
KIERKEGAARDIAN POINTERS TO METAETHICS

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Abstract

Metaethics has once again come to the attention of current philosophers, theologians, and important thinkers. The reason behind this trend is the current ethical challenge and the urgency of considering moral phenomena, whose analytical explanatory reasoning is directed towards the substance of ethical frameworks. This study offers interpretative insights into Kierkegaard's thought as presented in his monumental writing 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments' and 'Philosophical Fragments' in regard to metaethical horizons, that is, the direction in which both his theological and philosophical perceptions point. The aim of the study is to imply epistemological boundaries, metaphysical considerations, and ethical origins that the genius of Kierkegaard's spirit penetrated with the prophetic insight in his writing corpus, in which Absolute paradox plays the key role. From this point, Kierkegaard develops his indirect critique of strict naturalism, which cannot provide satisfactory answers to fundamental moral questions. There is also space for a dynamic balance between universal and particular ethical principles that are accessible, discoverable and learnable, according to Kierkegaard, to every person in every cultural and historical context.

Keywords: philosophy, metaethics, existence, epistemology, theology

1. Introduction

One of the Kierkegaard's most outstanding works – *Philosophical Fragments* – was compositionally built in the form of a classical drama and introduced on 13 June 1844 under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus. The name Climacus refers to a monk from Saint Catherine monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. (Saint John Climacus, John Scholasticus, respectively John of the Ladder, 525-606 AD, is the author of *Ladder of Divine Ascent* (gr. *Κλίμαξ*), the literary output depicting 30 steps of spiritual ascent to the final destination of Heaven.) In his works *De omnibus dubitandum est* and *Philosophical Fragments* Kierkegaard's pseudonym symbolizes certain structures of logical thinking sequences in regard to Cartesian methods of thinking. Hence the ladder image offers an interesting starting point that is relevant to a variety of metaethical considerations and arguments as shown below.

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It is clear from the picture that only the last one, standing highest on the ladder, reaches a point from which to enter Heaven – but with a little help. However, this assistance is irrelevant to those who are on the ladder below. In addition, the demonic world is constantly pushing down those who are climbing up, so the question arises – who can actually get to the top? For Kierkegaard, this issue has become very important in various ways and we can see them all in his writings. On the epistemological plane, for example, it is the problem of the reliability of knowledge. The question can be put as follows: If only the one on the top reaches the ‘heavens’ of knowledge, to what extent can the knowledge of those on the ladder be confident? The world of knowledge with Kierkegaard covers not only the sphere of aesthetics, but also ethics and religion. It covers also scientific achievements in knowledge and thus it could be said to be also the perception of basic cosmological questions on the human side.

It must be said here that it also indirectly addresses the application of such a ladder in the field of Ethics and Morality. The question – Who is morally perfect? – could be answered in this way – He who achieved the level of perfection, heavens, i.e., who is at the highest point of the ladder. Here is another question of the same kind – Who can be morally perfect? The question of whether such a situation can be achieved does not leave Kierkegaard unresponsive. The image itself implies the seriousness and merit of this level of ethics. If the world of demons is attacking those who are trying and striving for moral improvement in themselves, it seems that human effort alone cannot achieve moral perfection. Here is the basis for his reflection on how to live an authentic life in the perspective of eternity, which for Kierkegaard formed the basis of his thinking of the world, of history and of himself and the purpose of his life. If we want to understand how Kierkegaard grasps the issue of descriptive and prescriptive ethics, we must still remember the painting in the monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai.

It is understandable therefore, that Kierkegaard should seek to express his inner conviction under another pseudonym. Later in his work *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) he actually used the derived pseudonym Anti-Climacus, which relates to Climacus in many ways. The essential difference between these two characters is that Climacus does not consider himself to be a Christian, while Anti-Climacus is presented as profoundly Christian. For Kierkegaard, the theological concept of ‘law’ and ‘grace’ becomes the basis for understanding life dynamics. The law is represented here by Climacus. It is human effort, fulfilment of expectations, improvement in the process of cognitive endeavour. Grace here is embodied in Anti-Climacus, as the image of God’s intervention in human life. It is a supernatural phenomenon that in its nature correlates with the character of the absolute paradox and the God-Man relationship.

The main characters in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* and *Philosophical Fragments* are Socrates and ‘God in time’ (Jesus Christ), while their dialogues as well as the author’s own reflections ascend to a deeper understanding of notions like truth and untruth, necessity and possibility, eternity and temporality, liberty, doubt and other

categories – in an epistemological dialectic of the relations between Philosophy, biblical revelation and history of Christianity. It is interesting to notice that the work consists of five chapters, while between the fourth and fifth chapter he interposed the Interlude – where he analyses concepts of *coming into existence* and the *reality of being* in relation to a temporal dimension of the historicity of truth. Not by accident does he mention 1843 years since the birth of Christ, which is the year in which the manuscript was written. This refers to his reflections on the relationship between a man and the highest truth (and also vice versa) to the historical fact in the category of absolute paradox.

These and other polarities of ethical categories indirectly define Kierkegaard's metaetic world, which, although it does not explicitly describe and critically analyse, but implicitly works with it. Kierkegaard sees his own position as 'higher' than the Climacus' and 'lower' than the Anti-Climacus' [Pap. X, 1 A 517]. This determines a certain coherence between the two different perspectives of both these pseudonyms. At the same time, these two present such a dynamic that offers Kierkegaard an appropriate space where there is a tension between the two thinking concepts, while creating an existential dialectic of the struggle for the authentic life of a single individual in a given historical, social and political context.

2. The truth issue

The first chapter of *Philosophical fragments* takes the form of an experiment in thinking where Climacus introduces the Socratic concept of truth and how a man can find the truth. It is based on the Platonic conception of a man's natural predisposition to learn and understand 'forms' and an inbuilt ability to come to the truth by rational analysis. In the Socratic view "every human being is himself the midpoint and the whole world focuses only on him because his self-knowledge is God knowledge" [1].

To learn the truth and to access the truth "stored in the memory" [1, p. 30], the truth which he already knows, he has only to recall. The problem is that once a man has the truth within, he does not need to look for it outside in order to learn it, only if he admits not having it. In that case he would be looking for the truth in external reality and if he finds it, it would be only an illusion (as truth does not exist in the external reality but in the internal world of each man) [1, p. 33], then it would be a lie. This approach does not solve the question of a "relationship to eternal happiness" [1, p. 33], as eternal happiness should be the resource of his memories and apparently the man does not have it – he keeps looking for it and longing for it.

Climacus consistently thinks about truth, which stands outside present knowledge, being hidden in the memory of the subject. This leads to a metaphysical postulation as this memory is a pre-existence in itself, not a memory of pre-existence [1, p. 103-104]. Climacus in his consistent logical analysis reveals a serious problem of Socratic truth, which is man's inability to find the truth, to learn the truth "whether we have it within or not" [1, p. 34]

despite constantly looking for it and longing for it as the “condition of truth is existential” [1, p. 35], but a Socratic teacher cannot provide anything existential to the learner” [1, p. 37].

Subjective learning of the truth happens in time. Climacus focuses on the dimension of time and resource of truth in a historical sense, as this is the only way not to forget the truth “either in time, or in eternity” [1, p. 33]. Eternity begins at the ‘moment of time’. Man is untrue and needs a teacher as well as a ‘condition’ to be able to understand the truth [1, p. 35]. In the Socratic view the teacher is “only an opportunity” [1, p. 34] unable to help an individual, who has to “reveal his own untruthfulness” without having *a condition*. The one who “provides the learner not only with the truth, but also the condition, is not a teacher” [1, p. 35]. Climacus in a Socratic way explains that it must be someone who is absolutely greater than a man, someone able to possess the condition, being capable of providing the condition deliberately.

This alternative reminds us of a Christian concept, especially its focus on man who has lost the truth and also the image of a teacher who is human and divine in his very nature. The truth comes to man as a revelation from the teacher, who is not only a human being (as Socrates), as the learner’s inability anticipates a complete ‘transformation’ into a new being instead of a ‘reformation’ [1, p. 51]. By saying this Climacus does not solve the problem of which alternative is more correct, but only tries to demonstrate the dissimilarity and incompatibility of these two concepts in their internal logic. In agreement with Pattison in this work one could find “the *strongest formulations* of the *inability of philosophy to deal* with the issues of *religion*” [2]. Collins sees Climacus’ effort as a tension between ‘immanence and transcendence’, explaining that Socrates on the one hand successfully resisted the temptation to avoid the existential problems of the individual in time by “dialectical retreat to the purely eternal mode of being”, however, on the other hand, a possibility of a “sincere transcendence” remains implicitly open in his existence [3].

Climacus’ intention is to present both: the Socratic view and the Christian ‘project’ logically substantiating and explaining this *hypothesis*, especially regarding the concept of *rebirth* which is a question of “state of non existence and existence” [1, p. 40-41] – in the intentions of Socratic logic. Paradoxical expression *Similitudo Christum inter et Socratem in dissimilitudine praecipue est positia* - the similarity between Christ and Socrates consists essentially in their dissimilarity and does not lead to “new academical embracing of inconsistency” [4], but to the rejection of speculative dialectics in the name of existential experience. Walsh assumes that it is a reasoning of “thinkingness of hypothesis” that is at the centre of his attention rather than a reflection on “truth and untruth” [5]. The concept of subjective truth becomes a coherent entity containing a paradox: truth is subjective – subjectivity is untrue. Truth is existential, subjective and yet if truth is to stay true, its source must stand outside in an external reality, while being existentially embraced internally. The dialectics of this paradox contains an important moment of every individual’s inner decision.

3. The centrality of the absolute paradox

The absolute paradox plays a key role in Kierkegaard's thinking. His misunderstanding by some scholars shifts the meaning of Kierkegaard's terms in an unwanted direction, and his philosophical intentions become ambiguous and fuzzy. Climacus' concept of absolute paradox among certain scholars leads to an assumption that Kierkegaard was an irrational existentialist, as for some "paradox is intellectually unacceptable and from a rational point of view the thesis *God-man* is nonsense" [6]. One of the reasons for not accepting this concept was the fact that the notion of *paradox* does not indicate a logical contradiction of two mutually contrasting meanings. Factually it indicates a relationship between two actual statements mutually discordant. Climacus therefore uses paradox as a synonym for contradiction. Nevertheless, the context of his study leads us to conclude that he actually understands the principle of paradox, as he is not content with the fact that "our age has annulled the principle of contradiction" [1, p. 114], by which he means that the Hegelian approach to the world, which itself contains many contradictions, has become an obstacle to the true understanding and discernment of reality as such.

From the texts it is clear that unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard acknowledges the relevance of a contradicting principle in formal logic as well as in Philosophy and Theology. The notion *contradiction* is to be interpreted as an ironical means for the grasping of *absolute unlikeness*, as an ostensible contradiction of the issues Kierkegaard was dealing with. Otherwise the actual meaning of 'to be God' and 'to be man' would have been obvious. Certain contradictions and paradoxes can be resolved, nevertheless the paradox of the incarnation of the eternal God appears to be insoluble, as "absolute unlikeness" is annulled in "absolute likeness" [1, p. 62]. At this point, Kierkegaard's philosophical interest in life issues of 'this world' is being confronted with the imperative coming from 'another world,' and thence metaethical reasoning necessarily presupposes relevant and satisfactory discourse in metaphysics. For Kierkegaard, to play with the concept of absolute paradox does not mean to create a philosophical concept, but to deal with the reality that surpasses our perceptive capacities.

This is what Climacus indicates as the absolute paradox. The invisible, eternal God became a visible, temporal man in Jesus Christ. Thus, what is historically impossible became historically actual 'absolute fact'. Eternity, being essentially unhistorical (not limited by historical or finite conditions), at the moment of the incarnation became historical in the individual person in time, which is "in absolute contradiction to our understanding of eternity" [7]. Here we face an important moment of reasoning – if man were able to explain the absolute paradox, the absolute paradox would stop being a paradox. On the other hand if *unlikeness is annulled by likeness*, then the absolute paradox creates a certain structural parallel between the incarnation and human existence qua existence. Existential tension between the imperfection of experienced reality and absolute desires in human life "helps to explain a tension between

reason and faith in the incarnation” [8], which renders the sustainable scope for such a justification.

Paradox, according to Climacus, is a substantial part of thinking, and does not contradict thinking, being a passion of thought, where the highest paradox is “wanting to discover something that thought itself cannot think” [1, p. 54]. Passion, as well as love, want to destroy themselves, and that is why “paradox demands the disappearance of reason”, as does love. According to Climacus love, which is actually based on self-love, demands “at its highest level a self- destruction” consequently. In consistency with the hermeneutics of love therefore one cannot agree with Schaffer’s interpretation of Climacus in a sense of absolute distinction between reason and faith. For Schaffer such existential experience becomes illogical and irrational, as “there is no relation between what is reasonable and what is believed” [9], however, actually the opposite is true. According to Climacus it is apparent that paradox is in conflict not only with Hypothesis A, but also with Hypothesis B and the essence of faith is also paradoxical: “it never could have occurred to Reason. Indeed, when Paradox is announced, Reason realizes that Paradox will encompass its (Reason’s) destruction” [1, p. 63]. The final position embraces the view according to which absolute paradox exceeds man’s rational capacity, the intentionality of human will and the imagination of man’s creativity.

Paradox shifts man’s thinking beyond imagination, thus man does not need to understand paradox, but needs to understand the fact that paradox exists [1, p. 72]. Mooney notices the precise and sophisticated pedagogical intention of Climacus. Climacus allows reason to “run towards an enigmatic reality” only to “stumble and fall in its passionate run” and to experience its own downfall which “creates a space for coming of God – man” [10]. For Climacus paradox defeats reason, but not every defeat is a humiliation, as there is nothing humiliating in reason discovering its limits. According to Climacus with death even the most passionate aspirations cease and there is no reason to see death as a humiliation, as to perceive the consequences are just as doubtful an advantage as is immediate certainty. The encounter with *absolute paradox* enables man to be open to “absolute unlikeness” which is “totally inexplicable while being logically incoherent” [11].

4. Moral challenges

After Alasdair MacIntyre published his work *After Virtue* [12], a new wave of discourse on topics related to defined ethical origins and metaethical frameworks is emerging. There is no doubt that moral theories cannot be seriously avoided unless we try to avoid the insistence of the metaphysical problem. As he himself acknowledges “But I had now learned from Aquinas that my attempt to provide an account of human good purely in social terms, in terms of practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had to provide it with a metaphysical basis. It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason

of their specific nature, that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do.” [12] MacIntyre’s metaethics is derived from Thomistic metaphysics that renders a close system of axioms, where any contradictions finds no place unlike Kierkegaard’s one, where the reality of universe is based upon paradox, where an infinite God created a finite universe and man in His own image. The absolute paradox is the climactic exposition of this creation narrative and being historically anchored it has an imperative mandate for Kierkegaard with regard to any sphere of the life of any one individual.

MacIntyre regards Kierkegaard as being inconsistent in his claim regarding the ethical correlation between reason, authority and radical choice, when he argues that it is the combination “of novelty and tradition which accounts for the incoherence at the heart of Kierkegaard’s position” [12, p. 43]. It is obvious that tradition and current moral challenges expose a contradiction that cannot be solved in MacIntyre’s way of reasoning. In his concept continuity presents just illusion and thus does not need to be taken seriously. Hence his moral philosophy is being rooted in respect to a community engaged in a concrete ‘tradition’ practice. His moral framework is based on the affirmation of some virtues as they are embraced in specific, historically grounded, social practices. Not only does he lacks the balance between deontological and utilitarian ethics, but loses the potential to find a reconciliation with regard to tension between universalism and particularism in ethical theories. Kierkegaard’s concept of absolute paradox offers a panorama room, where those challenges are met with a satisfactory solution relevant to empiric observations, since that concept reflects possibility, necessity, formation and becoming.

On the other side of the spectrum current trends is the strong naturalist position represented by Stephen Hawking. In his famous work *The Grand Design* he presents his metaphysical concept, where everything in the whole universe has its cause in spontaneous creation, where gravity is the primary cause of everything [13]. The consequences of such a statement are profound. Firstly, a human being is a machine that operates under quantum principles. Secondly, human freedom is just an illusion, since our behaviour is determined by physical law. And thirdly, any human effort to find ethical answers must fail in vain as philosophy is a dead discipline, according to Hawking. The ethical dimension of existence can be, according to Kierkegaard, accomplished in the fullest sense in the totality of life, when a single individual actualizes his ethical relationship with God.

In a short chapter entitled ‘Moral’, Climacus’s sophisticated sequence of each individual part of his book approaches a concluding synthesis. Climacus here states getting ‘far beyond Socrates’ in all points contained in Hypothesis A. Although it is obvious from the point of view of logical forms of propositions that if statement A is true, then statement ‘B’ is its negation ($B = \neg A$). Climacus is still reticent in the thesis that sentence B is more relevant (‘more true’) than sentence A. Reason is the paradox of the Christian faith, which, being indicatively born from the insufficiency of statement A, cannot be simply

identified with B, as it would be ‘not Socratic’. What is the point? The core of Climacus’s argumentation is made by final indications directed for Socrates: “a new organ (faith), new assumption (conscience about sin), new decision (moment) and a new teacher (God in time)” [1, p. 115]. Accordingly, morality is, in a Socratic way, superficial and in terms of the intrinsic aspect of the Universe, not fundamental.

5. Pointers to beyond

The limits of reason, as well as of scepticism, are in Climacus’ view overwhelmed by the will – not by the new knowledge, as the absolute paradox cannot be explained *per definitionem*. The truth in particular words only restricts thinking from approaching universal truth. The only relevant accession to truth is in *direct experience*, not referring to a direct experience of eternity, but the actualization of man’s free will. The dimension of every individual’s free will considering the absolute paradox becomes the *determining principle* of man’s self-expression [14]. Hegelians, unlike Climacus, dealt with paradox in a speculative way, where both the finite and the infinite are abstractions, which have no real existence individually, but only exist in their internal unity.

The dialectics of every man’s freedom and free will in Climacus’ work is related to the knowledge, as well as to the inner attitude of man’s heart. According to Socrates when a man does wrong, he has not understood what is right. If he understood what is right, he would do it – therefore ignorance is sin. “Christianity is right: sin is guilt ...the fact that a man is unable to understand what is right is because he does not want to understand it – this is where it has its roots”. [Pap. XI, 1 A 318] The problem of man’s relationship to absolute paradox has not only philosophical and theological dimensions. Principally there is its existential dimension. Absolute paradox as a collision of ideal being and real being has its ‘acoustic reflection’ – in Climacus’ expression – in an existential tension between the ideal and actual reality in every individual’s life. For recent interpretations of the legacy of Kierkegaard’s ethics for contemporary Christian reflection against current cultural and social context see [15-19].

In the Kierkegaardian perception of the concept of ethics, sin has an unavoidable position. Climacus sees sin as “a state of untruth and being in it is man’s own fault” [1, p. 35], which correlates with a paradox of freedom, where the independence from the truth socratically imprisoned man in untruth. Man’s inner attitude to the absolute paradox in certain time is therefore a moment of decisive significance in his relationship to the absolute truth with absolute consequences for his existence in time. This correlates with his twofold view on truth – philosophical or empirical – that calls for a demand to investigate the truth in an existential mode in order to avoid being trapped by illusion [20]. In Climacus’ argument God’s incarnation (more accurately the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity) as well as every individual’s own decision in time are paradoxical, therefore cannot be perceived by a logical concept of time in a

speculative perception of ‘becoming’ of being and its destruction. It is to be perceived existentially, as only then eternity makes sense, equally, the ‘other’ nature of eternity and temporality remains preserved. One can, in the *moment* of his encounter with the absolute paradox, react in one of two possible ways: he/she resigns which means that the reason capitulates, which is the case when faith as a relationship of man and absolute paradox which is a gift of God is being born. Or he/she rebels against and feels offended, which is the result of untruth in Kierkegaard sense.

For Climacus, a ‘fellow-Christian’, the concept of ‘skandalon’ [1, p. 65] became a targeted allusion to a biblical concept of offence, while the Messiah’s crucifixion confronts an individual with a need for decision-making.

Paul the Apostle in his letter to Christians in Corinth: “ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον Ἰουδαίοις μὲν **σκάνδαλον** Ἑλλησιν δὲ **μωρίαν**” (we preach Christ crucified: a **stumbling block** to Jews and **foolishness** to Gentiles) (I Corinthians 1.23). Christ crucified, as the incarnated Logos, was at the centre of the apostolic message which was denied by people like Simeon who had prophesied before Christ was born: “this child is born.....and to be a sign that will be spoken against“ (ἀντιλέγω = *antitélegó*, this word means *contradiction* and also a *rejection* and *opposition*) (Luke 2.34). This corresponds with Climacus’ thesis that contradiction is not a result of reasoning, being caused by absolute paradox which receives confirmatory witness from the offence. The concept of the ‘scandal of faith’ is rooted much deeper into Isaiah’s prophecy about the Messiah: “He will become a snare, an obstacle, and a rock against which the two houses of Israel will strike and stumble, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (וְהָיָה לְמַקְדָּשׁ וּלְאַבְרָן – נֶגֶף וְלִצְוֹר מִכְשׁוֹל – Isaiah 8.14). It is worth mentioning, that the textual exegesis indicates a passive ignorance and active arrogance of man in his attitude to the Messiah [21]. This interestingly relates to Climacus’ concept of “passive and active offence” [22], which one should be of no surprise, when realizing Kierkegaard’s theological knowledge and deep awareness of the Bible message.

In historical confrontation with the apostolic Gospel, Greeks who represent a *Socratic concept* (hypothesis A) and Jews who represent a *religious concept* (hypothesis B) meet an obstacle of ‘the God-Man on the cross’. By no means of rational analysis, religious belief and historical knowledge either, they were not able to overcome the obstacle. Though, from a different perspective, concerning the question of an individual’s existential definition against the absolute paradox in the *moment* of time, which then becomes ‘a decision of eternal’, it is Climacus again who raises a horizontal line of the historical and contemporary. For a human being the absolute paradox can become either a stumbling block or the trigger of faith.

6. Conclusions

The current discourse on the ethical justification of moral attitudes and origins for solving ethical dilemmas shows the necessity of revitalizing the

subject of metaethics with all the secondary aspects of the given issue. It seems that today's understanding of the moral justification of thought, motivation, and action on the part of the individual lacks deeper anchoring in a theoretical framework. The reason for this is the crisis of contemporary Philosophy with respect to Ethics, where there is no room for the recognition of the absolute of moral categories. It turns out that MacIntyre's understanding of morality in terms of a social construct, which is cultural and value-dependent to social context, is unsustainable. Current research on this issue indirectly confirms that there is a lack of a solid foundation for ethical universals that could be posited despite the historical development of human society. Hawking's strict naturalism causes an unacceptable reductionism in which theoretical formulas do not correspond to the observed reality in terms of humanities, namely in terms of the freedom, dignity and moral responsibility of a single individual. As has been shown in this study, Kierkegaard's contribution to this discourse is deep, comprehensive, honest and relevant.

Firstly, Kierkegaard anchors his moral reasoning historically. His rationale for the freedom of man, who authentically seeks to develop his potential towards a moral ideal, is based on an absolute paradox. Its essence lies in the incarnation of God (i.e. the second person of the Trinity), who became man. Eternity met with the time-space in the historical moment. This opens the space for faith in a personal God, which is the gift and also the engine for the inner drive of man for responsible life, and forms the basic direction of his hidden motivation. Because of the historicity of the absolute paradox, ethical principles have a dialectical space for sufficient grasping moral universalism and particularism, which cannot be said about current ethical theories.

Secondly, Kierkegaard's absolute paradox provides a rigorous justification for claiming that moral truth can be learned in every generation of social development, in every cultural and political context as time goes by. Concerning the relationship between absolute truth and historical events, Climacus postulated here an egalitarian principle. There is, however, also room for the tension that claims that absolute truth is accessible to every human being not everyone will accept that absolute truth, because of a lack of faith. Behind Climacus' way of reasoning one could find three different conceptions of faith. The first could be called a thomistic faith, which is being based on conviction that some metaphysical and historical claims are true. Such a concept offers no room for open questions and cannot properly cope with the paradoxical character of the reality of life. The second has to do with Lutheran kind of faith Kierkegaard was familiar with, which combines thomistic claim with the belief in God. The weakness of this concept is the rigidity of faith and the way of spirituality, which by its legalism does not liberate man but engages him in formalism, hardness of heart, and religious pretence. As such Christianity is not the salt of the Earth, nor the light of the world, but of sorrow and obstacle in the human development of society. The third concept is a Kierkegaardian one, which says that true faith is simply trust in the living God. This can happen regardless of the individual's condition in life or kind of personality.

Thirdly, the driving force of human life must be love, because love was behind the fact that God (the Son) became man. Kierkegaard's absolute paradox sets the foundation for decisive love, which is the right motive for thinking of man. It is also a way of self-expression in social relations but also in an ecological sense. Love also becomes the imperative, goal, intent and ultimate purpose of human life, because man was created out of love, because of love and for the love. When thinking of a love, one can bring human sin and God's grace into consideration. Climacus develops this triangle ethics into a dialectic, in which radical decision has its inevitable place. The God-man relationship according to Climacus was based upon a radical choice, therefore the 'either-or' principle makes the modus operandi for human endeavour in terms of moral responsibility. The absolute paradox with Climacus' ambitions thus somehow presents the point from where one could anticipate different modes of emotivism, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, deontologism, contractualism, etc. to be reconciled as a mosaic of stones presenting one picture. Coherent, relevant, consistent and contingent, Kierkegaard's absolute paradox is a massive philosophical-theological concept that embraces under the surface even more questions, thoughts and inspiration, which I have not dealt with in this paper. But that's how it should be. Or – what would be a paradox if it were otherwise?

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