining decision—therefore no actual self—can be found in the esthetic stage, the self is determined as talent. The term “talent” translates as *Gave* in Danish which linguistically stems from the past tense of “to give” (*gav* in Danish)—Taylor interprets this nuanced definition as a dimension of the esthetic stage of existence which denotes a “self that is given, and that has not developed through the individual’s own decisions”.¹⁵⁷

The initial form of esthetic existence begins its development at the immediate pole of the esthetic existence. As was previously discussed, immediacy can be understood as a childlike quality—the individual relates immediately to finitude and her existence is self-centered, indulgent, and guilt-free. Due to its eccentricity—relating in the direction of *outside* from oneself—this early form of esthetic existence prevents one from self-reflecting in any way, let alone taking responsibility for her given self. Moreover, in immediacy, the individual is not able to differentiate herself from the outside world (“not-self”).¹⁵⁸ It can be said that the esthete longs for freedom, but not the one which can be obtained only in the highest sphere of religiousness. Rather, the esthetically pursued freedom is mistakenly taken to be instant happiness and satisfaction—the freedom is thus limited to a fleeting moment which cannot move the individual forward, as she does not reflect on her history. Furthermore, the esthete does not comprehend the eternal—perhaps only in art or romantic love. Essentially, the esthetic existence is driven by a desire for something interesting as a way to escape boredom. As part of the chase for the interesting, the esthete develops moods—*Stemninger* in Danish, stemming from the etymological root “attunement”—which are nonetheless everchanging, so the individual’s existence is unstable and dependent on circumstances. The various moods represent a state of mind which influences one’s emotional-psychological life in its entirety, the influence nevertheless depends on the intensity of the particular mood.¹⁵⁹ For Kierkegaard, the three underlying moods are anxiety, melancholy, and despair. In the esthetic stage of existence, the moods are starting to manifest in the individual’s life, but they gradually intensify in

¹⁵⁶ Taylor, M. C., *Kierkegaard’s Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and Self*, 129.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 130.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 133.

¹⁵⁹ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 124.

the ethical existence.

The only way to break out of this is through the disturbance of immediacy. This happens when something *external* begins to affect the individual and upsets the calm and seemingly bountiful conduct of her esthetic existence. As such, one's existence can develop only when the individual undergoes "a protracted stage of self-alienation" starting off as the awakening of desire—the unsettling *lack* of something in one's life which opens the split between the subject and object wide open, and which gives rise to objectless anxiety.¹⁶⁰

Here comes a moment when the immanent, pre-reflective, pole of esthetic existence "is ripe, so to speak, and the spirit requires a higher form, when it wants to lay hold of itself as spirit".¹⁶¹ This signifies a transition to the reflective pole of the esthetic existence in which one's self-consciousness develops and as a result, the individual is able to distinguish herself from the world. The esthete's existence culminates both with the rise of reflection, but also with the occurrence of irony¹⁶² as the distinctive mark of the esthetic existence's highest form which can continue onto the ethical sphere of existence. Here, irony is to be understood as an infinite negativity that leverages negative freedom to abolish finitude or relativity.¹⁶³ Additionally, true irony liberates one from the seriousness of life. Irony also signifies that the individual has turned more inward. At this stage, the ironist has discovered an actual self and an ideal self—if she decides to anchor herself in the ideal, her life has transformed. McCarthy asserts that melancholy "brings one to consciousness of genuine crisis within the personality and the need for imminent resolution".¹⁶⁴ The reflective pole of the esthetic existence denotes what Taylor calls "a life in possibility".¹⁶⁵ Since her reflection is infinite, so are the countless of possibilities that arise. The kind of reflection typical for this pole of the esthetics is characteristic for its outward direction—when the individual begins to sense emptiness within herself and demand its fulfillment, she starts to relate dialectically outward to purely practical or intellectual goals but shies away from any decision-making. The esthetic existence is thus characterized by constant movement and discontinuity, hence the absence of any

¹⁶⁰ McDonald points out the Platonic nature of desire, meaning that one can only desire that which she lacks. See McDonald, W., "Aesthetic/Aesthetics", 27.

¹⁶¹ EO2, 188 / SKS 3, 183.

¹⁶² Irony and its significance in Kierkegaard's philosophy will be discussed in chapter 1.4.1 (pp. 66-8).

¹⁶³ CI, 254 / SKS 1, 292.

¹⁶⁴ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 129.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, M. C., *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and Self*, 162.

permanence. In this way, one can dialectically relate to a wide spectrum of different phases ranging from the simplest—such as the desire for beauty as a means to fill that void—to the most complex, where the esthete begins to reflect on her desires and becomes aware of the contradiction between ideality and reality. When the individual fully reflects on her desire—one may even begin to experience pleasure in overcoming the desire—the esthetic stage escalates as the individual now realizes the futility of her actions and melancholy starts to slowly set in. Melancholy can be understood as a mood which weighs heavily on the individual's personality—the esthete rejects all finite possibilities, becomes increasingly sensitive and is open to the potential existential growth in theory, but she has not yet actualized the wish in decision.

Thus, the esthete's existence can mature into the ethical stage only when her reflection transforms from objective to a subjective one. Subjective reflection denotes reflecting on one's own self in order to better comprehend one's existential situation. It is within this sphere that decision can take place. As was already foreshadowed, no movement can take place without one's cooperation—it demands an act of will, i.e. decision. The first act of despair represents a choice of oneself as spirit established by another. Once the individual makes this movement, she gains a new relationship to God as another. Nevertheless, the moods, the spirit, or doubt do not go away with the progression onto the ethical existence—quite the contrary, they continue to intensify. In fact, despair seems to emerge as a pathway from the esthetic categories to the ethical stage of existence. The despair is stirred by the awakening of the “dreaming spirit”¹⁶⁶ which enables one to become more conscious of the eternal. With regard to doubt, the initial esthetic existence may contain doubt either on a purely intellectual level or the individual is not aware of doubt at all, hence she experiences anxiety. However, once the esthetic existence starts to progress with consciousness, the doubt bursts into an existential level along with despair. On the verge of the esthetic-ethical existence, doubt has developed from a mere epistemological exercise into a substantial existential despair.

2.2.2 Ethical Existence

If the esthetic stage of existence was marked with a lack of decision, it is precisely decision which makes the ethical stage distinct from the esthetic one. The ethical

¹⁶⁶ CA, 41-3 / SKS 4, 347-9.

individual becomes the master of her desires—in fact, she can even control or suppress them. Considering each of the existential stages with regard to the extremes of the relation, the previous esthetic existence was associated with one’s gravitation toward the extreme of finitude. Nonetheless, in the ethical existence, the individual inclines towards the counter-pole, i.e. ideality. The ethical attitude thus constantly measures one’s actions against ideality—for the ethical individual, ideality denotes perfection and full self-actualization.¹⁶⁷ However, ethics will never be sufficient enough to adequately fulfill the ideals. It is precisely this clash that becomes misleading for an individual at this stage since the ideal transcends one’s finitude. Kierkegaard often illustrates the principles of ethics on the example of Pharisees, who confused the “authenticity of an individual” with the “obeying of laws by an individual” and were convinced that good deeds stand for genuine piety. Compared to the esthete, the ethical individual’s existence is more inward and subjective. The deepened subjectivity implies, as Stack formulates it, that the individual has come to know her actual self to the degree that was possible, “accepts responsibility for what one has been”, and thus the individual’s self “is consolidated in and through resolute choice”.¹⁶⁸ In other words, there is a deeper relationship of the ethical individual to herself—to her center—and “the mood of the person who lives ethically is centralized”.¹⁶⁹ The ethical individual’s task, then, is to persist in her moral development but not by the consistency of thought, but rather the consistency of attitude.¹⁷⁰ This requires accepting one’s actual self along with the various shortcomings and imperfections with the cultivation of self-reflection.

However, one cannot become herself fully if she persists in this stage of existence for too long—after all, the ethically-existent individual measures her actions against an unattainable ideal which she cannot attain by her own might and effort. Since the eternal God and the everchanging world are qualitatively two distinct categories, the ethics is not enough to provide full self-actualization of the individual.

In between the late-ethical and the early-religious stages of existence, there is a peculiar phase characterized by humor. Its boundary can be identified at the point where the ethical individual encounters the God-man and realizes the totality of guilt and the absoluteness

¹⁶⁷ Amir, L., “Stages”, 93.

¹⁶⁸ Stack, G. J., “Kierkegaard: The Self and Ethical Existence”, 109.

¹⁶⁹ EO2, 230 / SKS 3, 220.

¹⁷⁰ Stack, G. J., “Kierkegaard: The Self and Ethical Existence”, 109.

of sin. Kierkegaard views humor as something that tenses the strings of human subjectivity and can nudge one into the realm of existence that bridges irony. In fact, humor disarms irony in its skepticism—while irony focuses on human finitude, humor focuses on human sinfulness. At this stage, the individual is aware of and begins to show an interest in eternity which stands contrary to suffering and isolation. In *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Climacus argues that humor is indispensable for coping with the demands of Christianity.¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, even humor can be twofold—Climacus distinguishes between immature and mature humor. On the one hand, immature humor lacks sufficient reflection, springs from the esthetic, and leads to nothing higher—in *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, it is described as “flippancy that has skipped too soon out of reflection”¹⁷². On the other hand, mature humor is a prerequisite for embracing Christianity, as it is aware of suffering, the contradictions inherent in religiosity, and as it can think of Christian categories—such as sin, sacrifice, forgiveness of sins—as of possibilities. Just as irony foreshadows another existential stance, humor signals the religious stage of existence. Thus, the leap into religiousness depends—same as in the case of irony—on the individual's conscious decision.

An especially important aspect in the ethical existence with respect to doubt is despair which gradually grows with the increase of spirit. In the higher—or the more progressed—form of despair the individual comes to a dreadful realization that she by no means can achieve the possibility of freedom which is inherent in her relation to the eternal. Moreover, the individual has at this point become conscious of the spirit's importance as part of one's *being*, but also the disequilibrated relation to another—God—due to sin. As a result, the despairing individual has a deeper and more realistic view of oneself, but at the same time she longs for self-affirmation. It is guilt-consciousness and sin-consciousness which give rise to the spiritual possibility of the individual's restoration. Nonetheless, it must be followed by an act of will which is inherent in the double movement of infinite resignation and the leap of faith. It is precisely the profound experience of despair which moves one to the vulnerable state of sin-consciousness. With regard to doubt, it is saving doubt—directed inward towards one's self—that renders one incapable of anything, and thus necessitates divine intervention. Nonetheless, if one

¹⁷¹ CUP1, 272 / SKS 7, 246f.

¹⁷² CUP1, 292 / SKS 7, 266.

succumbs to false doubt—which doubts everything except itself—she becomes trapped in an endless cycle of reflection, overwhelmed by the multiplicity of knowledge, and ultimately blinded by intellectual pride and a pervasive mistrust. As a result, the individual descends into a state of despair that offers no hope for redemption. This despair stems from the inability to achieve authentic freedom, which, according to Kierkegaard, can only be found in one’s relationship with the eternal.

2.2.3 Religious Existence

Religiousness is an intricate stage of existence, as it is not a unified sphere but rather consists of Religiousness A and Religiousness B. Religiousness A can be understood as an ethical-religious stage, representing a highly developed ethical life-view that exhibits characteristics of Christian religiosity. As a result, it is quite problematic to pinpoint when exactly one transitions fully into Religiousness A. Nonetheless, it can be argued that ethical existence begins to escalate significantly when the individual develops sin-consciousness and guilt-consciousness. As such, Religiousness A merges with the sphere of humor but differs from it in the individual’s concrete decision to relate to the eternal absolutely while relating relatively to the relative.¹⁷³ Religiousness A concerns an important phenomenon of self-annihilation which—as shall emerge from the upcoming chapters—is the product of saving doubt. The annihilation of the self, synonymous with dying to oneself, leaves one in a state of vulnerability, rendering her capable of nothing at all. This vulnerability, however, is essential for establishing an intimate relationship with the God-man. Within Religiousness A, one becomes more conscious of how paradoxical this relationship is in its nature. Religiousness A is essentially immanent as the individual grows more aware of the eternal aspect of one’s self—Kierkegaard uses the terms “inward infinity”¹⁷⁴ or “infinity inside [oneself]”¹⁷⁵.

In Religiousness A, the deepening of one’s subjectivity inevitably leads to the increase of doubt and despair. While saving doubt plays its part in self-annihilation and in feeling oneself a helpless but conscious sinner, it is solely up to the individual whether she will decide to make the movement of faith. Nonetheless, this movement is much swifter and more sudden than the previous—rather steady—transition from the late-ethical stage into Religiousness A. One leaps from Religiousness A to Religiousness B by infinite

¹⁷³ See also Amir, L., “Stages”, 94f.

¹⁷⁴ CI, 298 / SKS 1, 332.

¹⁷⁵ CI, 298 / SKS 1, 331.

resignation—aided by the saving doubt—followed by the qualitative movement of faith. This moment represents the New Testament *metanoia*, i.e. genuine repentance which signifies a sudden change of mind or a sharp turn from one’s old ways towards God.

When the individual reaches a state of profound helplessness, acutely aware of the chasm between the spirit and the another, a wondrous transformation takes place. On the one hand, the grip of temporality, necessity, and finitude is annulled. Yet, simultaneously, they are integrated into a higher synthesis, arising from the individual’s newfound awareness of the eternal, freedom, and infinitude. Moreover, this higher synthesis is grounded in God—the another—which establishes the synthesis of the opposite extremes and mends the wide gap between the individual and God. This lies at the heart of the Lutheran *sola gratia* and *sola fidé*—the reconciliation happens out of God’s *agapé* love and grace.

Religiousness B as the subsequent and the highest sphere of existence is transcendent. It is based on the historical event of eternal God becoming temporally incarnate in Christ, and the individual thus encounters God outside of herself. This life-view is inherently paradoxical—the individual longs for eternity through a relationship with somebody *else*, specifically the eternal God who became historical in a particular time. Therefore, Religiousness B requires faith that stands in contrast to reason. The only way one can maintain a relationship with the God-man while living in a world full of relativities, is through faith as an act of will. Only the act of will is capable of bridging history and bringing about contemporaneity with Christ. Religiousness B—in which the individual becomes fully herself—is not a stagnant sphere of existence but rather a life-perspective of faith which must be maintained, renewed, and fought for via the Pauline “good fight”¹⁷⁶.

To conclude, one must deal with paradoxes in Religiousness A, but especially in Religiousness B. Perhaps the biggest paradox is that of faith which goes hand-in-hand with the notion of offense at God-man—one is either offended or believes. Christian faith thus gives the individual a new form of knowledge as both practical and religious relation to the revealed truth in Christ.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, since absolute truth surpasses mere human understanding to such an extent that it cannot be contained objectively, it presents yet

¹⁷⁶ 2 Timothy 4:7.

¹⁷⁷ Tallach, J., “In Order the to Find God: Kierkegaard and Objective Revelation”, 156f.

another paradox. Being offended and believing thus stand in mutual contradiction.

Regarding the objective of this dissertation, it is important to note that dialectically faith is the opposite of sin, but epistemologically faith is the opposite of reason, hence doubt. For faith and doubt have opposite ends—while the ultimate goal of doubt is epistemic certainty, the ultimate end in Christian faith is the God-man. Moreover, while skepticism suspends belief, faith suspends unbelief since faith in itself lacks any epistemic certainty. To have Christian faith, then, is to have the assurance of one’s salvation—assurance which transcends reason, assurance which excludes doubt, and assurance which flows from the decision to believe in Christ. As was already mentioned in the previous chapter, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Climacus states that the Greek skeptics “doubted not by virtue of knowledge but by virtue of will”.¹⁷⁸ He then goes on to describe belief as something that is “not a knowledge but an act of freedom, an expression of will”.¹⁷⁹ For Kierkegaard, there will always be a gap between understanding something versus doing it. That is why the concept of will represents a free act which connects possibility and actuality—or thought and action—but also an element which moves the self. As such, when *relating to* any phenomenon, the underlying task of an individual is not to merely decide between two equally strong alternatives, but the task is existential—to make the right decision and cling to it in the long run.¹⁸⁰ This principle also applies to Religiousness B, where the Christian’s primary task becomes persevering in the commitment made through the leap of faith.

¹⁷⁸ PF, 82 / SKS 4, 281.

¹⁷⁹ PF, 83 / SKS 4, 282.

¹⁸⁰ Strande, N., “Will”, 238-9.

3. SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDIED TEXTS

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* as the primary source for the upcoming hermeneutical interpretation, this brief chapter will outline the referencing system employed for the various upbuilding discourses. Additionally, it will provide an overview of the organization and publication history of these texts as authored by Kierkegaard.

The *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*—upon which this entire analysis is primarily built—contain key passages to Kierkegaard’s view on doubt, the genesis of doubt, as well as the evolution of doubt in one’s existence. Moreover, they provide a unique outlook on the Garden of Eden story as portrayed in the book of Genesis. Since these discourses will be referenced all throughout the analysis, the upcoming passage will provide a general overview of the book, its design and structure.

The translation¹⁸¹ of Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses (Atten Opbyggelige Taler* in Danish), from which the upcoming analysis will stem, is the one by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, its first edition being released in 1990 along with a historical introduction and accompanying notes. It consists of two sets of the total of nine discourses released by Kierkegaard in 1843 and 1844: *Two Upbuilding Discourses* from 1843, *Three Upbuilding Discourses* from 1843, *Four Upbuilding Discourses* from 1843, *Two Upbuilding Discourses* from 1844, *Three Upbuilding Discourses* from 1844, and *Four Upbuilding Discourses* from 1844.

Contents of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*

Historical Introduction (written by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong)

Two Upbuilding Discourses (1843)

The Expectancy of Faith

Every Good and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above [Every Good Gift 1]

Three Upbuilding Discourses (1843)

Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins

¹⁸¹ As for English, there are two translations of Kierkegaard’s *Opbyggelige Taler*, one of them being Swenson’s *Edifying Discourses* published between 1943-1946, the other being Edna and Howard Hong’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* which in its title adhered to the original term *opbyggelige* having the etymological root *opbygge* (“to build up” in English).

Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins

Strengthening in the Inner Being

Four Upbuilding Discourses (1843)

The Lord Gave, and the Lord Took Away; Blessed Be the Name of the Lord

Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above [Every Good Gift 2]

Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above [Every Good Gift 3]

To Gain One's Soul in Patience

Two Upbuilding Discourses (1844)

To Preserve One's Soul in Patience

Patience in Expectancy

Three Upbuilding Discourses (1844)

Think about Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth

The Expectancy of an Eternal Salvation

He Must Increase; I Must Decrease

Four Upbuilding Discourses (1844)

To Need God Is a Human Being's Highest Perfection

The Thorn in the Flesh

Against Cowardliness

One Who Prays Aright Struggles in Prayer and Is Victorious—in That God Is Victorious

Supplement (written by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong)

Key to References

Original Title Pages

Selected Entries from Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers Pertaining to *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*

Regarding the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses'* content, there are several aspects and categorizations to consider. In the first place, the upbuilding discourses contain a distinct Protestant approach to religious virtues. Gouwen describes how the virtues can be understood both substantively and relationally. The substantive part can be seen in virtues that manifest as character traits which have developed over time and thus signal that one

journeys through life and progresses over time via the ethical formation or by the religious existence itself.¹⁸² The relational part denotes that the virtuous individual is in a relationship with God and accepted by him.¹⁸³ However, in such a way, there is a tension between the upbuilding discourses' emphasis on the virtuous life of good deeds on the one hand, and their accentuation of grace and mercy which cannot be achieved by effort on the other. Next, there are what Marek calls three ways in which the upbuilding discourses speak to the reader. First, they argue the reader out of what she should avoid and reject—in that sense, they are restrictive or negative. Second, they encourage the reader to heed, cultivate, or seek something—thus, they are positive. Third, the upbuilding discourses contain messages that are not homogenous in content but rather they evolve dialectically—this marks their dynamic aspect.¹⁸⁴ The dynamic facet lies in the incomplete process of *becoming oneself* which is covered by Kierkegaard in topics such as learning about the newly discovered subjectivity, keeping the religious virtues alive in the everyday life, abandoning one's old ways, or embracing one's imperfections and shortcomings. This dynamic side to the upbuilding discourses also appears in Gowen's take on Kierkegaard's ethico-religious images of character-building, soul-making, or continuity—in brief, the “ongoing intentions, dispositions, judgements, and motivations that characterize a person over time”.¹⁸⁵

In the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, there are instances of more discourses bearing the same title, especially the three discourses which will be focal for the interpretation. As this can create confusion to some extent, each discourse has been indexed with *Every Good Gift 1*, *Every Good Gift 2*, and *Every Good Gift 3* to differentiate between the three. The identically-titled upbuilding discourses *Every Good Gift* and *Every Perfect Gift Is from Above* derive from the verses in the New Testament's Epistle of James:

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of

¹⁸² Gouwens, D. J., *Kierkegaard as religious thinker*, 117.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Marek, J., *Kierkegaard. Nepřímý prorok existence*, 150-71.

¹⁸⁵ Gouwens, D. J., *Kierkegaard as religious thinker*, 93f.

the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”¹⁸⁶

All three discourses will serve the analysis to some degree, but *Every Good Gift 2* from the four-volume set published in 1843 will be central. While *Every Good Gift 1* describes the nature of the “good gift”, and *Every Good Gift 3* discusses giving and receiving, the second discourse (*Every Good Gift 2*) interprets the verses from the letter of James in the context of doubt and faith. It is in this upbuilding discourse that Kierkegaard explicitly describes the origin of doubt in the story of Genesis 3, when skepticism entered the world along with knowledge in the form of fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

As a matter of fact, almost all of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* will be quoted or referenced throughout the interpretation at some point. However, it should be emphasized that the *To Need God Is a Human Being’s Highest Perfection* upbuilding discourse—often shortened to *To Need God*—represents another fundamental text which contains valuable thoughts on the two ways of relating to one doubt. It is in this upbuilding discourse that Kierkegaard explicitly states that in order for an individual to correspond fully to God, she must paradoxically become capable of nothing at all though *profound self-knowledge* which understands that by becoming the one in need, one gains herself. This upbuilding discourse will be frequently referenced in the *In Between False and Saving Doubt* chapter, as it illustrates the process of inward-directed doubt culminating in self-annihilation. This self-annihilation, which leads to the need of God, turns into the very prerequisite to faith.

*

Furthermore, this dissertation will incorporate relevant insights from other key works by Kierkegaard. Some of the most influential writings with regard to skepticism and doubt’s formal structure are those texts written under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. As was already witnessed in chapter 2.1.2 (pp. 37-44), his short, yet thought-provoking, posthumously published essay *De omnibus dubitandum est* provides a detailed—almost anatomical in its scholarly style of writing—analysis of doubt, its origin, and its effects on one’s existence when approached by means of modern philosophy, i.e. objectively, in the same fashion as the Cartesian methodological skepticism. *Philosophical Fragments*

¹⁸⁶ James 1:17-22; ESV.

along with the sequel *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (also *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* for short) represent other writings by the pseudonym Johannes Climacus which broaden the perspective on doubt outside of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. They both deal with the differentiation between subjective and objective doubt, but they also mention the two potential existential outcomes of one doubt. Nonetheless, this dissertation will resource from other Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works as well, especially *Either/Or*, *Sickness unto Death*, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *Practice in Christianity*. Although these sources contain many valuable insights into skepticism, relating to doubt, or even faith in contrast with doubt, they will be secondary to the already-discussed *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. The other sources will serve to expand and support the main claims or show the interconnectedness with other writings by Kierkegaard or his pseudonymous spokesmen.

II. ANALYSIS

1. ONE DOUBT, TWO WAYS OF RELATING TO IT

The objective of this chapter is to establish a coherent understanding of doubt as one phenomenon with two possible ways of relating to it. Although the analysis will refer to “false doubt” and “saving doubt”—which may evoke two characters that are either good or bad—they are only supposed to pinpoint the two potential existential states resulting from one doubt, the doubting individual being responsible for how she relates to it. The two terms stem from Kierkegaard’s *Every Good Gift 2* in which he identifies false doubt on the one hand and doubt which has the potential to save an individual through faith on the other.

“False doubt doubts everything except itself; with the help of faith, the doubt that saves doubts only itself.”¹⁸⁷

Moreover, the following excerpt from the same upbuilding discourse (*Every Good Gift 2*) reveals that while knowledge can give birth to doubt, knowledge also has the capacity to *guide* an individual. As such, it can be presupposed that knowledge can produce both negative and positive existential outcomes.

“With the knowledge, doubt became more inward, and the knowledge, *which should have guided man* [emphasis added by AP], fettered him in distress and contradiction.”¹⁸⁸

This thesis can be expanded by a quote from the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse in which Kierkegaard writes that knowledge can either deceive or educate. The duality inherent in knowledge—or the two possible outcomes—stands out in the Danish original where Kierkegaard uses the verbs *opdrage* (“to educate”) and *bedrage* (“to deceive”). Both of them share a common etymological root *drage* and by adding the prefix *op-*, it signifies an upward direction, while by adding *be-*, the direction is downward.

“[A]lthough one would not therefore deny that through its pain it [knowledge, added by AP] educates a person, if [s]he is honest enough to want to be educated [opdrages] rather than to be deceived [bedrages].”¹⁸⁹

With regard to the terminology employed in this dissertation, the term “false doubt” marks objective doubt, which is governed by thought, while the term “saving doubt”

¹⁸⁷ EUD 137 / SKS 5, 140.

¹⁸⁸ EUD, 127 / SKS 5, 131.

¹⁸⁹ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

represents subjective doubt, which arises from an act of will. Therefore, subjective doubt can be equated with despair as it represents an advanced form of doubt which has permeated existence and personality.

1.1 What Did Eden Look Like Before Doubt?

First, it is crucial to reconstruct the Garden of Eden as it existed before it was corrupted by sin. Kierkegaard writes at the beginning of his *Every Good Gift 2* that by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve disturbed the peace.¹⁹⁰ What was this original peace characterized by? Kierkegaard is referring to Old Testament *shalom*, which encompasses more than just the absence of war or the opposite of unrest. Novotný, in his *Czech Language Bible Dictionary*, states that in the Old Testament sense, *shalom* can be understood as steadiness, integrity, wholeness, perfection, something complete, but also harmony, concord, or figuratively the togetherness of family and larger units.¹⁹¹ O'Collins and Farrugia's *Concise Dictionary of Theology*, on the other hand, describes *peace* as the broad riches received in union with God.¹⁹² Kierkegaard speaks similarly of this kind of peace when he calls it "secure peace" and associates it with "the quiet celebration of beauty", "the all-enveloping blessing of heaven", adding that "heaven did not have to mirror earth" because "heaven was earth" and "the image of God was impressed on all creation as a reflection of eternal glory".¹⁹³ On the ground of this harmony—concord, perfection, or completeness—nothing had to be questioned or contradicted for everything was in its essence true and appeared as it was. After all, God said of his creation that it was good.¹⁹⁴

In his *Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Vigilius Haufniensis writes about a state of innocence in which there was no sin. He equates innocence with ignorance, not pejoratively, but rather as a state of *not knowing*—not knowing what is good and evil, nor any distinction between the two. He continues by noting that "ignorance is qualified by spirit", and that spirit was not at work during this state because ignorance in the original Eden, prior to sin, was about nothing.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

¹⁹¹ Novotný, A., "Pokoj", 669.

¹⁹² O'Collins, G., Farrugia, E. G. (eds.), "Peace", 195.

¹⁹³ EUD, 125f / SKS 5, 130.

¹⁹⁴ EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

¹⁹⁵ CA, 44 / SKS 4, 349.

1.2 How Did Sin Enter the World?

Once Adam obtained from God the prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the state of innocence did not perish but rather intensified, as the object of relation switched from pure nothingness to the prohibiting words. This is explained in the first chapter of Haufniensis' *Concept of Anxiety*, where he elaborates on the birth of anxiety and original sin. Here he summarizes the story from Genesis 3 in one statement, that "sin came into the world by a sin" and goes on to say that "sin presupposes itself".¹⁹⁶ In other words, sinfulness came into Adam by the first sin. Before sin entered the world, Adam only knew a prohibition from God that he must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, therefore Adam did not understand the meaning of that word because distinction would only come *after* tasting the fruit. However, Adam demonstrated an understanding of freedom by desiring to utilize it to attempt the prohibited. Therefore, it was the prohibition that arose the desire for knowledge in Adam. Nevertheless, the prohibited words also created anxiety in him as they conflicted with the freedom's possibility (being able *to know*).

Additionally, in *Every Good Gift 2*, Kierkegaard explicitly states that "the doubt that had come along with the knowledge coiled itself alarmingly around [Adam's, added by AP] heart, and the serpent that had seduced him with the delectable now squeezed him in its coils".¹⁹⁷ Just as sin entered the world through sin, so too did knowledge enter the world through deception. This point is crucial to understand, as it sheds light on the profound consequences that followed the disruption of the initial *shalom*.

1.3 How Did Eden Look Like After Doubt?

The fruit growing on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil embodied the distinction between good and evil—in other words, knowledge's fruit was the very distinction between good and evil. Before Adam had tasted the fruit of this tree, he had no reason to ask *where* the apple came *from*, since at the moment it was offered to him by the serpent, he could not yet distinguish between good and evil. But the "fruit of this fruit" was precisely that distinction.¹⁹⁸ By eating the apple, a seed was planted in Adam which gave rise to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil within him—at first, its fruit appeared

¹⁹⁶ CA, 32 / SKS 4, 338.

¹⁹⁷ EUD, 127 / SKS 5, 131.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

irresistible, but when tasted, it only brought about pain. It was through this act that the original *shalom* was disrupted. According to Kierkegaard, the following states came into the world along with knowledge:

- “the pain of want” (Danish: *Savnets Smerte*)
- “the dubious happiness of possession” (Danish: *Besiddelsens tvivlsomme Lykke*)

- “the terror of separation” (Danish: *Adskillelsens Forfærdelse*)
- “the difficulty of separation” (Danish: *Adskillelsens Vanskelighed*)

- “the disquietude of deliberation” (Danish: *Overvejelsens Uro*)
- “the worry of deliberation” (Danish: *Overvejelsens Bekymring*)

- “the distress of choice” (Danish: *Valgets Nød*)
- “the decision of choice” (Danish: *Valgets Afgørelse*)

- “the judgment of the law” (Danish: *Lovens House*)
- “the condemnation of the law” (Danish: *Lovens Fordømmelse*)

- “the possibility of perdition” (Danish: *Fortabelsens Mulighed*)
- “the anxiety of perdition” (Danish: *Fortabelsens Angst*)

- “the suffering of death” (Danish: *Dødens Lidelse*)
- “the expectation of death” (Danish: *Dødens Forventning*).¹⁹⁹

It can be observed that knowledge brought about double-mindedness. All the states of existence—be it wanting, separation, deliberation, choice, understanding the law and perdition, and death—started to represent two sides of one coin to an individual. Therefore, as the interpretation progresses, the same dualistic tendency can be presupposed even with regard to doubt. In fact, Kierkegaard writes that “doubt proceeds from the fact of there being two” and adds that “it is a passing to and fro between two or more points, so that we can neither rest at the one nor the other”.²⁰⁰ In his *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Climacus points out that doubt is characteristic for disputing—the Latin *disputare* (“double-reckon” as he puts it) which essentially signifies “making [something, added by AP] duplicitous”.²⁰¹

At this point, it can be argued that doubt possesses a certain ambiguity, and the individual’s relation to doubt fundamentally influences the nature and development of her

¹⁹⁹ EUD, 125 / SKS 5, 129.

²⁰⁰ Pap. II C 25 (Pap. XII, 282), n. d.

²⁰¹ PF, 84 / SKS 4, 283.

existence. The manuscript in progress for *Johannes Climacus or De omnibus dubitandum est* bears witness to this. Here, he sketched two words: *dubito*, and *zweifeln*; the first one means “to doubt” in Latin while the latter means “to doubt” in German. Below, he wrote *tvivle* which means “to doubt” in Danish. Since these were the notes in his journal, Kierkegaard added nothing more than (duo), (zwei), and (tve) next to each of these words, indicating their common etymological root: *two*.

dubito (duo). zweifeln (zwei)
tvivle (tve)²⁰²

Despite their briefness and shortness, these notes reveal the fact that Kierkegaard was aware of the duplexity inherent in doubting.

1.4 Relating to Doubt

The states of the garden of Eden before and after doubt entered it have been defined. At this point, it is important to analyze how doubt can be navigated by an individual. This section has already been using the term “relating to doubt”. Metaphorically, this *relating to* can be likened to a train standing at a railroad switch, where the driver needs to decide which direction to go. In the same way, there are two ways in which an individual can relate to one doubt, or there are two possible directions, but it is up to the driver—the individual—to take a turn. For Kierkegaard, this *relating to* is closely connected with the concept of will and subjectivity. Whether the individual approaching the railroad switch—where one way represents “saving doubt” and the other “false doubt”—decides to go either way, both decisions happen in freedom and are ultimately up to the individual.

The tendency of relating to the same thing in two opposite ways can be also traced in Proverbs 26, where Solomon mentions two similar consecutive theses (verses 5 and 6) in two very different manners. Here, it can be observed that there are two ways of responding to a fool: one that is unwise—or foolish—and one that is wise.

„Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.“²⁰³

²⁰² Pap. IV B 13:2 n.d., 1842-43.

²⁰³ Proverbs 26:5-6; ESV.

Kierkegaard considers this issue in relation to the interplay of knowledge and decision. In his *Works of Love*, he mentions that “knowledge as such is impersonal” as it “places everything in possibility and to that extent is outside the actuality of existence in possibility”.²⁰⁴ In other words, knowledge on its own does not contain any form of decision. Both the individual whose doubt leads to deception and the individual whose doubt leads to salvation have knowledge in common. Only when one decides based on that intermediate knowledge, it becomes apparent whether it was good or bad. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, indifference—or abstract knowledge as such—is cancelled by concern—or interest—for as soon as there is a relation to something, “explanation of another kind” is wanted, worries about “what meaning the world has for h[er] and [s]he for the world” and “effort to assure h[er]self of the relation of this knowledge to the object” arises in an individual.²⁰⁵

Another example of the two possible ways in which one can relate to the same object, specifically knowledge, is directly from Kierkegaard. In the *Works of Love*’s discourse titled *Love Believes All Things*, Kierkegaard addresses that an individual can be misled by deception from knowledge in a way that she mistrusts everything by concluding, assuming, believing in her conclusions and eventually “believes by virtue of the disbelief inherent in mistrust”²⁰⁶. On the other hand, Kierkegaard goes on and writes that “*from the same knowledge* [emphasis added by AP], by virtue of belief, one can conclude, assume, and believe the very opposite”²⁰⁷. For now, the fact that knowledge can lead to two different scenarios is important, the aspect of mistrust shall be discussed in chapter 2.1.3 (pp. 76-8).

1.4.1 Doubt as Negativity

As was already mentioned in chapter 2.1.2 (p. 39), doubt as such represents a negative principle which—in contrast with wonder—polemicizes with the preceding, and historical consequence can be drawn from it.²⁰⁸ This negating effect is important with respect to the two ways of relating to doubt. Before exemplifying the two possible directions of doubt’s negativity in an individual’s existence, the same kind of negativity

²⁰⁴ WL, 230 / SKS 9, 232.

²⁰⁵ EUD, 86 / SKS 5, 93.

²⁰⁶ WL, 227 / SKS 9, 229.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ JC, 145 / SKS 15, 38.

inherent in a different phenomenon—that is irony—will be illustrated, for it will provide different perspective on the same principle.

“[J]ust as philosophy begins with doubt, so also a life that may be called human begins with irony.”²⁰⁹

For Kierkegaard, irony marks both a figure of speech which expresses the very opposite of what is said or meant, and an existential attitude.²¹⁰ Both of these types of irony have a common feature—“the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence”²¹¹. The phenomenon indexes the outwardly spoken words and the essence lies in the speaker herself. Concerning the latter type, i.e. irony as a way of living, it revolves around the ironist who practices irony’s “negative freedom”²¹². This plays out in the ironist not taking any accountability for what is said and in such a way, she is liberated from both action and the meaning of the words. As such, the ironist is bound by no rules or restrictions. According to Kierkegaard, genuine irony is not intended to be understood by the listeners and cannot be practiced occasionally, but rather must be a pervasive and consistent mode of being. Moreover, irony as a life-view involves a contradiction between the phenomenon—the ironist’s “outward actuality”—and the essence—the ironist’s “inner self”.²¹³ As was already mentioned, irony has a negating effect: in the eminent sense, it is not targeted at a “particular existing entity” but rather at the “entire given actuality at a certain time and under certain conditions”.²¹⁴ By its negativity, irony destroys actuality as a whole, it by no means successively destroys one portion of actuality after another.²¹⁵ Here, Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel that irony should be perceived as “infinite absolute negativity”²¹⁶. Under the aspect of irony, i.e. *sub specie ironiae*, the individual contemplates “the totality of existence”.²¹⁷ Thus, the individual stands in irony’s negative freedom and exists as the sole criterion for truth. For Kierkegaard, the ultimate archetype of pure negativity inherent in irony as a life-view was Socrates.²¹⁸ The

²⁰⁹ CI, 6 / SKS 1, 65.

²¹⁰ Both of these underlying layers inherent in irony are discussed in Jordán’s contribution in *Kierkegaard’s Concepts*. See Jordán, N. B., “Irony”, In *Kierkegaard’s Concepts (Vol. 15, Tome 4): Individual to Novel*.

²¹¹ CI, 247 / SKS 1, 286.

²¹² CI, 263 / SKS 1, 301; CI, 166 / SKS 1, 214.

²¹³ Jordán, N. B., “Irony”, 40.

²¹⁴ CI, 254 / SKS 1, 292.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Jordán also emphasizes that for Kierkegaard, “irony as a standpoint made its entrance in world history through the figure of Socrates”. See Jordán, N. B., “Irony”, 41.

specificity of Socratic irony was that while he dismantled contemporary culture's established order, he did not substitute the empty hole of actuality with anything else—he left it open and thus his ironical life-perspective was absolutely negative. By letting others be confronted with the open void which the society was incompetent to fill, Socrates led them to complete abandonment where they had to encounter themselves and face themselves only. In doing so, a new form of subjectivity was discovered—that which the actuality would have never been able to grant them.

Just as Socrates used irony to annihilate the former established order in an attempt to bring forth new subjective beginning, so can saving doubt used in the right way be understood as a negative force which can be targeted towards one's self. Moreover, just as irony can represent a figure of speech, it can take on deeply existential form and permeate the individual's existence altogether. As shall be seen, with its negating effect saving doubt can destroy all that stands in the way of becoming deeply subjective, and in such a way pave the way for an individual to find her true self. Within the context of this dissertation, saving doubt has the power to bring the individual to an isolated place where she becomes nothing at all, and she *absolutely* needs God. However, doubt's dismantling power can be also used in the opposite direction, that is outside of oneself. Such a way of doubting is detrimental as it cancels actuality, and the individual becomes prey to doubt's absolute negativity. Hence, the terminology for the two ways of relating to doubt stems from *where* it takes the individual—on the one hand, saving doubt stands for subjective doubt which allows one to enter the realm of subjectivity, while on the other hand, false doubt stands for objective doubt preventing one from deepening her subjectivity.

To conclude, when *relating to* doubt, no movement can take place without the cooperative involvement of an individual which requires an act of will. Throughout the entire process of *becoming Christian* via the culmination of spirit, the will always represents a decisive factor in Kierkegaard's anthropology. For this reason, the esthetic stage of existence ceases to progress onto a higher stage, that is the ethical, when the individual refuses to will.

2. FALSE DOUBT

In this chapter, one of the two ways in which an individual can relate to doubt will be analyzed—that leading to existential despair via deception. This chapter will focus on the etymology of the word “deception” (*bedrag* in Danish), then tackle on the exponential relation between knowledge and pain, and it will be concluded with an elaboration on how this type of doubt stands in opposition to faith.

Kierkegaard describes this type of doubt—based on the Genesis story where Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil after having spoken with the serpent—as one that stems from deception. That is why Kierkegaard writes in his *Every Good Gift 2* upbuilding discourse that “by way of a deception the knowledge came into the world as a deception”²¹⁹. This word *deception* is directly mentioned in Genesis 3:13, although various Bible translations use slightly variant word equivalents. Nevertheless, all translations fittingly depict the origin and cause of doubt itself: being tricked, beguiled, misled, deceived, or cause to forget.

“Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent **deceived** me, and I ate.’” (Gen 3:13; ESV)

“Then the LORD God asked the woman, ‘What did you do?’ ‘The Shining One **misled** me,’ the woman answered, ‘so I ate.’” (Gen 3:13; International Standard Version)

“And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent **beguiled** me, and I did eat. (Gen 3:13; English Revised Version)

“Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” And the woman said, ‘The serpent **beguiled and deceived** me, and I ate [from the forbidden tree].’” (Gen 3:13; Amplified Bible)

“And YHWH God says to the woman, ‘What [is] this you have done?’ And the woman says, ‘The serpent **has caused me to forget**, and I eat.’” (Gen 3:13; Literal Standard Version)

Another profound source which casts light on how Kierkegaard understands deceit is his *Works of Love*. Here, in the chapter *Love Believes All Things—and Yet Is Never Deceived*, he describes deception as a counterpart to truth, leading to two juxtaposed possibilities.

²¹⁹ EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

This puts an individual in a position, or a test, where she must choose between the two. It is ultimately up to the individual to decide between the two and the choice will reveal the person's inner motives—Kierkegaard writes that it shows whether there is love or mistrust in that person.²²⁰ The decision is a difficult one: will one decide to believe truth or deception?

“Just because existence has to test you [...] existence confronts you with the truth and the deception in the equilibrium of the opposite possibilities so that as you now judge, that is, as you now in judging choose, what dwells in you must become disclosed.”²²¹

Although this is not explicitly stated in the *Works of Love*'s discourse, this view parallels with the story of Adam and Eve eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The truth was distorted by deception contained in the serpent's words. It is evident that the serpent embodies deception, while God embodies truth. Thus, when God—alias the truth—says “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”²²², the serpent—alias the deception—perverts the words into the very opposite and says, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”²²³. Ultimately, Adam and Eve are confronted with a choice between two antithetical options, which tests whether their decision will be driven by mistrust of God or by love for God.

2.1 Key Features of False Doubt

In the following section, the distinctive characteristics of false doubt will be identified and analyzed. Kierkegaard's three discourses (*Every Good Gift 1*, *Every Good Gift 2*, *Every Good Gift 3*) will serve as the main source for the analysis but occasionally, other discourses (*Against Cowardliness*, *Expectancy of Faith*, *Strengthening in the Inner Being*, *The Thorn in the Flesh*) and one passage from the *Works of Love*, namely *Love Believes All Things—and Yet Is Never Deceived*, will be used to support or expand the claim. In order to exemplify the way in which false doubt plays itself out practically in one's existence, the story of Goethe's Faust will be used as Kierkegaard held that this character

²²⁰ WL, 228 / SKS 9, 230.

²²¹ WL, 227 / SKS 9, 229.

²²² Genesis 2:16; ESV.

²²³ Genesis 3:4-5; ESV.

was an incarnation of doubt in a specific time. Thus, it will provide more clarity as to where this doubt can take the doubter and what would need to happen in order for the doubter to be extricated from her suffering.

2.1.1 Hunger for Knowledge

*“[A]t times the knowledge was to h[er] something unattainable for which [s]he sighed [...] at times it starved h[er] with its emptiness.”*²²⁴

Besides deception, this type of doubt is closely tied with knowledge, and it results in what Kierkegaard calls “wanting more”²²⁵ from knowledge or “praising [knowledge]”²²⁶. This point is crucial as it provides a deeper understanding of what gives birth to doubt, and how knowledge relates to existential doubt. First, knowledge as such is entirely neutral, “infinitely equal”²²⁷, or like “infinite indifference”²²⁸ and “sheer transparency”²²⁹, as it places opposite possibilities in equilibrium. Therefore, knowledge on its own cannot defile a person but the issue lies in how one relates to it. In other words, when an individual wills to judge the two opposite possibilities in equilibrium, the final judgement shows whether that decision stemmed from good or bad intentions.²³⁰ Kierkegaard likens this characteristic of knowledge to an auctioneer.

“Knowledge is the infinitely indifferent (in the sense of rank). Knowledge is like an auctioneer who puts existence on the block. The auctioneer then says: Ten dollars (the value of the property)—but it means nothing; only when someone makes the bid, only then is the bid ten dollars.”²³¹

Bearing the above in mind, the first characteristic of false doubt is its unsatisfiability, which perpetually drives an individual to seek more knowledge. This aspect presents yet another paradox: the individual who is entangled in false doubt is hungry for knowledge, but the knowledge starves her, for it cannot fulfill her and makes her even hungrier. In this case, hunger can be identified with a desire which reacts to a feeling of scarcity. Therefore, knowledge—which became an external object of desire for an individual and which was supposed to provide the individual with existential support and stability—

²²⁴ EUD, 127f / SKS 5, 131.

²²⁵ EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ WL, 231 / SKS 9, 232f.

²²⁸ WL, 231 / SKS 9, 233.

²²⁹ WL, 233 / SKS 9, 234.

²³⁰ WL, 231 / SKS 9, 233.

²³¹ JP 2, 2297 / SKS 20, 172, Pap. VIII A 186 n.d., 1847.

failed to provide the individual with the desired self-affirmation. The request is thus the desire's expression to heal the inner emptiness resulting from the disturbed immediacy caused by worldly knowledge. This emptiness universally increases gradually as desire increases—regardless of whether one desires more worldly knowledge at the late-esthetic or the ethical stage. While in the state of “spiritual infancy”, this desire may resemble childlike curiosity, in the ethical sphere, the desire for knowledge is an expression of the individual's search for ideality. The growth in knowledge is thus a painful process for the individual—with each step, the space for the possibility of knowledge expands more and more, and the further one advances in knowledge, the more its imaginary limits recede from one's view.

Furthermore, the existential pain increases when attaining knowledge is set as the goal. As a result, the pain is caused by the fact that full knowledge is unattainable. As the individual searches for meaning or a way out of suffering, knowledge becomes a trap rather than a means for potential salvation. To use the imagery from the Genesis story, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil can never become—or be interchanged with—the tree of life. This unsatiable search for more knowledge also results in the skeptical questioning and needing more answers. Kierkegaard observes this tendency in *Every Good Gift 2* as he describes Adam's deep curiosity which arose from the disturbed trust in the Garden of Eden. Here he mentions that suddenly, nothing was as it had seemed, and Adam started to ask *where* everything came *from* because the fruit was offered in a way that receiving it arouse questions about the giver.²³² Moreover, it is apparent that the search for more knowledge is driven by an exciting fascination for future virtual possibilities—such experience of possibility truly absorbs a person and is closely tied with anxiety which will be discussed later in chapter 5.2.4 (pp. 175-77).

In the *Strengthening in the Inner Being* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard also speaks of a comprehensive knowledge (*Viden* in Danish, as preserved in parentheses by Edna and Howard Hong in their English translation) which cannot calm *concern*. In fact, concern demands a different kind of knowledge, one that “does not remain as knowledge for a single moment but is transformed into an action the moment it is possessed, since otherwise it is not possessed”²³³. Kierkegaard goes on to say that concern also demands—

²³² EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

²³³ Ibid.

he uses a stronger word indicating starvation, “craves”²³⁴—an explanation, or a witness (*Vidnesbyrd* in Danish). However, if explanation, or a witness, is provided by knowledge of this kind—which is characteristic for its equivocality and comfortlessness—it is “full of deceit and riddles and only engenders anxiety”²³⁵. Kierkegaard calls this knowledge a “knowledge in which a person vanishes from h[er]self”²³⁶. Therefore, knowledge on a purely abstract level fosters only suffering until it is broken by an action. This point will be even more visible in the story of Faust (Intermezzo I, pp. 87-95).

2.1.2 Pride

*“[I]s it not doubt’s stratagem to make a person believe that [s]he by h[er]self can overcome h[er]self?”*²³⁷

In biblical language, the above-mentioned principle of constant hunger for knowledge can be likened to idolatry. Similarly as knowledge stands as an external object towards which one strives, so can knowledge be understood as an idol which replaced God to an individual. This point closely corresponds to relating to doubt as one can choose the object of praise, and in this case, it is not God, but knowledge.

The mechanism behind idolatry can be better understood on the example of Israelite’s Baal worship. In the Ancient Israel, the worship of Baal was closely tied with the land’s prosperity which depended on the regularity of rains and water.²³⁸ When the rain comes at the right season, the land becomes very fertile and produces all kinds of crop—therefore, it represents abundance and prosperity. However, not all seasons—some of which can even turn into years—are good and prosperous. There could be lengthy seasons of extreme drought which would result in catastrophic consequences. Therefore, when season of drought occurred and lasted for a while, a level of anxiety would build up amongst the Israelites as it was very unclear and unpredictable when rain would come. In this context, the cult of Baal represented a worship alternative to the God of Israel as rains were believed to be Baal’s bounty. Israelites’ life in a land dependent on rainfall thus

²³⁴ EUD, 86 / SKS 5, 93.

²³⁵ EUD, 87 / SKS 5, 93.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

²³⁸ “For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven.” (Deuteronomy 11:10-11; ESV)

increased the appeal of the Baal worship. In distress, some Israelites would naturally revert to reviving, reactivating the god of rain through prayer, mourning, dancing, self-harm, or water-pouring.²³⁹ Nonetheless, the problematic feature of pride inherent in idolatry is that any object—be it a good thing on its own—can be easily turned into an idol. That is also why Jesus criticized the Pharisees for worshiping rules, laws, and orthodoxly following the commands of Torah, making them their god. In the same sense, the way in which one relates to knowledge and doubt itself can become idolatrous, making knowledge the object of worship.

Thus, false doubt can be understood as prideful in a sense that God is not seen as enough to fulfill one's feelings of inner emptiness and satisfy her hunger for more knowledge. However, another level of pride lies in the refusal to receive outside help when found in distress. Kierkegaard pinpoints this prideful aspect of a hunt for knowledge by mentioning that the false doubt's strategy is to exclude God from overcoming the suffering by relying solely on one's own strength and wisdom. That is also why false doubt questions everything but itself. In this sense, it is the opposite of the Socratic knowledge which knows that it knows nothing. Kierkegaard describes the prideful aspect of false doubt rather explicitly when he writes in *Every Good Gift 2* that the deceived individual managed to fool herself by means of the "brilliant deception" in such a way that she started to "arous[e] the admiration of people", "exult over imagined victories" and "prais[e] knowledge".²⁴⁰

Besides idolatry, another phenomenon which lies behind the prideful aspect of false doubt is resentment, which may to some degree resemble offense.²⁴¹ The nature of such resentment can be observed in the reactions of the Pharisaic and Greco-Roman worlds to the apostle Paul, who became a significant obstacle to their established systems of belief and power.²⁴² Across many of Kierkegaard's *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, the figure

²³⁹ Pope, M. H., "Baal Worship", In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

²⁴⁰ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

²⁴¹ In this particular instance, offense is not meant to be understood in the traditional Kierkegaardian sense as described in *The Practice in Christianity* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, for such kind of offense has to do with the God-Man paradox. This topic will be further discussed in chapter 3.2.1 (pp. 115-20).

²⁴² It must be remembered that Paul had a unique status both among the Jews and the Greeks. Ethnically, he was born an Israelite to the Benjamin tribe, he was circumcised after birth, and grew up following the teachings of the Pharisees. This is reflected in the following verse from Philippians 3:5-6; ESV: "[C]ircumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless." Here Paul also openly writes that he persecuted the church. As Porter puts it, when Paul persecuted the church, he was doing so out of deep conviction and protected his ethnic faith with zeal from

of Paul is mentioned numerous times.²⁴³ In the context of the discourse *Strengthening in the Inner Being*, Paul is praised by Kierkegaard for withstanding the resentment and not despairing over his imprisonment and trials. Furthermore, Paul is portrayed as someone who resisted doubting when he was rejected both by Jews, who were outraged by his abandonment of the Mosaic laws, and by Romans and Greeks, who perceived him as foolish. The following passage reveals that Kierkegaard held Paul in high esteem and set him apart as someone who did not give in to doubt.

“[Paul] had every human witness against him, and in addition he had the concern that the congregation would lose heart or, worse yet, be offended at him, because offense surely is never closer than when truth is oppressed. [...] But does Paul, forsaken by the witness, despair? By no means. [...] What gave Paul the power for this? He himself had a witness; he was no doubter who in his innermost being retracted the strong thoughts.”²⁴⁴

On the one hand, the prominent thinkers of the Hellenistic culture with high social status were offended by Paul’s conversion to Christianity which was in their eyes foolish. Kierkegaard portrayed Ancient Rome as “intoxicated with self-confidence”²⁴⁵, which gives an insight to the power dynamics between the “sophisticated Romans” and the “Roman citizen Paul who converted to Christianity which went against intellect and reason”.²⁴⁶ The Romans—following the teachings of Plato for whom the task of the soul’s reasoning part was to discern what is good for it and consequently commend the other parts accordingly—were perplexed by Paul’s statements in which he said that his physical body has been overpowered by sin, which uncovered the weakness of his will wanting to

any potential threat. Despite his Jewish upbringing, though, Paul was born and grew up in Tarsus, in a Jewish diaspora in contemporary Turkey, which was notorious as a center of Hellenistic philosophy, education, and literature. As a result, Paul spent significant years of his life exposed to the Greco-Roman culture from which he adopted various habits, such as Greek way of writing his letters, or epistles, accompanied by fluent spoken and written Greek. Importantly, the book of Acts mentions twice (See Acts 16:37 and Acts 22:25-28) that Paul was a Roman citizen along being a citizen of Taurus. This cultural “third space” gave Paul the ability to interact with both worlds, but he also experienced resentment from both sides. The essence lied in the gospel of Christ openly proclaimed by Paul. Kierkegaard writes about Paul that “he brought with him a teaching, of which he witnessed that it was divine truth, communicated to him by a special revelation”. EUD, 80 / SKS 5, 88. See also Porter, S. E., “Paul as Jew, Greek, and Roman: An Introduction”, 1.

²⁴³ Apostle Paul, or formerly Saul, is mentioned in the following upbuilding discourses: *Strengthening in the Inner Being, Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above, The Thorn in the Flesh, The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation, To Need God*.

²⁴⁴ EUD, 83 / SKS 5, 91.

²⁴⁵ EUD, 80 / SKS 5, 88.

²⁴⁶ Jipp suggests in his article “Reading Romans 7:7-25 and Plato’s Republic” that apostle Paul appropriated a popular Platonic discourse called *akrasia*, a self-restraining speech acting contrary to the speaker’s own judgement, in order to oppose his Judeo-Christian adversaries.

do the good.²⁴⁷ Moreover, Paul was willingly accepting his weakness and taking paradoxical pride in it.²⁴⁸ The contempt of the contemporary Greco-Roman world therefore stemmed from the fact that Paul openly admitted to the weakness of his will and boasted in it.

On the other hand, the Hebrews were offended by Paul's conversion to Christianity and falling away from the teachings of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were especially triggered by Paul's preaching of a Law-free gospel, as they considered their Law a sacred gift from God, believing it would safeguard them from the corrupting influence of sin and bodily desires.²⁴⁹ They were offended at the fact that Paul dared to call the Mosaic Law seized by sin. Moreover, they were offended that Paul would say that the blessings of Abraham could flow even to the Gentiles.²⁵⁰ Thus, their offence was rooted in the conviction of exclusivity which was being threatened by the gospel that Paul was preaching.

Last, the prideful aspect in false doubt also lies in its egocentrism. Kierkegaard sums this up in the already discussed statement that "false doubt questions everything but itself".²⁵¹ This plays itself out in cowardliness—however, this side to pride is tricky, for the self-absorbed individual would never admit that she is guilty of being prideful. Dion observes that Kierkegaard plays with this notion in his *Against Cowardliness* upbuilding discourse, where he is aware of the fact that an average reader of his upbuilding discourses would never identify herself as a coward. Thus, Kierkegaard warns against "false pride"²⁵² which in itself is cowardliness as it marks a certain self-assurance which borders with self-importance, arrogance and vanity.²⁵³ As such, it is the highest form of the demoniacal "anxiety about the good" which will be introduced in chapter 2.1.5 (p. 83). False pride is lonely—it demands a "high conception of one's own worth" and the cowardly prideful

²⁴⁷ "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. [...] For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." (Romans 7:15;18-20; ESV)

²⁴⁸ "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9; ESV)

²⁴⁹ Paul's speech about the Law can be found in Romans 7.

²⁵⁰ "But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:12-14; ESV)

²⁵¹ EUD 137 / SKS 5, 140.

²⁵² EUD, 354 / SKS 5, 341.

²⁵³ Dion, D. M., "Pride", 132.

individual fears above anything else her “responsibility the proud person has for h[er]self”.²⁵⁴ She wants to do whatever she sets her mind to, she want to “set the task as high as possible and then to finish it by h[er]self, satisfied with h[er] own consciousness and h[er] own approval”.²⁵⁵ However, Kierkegaard marks such an existence as “sleepless, very exhausting, and pursued by many terrors”.²⁵⁶

2.1.3 Mistrust

*“Who would want to deny that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above? But not wanting to deny it is still a very long way from wanting to understand it, and wanting to understand it is still a very long way from wanting to believe it and from believing it. But he who is not for is always against.”*²⁵⁷

Another feature of false doubt—or what it causes in an individual’s life—is unbelief which stands contrary to faith, but which is also tightly connected to the previously discussed pride intertwined with mistrust. While belief is typically understood as accepting something without needing a proof²⁵⁸, trust has a personal connotation. Therefore, mistrust is used here in the same way as Kierkegaard uses it in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, specifically in his upbuilding discourse *Against Cowardliness*. Here he depicts this attitude of being “a little mistrustful at all times, never to devote oneself altogether”²⁵⁹. In the same way, false doubt stirs up mistrust and unbelief in an individual.

Ethically, false doubt represents disobedience to God as it mistrusts him. As Kierkegaard depicts this in his *Works of Love*, “we can be deceived by believing what is untrue, but we certainly are also deceived by not believing what is true”.²⁶⁰ From such vantage point, this kind of doubt reveals the doubter’s character for she chooses to mistrust God and trust knowledge instead. It is crucial to reemphasize that mistrust cannot maintain knowledge in equilibrium as it represents a choice which reveals its sinful nature. Kierkegaard describes mistrust as something that “defiles knowledge and therefore verges on envy, malice, and corruption, which believe all evil”²⁶¹—thus, it is not knowledge of

²⁵⁴ EUD, 354 / SKS 5, 341.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ EUD, 354 / SKS 5, 341f.

²⁵⁷ EUD, 135, SKS 5, 138.

²⁵⁸ “...belief is the good in a person that does not come with much knowledge.” (WL, 234 / SKS 9, 235)

²⁵⁹ EUD, 359 / SKS 5, 346.

²⁶⁰ WL, 5 / SKS 9, 13.

²⁶¹ WL, 234 / SKS 9, 235.

evil that corrupts an individual but rather mistrust of the good.²⁶² In other words, for Kierkegaard, this mistrustful attitude uncovers that the doubter might be fearing evil or being wrong, but she does not fear missing out on God’s goodness and righteousness, which ultimately is equally as wrong as choosing evil.²⁶³ Another aspect of mistrust is, as Kierkegaard notes in another discourse from his *Works of Love*, that “mistrust believes nothing at all”²⁶⁴. What this means is that mistrust subverts all trust—Howard and Edna Hong highlighted this by preserving the two words in their original version when translating the Danish original text into English: Kierkegaard used *tro* for “trust” and *Mistroiskhed* for “mistrust”. Thus, same as in English, both words include *tro*, or “trust” as their etymological root. Importantly, Kierkegaard goes on to say that mistrust is “a misuse of knowledge”²⁶⁵ which reveals the nature of false doubt stemming from knowledge.

“What, specifically, is mistrust's shrewd secret? It is a misuse of knowledge, a misuse that summarily, in one breath, wants to attach its ‘ergo’²⁶⁶ to what as knowledge is entirely true and becomes something entirely different only when, upside down, it is believed by virtue of that which is just as impossible as it is upside-down, since one does not believe by virtue of knowledge. What mistrust says or presents is really only knowledge; the secret and the falsity lie in this, that it summarily converts this knowledge into a belief and pretends that nothing has happened, pretends that it is something that does not even need to be noticed.”²⁶⁷

Last, false doubt is also personalized in the *Expectancy of Faith* upbuilding discourse where it is portrayed as “guileful, sneaking on secret paths around a person”.²⁶⁸ Here it is depicted as an outward element that seduces a person and which demands from the individual to relate to it somehow. In this instance, the principle of how false doubt lures one in is through whispering contradicting antitheses that turn one’s trust into mistrust. Furthermore, in this upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard describes a faithful individual expecting victory, while doubt whispers to her that such an expectancy is a deception. As such, it contradicts the paradoxical nature of faith and opposes that “expectancy without

²⁶² WL, 233 / SKS 9, 234.

²⁶³ “Mistrust [...] has a preference for evil. To believe nothing at all is the very border where believing evil begins; [...] the good is the object of belief, and therefore someone who believes nothing at all begins to believe evil.” (WL, 234 / SKS 9, 235)

²⁶⁴ WL, 226 / SKS 9, 228.

²⁶⁵ WL, 227 / SKS 9, 229.

²⁶⁶ By *ergo* Kierkegaard means *belief*. “The individual first begins his life with ‘ergo’, with belief [...] they live by virtue of an ‘ergo’, of a belief.” (WL, 230 / SKS 9, 232)

²⁶⁷ WL, 227 / SKS 9, 229.

²⁶⁸ EUD, 23 / SKS 5, 32.

a specified time and place is nothing but a deception; in that way one may always go on waiting; such an expectancy is a circle into which the soul is bewitched and from which it cannot escape”.²⁶⁹ This exemplifies a direction of doubt *from* the outside *to* the individual rather than from within the doubter, similarly as in the serpent’s speech in the garden of Eden. As was already mentioned, when God said that Adam and Eve could eat from all trees except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent hurried to counter those words by twisting them upside down, saying that they will surely not die but rather have their eyes open and be like God.

To conclude, all of the given examples of mistrust reveal that not believing what is true represents a far more evil form of mistrust than believing what is untrue as it signifies that the doubtful individual is more concerned about not being wrong rather than missing out on God’s goodness. Moreover, mistrust may feed into one’s existential fragmentation which fears engaging in something entirely at the expense of something else. Rather, the mistrustful individual paradoxically wants to possess everything while believing nothing at all.

2.1.4 Variation

*“If you want to put your trust in doubt's false friendship, then very soon doubt will repeatedly change everything for you with its shadows, confuse it with its variations, obscure it with the fogs of night, take everything away from you as if it had not been.”*²⁷⁰

The next characteristic of false doubt plays itself out in that it causes the doubtful person to experience turbulent changes and inconsistencies. Kierkegaard calls this state “variation” in accordance with apostle James’ words from his opening chapter.²⁷¹ The variation can be understood as instability, drawing close to the imagined limits of knowledge, and then falling far from them, feeling ecstatic one time and then low and desperate the other. The excerpt from *Every Good Gift 2* reveals deeper layers to the variations experienced under the weight of false doubt. Furthermore, it bears many similarities and analogies with the story of Garden of Eden. All the states resulting from Adam and Eve tasting the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—be it wanting, separation, deliberation, choice, understanding the law and perdition, and

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ EUD 136 / SKS 5, 139.

²⁷¹ “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no *variation* [emphasis added] or shadow due to change.” James 1:17 (ESV)

death—started to represent dual existential outcomes, false doubt magnifying the negative ones. As shall be demonstrated in the following analysis, false doubt causes change, confusion, obscurity, and takes away everything from the individual.

First, Kierkegaard implies that false doubt “will repeatedly change everything with its shadows”²⁷² and “obscure [everything] with the fogs of night”²⁷³. This is directly connected with James 1:17, which says that the perfect gift comes from the Father of the Lights with whom there is no shadow. Hiebert provides a commentary in which he points out that “lights” in the Ancient Greek represented celestial bodies which light up the sky both during the day and night. He further emphasizes that the sun and the stars consistently emit light without variation, even though this light may not always be perceptible due to cloud cover or the Earth’s rotation, which brings about periods of darkness.²⁷⁴ Similarly, false doubt obscures the doubter’s vision so that the individual’s perception is distorted, and she cannot see the light, or God, behind the fogs.

Second, doubt is described as something that “confuses [everything, added by AP] with its variations”²⁷⁵. This confusion is described in *Every Good Gift 1*, where Kierkegaard portrays the unpredictable and fluctuating nature of knowledge, ergo doubt, as akin to a constantly shifting pendulum swinging between opposite extremes. He writes that at times, knowledge appears as an unattainable ideal, relentlessly pursued yet forever out of reach. At other times, it manifests as a fleeting bliss, a fleeting sense of enlightenment that quickly vanishes. Kierkegaard notes that such knowledge “innervate[s]” one’s entire being and makes her feel fulfilled, only to leave her completely empty the next time.²⁷⁶ And finally, knowledge can even become a source of shame, a burden that weighs heavily on the individual.

Last, doubt is depicted as something that “take[s] everything away from [an individual] as if it had not been”.²⁷⁷ This aspect is traceable in Kierkegaard’s interpretation of the Garden of Eden story where he points out the two sides of knowledge where it appeared—and still continues to appear—appealing and desirable but eventually showing its true

²⁷² EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*, Birmingham: BHM Books, 2002 (Revised edition).

²⁷⁵ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

²⁷⁶ EUD, 127f / SKS 5, 131.

²⁷⁷ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

colors. The two-faced knowledge always looks appealing at first glance, but after having a bite of the forbidden fruit—as was seen on the consequences Adam faced—it fosters nothing but trouble. The dark side of knowledge closed Garden of Eden forever and took away from the individual the original *shalom*. It left Adam empty-handed and wondering, “What is the good, where is the perfect to be found? If it exists, where is its source?”²⁷⁸

2.1.5 Anxiety of Nothingness

“[A]nxiety changed the little into much, the little period of time into an eternity, the little distance into a chasmic abyss, that one difficulty into a decision of the totality, that one deviation into the loss of the totality.”²⁷⁹

One of the most tangible effects of doubt on one’s experience is anxiety due to its exponential relationship to knowledge—ergo, the more knowledge one acquires or even attempts to acquire, the more doubt and pain she experiences.²⁸⁰ First, anxiety as such ought to be defined with special attention to Kierkegaard’s *Concept of Anxiety*, as it provides an explanation of its origin and characteristic with respect to the Garden of Eden story.

Kierkegaard’s spokesman Vigilius Haufniensis holds that anxiety preceded Adam’s fall. Thus, anxiety as such is not a sin but it is one’s natural response to the *possibility* of sinning. And such possibility of sin is characterized by, and happens within the realm of, freedom. While freedom creates space for anxiety, this anxiety does not necessary lead to sin, nor does anxiety constitute sin itself. This freedom offered the individual a double possibility to either sin or not to sin and it caused anxiety in her both before original sin but also outside of sin itself. Therefore, Haufniensis perceives the root of sin not in one’s own sinfulness or transgression, as every individual sins in the state of innocence and freedom. Considering this, Adam sinned in a state of innocence, ignorance, or the inability to discern good from evil. The ability to distinguish good and evil came *after* eating from the tree of the knowledge between good and evil, which bore such fruit. A transition, or

²⁷⁸ EUD, 127 / SKS 5, 131.

²⁷⁹ EUD, 344 / SKS 5, 331f.

²⁸⁰ The exponential correlation between knowledge and sorrow is further discussed in Poláčková, A., “Kierkegaard and Ecclesiastes: The Relationship Between Sorrow and the Possibility of Knowledge”. Kierkegaard tends to associate the mutual relationship between knowledge and sorrow with Ecclesiastes 1:18 (ESV), “For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”. This verse is cited in *The Lord Gave, the Lord Took Away* upbuilding discourse where Kierkegaard notes that “lest by increasing his wisdom he also increase his grief”. EUD 113 / SKS 5, 119.

as Haufniensis says, a qualitative leap, happens from the state of innocence to the state of sinfulness. Such qualitative leap also brings awareness of sin to the individual.

As such, a distinction between anxiety before Adam's sin and after his sin can be made. Anxiety in the original Garden of Eden arose from Adam's dreaming spirit and it could be plainly described in McCarthy's words as the "dizziness of freedom" or the "pre-conscious anxiety".²⁸¹ The anxiety experienced after the fall brought about two sub-types of anxiety, that is objective and subjective anxiety. *The Concept of Anxiety* deals with objective anxiety rather briefly and swiftly for it represent solely a reflection of sinfulness present in the post-fall world.²⁸² Moreover, Haufniensis is concerned mostly with the latter type, i.e. subjective anxiety, as it relates directly to one's own self and is directly caused by the progressive awakening of the spirit. While anxiety is objectless, it nevertheless has a specific subject which is *the self* of the subject herself. Such subjective anxiety is essentially the same both before and after sin as it contains the same essence in both cases. Nonetheless, since every individual is different, so are the possibilities one faces. Since sin came into the world as sin, everyone in every generation makes the same choice as Adam did in the Garden of Eden and as a result, all must relate to sinfulness—either to stay in it or to renounce it. Any *relating to* can be twofold, same as in the case of relating to sin-consciousness. In different words, one can take two possible stances towards the evolving spirit and the arising anxiety.

The first possible relation is described by Haufniensis as "anxiety about evil".²⁸³ Such a state of anxiety is experienced by an individual who has not yet fully understood herself as a sinner either due to ingenuine repentance or due to a very heightened sin-consciousness which she avoids. Thus, the individual is stagnant in the potential movement towards faith because she must go *through* the entire experience of anxiety and *fully* embrace one's own sinfulness. The great danger of false doubt lies in that it entangles one in the anxiety about evil and in such a way the individual "abort[s] this embryo of the highest life"²⁸⁴ which is inherent in the spirit. Haufniensis depicts this type of anxiety as one which "sucks out the strength of repentance and shakes its head".²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 40.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 41.

²⁸³ CA, 116 / SKS 4, 418.

²⁸⁴ CA, 117 / SKS 4, 418.

²⁸⁵ CA, 116 / SKS 4, 418.

The latter possible relation is “anxiety about the good” which is called “demonic” by Haufniensis, and which falls within the aesthetics.²⁸⁶ Why? Because such an anxious individual flees from any hint of the eternal or the slightest activity of the spirit right before the question of sin-consciousness even comes to play in one’s existence. Therefore, “the demonic manifests itself clearly only when it is in contact with the good, which comes to its boundary from the outside”.²⁸⁷ While the demoniacal aspect in this particular type of anxiety can be defined as avoiding the good—freedom—as the individual is in the state of sinfulness—unfreedom—the unfreedom is to some degree in contact with the freedom, as the previous citation well illustrates. The constant reckless back-and-forth movement between the unfreedom and freedom’s possibility is precisely the horror of anxiety.

Thus, Haufniensis understands *experienced* anxiety as the way in which one is being both attracted to and repulsed by the nothingness of future possibilities.²⁸⁸ This means that the self-interested subject swings between sympathetically being fascinated by future possibilities as she is always interesting to herself, and antipathetically being terrified by future possibilities as they represent a terrifying unknown to her. However, Haufniensis does not intend to portray a black-and-white experience of anxiety and for that reason, he describes the interconnectedness of those two as “a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy”^{289, 290}

Therefore, the state of anxiety represents an ontological element essential to one’s existence, and it marks human freedom.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, anxiety concerns an individual on a mental-emotional level when she is confronted with the eternal *outside of* her as the eternal within her exists only as a potential.²⁹² In addition, anxiety can be better understood in distinction to fear, as it sometimes is used interchangeably in modern times. Fear always stems from something concrete—be it spiders, snakes, or heights. Anxiety, on the other hand, has no specific object or trigger.²⁹³ Such example can shed light on

²⁸⁶ CA, 118 / SKS 4, 420.

²⁸⁷ CA, 119 / SKS 4, 421.

²⁸⁸ Beabout, G. R., “Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair”, 27.

²⁸⁹ CA, 42 / SKS 4, 348.

²⁹⁰ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 42.

²⁹¹ “The actuality of the spirit constantly shows itself as a form that tempts its possibility but disappears as soon as it seeks to grasp for it, and it is a nothing that can only bring anxiety.” CA, 42 / SKS 4, 347.

²⁹² CA, 41 / SKS 4, 347.

²⁹³ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 35.

what Haufniensis means when he writes that anxiety is begotten by “nothing”²⁹⁴.²⁹⁵ Anxiety never ceases in an individual as it exists as long as possibility exists; thus, an individual remains in the state of anxiety even in the highest form of existence.

The Thorn in the Flesh upbuilding discourse portrays the effects of rising anxiety in one’s existence by emphasizing the psychological feelings of overwhelming intensity—Kierkegaard writes that anxiety turns “little into much”, “little period of time into eternity”, and “little distance into chasmic abyss”.²⁹⁶

2.1.6 Crippling Despair

*“And the chill of despair froze your spirit, and its death brooded over your heart.”*²⁹⁷
*“[T]he ice and snow of despair create the deceptive mountain torrent.”*²⁹⁸

Anxiety is very closely related to despair as they both undertake what McDonald describes as “parallel movements”²⁹⁹, both essentially resulting in a state without any closure to the dialectical ambiguity. Interestingly, in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard often metaphorically portrays despair as something causing icy cold sensations which freezes an individual in her existence and makes her unable to move forward or make decisions. In this case, despair is very closely connected to doubt which is also manifested in the striking etymological resemblance of the two words. In Danish, the word for doubt is *Tvivl* and the term used for despair is *Fortvivlelse*, the prefix *For-* indicating “continuation onto completion”³⁰⁰ and *Tvivl*, its root, suggesting twoness or split that despair develops.³⁰¹ The relation of doubt (*Tvivl*) and despair (*Fortvivlelse*) cannot be overlooked as it gradually intensifies hand in hand. To be exact, doubt begins solely on an intellectual level first but grows more inward with the intensification of the spirit, and then it becomes exponentially stronger along with despair and thus progresses to an existential level marked with a subjective concern for one’s own life. As such, despair can be understood as an intensified doubt.³⁰² The movement of doubt turning into

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ CA (Historical Introduction), xvi.

²⁹⁶ EUD, 344 / SKS 5, 331f.

²⁹⁷ EUD 38 / SKS 5, 46.

²⁹⁸ EUD, 298 / SKS 5, 292.

²⁹⁹ McDonald, W., “Anxiety”, 63.

³⁰⁰ McCarthy, V. A., *The Phenomenology of Moods in Kierkegaard*, 156. Moreover, Podmore points out the term *Zweifel* (German for “doubt”) turning into despair (*Verzweifeln* in German) when adding the prefix *Ver-*. See Podmore, S. D., *Kierkegaard and the self before God: anatomy of the abyss*, 20.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

despair stems from the qualitative increase in existence. Thus, despair denotes what Beabout calls an “existential gap” within an individual, “the willful and errant doubling in one’s personality”.³⁰³ To put it differently, both doubt and despair contain duplexity³⁰⁴ which—in existential terms—can be called a split.

The possible resolve to the “dialectical ambiguity” is at hand only “when sin is posited in the particular individual by the qualitative leap”.³⁰⁵ However, the despair inherent in false doubt lies precisely in this inconclusion which leaves an open split within the individual—an such a split represents a wide gap of opposite extremes between which one’s anxiety ambiguously oscillates.³⁰⁶ Moreover, despair intensifies hand-in-hand with consciousness as a spirit involves a conscious self-relation. Thus, the initial form of one’s despair lies in the individual not being conscious of one’s own despair and not being aware of the task of becoming a self.³⁰⁷ No wonder Anti-Climacus understands despair as “sickness of the spirit”³⁰⁸ and calls it a “misrelation in the relation of a synthesis that relates itself to itself”³⁰⁹.

Nonetheless, even once the individual adopts the task of *becoming oneself* and grows conscious of her own despair, more types of despair begin to arise. Conceptually, despair always concerns the eternal, whereas one can despair over diverse things—the individual can despair over the earthly, over material loss, over a misfortune, etc. but essentially, one despairs of “that which releases [her] from despair: of the eternal, of salvation, of [her] own strength”.³¹⁰ First, Anti-Climacus specifies “despair in weakness” which denotes an individual who in despair does not will to be herself.³¹¹ Such a form of despair is thought to be feminine in the sense of devotedness and bountifulness. As it progresses, it develops an “inclosing reserve [Indesluttethed]”, which involves a self fixated on being unwilling to become itself but at the same time “being self enough to love itself”.³¹² In its

³⁰³ Beabout, G. R., “Existential Despair in Kierkegaard”, 174.

³⁰⁴ This was already discussed in chapter 1.3 (p. 65) with regard to Kierkegaard’s sketches about doubt.

³⁰⁵ CA, 111-12 / SKS 4, 413-14.

³⁰⁶ McDonald, W., “Anxiety”, 62.

³⁰⁷ “The ever increasing intensity of despair depends upon the degree of consciousness or is proportionate to its increase: the greater the degree of consciousness, the more intensive the despair.” SUD, 42 / SKS 11, 157.

³⁰⁸ SUD, 13 / SKS 11, 129.

³⁰⁹ SUD, 15 / SKS 11, 131.

³¹⁰ SUD, 60f / SKS 11, 175.

³¹¹ SUD, 49 / SKS 11, 165.

³¹² SUD, 63 / SKS 11, 177.

most progressed form—when the “inclosing reserve is maintained completely”—not willing to be oneself is the will to suicide.³¹³

If the despairing individual realizes *why* she does not will to be herself, she dialectically progresses a step further. This moment represents a shift of defiance, as the individual in despair suddenly begins to will to be oneself. As opposed to the formerly discussed feminine despair, this type of despair is understood by Anti-Climacus as masculine due to its qualification of spirit which marks a higher form than the feminine lower synthesis.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, this form shall be discussed in the upcoming chapters as it overlaps with saving doubt.

To conclude, both despair and the already discussed anxiety arise from the same underlying essence, i.e., when an individual is confronted with possibility. Nevertheless, despair comes into existence as a distinct category from anxiety; while anxiety is the possibility of freedom, despair is eternity present within a human. Furthermore, despair occurs not only when the eternal *is present*, but also when one *is conscious of* the eternal. In the *Thorn in the Flesh* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard writes about “a cry of despair”, which he links to the “suffering of separation”.³¹⁵ The kind of separation that the despairing individual experiences is an excruciating one because it “shuts [her] out of from the eternal” and gives her spirit “the status of an alien” for the spirit’s home is in the eternal.³¹⁶ Kierkegaard adds that such separation is far worse than the separation of death, for “death only separates a person from the temporal and therefore is a release”.³¹⁷ Therefore, the painfulness of such separation lies in the fact that the individual has to live with the despair at all times and cannot escape from it. She can attempt to ease the pain and provisionally numb it through fleeting temporal pleasures, but the awareness of her separation from the eternal will always be there.

³¹³ SUD, 66 / SKS 11, 180.

³¹⁴ SUD, 67 / SKS 11, 181.

³¹⁵ EUD, 337 / SKS 5, 326.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

INTERMEZZO I: FAUST

“But he is a doubter; his doubt has destroyed actuality for him, for my Faust is so ideal that he is not one of those scientific doubters who doubt one hour every semester on the podium but otherwise are able to do everything else.”³¹⁸

This intermezzo functions as a reflective pause within the interpretation, occurring after a thorough examination of the negative aspects of doubt and the various scenarios in which it detrimentally impacts an individual’s existence. In order to metaphorically color in the line art, the famous character of Faust by Goethe³¹⁹ will be presented here as an example to bring to life what had been discussed in this chapter. Kierkegaard himself writes³²⁰ about this figure, or an archetype³²¹, which is embodied in Faust as an eminent scholar who sold his soul to Mephistopheles in exchange for knowledge and magical powers that would help him indulge in worldly pleasures. In his *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes de silencio describes Faust as “*the* [emphasis added by AP] doubter” or “the doubter par excellence”.³²² However, Kierkegaard does not view this character only as an illustration, he believes that Faust is a manifestation of doubt in time. In other words, there is one universal doubt but many different Fausts in given times and places who project doubt according to the historic setting. The way in which Faust is depicted depends on how doubt is understood in a given time period in history. Therefore, it is not as surprising that the myth of Faust written by Goethe resembles several Old Testament stories since, as Kierkegaard would say, the same principle which is universal to all humanity is portrayed a little differently. The first similarity can be seen in the play’s opening Prologue of Part I, where God converses with Mephistopheles in the same manner as God spoke to Satan in the book of Job.

³¹⁸ FT, 110 / SKS 4, 198.

³¹⁹ It ought to be emphasized that Goethe’s version is used for interpretation as Kierkegaard was referring to this one. This comment is also made because there are other prominent versions, such as the old German folk tales, Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus*, the operas of Charles Gounod (*Faust*) and Hector Berlioz (*La damnation de Faust*). Needless to say, some of these versions were released after Kierkegaard’s death. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard was also a reader of other contemporary versions of the myth, such as that of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s, Maximilian Klingler’s, Christian Grabbe’s, or Nicolaus Lenau’s. For a thorough elaboration of Kierkegaard’s engagement with the figure of Faust see also Lisi, L. P., “Faust: The Seduction of Doubt”.

³²⁰ Most of Kierkegaard’s remarks on the topic of Faust can be found in his earliest authorial works, specifically the *Notebooks and Journals* from the period 1835-1837. Despite the shortness of Kierkegaard’s engagement with the story of Faust, his remarks in those journal entries show the intensity of his interest in the matter. See Lisi, L. P., “Faust: The Seduction of Doubt”, 210.

³²¹ Forrest mentions three Kierkegaardian archetypes which for him represent pivotal existential moments: *Don Juan* as the epitome of the esthetic existence, *Faust* as the ethical, and *Abraham* as the religious. See Forrest, W., “A Problem in Values: The Faustian Motivation in Kierkegaard and Goethe”, 251-61.

³²² FT, 108 / SKS 4, 196.

“The Lord: Do you know Faust?
Mephistopheles: The Doctor?
The Lord: Yes, my servant!” (Faust, 8/295)

“And the Lord said to Satan:
Have you considered my servant Job?”
(Job 1:8; ESV)

A direct reference to the serpent in the Garden of Eden can be also noticed in Mephistopheles' remark in his dialogue with God as he calls the “famous snake” his own relative.

“Dust shall he eat, and that with zest,
As did the famous snake, my near relation.”³²³

Even though Kierkegaard believed that the archetype of Faust recurred throughout history, he differentiated between the late 16th century Germanic Faustian tales and the story of Faust written by Goethe. He even called the older Faustian figures “the earlier” or “the original” and perceived Goethe's Faust as “the Faust who is now supposed to represent the age” and distinguished between these two.³²⁴ In his journal entry, Kierkegaard mentioned that the earlier Faust's doubt was characteristic for the fact that it made the knowledge of his time meaningless while the Faust of his time was overwhelmed by the “multiplicity of knowledge” or by “multifarious knowledge”.³²⁵ To be clear, the original Faust doubted in a rather practical way, meaning that he looked for a way out through experience which would provide him stability strong enough to withstand his doubt. He sought meaning beyond the scope of doubt's destructive effects only to realize that even more experience and more knowledge left him empty handed and completely starved out on the inside. The original Faust's gain from knowledge was sheer nothing. The contemporary Faust, on the other hand, experiences different kind of turmoil caused by the relativity of knowledge in doubt that he tries to make sense of. Considering relative meaning in the modern world, the new Faust is paralyzed by having to navigate a world filled with multiplicity of plausible answers to every question until

³²³ Goethe, J. W. von, *Faust: Part One and Two*, 9/330.

³²⁴ “That Faust who is now supposed to represent the age is essentially different from the earlier Faust and from the Faust of every other age is so evident that one needs only to be reminded of it.” JP 2, 1182 / SKS 17, 138, Pap. II A 29.

³²⁵ KJN 1, 132-3 / SKS 17, 139, BB: 49.

they all become meaningless. This peculiar “super excess” of meaning weighs him down and every relativity falls prey to doubt. Faust soon realizes that doubt annihilates and consumes any sort of meaning. Thus, the new Faust does not necessarily deal with the content of knowledge—or acquiring more information—as the original Faust had, but rather its format.³²⁶ He discovers that the knowledge which he was so obsessed with failed to provide him with the tool needed to organize the chaotic relativities into concrete categories or at least unify all the miscellaneous meaning he was immersed in into a pattern.

For Kierkegaard, the archetype of modern Faust serves as a means to demonstrate a phenomenon of utter despair caused by the multiplicity of knowledge. He shows that Faust chose knowledge as his path, and yet he doubts knowledge as the doubter par excellence. While doubt arises whenever there is only relativity, transcendence cannot be reached via knowledge as it stands beyond relativity which reduces everything into relativities. In essence, Faust desires to break out of the enchaining state of meaninglessness into transcendence which can be reached only by the infinite leap of faith. The transcendent meaning for which Faust longs cannot be found where he is searching for it, i.e., in the relativities, and this futile effort only feeds into doubt which has the tendency to annul, and thus it continually creates black hole in Faust which prevents him from progressing onto a higher existential life-view.

Although Faust is often understood to be just another Don Juan, Williams stands contrary to this generally accepted view by placing him in the ethical stage of existence. Therefore, Faust represents an archetype of a man arriving before the qualitative jump towards the archetype of Abraham, or the religious.³²⁷ As was seen above, Faust cannot seem to take the leap into transcendence because knowledge and reason cannot ensure such a movement for it stands contrary to faith and faith cannot be reached through reason. However, doubt is not only a negative element leading to despair; it is thanks to doubt that one is brought to the border of thought, of the ethical, and is presented with the question of the transcendent, or religious. When doubt clears the ground for an individual and leaves her empty handed, it is solely up to that individual which of the two paths she takes. She can either take the leap of faith, which would bring her into religiosity, or keep

³²⁶ Tattersall, M., “Faust’s Dog: Kierkegaard, Despair & the Chimera of Meaning”, 10.

³²⁷ Williams, F., “A Problem in Values: The Faustian Motivation in Kierkegaard and Goethe”, 253.

doubting and seek to get into transcendence through reasoning and fall back to square one in the vast realm of knowledge.

What supports the claim that Faust represents the ethical stage of existence is also Kierkegaard's interest in the relationship between Faust and Gretchen. In his early writings, Kierkegaard elaborates on the character of Gretchen, Faust's lover whom he romantically seduced and eventually lost her to execution, with respect to the doubt present in their relationship.³²⁸ Here, he depicts Faust's sensuous interest in Gretchen as a distraction from his ever-present, either conscious or subconscious, sense of overwhelming doubt. Gretchen represents to him a glimpse of hope that she can distract and cheer him up for a moment.³²⁹ Nevertheless, for Faust this instant gratification, or "immediacy"³³⁰, as Kierkegaard's spokesman A writes, sought in a romantic relationship with innocent Gretchen ends in yet another failure as it does not fulfill his needs same as every other activity. On the contrary, doubt constantly destroys any spiritual immediacy for him. At the same time, Faust's intention is not to make her doubt in the same fashion as him—in the beginning of Part I of Goethe's play, Gretchen's faith remains pure and childlike in opposition to Faust.

Another notable character that Kierkegaard pays attention to in his early writings is the already mentioned Mephistopheles. While Gretchen embodies someone pure, immediate, who stands contrary to Faust's doubt, Mephistopheles manages to prompt and magnify the doubt present in Faust.³³¹ Initially, Faust devoted himself to the diabolic companion in hope of getting enlightened or gaining knowledge and being educated by him. However, Mephistopheles' education and guidance stirs even more doubt in Faust which leaves him spiraling down to a place much darker than before he sealed the deal with the devil. Kierkegaard points this out as follows:

³²⁸ References to Faust and Gretchen can be found in *Either/Or, Fear and Trembling*, and *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*.

³²⁹ Tattersall, M., "Faust's Dog: Kierkegaard, Despair & the Chimera of Meaning", 14.

³³⁰ EO1, 207 / SKS 2, 202f.

³³¹ In a sense, Mephistopheles magnifies all the dubious aspects Faust carried in himself when the devil allowed Faust to experience all the temptations there may be in the world—knowledge, power, or lust. Amongst countless other instances, this tendency can be observed on a scene when Mephistopheles helps Faust become the Holy Roman Emperor's right hand. Faust cannot satisfy with having a lower rank than the ultimate ruler. Therefore, he is given a feudal fief as a compensation. While in the royal court, Faust cannot sit on the throne, but on his own land he can be a sovereign ruler. The relationship between Mephistopheles and Faust is well described from a psychological point of view by John Whiton in "Reading Goethe's Faust from a Catholic Perspective".

“For although Mephistopheles admittedly let him look through his spectacles into the hidden secrets of man and of the world, Faust was unable to refrain from harboring doubts about him; intellectually he could never enlighten him about the deepest things.”³³²

To conclude, Kierkegaard approves of Goethe’s ending to the play’s Part I which does not contain any resolution to Faust’s situation. Faust ends up existentially paralyzed.³³³ However, Kierkegaard explicitly criticizes Goethe’s conclusion to Part II where Faust, upon his death, is saved by the heavens despite his original deal with the devil. Kierkegaard considers Goethe’s closure to Faust’s inner conflict as an easy and most obvious solution which does not provide any answer to his despair and offers only “false harmony”³³⁴. Kierkegaard sums up his remarks concerning Part II of Faust as such: “Goethe has written a second part of F., whereas I simply cannot see that he has let this struggle unwind in the individual himself”.³³⁵

2.2 Concluding Thoughts on False Doubt

The story of Faust revealed what it practically looks like to relate to doubt in a self-destructive way, and how that played out in his existence. This concluding chapter’s aim is to review each of the key characteristics of false doubt (that is hunger for knowledge, pride, offense, mistrust, variation, anxiety, and despair) with respect to the previously discussed intermezzo. Goethe’s Faust—or, as Kierkegaard calls it, a specific manifestation of doubt in a given time—embodied all of the false doubt’s attributes in the following aspects.

First, Faust’s hunger for knowledge was evident not only in the very beginning of his search for answers but also continuously throughout his entire quest for terminating his suffering. Goethe’s Faust was different from the previous Fausts in the sense that this Faust was utterly lost in the multiplicity of knowledge, while the previous Faustian stories portrayed the knowledge of their times as meaningless. Moreover, the new Faust struggled with the format, rather than the content, of knowledge as it failed to offer him

³³² KJN 1, 14–15 / SKS 17, 19, AA:12.

³³³ “But now at last the type of people we need to observe come into view; namely, those who seek in intuition to comprehend in the totality of vision the infinite multiplicity in nature, in life, in history. Yet here, too, is the misfortune. For much is already unrolled before their eyes and more appears every day, but under all this multifarious knowledge there is a latent feeling of how infinitely little it is, and this is the feeling which *paralyzes* [emphasis added by AP] their activity.” KJN 1, 132-3 / SKS 17, 139, BB:49.

³³⁴ Lisi, L. P., “Faust: The Seduction of Doubt”, 18.

³³⁵ KJN 1, 98 / SKS 17, 105-6, BB: 14.

a tool necessary to organize its abstract multiplicity into cohesive concrete categories. At first, Goethe's Faust made a pact with Mephistopheles with hopes of achieving full knowledge. At this point, knowledge appeared to him as something completely harmless but extremely desirable. Initially, the knowledge was indeed neutral—Kierkegaard uses the terms “infinite equality”, “infinite indifference” and “sheer transparency”—as it placed opposite possibilities in equilibrium.³³⁶ However, once Faust started to relate to it in a possessive, lustful and greedy way, his hunger started to rise exponentially but his appetite for knowledge was never fully satisfied. Thus, with this fascination began the painful vicious cycle for Faust. As a matter of fact, with each progression in the acquisition of knowledge, the space for *more* knowledge widened and the limits of full knowledge disappeared. Moreover, his knowledge was comprehensive (*Viden* in Danish) and stayed purely on an abstract level. As a result, Faust became fully absorbed by that speculative knowledge and eventually “vanished from himself”³³⁷ in it. Kierkegaard wrote that this Faust's suffering would have been ended had this been broken by an action. To conclude, from an epistemological point of view, achieving full knowledge is impossible even though the desire for knowledge persists. The merging of the extremes is also unrealistic; on the contrary, the gap between them widens more and more.

Second, Faust's behavior was marked with pride, not necessarily the boastful kind of pride, but pride intertwined with idolatry. In the analytical part, idolatry was defined as a misplacement of the object of worship. Goethe's Faust willingly chose full knowledge, despite knowledge on its own being neutral and harmless, as his idol. In this way, he started to relate to it in a toxic manner. Although the object of worship did not provide Faust with satisfaction, his pride did not allow him to seek for other alternatives as his entire being was fully set on attaining more knowledge. Kierkegaard would likely describe this prideful aspect of false doubt as an overestimation of one's autonomy, where one mistakenly believes that she can overcome doubt and achieve certainty through her own intellectual willpower, rather than humbly acknowledging one's dependence on God. No wonder Kierkegaard remarks that false doubt questions everything else except itself.³³⁸ Furthermore, the story of Faust uncovers the role of Mephistopheles as the sneaky seducer, or an embodiment of the evil voice, who contributed to Faust's contempt

³³⁶ WL, 231-33 / SKS 9, 233-34.

³³⁷ EUD, 87 / SKS 5, 93.

³³⁸ EUD, 128f / SKS 5, 132.

and magnified all the dubious aspects in him, especially pride. That is why Faust is offended when he cannot sit at the Holy Emperor's throne and simply cannot accept a second position to the ruler. His pride leads him to demand a fief so that he could exercise his power and act superior on his own land. Even though offence takes place exclusively on the grounds of religious conversations or Christendom, it is evident that Faust's prideful behavior counters the meek attitude of Paul, speaking in the akratic manner, which is highly praised by Kierkegaard.

Next, Faust exhibited a great amount of mistrust. This can be seen on various levels. First, Faust was so adamantly set on achieving epistemic certainty that his search for knowledge on the path *of* knowledge left him blind to other alternatives. By holding fast onto his abilities in achieving the prize upon which his eyes were dead set on, Faust relied solely on his own (and to some degree on Mephistopheles') strength and mistrusted the good. While it could be objected that Faust had no idea what good meant for him, Kierkegaard is strict and notes that the doubter can be deceived not only by not believing what is true but also believing what is untrue. As was said in the analytical part, mistrust cannot hold knowledge—which in its neutral state holds the opposite possibilities balanced—in equilibrium for mistrust defiles knowledge and pushes it towards malice, corruption, and envy. Second, Faust's mistrust, same as any other mistrust, was ethically a disobedience to God as Faust willingly decided to listen to Mephistopheles' deceitful voice which very much resembled that of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Mephistopheles personified false doubt as an outward element which would not only lead Faust astray, but also forced him to take a stance towards it in one way or the other—in other words, Faust had to relate to it. Mephistopheles' voice had a distinct tone: it spoke in antitheses which contradicted the truth with a sole objective to turn Faust's trust into mistrust. This pattern can be noticed in the very beginning of the story where Mephistopheles makes a bet with God, same as the dialogue between God and Satan about Job, which in its essence lies in the fact that Mephistopheles wants to lure God's favorite man away from righteousness. Therefore, all of Mephistopheles' striving is driven by the desire to subvert Faust's trust in God into mistrust and force him to believe that fulfillment can be found in absolute knowledge.

Another recognizable feature of false doubt is that it causes turbulent variations in the doubter's existence. This was well traceable in the story of Faust who, on his journey

towards achieving full knowledge, experienced the highest of heights but also the lowest of lows. While Faust experienced moments of power, success, admiration and validation, but also gaining more knowledge, he also tasted the bitterness of knowledge, which ultimately led him to utter despair, feelings of defeat, and self-loathing. When portraying the ever-changing conditions under the rule of false doubt, Kierkegaard uses the imagery of putting one's trust in doubt's false friendship which eventually takes everything away from her, confuses her, and blurs her vision.³³⁹ If Mephistopheles represented false doubt, then he did his personification justice as his friendship with Faust was false from the beginning, having mischievous intentions. Mephistopheles promised Faust absolute knowledge with the use of his magical powers only for Faust to slowly realize that their friendship was detrimental. False doubt also robs the doubter with its variations leaving the person empty-handed and worse off than before. The greatest pain Faust had experienced was undoubtedly the loss of his beloved innocent Gretchen who, as understood by Kierkegaard, represented to him a symbol of immediacy which helped Faust escape the overwhelming doubt for a moment and forget about it.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Gretchen's passing was the epitome of Faust's complete loss of spiritual immediacy that left him in utter despair. Moreover, it symbolized the reality that his distraction from doubt was only temporary. Thus, Faust's vision was obscured with the fogs of the false doubt's omnipresence, and he could not seem to find any hope which, as was exemplified in Hiebert's commentary on James 1:17, was always at hand but the doubt completely covered it for Faust.

Without dispute, Part I of Goethe's Faust reveals great anxiety and despair experienced by the main character. This dissertation revolves around the "Part I Faust" because Kierkegaard himself considered this figure the epitome of modern doubt. The essence of the despair experienced by Goethe's Faust can be better understood by comparing the "earlier Faust" with "the Faust which is supposed to represent the modern age", for Kierkegaard distinguished between these two Fausts' despairs.³⁴¹ Kierkegaard perceived the earlier Faust in the Old-Germanic folk stories as a character dealing with a rather practical form of despair. His despair resulted from the fact that the knowledge he was acquiring within his academic studies gave him nothing in return and thus proved to be

³³⁹ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

³⁴⁰ EO1, 207 / SKS 2, 202f.

³⁴¹ JP 2, 1182 / SKS 17, 138, Pap. II A 29.

meaningless. The core difference lied in that the earlier Faust was not searching for speculative knowledge, but for guidance in what he should *do*, how he should *act*. He soon understood that the academic ground cannot provide him with that certainty. Thus, Kierkegaard pointed out to the earlier Faust's enthusiasm to *realize* the ideal. According to Kierkegaard, this characteristic illuminated the specificity of that period in history as that which sought to reconcile knowledge with *life*. On the contrary, the modern Faust's despair stemmed from his search for universal knowledge of an abstract kind. In other words, Kierkegaard's Faust³⁴² did not despair over the impersonality and abstraction of knowledge but instead he "despaired over the relativity of everything"³⁴³. Moreover, the increasing extent of despair is visible with the exponential progression of Faust's knowledge as his knowledge turned inward and did not stay only on an intellectual level. Needless to say, the analysis of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* also uncovered that despair has the tendency to paralyze or freeze an individual like icy cold winter which gets to the bone marrow. This is expressed by Kierkegaard when he describes Faust at the very end of Part I as "existentially paralyzed"³⁴⁴, unable to make a decision, or to will. This Faust would have been rescued from such paralysis only by an *act* of will, which was noticeable in the earlier Faust.

Nevertheless, both of these Faustian archetypes, or the expressions of doubt in a given time period, had one thing in common, i.e. anxiety as the ontological mark of freedom. Such state is neutral, but it can potentially become a mycelium for sin and despair. As was explained in the analytical part, Kierkegaard holds that anxiety as such is not a sin, but it is one's natural reaction to the *possibility* of sinning. Such scenario, which was experienced also by Goethe's Faust, takes place in the sphere of freedom which offers an individual a dual way of relating to the possibility of sin—either to sin or refrain from sinning. Faust's decision to the possibility of sinning was evident when he willingly, although reluctantly at first, decided to relate to sin in a negative way by sealing a deal with the devil.

³⁴² This nickname refers to the already mentioned expression by Kierkegaard, who describes the Faust of Part I as "my Faust". See FT, 110 / SKS 4, 198.

³⁴³ KJN 1, 134-5 / SKS 17, 140, BB: 49.

³⁴⁴ KJN 1, 132-3 / SKS 17, 139, BB: 49.

3. IN BETWEEN FALSE AND SAVING DOUBT

On the one hand, the intermezzo of Faust represented a conclusion and deeper explanation of what false doubt can cause in one's existence. On the other hand, the existential despair experienced by Faust also helped illuminate the very edge of the ethical existence prior to a potential leap of faith. Before examining the key features of saving doubt, it is necessary to explore the platform in between the false and saving doubt. While the movement towards religiosity happens via a *jump*, or a qualitative *leap*, the relatively broader term *platform* will be used to describe the moments and circumstances leading up to that *leap* anchored in resolution and will.

As the analysis progresses, it ought to be remembered that there is a difference between *objective skepticism* and *subjective skepticism*. All of these prerequisites are to be found in the realm of subjectivity. As was mentioned in the introduction to terminology (chapter 2.1.2, p. 44), when one's objective reason is expanded beyond its proper limits in the area of intellectual skepticism, it is being constantly self-destroyed on its own ground. Thus, skepticism makes one seriously search for truth within one's own subjectivity, as objective skepticism shows the inability to reach truth. As Rudd³⁴⁵ points out, Kierkegaard's notorious "truth is subjectivity"³⁴⁶ can be well appreciated against his concerns with skepticism.

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Johannes Climacus contrasts speculative knowledge, or objective skepticism, with Christian faith. Such distinction is crucial as it sets the scene for this platform in between saving and false doubt. Christian faith requires the suspension of one's understanding and letting go of pursuing epistemic certainty, as Christianity is a passion of the spirit and not a passion of intellectual cognition.³⁴⁷ Thus, the realm of faith and the realm of reason are separate, for their objects of pursuit are opposite—Christianity's object is *belief* and objective skepticism's object is *epistemic certainty*. How does one *jump* from one realm to another, then? Climacus answers this question by noting that Christian faith is an act of will which chooses between offense and belief. The speculative thinker is convinced that she knows how to cancel the paradox which characterizes the Christian faith. As a result, Christianity

³⁴⁵ See Rudd, A. J., "Kierkegaard and the Skeptics", 71.

³⁴⁶ CUP1, 189 / SKS 7, 173.

³⁴⁷ CUP1, 203f / SKS 7, 188f.

is not the unchangeable truth to the thinker but rather it is her understanding of Christianity that is the truth. And it is precisely her *understanding* which stands contrary to truth. Climacus writes that the Christian truth is not reached once an individual *understood everything* implied in the truth. On the contrary, Christian truth is born only when it, the Truth, is understood by the speculative thinker in the way she understands it. It is then, Climacus points out, that the Truth has come forth, and the speculation ceased to be true for the speculative thinker. As was already explained in the previous chapter, knowledge on its own is neutral—in this passage, it is paraphrased by Johannes Climacus as “something indifferent in relation to what is known, so that this is not changed by being known but remains the same”³⁴⁸—however, speculative knowledge places itself as the object of knowledge. As a result, speculation exists for the speculative thinker as the truth.

Therefore, Climacus’ answer to the realization of the leap is that the religious sphere cannot be reached via reason. He writes that “speculative thought is objective, and objectively there is no truth for an existing individual but only an approximation”.³⁴⁹ Contrarily, Christian truth is subjective. Objectively, there is no truth, that is why the false doubt produces despair because it thinks it can achieve full truth, but it is impossible. Christian sphere cannot be reached via a formula, or “a creed by rote”³⁵⁰, the individual “has to feel h[er]self a sinner”³⁵¹. This point is the underlying essence of what is the prerequisite to faith:

“The individual existing human being *has to feel [her]self a sinner* [emphasis added by AP] (not objectively, which is nonsense, but subjectively, and this is the deepest pain).”³⁵²

However, it is not an easy task to feel oneself a sinner—this does not happen overnight. If one were to say, “I feel sinful because I know this is something that needs to happen in order to jump to faith”, she would obviously place knowledge as the object, which is the untruth. Contrastingly, Climacus mentions two moments that need to organically, not forcefully, take place prior to the leap of faith. First, the individual must “want to understand the forgiveness of sins” and then “despair of understanding”.³⁵³ The

³⁴⁸ CUP1, 223 / SKS 7, 204.

³⁴⁹ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

³⁵⁰ Kierkegaard considers the Pharisee-like “faith”, which they though could be learned by habit, or by heart, paganism, because to him, Christianity is inwardness. See CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

³⁵¹ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

proposition here is that saving doubt plays a pivotal role in one's progression onto religiosity by the leap of faith. When one despairs of understanding, she stands in opposition to understanding in faith. Climacus writes that faith cannot be cultivated when sitting calmly in a ship during a nice weather—rather, it is an uncomfortable process. He then adds that faith is to be seen when the ship “has sprung a leak” and the steerer tries to “keep the ship afloat by pumping and not to seek the harbor”.³⁵⁴ The image should capture that “while the understanding, like a desperate passenger, stretches its arms toward land, faith works vigorously in the depths”, and as a result, “joyful and victorious, it [faith] *rescues the soul* [emphasis added by AP] against the understanding”.³⁵⁵ The defiant aspect, which goes *against* the understanding, is called the “firmness of faith” or the “resilience of inwardness”³⁵⁶ by Climacus.

3.1 Correspondence To—

The unique movement which happens during relating to doubt in a saving way is most explicit in Kierkegaard's upbuilding discourse *To Need God*. While the specific characteristics of saving doubt and its outcomes in one's existence will be listed and analyzed in the upcoming chapter, this midchapter aims to illuminate the dilemma one faces when relating to doubt. Furthermore, the nature of knowledge during the one-way-or-another kind of decision shall be exemplified. As will be seen more clearly, saving doubt has the power to move one to a place where she is *in correspondence with God*. Kierkegaard opens his discussion in the second part of his upbuilding discourse *To Need God* with a rhetorical question that has to do with the thesis that “God in heaven is capable of all things, and man of nothing at all”³⁵⁷. In relation to this thesis, he raises a question:

“Is it not so, my listener, that these two correspond to each other: God and man?”³⁵⁸

What Kierkegaard means by this is that an individual will *either* agree that the two correspond to each other, and she will be “happy about this wonderful good fortune” *or* disagree and will “prefer to be such a one who does not correspond to God at all” and “such a one who is capable of something [her]self and consequently does not correspond

³⁵⁴ CUP1, 225 / SKS 7, 205.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ EUD, 310 / SKS 5, 302.

³⁵⁸ EUD, 310 / SKS 5, 302f.

to God completely”.³⁵⁹ The case of the disagreeing person reveals that she is not fully invested in wanting to correspond to God.

The nature of correspondence *of* something, or someone, *to* something, or someone, can be better understood on two other examples provided by Kierkegaard in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, for he uses the term “correspondence to something” in the following upbuilding discourses: *The Thorn in the Flesh* and *Patience in Expectancy*.

In the first instance, i.e. *The Thorn in the Flesh*, Kierkegaard writes that Paul’s “suffering” and Paul’s experienced “blessedness of the spirit” correspond to each other.³⁶⁰ Via this comparison, Kierkegaard aims to demonstrate the absurd coexistence of the two states which are not mutually exclusive but in fact compatible. By the term “third heaven”³⁶¹, Kierkegaard refers to an out-of-body supernatural spiritual experience of the heavenly kingdom, or “being a participant in sublime revelations”³⁶² by apostle Paul. “Third heaven” is supposed to represent one pole of the correspondence’s union. The other pole is the “thorn in the flesh”, a metaphorical portrayal of Paul’s bodily, or human, weakness³⁶³ which not only threw him into temporality but also which countered the previously experienced feelings of bliss, beatitude, and expansion in God. However, Kierkegaard notes that the thorn in the flesh must have represented something deeply personal and inward for Paul—nobody thus knows what the thorn was, it was solely between God and Paul. What the thorn caused in Paul’s inner life, though, was that it disturbed his blessedness of the spirit, or the spiritual high. Kierkegaard even uses the term “shadow of variation”³⁶⁴ which matches one of the key features of false doubt and thus shows that the apostle experienced the turbulences of doubt which took away the heavenly blissfulness from him. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard praises Paul that during his suffering, he was dominantly “in harmony with God”.³⁶⁵ He sets Paul as an example of a disciple who “declared that he knew this variation was beneficial for him”.³⁶⁶ This attitude

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ EUD, 334-5 / SKS 5, 323-4.

³⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 12:1-3.

³⁶² EUD, 334 / SKS 5, 324.

³⁶³ The particular weakness, or the thorn in the flesh, is not fully known as Paul did not explicitly express what he had been struggling with. There have been ongoing scholarly discussions about the potential “thorn”, but Kierkegaard does not pay much attention to its meaning. For Kierkegaard, Paul’s admitted weakness was a testimony that no Christian can be excused from suffering. (EUD, 337, SKS 5, 326)

³⁶⁴ EUD, 337 / SKS 5, 326.

³⁶⁵ EUD, 333 / SKS 5, 322f.

³⁶⁶ EUD, 337 / SKS 5, 326.

uncovers how Paul related to doubt. He related to it by embracing it and turning it into a positive aspect which prevented him from self-sufficiency and pride. This frame of mind—also described by Kierkegaard as a “resign[ation] to the will of God in whatever happens”³⁶⁷—allowed Paul to exist in correspondence to God. Kierkegaard goes even further and illustrates what would the other way of relating to doubt look like in this case. He writes that had Paul took on the opposite attitude, he could have easily said that “there is a change in God”, that “Satan has the power to tear a person out of [the] beatitude”, and that “there is no security for a human being not even in the third heaven”.³⁶⁸

In the second text, i.e. *The Patience in Expectancy*, Kierkegaard presents another pair of mutual correspondence: “patience” and “expectancy”. The context of this upbuilding discourse is framed within the verses from Luke 2:33-40, a gospel passage about Anna and Simeon, two old prophets who were patiently and expectantly waiting for the promised Messiah.³⁶⁹ In this upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard describes an individual who in distress loses her original happiness—that resembling youthful naïveté or careless jubilation—and realizes that such shallow happiness can no longer protect her from sorrow. He identifies such moment as one that brings about “later wisdom” in which that individual does not even want to be happy but “dejected”.³⁷⁰ At that moment of anguish, Kierkegaard writes, it becomes apparent that “patience and expectancy correspond to each other”.³⁷¹ However, Kierkegaard specifies that the patience which corresponds to expectancy is a particular one: it is the opposite of a mere dull apathy or forgetfulness. On the contrary, it is marked with a proactive inspection of one’s expectancy. What does that mean specifically? The individual’s patience is determined by the very essence of its expectancy. The expectant individual thus needs to continuously survey her expectancy—“test h[er] expectancy”, “become aware of h[er] impatience”, and “judge h[er]self”—for genuine expectancy produces patience by its own virtue.³⁷² If the expectancy’s essence was not genuine, it would only produce impatience and, in such an instance, the individual ought to let go of that expectancy. The correspondence also goes in the other direction:

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ This story exemplifies the virtue of patience in expectancy best because the Israelites had been waiting for any sign of the coming of the Messiah for centuries. In fact, the “silent period” between the last words from God to his people through the prophet of Malachi and Jesus’ forerunner John the Baptist marked 400 years.

³⁷⁰ EUD, 220 / SKS 5, 219.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

“true expectancy, which requires patience, also teaches patience”.³⁷³ Kierkegaard writes that true expectancy pertains to the individual and does not leave it up to her strength to make the expected fulfillment happen. Essentially, in patience that individual offers her expectancy to God as a sacrifice for the “heavenly expectancy begins precisely when the earthly expectancy sinks down powerless and in despair”.³⁷⁴ Kierkegaard adds that every individual who is expectant in the true sense is in a relationship with God.³⁷⁵ Same as in the *Thorn in the Flesh* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard provides an example of what would the other scenario—that of fake patience in expectancy—look like. Such an individual would be under the spell of deception because her expectancy’s essence was a probability. Such person confided, unlike Anna and Simeon, in the words “maybe it will happen” instead of “it must happen”.³⁷⁶ Here, the *maybe* is precisely the *probability*, the deceitful element in this kind of expectancy. Therefore, through probability that individual closed herself off to patience for “only in patience does [s]he enter into a relation to expectancy, and this begins precisely when probability is fleeting”.³⁷⁷ Thus, the false doubt here did not stem from cognition but from an error in the will—it fooled the individual into wanting to make the indeterminate (the *probability* in expectancy) into a passionate decision.³⁷⁸

In conclusion, to Kierkegaard correspondence signifies a particular unity of two seemingly juxtaposed states of being, attitudes, or characteristics: *blessedness of the spirit—suffering, expectancy—patience, or man—God*. First, this unity is depicted by Kierkegaard in the *Patience in Expectancy* upbuilding discourse where he describes the correspondence between the two, i.e. patience and expectancy, as “having found each other and understanding each other in person”, or as “a good word in the right place”, or as “golden apple in a silver bowl”.³⁷⁹ Second, this inter-correspondence can be also likened to the New Testament verses in 2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV), in which apostle Paul writes that “we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us”. Bible commentaries explain that in the first century it was very common for people to store their treasured belongings in clay vessels. They could

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ EUD, 214 / SKS 5, 214.

³⁷⁵ EUD, 221 / SKS 5, 220.

³⁷⁶ EUD, 217 / SKS 5, 216.

³⁷⁷ EUD, 221 / SKS 5, 220.

³⁷⁸ EUD, 215 / SKS 5, 215.

³⁷⁹ EUD, 220 / SKS 5, 219.

have been found in every other household and therefore represented something rather ordinary and mundane. Moreover, these jars of clay were very easy to break and thus also presented great fragility. In this metaphor, the clay pot represents human frailty and weakness. The jars of clay in that time symbolized value only because they contained expensive possessions—otherwise they would be useless. The focus here is shifted towards the treasure which gave the vessel value and importance.³⁸⁰ In light of this metaphor, it should not be as surprising that Kierkegaard concludes his elaboration on the importance of *complete correspondence* with this all-encompassing statement.

“Thus a human being is great and at h[er] highest when [s]he corresponds to God by being nothing at all h[er]self.”³⁸¹

That is why full correspondence cannot take place when expectancy is blocked by probabilities or when suffering is perceived as something that maliciously robs one of her spirit’s blessedness. The correspondence becomes complete only when an individual lowers and humbles herself in order for God to strengthen her by his power.

3.1.1 Man—God

Nonetheless, there is still the correspondence of the individual to God left to be examined. This will be a focal point on this platform between false and saving doubt as it will illuminate the importance of saving doubt in an individual’s progression onto the religious sphere of existence. As was foreshadowed, the correspondence between the pair *man—God* occurs explicitly in the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse, but it is also directly connected with the good gift mentioned in all the *Every Good and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above* upbuilding discourses (*Every Good Gift 1*, *Every Good Gift 2*, *Every Good Gift 3*). It shall be exemplified that saving doubt contributes to the state where an individual genuinely feels *the need of God*, which makes her ready to receive the good and perfect gift.

“[T]he highest is this: that a person is fully convinced that [she] [her]self is capable of nothing, nothing at all.”³⁸²

Kierkegaard states that the way in which an individual chooses to relate to doubt depends on the nature of her self-knowledge. There are two kinds of self-knowledge which

³⁸⁰ Lapp, N. L., “Pottery”, 433.

³⁸¹ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 303.

³⁸² EUD, 307 / SKS 5, 300.

contradict themselves, and which lead to two completely different states. The following condensed list shows the two possible outcomes as outlined by Kierkegaard in the second half of his upbuilding discourse *To Need God*—the left side indicates the traits of the “negative” self-knowledge while the right side displays the aspects of a “positive” self-knowledge.³⁸³

gaining the whole world	x	gaining oneself
becoming the master	x	becoming the one in need
being capable of all things	x	being capable of nothing at all

The deceitful, “imperfect” or “altogether vague”, kind of self-knowledge signifies that an individual knows herself as “in relation to [her]self”, characterized by a relation between “a dubious self and a dubious *something else* [emphasis added by AP]”.³⁸⁴ That *something else* defines the self’s seeming worth (e.g., beauty, power, wealth, approval of others, knowledge) but when a change comes and that *something else* is taken away from her, deception is revealed. Nevertheless, the deception was still unknowingly there the entire time because that individual’s meaning of life was “founded on something else”³⁸⁵. The term *something else* uncovers that the person’s self is far from her as opposed to the world, which appears to be much closer. Terminologically, Kierkegaard uses the following expressions interchangeably to describe the two selves at work: “dubious self” equals with “first self”, and “deeper self” stands as the opposite. Needless to say, he stresses that this way of relating to one’s self-knowledge drives her away from perfection.

“Along this road, one never comes to view [herself] according to [her] perfection, and in order to begin doing that, one must begin to tear oneself loose from any such view, which is just as difficult as tearing oneself out of a dream without making the mistake of continuing the dream: dreaming that one is awake.”³⁸⁶

The opposite self-knowledge is described by Kierkegaard as “profound”³⁸⁷, and it begins at a point when an individual “turns and faces [her]self in order to understand [her]self”³⁸⁸. However, to the person who is still under the spell of false doubt, this will

³⁸³ This passage can be found in EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 306.

³⁸⁴ EUD, 313 / SKS 5, 305.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 305f.

³⁸⁷ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 305.

³⁸⁸ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 306.

appear as sheer foolishness. The opposite self-knowledge thus happens when that *deeper self* pacifies the self that was turned *outwards*, towards the world³⁸⁹ which was its object, and “summons it back from the external”³⁹⁰. Nevertheless, this withdrawal can take place only under the circumstance that the *first self* leaves the exterior world be as it is and views it as dubious.

“This is indeed the way it is; the world around us is inconstant and can be changed into the opposite at any moment, and there is not one person who can force this change by [her] own might or by the conjuration of [her] wish.”³⁹¹

Such altered view enables the *first self* to see the surrounding world as no longer appealing. The next step, in order to move towards the “positive” self-knowledge, is to admit that the *deeper self* is correct in that the surrounding world is indeed constantly changing, and that it cannot provide a solid foundation to relate to. Nothing can prove the “eternal claim”³⁹² of that *deeper self*. Kierkegaard writes that the only way to break away from it is for the *first self* to submit to the *deeper self*.³⁹³ When that moment happens, *positive self-knowledge*, the embodiment of saving doubt, comes into existence.

Kierkegaard poetically portrays this transformative moment by a dialogue between the two selves personified. He describes the submission of the *first self* to the *deeper self* not as something forceful, but rather as them becoming reconciled and walking on together.³⁹⁴ The *deeper self* tells the *first self* that now it can be finally gratified and fulfilled. The *first self* objects that it can never be as happy as before. The *deeper self* in turn encourages it to perceive it the other way around: “Suppose that the surrounding world had deceived you [...] what you regarded as certainty was actually only a possibility. What then? You would have despaired, and you would not have me to rely on. Would you not be better off now by having lost some of that burning desire and having won the understanding that life cannot deceive you; is that not that kind of losing a winning?”³⁹⁵. Kierkegaard comments on this imagery by stating that the *deeper self* uncovered a profound truth that when relating to the external world, one is not capable of anything at all. Having this

³⁸⁹ The term “world” is used broadly here, but it represents anything outside an individual that the dubious self relates to—it can also be the ideal of full knowledge.

³⁹⁰ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 306.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ EUD, 316 / SKS 5, 307.

³⁹⁵ EUD, 316f / SKS 5, 308.

consciousness—that of the everchanging conditions of the external world—will help an individual not be deceived even though she may act in, or relate to, the external. Kierkegaard calls this kind of consciousness “the deeper self’s consent”.³⁹⁶ Thus, if an individual attempts to grasp the external immediately, she can be easily deceived. If, however, she seizes it “with the consciousness that it could also be changed”³⁹⁷, than even if it in fact changed, she cannot be deceived because she acts in accordance with the *deeper self’s eternal claim*.

As demonstrated, this *profound self-knowledge* teaches one that she needs God. The term “self-knowledge” proves that the essential *relating to* doubt takes place in the sphere of subjectivity. However, the fact that one is situated in the sphere of subjectivity does not automatically ensure a positive outcome—the individual can also decide to be offended by the self-knowledge that she would need to decrease in order to find her perfection, and that individual could thus relate to a dubious *something else*.

3.1.2 What Makes One Ready to Receive the Good and Perfect Gift?

Kierkegaard’s reference to the “good and perfect gift” has been highlighted several times as he himself entitled three of his upbuilding discourses *Every Good and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above* in accordance with his beloved Epistle of James. The notion of a “good and perfect gift” is a crucial moment on this platform as it dramatically shifts the course of a doubter’s experience. As shall be seen in this chapter, Kierkegaard perceives the already-mentioned *need of God* by an individual as the very condition under which one is able to receive the good and perfect gift. The good and perfect gift is essentially God’s love. This chapter seeks to unravel the perfection of such condition³⁹⁸ along with the ultimate gift’s nature as portrayed in *Every Good Gift 2*.

To begin with the need of God as the condition for receiving the good and perfect gift, Kierkegaard specifies this neediness and differentiates it from an earthly need, which he describes as imperfection. According to him, the need must be perfect so that it can be satisfied by the perfect gift.³⁹⁹ Nevertheless, before such perfect need awakens, there must

³⁹⁶ EUD, 317 / SKS 5, 309.

³⁹⁷ EUD, 317 / SKS 5, 308f.

³⁹⁸ “This condition is in turn itself a perfection, since otherwise the good would not be a perfect gift.” EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

³⁹⁹ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

be, as Kierkegaard writes, “a great upheaval”.⁴⁰⁰ The upheaval can be understood as a wrestle with doubt. If one wills to relate to it in a positive way, under the guidance of *profound self-knowledge*, then the circumstance turns into a condition ideal for receiving the good and perfect gift. However, if one wills to relate to doubt in a negative way, directed by *imperfect self-knowledge*, then it will not allow for the condition to be a gift and will ultimately “defraud [her] of the perfection and the possibility of receiving the perfect gift”.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, the need for God must be absolute, not fragmented or only partial with half-meaning.⁴⁰² Hence, Kierkegaard—referencing apostle Paul that he would do the same—encourages the doubter to “use doubt in the right way”.⁴⁰³

“While the eyes of faith, then, steadfastly continue to be set on that which is above, quietly see heaven open, the apostle would now allow, indeed encourage, the single individual to *use doubt in the right way* [emphasis added by AP], not to doubt what stands firm and will stand firm forever in its eternal clarity, but to doubt that which in itself is transitory, which will more and more vanish, to doubt himself, his own capacity and competence, so that it becomes an incapacity that is discarded more and more.”⁴⁰⁴

Considering the quoted section, the essence of any doubt is that it questions *something*. The trajectory of doubt thus depends on what is that *something* being questioned. Kierkegaard makes it clear that false doubt questions that which is constant and eternal, i.e. God, while saving doubt questions what itself is variable and changing, i.e. oneself or the external world. This aspect goes hand in hand with the already-mentioned turn of the *first self* towards *profound self-knowledge*. Such moment happens when the *first self* is summoned from the external world by the *deeper self* which exclaimed the *eternal claim*: “the world around us is inconstant and can be changed into the opposite at any moment”.⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the knowledge must deepen even more and cannot view only the external as dubious. The individual must go deeper and question also oneself. Therefore, saving doubt makes an individual question the everchanging world around her but also herself to a point when she decreases and feels the deep need for God—and it is this need and lowliness that enables the individual to correspond to God and be in unity with him. Contrarily, false doubt resembles that stubborn *first self* which refuses to

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 139.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 140.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 308f.

believe the *deeper self's eternal claim* about the transitoriness of the external world—let alone the individual herself—wills to question it and considers it utter foolishness. As a result, the false doubt does not allow such an individual to experience the need of God which ultimately prevents her from corresponding to God.

Having examined the necessary condition for receiving the good and perfect gift—that is *to need God*—it is now time to survey the meaning of the actual good and perfect gift to be received. First, Kierkegaard uses the term “good and perfect gift” together on purpose as he thinks of the two inseparably, and it would thus be a mistake to speak of only “a good gift” or only “a perfect gift”. He does so consciously in accordance with apostle James, whose phrase he borrowed. In *Every Good Gift 1*, Kierkegaard points out that the expression “every good gift” signifies “the inner nature of the gift”, which is essentially one, undivided, and wholesome.⁴⁰⁶ “Every perfect gift” thereby denotes “the more intimate relation into which, by the help of God, the good gift enters with the individual who receives it”.⁴⁰⁷ To put it differently, when an individual receives the good gift, which is characteristic for its undividedness, an intimate relation between the good gift—intertwined with the receiver—and the perfect gift is formed “so that the good in and by itself does not become harmful or ruinous to [the individual]”.⁴⁰⁸ The next characteristic of the gift is that it comes “from above”, meaning that the gift turns the individual’s thoughts in the direction of up towards heaven where “every good has its home”.⁴⁰⁹ Second, the gift comes “from the Father of lights”, which, according to Kierkegaard, indicates that God’s “eternal love hurries ahead and prepares everything and in this way makes the good gift into a perfect gift”.⁴¹⁰ In the previous chapter (2.2.4, pp. 79-81), it was explained that one of the false doubt’s characteristics is that it causes variations and foggily obscures the doubter’s vision. Moreover, in accordance with Hiebert’s commentary on the book of James, lights in the Ancient world signified celestial bodies which unchangeably illuminate the sky and exist even when the night comes, or clouds cover them temporarily.⁴¹¹ The expression “Father of lights” thus symbolizes stability and something not to be doubted.

⁴⁰⁶ EUD, 39 / SKS 5, 48.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*, Birmingham: BHM Books, 2002 (Revised edition).

Needless to say, Kierkegaard shows the nature of the good and perfect gift by illustrating it on two human beings, one individual giving the good and perfect gift to another. In *Every Good Gift 3*, he writes that “the only good and perfect gift a human being can give is *love* [emphasis added by AP] and all human beings in all ages have confessed that love has its home in heaven and comes down from above”.⁴¹² Therefore, the condition of *needing God* exists as a positive predisposition for receiving unconditional love. Kierkegaard contemplates the relationship and “power dynamics” between the giver and the receiver through the perspective of equality. How does equality exactly play out in the triad giver-receiver-gift? According to him, the giver⁴¹³ admits that she is more insignificant than the gift—because love is higher than a sinner—and so does the receiver admit that she is more insignificant than the gift—for it was this humble confession which had become the condition for receiving the gift. Thus, both actors on the giving and receiving sides are “equal in insignificance in relation to the gift, because the gift is from above and therefore actually belongs to neither or belongs equally to both—that is, it belongs to God”.⁴¹⁴ The giver, or the “rich person” ceased to have love as a possession as a result of willing to give it to the one in need and so did the “needy person” receive it not as a possession but as a received gift.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, equality would not have been achieved had the rich person clung onto the “gift-to-be-given”—such state is classified as imperfection by Kierkegaard. For the rich person, the imperfection was removed by giving away the gift.

While Kierkegaard uses this example on two individuals to demonstrate divine love, the same principle applies also to God’s love towards an individual. Both the giver and the receiver engage with God as the author of the good and perfect gift. The rich man received the gift from God and by thanking him for the gift and for being able to bestow it in a good way, he essentially thanks God both for the gift and for the poor man. The poor man, on the other hand, thanks the rich man for the gift and also thanks God for the rich man. As a result, “equality prevails in the giving of thanks to God, equality vis-à-vis the gift in the giving of thanks”.⁴¹⁶ Kierkegaard emphasizes that “earthly gifts”⁴¹⁷ tend to be

⁴¹² EUD, 157 / SKS 5, 157.

⁴¹³ As a reminder, in this instance, “the giver“ is understood as an unconditionally loving individual, not God.

⁴¹⁴ EUD, 157 / SKS 5, 157f.

⁴¹⁵ EUD, 157 / SKS 5, 157.

⁴¹⁶ EUD, 157f / SKS 5, 157.

⁴¹⁷ EUD, 157 / SKS 5, 157.

imperfect as they may cause distinctions amongst givers and receivers and disturb the equilibrium, but the above-explained equality becomes more apparent and intact the more perfect the gift.

This section inspected the nature of the good and perfect gift solely so that it can cast light on what is at stake when dealing with doubt at its utmost intensity. Nevertheless, this platform between false and saving doubt is still to be explored. The *Every Good Gift 3* upbuilding discourse revealed that love is the only good and perfect gift that one can give and that it comes from God. Kierkegaard explains two scenarios of an individual who has encountered such love presented as a gift, each leading to a different outcome. It is precisely the act of *relating to* the gift that takes place on this very platform. In the first instance, one refuses to receive love as a gift. Kierkegaard writes that such an individual “inspects what he gets”.⁴¹⁸ This careful inspection and questioning are the underlying essence of false doubt as it questions—same as in the story of Garden of Eden⁴¹⁹—the giver. Such willful relating to what is offered by God is characterized by an “earthly understanding”⁴²⁰ connected with the concept of *imperfect knowledge*. After all, understanding goes hand in hand with knowledge which questions what is constant rather than itself or the world. Kierkegaard goes on to say that the imperfect earthly understanding can “make duplicitous that which signifies one and the same”.⁴²¹ Howard and Edna Hong preserved the Danish original terms in their English translation: duplicitous [tvetyde], one and the same [betyde]; *tve-* meaning “two” and *be-* meaning “one”.⁴²² As was explained in the terminological chapter 2.1.2 (p. 40), doubt is characterized not only by duplexity but also by it creating duplexity. Thus, false doubt is at play in the first instance, preventing one to receive the good and perfect gift. In the second instance, on the contrary, an individual wills to accept love as a gift from God. Such an individual “weans h[er] soul from understanding the imperfect to grasp the perfect”⁴²³. In other words, *profound self-knowledge* is the kind of understanding at play

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ The dubious questioning of God was analyzed in chapter 2.1.1 (p. 72), where this tendency was traced in the Garden of Eden story. Kierkegaard makes it clear that right after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit and the initial *shalom* had been disturbed, the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil caused Adam and Eve to ask where everything came from because “the fruit was offered in a way that receiving it arouse questions about the giver”. EUD, 126 / SKS 5, 130.

⁴²⁰ EUD, 158 / SKS 5, 157f.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² EUD, 158 / SKS 5, 158.

⁴²³ Ibid.

here as it makes the individual aware and acceptant of her imperfection, that is the dubious earthly understanding. In such a state, the individual does not question God, or the gift, or that which is constant, only *herself* as the receiver—and thus she becomes ready to correspond to God and “the prefect [...] comforts [her] while it is day and remains with h[er] when night comes”.⁴²⁴ The condition under which this individual is ready to receive God’s good and perfect gift is the work of saving doubt. Moreover, the latter instance of being willing to accept love as the good and perfect gift differs from the former one in that it does not differentiate between givers and receivers—in the context of love, Kierkegaard calls this state “equality in love”, “equality from above”, or “equality that does not allow any human being to be another’s debtor”.⁴²⁵ As a result, the “difference that troubled [the individual]”⁴²⁶ ceased to be an issue.

3.1.3 Annihilation

Finally, the state of complete correspondence to God presupposes a certain kind of annihilation as the key disposition in an individual. As shall be seen, there are three ways in which an individual can annihilate—externally, internally, and at God—but only the internal annihilation combined with the external one makes an individual ready to correspond by renouncing the external everchanging world and fighting against oneself. This passage uncovers the nature of all three directions of the annihilation and also outlines their effects on one’s existence.

Both the external and the internal annihilation is facilitated by the saving doubt as it makes the individual question the external world and brings one to a point when she finds her true self as a result of losing herself. Kierkegaard describes this annihilation in the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse. Ultimately, the self-annihilating process has an inward direction—towards one’s own self—but the internal struggle cannot begin without the *deeper self*’s reconciliation with the *first self* by convincing the *first self* to view the exterior everchanging world as dubious. Only then can what Kierkegaard calls “a struggle not with the world but with oneself”⁴²⁷ take place. Therefore, the external annihilation is needed in order to annihilate oneself. The internal struggle is nonetheless extremely tiring.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ EUD, 308 / SKS 5, 300.

“Observe h[er] now; h[er] powerful figure is held embraced by another figure, and they hold each other so firmly interlocked and are so equally matched in suppleness and strength that the wrestling cannot even begin, because in that moment that other figure would overwhelm h[er]—but that other figure is [s]he h[er]self.”⁴²⁸

At this point, the struggling individual is at her weakest, capable of nothing at all. Kierkegaard views this struggle as “exhausting”⁴²⁹ and “very terrible”⁴³⁰ and that is understandable, for who would want to wage an internal war which sole goal is self-annihilation? Nevertheless, this annihilation brings about paradoxical outcomes which make the individual perfectly suitable for correspondence to God.

- **Independence of Circumstances**

First, circumstances cannot determine the final result of the struggle to annihilate oneself, for the tried individual is her own judge and plaintiff. Furthermore, it is only her who can console herself as nobody else understands the anguish that the process of annihilation brings, and it is she herself who is “the instrument of the annihilation”.⁴³¹

- **Strengthening**

The annihilation strengthens the individual. In this annihilation, the individual is protected from any delusion, evasion, or self-deception. Needless to say, the process of annihilation cannot be forced on one’s own initiative as it is a “God-given good” which was entrusted to the individual as “the secret of truth”.⁴³²

- **Annihilation as Truth**

The annihilation is the individual’s truth. The self-annihilated (or self-annihilating) person is constantly aware of the knowledge contained in the *deeper self’s eternal claim*, i.e. that the exterior world is inconstant and can be changed into the very opposite at any minute, and she also deepens her knowledge of her own nothingness. Such a person is turned inward because she knows that she is capable of nothing on her own and that this lowly state of existence is nothing admirable for others. Moreover, the individual cannot escape this knowledge.⁴³³

⁴²⁸ EUD, 308f/ SKS 5, 301

⁴²⁹ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301.

⁴³⁰ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301f.

⁴³¹ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 302.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

Principally, the concept of self-annihilation should not be interchanged with a complete nullification of one's own identity or personality. On the contrary, Kierkegaard understands the internally-oriented annihilation in light of the New Testament's verses capturing Jesus's paradoxical words "whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it".⁴³⁴ Therefore, the act of self-annihilation, or self-denial, is to lead towards finding oneself. Kierkegaard calls this "the highest and the most difficult thing of which a human being is capable".⁴³⁵

Nevertheless, as it tends to occur on this platform in between false and saving doubt, the annihilation can happen also in the direction towards God. While it is praiseworthy for an individual to annihilate the external world by perceiving it dubious and everchanging, there is a certain type of external annihilation which is utterly deceitful and imperfect. In the *One Who Prays Aright* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard describes an individual who falls to "extreme defiance"⁴³⁶ and chooses not to annihilate herself but to annihilate God instead. This individual's struggle—which can take on subtle forms—thus represents an entirely different issue. The outcomes of such an annihilation are rather different from the former annihilation which was turned inwards or towards the everchanging external world. As can be seen below, these outcomes prevent one from corresponding to God. The correspondence to God cannot take place if the individual increases at the expense of the annihilated God.

- **Shallowness**

As the annihilation is aimed externally at God rather than towards oneself or towards the everchanging outward world, Kierkegaard notes that the individual lacks "true inwardness"⁴³⁷. As a result, the individual has a flat religious experience because she knows God "only through externals"⁴³⁸.

- **Struggleless Prayer**

Kierkegaard makes it clear that the individual who seeks to annihilate God no longer struggles in prayer because, as was mentioned above, she lacks true inwardness. If struggle in prayer is required for maturing in faith, this individual is stagnant as she

⁴³⁴ Matthew 10:39, ESV

⁴³⁵ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 302.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

gives thanks to God only for what she considers convenient. This struggleless attitude is exemplified by Kierkegaard on the following example in which he highlights the importance of one's awareness that everything must be accredited to God.

“[I]f everything went according to h[er] wish, [s]he would give thanks for it, and if it went contrary to h[er] wish, [s]he would stop praying, because [s]he would altogether lack the true inwardness of the thought that it must be understood as God wants it to be understood, that everything must be ascribed to him. [...] If a person gives up the inwardness of that thought, [s]he no longer reaches the point of struggling in prayer.”⁴³⁹

- **Self-Sufficiency**

The one who annihilates God is deceived as she places her worth on herself rather than on God. This can happen in an obvious way—she refuses that the thought of God's existence would have any power over her. The magnification of one's self can also happen very subtly—the individual believes that God cannot manage without her and in this way, she feeds into the idea of self-importance.⁴⁴⁰ The lack of one's dependance on God also coincides with the rejection of the thought that everything must be ascribed to God.

The three possible directions of annihilation show the very different sets of outcomes and predispositions to the potential correspondence to God. While the *internal* annihilation initiated by the *external* annihilation strengthens the individual despite its difficulty and struggle, the *external* annihilation targeted at God brings surface-level religious experience at the expense of a struggle-free prayer life. Needless to say, the struggle-free aspect in prayer does by no means imply that this individual does not struggle at all.⁴⁴¹ The difference lies in the nature of the struggle—while the self-annihilating individual's struggle is targeted *inwardly* towards the *self*, the God-annihilating individual's struggle is targeted *outwardly* towards God. Kierkegaard contrasts these two by stating that there are numerous strugglers whose struggles are varied—there are those who try themselves *with* God in prayer and those who try themselves *against* God, and such strugglers do not in fact struggle in prayer.⁴⁴² Moreover, while the internal annihilation brings

⁴³⁹ EUD, 386 / SKS 5, 369.

⁴⁴⁰ EUD, 386f / SKS 5, 369.

⁴⁴¹ “H[er] struggle becomes something entirely different, for which we dare not promise such a glorious outcome, no matter whether [s]he goes so far as to want to defy God, indeed, to the extreme defiance of wanting to deny God.” EUD, 386 / SKS 5, 369.

⁴⁴² EUD, 387 / SKS 5, 370.

independence of circumstances as the struggling individual is her own instrument of annihilation, the God-oriented external annihilation makes one very dependent on circumstances, for her contentment is derived from the amount of gratification it brings her. While the thought of “being nothing at all” is received by the internally-annihilated self as a God-given good and truth, to the God-annihilating individual it appears as unwanted or something to be despised. The third direction of annihilation, i.e. turned externally at God, is thus intertwined with false doubt.

3.2 Offense

Since this chapter models the platform where the *relating to* doubt takes places—and such a relation essentially conditions the existential outcome—the territory of offence will be explored as this decision-making process takes place directly here. This chapter seeks to present offense as something that either “makes or breaks” an individual in her late-ethical existence. Kierkegaard himself took the concept of offense very seriously, which is prominent mostly in *Practice in Christianity* where his spokesman Anti-Climacus writes that “the relation of personality to Christianity is not to doubt or to believe, but to be offended or to believe”.⁴⁴³ He goes on to say that in the same way as faith is a distinctively Christian concept, so is offense correspondingly a Christian concept closely related to faith. The possibility of offense thus either turns one to believe or to be offended. Importantly though, an individual can never take the leap of faith in any other way except “from the possibility of offense”.⁴⁴⁴

Within the context of this dissertation, the ground of offence provides a space where one needs to relate to knowledge in one way or another. An individual can either decide to subordinate it to education or praise the knowledge and keep living under deception.⁴⁴⁵ The central point to this dissertation is that saving doubt—under which one must want to be educated—can lead an individual to a vulnerable place where she senses the urgent need of God as the only way out of her despair and hopelessness. This plays out as she feels remorse and is willing to repent. Nevertheless, if one refuses to subject the knowledge to education, the outcome is the very opposite—such an individual remains deceived and essentially debilitated by the exhausting effects of false doubt. Needless to

⁴⁴³ PC, 81 / SKS 12, 91.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ EUD, 128f / SKS 5, 132.

say, offense represents a specific area where one needs to relate to the knowledge of absurd paradoxes and her own sinfulness. As shall be seen, there are only two possible outcomes of offense both in regard to paradoxicality and sinfulness: an individual is either offended or believes.

3.2.1 Knowledge of the Absolute Paradox

In his *Practice in Christianity*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Anti-Climacus defines the concept of the "absolute paradox", which is represented by the incarnate God in the body of Christ.

"The God-man is the paradox, absolutely the paradox."⁴⁴⁶

"What is presented is the absolute existing in the medium of actuality and in a form of a single human being who is like one of us. This is the paradox."⁴⁴⁷

These two statements are also embodied in the paradoxical nature of Christianity which stems from its constant use of what Kierkegaard's Climacus describes as "time and the historical in relation to the eternal".⁴⁴⁸ Essentially, offense in relation to the God-man can be two-fold: one can be offended either by the God-man's loftiness or by his lowliness. In the first case, the offended individual stumbles upon the fact that she should humble herself before the lofty God because she views herself as equal to God—the offense thus stems from the qualification of *God*. In the second case, the individual is offended that the one who is supposed to be God would become man capable of nothing, and that she should partake in his lowliness—the accent here is on *man*.⁴⁴⁹

Drawing on the already-discussed speculative knowledge, it is precisely the sphere of offence—or one's relation to the God-man—where rationality dwells. Anti-Climacus writes that "speculation has naturally considered itself able to 'comprehend' the God-man [...] for speculation takes away from the God-man the qualifications of temporality, contemporality, and actuality".⁴⁵⁰ This is an important aspect that is often referred to in the realm of offense. Objective, or speculative, knowledge revolves around the quest for the truth of Christianity, but the nature of that truth is historical, philosophical, and

⁴⁴⁶ PC, 82 / SKS 12, 93.

⁴⁴⁷ PC, 322 / JP VI 6368 (Pap. XI A 163) n.d., 1849.

⁴⁴⁸ CUP1, 95 / SKS 7, 94.

⁴⁴⁹ PC, 82 / SKS 12, 93.

⁴⁵⁰ PC, 81 / SKS 12, 92.

rational. The problem lies in that speculative knowledge seeks to abolish the paradox via the *sub specie aeterni* perspective, i.e. from the viewpoint of eternity—it seeks to be exclusively eternal in time.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless, such an attitude does not consider existence of an individual as such, for every individual is a synthesis of eternity and *temporality*. Thus, when the objective speculation seeks to seize the God-man paradox in this manner, it is unsuccessful. Objectivity resides outside the realm of truth, for it approaches truth rationally, or as something outside the existing individual. Climacus makes it clear that if truth is subjectivity, then the one seeking truth must want to exist *in* it.⁴⁵² Therefore, since the speculator is only an observer of the potential truth and she does not want to relate to the Christian truth personally, the truth cannot transform her inwardly.⁴⁵³ That is also why Anti-Climacus warns against the “didacticization of Christianity”⁴⁵⁴ in which truth is seen as cognition and knowledge—it is this didacticized Christianity which aims to comprehend, speculate, or observe the truth.⁴⁵⁵ On the contrary, he emphasizes that in early Christianity, “all the expressions were formed according to the view that truth is a being”.⁴⁵⁶

It can be concluded that the absolute paradox stands outside rationality and is absurd. Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes Climacus uses the term paradox and absurdity in a very similar manner—in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, he implicitly describes the God-man paradox by noting that “[t]he absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being”.⁴⁵⁷ Understandably, the speculative knowledge will sooner or later grow suspicious of the absolute paradox and object to it as absurd. Nevertheless, the incarnation of infinite God in time will remain a stumbling block, or offense, to the speculator as long as she makes the absolute paradox an object of her understanding. In order to grasp the absolute paradox, the speculative knowledge’s *episteme* would have to be turned upside down, for objective understanding cannot understand it. To put it

⁴⁵¹ CUP1, 227 / SKS 7, 207.

⁴⁵² CUP1, 199 / SKS 7, 182.

⁴⁵³ In this case, Kierkegaard refers to the famous quote by Jesus: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and *the truth will set you free* [emphasis added by AP].” (John 8:31-32, ESV)

⁴⁵⁴ PC, 206 / SKS 12, 203.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ CUP1, 210 / SKS 7, 193.

differently, the objective uncertainty, which is inherent in the absolute paradox, repels the speculator's inwardness.⁴⁵⁸

How, then, can an individual journey across the ground of offense to faith? As was already mentioned, one can never come to faith except from the possibility of offense.

“From the possibility of offense, one turns either to offense or to faith, but one never comes to faith except from the possibility of offense.”⁴⁵⁹

Hence, the opposite outcome of offense—that which leads to faith—cannot be searched in the realm of speculative knowledge, but it cannot leave the ground of offense itself. In light of the absolute paradox, understanding is absurd, and one can get past the absolute paradox only by not seeking to understand it. In the *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard's Climacus does not connect the origin of offense with understanding *per se*, but he writes that “offense comes into existence with the paradox”.⁴⁶⁰ The issue lies in the individual's engagement with the absolute paradox. While the offended speculative individual stands outside the paradox⁴⁶¹ as she studies, grows suspicious of, and analyzes it, the one who is able to overcome the paradox is in a relationship with the paradox. The two different outcomes of offense stem from a shift from *what* to *who*—a speculative individual makes the absolute paradox an object of her cognitive understanding but an individual who enters into a relationship with the absolute paradox makes God the object of her relation. This brings us back to the difference between objective and subjective knowledge versus the truth. The subjective knowledge is turned inwardly and when the inwardness reaches its highest, in that moment the individual corresponds to truth as a paradox.⁴⁶² In other words, at the peak of inwardness, eternal truth becomes a paradox to the individual “precisely in its relation to the existing subject”.⁴⁶³ Thus, the less an individual relies on her objectivity, the more inwardly-oriented she becomes—and inwardness correlates with faith. Climacus goes on to say that at this point, the *absolute* paradox is in itself paradoxical for it relates to the *absolute* difference between eternal

⁴⁵⁸ CUP1, 210f / SKS 7, 193.

⁴⁵⁹ PC, 81 / SKS 12, 92.

⁴⁶⁰ PF, 51 / SKS 4, 255.

⁴⁶¹ “The offense remains outside the paradox.” PF, 52 / SKS 4, 256.

⁴⁶² CUP1, 199 / SKS 7, 182.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

God and a temporal human being. And once the absolute paradox is in itself paradoxical, “it thrusts away by the virtue of the absurd”.⁴⁶⁴

This is the turning point where an individual *corresponds to* the absolute paradox in the same way as was discussed in the previous chapter. The individual annihilated herself—in this instance Climacus writes that she “forgot that she was an existing subject”⁴⁶⁵—and the truth no longer remained paradoxical. On the contrary, “the knowing subject [...] becomes a fantastic something, and truth a fantastic object for its knowing”.⁴⁶⁶ The inwardly-expressed annihilation thus made one suitable for correspondence.

By contrast, the already considered annihilation turned *externally* can be demonstrated even on the knowledge of the absolute paradox. In the same passage of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus illustrates how a speculative thinker relates to the paradox—“speculation does not stop with the paradox, it explains and *cancel*s”⁴⁶⁷ [emphasis added by AP] it”.⁴⁶⁸ While the quoted excerpt contains a relatively casual verb “to explain”, it must be understood from a very specific perspective. Climacus emphasizes that the function of an explanation is *not* to clarify that the unclear matter is something definite, rather, it removes the unclarity. Thus, an explanation of the unclear absolute paradox renders it evident what the paradox is but removes the unclarity around it.

By seeking to annihilate the unclarity in the paradox, the individual never seizes it fully, and the absolute paradox must be embraced absolutely—not only partially—otherwise it would be called a “relative paradox”⁴⁶⁹. The speculative thinker, whose annihilation is turned outwards to the God-man, still reserves some understanding for explanation and does not put all of it at stake. Such an individual takes “one-half of it for despairing [...] and the other half for perceiving that there is no reason for the understanding to despair”.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, the ambition to explain the absolute paradox holds that the paradox

⁴⁶⁴ CUP1, 209 / SKS 7, 192.

⁴⁶⁵ CUP1, 199 / SKS 7, 182.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ While the more recent translation by Alastair Hannay from 2009 uses the verb “to cancel”, the volume from 1992 translated by Edna and Howard Hong contains—in this particular context—a more fitting verb “to annul”. “Speculative thought does not stop with the paradox; it explains and *annuls* [emphasis added by AP] it”. See CUP1, 225 / SKS 7, 206.

⁴⁶⁸ CUP1, 189 / SKS 7, 173.

⁴⁶⁹ CUP1, 217 / SKS 7, 198.

⁴⁷⁰ CUP1, 226 / SKS 7, 206.

does not exist except only to a certain degree—and Climacus calls this attitude deceitful.⁴⁷¹ The fact that Climacus considers this movement “deceitfulness”⁴⁷² shows yet again that the outward annihilation is intertwined with false doubt. Moreover, the deceived individual is unable to stop questioning the paradox for she does not know that the vicious cycle can only be broken by faith.⁴⁷³ Hence, the inwardly-oriented annihilation involves a great risk, for it does not derive any benefit from one’s own understanding.

In conclusion, the either/or decision-making when faced with the possibility of offence could be traced in relation to the knowledge of the absolute paradox—an individual either accepts the absolute paradox or rejects it. As was displayed, the path of speculative knowledge is interwoven with false doubt. It is turned outwards, “away from the subject” towards the objective truth while the subject vanishes in infinite indifference.⁴⁷⁴ For the speculator, objective truth may represent abstract thinking, history, hard sciences, or a paradox cleansed of the debris of unclarity. Nevertheless, this path leads to a contradiction which, as was explained, is a prominent trait of false doubt. Johannes Climacus illustrates the outcome of such a treatment of knowledge as follows, noting that the subjective is extinguished at the expense of a hypothetical, or approximate, objectivity.

“At its maximum, it will lead to the contradiction that only objectivity has come about, whereas subjectivity has gone out, that is, the existing subjectivity that has made an attempt to become what in the abstract sense is called subjectivity, the abstract form of an abstract objectivity. And yet, viewed subjectively, the objectivity that has come about is at its maximum either a hypothesis or an approximation, because all eternal decision is rooted specifically in subjectivity.”⁴⁷⁵

The other path, resulting from one’s relationship *with* the absolute paradox, leads to an opposite existential outcome. Although this path demands risk and self-annihilation, the subjective knowledge brings about inwardness—or “inward deepening”⁴⁷⁶—and as it is turned towards the individual’s self, it wants to be true to itself. In this moment, the very opposite happens contrary to the first scenario. While the speculative thinker’s objectivity

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Yet again, the former 1992 translation of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* by Edna and Howard Hong contain a more accurate choice of words. While Hannay’s 2009 edition uses “the *let-down* [emphasis added by AP] of the movement” (CUP, 189f / SKS 7, 206), the Hong version translates it as “the *deceitfulness* [emphasis added by AP] of the movement”. See CUP1, 226 / SKS 7, 206.

⁴⁷³ CUP1, 226 / SKS 7, 206.

⁴⁷⁴ CUP1, 193 / SKS 7, 177.

⁴⁷⁵ CUP1, 194 / SKS 7, 178.

⁴⁷⁶ CUP1, 196 / SKS 7, 180.

came forth and subjectivity vanished, in this case the inwardly-turned individual's subjectivity remained and objectivity disappeared.⁴⁷⁷ On this subjective path, the individual chooses to annihilate herself rather than the unclarity surrounding the absolute paradox and the act of self-annihilation is thus carried out with the help of saving doubt.

3.2.2 Knowledge of One's Sinfulness and the Forgiveness of Sins

The other area in which an individual must take a stance towards a certain kind of knowledge is the knowledge of one's own sinfulness. The result of such relation is two-fold, same as in the previous case, i.e. knowledge of the absolute paradox, the individual is either offended or believes. Nonetheless, the formerly discussed paradox which was embodied in the God-man—the oxymoronic presentation of an absolute God taking on an existence of actuality or relating temporality to eternity—is at play here as well. It involves the same paradoxicality with an accent on *man*: that the absolute God would become a singular human being. In the context of sinfulness, the possibility of offense lies in the God-man's message that sin is a human being's corruption. Moreover, this corresponds with the God-man's "divine compassion"⁴⁷⁸, that he made himself "literally one with the most wretched"⁴⁷⁹. If one is offended at the thought of sinfulness, then the relation to the possibility of forgiveness of sins is out of question, for the divine forgiveness of sins presupposes that the individual understands and acknowledges her sinfulness in all its totality. Before analyzing the possibility of forgiveness of sins, awareness of sinfulness as such will be outlined.

In *Practice in Christianity*, specifically in the chapter titled *Invitation and the Inviter*, Kierkegaard's spokesman Anti-Climacus repeatedly employs the refrain,

"[B]lessed is the one who is not offended but believes in the forgiveness of sins."⁴⁸⁰

As was already mentioned, the first possible outcome of relating to the knowledge of one's sinfulness is offense. This form of offense can be better understood on Anti-Climacus' notion of the God-man's *divine compassion*. Divine compassion represents a paradoxical tendency of the eternal God wanting to recklessly partake in every

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ PC, 60 / SKS 12, 72.

⁴⁷⁹ PC, 59 / SKS 12, 71.

⁴⁸⁰ PC, 75 / SKS 12, 87.

individual's suffering. Here is yet another paradox, "enormous contradiction"⁴⁸¹, that the loftiness would manifest itself in the everyday. Anti-Climacus calls this a "misrelation of actuality"⁴⁸², "inverted relation"⁴⁸³ or "suffering belonging to actuality"⁴⁸⁴ and makes it clear that very few will not "judge it"⁴⁸⁵ or perceive it as "too much"⁴⁸⁶. The offended individual reacts to the idea of divine compassion in a way that is rather shallow and rests on an abstract level. Anti-Climacus gives an example of church-goers who, on Sunday, are emotional over the thought of sacrificial compassion and taking on other individual's burdens. Nevertheless, during the everyday life, *in actuality*, they laugh out loud at the very thought.⁴⁸⁷ The offended individual does not wish to become entangled in the realities of sinfulness—she requires a safe distance from the everyday world to cope with it. Anti-Climacus continues by stating that it is cunning if an individual is not completely aware that she is a sinner.⁴⁸⁸ Therefore, this form of offense results from being appalled by the fact that God would become an actual human being and give himself fully to sinners, or that the God-man would want an individual to imitate him in his divine compassion and not put one's self above those in need. However, the offended individual knows the concept of divine compassion or sinfulness theoretically, speculates about it on Sundays, but does not put her knowledge into action. As a result, such an individual relates to the *external*, does not want to embrace her sinfulness completely, and is far from annihilating herself. Exactly alike in the previous relation to the knowledge of the absolute paradox, the offense is linked with objective knowledge which lacks true inwardness. The aforementioned ethically religious individual—who goes to church regularly, objectively knows what divine compassion looks like but is not completely aware of her sinfulness—cannot truly, in inwardness, accept the forgiveness of sins for she does not subjectively understand and admits her sinfulness.

Let us consider the other outcome of one's relation to the knowledge of sinfulness. Suppose an individual turned inwards, subjectively surveyed and accepted her sinfulness, with the help of saving doubt annihilated herself, and now she faces the possibility of the

⁴⁸¹ PC, 60 / SKS 12, 72.

⁴⁸² PC, 57 / SKS 12, 69.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ PC, 188 / SKS 12, 188.

⁴⁸⁵ PC, 58-9 / SKS 12, 70-1.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ PC, 59 / SKS 12, 71.

⁴⁸⁸ PC, 61 / SKS 12, 73.

divine forgiveness of sins. What does belief in the forgiveness of sins, the opposite of offense, look like then? Kierkegaard's spokesman Climacus holds that forgiveness of sins is a Socratic paradox for three reasons. First, because the eternal truth relates to an existing subject—a sinner. Second, because forgiveness of sins must be “an eternal decision in time with retroactive power to suspend the past”.⁴⁸⁹ Third, because it has to do with eternal God having existed in actual time.

As was already mentioned at the beginning of this section, but also briefly in this chapter—“the individual has to feel [her]self a sinner [...] not objectively, but subjectively”.⁴⁹⁰ In addition, Climacus mentions another movement that must happen—the individual “must want to understand the forgiveness of sins *and to the very last turn*, [emphasis added by AP] despair of understanding”.⁴⁹¹ Hence, the leap of faith cannot take place unless these events occur in one's existence: feeling oneself a sinner, willing to understand the forgiveness of sins, despairing of understanding.⁴⁹² The trajectory of saving doubt starts to emerge even more clearly in this triad: the condition of feeling oneself a sinner is the work of saving doubt which—via the path of pacifying the *first self* and annihilating herself—takes the individual to a place where she feels the need of God and is willing to understand the forgiveness of sins. Importantly, the understanding is subjective and can be equated with *profound knowledge*. However, the outcome of the individual's relation to the forgiveness of sins will ultimately determine the leap of faith. And since the possibility of forgiveness of sins exists as a paradox, the individual is either offended or believes. Nonetheless, in order to believe the paradox which can be grasped only through inwardness, the individual must despair of understanding, for no paradox can be embraced via understanding.

“With the understanding in direct opposition [to the paradox, added by AP], the inwardness of faith must grasp the paradox, and that faith battles in just this way, as the Romans once did, blinded by the light of the sun, is the resilience of inwardness.”⁴⁹³

In this moment, the work of saving doubt ceases, i.e. one despairs of understanding, as the saving doubt provides the individual only with the predisposition to receiving the

⁴⁸⁹ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 204f.

⁴⁹⁰ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Or “stake all [one's] understanding when despair[ing]”. See CUP1, 225 / SKS 7, 206.

⁴⁹³ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

good and perfect gift, that is *love*⁴⁹⁴. Just now, Climacus warns that “if any other understanding ever forces itself upon h[er], [s]he sees that [s]he is about to lose h[er] faith”⁴⁹⁵. The decision to take the leap of faith thus represents a struggle, or “the deepest pain”, as it requires handling the “resilience of inwardness”.⁴⁹⁶

*

“[T]he true point of departure for finding the absolute is not doubt but despair.”⁴⁹⁷

Regarding the sin-consciousness, now is the time to return to the concept of despair. As was already foreshadowed, despair—same as doubt—has the potential to lead one to a desert place where the individual can deepen her subjectivity, abandon her orientation toward the externals, and profoundly become conscious of one’s own sinfulness. As such, this flipside to despair represents a blessing in disguise for without it, the individual would not “despair of understanding”⁴⁹⁸ and understanding—understood objectively or as the imperfect knowledge—is a stumbling block to faith. In fact, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Anti-Climacus interconnects doubt and despair and notes in his *Practice in Christianity* that “there is a confused discussion of doubt *where* the discussion should have been about despair”.⁴⁹⁹ The reason why the most progressed form of doubt always turns into despair—and it cannot be controlled or tamed either in “scholarship or in life”—is because despair “promptly plac[es] the relation under the rubric of personality (the single individual) and the ethical”.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, doubt which has burst into despair can be used dialectically as a necessary condition for dying to the world and to oneself—this then prepares the despairing individual’s spirit to be born again.

In *Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus notes that “first comes despair over the earthly or over something earthly, then despair of the eternal, over oneself”.⁵⁰¹ In the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*’ language regarding the work of saving doubt, the first despair

⁴⁹⁴ In his *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard notes that “[b]y forgiveness love hides a multitude of sins [...] [f]orgiveness removes what cannot be denied to be sin [...] [t]hus love strives in every way to hide a multitude of sins; but forgiveness is the most notable way”. WL, 294 / SKS 9, 291f.

⁴⁹⁵ CUP1, 224f / SKS 7, 205.

⁴⁹⁶ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

⁴⁹⁷ EO2, 213 / SKS 3, 205.

⁴⁹⁸ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

⁴⁹⁹ PC, 81 / SKS 12, 91.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ SUD, 68 / SKS 11, 181.

represents the *eternal claim* of the *deeper self* which summons the *first self* out from the external. The second movement of despair represents the targeting of doubt toward one's own self in self-annihilation. Nonetheless, Anti-Climacus adds that "then comes defiance, which is really despair through the aid of eternal" and calls it the "the despairing misuse of the eternal within the self to will in despair to be oneself".⁵⁰² Once the individual finds herself in such a defiance, she suddenly becomes close to the truth, for this state "lies very close to the truth" but it is still "infinitely far away".⁵⁰³ Same as Climacus holds that "where understanding despairs, faith is already present to make the despair properly decisive"⁵⁰⁴, so does Anti-Climacus writes that "the despair that is the thoroughfare to faith comes also through the aid of the eternal"⁵⁰⁵ and that "through the aid of the eternal the self has the courage to lose itself in order to win itself"⁵⁰⁶. As McDonald puts it, "despair has the dialectical capacity to be a boon as well as a bane" and it represents something from which the individual may learn with respect to the eternity's demand by "pushing [the individual] to the desperate expedient of seeking God's help".⁵⁰⁷

3.3 Concluding Thoughts

The exploration of the platform in between false and saving doubt ends here, for what happens when false doubt triumphs in one's existence was analyzed in section II's chapter 2, and the specific characteristics which can be attributed to saving doubt will be outlined in the upcoming chapters. Rather than a defined space with clear borders and contours, this land consists of moments, each of which represents a circumstance requiring an individual to *relate to* it, either in one way or another. During the decision-making process, or *relating to*, the influences of both false doubt and saving doubt can be clearly discerned.

On the one hand, the path of false doubt was tracked on this platform first in regard to an individual's correspondence to God. In this realm, false doubt was contained in the *imperfect self-knowledge* which is dubious and "far from viewing [the individual] according to h[er] perfection"⁵⁰⁸. The traits of this vague self-knowledge led to the state

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ CUP1, 233 / SKS 7, 213.

⁵⁰⁵ SUD, 68 / SKS 11, 181.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ McDonald, "Despair", 162.

⁵⁰⁸ EUD, 313 / SKS 5, 305.

where one feels like she gained the whole world, became the master, and became capable of all things. However, this is just an illusion of a seeming worth. On the contrary, such a deceived individual knows herself solely in relation to herself, the relation exists only between the dubious self and dubious *something else*, i.e. the feelings of strength, self-sufficiency or superiority. That is why complete correspondence, or a union, of that individual to God cannot take place, as she does not lower and humble herself before God and does not need to be strengthened by his power. Another way in which the false doubt played itself out was in the guise of speculative knowledge on the ground of offense. Climacus notes that when the eternal truth relates to an existing individual, it is a paradox.⁵⁰⁹ The offended speculative individual is posited outside the paradox since she makes the absolute paradox, i.e. God-man, an object of her speculative understanding. For her, the paradox can be explained and the unclarity, or mystery, surrounding it removed. Moreover, the paradoxicality here is perceived by the offended individual as foolishness rather than a virtue, for objectivity is repelled by the absurd.⁵¹⁰ As the objective speculator listens to the *first self*, ceases to annihilate herself, and focuses more on annihilating God or relating to the external world, she does not feel herself a sinner and thus cannot relate to the possibility of forgiveness of sins which marks the religious stage of existence.

On the other hand, alike the case of false doubt, the trajectory of saving doubt was traced first in the area of one's correspondence to God. Since the correspondence represents a distinct unity of the seemingly juxtaposed God and an individual, saving doubt helps the individual to annihilate herself via a *positive self-knowledge* so that she can be unified with God. The process of self-annihilation is nonetheless a terrible struggle which, against all the odds, strengthens the individual. The *positive self-knowledge's* role in an individual's existence is to enable the *deeper self* to summon the *first dubious self* from the external towards her own self. Needless to say, the work of saving doubt is not to unify the individual with God but to get the individual to a place where she—self-annihilated, capable of nothing at all, in need—is genuinely suited for correspondence to God. This would appear as a paradox to the speculator, though, because Kierkegaard notes that when an individual is nothing at all, it is precisely a perfection. Nevertheless, the self-annihilated individual's struggle does not end here just yet, for she must pass

⁵⁰⁹ CUP1, 202 / SKS 7, 185.

⁵¹⁰ CUP1, 213 / SKS 7, 195.

through offense, there is no way around it. Offense, as was outlined, concerns the God-man paradox. And such paradox needs to be embraced fully by the individual. The absolute paradox nonetheless cannot be understood by reason and thus needs to be approached in subjectivity, or inwardness. The *profound self-knowledge*, with which one loses herself to annihilation and yet finds herself, is a subjective one for it is turned inwardly to the individual who—by entering a relationship with the paradox—makes God the object to which she relates. In this way, the absolute paradox becomes essentially paradoxical, for it concerns the absolute gap between the infinite God and finite individual and all of a sudden, the paradox which was paradoxical in itself ceases. Yet again, saving doubt was present in the *positive self-knowledge*, for it turned her inward in subjectivity, made her feel a sinner, and thus granted her the predisposition to receive the good and perfect gift, that is love. The trajectory of saving doubt ends in this moment for it cannot automatically provide the individual with faith. On the contrary, the individual must now decide whether she wants to receive the gift or not, in other words, she needs to relate to it. While the term “love” may seem vague in this context, it is closely connected with the forgiveness of sins, which essentially gives the individual access to divine love. Therefore, the individual now faces the possibility of forgiveness of sins, a paradox to which she needs to relate. The individual must now struggle to embrace the paradox in faith and not be wavered by any kind of understanding.

4. SAVING DOUBT

“[N]ot to doubt what stands firm and will stand firm forever in its eternal clarity, but to doubt that which in itself is transitory, which will more and more vanish, to doubt h[er]self, h[er] own capacity and competence, so that it becomes an incapacity that is discarded more and more.”⁵¹¹

After having explored the platform in between false and saving doubt—which was characteristic for the many moments of *decision-making* and *relating to* an individual had to face—this section will now analyze the key features of saving doubt in the same fashion as chapter 2 examined the traits of false doubt. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is essential to define the scope of saving doubt by remembering its role and purpose in Kierkegaard’s anthropology.

As discussed in the previous section, the trajectory of saving doubt culminates at a point where an individual must confront the possibility of forgiveness of sins. Thus, while the term “*saving* doubt” presupposes an existential outcome that leads one to *salvation*, or the sphere of deep inwardness, it does not automatically transport one into such a state. Instead, it helps an individual to acquire all the predispositions necessary to take the leap of faith into the highest existential sphere, that is religiousness B, or it metaphorically opens one’s hands wide open so that she is able to receive the good and perfect gift, that is love. Ultimately, whether the individual will take the leap of faith and embrace this good and perfect gift remains her personal choice. The result depends on her relating to the possibility of forgiveness of sins. As shall be seen in this chapter, the key traits of saving doubt—which help the subjective individual to be ready to correspond to God—are educability, honest uncovering, humble meekness, discontentment, suffering, and inward retreat.

The second aspect worth considering before the actual analysis of saving doubt is the fine line of religiousness. As was discussed at the end of the first section (chapter 2.2.3, pp. 52-4), Climacus defines the intricate religious stage with the terms Religiousness A and Religiousness B. The following attempt to outline the general contours of the religious stage of existence will aim to pinpoint the slight overlap between saving doubt and

⁵¹¹ EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 140.

Religiousness A. According to Jere J. James’⁵¹² theory—from which this paragraph draws from—Religiousness A regards those who profess Christianity but are not Christian *decisively*, and thus it marks a preliminary religiousness to the higher stage, i.e. Religiousness B. To put it differently, Religiousness A can be understood as “faith before faith”, denoting a childlike faith which can gradually grow into a mature faith inherent in Religiousness B. Despite the differences between the two types, they both are closely connected, and an individual cannot get to the latter religiousness (B) unless passing through the former one (A). Nonetheless, the difference lies in the transformation, or transfiguration, of the key sub-concepts characteristic for Religiousness A—i.e. renunciation of sins, consciousness of guilt and suffering—in Religiousness B. Jones points out the “grammatical relationship”⁵¹³ between the concepts of Religiousness A and B. What is meant by grammar here is that the role of the given sub-concepts in Religiousness A is rearranged or turned upside-down in Religiousness B.⁵¹⁴ Nevertheless, these sub-concepts are equally present in both concepts. Therefore, the line between Religiousness A and Religiousness B is not marked out by specific indexes but rather—same as on the ground of offence—it is defined by a qualitative moment of transformation.

The transformation lies in one’s resignation of every finiteness so that “everything that is in the way is cleared away” and the individual can relate to the absolute.⁵¹⁵ Nonetheless, the absolute to which one relates cannot be understood as just another task one must carry out in order to achieve a higher good supplementary to other goods. Quite the contrary, the individual’s relation to the absolute is genuine only when she is willing to surrender herself and all the contemporary goods she possesses for the sake of the absolute good.⁵¹⁶ Moreover, the transformative moment occurs when one understands herself as “responsible for having failed to enact the ideal perfectly”⁵¹⁷—such a moment is paradoxical for although the individual experiences guilt-consciousness and complete self-annihilation, she is indeed relating to the absolute *absolutely*.

⁵¹² Jones, Jere J., “On the Distinction Between Religiousness ‘A’ and Religiousness ‘B’ in the *Concluding Un-scientific Postscript* of Søren Kierkegaard”, 1.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ CUP1, 469 / SKS 7, 510.

⁵¹⁶ Barrett, L. C., “Religious/Religiousness”, 218.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

With regard to this section, saving doubt falls precisely under Religiousness A for it marks the late-ethical attitude of subjectivity as one's truth. As such, Religiousness A is an immanent form of true religiousness since it—in Climacus' words—"presupposes only human nature in general"⁵¹⁸. Thus, in focusing on life as a task, Religiousness A is closely tied to the very late-ethical stage of existence, but its form shows progression in the sense that the task is no longer understood as following a set of duties, rules, or laws but rather as a search for the absolute good, i.e. God, which surpasses all of those rules or other "goods". Nonetheless, if the individual is to receive the good and perfect gift from God, she must abandon all attempts at self-salvation or efforts to deserve God's love as it is bestowed on the individual out of divine grace. The tricky part about the *sincere* and *absolute* need of God is that while the individual must endure suffering, develop guilt-consciousness and become capable of nothing at all within Religiousness A, these aspects cannot become the means to gain faith for her as it cannot be earned. Thus, Religiousness B—to which one jumps via *the leap*, and which qualitatively emerges with the cessation of saving doubt—will be further explored in chapter 5.2, focusing exclusively on faith and its relation to doubt.

4.1 Key Features of Saving Doubt

The upcoming section will seek to interpret the distinctives of saving doubt as mentioned by Kierkegaard in his *Every Good Gift 1* and *Every Good Gift 2*, the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse, as well as several other of his upbuilding discourses (*The Lord Gave and the Lord Took Away*, *The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation*, *To Need God*, *The Thorn in the Flesh*) and segments from *Practice in Christianity* and *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Furthermore, just as Goethe's Faust served as Kierkegaard's illustration of doubt manifested in time, the Old Testament figure of Moses represents someone who, despite his shortcomings, annihilated himself with the help of saving doubt.

4.1.1 Educability

*"[T]hrough its pain it educates a person, if [s]he is honest enough to want to be educated."*⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ CUP1, 560 / SKS 7, 509.

⁵¹⁹ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

Although the latter type of doubt, that is saving doubt, is referred to as “*saving*” throughout this dissertation, it could also be called “*educating*” doubt because it not only leads to a place where an individual feels the need of God, which is a predisposition to being saved, but it is also subjected to education. Within this particular context, the term “education” should be understood in close relation to the concept of *die Bildung*, as discussed in the first section (chapter 1.2, pp. 27-8). In the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses’ Supplement*, it is stated that “genuine education never makes one grow away from *the upbuilding* [emphasis added by AP] as something one needs less and less, but makes one grow up to the upbuilding as something one needs more and more, and of which one needs more and more”.⁵²⁰ Nevertheless, as much as the upbuilding is crucial in all religiousness, it takes on a specific form in Religiousness A and B. Kierkegaard’s spokesman Climacus clarifies this in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* by stating that the primary distinction lies the location of *the edifying*: in Religiousness A, it resides immanently within the individual, whereas in Religiousness B, *the edifying* paradoxically rests outside the individual.

Regarding Religiousness A, “the most edifying aspect of [it]” is “the totality of guilt-consciousness”.⁵²¹ More specifically, it is the self-annihilation—or “putting [one]self aside in order to find God”⁵²²—which is edifying in this former stage of religiousness. Therefore, the edifying can be seen in the negative, the self-annihilation, and since the individual is the one who prevents herself from finding God, it is the negation that clears the way to the God-relationship. Furthermore, the process of self-annihilation is edifying in its suffering which, when endured thoroughly, produces the very ground for the God-relationship.⁵²³ However, in order to understand the work of *the edifying* in the sphere of immanence, it has to be viewed from the ethico-religious perspective. Esthetically speaking, *the edifying* lies outside the individual in remote place towards which she strives.⁵²⁴ Such a viewpoint shift should not be neglected.

⁵²⁰ EUD, 474 / VIII B 188, 296.

⁵²¹ CUP1, 560 / SKS 7, 509.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ CUP1, 561 / SKS 7, 510.

“If one does not pay attention to this and to having this qualification of the upbuilding in between, everything is confused again as one defines the paradoxical upbuilding, which then is mistakenly identified with an external esthetic relationship.”⁵²⁵

Concerning Religiousness B, the above-explained differentiation will shed light on the paradoxical nature of *the edifying* in this sphere. In Religiousness B, the individual relates to *the edifying* externally—*the edifying* is not found by discovering the God-relationship within oneself but rather it is searched for on the outside. By the individual relating to something external, it appears to be an esthetic relationship *par excellence*, but it is in fact the absolute God-relationship. Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes Climacus highlights that “in immanence God is neither a something, but everything, and infinitely everything, nor outside the individual, because the upbuilding consists in h[er] being within the individual”.⁵²⁶ Put in this way, it is a paradox which resembles the paradoxicality of eternal God coming into existence in time as a singular individual. In the same way, it cannot be thought that the absolute God-relationship would consist of an individual relating to *the edifying* outside herself. In true religiousness, the individual must hold fast to this paradox absolutely, lest the paradox be relative and then the religiousness would collapse into “esthetic categories”⁵²⁷. Saving doubt, which is subjected to education, is seen in the negating aspect of self-annihilation and in not embracing the paradox via thought, or reason.⁵²⁸

The edifying element in saving doubt produces the fruit of self-knowledge. Getting to know oneself is a *learning* process by means of education. That is to say, the process during which an individual is being built up is uncomfortable and painful, but it in turn deepens the individual’s self-knowledge and intensifies her inwardness. In the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard repeats the line that “to need God is man’s highest perfection”, but then adds that such a perspective “makes life more difficult”.⁵²⁹ It—the distinct perspective on oneself and God—is nevertheless difficult because it wants to bring the individual to view herself “according to h[er] perfection”.⁵³⁰ Most importantly, within the context of education, it is through this perspective that the individual “learns

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ “Admittedly speculation keeps to immanence even if it has to be understood as something other than Hegel’s pure thought; but speculation must not call itself Christian.” CUP1, 561 / SKS 7, 510.

⁵²⁹ EUD, 312 / SKS 5, 304.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

to know [her]self”.⁵³¹ The self-knowledge is exactly the profound one, which was analyzed in the previous chapter 3.1.1 (pp. 103-5), and which is directly linked with saving doubt. Kierkegaard goes even further in his exposition of self-knowledge when he writes that an individual must “learn to know h[er]self radically”—the radicality comes when the individual has “been alarmed radically, onto death and *annihilation* [emphasis added by AP]”.⁵³²

4.1.2 Honest Uncovering

*“[L]et the discourse do what the distress and hardship of life sometimes do-strip a person in order to see how little it is that he needs.”*⁵³³

One significant consequence of both false and saving doubt within an individual’s existence lies in their respective eliminative or negating effects. As was seen in *Intermezzo I* (p. 90), Faust’s false doubt robbed him of immediacy and left him empty-handed—this vulnerable place of existence nevertheless left him far worse-off, defeated, and stuck in a vicious cycle. On the contrary, while the negating aspect of saving doubt also leaves an individual empty-handed, the nullifying process nonetheless contributes to self-discovery and inner strengthening. Kierkegaard portrays this uncomfortable process of being humbled by self-doubting with a metaphor of being stripped off of everything so that the individual cannot hide behind anything and has to stand existentially naked before God and herself. The *Every Good Gift 2* upbuilding discourse contains a passage which specifies the circumstance under which such an uncovering of an individual can take place—the doubter must “*honestly* [emphasis added by AP] want to undergo this experience” or, in other words, she must be “*honest* [emphasis added by AP] enough to want to be educated”.⁵³⁴ Honesty plays an important role during self-annihilation but it also, once again, closely correlates with decisiveness—or will—which is very different from the Faustian doubt that drowned him in abstract thought and paralysis.

The discussed trait of saving doubt—which is characteristic for stripping down a person so that she is nothing at all⁵³⁵—can be exemplified on the story of Job which Kierkegaard mentions in *The Lord Gave and the Lord Took Away* upbuilding discourse. Within the

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² EUD, 345 / SKS 5, 220.

⁵³³ EUD, 298 / SKS 5, 292.

⁵³⁴ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

⁵³⁵ “Thus a human being is great and at h[er] highest when [s]he corresponds to God by being nothing at all h[er]self.” EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 303.

context of *honest uncovering*, Job, confronted with deep suffering that touched his very core, is broken, defeated, but at the same time he realizes and acknowledges his finitude and life's ephemerality. This aspect is particularly profound when set against the specific situation Job found himself in. The Old Testament story begins with satan⁵³⁶ approaching God and conversing with him about Job, who, according to God, was the most righteous man on earth. Satan got permission from God to test his servant Job and see if he would curse God when faced with trials and tribulations. The only restriction satan received from God was not to touch Job's own life. Thus started a long existential journey for Job who was robbed of all his material wealth but also lost all his children and wife. Job's words—which are also borrowed by Kierkegaard at the very beginning of his upbuilding discourse as the opening quote—now speak volume, and they can illuminate the uncovering characteristic of saving doubt which tends to strip an individual to the core of her being.

“Then Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshiped, saying: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and *naked* [emphasis added by AP] shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”⁵³⁷

This passage unravels the negating movement of annihilation which existed as truth for Job. Despite having lost everything he cherished and held dear, Job chose to bless God's name instead of cursing him. By doing so, Job listened to the *deeper self's eternal claim*—that the outside world is everchanging and can change into the opposite at any moment—which proved to be correct. Nonetheless, the initial distress was only the beginning of a long self-annihilating journey which made Job turn from the external to the internal. Job's admirable attitude in the first chapter was followed by a turmoil of doubt during which he had to fight with himself. The whirlwind which shook Job's existential stability made

⁵³⁶ The Hebrew word “satan” is written with lower “s” because rather than the fallen angel, or an embodiment of evil, the figure is to represent a person who stands *contrary to* or *opposed to* someone or something (see 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:23, Numeri 22:22). However, there are two instances in the Old Testament which mention a supernatural figure, a *satan*, who worships God but also counters prophet Zachariah in the heavenly courtroom. The satan mentioned in the story of Job was one of the heavenly beings, described as “sons of God” (Job 1:6), who presented themselves before God's throne. The story of Job takes on a different meaning when reading it through the lenses of the satan figure. The supernatural being challenges the idea that when God only rewards those who are righteous, it corrupts their intentions and decreases their righteousness. The moral of the story thus shifts from the “why does God allow evil to happen to those who are righteous” question to “why should those who are righteous automatically prosper” question. See chapter 6 “Who is ‘Satan’ in Job?” in Walton, J. H., Longman, T., *How to Read Job*.

⁵³⁷ Job 1:20-21 (ESV); EUD, 109 / SKS 5, 115.

Job question himself, his life, God, and yet he was still declared innocent and righteous from the beginning to the end. There is no question that Job is a righteous man, the point is whether he will preserve his integrity throughout the trial.⁵³⁸ Job's integrity will be lost if he focuses on the benefits that his righteous way of life brings him, but his integrity will stay intact if he solely seeks God's favor "for no reason"⁵³⁹ in return. Even though Job's view of God changed from accepting his suffering (Job 1:21) to perceiving God as unimportant (Job 7:17-21; 14:3-6), unjust (Job 9:19, 22), and manipulatable (Job 31), he managed to retain his integrity. At the end of the story—when "the Lord answer[s] Job out of the whirlwind"⁵⁴⁰—God does not acknowledge that all that Job had said about him was correct—rather, he praises him for remaining steadfast in believing in his self-righteousness.⁵⁴¹

It is precisely Job's firm belief in his own self-righteousness despite the chaos holding him captive that Kierkegaard calls "humble courage"⁵⁴² and praises Job for "becom[ing] honest with [him]self"⁵⁴³. Within the context of *honest uncovering* as one of the key features of saving doubt, this quality of Job shone through in his suffering but also allowed him not to "deceive [him]self with imagined power".⁵⁴⁴ When he was stripped down of wealth, strength, and dignity, it was revealed that Job was confident in his self-righteousness and that he honestly proved he sought favor from God for nothing in return.

What can be learned about honesty and uncovering from Job? First, Job's brutal honesty prevented him from deception. In his *Practice in Christianity*, Anti-Climacus writes:

"But surely you want to be *honest* [emphasis added by AP] with yourself, and surely you will not let yourself be *deceived* [emphasis added by AP]."⁵⁴⁵

Honesty can thus be perceived as a counterpart to deception. Second, the process of being stripped down of everything existed as a truth for Job only, and the loss, which left him standing existentially naked before God, brought closeness between him and God.⁵⁴⁶ Last,

⁵³⁸ Walton, J.H., Longman, T., *How to Read Job*, 2015, 10.

⁵³⁹ This is the reason why satan poses a counterargument to God in Job 1:9,11 (ESV): "Does Job fear God for no reason? [...] Stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

⁵⁴⁰ Job 40:6; ESV.

⁵⁴¹ Walton, J.H., Longman, T., *How to Read Job*, 2015, 97-102.

⁵⁴² EUD, 123 / SKS 5, 127.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ PC, 172 / SKS 12, 173.

⁵⁴⁶ "The very moment everything was taken away from him, he knew it was the Lord who had taken it away, and therefore in his loss he remained on good terms with the Lord, in his loss maintained intimacy

the effect of saving doubt is that it peels off layers of an individual's existence, and it reveals what her life is built upon or what her core beliefs are. The process of uncovering each layer is difficult and it demands honesty to face what is underneath them.

4.1.3 Humble Meekness

*"But then when the busy thoughts had worked themselves weary, when your fruitless wishes had exhausted your soul, perhaps then [...] your mind developed in itself the meekness that is receptive to the word that was implanted within you and that was capable of blessing your soul. [...] Then no doubt you confessed in all humility that God surely did not deceive you when he accepted your earthly wishes and foolish desires, exchanged them for you and instead gave you divine comfort and holy thoughts."*⁵⁴⁷

Just as the previous trait of saving doubt involved two interconnected concepts, i.e. "honesty" and "uncovering"—meaning that the process of uncovering cannot take place without honesty—so does the next characteristic of saving doubt combines two very similar and yet intertwined qualities, "meekness" and "humility". As these two notions are about to be explained, they need to be understood inseparably but yet with subtle nuances.

To begin with humility, Kierkegaard uses the term within the context of *Every Good Gift 1*, *Every Good Gift 2*, and *Every Good Gift 3* as a noble quality facilitating the reception of the good and perfect gift. Etymologically, the Latin noun *humilis*—meaning "lowly", "humble", "on the ground"—contains the root word *humus*, meaning "ground", "earth", or "soil".⁵⁴⁸ In a sense, humility contains the already-discussed annihilating movement in the downward direction—towards the ground, the earth, the soil—or in a direction towards the individual's self. It thus reminds an individual in the Genesis 3 fashion that out of the ground she was taken and to the ground she will return.⁵⁴⁹ Despite the process

with the Lord; he saw the Lord, and therefore he did not see despair. Or does he alone see God's hand who sees that he gives, or does not also the one see God's hand who sees that he takes away?" EUD, 121 / SKS 5, 125.

⁵⁴⁷ EUD, 36 / SKS 5, 45.

⁵⁴⁸ Rowatt, W. C., et al., "Development and initial validation of an implicit measure of humility relative to arrogance", 198.

⁵⁴⁹ After the fall, God says to Adam and Eve: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:19, ESV) Kierkegaard uses the term humility in the same way in his *Every Good Gift 1* where he writes: "[Y]ou did not impatiently throw off the leash of humility, you had not forgotten that you are on earth and God is in heaven." (EUD, 35 / SKS 5, 44f)

of self-annihilation being extremely difficult, it leads to what Kierkegaard calls “humble” but also “an elevating truth”.⁵⁵⁰

“[A]nyone will surely admit who has honestly wanted to undergo this experience and has not preferred—*instead of a humble, even if in another sense an elevating, truth* [emphasis added by AP]—a brilliant deception by which he managed to fool himself.”⁵⁵¹

In addition to the humility’s downward direction, there is another movement inherent in the self-annihilation which exists as a truth⁵⁵² for the individual—*elevation* in the upward direction. This is an important aspect, as the annihilation brought about by saving doubt has the potential to eventually elevate the individual. On the contrary, false doubt boosts the individual’s ego in a seemingly elevating way only to deceive her and pull her into a downward spiral. Once the downhill slide happens, there is no elevation following the movement.

Meekness, on the other hand, is used by Kierkegaard in connection with the good and perfect gift. In fact, the word meekness occurs in the direct quotation of James 1:17-22, which serves as the underlying text for all three of Kierkegaard’s upbuilding discourses.

“Therefore put away all filthiness and all remnants of wickedness and receive with *meekness* [emphasis added by AP] the word that is implanted in you and that is powerful for making your souls blessed.”⁵⁵³

In order to better understand the importance of meekness in relation to saving doubt, its distinct meaning needs to be analyzed as the word itself is not as actively used nowadays. Meekness is to be found throughout the New Testament with its probably most famous occurrence in Jesus’ beatitudes. One of the beatitudes is meekness—“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5; ESV). Another occurrence of the word is in Matthew 11:29 (KJV) including Jesus’ self-identification—“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”. While the different Bible translations use the terms “gentle” (e.g. CSB, NASB, GW), “humble” (e.g. CEB, NLT, GNT) or “quiet” (*tichý* in Czech), the Greek

⁵⁵⁰ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

⁵⁵¹ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

⁵⁵² In chapter 3.1.3 (p. 111), it was explained that annihilation exists as the individual’s truth. The self-annihilating person is well aware that the outside world is not constant and can change at any time. This knowledge is with the individual at all times, and she cannot hide from her truth.

⁵⁵³ James 1:21, ESV.

πραεῖς (*prays*, translated as “mild” or “meek”) does not signify only gentleness, but rather gentleness blended with strength. The aspect of strength is rather important in this instance. Why? Because meekness in its original meaning—as demonstrated on the Bible quotations above—represents strength under control or exhibiting power without any harshness. In his *Czech Language Bible Dictionary*, Novotný writes that Jesus is the embodiment of a meek Messiah who—against all expectations of the Orthodox Jewish community—appeared on earth as a man who needs help rather than an armed sovereign ruler.⁵⁵⁴

In his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard first considers the word meekness in *Every Good Gift 2*, where he cites Sirach 4:18—“meekness discovers hidden things”⁵⁵⁵—here, meekness emerges as a virtue which stands opposite to “haste”, “does not take God’s kingdom by force”, “waits [...] for the good gift”, “is assured that God gives every good and every perfect gift” and “in that assurance it watches with thanksgiving”.⁵⁵⁶ In *Every Good Gift 1*, meekness is portrayed as something that is developed “secretly and imperceptibly”.⁵⁵⁷ Kierkegaard likens the inconspicuous process of meekening to busy thoughts working themselves weary and fruitless wishes exhausting an individual’s soul.⁵⁵⁸ The outcome of meekness intertwined with saving doubt is not only “calm[ness]” but most importantly receptiveness to the good and perfect gift which is “capable of saving [one’s] soul”.⁵⁵⁹ This goes hand in hand with the significant effect of saving doubt, or self-annihilation, on one’s existence—suitability for correspondence to God.

Humble meekness thus facilitates the self-annihilating process in a way that the savingly doubting individual is being reminded of “God [...] who created the world from nothing”.⁵⁶⁰ Although the annihilation is targeted *inwardly* towards one’s self, humble meekness provides another direction oriented *downwards* to the ground. This movement is the epitome of humility, but it could not be complete without meekness within this

⁵⁵⁴ Novotný, A. “Tichost, tichý”, in *Biblický slovník*, 1096.

⁵⁵⁵ EUD, 139 / SKS 5, 141.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ EUD, 36 / SKS 5, 45.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

context. Same as for Job⁵⁶¹, meekness makes one accept—be it willingly or reluctantly—this movement without resistance. Nevertheless, instead of a mere defeat, humble meekness represents a perfect surrender during which an individual consciously disarms herself and gives in to the self-annihilation. Only then can an individual anticipate an elevating movement and receptiveness to the good and perfect gift.⁵⁶²

4.1.4 Discontentment

“Then in a beautiful sense the human heart will gradually (the grace of God is never taken by force) become more and more discontented—that is, it will desire more and more ardently, will long more and more intensely, to be assured of grace.”⁵⁶³

The next characteristic of saving doubt is a particular kind of discontentment which contributes to the need of God necessary to potentially accept the good and perfect gift. Kierkegaard discusses this attribute—which accompanies the process of self-annihilation—in his *To Need God* upbuilding discourse. Here he contemplates the thought of “be[ing] contented with the grace of God” and makes a point that God’s grace does not always show itself in an individual’s life the way she would want it to. Contrarily, the grace of God is often rather difficult to comprehend or see in one’s life. When an individual receives by the grace of God what she requests or wishes for, it is very easy to be contented with it. However, the savingly doubtful individual has to practice a much “more difficult understanding” which is, nevertheless, “true”.⁵⁶⁴ This kind of interpretation of the phrase “to be contented with the grace of God” makes the individual rest assured of God’s grace without any need of “temporal evidence”⁵⁶⁵ or any immediate benefits of his grace, similarly as Job proved himself to seek God’s favor without demanding anything in return. However, it is even more virtuous when an individual longs to be “gladdened”⁵⁶⁶ by the grace of God and not be merely contented with it—not in the sense that she would be discontented at the benefits she was denied by God, but rather in the sense that she cultivates the view that “h[er] heart is strengthened by grace

⁵⁶¹ After God tested Job for the first time by taking from him his material possessions and all family members, he *shaved his head* as a contemporary Jewish symbol for expressing mourning, and then *fell upon the ground*. (Job 1:20)

⁵⁶² “[F]rom [an individual’s] inconstant heart [God] created the imperishable substance of a quiet spirit.” EUD, 36 / SKS 5, 45.

⁵⁶³ EUD, 303 / SKS 5, 296.

⁵⁶⁴ EUD, 301f / SKS 5, 295.

⁵⁶⁵ EUD, 302 / SKS 5, 296.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

and not by food”⁵⁶⁷. It is precisely at this moment that the individual is gradually—“in a beautiful sense”⁵⁶⁸—becoming more and more discontented in the above-mentioned manner. Such an attitude of refusing to stay contented with “enough grace” creates what Kierkegaard calls perfection. Why perfection? Because to be discontented with the assurance of God’s grace and to want more of it signifies that the individual *needs* God and to need God is the very prerequisite for receiving the good and perfect gift.

Thus, the more deeply an individual understands that she needs God and “the more [s]he in h[er] need presses forward to God”⁵⁶⁹, the more perfection there is in that individual. This exponentiality in the relationship between God and an individual can be contrasted with an individual’s “earthly”⁵⁷⁰ or secular way of living, which Kierkegaard calls “inverted”⁵⁷¹. The upside-down nature lies in this: the secular world considers it perfection when an individual needs little in life and the less she needs, the more perfect she becomes. Neediness in the secular world is considered imperfection, while in religiousness it is perfection. The individual who doubts in a saving way must be “*attentive* [emphasis added by AP] to the words”—which are “to be contented with the grace of God”—so that they can “call [the individual] aside” to a place where she is not distracted by the “secular mentality’s earthly mother tongue”, and remind her that to need God is a perfection.⁵⁷² The process of becoming more discontented and wanting more grace is thus a proactive attitude of attentiveness rather than a passive state. Moreover, the root cause of the discontentment matters, as well as the motives behind it. Just because an individual becomes “excessively unhappy”⁵⁷³, it does not automatically imply that she understands her need of God as a result of being capable of nothing at all. On the contrary, if that individual thinks that she only needs to find the correct means, or complain vehemently, to achieve that virtuous discontentment, she believes in herself only. Kierkegaard uses the New Testament account of the wedding at Cana as an illustration and says that such an individual has yet a bitter cup to drink for “truth serves the poor

⁵⁶⁷ Here Kierkegaard refers to Hebrews 13:9 (ESV): “Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.”

⁵⁶⁸ EUD, 303 / SKS 5, 296.

⁵⁶⁹ EUD, 303 / SKS 5, 296f.

⁵⁷⁰ EUD, 303 / SKS 5, 296-7.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷² EUD, 303 / SKS 5, 297.

⁵⁷³ EUD, 306 / SKS 5, 299.

wine first and keeps the best until last, whereas the deceitful world serves the best wine first”.⁵⁷⁴

It can be concluded that saving doubt contributes to an increased need for assurance of grace within an individual’s life. As doubt inherently possesses a negating effect, saving doubt manifests as a profound discontentment. This discontentment acts as a catalyst, prompting the individual to divest herself of life’s accumulated clutter. This process of divestment, while initially unsettling, ultimately clears the path, rendering the individual capable of nothing at all. This state, in turn, fosters a profound dependence on God’s grace.

Needless to say, in comparison with false doubt, the deep discontentment has a different direction, or motives, in each of the scenarios. On the one hand, in the case of saving doubt, the discontentment stems from an individual’s dissatisfaction with herself, as she is being self-annihilated—it is thus aimed inwardly towards the individual’s self as a result of one’s realization of her vulnerability and neediness of God’s grace. On the other hand, the discontentment of false doubt stems from wanting more from God or the world so that she can have her desires fulfilled—the individual’s discontentment is therefore targeted outwardly towards God, or his seeming lack of provision, when that individual is focused only on the benefits that the God-relationship brings her.

4.1.5 Suffering

“If one prefers to suffer instead of exulting over imagined victories, [...] then one presumably will not be disposed to praise the knowledge, as if what it bestows were at all proportionate to the trouble it causes, although one would not therefore deny that through its pain it educates a person.”⁵⁷⁵

The aspect of suffering was briefly explored in the previous chapter in regard to the annihilating process targeted at one’s self. While Kierkegaard calls the process of self-annihilation a “struggle”⁵⁷⁶, “trial”⁵⁷⁷, “anguish”⁵⁷⁸, “yoke”⁵⁷⁹, “difficult thing”⁵⁸⁰, or

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ EUD, 128 / SKS 5, 132.

⁵⁷⁶ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301.

⁵⁷⁷ EUD, 331 / SKS 5, 321.

⁵⁷⁸ EUD, 373 / SKS 5, 358.

⁵⁷⁹ EUD, 305 / SKS 5, 298.

⁵⁸⁰ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301.

“suffering”⁵⁸¹, all of these depictions will be summed up in one overarching term “suffering”, and this expression represents an excruciating and exhausting experience which the self-annihilating individual must endure. It was already mentioned that the suffering’s cause lies in that the individual has to fight against her own self and allow for the saving doubt to annihilate her completely so that she can eventually be suitable for correspondence to God. Moreover, the previous chapter showed that the suffering caused by saving doubt is independent of circumstances, exists as a truth for the individual, and paradoxically strengthens the sufferer.

Within the context of saving doubt and the amount of suffering it causes, it needs to be addressed that the most frequent use of the word “suffering” by Kierkegaard can be found in the *Thorn in the Flesh* upbuilding discourse. Here, apostle Paul is yet again portrayed as the embodiment of a sufferer who endured agonizing pain when persecuted for the sake of the heavenly kingdom, but also as someone who experienced suffering associated with the already discussed thorn in the flesh.⁵⁸² While both sufferings affected Paul on all levels, the latter kind represented a deep existential fight *with himself*. Whatever the thorn may have symbolized, it had a negative connotation and existed as “a warning”⁵⁸³ or “a reminder”⁵⁸⁴ that he was only a finite individual with flaws and limitations. This kind of suffering goes hand in hand with saving doubt in the following way: Kierkegaard admits that Paul’s thorn in the flesh is a negative element used by “Satan [to] assault [him]”⁵⁸⁵, but Kierkegaard also encourages the believer to imitate Paul in making the danger—in which the individual must walk—“serve the believer for good”⁵⁸⁶. If the thorn in the flesh represents a certain manifestation of doubt in an individual’s life, then positive outcomes come when the individual subjects the doubt to education and thus *relates to* “the thorn” in a saving way. Moreover, Kierkegaard makes it clear that suffering is “a component” and “no one enters the kingdom of heaven without suffering”.⁵⁸⁷ Although suffering is an inextricable component of every believer’s life, Kierkegaard warns against relating to the suffering in a self-deceptive way. In her suffering, the individual must not want to “play the hero”, “be a warrior at one’s own expense”, “determine the degree of suffering” and

⁵⁸¹ EUD, 305 / SKS 5, 298.

⁵⁸² See chapter 3.1 (pp. 99-100).

⁵⁸³ EUD, 331 / SKS 5, 321.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

“calculate the advantages”.⁵⁸⁸ The tried individual is by no means her “own teacher” and she is not posited in a “self-made conflict”.⁵⁸⁹ On the contrary, the sufferer must surrender to the suffering—or embrace saving doubt—so that she can be completely self-annihilated.

Another aspect of suffering brought about by saving doubt is depicted in the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse. Here, Kierkegaard refers to suffering as a “yoke of self-denial” which is beneficial and also adds that “the cross of sufferings *ennobles* [emphasis added by AP] a person more than anything else”.⁵⁹⁰ Therefore, the suffering experienced under saving doubt is as intense as that experienced under false doubt. Nonetheless, the nature of each suffering is different—while an individual who suffers as a result of the false doubt’s effects is trapped in a vicious cycle and cannot find a way out of her pain, the suffering underwent during self-annihilation aimed internally at one’s self is beneficial. Why? Because only in that kind of suffering can the individual “battle through to unshakeable faith”, and only out of this suffering “hope is born”.⁵⁹¹ The suffering can be likened to a fire which consumes all that prevents an individual from corresponding to God and rids one of the external. After all, Kierkegaard poses a rhetorical question: “Has God ever made a covenant with a person regarding the external?”⁵⁹² The suffering of saving doubt thus contributes to “the external being fad[ing] away in the wretchedness” and the “inner being untangl[ing] itself from the corruption”.⁵⁹³

Last, Christian suffering provides an opportunity for an individual to partake in Christ’s sufferings. This is described by Kierkegaard’s spokesman Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity* and in Kierkegaard’s *The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation* upbuilding discourse.

“[I]f you become contemporary with him [Christ, added by AP] in his abasement and this sight moves you to want to suffer with him, then there will be opportunity enough for you to be able to suffer in a way akin to his suffering.”⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ EUD, 305 / SKS 5, 298.

⁵⁹¹ EUD, 330 / SKS 5, 320.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ PC, 172 / SKS 12, 174.

As Christ experienced more than only one kind of suffering, the form of suffering portrayed within the context of this chapter is him becoming completely annihilated. Anti-Climacus makes it clear that this specific suffering closely relates to Christ's lowliness when he notes that everyone has to come to know him first in his lowliness, not loftiness.⁵⁹⁵ The ultimate self-annihilating process equals the *meek*⁵⁹⁶ attitude manifested by Jesus when he willingly suppressed his power and loftiness in order to let himself be crucified. In his epistle to Galatians, apostle Paul describes his self-annihilation akin to Christ's self-annihilation.

*"I have been crucified with Christ [emphasis added by AP]. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."*⁵⁹⁷

Nonetheless, the imitation of Christ in his suffering is *beneficial* and allows the individual who subjects doubt to education experience what Kierkegaard describes as "a fellowship of sufferings with God", "a covenant of tears with God" which comforts that individual with the expectancy of eternal salvation.⁵⁹⁸ Although the self-annihilating individual must go through the suffering on her own, as the annihilation targeted inwardly exists as a truth for her, the suffering exists as a covenant between her and the God-man who invites her to partake in his sufferings. Moreover, the same tendency was already mentioned in chapter 3.2.2 (pp. 120-1), where the principle of *divine compassion* was explained—and Kierkegaard emphasizes that God's divine compassion is a paradoxical desire of him wanting to partake in an individual's suffering. Kierkegaard's spokesman Anti-Climacus highlights that it is "the unlimited *recklessness* in concerning oneself only with the suffering, not in the least with oneself, and of unconditionally recklessly concerning oneself with *each* sufferer".⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ The term "meek" is used here purposefully in the same fashion as explained in chapter 4.1.3 (p. 136f), that is strength under control or willingly suspending one's power.

⁵⁹⁷ Galatians 2:20-21; ESV.

⁵⁹⁸ EUD, 264 / SKS 5, 260.

⁵⁹⁹ PC, 58 / SKS 12, 70.

4.1.6 Inward Retreat

“[Y]ou must retreat into yourself [...] sinking down into your own nothingness and surrendering yourself to grace and disgrace.”⁶⁰⁰

As was studied in chapter 3.2.1, the ultimate mark of saving doubt is deep subjectivity. Before correspondence to God—or relationship with the absolute paradox—can come, one must profoundly understand that she herself is “simply nothing”.⁶⁰¹ In the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard accentuates that the self-annihilation must happen in inwardness, and likens the internality to a “retreat into [one]self”.⁶⁰² However, the retreat must not resemble locking oneself up in a fortress with tall and thick walls from which one tries to defy the external world while the archenemy is with her in that fortress—it may have, in fact, been the archenemy’s instruction to close herself up in such a way.⁶⁰³ Contrarily to such isolation, the self-annihilating process needs to take place by “sinking down to [one’s] own nothingness” and also by “surrendering oneself to grace and disgrace”.⁶⁰⁴ Moreover, the individual has to initiate the risky *retreat into oneself* on her own, otherwise she “is not being tried in the struggle of which we speak”.⁶⁰⁵ The retreat is depicted *in contrast with* the closed fortress because the goal of an individual’s existence is not to live secluded from the external world altogether—on the contrary, if the individual seizes the external with the *deeper self*’s consent, i.e. conscious of the fact that the external can be changed at any time, she is not deceived. Thus, the battle must not take place from the fortress out towards the external world only, but it must be waged internally against oneself. As was discussed in the previous section, the *deeper self* claims that the external world is inconstant and can change at any minute and via this *eternal claim*. The *deeper self* has to convince the *first self* to believe it and thus come to a mutual reconciliation. Once this happens, the individual can continue venturing into the terrible inward self-annihilation. With regard to the external, the individual learns that she is capable of nothing. Who is the aforementioned archenemy in that fortress? Within the realm of saving doubt, it is the tried individual’s own *self*. The objective, then, is for the

⁶⁰⁰ EUD, 307 / SKS 5, 300.

⁶⁰¹ EUD, 306 / SKS 5, 299.

⁶⁰² EUD, 307 / SKS 5, 300.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301f.

individual to shift her focus from being distracted by the external to retreating into oneself.

“Then [s]he struggles with h[er]self in the internal world, not as previously, where the deeper self struggled with the first self to prevent it from being occupied with the external.”⁶⁰⁶

Once the individual is not preoccupied with the external, the *profound knowledge* can continue to grow in the realm of subjectivity. Regarding the exterior, the individual learned that she is capable of nothing only to realize that in the internal world she is “capable of nothing there either”⁶⁰⁷. Kierkegaard explains that capability in its true sense always needs an opposition, otherwise it would be either something “all powerful” or “imaginary”.⁶⁰⁸ The shift can be traced in the moment when an individual stops centering her attention on the external at the expense of the internal. While realizing and annihilating the external is important especially in the initial phase of becoming subjective, the individual cannot keep spending all her time and energy on defying the world. If an individual does not “discover this conflict”, her understanding is not profound but rather “faulty” and “imperfect”, for one needs to understand not only that she is capable of nothing at all in the external, but in the internal world as well.⁶⁰⁹ The retreat into oneself is thus one of the key features of saving doubt.

When an individual focuses in inwardness on the fact that she is capable of nothing at all, then—through a knowledge that is “really not complicated”⁶¹⁰—the individual learns to truly know herself. As Kierkegaard notes, the ultimate knowledge of one’s own nothingness into which the self-annihilating individual must sink down is simple. Nevertheless, the process during which the individual learns to discover and understand this uncomplicated “brief and pithy truth”⁶¹¹ is extremely difficult and complicated. It is important to remember that just as an individual can discover that she is capable of nothing *only by herself*, so can the same individual overcome herself *only by herself*. The process of self-annihilation, which happens once an individual ventures into an inward retreat, is her *own* truth.

⁶⁰⁶ EUD, 318 / SKS 5, 310.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ EUD, 319 / SKS 5, 310.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

“It seems odd that this is what a person is supposed to learn from h[er]self. Then why praise self-knowledge? And yet this is the way it is, and from the whole world a person cannot learn that [s]he is capable of nothing at all.”⁶¹²

In addition, Kierkegaard warns against understanding the internal struggle as a wrestle between *oneself* and *oneself*, or as an unequal struggle. Kierkegaard says that it is irrelevant to ask, “How can I be stronger than myself?”⁶¹³, and adds that the expression is rather colloquial and signifies something external. He gives several scenarios by which he seeks to demonstrate that while all of them are praiseworthy, they are not the same kind of overcoming as in the self-annihilating process. Suppose an individual who seeks out “worldly prestige” overcomes herself by ceasing to seize it, or an individual who is frightened by “life’s dangers” overcomes her fears to a degree that she no longer avoids those dangers, or an individual who lacks self-confidence overcomes herself to such a point that she no longer avoids decision-making.⁶¹⁴ The retreat into oneself does not demand from an individual to “resist [her]self”, or to do something “by extreme effort”, for such an attitude demands some sort of capability from that individual.⁶¹⁵ If that individual triumphs over *external* temptations confronting her from the outside world, that does not automatically imply that she would also be victorious over a “temptation as terrible as [s]he is able to imagine it”⁶¹⁶, meaning on the inside, as part of the *retreat into oneself*. True self-annihilation is characterized by a profound moment of inward reflection, during which the individual confronts and acknowledges the immensity of her internal temptations, recognizing them as forces far greater than her own will.

“[She] creates in h[er] innermost being temptations of glory and temptations of fear and temptations of despondency, of pride and of defiance and of sensuality greater than those [s]he meets in the external world, and this is the very reason [s]he struggles with h[er]self.”⁶¹⁷

When confronted with the overwhelming magnitude of one’s internal temptations, the individual may come to the profound realization of being capable of nothing on her own. This realization often emerges not from external sources, but from a deep and introspective engagement with one’s inner self. Kierkegaard writes that when facing the exterior world’s struggles, the individual battles only a “fortuitous degree of

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ EUD, 320 / SKS 5, 311.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

temptation”⁶¹⁸. While an individual must overcome herself as part of her inward journey, this is not achieved through personal strength or willpower. True self-overcoming occurs “with the help of God”.⁶¹⁹ This transformative moment will be nevertheless analyzed in the upcoming chapter.

4.2 Infinite Resignation

“[I]nstead of gaining the whole world, to gain h[er]self; instead of becoming the master, to become one in need; instead of being capable of all things, to be capable of nothing at all.”⁶²⁰

At this juncture, it becomes evident that the work of saving doubt—producing the fruit of educability, honest uncovering, humble meekness, discontentment, suffering, and inward retreat—assists an individual with dying to oneself. The complete self-abasement is inherent precisely in the infinite resignation, as famously depicted by Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes de silencio in his *Fear and Trembling*. Here he claims that “infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith, for only in infinite resignation do I become conscious of my eternal validity”.⁶²¹ Within this movement, the individual fully—i.e. absolutely, infinitely—renounces “the whole temporal realm”⁶²², even one’s own capability to realize the highest. The infinite resignation denotes that one also renounces the desire to achieve the highest—“the highest” representing whatever she may hold dear or most valuable subjectively. De silencio emphasizes that “only the single individual can ever give h[er]self a more explicit explanation of what is to be understood by Isaac”.⁶²³ Thus, “the highest”, which one renounces, signifies each one’s individual “Isaac”, i.e. something or someone she cherishes the most.

Moreover, the act of resignation itself does not require faith and does not provide one with faith—however, the individual gains “eternal consciousness”⁶²⁴ which signifies that spirit is involved.⁶²⁵ This movement is paradoxical in the following sense. On the one

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ EUD, 325 / SKS 5, 313.

⁶²⁰ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 306.

⁶²¹ FT, 46 / SKS 4, 140.

⁶²² FT, 49 / SKS 4, 143.

⁶²³ FT, 71 / SKS 4, 163.

⁶²⁴ FT, 48 / SKS 4, 142.

⁶²⁵ Remember that the spirit matures with one’s growth in consciousness.

hand, the infinite resignation can be facilitated by the individual—within the context of this section, it is the work of saving doubt targeted at oneself—whenever the individual is overpowered by some finitude, she can “starve [her]self into submission until she make[s] the movement [of faith, added by AP]”.⁶²⁶ On the other hand, while the movement of resignation grants the individual eternal consciousness, “to get the least little bit more than [one’s] eternal consciousness requires faith”, and this precisely is the paradox.⁶²⁷ Johannes de silentio illustrates this principle on a contemporary tale *Erzsi die Spinnerin*.⁶²⁸

“Infinite resignation is that shirt mentioned in an old legend. The thread is spun with tears, bleached with tears; the shirt is sewn in tears—but then it also gives protection better than iron or steel. The defect in the legend is that a third person can work up this linen. The secret in life is that each person must sew it himself, and the remarkable thing is that a man can sew it fully as well as a woman.”⁶²⁹

The movement of renouncing everything must be made by the individual herself only, nobody else can perform it on her behalf. Thus, the infinite resignation requires courage—in fact, “it takes a purely human courage to renounce the whole temporal realm”.⁶³⁰ Moreover, the individual does not cancel her resignation but keeps it for she “has made the movement infinitely”—that way nothing from the outside can disturb her.⁶³¹

This moment represents the most progressed form of Religiousness A. The infinite resignation can take place only when the individual targets the doubt towards herself and experiences the annihilating effects of saving doubt. Nonetheless, it is necessary to remember that saving doubt does not provide one with self-annihilation *automatically*, the individual must “use it in the right way”⁶³²—as such, the responsibility rests on the individual. Eventually, the place of self-annihilation where one feels the absolute need of God marks the very predisposition to faith. If the act of infinite resignation is performed

⁶²⁶ FT, 48 / SKS 4, 142.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ The tale “Erzsi die Spinnerin” written by Count János József Mailáth was first published in 1825. It reflects the 19th century Romanticism in European literature but also the religious and ethnic endeavors in contemporary Hungary. The story depicts Hungarian history marked with various tensions between Christianity and Paganism on the one hand, and Protestantism and Catholicism on the other hand. The multiethnic Hungary is embodied in “Erzsi”—the main protagonist—a “soldier of Italian and Norman descent who becomes a loyal member of the Hungarian king’s banderium”. See Foley, A. A., “János Mailáth’s ‘Erzsi die Spinnerin’: Introduction and Translation”, 72-3.

⁶²⁹ FT, 45 / SKS 4, 139.

⁶³⁰ FT, 49 / SKS 4, 143.

⁶³¹ FT, 44f / SKS 4, 139.

⁶³² EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 140.

thoroughly, the scope of saving doubt ends at this very moment. Unbeknownst to the individual, this represents only one of two movements—the famous “double movement”⁶³³ consists of infinite resignation and the “movement of faith”⁶³⁴. This qualitative movement is of crucial importance with regard to the theme of becoming oneself. As the individual—in Kierkegaard’s words—becomes “the one in need” and “capable of nothing at all”, she “gain[s] [her]self”.⁶³⁵ The latter movement—that of faith—will be further discussed in the upcoming overarching chapter as it stands outside of doubt.

⁶³³ FT, 36 / SKS 4, 131; FT, 119 / SKS 4, 206.

⁶³⁴ “After having made this movement, he [Abraham, added by AP] has at every moment made the next movement, has made the movement of faith by virtue of the absurd.” FT, 119 / SKS 4, 206.

⁶³⁵ EUD, 314 / SKS 5, 306.

INTERMEZZO II: MOSES

“Ah, humanly speaking, the weakest of the Israelites is capable of more than Moses, since that one still thinks he is capable of something, but Moses is capable of nothing at all.”⁶³⁶

While Faust represented the epitome of a doubter who did not use doubt in the right way—meaning that he doubted with the help of false doubt that annihilates any meaning and thus left him paralyzed in the multiplicity of knowledge, unable to act, and pointlessly seeking to get to transcendence via reason—Kierkegaard accentuates the Old Testament figure of Moses as an example of someone who became nothing at all so that God could shine through his incapability and weakness. There are, of course, some similarities between Moses and Faust in that they both felt paralyzed, lost, and helpless, but the cardinal difference between them lies in that the dissatisfaction stemmed from a different cause and the annihilation was targeted in a different direction. On the one hand, Faust became desperate because he was unable to leave the vast multifarious knowledge in which he annihilated every meaning, and which eventually left him empty-handed, Moses—as shall be seen in this chapter—targeted the annihilation towards himself, and as he doubted himself, his abilities, and capabilities, this cleared the way for God to work through him in miraculous ways. Nonetheless, this intermezzo shall also point out Moses’ shortcomings and struggles in an attempt to demonstrate that saving doubt does not presuppose perfection in the conventional sense.

Kierkegaard’s most in-depth characterization of Moses can be found in the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse right after he states that “a human being is great and at h[er] highest when [s]he corresponds to God by being nothing at all”⁶³⁷. While Moses is generally perceived as the great forefather of Israelites who led their *exodus* from Egypt to the Promised Land, and a receiver of the Ten Commandments, it is important to also view his accomplishments in light of his shortcomings and weaknesses, same as Kierkegaard did. He, on the one hand, calls Moses “the Lord’s envoy” to the enslaved Israelites to free them not only from the Pharaoh’s yoke but also to “free them from themselves”.⁶³⁸ On the other hand, Kierkegaard emphasizes that Moses did not in fact cause the ten plagues of Egypt and attributes the heroic deeds to God instead of Moses. The latter accent on

⁶³⁶ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

⁶³⁷ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 303.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

Moses' ministry is the one that directly correlates with saving doubt. After all, Moses' appointment as a leader by God begins with Moses being reluctant to accept God's calling on his life as he was doubtful in the two following aspects.

First, Moses was fearful that the rest of Israelites will question his encounter with God and him being chosen by God. In Exodus 4, Moses opposes God, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'"⁶³⁹. In response to his concern, God subsequently gives Moses two powerful signs so that the Israelites would believe him—Moses' staff turns into a snake, he is able to catch it with his bare hand, and then the snake turns back into the staff; later, Moses' hand turns leprous and then it is restored back to its normal flesh. As a reassurance to Moses, God then says,

"If they will not believe you, or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."⁶⁴⁰

Second, Moses was rather self-conscious about his speech impairment and opposes God, saying, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."⁶⁴¹. The Lord confronts him similarly as Job⁶⁴² by asking him a question, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"⁶⁴³ and he commands Moses to go and promises him that he would "be with [Moses'] mouth and teach [him] what [he] shall speak"⁶⁴⁴. However, Moses keeps opposing God and continues to doubt himself, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."⁶⁴⁵. God grew angry with Moses and decided to send with him also Moses' brother Aaron who was very articulate in his speech. Moses would still be the one to obtain the words from God, and then Aaron would be "[Moses'] mouth"⁶⁴⁶ and speak for him to others. Last, God instructs Moses to take with him the staff with which he was to perform signs and miracles.

⁶³⁹ Exodus 4:1; ESV.

⁶⁴⁰ Exodus 4:8; ESV.

⁶⁴¹ Exodus 4:10; ESV.

⁶⁴² In Job 38:4 (ESV), God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"

⁶⁴³ Exodus 4:11; ESV.

⁶⁴⁴ Exodus 4:15; ESV.

⁶⁴⁵ Exodus 4:13; ESV.

⁶⁴⁶ Exodus 4:16; ESV.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of the doubt targeted towards Moses' own self stems from the above-mentioned events. In order to demonstrate that Moses was capable of nothing at all, and his supernatural works were not ultimately his, Kierkegaard gives examples of what Moses did *not* do contrary to the ordinary belief of Kierkegaard's time. He starts juxtaposing the portrayal of Moses *capable of everything* by saying, "see the difference here"⁶⁴⁷. Had the Israelites asked Moses to go to Pharaoh because there was power and eloquence in his word, and his voice was loud and victorious, he would have probably replied back to them that he is capable of nothing at all, afraid to lay down his life for the Israelite nation, "capable only of submitting everything to the Lord"⁶⁴⁸. Kierkegaard goes on and writes that the same powerlessness can be seen in Moses when he presents himself to Pharaoh.

"And what is his [Moses', added by AP] weapon? The weapon of the powerless—prayers, and even when the last word of his prayers has already reached heaven, he still does not know what is going to happen, even though he believes that whatever happens still happens for the best."⁶⁴⁹

The most elaborate example of Moses' self-annihilation is depicted by Kierkegaard in relation to the notable moment from Exodus 17, when Moses struck the rock at Mount Horeb, and water flew out of it to satisfy the thirst of Israelites in the desert. The studied upbuilding discourse, i.e. *To Need God* lays out reasons for why Moses was doubting himself in the saving way. Most importantly, Kierkegaard attempts to paint a first-hand picture of what happened within Moses right before, during, and after the miracle. As the Israelites grew more thirsty and more agitated at the same time, they appealed to Moses to take his staff and command the rock to give water. Kierkegaard however states that Moses was well aware that his "staff [was] but a stick", and he also knew that the staff was not powerful in *his* hand.⁶⁵⁰ He did what the Israelites had been asking for simply because he could not "bear the sight of the misery of this languishing people"⁶⁵¹. Thus, Moses stroke the rock "even though [he] [him]self d[id] not believe that water w[ould] spring from it", not until after the staff had touched the rock.⁶⁵² Kierkegaard interprets the moment of the miracle itself as an instance when Moses does not know whether the stick

⁶⁴⁷ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 303.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

with which he is suddenly touching the rock is “to be the finger of the Almighty” because he sees “anything but the Lord’s back”.⁶⁵³ The remark about Moses never seeing anything but the Lord’s back may seem strange at first glance. Why would Kierkegaard mention this without any further explanation not only here but also in *The Lord Gave, the Lord Took Away* upbuilding discourse in relation to Job? The answer lies in Exodus 17—in the same chapter as the discussed story—where God says to Moses,

“Behold, I will *stand before you* [emphasis added by AP] there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.”⁶⁵⁴

The image of Moses standing behind God and seeing only his back is not only metaphorical, but also a physical one. The reason why Moses can never see God’s face is because he would be killed by his glory. In Exodus 33, God said to Moses after he had asked him to show his glory to him, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live”⁶⁵⁵ and adds that Moses “shall see [God’s] back, but [God’s] face shall not be seen”⁶⁵⁶. The position of Moses behind God and him seeing only God’s back is a reminder, same as Paul’s thorn in the flesh, that Moses is but a man, and that he is only a vessel which needs to be emptied out in order to be filled with God’s power.

Moreover, Moses stands out from the rest of Israelites not only because he is chosen by God, but also because he keeps his commandments and stands the tests which they have to face as part of the great exodus from Egypt. Right after Moses had miraculously led the Israelites through the split Red Sea, they reached “the wilderness of Shur”⁶⁵⁷ where they could not find any drinkable water, for all of it tasted bitter⁶⁵⁸. God instructed Moses to throw a designated tree into the waters so that they would turn sweet. Moses did so and the water became drinkable. Not long after this miracle, God enables Moses to command water from the rock in Horeb and satisfies the Israelites’ thirst. The next big event in which Moses proves his obedience to God is to be found in Exodus 19-25. Here, Moses and the Israelites are situated in the Sinai Peninsula and Moses goes up the mountain where he obtains promise from God to make covenant with Israel and records it in the

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Exodus 17:5; ESV.

⁶⁵⁵ Exodus 33:20; ESV.

⁶⁵⁶ Exodus 33:23; ESV.

⁶⁵⁷ Exodus 15:22; ESV.

⁶⁵⁸ The area which contained a well full of bitter water was called Marah. “Marah” stands for “bitterness” in Hebrew.

form of ten commandments on stone tablets. However, while Moses remains on the mountain with God for 40 days and 40 nights, enveloped in a cloud, the Israelites already manage to turn their backs on God and start creating the infamous golden calf as an idol for worship. Upon returning to the camp and witnessing the Israelites' worship of the "gods of gold"⁶⁵⁹, he grows irate and builds a tabernacle at the camp as a designated meeting place with God. It is here that Moses pleads God to forgive the sins of Israel. In fact, instead of animal sacrifice, Moses even offers himself as the ultimate atonement. Initially, God is angry with the Israelites' idolatry, but as Moses continues to speak with him, he intercedes for Israel and manages to change God's mind⁶⁶⁰ about the initial punishment and turns his anger to mercy. Afterwards, God renews the covenant with Israel, and when Moses comes down from the mountain, the Israelite camp notices that his face shines as a result of his encounter with God.⁶⁶¹

While Kierkegaard praises Moses for becoming completely self-annihilated, and in such a way God could perform miracles *through* him, there is another instance in the life of Moses—which is not in any way mentioned by Kierkegaard in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, but it is commented on in *Fear and Trembling*⁶⁶²—when he was disobedient to God by not following the instructions him and Aaron had been given. Numbers 20 captures another scene where the Israelites were thirsting in the desert as they ran out of water. Out of thirst and exhaustion—after all, this incident happened close to 40 years of wandering in the wilderness—they quarreled with Moses and argued that their situation in the desert was far worse than in Egypt under Pharaoh's yoke. When Moses presented himself in front of God, he was given the staff and was told to gather the Israelites and *command* the rock to yield water. However, Moses and Aaron "gathered the assembly together before the rock" and Moses said to the Israelites, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?"⁶⁶³ Then, instead of *speaking to* the rock, Moses

⁶⁵⁹ Exodus 32:31; ESV.

⁶⁶⁰ This passage is paradoxical because by Moses asking God to change his mind and divert his anger from Israel, he in fact asks for God to be consistent and stay true to his pledge to Abraham's descendants. The paradox juxtaposes God's intentions to show loyal love for Israel on the one hand, and God's holiness—i.e. being set apart and not tolerate sin—on the other. Moses' intercessory prayer thus challenges the ultimate divine will which God subjects to human appeal by intently listening to Moses and taking his perspective into account.

⁶⁶¹ Exodus 34:29.

⁶⁶² In his *Eulogy on Abraham*, Kierkegaard contrasts Abraham's faith demonstrated at Mount Moriah with Moses when he writes that "Moses struck the rock with his staff, but he did not have faith.", and references Numbers 20:10. See FT, 19 / SKS 4, 115.

⁶⁶³ Numbers 20:10; ESV.

“lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice”.⁶⁶⁴ God grew angry with Moses because through this act, he relied on his strength and did not submit to God and his instructions.

“And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.’ These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.”⁶⁶⁵

The second story from the book of Numbers can serve as a contrast to the previously mentioned self-annihilation as depicted in Exodus. In the first instance, Moses demonstrated complete submission to God despite initially doubting himself and his own abilities. Nonetheless, since Moses relied on his own understanding—be it due to the previous miracles⁶⁶⁶ that had been facilitated through the staff, or solely by Moses becoming more confident in himself—the obedience is not complete the second time he is to provide for the thirsting Israelites. This is also seen in the way Moses spoke to the congregation when he asked, “shall *we* [emphasis added by AP] bring water for you out of this rock?”⁶⁶⁷. The latter instance thus shows that Moses did not have to relate to doubt only one time and conquer it once and for all—quite contrarily, he had to relate to doubt all the time while wandering in the desert for decades.

4.3 Concluding Thoughts on Saving Doubt

The story of Exodus begins by God choosing Moses to deliver his people from Egypt to the Promised Land—essentially, the driving force behind the great enterprise lies in God acting on his love towards Israel. While Kierkegaard speaks of the absolute God-man paradox in relation to the incarnate God in the body of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament still considers God’s love, and the doubt is to be approached as that manifested in a given

⁶⁶⁴ Numbers 20:11; ESV.

⁶⁶⁵ Numbers 20:12-13; ESV.

⁶⁶⁶ Although it is disputed among Rabbinical scholars whether Aaron used the same staff as Moses, Exodus mentions that Aaron used his staff to bring about the first three plagues (changing the waters of Nile into blood and infesting Egypt first with frogs and later with gnats). On the other hand, Moses’ staff was turned into a serpent and back to the staff in front of his own eyes, it was used by Moses to unleash the seventh and eighth plagues (hail over all Egypt, and locusts carried into the Red Sea). Moreover, Moses’ staff was also used by him to part the Red Sea, then to produce water from the rock, and to beat the Amalekites. See also Schorsch, I., “The Staff of Moses”, in *Commentary on Parashat Va-era*, 2004.

⁶⁶⁷ Numbers 20:10; ESV.

time period.⁶⁶⁸ Just before God gave Moses the ten commandments at Mount Sinai, God proclaimed that he was “abounding in steadfast love”⁶⁶⁹ and thus revealed his character before renewing the covenant with Israel.

Although Moses did not lead the Israelites to Canaan—the Promised Land—during his lifetime⁶⁷⁰, his ministry was marked with moments of relating to doubt. This intermezzo revolved around Kierkegaard’s praise of Moses for becoming nothing at all, and thus relating to doubt in a saving way by turning it directly towards himself. There are two layers to Moses’ doubt—one that is deeply personal and one that has to do with patience and trust. After all, the latter instance of Moses relating to doubt in the desert many years after the former miracle showed that the *relating to* is by no means a one-time decision in life but rather moments of relating to possibilities that repeat themselves and towards which an individual has to take a stance. This aspect will nonetheless be discussed in more depth in chapter 5.1 (pp. 163-5).

On the one hand, Moses represents an archetype of someone who managed to accept God’s calling to carry out a great task in the form of delivering Israel out from Egypt to the Promised Land. He did so even as what Kierkegaard calls being weaker than “the weakest of the Israelites”⁶⁷¹. Moses became a leader who stood at the intersection between God and Israel—Moses represented Israel to God while at the same time he represented God to Israel.⁶⁷² When Moses gets appointed as a leader, he doubts himself and is reluctant to accept the calling. Nonetheless, God does not restrict himself to needing a powerful figure to deliver the Israelites from the yoke of Egypt. On the contrary, God does not need Moses to be utterly confident in himself, he wants him to *trust* God’s wisdom and enable him to deliver the Israelites from slavery so that they can encounter him in the same way as Moses did at the mountain. In order for Moses to carry out the task entrusted to him, he needs to subject to God completely and remember the promise from God that he would walk before him. For Kierkegaard, the imagery of God walking

⁶⁶⁸ While the Old Testament faith and the New Testament faith vary in their “content”, there is a common structure to them both. They both involve the double movement of self-annihilation and then believing.

⁶⁶⁹ Exodus 34:6; ESV.

⁶⁷⁰ According to Deuteronomy 34, Moses died at the age of 120 after 40 years spent wandering through the desert.

⁶⁷¹ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

⁶⁷² Milevsky, J., “Moses: God’s Representative, Employee, or Messenger? Understanding the Views of Maimonides, Nahmanides, and Joseph Albo on Moses’ Role and Ultimate Failure at *Mei Meribah*”, in Kugel, J. L., Moscovitz, L. (eds.), *JSIJ – Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal (Vol. 14)*, 2018, 6-7.

before Moses is comforting but also challenging, because Moses only saw “nothing but the Lord’s back”⁶⁷³. This casts light on the miracle at Mount Horeb, when Moses had to trust the unimaginable that when he stroke the rock with his staff, it would give water. Directly before placing his staff on the rock and when the staff touches the rock, Moses has no idea whether God will actually make water flow from it, Kierkegaard writes that “he does not know it until afterward”⁶⁷⁴. In that very moment—before water started gushing out from the rock—Moses has to empty himself out of all reason, speculation, or understanding, and then submit to the edifying externally. He had to establish a relationship with God *outside of himself*. Concerning *the other* or *the external* in religiousness, Moses showed humble meekness as another prominent trait of saving doubt. First, this quality shone through at Horeb when Moses suspended his self and his own power, becoming nothing at all, in order to find himself, the meek leader that God wanted him to be. Additionally, the same kind of humble meekness could be seen at Mount Sinai when Moses dared to courageously ask God to revert his anger from Israel and accept help from a source *outside of himself*.

Furthermore, saving doubt can be also seen in the discontentment built up in Moses after he had discovered that the Israelites created for themselves a substitute god made of gold in comparison with the Israelite’s discontentment when they grumbled in the wilderness and complained to Moses. The root cause is very different. While Moses realized the gravity of sin that Israel had committed against God within their covenant and was well aware of their need of God’s grace and forgiveness, the Israelites’ contentment depended on external circumstances. Thus, when they hungered, thirsted, or did not see immediate provision from God, their dissatisfaction grew, and it eventually led them to make a god of their own making.

On the other hand, the second layer to Moses’ doubt had to do with the lifelong duration of the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. Although geographically, the land of Canaan was not too far, the Israelites were instructed to take a long road through wilderness and desert.

“When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, ‘Lest the people change their minds

⁶⁷³ EUD, 121 / SKS 5, 125.

⁶⁷⁴ EUD, 311f / SKS 5, 304.

when they see war and return to Egypt.’ But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.”⁶⁷⁵

The long path from Egypt to the Promised Land was paved with an unknown and challenges that would often make the Israelites want to return to Egypt, where they sensed *some* consistency, despite being enslaved. The long road represented a test. However, the test did not lie in overcoming obstacles standing in their way—such a test would regard only the external—it was their faith in God that was tested. In other words, the long journey presented the Israelites with moments where they had to decide whether they would put their trust in God or lean on their own understanding and might. The Israelites’ doubt towards God escalated into the making and worshipping of the golden calf which denoted a misplaced object of praise and only highlighted their search for an external source of power to serve their purposes.⁶⁷⁶

Moses, however, was not exempt from stumbling while wandering through the wilderness for decades. The miracle at Meribah did take place but was preceded by Moses’ skepticism towards God’s instruction to *speak to* the rock and using his rod instead. The staff turned into symbol of self-reliance and reasoning at the expense of faith. By Moses choosing to rely on his own might, God forbid Moses to enter the Promised Land during his lifetime but allowed him to see it from a mountaintop moments before his death.⁶⁷⁷ Thus, Moses upset God by not obeying him at Meribah but still maintained favor in his eyes. While Moses, same as Job, had his shortcomings, he is still considered an extraordinary “prophet” of Israel “whom the Lord knew face to face⁶⁷⁸”.⁶⁷⁹ The long-term wandering took its toll on Moses and the literal wilderness had also turned into an existential wilderness characterized by a strong tension between the *ideal* Promised Land as the final destination and the *reality* of hunger, thirst, idolatry, life threats, and other obstacles. Putting the one instance of Moses’ disobedience aside, his self-annihilation allowed for God to act *through* him. Even though Moses saw “nothing but the Lord’s

⁶⁷⁵ Exodus 13:17-18; ESV.

⁶⁷⁶ Besides bull worship, there were other cults that represented an attempt to anthropomorphize divine gods. The Old Testament mentions the worship of Baal and his wife Asherah in the form of Asherah poles. See also Novotný, A., “Asserot”, in *Biblický slovník*, 42.

⁶⁷⁷ “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” Numbers 20:12; ESV.

⁶⁷⁸ The connotation “face to face” denotes an intimate relationship resembling friendship which stands out from the Old Testament’s holy God whose glory would kill anyone who would stand anywhere near him. Exodus 33:11 (ESV) mentions that “the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend”.

⁶⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 34:10; ESV.

back”⁶⁸⁰, being in God’s presence made his face shine. Whenever Moses would come out after having spoken with God, the Israelites noticed that his face shone. The very first time this happened was after Moses interceded on Israel’s behalf at the Sinai tabernacle—he did not realize it until others noticed the skin of his face.⁶⁸¹ The illumination of Moses’ face represents a significant aspect of the relationship between God and a self-annihilated individual. In Kierkegaard’s anthropology, a self-annihilated individual reflects—or mirrors—God’s glory. This is yet another metaphor alongside the imagery of the fragile clay vessels containing valuable treasure.⁶⁸² Moreover, the mirroring and correspondence does not depend on one’s perfection. Moses’ face shone despite his shortcomings, and he did not lose it after his incident at Meribah.

*

Before concluding this section altogether, it is important to remember that the aspect of “putting [one]self aside in order to find God”⁶⁸³ marks *the edifying* in Religiousness A. Thus, the edifying element is present in the negative movement of self-annihilation which allows for an individual to become an empty vessel into which a treasure can be stored. In respect of the intricate boundary between Religiousness A and B, this chapter regarded mainly the realm of Religiousness A as it focused on the process leading towards ultimate self-annihilation as the very work of saving doubt. As was already discussed, the work of saving doubt ceases at the moment when self-annihilation is complete and the now inwardly turned and deeply subjective individual has to take a stance toward the absolute paradox and take the leap of faith. Nonetheless, saving doubt can by no means influence such a leap—it is entirely up to that individual whether she will *decide to* take it.

⁶⁸⁰ EUD, 121 / SKS 5, 125.

⁶⁸¹ Exodus 34:29-35.

⁶⁸² See chapter 3.1, p. 101f.

⁶⁸³ CUP1, 560 / SKS 7, 509.

5. THE MOMENT OF THE LEAP

“[O]ne must lose everything in order to gain everything, and understand it so honestly that, in the most crucial moment, when h[er] soul is already shuddering at the risk, [s]he does not again leap to h[er] own aid with the explanation that [s]he has not yet fully made a resolution but merely wanted to feel h[er] way.”⁶⁸⁴

All of saving doubt’s features—be it educability, honest uncovering, humble meekness, discontentment, suffering, or inward retreat—have an important role within the double movement which is a necessary transformative experience on the path towards *becoming oneself*. The double movement consists of the already discussed movement of infinite resignation (see chapter 4.2, pp. 147-9) and the movement of faith. While the first movement takes place still with the aid of saving doubt—the saving doubt must be understood here as *the act* of targeting doubt towards oneself by the individual and thus doubting subjectively—one undergoes the movement of infinite resignation. As such, this movement is followed by the qualitative *leap of faith*⁶⁸⁵. Whereas in the first movement, the individual renounced one’s own capability to realize the highest good and—in the language of the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse—became capable of nothing at all, in the second movement, she believes that the highest good can be realized with the help of God.⁶⁸⁶ This makes the double movement different from an ordinary sacrifice in which one gives up a “lower good” so that she can receive a “higher good”.⁶⁸⁷ Same as the movement of infinite resignation cannot be universalized, so is faith situational and individual, meaning that it never looks the same for everyone. Kierkegaard’s spokesman Johannes de silencio even claims that “partnership in these areas [one knight of faith helping another one, added by AP] is utterly unthinkable”.⁶⁸⁸ De silencio famously exemplifies the double movement on the knight of faith who wants to get a princess, i.e. the princess represents the highest for him. When he “use[s] all [his] strength in resigning”, he cannot get her back by his own strength.⁶⁸⁹ Therefore, once he ultimately releases all his earthly worries and disquietudes, he has to rely solely on God’s strength.

⁶⁸⁴ EUD, 381 / SKS 5, 364.

⁶⁸⁵ It should be noted that while this dissertation, especially this chapter, consistently uses the term “leap of faith”, Kierkegaard’s terminology involves the Danish word *Spring* which stands for a sudden leaping movement from one place to another. Same as in English, this movement copies the breaking-forth flow of a water spring gushing out of the earth. See Schreiber, G., “The Leap”, 71.

⁶⁸⁶ Fremstedal, R., “Double Movement”, 190.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁸ FT, 71 / SKS 4, 163.

⁶⁸⁹ FT, 46 / SKS 4, 140.

If he does so, he gets the princess “by the virtue of the absurd”—the absurd meaning “the fact that for God all things are possible” which lies outside of human understanding.⁶⁹⁰ Thus, the second movement shows the “unshakability of faith in the full recognition of the impossibility”.⁶⁹¹ Now, the double movement emerges more clearly—the individual first “resign[s] everything infinitely, and then [she] grasp[s] everything again by the virtue of the absurd”.⁶⁹²

Yet, many scholars⁶⁹³ rightly highlight that Abraham’s faith—same as that of Moses which was portrayed in the previous intermezzo—is not Christian faith. As was already analyzed in chapter 3.2, New Testament faith is distinct for the possibility of offence with regard to the God-Man who represents the absolute paradox. In Christian faith, the individual must personally relate to Christ as the incarnate God in time. With that also comes one’s relating to guilt and adopting full sin-consciousness. Nonetheless, the double movement is still present even within the Christian faith. McDonald likens the faith in the Old Testament and the New Testament as same in format but different in content.⁶⁹⁴

Christian faith involves the double movement in the following way. First, the individual must realize the totality of guilt in which she identifies as ultimately guilty—not as the result of a particular transgression or as the gross sum of all the sins committed by the individual, but as always guilty by human nature. Therefore, the total guilt is absolute, as it is determined qualitatively in inwardness by the individual when faced with holy God. Nonetheless, this guilt-consciousness still belongs to immanence for the individual is thus far only *conscious of* the guilt totality. Second, in order for the leap to take place, the guilt-consciousness needs to be followed by proper religious guilt and repentance. The proper religious guilt marks the highest form of guilt which is characteristic for its sin-consciousness as opposed to mere guilt-consciousness. When the individual understands

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ FT, 48 / SKS 4, SKS 4, 142.

⁶⁹² FT, 40 / SKS 4, SKS 4, 135.

⁶⁹³ See McDonald, W., “Faith”; Fremstedal, R., “Double Movement”; Torrance, A., “A Kierkegaardian Guide to Reading Scripture”.

⁶⁹⁴ The scope of this work is by no means attempting to compare faith in the Old Testament and the New Testament. However, it treats them interconnectedly. As such, the theological approach is typological, meaning that it views the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It stems from Matthew 5:17 (ESV) where Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”. The interpretative approach also regards individuals, objects, events and places featured in the Old Testament as prototypes which shadow events and spiritual realities in the New Testament, viewed as antitypes. As such, the typological approach to Bible concerns the God-Man. See Davison, R. M., *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τελοσ Structures*, 1-10.

the totality of guilt in light of sin-consciousness, she realizes that it is a misrelation which only faith in God's unconditional love and the possibility of forgiveness of sins can rectify.⁶⁹⁵ As such, the latter of the two movements is inherent in repentance⁶⁹⁶ and acceptance of the forgiveness of sins. Same as in the Abrahamic double movement, Christian faith consists of an act of infinite resignation in the sense of realizing the totality of guilt, and becoming capable of nothing at all, understanding the inability to redeem oneself. Since guilt-consciousness belongs to the sphere of immanence, the first movement happens within Religiousness A. The second movement involving sin-consciousness however represents the hallmark of Religiousness B, as the infinitely-resigned individual undergoes "the transformation of existence" in which she simultaneously relates "absolutely to the absolute *τέλος* and relatively to relative ends".⁶⁹⁷

Another perspective on the double movement can be gained through the lenses of Kierkegaard's spokesman Anti-Climacus, who in his *Sickness unto Death* notes the following.

"To become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete is neither to become finite nor to become infinite, for that which is to become concrete is indeed a synthesis. Consequently, the progress of becoming must be an infinite moving away from oneself in the infinitizing of the self, and an infinite coming back to itself in the finitizing process."⁶⁹⁸

Thus, the double movement can be understood as an important transformational moment within the process of *becoming oneself*. All of the described various double movements depict not only the leap of faith but also—in its format—a subjective stand whereby the individual "move[s] away from oneself [...] and come[s] back to [her]self".⁶⁹⁹ The double movements also denote an individual being "both negated and affirmed at the same

⁶⁹⁵ Hanson, E. M., "Guilt", 135.

⁶⁹⁶ The concept of repentance is discussed by Kierkegaard's Judge William in *Either/Or* where he perceives the double movement as a *choice of oneself*. If the individual becomes self-annihilated through the act of repentance and courageously bears her past, she can then undergo the transformative leap of faith and receive forgiveness of sins from the outside. "Ethical repentance has only two movements—it either annuls its object or bears it. These two movements also imply a concrete relation between the repenting individual and the object of h[er] repentance, whereas fleeing from it expresses an abstract relationship." EO2, 248f / SKS 3, 237.

⁶⁹⁷ CUP1, 431 / SKS 7, 392f.

⁶⁹⁸ SUD, 29f / SKS 11, 146.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

time”⁷⁰⁰ or—to phrase it differently—they indicate “the negation of the negation, which in itself contains the true affirmation”⁷⁰¹.

5.1 Resolution

*“[T]his is the secret of resolution. It demands everything, that is true; it does not allow itself to be deceived, it tolerates no dishonesty.”*⁷⁰²

Once the savingly doubtful individual is self-annihilated, capable of nothing at all, and in desperate need of God, she now faces the possibility of forgiveness of sins. Will she be offended, or will she believe? If she *chooses* to believe in the paradox of the divine forgiveness of sins, she is taking the leap of faith. In that leap, the moment of resolution is essential and without it, the transition to true religiousness cannot take place. As was already emphasized, the work of saving doubt ceases at the point of complete self-annihilation, but the decision to take the leap is completely up to the individual. When Climacus writes that “speculation knows nothing of any decision”⁷⁰³, it casts light on the difference between decisiveness and speculation—as opposed to the abstractness which left Faust stuck in decision paralysis and his entire being drowned in the multiplicity of knowledge, decision is resolute. Faust could not progress to the religious sphere of existence because he became “infinetized in reflection”—and reflection can be stopped only by *the leap*.⁷⁰⁴ Therefore, Faust being caught up in reflection meant him becoming objective—and in such a way, he utterly lost “the decisiveness of subjectivity”—for reflection cannot be stopped objectively, it needs to be stopped by the subject herself.⁷⁰⁵ This signifies that resolution involves one’s will which initiates and mobilizes the understanding rather than the other way around. Moreover, while decision and resolution are interconnected, there is a subtle distinction between them—in decision, an individual decides for one thing as opposed to another, and in resolution, the individual chooses to stick by the decision. As Strand puts it, resolution in the Kierkegaardian sense is rather narrow and denotes choosing an “existential orientation [or] a way of seeing and relating to one’s life as a whole, and then sticking to this choice”.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁰ Fremstedal, R., “Double Movement”, 192.

⁷⁰¹ CI, 317 / SKS 1, 347.

⁷⁰² EUD, 363 / SKS 5, 348f.

⁷⁰³ CUP1, 222 / SKS 7, 203.

⁷⁰⁴ CUP1, 115f / SKS 7, 112.

⁷⁰⁵ CUP1, 116 / SKS 7, 112.

⁷⁰⁶ Strande, N., “Decision/Resolve”, 136.

Kierkegaard provides a metaphor in the *Against Cowardliness* upbuilding discourse, in which he contrasts the difference between speculation and resolution. The imagery interprets the New Testament’s parable about the cost of discipleship.

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”⁷⁰⁷

Kierkegaard approaches the parable in a way that supports his claim about speculation’s unproductiveness and resolution’s activity.⁷⁰⁸ When an individual plans to erect a tower, she first does an approximate estimate and calculates the tower height. However, without any resolution, there would be no tower regardless of that estimate’s perfection or how the tower looked in that individual’s mind. He goes on in his analogy and writes that an individual who manages to overcome her internal battles through resolution eventually builds a higher tower than someone who is “stranger to internal enemies” and “aggressively directs h[er] mind and thought toward humankind in the service of the good and wins thousands”.⁷⁰⁹ Kierkegaard writes that any good resolution presupposes an “acknowledgement of the good” and once the good is acknowledged, the decisive individual then wills to “do everything in one’s power, to serve it to the utmost of one’s capability”.⁷¹⁰ What is the *good* which needs to be acknowledged though? Within the framework of this work, it is the acknowledgement of the good and perfect gift, that is God’s love.

Another way of understanding the saving potential inherent in resolution is by contrasting it with deliberation. In his *The Lord Gave, the Lord Took Away* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard does not reject deliberation altogether as opposed to speculation—deliberation can be beneficial for an individual. Deliberation has the capacity to “penetrate the confused thoughts of [one’s] disquieted heart”, “have its importance for

⁷⁰⁷ Luke 14:28-30, ESV.

⁷⁰⁸ Importantly, the “productivity” inherent in resolution is not to be understood as a quantifiable effort in the Protestant ethic sense, but rather as a metaphorical fruit-bearing process which produces lasting fruit. The delicate meaning of Christian productivity can be also understood through the lenses of thought articulated in action. Climacus writes that deed not carried out is but a possibility or actuality in thought. Similarly, if an individual “think[s] something that someone else has done, therefore think[s] an actuality, then [she] take[s] this given actuality out of actuality and transpose[s] it into possibility”. CUP1, 321 / SKS 7, 292f.

⁷⁰⁹ EUD, 362f / SKS 5, 348.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

[the individual]” as it can become “vivid and present in h[er] soul just when [she] need[s] it”.⁷¹¹ In other words, deliberation can sow in an individual seeds of truth which comes to life in action. Decision is thus an articulation of the truth. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard makes it clear that prolonged deliberation “anesthetize[s] the energy of the act”.⁷¹²

Moreover, Kierkegaard also provides a portrayal of resolution in relation to renunciation of other possibilities. In the *One Who Prays Aright* upbuilding discourse, resolution is described as an act of abdicating all calculations, speculations, probabilities or quest for objective certainty. In a sense, an individual who refuses to fully commit to making a resolution approaches finite certainty instead of infinite certainty. Such an attitude represents an “upside-downness that wants to reap before it sows” and it demands “certainty before it begins”.⁷¹³ As a result, the individual who shies away from making a decisive resolution becomes “trap[ped] in probability, refus[ing] to understand the improbable” and gradually “shrinks from acting”.⁷¹⁴

5.2 Leap into Faith: Faith Versus Doubt

*“[W]here understanding despairs, faith is already present to make the despair properly decisive, lest the movement of faith become a transaction within the haggling territory of the understanding.”*⁷¹⁵

Once the individual *decided* to take the qualitative leap of faith, she moved from the ground of offense into the realm of religiousness. Another way of looking at the transition can be through the lenses of the good and perfect gift: by opening her hands wide open, the individual became ready to receive God’s love as the ultimate gift. This chapter seeks to portray the intricate sphere of Religiousness B into which the subjective individual jumped via *the leap*. Before identifying the distinctives of a Christian life⁷¹⁶, it is important to consider where doubt stands in contrast with Christian faith.

Remember that *the leap* was facilitated by these events⁷¹⁷:

- Feeling oneself a sinner;

⁷¹¹ EUD, 113 / SKS 5, 116.

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ EUD, 381 / SKS 5, 364.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ CUP1, 233 / SKS 7, 213.

⁷¹⁶ Christian life is to be understood as the highest form of existence, i.e. Religiousness B marked with faith.

⁷¹⁷ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

- Being willing to understand the forgiveness of sins;
- Despairing of understanding.

Importantly, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Climacus writes that “where understanding despairs, *faith is already present* [emphasis added by AP] to make the despair properly decisive, lest the movement of faith become a transaction within the haggling territory of the understanding”⁷¹⁸. This quote from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* sheds light on the nature of saving doubt—since salvation is not to be a calculated transaction with God, the individual does *not* know that her self-doubt could potentially result in salvation. When saving doubt intertwined with profound knowledge cancels objective certainty and speculation, it gets rid of understanding. Only when understanding is cancelled, faith is at sight. Thus, faith cannot be analyzed epistemically or speculatively, nor can it be understood as a mere immediacy. On the contrary, Christian faith is a “second immediacy” which transcends and counters reason.⁷¹⁹ After all, in an unpublished sketch, Kierkegaard emphasizes that “doubt is conquered not by the system but by faith”⁷²⁰. It must be emphasized that saving doubt does not belong to the realm of faith as much as false doubt does not—both represent different ways of relating to one doubt with different existential outcomes and the work of the saving doubt ceases prior to *the leap*.

In order to better understand faith in opposition to doubt, some of the key characteristics of doubt will be recapitulated, and the moment of doubt’s termination will be highlighted. Similarly as in chapter 3.2.1 (p. 117), this passage will draw from *Philosophical Fragments* in which Climacus provides an anatomy of doubt and contrasts it with belief. Here, Climacus remarks that in belief there is “no conclusion” but rather “a resolution”—and it is by resolution that “doubt is excluded”.⁷²¹ Thus, “belief is the opposite of doubt”.⁷²² Why? Because doubt and belief do not represent “two kinds of knowledge [...] in continuity with each other”.⁷²³ As opposed to doubt, belief is “an act of freedom” or “an expression of will” rather than knowledge.⁷²⁴ They are what Climacus calls “two different passions”: while belief signifies something “coming into existence”, doubt does

⁷¹⁸ CUP1, 233 / SKS 7, 213.

⁷¹⁹ See also McDonald, W., “Faith”, 68.

⁷²⁰ JP I, 891 (Pap. IV B 13:18) n.d., 1842-43.

⁷²¹ PF, 84 / SKS 4, 283.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ PF, 83 / SKS 4, 282.

not go “beyond immediate sensation and immediate knowledge”, for it does not want to err.⁷²⁵ The possibility of error is a risk that belief is willing to take, for it “wills to believe”⁷²⁶. Therefore, doubt is halted when the believing individual *decides to* restrain herself and hold herself back from any conclusion—same as the Pyrrhonists did via *epoché*—“in the uncertainty of coming into existence”.⁷²⁷ Belief is formed when inquiry is closed; and the closure takes place by *the leap*.⁷²⁸ Notice the shift here: while for the Pyrrhonists, skepticism represented the suspension of judgement⁷²⁹, i.e. belief, by the virtue of the will, faith represents the suspension of disbelief, also by the virtue of the will.⁷³⁰ Moreover, both faith and doubt involve *interest*—as was already mentioned, both are different passions and yet doubt arises of interest and faith is a “personal, infinite, impassioned interestedness”⁷³¹. However, although interest conditions doubt, it does not entail doubt altogether. Both faith and doubt are thus decisions which involve *interest*. Prior to the leap, the individual faced two choices—either *to doubt* or *to believe*—both choices existed as equally viable, and to choose for one option would automatically mean to exclude the other.

What can faith coexist with, then? Based on the above-mentioned qualities of doubt and faith, it can be concluded that within the religious sphere of existence, faith *is not* compatible with:

- Doubt
- Objective certainty
- Disbelief
- Speculation
- Conclusion

Conversely, faith *is* compatible with:

- Objective uncertainty

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ PF, 85 / SKS 4, 284.

⁷²⁸ See also Quanbeck, Z., “Kierkegaard on belief and credence”, 394-412.

⁷²⁹ Climacus calls Ancient skepticism “a withdrawing skepticism” with a reference to *epoché*. See PF, 82 / SKS 4, 281.

⁷³⁰ See also McDonald, W., “Faith”, In *Kierkegaard's Concepts (Vol. 15, Tome 3)*, 70.

⁷³¹ CUP1, 27 / SKS 7, 39.

- Subjective certainty
- Possibility of error
- Resolution
- Interest

This chapter analyzed doubt and faith as explained by Climacus—recall that in his *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the relationship between doubt and faith is depicted in its general “format”. Nonetheless, in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard himself goes further and describes the “content” of doubt versus faith within the framework of its “format”. In *Every Good Gift 2*, he speaks of the good and perfect gift in the context of doubt. Based on his illustrations, it will become even more clear what terminates doubt, and how doubt cannot coexist with faith. As shall be seen, Kierkegaard—under no guise of pseudonymity—understands religiousness as a sphere of existence which excludes doubt though wonder and spiritual judgment. On the contrary, he juxtaposes faith with experience, and with flesh and blood demanding of proof.

5.2.1 Wonder

*“Is not a wonder the archenemy of doubt, with which it is never combined?”*⁷³²

It is clear that doubt and faith cannot coexist with each other. Nonetheless, in *Every Good Gift 2*, Kierkegaard pinpoints wonder as another phenomenon which is an inherent mark of faith, and which is non-compatible with doubt. As shall be seen, wonder is a positive principle which in its form closely corresponds with self-annihilation and follows *after* the moment when an individual becomes “nothing at all”⁷³³.

The term “wonder” is used throughout Kierkegaard’s authorship as *Vidunderet* (“the wonder”, also “the marvel”, “amazement”) and *Beundring* (also *Forundring*, “a wonder” or “an admiration”).⁷³⁴ Overall, it can be concluded that the latter (*Beundring*) is a passion connected with the former (*Vidunderet*).⁷³⁵ Importantly, both of the terms appear in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, and both illuminate their relevance in the realm of faith.

⁷³² EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

⁷³³ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

⁷³⁴ Wyllie, R., “Wonder”, 259-60.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*

First, “the wonder”, i.e. *Vidunderet*, appears in *Every Good Gift 2*, where Kierkegaard places it in direct opposition to doubt and calls the wonder “the archenemy of doubt”⁷³⁶. As opposed to the self-annihilating process which can be carried out by an individual herself, the wonder represents a sudden internal state which transcends one’s abilities and effort. To put it differently, the wonder is stirred by something *external*, but it manifests itself as an *internal* change within the individual. Wyllie depicts the wonder as a “composite intuition”, one of the forms being the intuition of the God-man paradox, which composes of a) the intuition of the God-man, and b) a second intuition that a), i.e. the intuition of the God-man, originated in an *external*, divine, source beyond human reason and imagination.⁷³⁷ It is exactly b) which constitutes the wonder, and a) arises of b).⁷³⁸ Moreover, Kierkegaard makes it clear that the wonder cannot be understood as an evidence of Christianity’s validity because it is doubt that always requests proof or an identifying sign. Doubt cannot be halted “in the way that doubt demands”, and wonder would by no means “fight doubt with its own weapons”, meaning that wonder does not stop doubt via a proof.⁷³⁹

As was already mentioned, the wonder (*Vidunderet*) does not express itself outwardly but rather inwardly as a passion⁷⁴⁰—one of them⁷⁴¹ being the passion of a wonder (*Beundring*, *Forundring*⁷⁴²). Kierkegaard’s spokesman A uses the term *Beundring* to express his admiration for Mozart’s music⁷⁴³ but also with regard to philosophy. Regarding the “format” of wonder, Climacus connects wonder with the starting point of knowledge with respect to Greek philosophy and calls it a positive principle, for it does not deduce any historical consequence.

⁷³⁶ EUD, 311 / SKS 5, 304.

⁷³⁷ Wyllie, R., “Wonder”, 261.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁹ EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

⁷⁴⁰ “The historian once again stands beside the past, stirred by the passion that is the passionate sense for coming into existence, that is, wonder [Beundring].” PF, 80 / SKS 4, 279f.

⁷⁴¹ Other passions of the wonder may be also guilt and anxiety. See Wyllie, R., “Wonder”, 261.

⁷⁴² In the *Philosophical Fragments* and partially in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, the commentators equate the two Danish words *Beundring* and *Forundring* as synonymous, arguing that Kierkegaard conflated them with a single word “wonder”, same as the Latin term *admiratio* can be understood both as “admiration” and “wonder”. Therefore, this chapter will treat *Beundring* and *Forundring* as “wonder”. See Notes to Page 80 in PF, 310 and Notes to Pages 207-26 in EUD, 520.

⁷⁴³ “From the moment my soul was first astounded by Mozart’s music and humbly bowed in admiration [Beundring, added by AP]”. EO1, 47 / SKS 2, 55.

“To the best of his knowledge, the Greeks taught that philosophy begins with wonder [Forundring]. [...] Wonder is plainly an immediate category and involves no reflection upon itself.”⁷⁴⁴

He then contrasts wonder with doubt.

“Doubt, on the other hand, is a reflection-category.”⁷⁴⁵

As such, doubt is a negative principle which breaks off continuity, for it “polemic[izes] against what went before”^{746, 747}

In terms of the “content” of wonder, the *Patience in Expectancy* upbuilding discourse portrays the unwillingness to self-annihilate as something that ultimately prevents one from wonder which is an underlying aspect of faith. Thus, faith is marked with wonder which absolute object⁷⁴⁸ is the God-man.

“If, however, a person knew how to make h[er]self truly what [s]he truly is—nothing—knew how to set the seal of patience on what [s]he had understood—ah, then h[er] life, whether [s]he is the greatest or the lowliest, would even today be a joyful surprise and be filled with blessed wonder and would be that throughout all h[er] days, because there is truly only one eternal object of wonder—that is God—and only one possible hindrance to wonder—and that is a person when [s]he h[er]self wants to be something.”⁷⁴⁹

When the individual is *willing to* become nothing at all and absolutely needs God, she allows wonder to come forth by making the God-man paradox the one and only object of her admiration. Therefore, the God-man is the originator of the *sudden* wonder which stirs an internal passion of a wonder in an individual. The moment of wonder marks the distinct realm of faith—after all, Climacus calls faith “itself a wonder”⁷⁵⁰ and vice versa, he states that “wonder is only for faith”⁷⁵¹.

⁷⁴⁴ JC, 145 / SKS 15, 38.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Moreover, in the *Concept of Anxiety*, Vigilius Haufniensis rejects Descartes’ assertion that wonder [Forundring] in the sense of *admiratio* represents “the only passion of the soul that has no opposite”. CA, 146 / SKS 4, 445, See also JP 1, 735 (Pap. IV B 13:23) n.d., 1842-43. Quite the contrary, it is not only doubt that cannot coexist with wonder—Haufniensis proposes that envy opposes wonder. CA, 146 / SKS 4, 445.

⁷⁴⁸ In *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus compares two possible absolute objects of wonder in relation to history: those in Greek philosophy and the God-Man.

⁷⁴⁹ EUD, 226 / SKS 5, 224.

⁷⁵⁰ PF, 65 / SKS 4, 267.

⁷⁵¹ PF, 93 / SKS 4, 290f.

5.2.2 Flesh and Blood

*“Are not flesh and blood the confidants of doubt, with whom it continually consults?”*⁷⁵²

When Kierkegaard speaks of “flesh and blood” as doubt’s confidants, he refers to Galatians 1:16, in which apostle Paul describes his conversion as a result of his spiritual encounter with the God-man who instructed him to go preach to the Gentiles. In this specific verse Paul writes that he “did not immediately confer with flesh and blood”⁷⁵³. While it may seem that the term “flesh and blood” solely signifies the dualistic nature of an individual consisting of spirit and body, while the body should not be trusted, the expression has a deeper meaning. In fact, Paul uses a distinct Greek term *sarx* (σάρξ) for “body”, which resembles the word *soma* (σῶμα), and can sometimes be used interchangeably. Nonetheless, they still slightly differ both in their meaning and accents. While both *sarx* and *soma* denote “mortal body” in itself, *soma* means the outer biological appearance of a human being or an animal, *sarx* indicates mortality in a theological sense. Within the context of Paul’s epistles, *sarx* contains the meaning of a finite body corrupted by the nature of sin, targeted against God, and preventing one from living a full Christian life. Therefore, when the New Testament speaks about the resurrection of the body, it is never a resurrection of the *sarx*.⁷⁵⁴ The connotation “flesh and blood” depicts an unspiritual individual gripped by the post-fall sin, trapped in the limitations of her earthly existence. With respect to this chapter, the term represents the act of speculation and mistrust—*immediately conferring* with flesh and blood. In fact, even Kierkegaard’s spokesman Haufniensis refers to flesh and blood when he writes that “the more relaxed anxiety becomes, the more it signifies that the consequence of sin has entered the individual in *succum et sanguinem* [emphasis added by AP] and that sin has obtained a domicile in individuality”.⁷⁵⁵

How does “flesh and blood” connect to doubt and is thus incompatible with faith? Kierkegaard goes on to say that an individual who confers with flesh and blood always demands some kind of confirmation, or an “identifying sign” that the good and perfect gift “actually did come from above”.⁷⁵⁶ In other words, the individual searches for

⁷⁵² EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

⁷⁵³ Galatians 1:16, NKJV.

⁷⁵⁴ Novotný, A., “Tělo”, in *Biblický slovník*, 1089-92.

⁷⁵⁵ CA, 113f / SKS 4, 416.

⁷⁵⁶ EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

objective certainty—proof, or guarantee of sorts—but she looks for it in the wrong sphere. For Kierkegaard, certainty does not become feasible by obtaining a proof, because proof does not ensure *positive self-knowledge* and has no validity in the realm of subjectivity whatsoever. Consulting the utmost subjective matter, i.e. the good and perfect gift, objectively with *sarx* yields only a hypothesis or an illusion, but most of all it is nothing but a contradiction. On the contrary, certainty is a subjective matter established personally by the individual.⁷⁵⁷ Had apostle Paul consulted his revelation with “flesh and blood”, it would only reveal how uncertain he was—the fact that an individual looks for a confirmation shows the absence of certainty. Within the realm of faith, it is subjectivity that produces certainty. The fact that Paul opted out of speculating about the revelation meant that he *chose to disregard* the objective uncertainty. In an unpublished sketch, Kierkegaard jotted down the progression of doubt: he begins with writing that in ignorance one does not doubt.⁷⁵⁸ He then continues with uncertainty: for Kierkegaard, uncertainty means that the individual “leave[s] the issue alone”.⁷⁵⁹ However, he concludes that doubt is a “higher element of uncertainty” in which an individual “determine[s] [her] relation to the thing”, and he adds that one does not “determine it in uncertainty”.⁷⁶⁰ This correlates with the notion that one’s doubting stems from a high degree of uncertainty—otherwise that individual would not be looking for confirmation, proof or an identifying sign.

5.2.3 Spiritual Judgement

“Does the fruit of the knowledge here again seem so delectable that instead of making a spiritual judgment you demand an identifying sign from the good and the perfect, a proof that it actually did come from above?”⁷⁶¹

Unlike the futile search for objective proof in the realm of subjectivity, Kierkegaard holds that true religiousness involves a spiritual judgement which stands contrary to “demand[ing] an identifying sign”⁷⁶². While the translation by Howard and Edna Hong uses the words “spiritual judgement”, the original Danish version contains the term *at*

⁷⁵⁷ This is aligned with Carvalhais de Oliveira’s points made in her contributing paper on “Certainty”. See Carvalhais de Oliveira, S., “Certainty”.

⁷⁵⁸ Pap. IV B 10:18 n.d., 1842-43.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

*dømme aandeligen*⁷⁶³ which also translates as “judging for oneself”. Thus, the core of a spiritual judgement lies in an individual’s resolution which terminates reflection and speculation. In *Every Good Gift 2*, Kierkegaard writes that doubt is characteristic for its “busy deliberation” which, if not stopped, “is never finished”.⁷⁶⁴ However, it *must* be terminated “before the single individual can be what the apostle calls a first fruit of creation”.⁷⁶⁵ Spiritual judgement represents a willful act which is made in freedom—in it, the inherent passion of belief comes to life. As was already mentioned, belief signals “coming into existence”⁷⁶⁶. Importantly, this corresponds with Kierkegaard’s implicit reference to James 1:18. This passage follows the previous two verses in which the apostle first insists that the recipients of his epistle are not deceived⁷⁶⁷ and then he proceeds to speak about every good and perfect gift⁷⁶⁸.

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”⁷⁶⁹

With regard to spiritual judgement, there are two aspects in which this verse can illuminate the nature of faith. First, the word “will” in the opening statement “of his own will” indicates what Liddell and Scott identify as *βούλομαι* (transliterated as *boulomai*) which—along with the notion of “wanting to” or “intending to”—carries the idea of counselling, i.e. “to take counsel with oneself” and “to determine or resolve after deliberation”.⁷⁷⁰ Richison interprets this section of the verse in a similar fashion when he notes that God “conferred⁷⁷¹ with Himself about what he would do if mankind fell into sin [...] he counseled Himself, resulting in a decision to regenerate” and to “give second birth”⁷⁷² to “those who believe in His Son”.⁷⁷³ This is the same essence of spiritual judgment: a willful act which *gives birth* to new existence. Hence spiritual judgement marks the realm of faith which—unlike doubt—brings forth “coming into

⁷⁶³ SKS 5, 138.

⁷⁶⁴ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ PF, 84 / SKS 4, 282f.

⁷⁶⁷ James, 1:16.

⁷⁶⁸ James, 1:17.

⁷⁶⁹ James 1:18, ESV.

⁷⁷⁰ Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 325.

⁷⁷¹ Notice how God confers with himself—within the context of this section, the act can be understood in contrast with the previous point about “flesh and blood” with which a believer should never confer.

⁷⁷² The literal meaning of the phrasal verb “bring forth” in koine Greek is “to give birth”. The same connotation of “bringing someone out of the womb” is used only a few verses prior to this one (James 1:15, ESV) where James writes that “sin when it is fully grown brings forth death”. Verse 18 thus stands as a metaphorical juxtaposition to verse 15 with a rhetorical aim of positing the fruits of God versus sin.

⁷⁷³ Richison, G., *The Epistle of James*, 29.

existence”⁷⁷⁴.⁷⁷⁵ Kierkegaard was well aware of this as he emphasized in *Every Good Gift 2* that “God did it [brought us forth by the word of truth, added by AP] by himself and according to his own counsel”, he did not make “some pact with a human being that he would consult with h[er]”.⁷⁷⁶ This statement counters the previously discussed conferring with one’s flesh and blood which is deceitful.

Second, the term “firstfruits of his creatures”—or “first fruit of creation” as used in *Every Good Gift 2*—implies what Kierkegaard calls “a new order of things”.⁷⁷⁷ It was already foreshadowed that an individual can become the first fruit of creation *only after* doubt is terminated and its speculation broken off.⁷⁷⁸ The reordering relates back to Genesis 1—whereas in the “old order of things” God created Adam and Eve last, the epistle of James speaks of a new order in which an individual can become the first creation. Kierkegaard calls this a “new beginning” which by no means can be achieved “by the continued influx of doubt”.⁷⁷⁹ Why? Because there could never be “a beginning that would begin with something other than doubt”.⁷⁸⁰ After all, the old order of things in which Adam and Eve were created last, doubt sought to “fathom everything that had gone before”⁷⁸¹. Thus, when an individual is brought forth as the first fruit of creation, there is “no intermediary between God and [her]self”⁷⁸². Kierkegaard calls this a “condition” which cannot be self-given as it is a gift from God *of his own will*.

Thus, spiritual judgement represents a resolute act by which it puts an end to doubt’s vicious cycle and creates new beginning. The new birth of a Christian is a gift given to the individual by God according to his own will, i.e. his own decision after having conferred with himself. If doubt entailed a high level of uncertainty during the quest for certainty, then it is spiritual judgement that enables the individual to attain certainty for herself. Moreover, certainty comes to life along with the spiritual judgement, one *becomes* certain through action—it is not the other way around that certainty would precede

⁷⁷⁴ PF, 84 / SKS 4, 282f.

⁷⁷⁵ The aspect of “coming into existence” within the context of James 1:18 can be also linked to “word” for which James used the term λόγος (lógos). It is the same word through which God created the world according to the gospel of John. In this sense, λόγος thus stands for Christ who became flesh from word and is thus an articulation of God’s word.

⁷⁷⁶ EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 139.

⁷⁷⁷ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 139.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ EUD, 136f / SKS 5, 139.

⁷⁸² Ibid.

action.⁷⁸³ Through spiritual judgement marked with action, subjectivity gains a very concrete—not at all abstract—form.

5.2.4 Experience

“Should it be an experience? Is not doubt the very unrest that makes the life of experience unstable so that it never finds peace or takes a rest, is never finished with observing, and even if it ever did that would never find rest?”⁷⁸⁴

The next phenomenon which cannot coexist with faith is experience (*Erfaring* in Danish) which is discussed in *Every Good Gift 2*, but also in *The Expectancy of Faith* and *The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation* upbuilding discourses. In the *Expectancy of Faith*, Kierkegaard depicts experience as a “double-tongued friend who says one thing now and something else later”⁷⁸⁵ and a “deceitful guide”⁷⁸⁶, but also as something which “engendered doubt”⁷⁸⁷ and thus contains “dubious wisdom”⁷⁸⁸. *The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation* upbuilding discourse portrays experience as being in the “service of temporality”⁷⁸⁹. In essence, experience can be understood as the antithesis of theoretical knowledge, and it connects to practical knowledge in one’s life. However, experience cannot be relied upon when dealing with matters of faith and religiousness. Thus, experience is closely related to doubt and as shall be seen, it approaches the future in an entirely different way than faith.

First, Kierkegaard provides his exposition of experience in relation to *expectancy* and contrasts it with faith. Both faith and experience represent a way of relating to the future. While Kierkegaard holds that struggling with the future is “the most ennobling”⁷⁹⁰, and conquering the future brings about “strong and sound life”⁷⁹¹ despite the everchanging circumstances, there is a danger that the individual may attempt to turn the struggle with the future into something present and *particular*. In other words, struggling with the present represents a battle with “a particular thing against which [the individual, added by AP] can use h[er] total energy”⁷⁹²—nonetheless, the future is far from anything

⁷⁸³ Carvalhais de Oliveira, S., “Certainty”, 178.

⁷⁸⁴ EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

⁷⁸⁵ EUD, 19 / SKS 5, 28.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ EUD, 21 / SKS 5, 30.

⁷⁸⁸ EUD, 19f / SKS 5, 29.

⁷⁸⁹ EUD, 260 / SKS 5, 256.

⁷⁹⁰ EUD, 17 / SKS 5, 27.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

particular. Quite the contrary, struggling with the future is much more difficult, as it demands fighting against one's own self—the future “borrows its power from [the individual, added by AP]”.⁷⁹³ Kierkegaard makes it clear that experience cannot conquer the future because it always turns the future into something particular. Its weapons are guessing, conjecture, and inference. Moreover, these are all accompanied by corresponding feelings: guessing—fear, conjecture—anxiety, inference—uneasiness.⁷⁹⁴

When facing the future, the individual must overcome the changeable in the same fashion as the *deeper self* convinced the *first self* with its *eternal claim* to view the everchanging exterior as dubious. Kierkegaard likens this to the parable of a sailor navigating a turbulent sea, where unpredictable waves symbolize the ever-changing conditions of life. The sailor gazes at the night sky, using the stars as navigational guides, for their positions remain constant and have served as reliable landmarks for generations. The changeable and the future can be conquered only through the lens of the eternal.⁷⁹⁵ This is because future springs from the ground of the eternal and it is via the eternal that future can be grasped. The eternal is faith—Kierkegaard describes faith as “the eternal power in a human being”⁷⁹⁶. As opposed to experience, which turns the future into particularity, the believer “is finished with the future before [s]he begins with the present”⁷⁹⁷, as it expects future expectant of victory. Such an attitude enables the individual not to be occupied with the future in the present, as it has already been conquered. Such an expectant victory only strengthens the individual “for the present work”⁷⁹⁸. Nonetheless, the expectancy of faith and victory is not to be understood naïvely—as was already foreshadowed, the future borrows its power from the individual. As the future is formed *by* the individual, she also “forms it entirely as [s]he herself is formed”⁷⁹⁹. Therefore, faith is at work in the present, as the present has the power to influence the future. Importantly, faith is not something that the individual can generate on her own—faith is still a gift which comes *to* the individual—that is also why Kierkegaard writes that the individual can expect victory in all spiritual battles “with the help of faith”⁸⁰⁰.

⁷⁹³ EUD, 18 / SKS 5, 27.

⁷⁹⁴ EUD, 19 / SKS 5, 28.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ EUD, 19 / SKS 5, 28f.

⁷⁹⁹ EUD, 20 / SKS 5, 29.

⁸⁰⁰ EUD, 21 / SKS 5, 30.

Second, while faith “approves of this expectancy with its whole heart”⁸⁰¹, experience never engages completely. Kierkegaard gives the example of an experienced man who assesses life with its pros and cons, and who is always prepared for a certain level of unhappiness in happiness, and for a certain level of happiness in unhappiness.⁸⁰² The problem of experience lies in that the individual uses the phrase “to a certain degree”, which denotes the reluctance of approaching anything *absolutely* or giving up anything *absolutely*.⁸⁰³ The explanation for why experience refuses to engage completely can be found in *The Expectancy of Eternal Salvation* upbuilding discourse, which describes experience as “always having a goal [Maal] by which it measures [maale]”—more specifically, it is skilled at “measur[ing] out [udmaale] the particular”, which provides a sense of certainty for the individual, and “from the certain it knows how to calculate the uncertain”.⁸⁰⁴ In such a way, experience belongs “totally to temporality” which is a paradox as it wants to engage only to a certain degree and it only makes “rough estimate[s]”.⁸⁰⁵ On the one hand, an experienced individual may face turbulent changes or sudden events which can surpass the extent of experience resulting from that estimate being fundamentally shook. On the other hand, an experienced individual’s life may be peaceful without any major difficulties which would disturb her estimates, but she would not live for anything “higher in life” and she would still remain “a child of temporality for whom the eternal does not exist”.⁸⁰⁶ Conversely, a faithful individual holds onto one goal [Maal] and one criterion [Maalestok] only—that is the expectancy in one’s soul—which always remains valid and “by means of this goal and this criterion [s]he will always understand [her]self in temporality”⁸⁰⁷. In other words, faith holds onto one and only *eternal* goal which helps her know herself *in temporality*.

⁸⁰¹ EUD, 20 / SKS 5, 29.

⁸⁰² EUD, 20f / SKS 5, 29.

⁸⁰³ Here, Kierkegaard gives an example of the New Testament’s parable about the “rich young ruler” (Mark 10:17-31, Matthew 19:16-30) who, although keen on inheriting eternal life, was instructed by Jesus to go and give *all* his wealth and property to the poor, which made him sorrowful.

⁸⁰⁴ EUD, 260, SKS 5, 256.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁶ EUD, 260, SKS 5, 257.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

5.3 Concluding Thoughts on the Leap of Faith

With respect to the intricacy of faith already discussed at the beginning of chapter 5.2, the aforementioned list of compatibles and non-compatibles with faith can be amended as follows.

Faith *is not* compatible with:

- Doubt
- Objective certainty
- Disbelief
- Speculation
- Conclusion
- Experience
- Flesh and blood

Conversely, faith *is* compatible with:

- Objective uncertainty
- Subjective certainty
- Possibility of error
- Resolution
- Interest
- Spiritual judgement
- Wonder

Once the individual uses doubt in the right way and targets it towards herself, she becomes nothing at all, in absolute need of God, despairing of understanding. This movement allows her to disarm doubt or—in Kierkegaard’s words—“die to doubt as the perfect comes to [her]”⁸⁰⁸. Whereas doubt can be halted by one’s own will, faith is a gift from God because it comes *to* the individual and it cannot be earned by effort. Doubt and faith cannot coexist with each other for they have opposite goals: doubt’s objective is certainty, but faith’s objective is the God-man. Thus, prior to *the leap*, the individual chooses either faith at the expense of doubt, or doubt at the expense of faith.

⁸⁰⁸ EUD, 136 / SKS 5, 138.

The decision for faith has a resolute character. Resolution inherent in *the leap of faith* is marked with action—not a mindless one, but as a result of an absolute acknowledgement of the good and perfect gift, i.e. God’s love. The resolution is deeply subjective and takes place in time, but it nonetheless relates to the eternal and is thus absolute. As such, the resolution is *willed*, and it represents an essential prerequisite for faith. Moreover, the decisive individual has to will the acknowledged good to the utmost of her capacity, it cannot be willed only to a certain degree, which is the experience’s expertise.

The leap is taken into the realm of faith, or religiousness, which requires that the individual leaves behind any search for objective certainty, disbelief, speculation demanding of proofs, and conclusion. In addition, it was demonstrated that faith cannot tolerate conferring with flesh and blood, or *sarx*, stemming from mistrust, but also a life of experience which assesses and engages in everything only to a certain degree. Faith, on the contrary, demands from an individual absolute engagement and acceptance of uncertainty. Moreover, the realm of faith is filled with wonder which represents a sudden change *within* an individual triggered by an external phenomenon. Wonder and faith thus surpass the individual’s abilities. Faith arrives only after the individual makes a spiritual judgment which can terminate doubt and give birth to a new existence. By making a spiritual judgment, the individual mirrors God in willing—for God conferred with himself and decided according to his own will to bring the individual forth to a new existence. This aspect of faith supports the notion of saving doubt leading the individual—with her absolute cooperation—to a place where she is ready to correspond to God. The effort is made up until that point, but the rest is the work of faith. That is why faith cannot be earned, it can only be received from the outside.

To conclude, this chapter sought to portray the moment of *the leap* from the place of complete self-annihilation—after the work saving doubt comes to an end—into the intricate sphere of faith and contrast it with doubt. The next chapter will attempt to wrestle with the question of what happens *after* one takes the leap. Is the individual suddenly safe from the danger of doubt or does doubt ceases to exist altogether? Does faith grant one the luxury of not having to make any difficult decisions? As shall be seen, the believer has to relate to the possibility of doubt even after *the leap*, not because doubt would exist within the sphere of faith—they are still two completely opposite passions—but because faith is an unfinished process in which one still chooses between believing or doubting.

6. FAITH: FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

While faith excludes doubt, it does not mean that the individual will never have to relate to doubt anymore. Quite the contrary—faith is an unfinished process during which one is *becoming Christian* or *becoming oneself*. In his *Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard’s spokesman Anti-Climacus works out a “formula that describes the state of the self when despair [and doubt, added by AP] is completely rooted out” as “relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it”.⁸⁰⁹ Thus, true Christian selfhood is described as spirit and willing to be oneself as spirit demands faith—in order to will to be oneself as spirit, the individual must let go of worldly bonds, i.e. temporality.⁸¹⁰ This can be attained only by concentrating on eternity in faith’s resoluteness. That is also why becoming contemporary with Christ is an important element of faith—this brings joy and gives hope to the individual at all times for the God-man is always near and available as an object of faith worthy of following and imitation.⁸¹¹

Therefore, this final chapter seeks to outline what happens after the leap of faith. On the one hand, the individual’s existence dramatically changes during the moment of *metanoia*, when one repents and believes and thus becomes a new creation. On the other hand, the individual must navigate a new Christian life which still consists of decision-making and relating to the possibility of offense. As will emerge from the following interpretation, Kierkegaard holds that Religiousness B presents the Christian with the task of what apostle Paul calls “keeping [one’s] faith” or fighting “the good fight”.⁸¹² The good fight requires the renewal of one’s resolution, upholding contradictions, keeping one’s eyes on God, and imitating Christ.

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While faith halts doubt, Religiousness B presupposes that the individual has fought through doubt and experienced it in its utmost capacity and intensity. The individual had undergone the “exhausting” and “very terrible” struggle of despair during which she

⁸⁰⁹ SUD, 14 / SKS 11, 130.

⁸¹⁰ McDonald, W., “Faith”, 71.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² 2 Timothy 4:7, ESV.

targeted the doubt against herself and then she ventured into faith.⁸¹³ While faith is an undeserved gift, the process of moving *through* doubt in all its suffering required an act of will of the individual. As such, faith is not possible without a completed doubt—completed in the sense that doubt cannot be experienced only partially, it must involve the individual and her existence as a whole. Thus, one aspect of faith is to *undergo* the drastic transformation within the double-movement involving decision, but the next aspect, if not task, is to faithfully *persevere* in the resolution made and be willing to constantly renew it. This is the very essence of the good fight—to hold onto one’s resolution and constantly renew the once-already-made decision. Remember the subtle difference between decision and resolution: while in decision, the individual chooses one thing over another, resolution signifies an existential orientation in which one sticks to the decision made.

The very term “good fight” stems from Paul’s second epistle to Timothy, in which he writes, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”⁸¹⁴ Kierkegaard was very much inspired by the thought of fighting the good fight and borrowed Paul’s words in various places in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. In the *Thorn in the Flesh* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard describes the good fight as the “hardest suffering” belonging to “the highest life”.⁸¹⁵ Moreover, in the *He Must Increase; I Must Decrease* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard makes it clear that “every human being ought to fight the good fight” and “no one is shut out [from it]”.⁸¹⁶ Nonetheless, what kind of fight would be called *good* if it only consisted of suffering? The fight should not be exhausting as the struggle with doubt. On the contrary, Kierkegaard writes that during the good fight which is “glorious”⁸¹⁷, “comfort will surely come”⁸¹⁸, and the individual even experiences “the beautiful period in which the sun stops its course, stands still, and still does not set”⁸¹⁹. In the last description of the good fight, Kierkegaard references Joshua 10:13⁸²⁰, an Old Testament passage capturing the unmatched miracle

⁸¹³ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301f.

⁸¹⁴ 2 Timothy 4:7; ESV.

⁸¹⁵ EUD, 346 / SKS 5, 333.

⁸¹⁶ EUD, 280 / SKS 5, 273f.

⁸¹⁷ EUD, 280 / SKS 5, 274.

⁸¹⁸ EUD, 346 / SKS 5, 333.

⁸¹⁹ EUD, 280 / SKS 5, 273.

⁸²⁰ “‘Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’ And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.” (Joshua 10:13; ESV)

in the Valley of Aijalon following after Joshua's bold request to prolong the day by preventing the sun from setting so that the Israelites could gain more time to defeat the Canaanites before the night would set in. This parallel story uncovers a crucial aspect of the good fight—the Old Testament contains a passage commenting on the miracle experienced by Joshua and the Israelites. It says, “[t]here has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for *the Lord fought for Israel* [emphasis added by AP]”.⁸²¹ Regarding this, it is fascinating that the name for Israel etymologically consist of *sara* (meaning “he fought”) and *El* (meaning “God”). Traditionally, there are two ways of translating the name Israel: either “he strives with God” or “God strives”.⁸²² The story of Joshua and the Israelites conquering the Canaanites as a result of God fighting on their behalf demonstrates that the good fight does not necessarily have to imply that the individual is left alone to persevere in the resolution of faith—after all, this would suggest that in faith, the individual must be capable and strong. On the contrary, the good fight combines one's act of will to believe, while at the same time resting in God's power who alleviates the yoke of the fight and makes her fight seem light.

6.1 Renewal of Resolution

“If making a resolution is understood in this way to be the constant renewal of a crucial resolution (an apparent contradiction akin to reminding someone to act as if this were the last day of his life and then pointing out that a long life lies ahead of him), then it remains fixed that resolution is a saving means.”⁸²³

In Christian faith, offense has to be constantly present as a possibility—it exists as what McDonald calls “a negative criterion against which one chooses to renew one's faith in Christ”.⁸²⁴ As such, the possibility of offense still revolves around the God-man paradox that the eternal God would become incarnate in time—one is either offended *or* believes. First, the God-man is the ultimate object of faith and second, in Religiousness B the individual becomes contemporary with Christ. Therefore, faith consists of moments which represent the union of the temporal and the eternal. It is only in these moments that genuine resolutions are made. Moreover, the resolution is made by an act of will—on the one hand, the will exhibits freedom and spontaneity, but on the other hand, there must be

⁸²¹ Joshua 10:14; ESV.

⁸²² Novotný, A. “Izrael”, in *Biblický slovník*, 257.

⁸²³ EUD, 352 / SKS 5, 339.

⁸²⁴ McDonald, W., “Faith”, 72.

an external criterion which conditions the truth, and which challenges the individual to engage in the resolution. Considering this, only when the individual lets go of her self-sufficiency and self-reliance can she become attentive to the eternal. In the same way, only when the eternal truth-criterion is posited in time by God is the individual able to relate to the possibility of offence and take the leap of faith in the very moment.⁸²⁵ Importantly, Kierkegaard holds that the individual is not isolated in the necessity of making the decision. Rather—and that is the beauty and grace of faith—the individual is aided by God to will the eternal and her leap of faith is also sustained by God. True resolve thus belongs to Religiousness B and implies the synthesis between temporality and eternity, but also freedom and necessity. Therefore, the Christian task is to stay resolute in spirit, but at the same time God is present in every moment, ready to help the individual to will the eternal, if she lets him.

In the *One Who Prays Aright* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard writes that by making a “decisive resolution”, one accepts God’s invitation to undergo a “daring venture in which [she] ventures way out and loses sight of all shrewdness and probability” and “takes leave of h[er] senses or at least of all h[er] worldly mode of thinking”.⁸²⁶ In addition to this, Kierkegaard points out in his *Against Cowardliness* upbuilding discourse that while it is important to constantly *renew* the resolution, in the long run, the goal is to *persevere* in making the resolution. It would be foolish to think that “on the battle day of resolution”, everything is won and decided once and for all.⁸²⁷ While Kierkegaard does not diminish the importance of making a decision which signifies a “good and glorious beginning”, it should not however overshadow the importance of “coming into stride at the beginning” and “go[ing] on”.⁸²⁸ The faithful constant renewal of the decisive resolution thus demands—but also produces—steadfastness. Moreover, while being authentic and consistent in the repetitive moments of resolution may seem marginal or not as grandiose, Kierkegaard holds this quality in high esteem. He contends that “even the person who walks his way with firm steps nevertheless does not walk with a hero's pace”.⁸²⁹

However, Kierkegaard reminds his readers in the *One Who Prays Aright* upbuilding discourse that faith is a deeply subjective sphere which will not—and cannot—look the

⁸²⁵ See also McDonald, W., “Moment”, 177-8.

⁸²⁶ EUD, 380 / SKS 5, 363.

⁸²⁷ EUD, 351 / SKS 5, 338.

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

same for everyone. The inwardness of faith plays itself out even in the resolution of faith—Kierkegaard emphasizes that once the individual “makes the eternal resolution and in it grasps the eternal, then [s]he owes no one anything”.⁸³⁰ What he means by this is that no individual can mediate or translate the eternal resolution to another individual, for its essence is true for the individual alone and thus is unconveyable. In the same way, once the individual makes or renews the resolution, it is *resolute*, and no one can “take it from h[er]”.⁸³¹

To conclude, Christian faith demands obedience and perseverance in the repeated moments of having to renew one’s resolution and thus it represents a struggle—the good fight. However, remember that same as the pain of self-annihilation eventually uplifts the individual, so should the difficult struggle of being persistent in the renewal of resolution be edifying and gladden the individual. Kierkegaard emphasizes this aspect of faith in the *Against Cowardliness* upbuilding discourse, where he describes a Christian individual whose “step was weak, h[er] gait vacillating” and at times she is “going backward instead of forward”.⁸³² However, he highlights the importance and the power of resolution—“resolution helped h[er] again, little by little” and “[s]he still exhorted h[er]self with a beautiful saying.”⁸³³ Indeed, the following saying well defines not only the temporal-eternal synthesis of the Christian self, but also the aspect of faith which consists of duty for the individual on the one hand, and graceful help from God which hurries to the individual on the other hand.

“Do what you can for God, and he will do for you what you cannot do.”⁸³⁴

Kierkegaard notes that even though the individual’s resolution may “seem to be of humble origin, a cripple with that highborn resolution”, the renewal of one’s resolution has the capacity to carry the individual through her battle.⁸³⁵

6.2 Upholding Contradictions

“This self-contradiction is again expressed in the soul’s being stronger than the world through its weakness, in its being weaker than God through its strength, in its

⁸³⁰ EUD, 382 / SKS 5, 365.

⁸³¹ Ibid.

⁸³² EUD, 352 / SKS 5, 339.

⁸³³ Ibid.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

inability to gain anything but itself unless it wants to be deceived, and in its being able to gain itself only by losing itself.”⁸³⁶

Faith is in itself paradoxical, as its object is the God-man, but also as it stands contrary to reason and objective certainty. Nonetheless, in the *To Gain One’s Soul in Patience* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard also suggests that the soul—understood as one’s existential relation to the synthesis as a whole—“is the contradiction of the temporal and the eternal”.⁸³⁷ Importantly, within the context of one’s *becoming of Christian*, the contradictory nature of one’s soul plays itself out even in the fact that one’s soul can be both *possessed* and *gained* at the same time. Moreover, “it can be possessed only in such a way that it is gained and gained in such a way that it is possessed”.⁸³⁸ Kierkegaard exemplifies this principle on the imagery of an individual who is born into this world as a naked infant possessing nothing—but still, “in the nakedness of h[er] soul”⁸³⁹, she possesses her soul. The contradiction manifests in that the individual possesses her soul as something that is yet to be gained. However, the soul is not to be found outside of the individual but rather on the inside. Eventually, the eternal inherent in the synthesis is not something to be possessed or gained but rather something already possessed that cannot be gained or lost. It is the internal which presents the possibility of losing or gaining one’s soul and as opposed to the eternal, it is a self-contradiction. Kierkegaard poses a question which helps illuminate the question of possessing and gaining one’s soul, “[W]hose possession, then, is h[er] soul?”.⁸⁴⁰ Kierkegaard answers that it is God who is the possessor of one’s soul, for he possesses it as “legitimate property”, but at the same time he does not possess it “in such a way that the person h[er]self cannot gain it as her legitimate possession”.⁸⁴¹ Therefore, one’s soul is in contradiction and a “self-contradiction between the external and the internal, the temporal and the eternal”.⁸⁴²

“[The soul] is to be possessed and gained at the same time, it belongs to the world as its illegitimate possession; it belongs to God as his legitimate possession; it belongs to the person himself as his possession, that is, as a possession that is to be gained.”⁸⁴³

⁸³⁶ EUD, 172 / SKS 5, 173.

⁸³⁷ EUD, 163 / SKS 5, 163.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰ EUD, 166 / SKS 5, 165.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ EUD, 166f / SKS 5, 165.

Therefore, an individual can truly possess one's soul only by surrendering it to God, although this is a contradiction which implies that she does not possess it, even though she does possess it. Finally, Kierkegaard summarizes that one gains her soul "from God, away from the world, through h[er]self".⁸⁴⁴

There is another level to the contradictory nature of Christian faith: the individual's task is to practice the relation to one's absolute τέλος so that she can continuously have it within herself while "continuing in the relative objective of existence".⁸⁴⁵ The existing individual "has h[er] absolute orientation toward the absolute τέλος and comprehends the task of practicing the relation".⁸⁴⁶ In other words, the Christian individual does not stop existing in the world—Kierkegaard's spokesman Climacus jokes that one cannot simply "take off the multitudinously compound suit of finitude in order to put on the abstract attire of the monastery".⁸⁴⁷ Of course, the individual is not rooted in the finite as she was in immediacy—those roots were cut. However, the individual still lives in the finite even after the leap of faith, but she does not build her life in it. In Climacus' words, the individual living in the finite resembles someone "walk[ing] in a stranger's borrowed clothes" while not defining her distinction from the world by the foreign clothes.⁸⁴⁸ In such a way, the individual lives as incognito, metaphorically implying that her looks do not stand out from the rest. As was mentioned in the very beginning of this dissertation, the individual existing as spirit continuously relates both to the eternal and to the temporal. She is in the world but not of the world. Her left foot is standing in the temporal which is characteristic for *becoming*, while her right foot stands in the eternal which signifies *being*.

Therefore, when Kierkegaard's spokesman Vigilius Haufniesz holds that "every contradiction is also a task"⁸⁴⁹, he means that to keep balance between the temporal and the eternal is a task which demands practice. The same applies to upholding the tension between the temporal and the eternal, but also between possessing and gaining one's soul—all contradictions must be maintained in equilibrium. Indeed, Christian *task* understood as developing the skills needed to uphold contradictions and continually

⁸⁴⁴ EUD, 167 / SKS 5, 166.

⁸⁴⁵ CUP1, 408 / SKS 7, 371.

⁸⁴⁶ CUP1, 409 / SKS 7, 372.

⁸⁴⁷ CUP1, 410 / SKS 7, 373.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁹ CA, 49 / SKS 4, 354.

putting that ability into practice is precisely what Climacus means when he writes, “the task is to gain proficiency in repeating the impassioned choice and, existing, to express it in existence”.⁸⁵⁰

6.3 Keeping One’s Eyes on God

“[S]he continually keeps h[er] eyes on God, that [s]he, although [s]he h[er]self is capable of nothing at all, with God is capable of ever more and more.”⁸⁵¹

The next form of the good fight in every Christian’s life is the need for keeping one’s gaze on God only. Kierkegaard explains the importance of practicing gazing into the eyes of God in various ways but essentially, this practice helps the individual orient oneself absolutely to the absolute while still having her foot in the temporal to which she is a stranger.

One of the first mentions of the importance of turning one’s gaze towards God—or the eternal—appears in *Every Good Gift 2*, interestingly right before the passage describing saving and false doubt. Here, Kierkegaard points out that one needs to have “the eyes of faith” and “steadfastly continue to set them on that which is above”.⁸⁵² The reason why he calls attention to this is because it helps one stay focused and hold onto the eternal aspect of faith without having it “divided and fragmented so that it has only half meaning, and also that it not be garbled”.⁸⁵³ Thus, the first lesson here is that faith requires that one orients herself absolutely to the absolute and continuously maintains the relation. Nonetheless, as it is within the religious existence, the responsibility rests on the individual while at the same time, she is not left alone in the good fight—when the individual’s own strength or will fails her, God comes to rescue. Kierkegaard notes that “God gives both to will and to bring to completion; he begins and completes the good work in a person”.⁸⁵⁴

According to Kierkegaard, keeping one’s eyes on God helps one set aside all unimportant temporalities and externals. When one gazes on God, her sight is focused on a sole objective and everything else turns into a blur. The *Every Good Gift* upbuilding discourse

⁸⁵⁰ CUP1, 410 / SKS 7, 373.

⁸⁵¹ EUD, 325 / SKS 5, 313.

⁸⁵² EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 140.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ EUD, 134 / SKS 5, 137.

uses the words “abiding in God”⁸⁵⁵ as an effect caused by the practice of keeping one’s eyes on God—it denotes the complete orientation of one’s existence in the direction to the eternal and letting all distractions melt away. In relation to abiding in God, Kierkegaard cites Acts 17:28, “In him we live and move and have our being.”⁸⁵⁶ What is more, abiding fully in God and fixing one’s eyes on him protect one from the attacks of doubt which cannot “invalidate this” because it “cuts short doubt”, “disarms doubt”, and “doubt cannot understand this”.⁸⁵⁷ This suggests that fixing one’s gaze on God requires setting aside all understanding—it demands what Climacus calls “risk[ing] [one’s] thought” and “ventur[ing] to believe against understanding”.⁸⁵⁸

Moreover, the practice of gazing upon God cultivates in the individual “absolute respect for the absolute *τέλος*”, as she seeks to “preserve the absolute choice in the finite” and take away the “vital power of the finite” so that she does not exist immediately in the finite.⁸⁵⁹ Looking at the effort and proactivity inherent in the task of abiding in God, it may seem like there is not much comfort and console for the individual whatsoever. However, Climacus shifts the attention to the concept of “eternal happiness”⁸⁶⁰—also called “Christian blessedness”⁸⁶¹ by Anti-Climacus—which follows after being cured of despair and doubt by faith. The term “happiness”—*Salighed* in Danish—appears in the Danish Bible translation to express the beatitudes taught by Christ.⁸⁶² In the same way, it can equally refer to the afterlife.⁸⁶³ The Christian blessedness is to be found exclusively in the inward subjectivity as it “exists only for the subjective person”.⁸⁶⁴ As such, the eternal happiness is to be understood as the foundation for relating to the absolute, but it also needs to be approached from a dialectical perspective—yes, while the relation manifests itself in suffering and struggle, it nonetheless provides a safe haven for the individual, full of true happiness which is detached from temporality and independent of circumstances. In light of eternal happiness’ dialectics, it is understandable that while one may struggle as part of the good fight, if she abides in God and practices locking her gaze

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ Acts 17:28; ESV.

⁸⁵⁷ EUD, 134 / SKS 5, 137.

⁸⁵⁸ CUP1, 429 / SKS 7, 390.

⁸⁵⁹ CUP1, 411 / SKS 7, 373.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁶¹ SUD, 15 / SKS 11, 131.

⁸⁶² Bøgeskov, B. M. O., “Happiness”, 387.

⁸⁶³ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁴ CUP1, 163 / SKS 7, 151.

with God, the burden of Christian hardships will suddenly seem light and easy to bear. That is also why Kierkegaard writes in the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse that the Christian suffering is “only brief and short”, “the yoke of self-denial is so easy to bear”, and the “the cross of sufferings ennoble a person more than anything else”.⁸⁶⁵

6.4 Imitating Christ

“[A] person resembles what [s]he loves with h[er] whole soul.”⁸⁶⁶

The concept of *imitatio Christi*—which had already been briefly mentioned in the very beginning of this dissertation—denotes the unfinished process of *becoming* and *growing into a template*, and thus marks another important aspect of Christian faith. Borrowed from the late medieval Catholic literature, Pietism introduced *imitatio Christi* into the Protestant tradition which had its profound influence on Kierkegaard’s spirituality. The emphasis shifted to humanity’s fragility, and that a true pious life cannot be led without God’s grace—Rogers, for instance, praised “Abraham’s faith, Joseph’s chastity [and] David’s zeal”.⁸⁶⁷ Although the listed examples come from the Old Testament, they very much highlight the qualities worthy of imitation in the eyes of the prominent Protestant thinkers. Next, Schwenckfeld was captivated by the “*imitatio*’s interiority”⁸⁶⁸ and he harshly critiqued Protestant externalism which, according to him, was futile as it robbed the Gospel of its core message. In contrast, true *imitatio* makes one accept the “turbulent fortunes of a faithful believer” and, what Leo Jud insisted on, genuine *imitatio Christi* welcomes the experience of suffering through which one can perfect her understanding of her own faith and profoundly deepen her intimacy with Christ.⁸⁶⁹ Castellio in turn stressed that *imitatio Christi* concerned every single Christian and “learned theologians” were not exempt from it same as “the unlearned simple folk” were not.⁸⁷⁰

Kierkegaard’s understanding of the good fight exhibits all of the *imitatio*’s traits discussed above. The imitation of Christ can be understood as every believer’s inevitable portion which calls for having Christ as the ultimate object of faith. What exactly is Christ to be imitated in? As the God-man, he embodies the perfect model who alone managed to relate

⁸⁶⁵ EUD, 305 / SKS 5, 298.

⁸⁶⁶ EUD, 219 / SKS 5, 218.

⁸⁶⁷ Habsburg, W. von, *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650*, 276.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 282.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 293f.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 298.

eternal *being* and temporal *becoming*. In other words, through his physical existence in the world, the God-man *became* a very concrete historical figure who at the same time represented eternal *being*. As such, Jesus Christ's unique existence here on earth—although impossible to replicate identically—invites every Christian individual to participate in the task of imitating him individually and characterfully. Thankfully, this imitation is not to be done from a distance, like a painter who paints an arranged still life. Quite the contrary, the Christian individual is invited to partake in the contemporaneity with Christ which, in fact, is “the condition of faith”.⁸⁷¹ God becoming contemporary with a believer signifies that Christ's presence is available at every moment, regardless of the circumstances, to the believer. Kierkegaard's spokesman Anti-Climacus emphasizes that Christ walking here on earth does not represent a mere historical event lost in the distant past, but rather an event translating all the way to the very present.⁸⁷² In fact, faith is to be found on earth, and in such a way, Christ's presence transforms the historical event into an instant which never becomes “a thing of a past”—this is contemporaneity's essence.⁸⁷³ However, every imitator of Christ has to adopt the principle, or attitude, of what Stan calls “the more abased, the more blessed”.⁸⁷⁴ Verging on offense, this principle only highlights the radicality which Kierkegaard sees in the cost of discipleship—one should imitate Christ even in his suffering. Whether betrayed by a loved one, scorned and mocked, or crying out loud “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”⁸⁷⁵, partaking in the suffering of Christ denotes not shying away from both the glorious and the tormenting moments experienced by the God-man when walking on earth. Moreover, the suffering ought to teach the individual to view her temporal existence through the lenses of eternity. Indeed, from the eternal viewpoint, temporal suffering lasts for but a second and it cannot be fully understood outside of Christian faith.

However, *imitatio Christi* involves two parties: Christ as the perfect image to be imitated, and the individual who wholeheartedly seeks to imitate him. As shall be seen, even *imitatio Christi* illuminates that Christian faith is a symbiosis—or the perfect correspondence—between God and the individual. As a result, the individual's effort and responsibility never outweigh the work of God's grace which continually transforms her

⁸⁷¹ PC, 9 / SKS 12, 17.

⁸⁷² Ibid.

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Stan, L., “Imitation”, 205.

⁸⁷⁵ “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”. Matthew 27:46; ESV.

to look more like him. In the *Patience in Expectancy* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard holds that every individual “resembles what [s]he loves with h[er] whole soul”.⁸⁷⁶ This sheds light on the nature of imitation from the perspective of the imitator—she must be “properly expectant”⁸⁷⁷, meaning that Christ has to be the object of her expectancy.⁸⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the individual is not left alone in the imitation of the object of expectancy—Kierkegaard points to the other side of the *imitated-imitator* relationship and emphasizes that Christ is a glorious object of faith who will in turn “form the expectant person in its own likeness”.⁸⁷⁹

6.5 Love as the Good and Perfect Gift: Concluding Thoughts on Fighting the Good Fight

Before concluding this chapter altogether, the existential sphere of faith needs to be framed within the context of love as the good and perfect gift from above. Once the individual’s hands become empty and wide open due to the annihilating effect of saving doubt, they can accept the divine gift of God’s love. If one decides to accept the gift, it changes her through and through. In fact, it helps the individual navigate the temporal-eternal tension of faith, but it also makes the good fight actually *good*. How, then, does love transform one’s existence?

In the *Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins* upbuilding discourse, Kierkegaard opens the chapter by listing all the good qualities of divine love. According to him, love is “well pleasing in the eyes of God”, it makes the individual “stronger than the whole world” and “weaker than a child” at the same time, it forms the individual into a believer “more unwavering than a rock” but also “softer than wax”.⁸⁸⁰ He goes on to say that love “outlives everything”, it “cannot be given but itself gives all”, “perseveres when everything falls away”, “comforts when comfort fails”, “endures when everything is changed”, “remains when the imperfect is abolished”, “witnesses when prophecy is silent”, “does not cease when the vision ends”, “sheds light when the dark saying ends”, “gives blessing to the abundance of the gift”, “makes the widow’s gift an abundance”,

⁸⁷⁶ EUD, 219 / SKS 5, 218.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ There can be different objects of expectancy, such as mammon, power, success, health or beauty, but they all belong outside the existential sphere of Religiousness B whose sole object of faith has to be the God-man only.

⁸⁷⁹ EUD, 219 / SKS 5, 218.

⁸⁸⁰ EUD, 55 / SKS 5, 65.

“turns the simple person into wisdom”, and it never changes although everything else changes.⁸⁸¹

Love as the good and perfect gift plays a crucial role in the individual’s good fight. As was mentioned in chapter 3.2.1 (p. 107), Kierkegaard holds that God’s “eternal love hurries ahead and prepares everything and in this way makes the good gift into a perfect gift”⁸⁸². It is the *eternal* aspect of the love from above which has the power to alter one’s perspective on temporality. That is also why Kierkegaard’s ode to love almost always involves two contradictory claims—because of divine love, even those who are weak become strong, and those who face grave sufferings experience comfort that surpasses all understanding.

Thus, Christian love emerges when the individual relinquishes all attempts to make her ego the object of love. Instead, she chooses herself absolutely through self-annihilation, leaving her existentially bare before God. In fact, it is Christian love which “subverts self-love by virtue of resignation” and “by regarding love as a duty”.⁸⁸³ As such, in true Christian love, God enters the already established ground for selfhood—that is the self-relation described as “first love”⁸⁸⁴—and becomes the “third power”⁸⁸⁵ or “third authority”⁸⁸⁶ in the love relation. It does not force itself, but if the individual allows for God to enter in, she essentially “let[s] love transfigure itself in a higher sphere”.⁸⁸⁷ All of a sudden, when the individual “humbles h[er]self under his [God’s, added by AP] love”, an “ennobling change” takes place—the love relation gains an “absolute stamp of eternity upon it” and this eternity is grounded “on the eternal itself”.⁸⁸⁸

As any other aspect of faith, Christian love does not represent just an idea or a theological concept—the eternal love needs to be lived out in the finite world. This makes love both a gift and a duty at the same time, as the individual is called to love her neighbor as herself. On the one hand, the fact that such love is the good and perfect gift implies that it expects nothing in return, and thus it does not conditions reciprocity. On the other hand,

⁸⁸¹ EUD, 55 / SKS 5, 65f.

⁸⁸² EUD, 39 / SKS 5, 48.

⁸⁸³ McDonald, W., “Love”, 108.

⁸⁸⁴ EO2, 56 / SKS 3, 62.

⁸⁸⁵ EO2, 55 / SKS 3, 61.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁷ EO2, 56 / SKS 3, 62.

⁸⁸⁸ EO2, 57-8 / SKS 3, 63-4.

love understood as a duty demands that the individual *preserves* and *maintains* the gift. As a result, Christian love denotes both relating to one's neighbor—who is “the other human *qua* human”⁸⁸⁹—and to the eternal God. Only in such a way can one love her neighbor in the Christian sense.

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To summarize, faith understood as *the good fight* depicts the intriguing religious existence which follows after doubt's halt in the double movement. The sphere of Christian faith is paradoxical in its tension between the temporal and the eternal. The Christian individual's selfhood consist of being a spirit and willing to be oneself as spirit, which can be achieved only by severing temporal ties. However, another paradox of faith lies in that while the individual must relate absolutely to the absolute, she is not completely removed from the temporal world which requires existing in the world while not being of it. Last, faith paradoxically conditions the possibility of offense as its dialectical opposite—if the individual does not believe, she is offended. Nonetheless, one important aspect has emerged throughout this chapter—faith is a cooperative relationship between the individual and the God-man. While faith is a strenuous *fight*, it is made *good* thanks to God's contemporaneity with the individual, and power in which she can rest. This became visible in all four traits of the good fight, i.e. renewal of one's resolution, upholding contradictions, keeping one's eyes on God, and imitating Christ.

First, the significance of holding onto one's resolution and constantly renewing the decision of faith was analyzed. The beginning of this chapter thus served as a reminder that there is a distinction in making a one-time decision in which the individual decides between one thing over another and maintaining the resolution to stick to that decision in the long-term perspective. As such, renewal of one's resolution implies an existential orientation which has its impact on faith. Even here, the already foreshadowed cooperative nature of faith can be observed—while the individual must practice maintaining the resolution, it is not completely up to her, as the act of willing the eternal and taking the leap of faith is sustained by God. Therefore, true resolutions are made only in the moments when the temporal and the eternal unite.

⁸⁸⁹ McDonald, W., “Love”, 108.

The Christian duty of making eternal resolutions only highlights the next characteristic of the good fight, that is maintaining contradictions. Indeed, faith presents one with different contradictions, such as the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity, the possibility of gaining one's soul and possessing one's soul at the same time, or the contradiction between the temporal and the eternal. Haufniensis' claim that "every contradiction is also a task"⁸⁹⁰ thus implies that within the religious existential sphere of deep inwardness, the Christian task is to uphold the contradictions and maintain a balance between the temporal and the eternal. This plays itself out in the individual practicing the relation of having her "absolute orientation toward the absolute τέλος".⁸⁹¹ This will allow the individual to relate absolutely to the absolute while still existing in the world as someone who has borrowed a stranger's clothes.

Nonetheless, the individual is not left alone in practicing maintaining a balance between the temporal and the eternal. On the contrary, she has the perfect model for imitation, that is the God-man, eternal God incarnate in human form. The individual is invited to become contemporary with Christ so that she can experience his presence at every moment. In contemporaneity, Christ's presence is transformed from a historical event into the very present. Although the *imitatio Christi* inevitably presents challenges and hardships, the individual can find solace in the understanding that by making Christ the object of her faith, she can expect to be transformed more and more into his likeness. Ultimately, this transformative process enables one to perceive all temporal difficulties through the lens of eternity.

Next, it is important that as part of the good fight, the individual must practice abiding in God by fixing her gaze on him. This enables the individual to reorient herself absolutely to the absolute and continue to do so. Once the individual aligns with God and practices the absolute relation—although she may do so imperfectly—God "completes the good work in [her]".⁸⁹² Therefore, concentrating on God alone makes all other temporal distractions fade away in a blur for the individual.

In conclusion, the good fight of faith signifies an ongoing endeavor where the individual's proactive engagement complements God's omnipotence and omnipresence. This divine

⁸⁹⁰ CA, 49 / SKS 4, 354.

⁸⁹¹ CUP1, 409 / SKS 7, 372.

⁸⁹² EUD, 134 / SKS 5, 137.

support becomes accessible to the individual upon achieving a state of humility and complete receptivity to God's will. On the one hand, the individual's proactivity is inherent in the tasks of upholding contradictions, absolutely relating to the absolute, orienting one's existence to God, and imitating Christ not only in the glorious moments, but also in the most terrible of sufferings. On the other hand, God's omnipotence and omnipresence is ready to alleviate the fight and even strive on the individual's behalf, same as Joshua and the Israelites experienced sun stopping its course so that they could be victorious over their enemies.

III. CONCLUSION

1. FINAL RETROSPECTION

This final section seeks to reflect on the ways in which the answers to the main question have been unravelling throughout this dissertation. The initially posited objective was to show the significance of doubt—specifically the two ways of relating to doubt—as part of the existential process of *becoming oneself* or *becoming Christian*. The importance of this lies in that each of the ways in which one can relate to doubt can profoundly alter the trajectory of an individual's existence. In Kierkegaard's anthropology, *becoming Christian* denotes being as a spirit which has to continually relate to the temporal and to the eternal at the same time. Every Christian's goal, then, is to maintain an equilibrium between the temporal and the eternal—however, *being Christian* denotes *becoming Christian*, for faith is by no means a static stage of existence. Contrarily, in order for one to have faith, she must continually renew her resolution to be Christian and carry out the double movement of infinite resignation and faith. However, there is a long road preceding the double movement and it is paved with much decision-making.

As was discussed in section I, Kierkegaard's notion of skepticism stands out from his philosophical predecessors in his understanding of doubt as a dynamic phenomenon which can reach different scales of intensity. Terminologically, the intensification of skepticism plays itself out with “doubt” as a relatively moderate form governed by thought, and “despair” as the gradation of doubt on an existential level. Importantly, the act of will determines whether doubt is objective or subjective—objective doubt does not demand will, but one cannot doubt subjectively without willing it. The scale of doubt depends on the level of how conscious one is of her doubt—the more consciousness, the more doubt. In addition, it was explained that throughout this dissertation, doubt would represent an overarching term encompassing all of its levels. Nonetheless, one can relate to one doubt in two ways. In his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, Kierkegaard classifies the two-fold relation as “false doubt”, which doubts everything but itself, and “saving doubt”, which doubts only itself. Each way of relating to doubt brings about different sets of existential outcomes. In fact, their effects deeply affect the individual's process of *becoming oneself*.

The interpretative analysis of the first form of relating to doubt—i.e. false doubt—uncovered the following characteristics, which all seem to be linked with one another. Hunger for knowledge marks the first trait of false doubt—it represents an ever present

desire to gain more knowledge. Nonetheless, since this want can never be fully satisfied, this creates tension within the individual. In a sense, the constant hunger for more knowledge is closely connected with the act of praising knowledge. This marks another feature of false doubt, i.e. pride. The prideful aspect of false doubt was exemplified on the biblical concept of idolatry. Whether in the Old or New Testament, idolatry tends to represent a misplaced object of worship. In addition, the theme of pride is inherent even in Kierkegaard's own description of false doubt in that it "doubts everything but itself"⁸⁹³. Next, the deep-rooted mistrust in false doubt was analyzed. In fact, mistrust, understood as unbelief, stands contrary to belief, much like doubt stands contrary to faith. Nonetheless, mistrust does not solely signal the refusal to believe untruth, but also to not believe the truth. Kierkegaard holds that the latter form of mistrust is far worse and even calls it evil. The next fruit, which the false doubt produces in one's existence, is the constant variation accompanied by turbulent changes and inconsistencies. Kierkegaard depicts variation as obscuring the individual's vision and confusing her with change. After all, this characteristic was evident even in the Genesis story following the fall—the cloud of doubt prevented Adam and Eve from seeing God clearly and it left them wondering, "What is the good, where is the perfect to be found? If it exists, where is its source?"⁸⁹⁴ Last, false doubt brings about anxiety and despair. Although both anxiety and despair stem from the individual's confrontation with possibility, and they both undertake parallel movements resulting in the state with no closure to the dialectical ambiguity, they still differ from each other. On the one hand, anxiety implies the possibility of freedom, but on the other hand, despair represents eternity present within the individual. In addition, despair differs from anxiety in that the individual *is conscious of* the eternal within herself, and yet simultaneously recognizes the vast chasm that exists between her, the temporal, and the eternal. Understandably, this realization causes a great deal of pain and sorrow in the individual's existence. Generally, it can be concluded that false doubt is characteristic for its horizontality. In other words, false doubt only stretches out and does not move the individual anywhere, leaving her stuck in the ethical stage of existence at most, and preventing her from taking the leap of faith. This was also illustrated on "Kierkegaard's Faust" as the embodiment of such doubt.

⁸⁹³ EUD 137 / SKS 5, 140.

⁸⁹⁴ EUD, 127 / SKS 5, 131.

Prior to interpreting the key features of saving doubt, the platform in between false and saving doubt was analyzed, mapping the moments and circumstances leading up to the double movement. Based on the *To Need God* upbuilding discourse, this chapter considered the two contrasting types of self-knowledge—*negative self-knowledge* and *positive self-knowledge*. The *negative self-knowledge* leads to the illusion that the individual is the master, capable of all things and gaining the whole world. That is also why Kierkegaard describes it as *deceitful* and *imperfect*. On the contrary, the *positive*—or *profound*—*self-knowledge* causes one to become the one in need, capable of nothing at all, but gaining oneself. Thus, only through *positive self-knowledge* can one relate to doubt in a saving way. In short, both expressions of one doubt polemize with or question something. However, the object of one’s doubt matters—while false doubt puts in question that which is eternal and constant, i.e. God, saving doubt questions that which is variable and transitory, i.e. the external world and oneself. With this in mind, Kierkegaard prompts his readers to “use doubt in the right way”⁸⁹⁵. Only by targeting the doubt against oneself can one facilitate the self-annihilating process which would eventually make her ready to correspond to God. For Kierkegaard, the process of self-annihilation represents an “exhausting”⁸⁹⁶ and “very terrible”⁸⁹⁷ struggle, as the individual becomes the very instrument of the annihilation. Nonetheless, the individual is strengthened by the process, and it exists as truth protecting her from any delusion or deception.

The platform in between saving and false doubt also demands that one relates to the possibility of offense. Every Christian must go through this moment, for the leap of faith always happens from the possibility of offense. Offense regards the absolute God-man paradox that the eternal God would become incarnate in time—one can be either offended by the God-man’s loftiness or lowliness. In either case, the result of one’s relation to the possibility of offense is always one or the other—the individual is either offended or believes—but there is no other option. Moreover, it was demonstrated that within the sphere of offense, rationality comes into play. One must not seek to *understand* the God-man paradox, for the outwardly-turned speculative knowledge strips off the God-man of his temporality and contemporaneity and is thus interwoven with false doubt. Rather, the absolute paradox must be grasped subjectively—with the help of saving doubt, one

⁸⁹⁵ EUD, 137 / SKS 5, 140.

⁸⁹⁶ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301.

⁸⁹⁷ EUD, 309 / SKS 5, 301f.

chooses to annihilate herself rather than the unclarity surrounding the absolute paradox. In addition, the God-man paradox presents the individual with what Kierkegaard calls “divine compassion”⁸⁹⁸, which signifies that God made himself one even with the most wretched. One’s sinfulness must be fully acknowledged by the individual, for otherwise she could not relate to the possibility of the forgiveness of sins. Last, if one is to undergo the double movement of faith, she must “despair of understanding”⁸⁹⁹ on this very platform. This suggests that despair can serve a good purpose if used against one’s own understanding—only in this way can one let go of the *imperfect knowledge* and deepen her inwardness.

The road to becoming capable of nothing at all—which is specific for Religiousness A—became more visible during the interpretative analysis of saving doubt. Several key passages from Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* uncovered the following characteristics of saving doubt. First, the saving kind of doubt is subjected to education and is eager to be educated. Understood within the context of *die Bildung*, the edifying takes on a specific form in Religiousness A—the most edifying aspects in Religiousness A is the totality of guilt-consciousness and “putting oneself aside in order to find God”⁹⁰⁰. These aspects edify an individual through suffering which nonetheless produces the fruit of self-knowledge. Second, saving doubt has the ability to uncover the individual’s innermost being so that her core values and deep motives are made visible, and one has to honestly face herself and God. This was illustrated on the story of Job who was tried with terrible suffering but he, despite losing all that he held dear, proved to be righteous in the eyes of God and blessed his name even amidst great losses. Next, the virtue of humble meekness was analyzed with the focus on the “humble” but also “elevating” truth which the process of self-annihilation brings. While humility, having its Latin etymological origin in “soil” or “earth”, implies a downward direction, the saving doubt’s annihilation can eventually uplift the individual. Moreover, meekness—which goes hand in hand with humility—understood as strength under control, or power without harshness, plays an important role in the individual becoming receptive to the good and perfect gift. In addition, saving doubt also produces great suffering because one must fight with her own self. The specific kind of personal suffering was exemplified on Paul’s thorn in the

⁸⁹⁸ PC, 60 / SKS 12, 72.

⁸⁹⁹ CUP1, 224 / SKS 7, 205.

⁹⁰⁰ CUP1, 560 / SKS 7, 509.

flesh. Whatever the thorn may have symbolized for him, Paul related to it in a way that served him for good—the thorn kept reminding him that when he is weak, God is strong, and it even allowed him to boast in his weakness. Kierkegaard makes it clear that only out of this suffering hope is born. Last, saving doubt makes one undertake an inward retreat which does not resemble locking oneself up in a fortress from which the individual fights against the entire external world while the archenemy, i.e. the individual herself, is in that fortress. The inward retreat begins when one stops being preoccupied with the external—only then can the individual become increasingly subjective. Thus, the goal of the inward retreat is to turn inwards and, in inwardness, to fight with oneself until the realization that one is capable of nothing at all matures and ripens. If false doubt was characteristic for its horizontality, saving doubt is vertical—it penetrates to one’s innermost being, and it sets one’s existence into motion.

The work of saving doubt successfully ends when the individual reaches the point of infinite resignation via the painful path of self-annihilation. The second part of the turbulent double movement comes about with the movement of faith which—same as in the case of infinite resignation—cannot be universalized and every individual must go through it situationally on her own. Moreover, as any other movement, it demands one’s cooperation in the form of decision. After the individual has become conscious of the totality of guilt within Religiousness A, she must now acknowledge the guilt-consciousness in light of sin-consciousness and react to it in repentance. Repentance, or *metanoia*, fully realizes the misrelation between God and the individual which can be rectified only by God’s *agapé* love and acceptance of the forgiveness of sins. As such, the double movement transforms one’s existence in which she simultaneously relates “absolutely to the absolute τέλος and relatively to relative ends”⁹⁰¹.

The *Moment of the Leap* chapter captured the cardinal difference between doubt and faith by exploring what it can and cannot coexist with. It was concluded that faith is not compatible with doubt, objective certainty, disbelief, speculation, and conclusion. Moreover, the interpretation of Kierkegaard’s *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* revealed that faith also excludes experience which always tends to turn the future into something particular, and flesh and blood in the sense of mistrustfully speculating with one’s unspiritual flesh—*sarx*—in a foolish effort to gain some sort of objective confirmation

⁹⁰¹ CUP1, 431 / SKS 7, 392f.

about a subjective matter. Next, it was demonstrated that faith is compatible with objective uncertainty, subjective certainty, possibility of error, resolution, interest, but also with spiritual judgement which has the power to terminate reflection and speculation. Moreover, it can also coexist with wonder—“the archenemy of doubt”⁹⁰²—as a positive principle which brings about sudden internal state transcendent of one’s abilities and effort.

The last chapter of section II considered the dynamic sphere of faith which is often understood by Kierkegaard—inspired by apostle Paul—as fighting the good fight. In light of *becoming Christian*, true selfhood denotes being a spirit—nonetheless, willing to be oneself as spirit demands faith through which one must learn to stick to the eternal while still existing in the temporal. The good fight requires that the individual continuously renews her resolution, upholds the contradictions inherent in faith, practices keeping her eyes on God and imitates Christ in his suffering. Importantly, the struggle of faith should not feel as burdensome as the terrible struggle inherent in the process of self-annihilation. Indeed, while Christian faith does not exempt one from the suffering akin to that experienced by Christ on earth, the contemporaneity of Christ with the individual ensures that the Christian is not left alone in the trials and tribulations. Contrarily, the good fight demands the will to believe from the individual, while offering her rest in God’s power who fights on her behalf and makes the suffering seem light. Indeed, faith is by no means a stagnant stage but rather a way of life—or an existential orientation—which demands viewing one’s temporal existence through eternity’s perspective, steadfastly persevering in the decision made during the double-movement, and not shying away from repeating it.

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The themes of “self-annihilation”, “dying to oneself”, “becoming capable of nothing at all”, “becoming the one in need”, “losing oneself”, which are central to the concept of saving doubt, cast light on saving doubt’s profound meaning in Kierkegaard’s existential anthropology. It should be noted that these negative movements inherent in saving doubt do not simply cancel the individual altogether and swallow her up in nothingness—rather, they are dialectical. This means that the movements shift from “self-annihilation” to

⁹⁰² EUD, 135 / SKS 5, 138.

“God’s creation”, from “dying to oneself” to “being born again”, from “becoming capable of nothing at all” to “becoming contemporary with Christ”, and from “losing oneself” to “gaining oneself”. Moreover, one’s relationship with God does not imply that the individual is consumed by God and disappears with self-annihilation. Rather, in the God-relationship the individual grows aware of the fact that she is God’s creation and apart from him, the individual is indeed nothing at all. Last, *being Christian* denotes distinct dialectics of proactive and passive virtues, combining the view of life as a task but also as a gift.⁹⁰³ On the one hand, faith demands that one continuously realizes her insignificance and nothingness without God, becoming completely dependent upon him and passively accepting the Christ-like suffering. On the other hand, faith also requires that one proactively transforms her decision into a resolution, wills to believe, and loves God, herself, and her neighbor as a result of accepting the very good and perfect gift, that is God’s unconditional love.

On a more personal note, I believe that Kierkegaard’s understanding of *becoming oneself* carries a meaningful message even into our postmodern times. A Christian individual is the result of—although the term “result” is an imperfect description, as *being oneself* is an unfinished process—a painful formation. Therefore, Kierkegaard’s legacy is far from unrealistic or naïve. He acknowledges not only one’s growth, victories, highs, discoveries, and epiphanies, but also one’s shortcomings, downfalls, losses, stagnations, and setbacks. In fact, not only are all of these events *considered*, but they are indeed *necessary* and *acceptable* on the path of *becoming oneself*. Kierkegaard would indeed encourage his reader to fully embrace the turbulent experience of doubt rather than seeking immediate relief. Instead of succumbing to despair, the individual must navigate the eye of the storm, completely passing through doubt to discover her authentic self.

⁹⁰³ See also Gouwens, D. J., *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, 110-20.

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- CSB *Christian Standard Bible*, Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.
- ESV *English Standard Version*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001.
- GNT *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*, United Kingdom: Bible Societies, 1976.
- GW *God's Word Translation*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2005.
- KJV *King James Version*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- NASB *New American Standard Bible*, LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.
- NKJV *New King James Version*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982.
- NLT *New Living Translation*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

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- SV Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Vaerker, (Drachmann, A. B., Heiberg, J.L. & Lange, H. O., eds.), København: Nordisk Vorlag 1920-1926.

English Abbreviations

- JP Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, vol. 1-6, vol. 7

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- KJN Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, vols. 1–11, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- KW Kierkegaard's Writings, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, vols. I-XXVI, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978-98.
- CA The Concept of Anxiety, trans. by Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson, KW VIII.
- CD Christian Discourses, KW XVII.
- CI The Concept of Irony, KW II.
- CUP Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Crumbs, ed. and trans. by Alastair Hannay, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- CUP1 Concluding Unscientific Postscript, KW XII,1.
- CUP2 Concluding Unscientific Postscript, KWXII,2.
- EO1 Either/Or, Part I, KW III.
- EO2 Either/Or, Part II, KW IV.
- EUD Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, KW V.
- FT Fear and Trembling, KW VI.
- JC Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est, KW VII.
- JFY Judge for Yourself, KW XXI.
- PC Practice in Christianity, KW XX.
- PF Philosophical Fragments, KW VII.
- PV The Point of View including On My Work as an Author and The Point of View for My Work as an Author, KW XXII.
- SUD The Sickness unto Death, KW XIX.
- UD Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, KW XV.
- WA Without Authority including The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air, Two Ethical-Religious Essays, Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays, An Upbuilding Discourse, Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays, KW XVIII.
- WL Works of Love, KW XVI.

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