VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

Viktoras BACHMETJEVAS

RELATION BETWEEN IRONY AND ETHICS IN S. KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

Doctoral Dissertation
Humanities, Philosophy (01 H)

Kaunas, 2016

UDK 101.9(489)
Ba-31

PhD thesis was prepared in 2008–2013 and 2015-2016 at Vytautas Magnus University Faculty of Humanities Department of Philosophy according to the granted right to conduct PhD program.

Scientific Advisor:
Prof. dr. J. D. Mininger (Vytautas Magnus University, humanities, philosophy 01 H)

ISBN 978-609-467-196-8

VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETAS

Viktoras BACHMETJEVAS

SANTYKIS TARP IRONIJOS IR ETIKOS S. KIERKEGAARD'O MĄSTYME

Daktaro disertacija
Humanitariniai mokslai, filosofija (01 H)

Kaunas, 2016

Mokslo daktaro disertacija rengta 2008–2013 ir 2015-2016 metais Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Humanitarinių mokslų fakulteto Filosofijos katedroje pagal suteiktą doktorantūros teisę.

Mokslinis konsultantas:
Prof. dr. J. D. Mininger (Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, humanitariniai mokslai, filosofija 01 H)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 6
Introduction 7
1. Objectives and Relevance 7
2. Thesis to Be Defended 9
3. Structure 10
4. Overview of Secondary Literature 13
Irony: Conceptual Framework 16
5. Preliminary Hermeneutical Remarks 16
6. Hegel's Presence in *The Concept of Irony* 20
7. Definition(s) 23
7.1. Opposite of What Is Said 24
7.2. Absolute Infinite Negativity 26
7.3. Ironist 29
7.4. Typology of Irony 31
8. Summary 32
Irony: Historical Framework 34
9. Emergence of the Concept 35
9.1. Historical Socrates 35
9.2. Socratic Irony in The Concept of Irony 42
10. German Romantics 45
11. Summary 52
Ethics: Conceptual Framework 53
12. First Ethics I: In the Footsteps of German Idealism 54
13. First Ethics II: Case Study of Marriage 71
14. Limits of the Ethical Stage 74
15. Second Ethics 82
16. Summary 86
Irony & Ethics 88
17. Incognito of the Ethical 88
18. Indirect Communication 94
19. Controlled Irony 99
20. Socratic Irony as Controlled Irony 102
21. Controlled Irony as Therapy 106
22. Summary 110
Conclusion 112
Appendix. Kierkegaard's Reception in Lithuania 114
Bibliography 124

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The initial idea for this study came to life in the form of MPhil thesis at the Institute of Philosophy at KU Leuven. My supervisor was Professor Paul Cruysberghs and I feel that I haven't thanked him enough for the encouragement he extended towards me during the period of our acquaintance. Tomas Šinkūnas was the brave soul who took the freshly finished manuscript and combed through it for mistakes, while Vytautas Ališauskas read the penultimate draft. I am extremely grateful for their time and effort. I would also like to thank Nerijus Čepulis, Agnė Budriūnaitė, Dalius Jonkus, Jurga Jonutytė, and Gintautas Mažeikis, for the various forms of support and encouragement I've received during the time of writing this dissertation. Finally, I am hugely indebted to my consultant J. D. Mininger, whose professional and human guidance allowed me to navigate the latter stages of this project in a much more assured manner than I would have done it alone.

Most of all, I am grateful to my Mother Vitalija for her continued love and support, and finally to Lina, Jonas and Jokūbas, without whom this would simply not be as meaningful as it is now.

A version of the part of chapter III was published under the title 'Etinė stadija ir jos ribos S. Kierkegaard'o filosofijoje' ['The Ethical Stage and Its Limits in S. Kierkegaard's Philosophy'] in *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 14 no. 4 (2012). I would like to extend my thanks to the journal for kind permission to use the material again here.

INTRODUCTION

> Philosophy, like an epic poem, must start in the middle.
>
> *F. Schlegel*

1. Objectives and Relevance

The very appearance of the terms 'irony' and 'ethics' next to each other might seem at least puzzling if not contradictory to contemporary reader. It has become almost obligatory to equate someone who is considered to be ironical with someone who is unwilling to commit to any values (moral included) at all. Richard Rorty speaks for many when he describes ironist as someone whose primary concerns are sceptical rather than ethical:

> (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. (Rorty 1989: 73)

Indeed, one has to admit that Rorty himself sees such an ironist as a pretty positive character – it is a figure of intellectual honesty who employs irony because he attempts to evade imposing his own necessarily biased and limited views (read: final vocabularies) on his interlocutor. Yet, this is as positive as it gets – the 'everyday' usage of the term agrees with Rorty's assessment of detachment, yet does not grant an ironist even the tag of 'intellectual honesty'. If there is a prevailing picture of an ironist in contemporary culture, it is a picture of one who embodies ultimate, radical, sceptical detachment, inability, but also unwillingness to take up any position, let alone one, which has moral import. As Claire Colebrook explains:

> Any described perspective or point of view – any delimited context – already suggests a "higher" position from which that point of view is seen *as point of view*. But this elevation or step back, by its very ironic nature, cannot be determined as simply another viewpoint. It is a sense of the banality and inadequacy of any mere viewpoint. This "sense," however, is itself only achieved through techniques of point of view. Irony, then, is a literary effect, a manifest demonstration that any position is at once the specifically determined style of a point of view. (Colebrook 2002: 49)

Therefore, an ironist in contemporary culture is an epistemological and ethical relativist, who reinterprets all the claims of epistemological and ethical import as just 'another point of view'.

The idea that such an understanding of irony is at best extremely one-sided and at worst completely misguided is a basic assumption of the present study. Contrary to this dominant view of ironist as moral relativist, the present work attempts to show that on all three counts Rorty's description of ironist is conceptually incorrect: it is not necessary neither that ironist 'has radical

and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she uses', nor that 'the argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts', nor, finally, that 'she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others'. In other words, what this study attempts to do is to show that irony and ethics are not mutually exclusive, as current 'postmodern' thinking would lead us to believe.

The thought of Søren Kierkegaard serves as the primary source and inspiration in this endeavour. Admittedly, the strong connection between irony and ethics is not new to Kierkegaardian readers at all – his pseudonym Johannes Climacus famously describes irony as 'the incognito of the ethical' and suggests that 'irony is the *confinium* between the esthetic and the ethical', while in his thesis *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard talks about irony as 'disciplinarian'. Nevertheless, beyond these pretty obvious references, the topic has been somewhat neglected in Kierkegaardian scholarship, so that as recently as 2013 Mark A. Tietjen is compelled to ask:

> The next major sphere is the ethical, which deserves special care given the varying meanings of the term throughout the authorship. Considering Climacus' second list of the spheres, one notices that "the ethical" is absent, however, and instead Climacus counts "ethics with irony as its incognito." What does this mean? What is the relation of irony to ethics? (Tietjen 2013: 39)

As the title of the present work indicates, the last question will be the main focus of the present work. However, before I proceed to flesh out the way in which I answer this question, I should say something about what remains outside of the focus of this investigation. First, this dissertation will not discuss the cases of irony in Kierkegaard's writings. This is not to say that they are not interesting in themselves, but rather that I do not think that the analysis of these literary devices is of major importance to the topic at hand. Second, this dissertation will not draw on Kierkegaard's biography when discussing the conceptual problems of the present dissertation. Although there is a lot to be admired and respected in the biographical approaches to Kierkegaardian authorship (existentialist, psychoanalytic or whatever else they may be), this is simply not the methodology, which is applied in the present work. As stated above, the inspiration for the present investigation is the conviction that the currently dominant understanding of irony as representative of ethical relativism is misguided and the related hypothesis that Kierkegaard's understanding of irony can correct and enrich how we think about irony. Therefore, the investigation focuses on the history and the development of the concept within the authorship rather than the history and the development of the author. Consequently, that entails a presupposition that there *is* a coherent conceptual framework, which underlies the whole authorship, and the task of a historian of concepts, as I understand it, is precisely the unpacking of the concept within that authorship.

Before I show what is the strategy of this 'unpacking' in the present work, I would like to answer one possible objection to such an approach, which is quite specific for Kierkegaardian studies. It concerns Kierkegaard's strategy as an author, namely, his pseudonyms. Kierkegaard explicitly tells his readers that

> In the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader. (Kierkegaard 1992: 626)

Despite the glaringly untruthful character of the statements (after all we know that every single word in the pseudonymous books *are* by Kierkegaard and it is simply nonsensical for him to claim that he has 'no knowledge of their meaning', when we know that he has), one can understand what Kierkegaard means: the pseudonyms are intended as possessing different opinion to Kierkegaard, not necessarily in agreement among themselves and, more importantly, with Kierkegaard. Therefore, Kierkegaard is justified in requesting that when quoted the pseudonymous texts should be attributed to their pseudonymous authors rather than the real author. Having said that, it does by no means follow that everything what pseudonymous authors say is in disagreement with what Kierkegaard would say in his own name. It would be extremely foolish and naïve to think that if, for example, Anti-Climacus thinks, that "To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself – this is the formula for all despair." (Kierkegaard 1980b: 20), then Kierkegaard necessarily does not think that the formula for all despair is precisely this. It is much more reasonable to believe that one has to be sensitive to the differences between Kierkegaard's thought and the thought of his pseudonyms, where and when they occur, but not to assume these differences as default. As a rule, this is the general strategy in relation to the pseudonymous works I pursue throughout the study.

Therefore, the goal of the present investigation is to show that irony is not unethical in character, but, to the contrary, can have and has ethical and moral import to the life of the individual. In order to achieve this goal, Kierkegaard's works will be analysed in order to uncover relevant conceptual implications and connections between ethics and irony.

2. Thesis to Be Defended

Kierkegaardian authorship contains two notions of ethics. The first ethics is the ethics, which can be equated with Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* – it is the ethics of prevailing societal norms, traditions and habits. The problem with such an ethics is that it lacks in universal validity as it fails to recognize and identify the source of morality in the nature of human being as the being which always emerges as the consciousness of having done wrong. The second ethics is the ethics, which acknowledges this – it is essentially religious ethics that emerges from guilt

consciousness. Guilt consciousness (or sin consciousness for Kierkegaard) can be healed by religious devotion, yet lack of religious devotion (for the inability or unwillingness to make "the leap of faith) leaves an individual in despair.

For Kierkegaard irony plays a double role in relation to ethics. As a communicative tool it is an effective way to communicate the insufficiency of the first ethics. The proponent of what Kierkegaard calls controlled irony manages by means of the destructive aspects of irony to show to others the shallowness and incorrectness of their convictions about being able to ground irony by themselves without the transcendent source. On the other hand, as a therapeutic tool it is an effective way to deal with the guilt consciousness which is accessible both to those who have made a leap of faith, but also, and more importantly, those, who were not able and / or unwilling to deal with guilt consciousness in this way.

3. Structure

In chapter I we begin by examining the conceptual framework within which irony is situated in Kierkegaard's authorship. The central text in this regard is Kierkegaard's thesis *The Concept of Irony*, which he defended as his dissertation on the graduation from the University of Copenhagen. Some commentators believe that this text should not be regarded as representing Kierkegaard's views on the grounds that Kierkegaard himself did not include this text in the list of his books or that he - under the guise of Johannes Climacus - tried to present it as one of the pseudonymous books (and in this way to disqualify it as representing his own views). I show that there are very serious grounds to believe that Kierkegaard's dismissal of this text could actually be a proof that this work was representative of Kierkegaard's views at the time of writing. Furthermore, I argue that it should be taken as meant directly, i.e. that it is not a pseudonymous book, but a book where Kierkegaard means what the author of the book says.

In section 2 of chapter I I deal with another reason why this particular text is sometimes dismissed by the commentators – namely, an openly and overtly Hegelian features of this particular text. I argue that although Hegel is undoubtedly present in Kierkegaard's dissertation, this does not mean, as recent research by Jon Stewart has shown, that Kierkegaard did not mean what he wrote. Furthermore, I argue that Hegelian influences are not merely sincere, but in certain aspects are even stronger than favourable commentators like Stewart have shown.

The final section of chapter I is devoted to Kierkegaard's definition of irony. I show that Kierkegaard adopts Quintilian's 'rhetorical' definition of irony as 'the opposite of what is said' and extends it to non-linguistical domain. I argue that this allows him to treat irony as more than merely a linguistic device. In a similar move Kierkegaard adopts Hegel's description of irony as

'absolute infinite negativity', which the latter uses in regard to Karl Solger, and makes this description into a definition. I argue, again, that this move allows Kierkegaard to treat irony not as a historical phenomenon (as Hegel does), but as a metaphysical concept. I apply Roger Booth's analysis of irony in order to illuminate what the adopted Hegelian definition entails.

Having established the definitions I discuss how they apply in practice, or what, in Kierkegaardian terms, it means to be an ironist. I show that the crucial feature of an ironist for Kierkegaard is what he terms 'negative freedom', the ability to remain existentially disengaged from any particular context. Finally, I conclude the chapter with the proposed typology of irony that Kierkegaard suggests in his dissertation. I argue that the typology shows Kierkegaard's intentions to treat irony within ethical realm.

Chapter II concerns itself with the historical framework within which in his thesis Kierkegaard situates the manifestations of irony. Although, admittedly, at times the manner of presentation is too schematic without being clarifying, nevertheless I maintain that Kierkegaard's analysis of both ancient and contemporary examples of irony warrants a careful look and can help in order to understand what type of irony will not qualify as an ethically informed irony. Therefore, the first section of the chapter is devoted to Socratic irony, as Kierkegaard understands it in his dissertation. Kierkegaard's argument is twofold: on the one hand, he embarks on an elaborate and detailed discussion of historical sources on Socrates in order to distil what he deems to be real, historical Socrates. On the other hand, after having established what for him will be the true Socrates, Kierkegaard attempts to define what constitutes the essential features of this true Socrates and concludes that it is irony. There are two particular points of interest for the present study. First, I analyse how Kierkegaard comes about this picture of Socrates in order to understand how to deal with the contradiction that appears later in the authorship, when Johannes Climacus famously mocks *Magister Kierkegaard* for misunderstanding Socrates. I deal with this contradiction fully in the final chapter of the thesis. Second, the historical analysis of Socratic irony allows us to identify additional features of irony (such as sting and rejoinder) that Kierkegaard considers important.

In the second section of chapter II I discuss Kierkegaard's understanding of what he considers to be contemporary specimen of irony, namely, the irony of German Romantics. I show that Kierkegaard in significant ways dumbs down Romantic understanding of irony, by making it into a matter of mere caprice. I conclude that this picture is incorrect, but, more importantly to my argument, it betrays what Kierkegaard is after in his understanding of irony, namely, that irony is ethically informed. Also it helps to make the transition into what Kierkegaard believes to be the distinction between the esthetic and the ethical.

Chapter III is devoted to Kierkegaard's understanding of ethics. Ethics in many ways is an even more complicated issue in Kierkegaardian scholarship than irony is. It is extensively used by the pseudonyms as well as by Kierkegaard himself, several renderings and, seemingly, interpretations are present throughout the works and the debates still rages what is and what is not ethics for Kierkegaard. My contention is that there is a coherent and intrinsically compatible system of concepts within Kierkegaardian authorship, thus the disagreements between Kierkegaard's authors are 'local' and for 'operational purposes' rather than global and meant to be insolvable.

I take as a starting point the ethical stage, which seems to me best represented by Judge William in *Either/Or II*. Therefore in the first two sections I discuss in detail what for Judge William are the crucial categories of the ethical stage. In the first section of this chapter I argue that Judge William is a Kantian rather than a Hegelian ethicist, for whom the crucial moral category is autonomous choice of the individual. I show that one can trace the roots of this idea from Kant via Fichte. The second section is devoted to Judge William's understanding of how the ethical stage is applied in practice. I show that the focus of such an ethical life is the fulfilment of one's duties.

In the third section of chapter III I introduce the notions of 'first' and 'second' ethics, which are present in Vigilius Haufniensis' treatise *The Concept of Anxiety*. I argue that this distinction is a conceptual one in Kierkegaard's authorship, in other words, it should be taken seriously and addressed. I show that the first ethics, which I deem to be the ethical stage, is limited in its inability to rationalize away the consciousness of guilt, which is a necessary part of every individual's existence. Therefore, as Haufniensis and Johannes de silentio claim, there must be a second ethics, which is able to appropriate this particular consciousness. I argue, contrary to the prevalent position among the commentators, that this second ethics is communicable and does not require indirect communication. To the contrary, indirect communication is needed merely at the transition point from the first ethics to the second. Finally, I use the last section of this chapter to demonstrate that the direct communication of the second ethics is perfectly possible and is used by Kierkegaard himself.

The last chapter of the study is devoted to show, how irony can play a positive role in the ethical realm. I present and explicate Kierkegaard's notion of controlled irony. I show that Kierkegaard sees a constructive role for irony in esthetic production and ethical life. I argue that this becomes possible only with Kierkegaard's extensions and reformulation of the classical definitions of irony he employs. In the next section I discuss the historical specimen of controlled irony Kierkegaard suggests. I discuss the Socrates, which is presented by Johannes Climacus in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. I argue that although the view of Socrates as an ethicist

clearly has shifted significantly since Kierkegaard's thesis, it is important to note that the view of Socrates as first and foremost ironist remained intact. Furthermore, I touch upon other curious cases of controlled irony, which Kierkegaard mentions (such as John the Baptist and Hegel among others) in order to further illuminate, what the notion of controlled irony might entail.

Finally, the last two sections juxtapose the notion of the second ethics and the controlled irony in order to show that the communicative impasse, which is created by the inability of the second ethicist to convey his message to the uninitiated, is resolved by the employment of irony as communicative tool.

In many senses the first three chapters are a preparation for the fourth. Chapter IV makes use of the notion of the second ethics, presented in Chapter III, and the notion of irony as absolute infinite negativity, presented in Chapter I, and shows that ethics, that is in-formed by inward religious sentiment, strives to communicate this in-formation, yet is aware of its own limitations in this endeavour. Therefore, it draws on such "destructive" communicative tools as irony in its attempt to pave the ground for its goals.

4. Overview of Secondary Literature

I have already mentioned that there is no systematic exploration of this particular aspect of Kierkegaard's thought in secondary literature. Despite this, there are a few authors whose insights have been helpful to illuminate the present study.

Regarding Kierkegaard's understanding of irony, John Lippitt's *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (Lippitt 2000) is perhaps the most ambitious attempt to systematize Kierkegaard's notion of the comic and the two sub-concepts – humour and irony – it entails. Nevertheless, it comes with two caveats. Despite what the title promises, Lippitt focuses on the notion of the comic in one pseudonymous work, namely *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and almost completely ignores other Kierkegaard's works, most glaringly *The Concept of Irony*. Secondly, again despite what the title promises, Lippitt's interest is mostly devoted to the notion of humour, while irony, despite a few insightful and knowledgeable comments, remains on the periphery. Having said that, Lippitt's study is and will remain a point of departure for any study of Kierkegaard's understanding of the comic.

The second monograph, which clearly stands out in recent literature on Kierkegaard's irony, is K. Brian Soderquist's *The Isolated Self. The Truth and Untruth in Søren Kierkegaard's 'On The Concept of Irony'* (Soderquist 2013). The undoubted value of Soderquist's research is somewhat offset by his focus on Kierkegaard's dissertation only. Furthermore, because of his interest in the

demarcation of the self by means of irony, he overlooks or sometimes plainly denies the relation of irony to ethics in Kierkegaard's thought in general and in the dissertation in particular.

The other two monographs, which deserve attention, are Michael Strawser's *Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard From Irony to Edification* (Strawser 1997) and Michael A. Tietjen's *Kierkegaard, Communication, and Virtue: Authorship as Edification* (Tietjen 2013). Strawser's study is commendable for its intention to take seriously Kierkegaard's dissertation and for the ambition to treat Kierkegaard's project in a holistic manner, while Tietjen's study is important, because it develops the hermeneutic of trust, which provides methodological ground for such a treatment. Despite the actual or perceived shortcomings of these authors, I am heavily indebted to all of them, as without their projects I would not have had the courage to follow the same path.

Although Jon Stewart's research does not focus on irony *per se*, his work in re-evaluating Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel and his speculative philosophy in the last 12 years have allowed to constructively re-read Kierkegaard's thesis and paved the ground for re-evaluating the extent to which Kierkegaard is influenced by Hegel's insights on particular historical figures like German Romantics, but also by Hegel's systematic treatments of philosophical concepts like irony. Stewart's *Kierkegaard's Relation to Irony Reconsidered* (Stewart 2003) and more recent *The Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age. Heiberg, Martensen and Kierkegaard* (Stewart 2015) since the moment they appeared have gained the status of truly fundamental and indispensable authorities on the role of Hegelian philosophy within Kierkegaard's authorship.

However useful these authors were in finding the way to approach Kierkegaard's authorship, as regards understanding of what irony is in general *and* for Kierkegaard, I also had to look elsewhere, as all of the above authors do not see irony as the primary focus of their interests. In order to situate irony as a phenomenon Wayne C. Booth's seminal work *Rhetoric of Irony* (Booth 1975) is unparalleled in the field. Way too many authors on irony get caught up in the contradictions and implications of implications, which the phenomenon they are discussing entails, and thus render the whole discussion rather useless. It's as if, to use Kierkegaard's words, irony takes over. Booth's pragmatic resolution to deal only with, what he can handle, and to leave out, what is not yet ready to be analysed, produces a commendable and thorough study on irony and one of the most efficient distinctions of 'stable' and 'unstable' ironies that are available. Additionally, I have to mention Alexander Nehamas, whose work on irony, in particular *Virtues of Authenticity* (Nehamas 1999), was especially helpful in the early stages of this study, and D. C. Muecke's *The Compass of Irony* (Muecke 1969) remains, even after all these years, one of the most admirable attempts to provide a typology of irony.

While discussing the other side of the topic, namely, the ethical, the work of M. Jamie Ferreira is unparalleled both in its lucidity and scope. My view of what I term 'second ethics' is heavily

influenced and broadly follows Ferreira's *Love's Grateful Striving* (Ferreira 2001). In addition, Ronald M. Green's articles (Green 1986, Green 1993) helped me to formulate my view of the transition between the first and the second ethics.

Additionally, at the beginning of each chapter I provide the more specific sources that helped inform my view on the particular aspect of Kierkegaard's thought in question.

Finally, despite (or perhaps to the contrary, because of) the fact that this study is conducted in English, yet by a Lithuanian, I felt that it would be a significant oversight and a dereliction of duty on my part to completely overstep the Lithuanian Kierkegaardian scholarship. While it is impossible to measure the impact and influence, which previous Lithuanian readers of Kierkegaard have had on my thinking, it is undoubted that this influence is profound in many significant ways. Therefore, I devote the appendix of the dissertation to the overview of Kierkegaard's studies in Lithuanian. It is also hoped that, beyond the duty of the indebtedness from my side, this might be of some interest to the English reader, who otherwise would be completely ignorant of this aspect of Kierkegaard studies and reception.

IRONY: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I will provide the conceptual framework within which Kierkegaard encompasses his understanding of irony. In order to achieve this I will look at Kierkegaard's dissertation *The Concept of Irony*, where he provides his definition of irony, qualifies it within the sphere of language, poetry and ethics and suggests his own historical interpretation of the development of the concept and, more importantly, typology of ironies. I will argue that already in this early work Kierkegaard fundamentally lays out his approach to irony, which will remain stable throughout his authorship.[1]

However, before doing this I will discuss two meta-issues, that are lively discussed in Kierkegaardian scholarship and directly influence how one reads Kierkegaard's dissertation: (i) the so-called ironic and related to this (ii) Hegelian readings of the dissertation. Some scholars argue that the thesis was written ironically and as one of the proofs use explicit Hegelian overtones in the text, which, according to the popular version of Kierkegaard as an anti-Hegelian, show that Kierkegaard could not have been serious. In the following I discuss the arguments for and against (i) and conclude that it is improbable. Regarding (ii) I concentrate on two particular points that are relevant to this thesis, namely, Hegelian definition of irony, which Kierkegaard adopts, but, I argue, extends and reshapes, and Hegel's interpretation of Socrates, which Kierkegaard accepts with qualifications.

5. Preliminary Hermeneutical Remarks

Ever since Kierkegaard wrote his dissertation, the debate on how one is supposed to read it carries on. Traditional, i.e. direct, reading of the work, which presupposes that the author means

[1] It is remarkable how little Kierkegaard's work on irony has been used by philosophers and how much, by contrast, by the literary critics. The most important book, dealing with Kierkegaard's irony philosophically is John Lippitt's *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (Lippitt 2000), while Michael Strawser's *Both/And: From Irony to Edification* (Strawser 1997) deals with irony extensively. K. Brian Soderquist's recent monograph traces how irony affects the genesis of the self in Kierkegaard's thesis (Soderquist 2013). Various critical assessments are provided in *International Kierkegaard Commentary* (Perkins 2001). Jon Stewart deals with Hegelian influence in Kierkegaard's thesis (Stewart 2003: 132-181, Stewart 2015: 171-231) while Andrew Cross in "Neither Either Nor Or: The Perils of Reflexive Irony" (Cross 1998) discusses the alienating aspects of irony. On the relation between irony and melancholy in Kierkegaard's dissertation see Abrahim Kahn's "Melancholy, Irony, and Kierkegaard" (Khan 1985). It is curious that Kierkegaard was introduced in Lithuania primarily as an ironist (Šliogeris 1978).
On Kierkegaard's understanding of irony from rhetorical perspective see Wayne C. Booth's excellent *Rhetoric of Irony* (Booth 1975), David Kaufer's "Irony and Rhetoric Strategy" (Kaufer 1977), its relation and use to literary criticism see Joseph A. Buttigieg's "The Interest of Irony" (Buttigieg 1983) and Paul A. Bové's "Cleanth Brooks and Modern Irony: A Kierkegaardian Critique" (Bové 1976), the problems of the perception of irony in Kierkegaard see Birgit Baldwin's "Irony, that 'Little, Invisible Personage': A Reading of Kierkegaard's Ghosts" (Baldwin 1989), its antagonism together with Romantic irony towards contemporary irony see Berel Lang's "The Limits of Irony" (Lang 1996), equation with Derrida's deconstruction see Ronald Schleifer's "Irony, Identity and Repetition: On Kierkegaard's 'The Concept of Irony'" (Schleifer 1979).

what he says, is confronted with another interpretation, which suggests that this work is ironic in nature, and therefore should be read with double care and from a distance. The first one to offer such an interpretation was Hans Frederik Helveg, who as early as 1855 in his article *Hegelianism in Denmark* suggested that

> The work in question not only treats irony but is an irony, specifically its aim, for it contains something quite different and contains much more than the recipient could imagine. The members of the Department of Philosophy who evaluated the piece could hardly have imagined that the work of the young author was not much a requirement for a Magister degree as it was a program for life; it was not the solution to a scholarly problem but a life task. (Quoted in Olesen 2001: 101)

Usually such an interpretation suggests that Kierkegaard merely presented another point of view, to which he not necessarily ascribed himself, that he "tried out a role of a Hegelian philosopher", and basically "played toss-in-a-blanket" with his audience. Mainly the arguments for such an interpretation are drawn on the basis of the frequently low quality of the text,[2] heavy reliance on Hegel,[3] so uncharacteristic to Kierkegaard, and Johannes Climacus'[4] reference to 'Magister Kierkegaard' in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*,[5] thus implying that Kierkegaard treated his thesis merely as another pseudonymous work.[6] Therefore, such a reading concludes that what was written by *Magister* Kierkegaard was not what *Søren* Kierkegaard really meant. While Magister Kierkegaard was solving his scholarly tasks, Søren Kierkegaard was busy with his 'life task'. *The Concept of Irony* then has a double meaning and the second - the real - one was known only to the author.

However, these arguments can be countered, I would like to believe, relatively easily. Inconsistencies and low academic standards can be explained by the immaturity of the author and Kierkegaard's rather ambiguous relation to the academia and its requirements. Moreover, even later in his authorship, despite the fact of his having a certain fondness for putting his surname as an editor on the cover of his pseudonymous books, Kierkegaard failed to have the same fondness for editing itself. As for Climacus' reference to Magister Kierkegaard, the

---

[2] For example, Olesen claims to have proven that the chapter on Friedrich Schlegel contains several long passages that are direct translations of Schlegel's novel *Lucinde* – 'but without quotation marks.' (Olesen 2001: 104n)

[3] Kierkegaard devotes a special appendix to Hegel's view on Socrates, while he also is clearly influenced by Hegel in his interpretation of Romantic irony; furthermore, throughout the thesis he makes use of Hegel's definition of irony as 'absolute infinite negativity'. (Kierkegaard 1989: 6, 26, 261 et al.) I discuss the extent and the limits of Hegel's influence in the next section.

[4] I will refer to the authors of Kierkegaard's books by the pseudonyms (where there are such), for Kierkegaard insisted not to be identified with any of the pseudonymous authors and rather be referred to as 'the author of the author or the authors'. (Kierkegaard 1992: 627) This, however, does not mean that I will automatically assume that they have different opinions to Kierkegaard's – I will rather pass judgement on a case-by-case basis.

[5] Climacus reproaches Magister Kierkegaard for bringing out 'only one side' of Socrates' ethical stance. (Kierkegaard 1992: 503) The supporters of indirect reading would like to see here a disagreement between the pseudonyms, or the life-views they represent, in the same way as it appears, for example, between Johannes the Seducer and Judge William in *Either/Or*.

[6] The most notable recent supporters of such a reading are Joakim Garff (cf. 'In his dissertation he not only *explicates* irony, he also *replicates* it.' (Garff 2005: 196), Michael Strawser (Strawser 1997), Tonny Aagaard Olesen (Olesen 2001: 101-122) et al.

argument is hardly sufficient or proven. If anything, it proves that *at the time* of writing the *Postscript* Kierkegaard was willing to make his previous self – the author of the dissertation – into just another pseudonym. However, this does not mean that the same willingness was present *at the time* of writing the dissertation. Furthermore, there is evidence that it was not just a disagreement between the pseudonyms. In the famous quote from his diary Kierkegaard seems to admit as much:

> Influenced as I was by Hegel and whatever was modern, without the maturity really to comprehend greatness, I could not resist pointing out somewhere in my dissertation that it was a defect on the part of Socrates to disregard the whole and only consider numerically the individuals. What a Hegelian fool I was! It is precisely this that powerfully demonstrates what a great ethicist Socrates was. (Kierkegaard 1967: 4281)

Kierkegaard not only acknowledges having been immature at some point in his life (which seems quite difficult to accept for some of his readers), but also of having had a change of heart from what he had writtent previously in his dissertation. It seems that after all Magister Kierkegaard wrote what Søren Kierkegaard meant, for, as Andrew J. Burgess points out, "there seems no sense for Kierkegaard to abandon positions he never maintained." (Burgess 2001: 151)

The above quote also helps to refute the last argument for the 'ironic' reading of the thesis. Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian stance in the Kierkegaardian scholarship is something of an obvious truth, from which the student of Kierkegaard is supposed to begin. It is often taken for granted that one of the main goals of Kierkegaard's authorship was an anti-Hegelian campaign and Hegelianism was what "he hated above all else". (Bretall 1946)[7] Indeed, much of Kierkegaard's fame (especially outside Denmark) even up to now is down to his reputation as a thorough anti-Hegelian. In such a climate it seems unthinkable that Kierkegaard could have held at some point the same position as Hegel. However, such a perception is not as self-evident as one would like to believe. As we have seen, Kierkegaard acknowledged of being influenced by Hegel at least during the period of writing his dissertation. Moreover, Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel has been recently re-evaluated by Jon Stewart, who challenged the traditional anti-Hegelian interpretation.[8]

Therefore, the direct reading of the book in question seems to warrant more credibility.[9] The position presented in the thesis can be safely regarded as Søren Kierkegaard's position at that particular moment in his authorship. Such a conclusion might seem laughable to a more astute

[7] Quoted in Stewart 2003: 9.

[8] I discuss Stewart's findings in detail and the points of Hegelian influence which he did not mention in the next section.

[9] The discussion is not helped by inaccurate or even plainly incorrect arguments. The Hongs, in their otherwise excellent edition, relying on Holger Frederik Rørdam, state that during the defence Kierkegaard 'played toss-in-a-blanket with the faculty' (Kierkegaard 1989: xi), which then was taken up by several other authors. However, as Bruce H. Kirmmse pointed out (Kirmmse 2001: 76), the phrase was used to describe Peter Christian Kierkegaard's doctoral defence in 1836 and not his younger brother Søren's in 1841.

reader. He might ask - does it make any difference if Kierkegaard really meant what he wrote? Shouldn't we concern ourselves only with what he wrote rather than playing a guessing game of what he might have meant if he ever meant anything else? Isn't our job as philosophers based on the trust that others will try to communicate their ideas as clearly as possible? However, such a reader would risk missing a few important points. The history of philosophy knows thinkers who for one reason or another refused to communicate their ideas in the clearest fashion possible. The debate on what Plato thought about language or love is still going on, and even his own contemporaries struggled to figure out what was the actual essence of Socrates' teaching.[10] Nietzsche famously refused to be blamed for the misunderstanding of his books and demanded a 'hearing ear' from his reader.[11] Kierkegaard certainly falls into this category.[12] Almost all his philosophical works are written under the guise of a pseudonym.[13] Distance between the author and the reader, which such a usage of pseudonyms evokes, however, creates a hermeneutical problem. The reader, left with no apparent author,[14] finds himself in a position where he does not have to prove anything to anyone for he is the only one who is left in the discussion.[15]

Could it be, thus, that we are facing the work where Kierkegaard for once actually speaks more directly and openly than it is customary for him and thus opens his cards? Could it be that we are facing the work where Kierkegaard's initial reflections on irony are expressed in a more direct way than we are normally used to? In order to find out we have to turn to the text.

---

[10] A good indication of the confusion caused by Socrates' teaching is the amount of schools, which claimed to have originated from him (among them such diverse traditions as Scepticism and Cynicism).

[11] "If anyone finds this script incomprehensible and hard on the ears, I do not think the fault necessarily lies with me. It is clear enough, assuming as I do, that people have first read my earlier works without sparing themselves some effort: because they really are not easy to approach." (Nietzsche 1994: 9)

[12] A great discussion on the relation between Kierkegaard's style and his philosophical meaning – among many other attempts, to be sure – is found in Lawrence M. Hinman's "Philosophy and Style" (Hinman 1980).

[13] This fact for some commentators seems to equate to the book being 'ironic'. For example, Ronald M. Green, having established that *Fear and Trembling* is a 'cryptogram', basing his thesis on the epigraph and the pseudonym, concludes: "All signs, therefore, indicate that from the outset Kierkegaard approached this creation with his sense of irony at its most acute." (Green 1986: 96) It is obvious that mere exercise of distancing oneself from what one is saying is not necessarily a sign of irony.

[14] The reader of *Either/Or*, for example, has to be surely confused, having to do only with the editor on the title page, who, furthermore, in his Preface admits that he has got nothing to do with the text, since he found it accidentally.

[15] It is rather ironic that the debate is not merely a scholarly problem of Kierkegaardian research, but also an illustrious indicator of the influence Kierkegaard's works have on their readers – confused and paranoid such readers tend to see irony in every Kierkegaard's move and often a simple contradiction is turned into a most profound example of irony. Kierkegaard, however, thought that it is precisely the readers' fault if they did not understand what he meant. Consider his (this time clearly ironic) answer to one of the readers of his dissertation, Andreas Frederik Beck, who in his review professed not being able to follow the author. In reply Kierkegaard writes: 'It is sufficient punishment for me that Dr. B. has not understood me, and all the more so, since it already was grievous enough for me that Dr. B. believed that he had understood me in several passages.' (Quoted in Olesen 2001: 120)

6. Hegel's Presence in *The Concept of Irony*

Almost all the readers of Kierkegaard's thesis noted that Hegel's presence both on the conceptual level and in the structure of the work is incomparable to that of any other author. The organization of Part I has a Hegelian structure,[16] the part on Socrates ends with a special Appendix devoted to Hegel's point of view,[17] while the whole section on Romantic irony is strongly influenced by Hegel's interpretation. All the readers of the work agree to at least that much. However, as we have already noted, these facts prompt quite different reactions to the work itself and evoke completely opposite interpretations. The ongoing tradition to perceive Kierkegaard as primarily and predominantly anti-Hegelian thinker gave birth to what we could call the 'ironic theory', which claims that the work is not what Kierkegaard really meant, since he was trying on the mask of the 'Hegelian philosopher', etc. Such a theory tries either to minimize or completely discard Hegel's presence in the thesis, thus doing justice neither to Hegel, nor to Kierkegaard.

As it was already noted this anti-Hegelian thesis has been challenged and pretty much dismissed by the research conducted recently by Stewart. Stewart challenges what he calls 'the standard view' (Stewart 2003: 3-27) mainly on two points. He claims that (i) Kierkegaard had a 'Hegelian' period early in his career and (ii) even later the main target of his attacks were Danish Hegelians J. L. Heiberg and H. L. Martensen rather than Hegel himself. On this reading Kierkegaard's thesis is Hegelian not because it is ironic (as the 'standard view' would have it), but because Kierkegaard himself *is* Hegelian. Stewart's seminal *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered* (Stewart 2003) has been recently extended by *The Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age. Heiberg, Martensen and Kierkegaard* (Stewart 2015), where Stewart convincingly shows that during the time of writing of the dissertation Kierkegaard was quite positively predisposed not merely to Hegel, but also to the Danish Hegelians Heiberg and Martensen, therefore, there are very good reasons to read the compliments to Hegel, Heiberg and Martensen in the thesis as meaning what they are saying. For example, when Kierkegaard concludes the thesis with an advice to his reader to look for controlled irony in Martensen's review of Heiberg's poetry (Kierkegaard 1993: 329), Stewart does precisely that and convincingly shows that the review in question indeed proposes a vision of aesthetic irony that

[16] The sections are entitled *The View Made Possible*, *The Actualization of the View*, and *The View Made Necessary*, which clearly follow Hegel's categories of possibility, actuality and necessity.

[17] Although the Appendix is intended as the comparison of earlier views on Socrates, such an intention is immediately reduced to the overview of exclusively Hegel's position, because, according to Kierkegaard, "Hegel clearly provides a turning point in the view of Socrates. Therefore, I shall begin and end with Hegel, without giving attention to his predecessors, since they, insofar as they have any significance, have been corroborated by his view, or to his successors, since they have only relative value in comparison with Hegel." (Kierkegaard 1989: 221)

corresponds with the one, merely sketched by Kierkegaard in the last chapter of his dissertation. (Stewart 2015: 215-231)[18]

For our present purposes I will concentrate on two points of encounter between Hegel and Kierkegaard in the dissertation, which are of direct relevance to the topic of the present work. These two points are Hegel's definition of irony, adopted and extended by Kierkegaard, and Hegel's view of Socrates, accepted by Kierkegaard, yet with important qualifications.

Hegel famously provides the description of irony as infinite absolute negativity in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, where he writes:

> And therein he hit upon the dialectical element of the Idea, the point to which I give the name of 'infinite absolute negativity', the activity of the idea in that it negates itself as the infinite and universal, so as to become finiteness and particularity, and just as really cancels this negation in turn, establishing thereby the universal and infinite in the finite and particular. (Hegel 1993: 75)

Kierkegaard found this definition so important that he put it among the Latin theses that accompanied the text.[19] In other words, he was not merely adopting the definition – he was willing for it to be one of the points of discussion and during the defence.[20]

Anyone, who consulted this particular place in Hegel's book, will know that Hegel here is talking about a German Romantic writer Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger. Importantly, although he discusses Ludwig Tieck and Schlegel in the same context, this particular description of irony is used exclusively in relation to Solger. This is made evident also in *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel uses similar formulation in relation to Solger's critique of Schlegel. (Hegel 1991: 180-181n) Moreover, nowhere does Hegel use it in reference to Socratic irony. In fact, Hegel makes a clear distinction between Socratic and Romantic ironies. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he makes sure to distinguish between Socratic 'universal irony of the world' and Schlegel's (or more generally what he deemed to be the philosophical movement, influenced by Johann Gottlieb Fichte) irony as 'universal principle'. (Hegel 1892: 384)

For his part Kierkegaard appropriates this definition when referring to *any* kind of irony. Most elaborately he does so when discussing irony in world-history:

> Here, then, we have irony as the infinite absolute negativity. It is negativity, because it only negates, it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. (Kierkegaard 1989: 261)

---

[18] For Stewart's refutation of the ironic thesis cf. Stewart 2003: 135-141. Also cf. George Pattison's article "How Kierkegaard Became 'Kierkegaard': The Importance of the Year 1838" (Pattison 2008: 753-761), which shows the influence of Kierkegaard's theological studies on his Hegelian views during his study years and explains, why Kierkegaard would distinguish Hegel from Danish Hegelians.

[19] The full formulation of the thesis is this: "Irony as infinite and absolute negativity is the lightest and weakest indication of subjectivity." (Kierkegaard 1989: 6)

[20] Burgess (Burgess 2001: 141-160) argues that because this definition of irony is taken from Hegel, the thesis should be interpreted as ironic. However, Burgess fails to explain why Kierkegaard could not borrow the definition from Hegel, taking Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian stance as an assumption. Moreover, as I try to show, Kierkegaard's interpretation of this definition departs significantly from that of Hegel's, and thus it remains unclear why he couldn't borrow the formula while at the same time reinterpreting it in his own terms.

I will discuss what implications this explication has in the next section, but for now let's note that in addition to extending the application of the formula to all irony, Kierkegaard also places it above the particularities of historical context. In other words, this formulation – in contrast to Hegel's – becomes the definition of the concept rather than the description of the historical phenomenon.

In Hegel's formulation it is clear that Solger took an active part in acquiring irony, he 'hit upon' the activity of the idea. In Kierkegaard's interpretation, however, irony as infinite negativity is a part of the necessary world-historical process. Such irony appears in the times of epochal changes and ironic individuals are the embodiment of the need for that change. As Kierkegaard puts it, "To a certain degree, every world-historical turning point must have this formation." (Kierkegaard 1989: 261) The individual does not choose irony as negativity, but is rather possessed by it. Thus, in contrast to Hegel, irony for Kierkegaard is much closer to Schlegel's 'universal principle' rather than historical accident.

The second point of divergence between Kierkegaard and Hegel is the figure of Socrates. In the Appendix to the Part I Kierkegaard is supposed to fulfil a self-proclaimed goal – to overview and assess the secondary literature on Socrates. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard immediately declares that the only one, who is worth paying attention to in this regard, is Hegel. Admittedly, this sounds a bit too outrageous even for a biggest fan of Hegel and thus could be used as a reason to interpret at least this part of dissertation as ironic (as some scholars duly did), yet one must remember that this part comes after an extensive and elaborate analysis of all historical sources on Socrates, which provides revolutionary at the time hermeneutical decisions: Kierkegaard distinguishes three historical sources (Xenphon, Plato, Aristophanes), depending on their biases and historical accuracy and distinguishes Platonic dialogues between 'Socratic' and 'Platonic'.[21] Kierkegaard was very much aware of the novelty of his work, thus it could be understandable that he would consider *all* the previous scholarship as having in essence the same value and the same flaws. If that was the case, it would be not surprising if he would take the latest of the historians of philosophy as the example of the greatest scholarly achievement before Kierkegaard himself.

This is supported by the fact that Kierkegaard immediately follows up this introduction with an overview of what he regards as Hegel's inconsistencies and flaws in analysing Socrates. Kierkegaard reviews Hegel's treatment of Socrates in his *History of Philosophy* and shows that Hegel (i) did not distinguish Platonic dialogues which can be trusted as faithful to Socrates and those in which Socrates is merely used as a loudspeaker for Plato's own philosophy; (ii) furthermore, he did not notice the difference between Xenophon's and Plato's interpretations of

[21] I discuss more extensively Kierkegaard's achievements in Socratic scholarship in the next chapter.

Socrates.[22] Both critical remarks could be reduced to one: Hegel is analysing the sources from too great a distance and thus gives too broad (and therefore imprecise) a picture of Socrates. "He [Hegel – *VB*] is in too much of a hurry and is too aware of the great importance of his role as commander-in-chief of world history to take time for more than the royal glimpse he allows to glide over them." (Kierkegaard 1989: 222) In other words, Kierkegaard criticizes Hegel for not doing what he, Kierkegaard, just extensively did in part I of the thesis, namely, looking in detail at the historical sources on Socrates and trying to distinguish the objective truth from creative licence of the authors of those sources.

However, these methodological criticisms are not substantial enough to dismiss Hegel's view as inadequate and Kierkegaard himself acknowledges that much: "These separate [Hegelian – *VB*] observations are in complete agreement with what I tried to point out in the first section of this study." (Kierkegaard 1989: 223). This is also attested to by the fact that subsequently Kierkegaard extensively quotes and reports Hegel's views on Socrates.

To reiterate, Kierkegaard suggests that Hegel was not attentive enough to the historical sources on Socrates and therefore his interpretation is too broad. Despite that and contrary to the popularly held view, Kierkegaard agrees that *in general* Hegel is completely correct about Socrates and his views coincide with Kierkegaard's views.[23] Also Kierkegaard adopts Hegel's description of irony and makes it into a definition. I will turn now to the discussion what he makes of this definition.

7. Definition(s)

In his dissertation Kierkegaard provides two definitions of irony. Both of them are borrowed from other authors (Quintilian and Hegel), and both of them are reinterpreted by Kierkegaard to serve his own purposes. In this section I will discuss the extent to which Kierkegaard pushes these two definitions and what meanings he invests in them. Also I will give an account of various qualifications of irony which Kierkegaard provides and which help illuminate its standing in the domains of language, rhetoric and poetry. Ultimately I argue that already in the dissertation Kierkegaard expands the usage of irony from purely linguistic to existential sphere.

[22] In truth, there is one more reproach to Hegel regarding Socrates, namely, that Hegel's account of Sophism leaves open a possibility of equating Socrates with the Sophists. Kierkegaard is very much explicit in his disagreement with such a possibility.

[23] This is important to note as later in the authorship Kierkegaard changes his opinion about Socrates quite radically, yet does *not* change his opinion on irony. I discuss Kierkegaard's later take on Socrates in chapter IV.

7.1. Opposite of What Is Said

We encounter the first definition in the section entitled "Observations for Orientation", which comes after the Introduction to part II. After devoting the whole of part I to the textual analysis of historical sources on Socrates, Kierkegaard finally turns to a more general approach and provides a definition of irony.

Initially Kierkegaard merely repeats a classical formulation, first offered by Quintilian[24] and since taken up as a vocabulary description, as "saying the opposite of what is meant". (Kierkegaard 1989: 247) Yet immediately in the next sentence he redefines this definition and puts it in more general terms: "The phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence." (Kierkegaard 1989: 247) Kierkegaard explains such redefining of the initial characteristic in purely linguistic terms: the phenomenon is the spoken word, while the essence is the meaning of the word. The relation between the word and its meaning is intrinsic: a word without a meaning is a mere blabber, and a thought without a word cannot be articulated as a thought. In other words, the relation between the phenomenon and the essence is interdependent. Nevertheless, the metaphysical twist in the reformulation is obvious. Clearly such redefinition serves not only explanatory goals. In addition to being exegetic to the initial formula, it also becomes a precursor to see in irony more than just a figure of speech. From exclusively linguistic domain, irony, qualified as a disparity between essence and phenomenon, can now be noted in an increasingly broader number of contexts, be it a situation, a work of art or simply an object.[25] In other words, such a formula allows Kierkegaard to qualify as ironic any situation in which the phenomenon is not correlative with the essence.

This redefinition serves another goal – it helps Kierkegaard to qualify another type of irony that is often overlooked. We have noted already that normally irony is understood as 'saying the opposite of what is meant'. This is made apparent to the listeners by contrasting the literal meaning of the words with the context. In such a way listeners become aware that the speaker's (the ironist's) real meaning differs from the meaning of his spoken words. However, as Kierkegaard points out, there are cases of irony when the speaker means what he says, albeit he pretends not to. In such cases irony is used to deceive listeners into thinking that the real meaning of the saying does not correlate with the literal meaning of the words. What is said is what is meant, yet, irony is used to deceive the listeners into the opposite. Here, opposite to the

[24] For Quintilian's definition cf. (Quintilian 1986: IX, II, 44).

[25] Indeed, in a contemporary usage of irony we keep referring to films, books or even buildings as ironic, by that meaning that we register a contradiction or failed expectations of 'how things ought to be.' (The most influential contemporary classification of ironies remains Douglas C. Muecke's *The Compass of Irony* (Muecke 1969)). Incidentally, some of the contemporary commentators ascribe this extended usage of irony to Kierkegaard (e.g. Booth 1975), however, it is more credible that this extension was provided by the early German Romantics, and especially Schlegel, and from him via Hegel came into the usage that we recognize from Kierkegaard.

above-mentioned type of irony, "the essence becomes identical with the phenomenon."[26] (Kierkegaard 1989: 248) Kierkegaard notes that such a usage of irony is not only rare, but also risky, for, paradoxically, the sincerity has to be unconditional: "The remark is so earnest that it is shocking." (Kierkegaard 1989: 248) This type of irony demands complete earnestness, for otherwise it boils down to a mere lie. Moreover, the earnestness has to register with the listeners as shocking, for otherwise it will not have the desired effect. Such irony, however, demands some prior knowledge from the listeners in order to be grasped. The listeners, according to Kierkegaard, have to know the state of affairs: "The hearer in the know shares the secret lying behind it" (Kierkegaard 1989: 248), for otherwise the earnestness will remain unnoticed.

Let's consider one of the most famous examples of this type of irony – Putin's response to Larry King's question regarding the tragedy of the 118 members of the crew trapped beyond reach of rescue in the nuclear submarine *Kursk*. To King's question 'So what really happened to that ship?' Putin responds with a wry smile: 'It sank.' It is clear that Putin means what he says, and yet it would be extremely surprising if anyone would fail to miss the ironic character of that particular utterance. Of course, Putin helps the audience with the signal – the smile -, which indicates that there is something more going on than just an honest response to an honest question. Yet it is clear that the smile does not create the ironic effect, but merely indicates it. If anything, the ironic effect would be stronger without it. Then what creates the irony in this particular case? Purely schematically, Putin here clearly is using not merely the previous knowledge of the audience of all the circumstances surrounding the accident, but also the expectations of the audience regarding the response. In order for the ironic effect to take place, there must be a certain "community" of ironists formed - Putin has to know that his audience expects a rather different answer, while his audience has to know that Putin knows that. Thus ironic effect is created by ably using the context – the knowledge and the expectations of the audience. A much more difficult question is what does this particular case of irony achieve? If Putin means what he says, then one could conclude that a simple statement of the fact is all he is trying to say: "The matter of fact is that the ship sank, as you all know." or something to that extent. But if that would be the case, this would be merely an example of a direct speech. Clearly, in this particular case there is this *and* something more going on, even if one struggles to make out what exactly that is. It could be that Putin is mocking the sensationalism of contemporary media and society, while it could as well be that he is mocking only the dramatic style of King's questioning. It is hard to tell in this particular case, albeit precisely this merely

[26] Perhaps as an example of such irony could be Mae West's refusal to attend a state dinner at the White House at the President Gerald R. Ford's invitation: "It's an awful long way to go just for one meal." I borrow the latter example from Gregory Vlastos (Vlastos 1991: 21).

underlines the importance of the fact that despite this lack of understanding the precise meaning of irony we still unmistakably are sure that irony is present.

Kierkegaard picks up on this point, when he gives Quintilian's formula another twist. Ironic figure of speech, according to him, rather than merely meaning the opposite of what it says, "cancels itself". (Kierkegaard 1989: 248) In other words, in a lot of cases of irony we might know better what the ironist is not saying than what he intends to say, or, to put it in Quintilian's terms, we might not know what ironist means, but in all successful cases of irony we will be aware of what ironist does not mean. This is not to say that there are no cases of irony when we do know what ironist means. For these purposes Wayne C. Booth in his *A Rhetoric of Irony* suggests a distinction between a stable and unstable irony. According to Booth, a stable irony is a type of intended, covert, fixed, and finite in application irony where "once a reconstruction of meaning has been made, the reader is not then invited to undermine it with further demolitions and reconstructions." (Booth 1975: 6) Accordingly, unstable irony is that type of irony where, because the intention of the ironist is unknown, the meaning of irony is unidentifiable. It is worth noting that ironic figure of speech in both cases necessarily cancels itself, yet only the stable irony intends some new meaning instead of the cancelled meaning.

What is common to all types of ironies is a higher or lower degree of pretence or simulation. Importantly, the simulation has to be evident for the ironic effect to take place. As Kierkegaard puts it, "It is like a riddle to which one at the same time has the solution." (Kierkegaard 1989: 248) This theatrical effect creates a peculiar feature – it creates a possibility of double talk. Ironist can communicate at the same time on two levels – he can, for example, be earnest with someone who shares the same knowledge of the context, at the same time without disclosing certain meanings or concealing them from those who are not aware of the wider context.

In conclusion, Kierkegaard reworks Quintilian's definition to expand its meaning from merely rhetorical to metaphysical, in this way opening up a numerous possibilities of seeing irony in other than linguistic contexts, but, more importantly, uncovering a possibility to introduce ethics into the usage of irony.

7.2. Absolute Infinite Negativity

Having reworked the traditional 'rhetorical' definition by Quintilian in metaphysical terms, Kierkegaard picks up another – the 'metaphysical' one – by Hegel and again reinterprets it. Here's the most extensive treatment of the definition:

> Here, then, we have irony as the infinite absolute negativity. It is negativity, because it only negates, it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. (Kierkegaard 1989: 261)

Clearly the definition is saying too much and too little at the same time. On the one hand, it is extremely dense; on the other hand, one is tempted to disagree with some of the statements. Does it *only* negate? Does it not negate particular phenomenon? In order to understand these qualifications one must remember that Kierkegaard is defining here a concept, i.e. is working not through particular manifestations of irony, but attempts to uncover the fundamental structures of the concept as he sees it. This means to see the logically and rationally implied consequences within the concept, even if they have not manifested themselves yet or are not present in all of the cases of its manifestation.

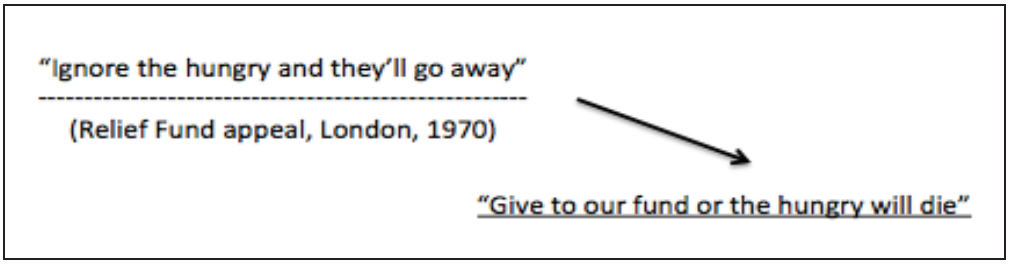
The most accessible aspect, i. e. the one that seems the easiest to understand and to approach, is the negativity. Even Quintilian's definition contains the negation as the essential feature of irony. What is important though is, as we have seen from his reformulation of Quintilian's formula, that Kierkegaard does not consider the meaning of what is said an essential part of ironic figure of speech. The essential part is, to reiterate, that the phenomenon does not coincide with the essence. It is precisely this what creates ironic effect and nothing more. Therefore, in Kierkegaard's opinion, irony *only* negates.

Regarding the absolute aspect of irony, let's try to make sense of the definition not the way Kierkegaard intended, i.e. metaphysically, but rhetorically with the help of Booth. Evoking the metaphors of intellectual locations (*topoi*), Booth says that:

> This notion of a complex dwelling place can be useful, stretched far beyond its original application, in clarifying what we do as we read irony. The reconstruction implied by conventional formulas about irony would be a very simple one. Irony, the dictionaries tell us, is saying one thing and meaning the opposite. If we apply the metaphor of locations to such a definition, there would seem to be no great act of reconstruction required; the reader is asked simply to move from one platform, on which the speaker pretends to stand, to another one, on which he really stands – one that is somehow the "opposite," across the street, as it were. But perhaps the implied intellectual motion is really "downward," "going beneath the surface" to something solider or more profound; we rip up a rotten platform and probe to a solid one. (Booth 1975: 34-35)

Schematically this could expressed in the following way:

Table 1 (Booth 1975: 35)



Of course, the next level of meaning is there only in the case of stable ironies. Unstable irony will provide either alternating possibilities of the next location, or no possibility whatsoever. In that sense it is not related to anything and can be termed as absolute or standing on its own. Thus, for Kierkegaard the fact that some cases of irony clearly indicate what the next location should be is merely an accidental feature of irony and does not play a crucial role. In other words, Kierkegaard would reject Booth's distinction between stable and unstable ironies as merely instrumental and not essential.[27] Also one might ask how this rhetorical explanation might work in metaphysical sphere. At the moment we are lacking the conceptual terms to deal with irony as absolute and this will be discussed further, yet what can be said even now is that when irony is considered as an incognito of existential position, it is used as an absolute negation in order to direct into the next 'stage on life's way'.[28]

Let's turn again to Booth:

> When Fielding wrote of Mrs. Partridge, in *Tom Jones*, that she was "a professed follower of that noble sect founded by Xantippe of old," it was of no importance to him or his readers to ask whether Socrates' wife was in fact a "Xantippe," a virago; what was important was whether readers in general could be assumed to believe so. The point of "noble" depends on the reader's knowledge not so much of historical fact but of conventional notions of valid judgement. If he can assume that *Fielding* would assume that *he* would assume *Fielding's* assumption of such knowledge in all readers – our old circularity – then the ironic interpretation is certain. It may be objected that this absurd building of assumptions could go on indefinitely. Surely we have reached a point beyond which we could easily move toward infinity ("but *Fielding's* assumption is based on the probability of the *reader's* inference, but the *reader* must assume…"). (Booth 1975: 59)

Again, Booth is more interested in stable ironies, thus he is interested in the possibility of stopping this infinite circle of assumptions. Nevertheless, he depicts the scheme rather clearly. Irony as a concept has as its essential character a set of assumptions between the ironist and the hearer, while the inner logic of this set dictates that potentially these assumptions can build on each other and thus go on infinitely. Let's get back to the previous example of Putin's response. As I have noted, the audience has to assume that Putin knows that the audience expects an elaborate and sensitive answer, and at the same time Putin knows that audience knows that Putin knows. Kierkegaard, unlike Booth, is not interested to make irony into a rhetorical instrument (not yet at least), thus he merely marks the feature – even if not all cases of irony are originally meant to have this infinite circle of assumptions, then all cases of irony *can* at least be

[27] It is safe to assume, that Booth would agree with Kierkegaard on this point. It is worthwhile to note that Booth's analysis of irony is intentionally instrumental, i.e. he sees as his goal an instrumental depiction of irony, hence stable irony is seen by Booth as something that can be analysed and put to practical uses, as opposed to unstable irony the use of which in terms of rhetoric is much more complicated. Nowhere would Booth indicate that there is difference between stable and unstable ironies in terms of their conceptual hierarchy, purity or such.

[28] I discuss this in Section 17 'Incognito of the Ethical'.

transformed into it. To put it in Hegelian terms, irony as a concept has this potentiality and this very fact signifies that this potential infinite circle of assumptions is an essential feature of the concept.

Thus irony *negates*, because it highlights the contradiction to an extent that is destructive. It negates *absolutely*, because it does not stand in relation to anything what would condition it. And this negation is potentially *infinite*, as there is nothing within irony itself that would indicate or draw the limits of irony.

7.3. Ironist

In a similar fashion to the reframing of the Quintilian's definition and extending it to contexts beyond speech, Kierkegaard does not merely provide a conceptual input on Hegelian definition, but also shows a keen interest in discussing the personality of the one engaged in irony. On the one hand, this is an obvious departure from Hegelian speculative philosophy, as this particular philosophical approach is not particularly interested in what it would regard merely depictions of particular moments of the concept. On the other hand, this opens the space for Kierkegaard to explore irony as existentially determining factor in one's life.

The whole discussion is centred on the distinction of positive and negative freedom, while, curiously enough, freedom is introduced in the context of speech or utterances:

> When I am aware as I speak that what I am saying is what I mean and that what I have said adequately expresses my meaning, and I assume that the person to whom I am talking grasps my meaning completely, then I am bound in what has been said – that is, I am positively free. (Kierkegaard 1989: 247)

Thus, positive freedom is understood as something that binds – it is a responsibility that one undertakes of one's own volition. Freedom here appears as an unrestricted choice of the individual, the author of the utterance, and it is positive, because the content of what was said is graspable by others. For this reason the speaker is bound to what he said.

By contrast, in irony the speaker is not bound by what was said, because the true meaning of his words remains hidden. To be sure, it is still freedom, as the individual, the author of the utterance, is the one who makes the choice of what to say, yet that freedom is unbinding, because the content of what was said is not graspable by others in the same way as it is in normal cases of speech. Accordingly, his freedom remains negative - it lacks content.

Again, such a qualification, in a similar fashion as the previous one, extends the understanding of irony beyond purely linguistic sphere. Irony becomes a matter of the ethical sphere, for it is a constituent of human freedom. The ironist is free only by destroying the validity of the actuality that surrounds him. "For the ironic subject, the given actuality has lost all its validity entirely; it has become for him an imperfect form that is a hindrance everywhere." (Kierkegaaard 1989:

261) The loss of validity distances the ironist from actuality, makes him face and confront it. However, he falls short of any positivity. "He does not possess the new. He knows only that the present does not match the idea."[29] (Kierkegaard 1989: 261) Therefore, irony, albeit freeing the individual, does not give him any other goal and thus becomes a self-serving and self-centred objective. Kierkegaard, enforcing his previous point about self-cancelation, notes that "irony, however, has no purpose; its purpose is immanent in itself and is a metaphysical purpose. The purpose is nothing other but the irony itself." (Kierkegaard 1989: 256) In the social sphere, on the other hand, the value of an ironist in the society is limited to that of a critic, a 'gadfly', who can only point out the problems and discrepancies. However, lacking any positivity, and being free both from obligations and responsibilities within the society, he neither is willing nor is able to assist in solving them.

Such negative freedom evokes in the ironic subject an attitude of superiority towards the others. The loss of the validity of actuality frees an ironist from an obligation to engage in a positive discourse. Irony, as a linguistic tool of 'not saying what is meant', provides him an instrument to do so. "It travels around, so to speak, in an exclusive incognito and looks down pitying from this high position on ordinary, prosaic talk." (Kierkegaard 1989: 248) Irony, as a negative freedom, remains 'unknown quantity' to others and puts them in confusion, which leads the ironist to think of himself as superior to others. This in turn brings about isolation of ironist. Kierkegaard notes that irony is often employed as a tool of transmitting secrets, "so that lay people will not be able to understand." (Kierkegaard 1989: 249) This, however, does not create any kinship between ironists. There is no secret community of ironists that share in the knowledge or deeper understanding, neither there is a need for one: "It is only a secondary form of the ironic vanity that desires witnesses in order to assure and reassure itself of itself." (Kierkegaard 1989: 249) The need of an ironist to reassure himself is inconsistent, for then it shows that actuality still has validity for him. Thus, a mature, pure ironist is, according to Kierkegaard, driven toward isolation and solitude. His irony becomes self-serving, while his social roles are minimized and have only relative validity for him.[30]

To sum up the qualifications Kierkegaard offers we can conclude that for Kierkegaard irony transcends the sphere of language, has ethical implications, in its nature is asocial, and, by contrast, is intrinsically intertwined with the individual's concrete existence.

[29] It must be noted that even the 'idea' here is not the ironist's idea – it is the idea of the actuality. The power of the ironist consists in seeing the mismatch between actuality and its own idea, between what it is and what it thinks of itself. However, according to Kierkegaard, the ironist does not have any idea of his own. "He is continually pointing to something impending, but what it is he does not know." (Kierkegaard 1989: 261)

[30] Such a qualification of irony by Kierkegaard is definitely at odds with Climacus' understanding of it (cf. Kierkegaard 1992: 436). Furthermore, it is unclear even within the thesis how this qualification matches up with the figure of Socrates. Nowhere in the thesis Kierkegaard claims Socrates to have had such an attitude toward the others.

7.4. Typology of Irony

The qualifications of irony we've just discussed in the previous sections are general and apply to all types of irony. This, however, does not mean that Kierkegaard perceives irony as a homogenous concept. As he states in the Introduction to the thesis: "Concepts, just like individuals, have their history and are no more able to resist the dominion of time." (Kierkegaard 1989: 9) There are two main types of qualification of the concept of irony in Kierkegaard's thesis. One is historical and distinguishes Socratic and Romantic ironies, while the other concerns itself with the concrete manifestations of irony. The latter qualification in turn distinguishes irony as a figure of speech, irony as a position and irony as an element.[31] Kierkegaard is not concerned with irony as a figure of speech and, although referring to it a few times, he never speaks about it explicitly. Instead he turns his analysis to what he calls irony as a position.

In most general terms irony as a position could be characterized as an attitude of the individual extended temporally. (Kierkegaard 1989: 253) It is not merely a figure of speech, used occasionally, but is constitutive in the whole of one's life (Kierkegaard 1989: 131) and makes up 'the substance of his existence' (Kierkegaard 1989: 12). In other words, irony as a position pervades and in-forms all the actions of the individual. It influences the individual's decision-making in all his everyday tasks, affects his intellectual, imaginative, affective and practical attitudes and relationships. Such irony is described as total (Kierkegaard 1989: 112), for it pervades one's all activities, and pure (Kierkegaard 1989: 253), for it is the sole deciding factor in these activities.[32] Socrates and such German Romantics as Schlegel, Tieck, and Solger exemplify pure irony.

The main body of the text of Kierkegaard's thesis concerns itself precisely with this type of irony. Kierkegaard qualifies it, discusses its separate manifestations in the historical sources of Socrates and the works of the German Romantics, and gives its evaluation in terms of the ethical and its role in the world-history. His evaluation of such irony is mostly critical. According to Kierkegaard, such irony has only a critical role to play in the society, makes the individual socially alienated and in such a way aggravates the fulfilment of his social roles. However, it is not the only type of irony.

In the concluding chapter of his thesis Kierkegaard contrasts such irony with what he calls 'irony as a controlled element'[33] (Kierkegaard 1989: 324). In the brief discussion, devoted to it, Kierkegaard shows that irony, if it is not a position that overwhelms the individual, but only an

[31] For irony as a position cf. Kierkegaard 1989: 131, 145, 154; for irony as an element cf. Kierkegaard 1989: 324-329.

[32] Throughout the dissertation I'll be using 'irony as a position' and 'pure irony' interchangeably.

[33] Throughout the dissertation I'll be using 'irony as a controlled element' and 'controlled irony' interchangeably.

element of it, which is subdued to outside goals, can play positive roles in one's life. He identifies two spheres where such an irony can be beneficiary, i.e. art and ethics, and tries to show that mastered irony enables an artist to gain distance from an objective view of his own work while in ethics it serves as a safeguard from the hindrances one may encounter while going about in one's ethical tasks. In the section 'Controlled Irony' of the last chapter of the present text I will elaborate more precisely what Kierkegaard means by controlled irony and how he sees its connection with and role in ethics.

8. Summary

This chapter is devoted to Kierkegaard's conceptual understanding of irony. Since the analysis draws heavily on Kierkegaard's dissertation, I open the chapter with the discussion of the ways in which one can and should approach this text. I argue that the 'ironic' hypothesis, which suggests that this particular text of Kierkegaard's authorship should be dismissed as 'pseudonymous' or worse, does not have sufficient grounds. To the contrary, I argue that Kierkegaard's dissertation, for all its supposed flaws of being academic, Hegelian or amateurish, is exactly the text where Kierkegaard means what he says.

In the chapter I also discuss more specifically one of the arguments to dismiss Kierkegaard's thesis as Hegelian. I maintain that although Hegel's influence is undoubted in the thesis, one should use this as a clue, which helps further inform Kierkegaard's views at the time. I argue that this acceptance of Kierkegaard's being a Hegelian at some point in his authorship not merely better reflects the true state of affairs, but also helps to illuminate and fill in the gaps left by young Kierkegaard in his dissertation.

Finally, I turn to Kierkegaard's exposition of irony and show that despite apparent dependence on previous accounts of irony by Quintilian and Hegel, Kierkegaard uses these accounts productively and creatively and extends these definitions beyond their original use. In the case of Quintilian's classical definition of irony as 'the opposite of what is said', Kierkegaard redefines its context beyond rhetorical sphere into metaphysical context. I argue that this move allows Kierkegaard not merely 'extend' the meaning of irony to non-linguistic contexts, but also paves the ground for treating irony with ethical categories. In the case of Hegel's 'metaphysical' definition of irony as 'infinite absolute negativity', I argue that Kierkegaard again shifts the context from Hegel's intended description of Solger's irony to *all* irony and also gives it a thorough rhetorical analysis. In order to illuminate Kierkegaard's reading of this definition I employ Booth's notion of unstable irony. Again, I maintain that such an extension of Hegelian

description will provide a basis for Kierkegaard to seek ethical concepts in order to counter irony as 'absolute infinite negativity'.

This point is supported and made explicit by Kierkegaard's discussion of the ironist and his relation to what Kierkegaard calls negative and positive freedom. I show that in the thesis Kierkegaard explicitly connects irony as absolute infinite negativity to what he calls negative freedom – individual's employment of irony as a means of remaining beyond any social and, by implication, ethical commitment. Kierkegaard implies that this should be replaced by what he terms positive freedom, i.e. individual's conscious commitment and taking up a position. Significantly, positive freedom does not mean abolishment or neglection of irony. I show that the division between negative and positive freedom helps Kierkegaard to introduce a certain typology of irony, namely, irony as a position and irony as a controlled element, where negative freedom corresponds to irony as a position, while positive freedom corresponds to irony as a controlled element. I argue that the latter type of irony is the one that has a positive and meaningful relation to ethics.

In order to show what this relation is (which I do in the last chapter of the study) one needs to do preliminary work on the other side of the relation and to investigate what ethics means in Kierkegaard's thought. However, before proceeding to do that we need to investigate another crucial aspect of irony in Kierkegaard's understanding, namely, the historical examples of irony, which he discusses in the thesis. It is important for two reasons: first, these historical examples help to better understand what Kierkegaard sees as correct and incorrect uses of irony; second, the discussion of Socratic irony is also crucial because of the apparent shift of opinion in Kierkegaard's authorship. Therefore in the next chapter I discuss the Socrates of *The Concept of Irony*, while in the last chapter I discuss the Socrates of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The underlying assumption, which guides my exposition, is that despite the differing understandings of Socrates in these two texts, the understanding of irony remains the same.

IRONY: HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

In addition to conceptual understanding of irony Kierkegaard also has a certain vision of historical development of irony or, at least, he makes use of historical examples of irony in his own agenda. As is well known, Kierkegaard uses Socrates more than anyone else, and also devotes quite considerable attention to the way he understands the German Romantics to have understood irony. What is much less known, is that these are not the only examples of irony in history Kierkegaard mentions. As examples of irony in general Kierkegaard also mentions such historical figures as William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and Johan Ludvig Heiberg, and as examples of irony in history specifically Kierkegaard names Hieronymus Cardanus, Tommaso Campanella, Giordano Bruno, and Erasmus of Rotterdam. While it is true that these names are mentioned only in passing, they indicate that Kierkegaard sees his discussion of Socratic and Romantic ironies as part of a historical vision of the development of the concept. It is important to keep this in mind while discussing these two particular types of irony.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the most elaborate accounts are the Socratic irony and the Romantic irony, thus in this chapter I will proceed in the following manner. First I will discuss Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socratic irony as irony's 'entry into the world' (Kierkegaard 1989: 9). I will argue that Kierkegaard, although having a negative moral evaluation of Socrates, nevertheless justifies Socratic irony as a necessary moment in the world-history. Second, I will discuss the way Kierkegaard interprets the Romantic irony and will show (i) that his interpretation is too dependent on Hegel and (ii) that it is wrong in several key aspects, which undermine his 'historical' interpretation of the development of the concept. Finally I will turn to the discussion of Socrates as interpreted by Johannes Climacus in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. I will show the differences in the perception of Socrates between those two texts and will argue that it is not merely a difference in the understanding of two pseudonyms, as Kierkegaard would want us to believe, but a significant shift in his own understanding of Socrates. Thus I will conclude that Kierkegaard at the beginning of his authorship had a historical understanding of the development of the concept of irony, which he later abandoned. Moreover, even at the early stage of the authorship his interpretation was possible only because of the Hegelian – and incorrect – interpretation of Romantic irony.

9. Emergence of the Concept

> Irony was his position – more he did not have.
>
> *Concept of Irony, 214*

As already mentioned, more than half of Kierkegaard's thesis is devoted to the figure of Socrates. As the title indicates, indeed there is a 'continual reference to Socrates'.[34] However, a reader, expecting that this is a reference exclusively to Socratic irony, might be disappointed. Kierkegaard constructs a twofold argument: part I is meant to prove that Socrates was indeed an ironist, i.e. irony is his essential feature as a historical character, while part II evaluates Socratic irony in conceptual and historical terms.[35]

9.1. Historical Socrates

The whole part I is devoted primarily to textual analysis of the historical sources on Socrates, because, as Kierkegaard points out, his intention is to deal with "Socrates' historical-actual, phenomenological existence" (Kierkegaard 1989: 9), that is, the real person of Socrates, which, according to Kierkegaard, has to be cleansed of the interpretations of his contemporaries.[36] A new historical hermeneutical awareness in the historical-philosophical research, which emerged only a few decades before Kierkegaard's dissertation and was exemplified by such scholars as Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher and Friedrich Ast, set new tasks for the historians of philosophy. Historical-philological approach to philosophical texts for the first time thoroughly attempted to distinguish Socrates in Plato's works from the actual-historical Socrates. It also

---

[34] In fact, the reference is so continual that although it is highly unadvisable (and probably a bad omen) for one author of the thesis to criticize another author's thesis, it is difficult to resist the temptation to mention that Kierkegaard with almost the same success could have turned the title around and named it *Socrates with Continual Reference to the Concept of Irony*. At least prof. Sibbern, at the time the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Copenhagen, would have agreed as he suggested even more drastic changes, namely, *Socrates as Ironist with a Contribution to the Development of the Concept of Irony in General, Particularly with Regard to the Most Recent Times*.

[35] An overview of Kierkegaard's interpretations of Socrates is provided by Harold Sarf in "Reflections on Kierkegaard's Socrates" (Sarf 1983). On Kierkegaard's Socrates as ironic position see David Holdcroft's "Irony as a Trope, and Irony as Discourse" (Holdcroft 1983), on Kierkegaard's authorship as Socratic see Anne Salvatore's "Socratic Midwifery: Greene and Kierkegaard" (Salvatore 1985), on Kierkegaard's Socrates as the precursor of indirect communication see Neil Easterbrook's "'By Indirections find Directions out': Kierkegaard's Socratic Attractor" (Easterbrook 1995), on the hermeneutics of Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socratic irony see Darío González "La hermenéutica de la Ironía: Visibilidad y discursividad en la interpretación kierkegaardiana de Sócrates" (Gonzalez 2008).

[36] The scope of this thesis does not permit us to have a close look at these readings. Yet, it is worth mentioning that Kierkegaard's contribution to the interpretation of Socrates is still discussed today see Gregory Vlastos *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Vlastos 1991), Alexander Nehamas *Virtues of Authenticity* (Nehamas 1999), David Wolfsdorf "The Irony of Socrates" (Wolfsdorf 2007), Ruth L. Smith "Morals and Their Ironies" (Smith 1998) et al.

raised a new set of questions: which source is the most reliable or the most faithful to the real figure of Socrates?

In part I of his dissertation Kierkegaard shows his deep knowledge of the ongoing debate and provides his own contribution. The apparent aim – and the working hypothesis - of Kierkegaard's analysis is to distinguish Socrates from interpretations of historical sources and to show that the position, which best describes Socrates as a philosopher, is that of irony. At the outset Kierkegaard declares that he is going to analyse only the sources provided by Socrates' contemporaries, namely, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes, as they are the closest to the object of research and therefore their value is incomparably greater than any other possible sources. Kierkegaard's strategy is to engage in textual analysis of these sources, compare them with historical data and check them for inner coherence, and based on this evidence decide for or against their relevance. It is hoped that eventually the correctly chosen sources will reveal not merely that Socrates was primarily an ironist, but also will help to inform our understanding of what irony is. As Kierkegaard says himself in the beginning of his exposition: "It is common knowledge, of course, that tradition has linked the word "irony" to the existence of Socrates, but it by no means follows that everyone knows what irony is." (Kierkegaard 1989: 11)

Kierkegaard starts off with his interpretation of Xenophon's version of Socrates. He describes Xenophon's portrayal as unreliable, for he was pursuing his own specific agenda: "to show what a scandalous injustice it was for the Athenians to condemn Socrates to death". (Kierkegaard 1989: 15) Such a goal, in Kierkegaard's view, led Xenophon to portray Socrates as completely harmless to such an extent that it backfires and the readers of Xenophon "wonder greatly what kind of daimon must have possessed the Athenians to such a degree that they were able to see more in him [Socrates – *VB*] than in any other good-natured, garrulous, droll character." (Kierkegaard 1989: 16)

Another argument against Xenophon's truthfulness is his apparent stylist shortcomings. In Kierkegaard's view, Xenophon's works lack context (Kierkegaard 1989: 16), while he himself lacks 'an eye for the rejoinder' (Kierkegaard 1989: 18). These stylistic shortcomings, argues Kierkegaard, further cast into doubt the picture of Socrates we find in Xenophon. Kierkegaard claims that Socrates' personality was characterized by duplexity of his life, "a secretive presence in and a mystical floating over the multicoloured variety of exuberant Athenian life", (Kierkegaard 1989: 16) which can be fully transmitted only by providing a context to Socrates' conversations. Xenophon's inability to understand the meaning of Socratic rejoinders, on the other hand, makes Socrates look 'too correct, all too stubborn, all too tedious' (Kierkegaard 1989: 18). Moreover, according to Kierkegaard, the lack of such rejoinders fails to depict Socrates' gravitation "toward an ironic totality, a spiritual condition that was infinitely

bottomless, invisible and indivisible." (Kierkegaard 1989: 19) At this point Kierkegaard does not elaborate what this 'ironic totality' might be, but we get a clearer idea of what it is by the example Kierkegaard provides:

> There is a work that represents Napoleon's grave. Two tall trees shade the grave. There is nothing else to see in the work, and the unsophisticated observer sees nothing else. Between the two trees there is an empty space; as the eye follows the outline, suddenly Napoleon himself emerges from this nothing, and now it is impossible to have him disappear again. Once the eye has seen him, it goes on seeing him with an almost alarming necessity. (Kierkegaard 1989: 19)

According to Kierkegaard, the same happens with Socratic rejoinders – an observer hears them and at first impression they sound like usual sentences and words. There is not a sign that there is another possible interpretation: the words mean what they say. But precisely this lack of a hint, this "empty space, this nothing" (Kierkegaard 1989: 19) is what hides that, which is the most important. Once the alarming truth starts appearing from behind the words, one cannot escape the meaning – the other, hidden-behind-the-words meaning - they carry. According to Kierkegaard, Xenophon failed to grasp the meaning of Socratic rejoinders and thus deprived his character of an essential aspect.

Finally, Kierkegaard concludes that: "with respect to irony, there is not one trace of it in Xenophon's Socrates." (Kierkegaard 1989: 25) Instead, what we find in Xenophon, according to Kierkegaard, are sophisms. It is interesting to note how Kierkegaard distinguishes sophism from irony. He points to three aspects, which are lacking in Xenophon's Socrates' witticisms. First, these witticisms lack a sting or a '*pointe*'. It seems that irony, as opposed to mere wit, has to play a social or, one could go even further even at this point, moral role. Important to note, that this role is of an aggressive or destructive character. Second, the witticisms lack what Kierkegaard terms 'infinite elasticity', i.e. the possibility to extend the wit to the infinite accumulation of assumptions and meanings. Finally, they fail to 'approximate the view'. It is, admittedly, a murky formulation, but we can safely say that Kierkegaard sees as a requirement for irony to perform a role of a certain compass, which again implies a moral role and what, apparently, pure witticisms do not achieve. (Kierkegaard 1989: 26)[37]

Thus, Kierkegaard completely dismisses Xenophon's point of view, but the arguments he uses are indicative of the agenda, which he will pursue. At this stage he identifies the context of the conversation, the Socratic rejoinders and irony as key elements for the full and adequate understanding of Socrates.

[37] It is curious to note that one of the greatest ethical theorists of contemporary philosophy Emmanuel Levinas sees exactly the same role for ethics and even uses the same visual metaphor: "the first 'vision' of eschatology (hereby distinguished from the revealed opinions of positive religions) reveals the very possibility of a *signification without a context*. The experience of morality does not proceed from this vision – it *consummates* this vision; ethics is an optics. But it is a 'vision' without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision, a relation or an intentionality of a wholly different type." (Levinas 1969: 23)

After having discussed Xenophon, Kierkegaard turns to Plato. By contrast to Xenophon, Plato, according to Kierkegaard, went to another extreme and saw in Socrates 'an *immediate conveyor of the divine*', a personality, which "is for the second person not merely inciting but epoch-making, is a spring of eternal life unexplainable to the individual himself". The impact of such a personality on human race, according to Kierkegaard, is fulfilled "partly in a communication of life and spirit […], partly in a release of the individual's locked-up powers." (Kierkegaard 1989: 30) Thus the reader has to be careful with Plato's version of Socrates. Plato as an immediate pupil was so influenced by Socrates that, according to Kierkegaard, he "feels himself so inseparably fused with Socrates in the unity of spirit that for him all knowledge is co-knowledge with Socrates". As a result, Plato does not make a clear distinction between his own thoughts and what Socrates says in his dialogues. "Socrates flows through the whole fertile territory of Platonic philosophy; he is present everywhere in Plato." Therefore, according to Kierkegaard, the essential question while reading Plato is the distinction between the Platonic and the actual Socrates. (Kierkegaard 1989: 29-30)

Kierkegaard identifies the narrative dialogues as the ones, which are closest to the actual Socrates. He chiefly focuses on *Symposium*, *Protagoras*, *Phaedo*, *Apology*, and *Republic*, and also uses separate examples from *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. In the discussion Kierkegaard shows that he is well aware of the debate and exegetical problems poised by the Platonic corpus and touches upon such specific issues as the chronology of Platonic works, the stylistic distinctions within Plato's dialogues, the method and the dialectic in Plato's philosophy. However, I will concentrate on Kierkegaard's interpretation of the actual Socrates and specifically his irony. The main aim of Kierkegaard's discussion here is to show what relation Socrates had with irony and provide its basic characteristics.

What clearly gives advantage to Plato over Xenophon is that Plato remains truthful to Socratic method of conversing. Kierkegaard equates Socratic conversation with 'asking questions',[38] yet it is a very specific way of asking questions:

> One can ask with the intention of receiving an answer containing the desired fullness, and hence the more one asks, the deeper and more significant becomes the answer; or one can ask without any interest in the answer except to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind. (Kierkegaard 1989: 36)

In other words, what is important here is the intention of the one who asks. In terms of the development of the questioning, "the first is the *speculative* method, the second the *ironic*." (Kierkegaard 1989: 36) It is the latter method, which Kierkegaard associates with Socrates. Now one could object that Socrates had a very keen interest in the answers to his questions. But this

[38] Incidentally, for Kierkegaard, this is another point of difference between Socrates and the Sophists – Socrates is good at asking questions, the Sophists are good at answering them.

objection would miss a larger point. Socratic questioning is interested in the immediate answer only locally, as in truth he is pursuing a bigger goal - his "questioning was essentially aimed at the knowing subject for the purpose of showing that when all was said and done they knew nothing whatever."[39] (Kierkegaard 1989: 37) And Kierkegaard would argue, that it is this 'higher' intention – the attempt to destroy the existing content rather than provide a new one – that betrays its ironic character.

Another proof of irony is the air of mystery and seductiveness that Socrates brings about in his relationships. This is attested by Alcibiades' and Socrates' relationship, described by Plato in *Symposium*. Kierkegaard sees Alcibiades' passion for Socrates as 'inevitable', for "not only he but almost all of Socrates' associates had this relation to him". (Kierkegaard 1989: 48) What makes Socrates so seductive? Kierkegaard attributes it to irony: "just as there is something deterring about irony, it likewise has something extraordinarily seductive and fascinating." (Kierkegaard 1989: 48) Only irony as purely negative can explain why Alcibiades' and Socrates' relationship did not have "a rich exchange of ideas, or a copious outpouring on the one side and the grateful receiving on the other." (Kierkegaard 1989: 48) As an art of questioning irony does not bring about any positive content, and it is precisely this negative character of irony that evokes the atmosphere of mysteriousness and seductiveness. Kierkegaard notes that psychologically it has a double effect. The destructive power of irony cancels all content and this makes the individual feel liberated. "The ironist lifts the individual up and out of the immediate existence." (Kierkegaard 1989: 48n) However, the feeling of liberation is promptly substituted by the feeling of being captured by the ironist, because the need for the positivity is not fulfilled. The individual becomes dependant on the ironist, seduced by his freedom and repelled by his refusal to provide an idea. As Kierkegaard points out, "it is essential for the ironist never to articulate the idea as such but only casually to suggest it, to give with one hand and take away with the other." (Kierkegaard 1989: 49) Thus, if we have noted that irony makes the ironist himself negatively free, the same cannot be said of the hearer of irony – on the one hand, he feels liberated, for the immediate content is cancelled, yet this cancelation makes him dependent on the ironist, which he experiences as a form of seduction. And it is this seductive character, which Kierkegaard claims Socrates to possess not only in relation to Alcibiades, serves for Kierkegaard as another proof of Socrates as ironist.

In a similar fashion *Protagoras* and *Phaedo* are used for these purposes. In these dialogues apparent lack of any conclusions (e.g., Socrates' conclusion to have no reason to fear death in

[39] In support of such interpretation Kierkegaard draws Socrates' phrase from the *Apology* 41b, where Socrates claims to wish to go to the underworld in order to investigate who there is really wise and who is not.

the case of *Phaedo*[40]) is taken to signal another manifestation of Socratic irony. Kierkegaard here again is adamant to stress a peculiar feature of irony that became an essential aspect of modern irony, namely, that irony is inconclusive in its essence. It denies or rather cancels the propositions that were proposed earlier, but does not advance any new ones:

> A negative conclusion always denotes the conclusion, and only irony can provide a negative conclusion in its purest and most unadulterated form. Even skepticism always posits something, whereas irony, like that old witch, continually makes the very tantalizing attempt to eat up everything first of all and thereupon to eat up itself. (Kierkegaard 1989: 55)

The distinction between irony and scepticism helps to illuminate what Kierkegaard would take irony to mean. The 'conclusion' irony provides is not a mere sceptical refusal to make a decision. It is something rather different – irony shows that there is no decision to be made, or, more precisely, that all the possible decisions are not the solution which is sought after. It is the activity of irony itself, which prevents one from reaching any conclusion. Moreover, after negating any possible positive outcome, irony negates itself.[41] Again, one could argue if Kierkegaard is right that scepticism necessarily posits something, yet this point is not crucial for his argument.

In any case, on a more general level it seems, though, that contemporary scholarship would agree with Kierkegaard. Namely, Socratic method did not involve a positive teaching, whatever its negative implications might have been: to provoke into thinking, to disclose the stupidity or something else. What matters to Kierkegaard here is that this negative approach he interprets as another sign of Socrates' ironic attitude.

A very similar approach and conclusion are taken in regard to *Republic I*, which again is understood by Kierkegaard as not providing any conclusions to hold on to, yet Kierkegaard adds another aspect – Socratic negativity can play (and plays in this particular context) a role of the 'activator' for thinking. What is more important yet is that Kierkegaard here in passing provides a rhetorical scheme of irony. As a dialectical movement, it starts from the most abstract ideas and "wants to let these display themselves in more concrete qualifications." (Kierkegaard 1989: 121) It is, according to Kierkegaard, 'metaphorical', for it always judges concrete phenomena from the viewpoint of the abstract thought. (Kierkegaard 1989: 121) In other words, on a purely schematic level one creates an ironic contradiction by shifting between different levels of abstraction.

[40] "For I am thinking – see in how contentious a spirit - that if what I say is true [i.e. the soul is immortal – *VB*], it is a fine thing to be convinced; if, on the other hand, nothing exists after death, at least for this time before I die I shall distress those present less with lamentations." (*Phaedo* 91 a-b).

[41] Kierkegaard refers to Socrates' phrase at the end of *Protagoras* as the example of such self-cancelling: "It seems to me that our discussion has turned on us, and if it had a voice of its own, it would say, mockingly: 'Socrates and Protagoras, how ridiculous you are, both of you.'" (*Protagoras* 361 a-b)

Finally, the whole speech in *Apology* is taken to be ironic, while the argument used is that Socrates relocates the accusations in an ironic twist: "most of the accusations boil to a nothing – not to a nothing in the usual sense of the word, but to a nothing that Socrates simply passes off as the content of his life, which again is irony." (Kierkegaard 1989: 37n) As is well known, Socrates in his speech reinterprets the accusations (which are understood by the court as a matter of civic life) as mere peculiarities of his private life, thus provoking accusations of disrespect towards the court. Kierkegaard is in no doubt that Socrates was being ironic while reframing the accusations. Yet, it is indicative that even if Kierkegaard is wrong and Socrates was not being ironic, he could not be unaware that the listeners will make an assumption that he was. The situation nevertheless will remain ironic, even if Socrates was not attempting to be ironic himself.

Thus Kierkegaard concludes that Plato's Socrates is much more truthful and – more importantly - informative (if the works for interpretation are selected carefully) than Xenophon's. His apparent refusal to provide any positive content, penchant for asking questions, rather than narrating or speculating, and an ability to shift between different levels of generality signal that Socratic existence was based on something deeper, namely, irony.

Kierkegaard finally turns to the last contemporary of Socrates, Aristophanes, and credits him for spotting and documenting an important feature of Socrates, namely, the comical. If Plato, out of his respect and admiration for his teacher overstressed the tragic side of Socrates, Aristophanes provides the comic side. After an elaborate textual discussion Kierkegaard decides that the comical character Socrates of the *Clouds* was truthful to the real Socrates of Athens. This is attested to by the ancient anecdote that Socrates was himself present at the play and stood up, so the audience could witness that the character and the real person are very much alike. Kierkegaard connects the comity of Socrates with irony:

> Irony, on the other hand, is simultaneously a new position and as such is absolutely polemical toward early Greek culture. It is a position that continually cancels itself; it is a nothing that devours everything, and a something one can never grab hold of, something that is and is not at the same time, but something that at rock bottom is comic. (Kierkegaard 1989: 131)

Thus irony as a new quality, which contrasts itself with the *status quo*, is bound to produce a comic effect by virtue of contrasting characteristics or features.[42] Again Kierkegaard picks up from Aristophanes what he thinks is indicative of Socratic irony, yet at the same time he provides additional strokes to his picture of irony. Irony emerges as permanent polemics, questioning of the stated position. It is essentially an op-position. Its negative character permits

[42] However, Johannes Climacus in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* discusses the relation at length and qualifies it (cf. Kierkegaard 1992: 500-520 and chapter IV of this thesis).

irony to always oppose the position in front of it without ever disclosing one's own position or even without having one.

As I have shown, Kierkegaard's analysis of the historical sources of Socrates is geared towards showing that the essential denominator of Socrates was irony. In order to achieve this, as we have seen, Kierkegaard attempts to distil the historical Socrates from the fictional character of his contemporaries. Having identified specific Platonic dialogues as the most trustworthy for his purposes, Kierkegaard analyses them to show that Socrates was fond of asking a specific type of questions, never produced any conclusions, was in essence a comical character, while his wit was always meant to attack or have a sting. This allows Kierkegaard to conclude that only irony can fully encapsulate and ground these separate features of Socrates, or to put in Kierkegaard's words, that irony was Socrates' position.

9.2. Socratic Irony in The Concept of Irony

Having established that Socrates was indeed an ironist first and foremost, Kierkegaard undertakes to evaluate this particular type irony in terms of application and conceptual development. Kierkegaard emphasizes two points that he seems to find crucial.

The first point is the function of irony in the historical process. Kierkegaard (at the time of writing the dissertation) seems to think of history in terms of Hegelian dialectical process. The position – the thesis – has to be sublated by its negation – the antithesis – in order to create some new quality, and in such a way produce progress. Kierkegaard suggests that irony plays a role of antithesis in this story. "To a certain degree, every world-historical turning point must have this formation also, and it certainly would not be without historical interest to track this formation through world history." (Kierkegaard 1989: 261) Ironist is the opposite of a prophet:

> The prophet walks arm in arm with his age, and from this position he glimpses what is coming. The prophet […] is lost to his generation, but essentially that is the case only because he is preoccupied with his visions. The ironist, however, has stepped out of line with his age, has turned around and faced it. (Kierkegaard 1989: 261)

Curiously, Kierkegaard qualifies John the Baptist as ironist: "He required of Judaism what Judaism wanted to give – justice, but this it was unable to give, and thereby it foundered." (Kierkegaard 1989: 263), while in Reformation Cardanus, Campanella, Bruno, and Erasmus ('to some extent') are mentioned as examples of ironists. Socrates in this history has a special place, as he is the first to introduce the concept. Yet at the same time he is viewed merely as a position in a dialectic movement of the concept of irony, a first step, 'an entry into the world' (Kierkegaard 1989: 9). Socrates remained beyond or, to be more precise, prior to the universal idea.

The second point, which Kierkegaard emphasizes in relation to Socrates and irony in general, is subjectivity. The subjective individual does not see the idea and therefore his position is drawn towards the nothingness of irony and the negative freedom, which it offers. Irony, which by its nature is 'unknown quantity', can be described as a subjective dialectic. It prevents the individual from abstracting from the phenomena to the idea, for the individual "is thrust back or flees back into actuality." (Kierkegaard 1989: 154) Therefore, an ironic individual is caught in between the striving towards the idea and always being thrown back to actuality without having seen it. Aristophanes, according to Kierkegaard, caught this aspect of Socratic irony, for he "has viewed it in such a way that he always merely shows its implicit emptiness." (Kierkegaard 1989: 153)

Importantly, Socratic subjectivity is not a whimsical, moody, forever shifting subjectivity. Kierkegaard identifies the Socratic daimonion as the unifying element of Socrates position. It is unifying, according to Kierkegaard, for it was the only thing that remained constant in Socrates' life, the central pole around which Socrates life circled. And yet, despite being the constant, it remained subjective, for it had validity and meaning only for Socrates. It was not the case that it was impossible to communicate directly the relation between Socrates and the daimonion. More precisely, it was impossible that it would acquire the same meaning for someone else as it had acquired for Socrates. According to Kierkegaard, Socrates himself understood as much and therefore his daimonion always stayed somewhat within his inwardness. And, therefore, the position, which Socrates had to take upon, concludes Kierkegaard, was that of irony, for direct communication was deemed incapable and thus useless to directly communicate what was happening within him.

Therefore, the picture of Socrates, which emerges is that of the person who was striving for ideality and yet could not reach it. "He demanded ideality from all of it, and this demand was the judgment that judged and condemned Greek culture." (Kierkegaard 1989: 214) Socrates was not an ideal character and he used his irony not because he knew something and was hiding it. He used irony because he knew nothing and that is why irony became his constant position: "His irony was not the instrument he used in the service of the idea; irony was his position – more he did not have." (Kierkegaard 1989: 214) However, it is very important to note the argument, which Kierkegaard draws in support of such interpretation – it is the completely negative polemic attitude, which proves that Socrates did not possess the idea. "If he had had the idea, his annihilating activity would not have been so radical." (Kierkegaard 1989: 214) The critical force of irony was so powerful precisely because it refused to offer anything positive.

However, such negativity, according to Kierkegaard, has a positive, albeit limited, role to play in world history. Irony, denying any positive content in the present status quo, opens up

possibilities for any kind of positivity. Therefore, Socrates' worth in the world-historical development is limited barely to this opening – by denying any already present positivity he enables us to begin all over again. Kierkegaard expresses it in somewhat paradoxical formulation: "Thus as beginning he is positive, but as mere beginning he is negative." (Kierkegaard 1989: 217) He plays a positive role in the sense that he clears the ground for any new developments, yet he himself is not one of those new developments and in this sense remains a negative.

Within the context of ethics Socrates' position is interpreted as that of morality. Socrates, as a subjective thinker, negated the state and although he recognized the need to strive towards the good, he failed to see the universal good, or, in the terms of Reed Merrill, accepted "universal pluralism" (Merrill 1979: 224) . In this sense he is the founder of morality, of personal ethics, as opposed to objective and universal ethics. Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel on this point, however, not without reservations. "It is the idea of the good he wants to claim for Socrates, but he gets into trouble thereby since he must show how Socrates interpreted the good." (Kierkegaard 1989: 235) This is, of course, impossible in Kierkegaard's point of view, for Socrates' position, as it was noted, was that of negativity. He failed to grasp the idea of the good in its universal manifestation and as such remained within subjective ethics, within the sphere of morality.

Irony is the first and most abstract qualification of subjectivity. "Irony as infinite and absolute negativity is the lightest and weakest indication of subjectivity." (Kierkegaard 1989: 6) Socrates posits something and in this he is positive. But what he posits is precisely nothing. Therefore, his position remains pure negativity. It is a position, but a negative one. (Kierkegaard 1989: 269)

As we have seen in his thesis Kierkegaard sees Socratic irony strictly as a historical phase – Socrates is the one who introduces irony in conceptual history, yet he is not himself aware of what it is and in that sense it is safe to say that he can not make use of irony in a positive sense. Therefore, Socratic irony remains a destructive moment in history – it sweeps away what went on before and clears the ground for future developments. Socrates himself, for his part, remained purely within subjectivity. Also, it is important to note that Kierkegaard's opinion of Socratic irony has changed quite significantly later in his authorship – I discuss the shift and new approach in Chapter IV. Nevertheless, the belief that irony was a crucial aspect of Socratic philosophy remained unchanged throughout the authorship.

10. German Romantics

His life is nothing but moods.
Concept of Irony, p. 284

In Kierkegaard's dissertation German Romantics and their understanding of irony is analysed quite prominently and is overshadowed only by the attention devoted to Socrates.[43] What is peculiar and important to keep in mind is that for Kierkegaard the Romantics are the representatives of the 'contemporary' irony and – maybe more importantly – it is them who, in Kierkegaard's view, are responsible for making irony the topic of philosophical reflection altogether. Thus when Kierkegaard talks about Romantic irony, he believes to be talking not merely of a concept in the historical process, but also of a prevailing cultural phenomenon, of something that can help to understand what makes up the essence of the culture of his time. In this section I will discuss how Kierkegaard understood Romantic irony, to what extent he was influenced by Hegel and in what key aspects this influence played a harmful role in his interpretation.

It is certainly correct to say that German Romantics, and Schlegel in particular, are the ones who reintroduced irony as a key topic of Western philosophical thought. Influenced by Fichtean distinction between idealism and dogmatism, they radicalize and reinterpret his conviction that philosophy must start from pure subjectivity. Their key correction to Fichte's thought is the belief, that the divide between the pure I and the Absolute is unbridgeable by means of thought. Thinking, or philosophy, as a conscious activity of the self, is limited and is incapable of an all-encompassing look that philosophy strives for.[44]

The fact that the self is incapable of possessing the Absolute does not exhaust the full nature of the being of the self – possession is replaced by longing for the Absolute. The limited self is longing to be reunited with the unlimited and at the same time is incapable of achieving it. Furthermore, the self is incapable even of encompassing realization of its own existence and, in

[43] It is remarkable how little secondary literature discusses Kierkegaard's views of German Romantics. Jon Stewart heavily draws on them in order to expound Hegel's influence on Kierkegaard (Stewart 2003: 170-181), while J. D. Mininger productively compares Kierkegaard's and Paul de Man's readings of German Romantics' irony (Mininger 2009). Tomas Sodeika also has discussed the influence of Romantic irony to Kierkegaard's tension between actuality and textual reality (Sodeika 2001).

[44] There is some debate regarding whether the Romantics were the continuation of Fichte or rather Fichtean *Wissenschaftslehre* was merely an early influence, which was then abandoned by the Romantics for its supposed inadequacies. The first view was dominant until recently (and exemplified by Mark Kipperman's "Fichtean Irony and Some Principles of Romantic Quest" (Kipperman 1984)), yet has been challenged by more recent scholarship, and in particular Manfred Frank's *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism* (Frank 2004). Kierkegaard, at least in his dissertation, clearly holds the former view.

Romantic vision, instead of the illusion of coherent existence "it can only grasp fragments of itself without cohesion and foundation" (Frank 2004: 218).

Thus, Romantics saw it as their goal to destroy the illusion that this world is inclusive and coherent and to demonstrate that, to the contrary, it is indeed atomized and fragmentary. Irony emerges here as a central didactic device. It is seen as a reflection – a mirror – held up against the limited existence, the self, in order to highlight the contradictions that eventually make the self find itself as "inwardly split and divided, full of contradictions and incomprehensibilities, in short, as a patchwork, rather opposed to unity" (Schlegel 1958 ff.: vol. 12, 381 n).

Importantly, this does not result in a new, higher level world-view. The fragmentary contradictions of limited existence cancel each other out or, more precisely, "neutralize themselves reciprocally" (Frank 2004: 218). What the self is left is precisely with nothing, or, to be specific, nothingness, as this empty space has a purpose to serve: the limited existence of the self, cancelled by means of irony, must point the self toward the infinite. This is what Schlegel means when he says that "irony [is] merely the surrogate of that which should go into the infinite" (Schlegel 1958 ff.: vol. 18, 112).

Finally, structurally irony is a synthesis of wit and allegory. Allegory is linguistically defined in precisely the same terms as irony – 'meaning something other than what one says' –, while metaphysically Romantics understood it as that what points to the infinite in the finite, 'the ecstatic trait of the finite'. Wit, on the other hand, is what picks out the contradictions in the world-views or 'systems', or, again linguistically, is what provides a paradox in irony. In other words, it combines different elements, yet not in order to produce a new quality, but in order to dissolve the existing one.

And the structural parts of irony, perhaps, explain, why the Romantics would favour art, and poetry in particular, over philosophy:

> Philosophy taught us that the divine can only be hinted at, only presupposed with probability, and that we must therefore assume revelation to be the highest truth. Revelation is, however, for people of senses too sublime a knowledge, and so art steps onto the scene very nicely, in order to place, through sense presentation and clarity, the objects of revelation before the eyes. (Schlegel 1958 ff.: vol. 13, 174)

Only art is capable of bridging the gap between the limited self and the unlimited Absolute, while artistic production is much more gratuitous to allegory, wit, and irony.

It is fair to say that none of what was just said is found in Kierkegaard's presentation of Romantic irony. It is well documented that Kierkegaard's presentation of Romantic irony is heavily influenced by Hegel's discussion, despite that fact that Kierkegaard reproaches Hegel for "one-sided attack on the post-Fichtean irony" (Kierkegaard 1989: 265). I will argue that despite having the ambition to be more objective than Hegel, Kierkegaard ultimately fails to give a fair account of Romantic irony and misses crucial points of it that would have led him to re-evaluate

his approach to the historical understanding of the development of this particular concept. Furthermore, whatever its merits as an interpretation of Romantic irony, Kierkegaard's commentary on the works of German Romantics illuminates his own understanding of irony in general and of pure irony in particular.

The crucial point of intersection is – again – Socrates. Having established irony as a driving force towards the infinite, Schlegel tries to show that Socratic irony is an example of this movement toward infinity and, by implication, is not a result of philosophical, but rather a poetic activity. As Robert R. Williams rightly notes, "Hegel takes pains to establish that Socratic irony is not Schlegel's and not unphilosophy", yet I disagree with Williams, when he says that "Kierkegaard […] defends Schlegel's irony against Hegel" (Williams 2003: 68). The whole exposition of post-Fichtean irony, if anything, is more Hegelian than Hegel's. Kierkegaard grants that both Socratic and Romantic ironies share the similarity in that they are subjective, yet Romantic subjectivity, in Kierkegaard's view, is different from the subjectivity, which is characteristic of Socratic irony. Romantics elevate subjectivity: "It was not subjectivity, which should forge ahead here, since subjectivity was already given in world situations, but it was an exaggerated subjectivity, a subjectivity raised to the second power." (Kierkegaard 1989: 275). Socratic subjectivity, as we noted, was not self-aware, it was merely a positing of the idea without conceptual reflection of the idea. Romantic subjectivity is very much a self-aware, reflected subjectivity, which means that it emerges with a conceptual program of how it has to realize itself in historical process.

The subject feels here omnipotent and constitutive of the world. Therefore, argues Kierkegaard, irony functions in a different set of circumstances. It is outside of the historical process or a 'natural order of things': "It was not in the service of the world spirit." (Kierkegaard 1989: 275) Socrates had the old Greek culture to face to while for a Romantic ironist 'nothing was established'; therefore he feels he has 'the absolute power to do everything'. (Kierkegaard 1989: 275) Such a subject sees the relative validity of the established order, as, according to Kierkegaard, did Socrates. However, his conviction, that all social order is a cultural construct and thus is a product of human activity, makes him aware of his own power. Romantic irony, according to Kierkegaard, "knew that in general it had the power to bind and unbind. If it posited something, it knew it had the authority to annul it, knew it at the very same moment it posited it." (Kierkegaard 1989: 276)

There is another analogy between Socrates and the Romantics – actuality for them loses any validity. And yet again, in Kierkegaard's eyes, the similarity merely betrays the difference. Socrates was not opposed to any actuality – as we have noted, for him merely that particular

historical environment has lost any validity. For the Romantics any historical actuality does not have validity whatsoever. Irony can start over and over again from any given moment:

> Sometimes it lived in Greece under the beautiful Greek sky, lost in the present-tense enjoyment of harmonious Greek life... […] Sometimes it hid away in the primeval forest of the Middle Ages, listened to the secret-laden whispering of the trees, and built nests in their leafy tops or hid in its dark hollows. (Kierkegaard 1989: 277)

Nothing binds it to the past, present or future. It does not have such context – it remains a pure negativity, unbound by any utterances, social relations or historical circumstances. Furthermore, as it is pure negativity, it feels content with its own negative state and does not regard the lack of positivity as a disadvantage that needs to be overcome.

Kierkegaard here is unhesitant in his moralizing: "In order for the acting individual to be able to accomplish his task by fulfilling actuality, he must feel himself integrated in a larger context, must feel the earnestness of responsibility, must feel and respect every reasonable consequence." (Kierkegaard 1989: 279) The activity of such an ironist, in distinction to Socratic irony, is not led by the aim to acquire an idea. All his activities are ruled by his own whims and pleasure. Therefore, according to Kierkegaard, he lacks any continuity. (Kierkegaard 1989: 277) Moreover, albeit passing judgment on history and knowledge, Romantic irony evades being judged itself.[45] Kierkegaard stresses that autonomous irony, being completely free, has no sorrows, but neither does it have joys and blessings – being the only authority to itself, it has nothing (higher or lower) to refer to. (Kierkegaard 1989: 279) The ironic individual puts himself outside and above the social reality around him. He distances himself from fulfilling his social roles, for they lose their meaning to him, and scorns those, who take them seriously.

On the one hand, one must agree with Kierkegaard. The Romantics clearly thought of ways to transcend historical circumstances and when Schlegel writes that

> It [irony - *VB*] contains and excites a feeling of the insoluble opposition between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between the impossibility and the necessity of an exhaustive communication. It is the freest of all licenses, because through it, one clears oneself away from oneself. (Schlegel 1958 ff.: vol. 2, 160)

He is clearly being much more ambitious than the Socrates, whom we encountered in Part I of Kierkegaard's dissertation. On the other hand, it remains unclear, if Kierkegaard is ignorant of the wider function of irony in the Romantic world-view, or he deems it too ambitious and both morally and existentially unjustifiable.

[45] This could be ascribed to all irony. As negative, it is a judgment, however, it does not reveal its own position, thus is hard to be judged by itself, unless irony is judged as a general attitude. Kierkegaard's critique is undoubtedly an example of such judgment.

The psychological analysis of the Romantic ironist suggests the latter. Kierkegaard characterizes the Romantic individual merely as a series of constantly changing moods. (Kierkegaard 1989: 282) Kierkegaard himself employs irony to discuss this:

> At times he walks around with the proud air of a Roman patrician wrapped in a bordered toga, or he sits in the sella curulis with imposing Roman earnestness; at times he conceals himself in the humble costume of a penitent pilgrim; then again he sits with his legs crossed like a Turkish pasha in his harem; at times he flutters about as light and free as a bird in the role of an amorous zither player. (Kierkegaard 1989: 282)

That this refers only to Romantic irony and not to all irony becomes clear by the subsequent remark: "This is what the ironist means when he says that one should live poetically; this is what he achieves by poetically composing himself."[46] (Kierkegaard 1989: 282) He elaborates on this point – there is nothing wrong to lead a poetic existence or to live poetically. However, there is a huge difference between composing oneself poetically and letting oneself be poetically composed. Kierkegaard continues:

> An individual who lets himself be poetically composed does have a definitive given context into which he has to fit and thus does not become a word without meaning because it is wrenched out of its associations. (Kierkegaard 1989: 283)

Again, the charge seems to return – the Romantic poetry tries to actively change the actuality rather than play along with it. For Kierkegaard it represents precisely this 'word without meaning', for it defies the context, cancels the validity of actuality without any attempt to create a new one.

Romantic ironist does not have any interest to fit into the context – his efforts are directed towards composing himself. As Ayon Roy notes, "One of [Romantic] irony's basic features is its permanently disruptive force: its refusal to be neatly defined or circumscribed, its uncanny tendency to proliferate endlessly into further ironies." (Roy 2009: 107) Furthermore, a Romantic ironist requires that the context, the environment be formed to fit him – "he poetically composes not only himself but he poetically composes his environment also."[47] (Kierkegaard 1989: 283) A Romantic ironist "lets people pass before him and finds no fellowship for himself" and in doing so he "continually collides with the actuality to which he belongs." (Kierkegaard 1989: 283)

Such conflict brings about the biggest break, which Romantic ironist experiences in regard to actuality. Because of his collisions with the surrounding reality the ironist must "suspend what is constitutive in actuality, that which orders and supports it: that is, morality [*Moral*] and ethics [*Sædelighed*]." (Kierkegaard 1989: 283) Again, here's a crucial difference between Socrates and

[46] Although Kierkegaard does not indicate whom he is referring to, from the further context it is clear that he means Schlegel.

[47] What Kierkegaard has in mind here might be clarified by *Seducer's Diary* in *Either/Or I*. Johannes the Seducer in his epistolary story not only lives in his own imaginary world, but also requires the environment to play by his rules and follow his path. Thus, there is a programmed conflict between an ironist and actuality.

the Romantics. Socrates, in Kierkegaard's view, was the one to introduce the morality in history. It is in a dialectical tension with ethics, yet this tension is realized productively in the development of ethics. Romantics, by attempting to rise above any temporality, cancel both particular private morality and universal ethics that defines a concrete historical actuality.

Kierkegaard admits that Hegel also criticized this point (not to mention that the point about Socrates as the introducer of morality is also borrowed from Hegel). However, Hegel's criticism was centred on the division between the personality of the ironist and the actuality. Hegel praised Romanticism for seeing the Idea and even understanding the shortcomings in the actuality, however, failing to realize that the Idea and actuality must correspond. The Romantics, in Hegel's view, did not understand that actuality may loose its validity not because the individual or consciousness turns to himself, but because this actuality is replaced by another, somewhat truer actuality, which corresponds better with the Idea.

Kierkegaard, however, is evidently more interested in the problem of ethics in this context. The Romantic ironist, according to Kierkegaard, places himself as if above ethics and morality – "he lives far too abstractly, far too metaphysically and esthetically to reach the concretion of the moral and the ethical." (Kierkegaard 1989: 283) Such an ironist is a mere observer, a spectator, for whom "life is a drama, and what absorbs him is the ingenious complication of this drama." (Kierkegaard 1989: 283) What seems to be the problem of such an ironist is that the one acting in such a drama is the same ironist. In other words, the Romantic ironist puts the ideality of his consciousness before the actuality of his individual existence, thus cancelling out the ethical way of living.

Here ethics for Kierkegaard seems to be that which guarantees the continuity of one's life, for the existence of the individual cannot rely on mere possibilities of the poetical licence. All what unites such a disjointed existence is the permanent change of moods. The ironist "succumbs completely to the mood. His life is nothing but moods." (Kierkegaard 1989: 284) To be sure, Kierkegaard neither argues that an individual should get rid of moods, nor does he claim that it is possible. That would be a strange thing to claim. What he is rather aiming at is to show that moods have to be disciplined by the guiding principle, an ethical requirement. Moods certainly can serve as the intensifiers or enhancers of the genuine principles of actual existence, but not as the guiding principle itself. As Kierkegaard puts it,

> An earnest Christian, for example, is well aware that there are moments when he is more profoundly and vitally gripped by the Christian life than he usually is, but he does not therefore become a pagan when the mood passes. (Kierkegaard 1989: 284)

Thus, the moods, which are made into the basis and the defining moment of one's existence, are incoherent and do not provide an ethical point of reference.

One may ask what role does irony have in this context. It is the actual existing individual who defines irony as a method of discourse that is always spoken by the very same individual. Therefore, one can conclude that irony, employed by the Romantic individual, will lack ethical implications and will be based on that individual's moods rather than on ethical views.

Moods of the Romantic individual, being the defining moment of his existence and lacking any continuity, provide the most contrasting of sequences in one's life. An ironist, thus, finds himself in a rather peculiar situation. On the one hand, he must poetize everything in order to live a poetic existence and thus turns to his moods as a source of poetic inspiration. On the other hand, he wants to remain free and in control of his life, therefore, he has to be in control of his moods also. One mood cannot stay long in order not to take over. It must be replaced by another one, which in turn is replaced by the subsequent one. Even the moods fail to provide the ground for the Romantic ironist – "the mood itself has no reality for the ironist." (Kierkegaard 1989: 285) Thus Kierkegaard seems to fail to notice that the Romantics like Schlegel saw fragmentary and contradictory aspect of actuality as the metaphysical essence of actuality. It is not to be controlled, but rather exposed, the moods are not to be made irrelevant, but focused upon and highlighted, for they are closest to the poetic fantasy.

Kierkegaard is critical of the poetizing as well. In his eyes, the infinite poetizing of such an ironist, the poetizing of his existence and his moods ultimately leads to the paralysis of intellectual activity in general. The ironist does not have anything firm to turn to, his freedom turns into a self-indulgent sequel of moods, even which he can't get the grasp of, for that would signify the ending of his freedom. Such existence, concludes Kierkegaard, leads to boredom. Boredom, according to him, is the only continuity in such an ironist's life (the continuity, which unlike moods, is not dependant on the individual), the unity, which bonds the existence of such an ironist. Having rejected the ethical, as the uniting bond of 'healthy and sound life', and declared oneself a free individual, the Romantic ironist cannot escape this uniting bond, however, he reaches it in the form of boredom. It is boredom, according to Kierkegaard, which cancels out the opposites and provides the uniting bond of ironist's existence.

In summary, as I have shown, Kierkegaard's analysis of the Romantic irony seems to be unjustly critical and one-sided. He sees in it merely poetical play of fantasy, a fragmentary tendency for the effect of the moment, and egotistical concentration on one's own moods while neglecting one's own social and ethical commitments. It remains an open question if Kierkegaard was aware that his analysis is a bit too partial, yet what is much more important to the present thesis is that in this critique one can see what Kierkegaard expects irony to be. And the central part of his critique of Romantic irony is the lack of ethical principle that would guide it.

11. Summary

In this chapter I discuss two historical examples of irony, which Kierkegaard presents in his dissertation. The first example, which is extremely important for Kierkegaard, is Socrates. I show that in the thesis Kierkegaard proceeds in his analysis of Socrates in two stages. First, he attempts to distil what he considers to be historical Socrates from the available historical sources. He chooses a few Platonic dialogues as his most trustworthy sources. I conclude that his exegesis is valuable and is not off the mark, nevertheless, it is not important for our thesis as what is really of interest is not how precisely and accurately Kierkegaard understood Socrates, but how he saw Socrates as an ironist. Therefore, what is of significance in this discussion is that Kierkegaard concludes that Socratic position was precisely irony. I also discuss what Kierkegaard believes to be the characteristic features of Socratic irony, such as rejoinder, sting, etc.

I pursue the same strategy in the discussion of Kierkegaard's exposition of Romantic irony. With the help of Frank's illuminating analyses of German Romantics, I conclude that Kierkegaard's presentation of Romantic irony was extremely one-sided and Hegelian, nevertheless, it is still useful in order to understand what Kierkegaard considers to be an improper and incorrect way to employ irony.

I conclude that in both these historical examples Kierkegaard is unhappy with what he sees as irony being the guiding principle. For him, Socrates' worth in the historical development of irony is merely as the founder of the concept, while German Romantics are so overwhelmed by the negating possibilities of irony, that they fail to see its use in ethical life and in aesthetic production. One has to look at irony as controlled element in order to see how these possibilities can be used to positive effects, but before we do so, we will turn to Kierkegaard's understanding of the ethical.

ETHICS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

On a certain level Kierkegaard's understanding of ethics is pretty straightforward. A simplified representation of it found in the compendiums of philosophy normally presents a schematic image of the individual self in which existential human possibilities are framed in three spheres or stages: esthetic, ethical, and religious. According to such an interpretation, these stages are inter-related, and this inter-relation has the character of quasi-Hegelian dialectical bonds. These bonds remind us of Hegel because the stages are related according to the dialectical principle of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, however, these bonds are *quasi*-Hegelian, because in truth the transition from the ethical to the religious stage is not mediated, but, to the contrary, requires a break of dialectical bonds. This break means that language, direct communication or at least rational discourse fail and different means of coping with this break are required.[48] Such interpretation draws primarily on works like *Either/Or*, *Stages on Life's Way*, and *Fear and Trembling*.

Yet a more careful reading of works like *Postscript*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *Works of Love* shows that the picture is not that straightforward. Johannes Climacus in the *Postscript* introduces the term ethical-religious (later picked up by another pseudonymous author H.H. for his *Two Minor Ethical-Religious Discourses*), which clearly indicates that some sort of revision of the initial structure of the stages is required. Vigilius Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety* introduces the notions of 'first ethics' and 'second ethics' and juxtaposes them, signalling that we are dealing with at least two different understandings of ethics that are in dynamic relationship. Finally, in *Works of Love* Kierkegaard under his own name makes an elaborate presentation of religiously charged ethical views, the connection of which with the ethical stage is not immediately clear and requires analysis. These problems indicate that a much more thorough examination of Kierkegaard's views is needed. In this chapter I will pursue three goals: first, I will present the understanding of the ethical stage, as it is exposed by Judge William in *Either/Or II*, second, I will show the limitations of the ethical stage, as it is presented by Haufniensis in *The Concept of Anxiety*, three, I will present what I regard ethical-religious, as it is presented by Kierkegaard in *Works of Love*. This should provide a much more elaborate picture of Kierkegaard's ethical views and, more to the point of the topic of the dissertation, will give conceptual tools to show, how irony is related to ethics.

[48] There is an ample amount of studies into what the strategies of coping with this break can entail. The most common term to indicate those strategies is the so-called 'leap of faith'.

12. First Ethics I: In the Footsteps of German Idealism

To begin with, *Either/Or* is a difficult book to read in more than one sense.[49] There is the standard for any Kierkegaardian scholar issue of a pseudonymous work in the sense that Kierkegaard did not put down his name as an author. However, this issue here is exaggerated by the fact that, strictly speaking, it is not even a *pseudonymous* work. There is no pseudonym, which we could quote as an author. It is by design an author-less book. Furthermore, it is not even a book, if by a book one means a premeditated, structured and more or less coherent textual narrative. We do not find such a narrative in *Either/Or*. This is especially evident in part I, where we encounter a collection of random thoughts, two pieces of literary criticism, three speeches on literature, and a diary. To a lesser extent this also applies to part II, which presents three letters, yet the third one clearly stands out as it is written (except for the first couple of pages) not by the same author and with different intentions.

These remarks are important not in order to question Kierkegaard's sincerity when he says that "*Either/Or* has a plan from the first word to the last." (Kierkegaard 1967: 5627) or when he explicitly denies that it was a "collection of loose papers I had lying in my desk." (Kierkegaard 1967: 5628) There seems to be no doubt that *in this sense* it is a premeditated book. Rather, these remarks are important in order to help us approach the book in the right way. Judge William[50] does not write a philosophical treatise, therefore, his goal is not to present a systematic exposition of the ethical. It is evident from the genre of his three texts. These are *letters* with a very particular addressee – A – and a very particular goal – to show, if not to convince A of the limitations of the esthetic – in mind. Thus, it is a bit too hopeful to claim, as many commentators do, that Part II of *Either/Or* presents the ethical life-view or position. Rather, it is an attempt to show the limitations of the esthetic and to provide a defence of the ethical to the esthetic individual.

Despite the seemingly chaotic structure of *Either/Or I* and Victor Eremita's affirmation that "A coherent esthetic view of life can hardly be presented." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 13), it seems safe to

[49] Kierkegaard's ethical stage in light of relativist challenge is discussed by Peter J. Mehl (Mehl 1986; for the account of the relation between ethical choice and imagination see David J. Gouwens's "Kierkegaard on the Ethical Imagination" (Gouwens 1982), on Kierkegaard's implicit relations to Aristotle see "Passion and Reason: Aristotelian Strategies in Kierkegaard's Ethics" (Lillegard 2002), ethics in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* see Edward F. Mooney "Kierkegaardian Ethics: Explorations of a Strange Yet Familiar Terrain" (Mooney 2008).

[50] By Judge William I will refer to the position, presented in Part II of *Either/Or*, with the exception of the part of "Ultimatum", entitled "The Upbuilding That Lies in the Thought That in Relation to God We Are Always in the Wrong", which will be referred to Pastor. Meanwhile, the position, which can be extracted from the most of Part I will be referred to A, again with the exception of "The Seducer's Diary", the quotes from which will be attributed to Johannes the Seducer.

say that German Romanticism provides a thematic background for much of what is going on in *Either/Or I*.[51]

Kierkegaard, of course, wrote on German Romanticism a couple of years before in his dissertation. Despite the fact that the main topic of the thesis is irony, as we have seen, one of the main points of critique, aimed at Romantic irony, is precisely the lack of moral compass. Thus, in this regard the thesis already sets up the juxtaposition between the Romantic individual, whose position is irony, and the presumed alternative, for which irony would merely be a method of approaching the actuality. The thesis, of course, fails to present an elaborate exposition of this presumed alternative and in this sense leaves the reader unsatisfied. I contend that *Either/Or II* fills this gap – it is an elaborate exposition of the juxtaposition between the Romantic individual and the ethical alternative. A reasserts the double subjectivity of the Romantic ironist, while Judge William represents the ethical position, which is defined by its ironic attitude, if not exactly an ironic smile, toward everything that surrounds it.

The framework in which all the pseudonyms seem to be moving is the stark distinction between the esthetic and the ethical. This juxtaposition is introduced already in the Preface by the editor of the book Eremita: "A's papers contain a multiplicity of approaches to an esthetic view of life. A coherent esthetic view of life can hardly be presented. B's papers contain an ethical view of life." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 13) A also makes numerous references to this distinction as, for example, when he discusses the criminal's attempt at evasion before the judge:

> Insofar as the issue here is a crime, the sinner certainly cannot flee into the temple of esthetics, but nevertheless it will indeed have a mitigating word for him. But it would be wrong for him to seek refuge there, for his path takes him to the religious, not the esthetic. The esthetic lies behind him, and it would be a new sin on his part to seize the esthetic now. The religious is the expression for fatherly love, for it embraces the ethical, but it is mitigated, and by what means – by the very same means that give the tragic its gentleness, by means of continuity. (Kierkegaard 1987a: 146)

Johannes the Seducer also operates within this distinction: "Under the esthetic sky, everything is buoyant, beautiful, transient; when ethics arrives on the scene, everything becomes harsh, angular, infinitely *langweiligt* [boring]." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 367)

Furthermore, the pseudonyms also seem to have coherent and mutually compatible notions of these views of life. Thus, the issue of the book is not what these views of life are (this seems to be clear to all the pseudonyms), but which view of life is more relevant to their individual, personal lives. Thus the internal discussion does not anywhere attempt to systematically describe what is meant by the ethical – it is presupposed that the opponent means the same what the proponent means.

[51] E.g. "A stands in an awkward relation to musical theory, as if he would theorize *a la classique* and exemplify *a la romantique* with an ambivalent but constant reference to the German Romantics." (de Sousa 2008: 92)

Keeping in mind this context, it becomes clearer why Judge William is preoccupied not so much with presenting a theory, but with more practical goals. He sets himself a twofold task. The first goal is to show to the esthetic individual the limitations of the esthetic life-view from the point of view of the ethical. It is striking that Judge William almost never ironizes about A, although there is clear disagreement and disapproval on the part of Judge William of A's way of life. Nevertheless, one cannot escape the feeling of ironic detachment in the whole of the Judge's letters. The reader is left with the impression that Judge William at the same time cares about what A thinks, but also that whatever A thinks about his letters won't affect him in any way. It's as if he floats above this relationship in the same sense as the poet, who mastered the irony, "floats above his artistic work." (Kierkegaard 1989: 325)

His second goal is to propose a balance between the ethical and the esthetic, the implication here being that the aesthete has neglected the ethical aspects of life. This is explained partially by the curious strategy Judge William undertakes – he intends to reclaim the very categories which the aesthete claims are his own. By showing that these categories are realized to a fuller, more authentic, sense within the ethical sphere, he hopes if not to seduce A out of his aesthetic infatuations, then at least to show their limitations and self-deceptive character.

The first category to be attacked is a category of choice. Judge William proposes a rather strict negative qualification of choice and immediately claims that such a choice belongs only to the ethical: "Your choice is an esthetic choice, but an esthetic choice is no choice. On the whole, to choose is an intrinsic and stringent term for the ethical. Wherever in the stricter sense there is a question of an Either/Or, one can always be sure that the ethical has something to do with it." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 166) The argument for such a qualification is that choice has to have an intrinsic and essential effect on the individual:

> If a man esthetically ponders a host of life tasks, then he, as is the case with you in the preceding portion, does not readily have one Either/Or but a great multiplicity, because the self-determining aspect of the choice has not been ethically stressed and because, if one does not choose absolutely, one chooses only for the moment and for that reason can choose something else the next moment. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167)

Judge William is not interested in the multiplicity of possibilities that one encounters in everyday life and then randomly picks from them one or another. They are not important, as they have only momentary validity. The next moment or the next morning one will not even care to remember the choices one had made. The only choice that is worth discussing is when the particular decision will have long-term consequences for the individual in the sense that it will determine what one will become in the future. It is the choice that Judge William terms 'absolute choice'.

Long-term consequences do not mean that absolute choice is a kind of habit formation or auto-training exercise. It rather means that there is no turning back once the original choice has been

made. The absolute choice is irreversible – one cannot choose 'something else the next moment' - and it is bipolar – if one chooses irreversibly, one essentially chooses between two alternatives. Therefore, this choice has only one formulation: "The only absolute Either/Or is the choice between good and evil, but this is also absolutely ethical." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 166-167) In one sense, this is a much more straightforward choice than the multiple possibilities arrayed in front of the aesthete, yet, according to Judge William, this choice is 'much more meaningful' (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167), as it is irreversible and has much bigger implications for the individual.

Choice is an inward category by definition in the sense that it is the individual's will, which is the main factor. Yet, Judge William makes this inwardness much more rigorous and enclosed: "What is important in choosing is not so much to choose the right thing as the energy, the earnestness, and the pathos with which one chooses." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167) In the ethical choice the intention or the attitude of the individual is much more important than the results which are to be expected.

Judge William clearly is neither the utilitarian ethicist, nor virtue ethicist. What he seems to work in is the tradition of German Idealism, or more concretely the ethical theories of Immanuel Kant and Hegel. At this point it is difficult to say, whom he prefers more or if he has his own version of the ethics of intention, yet it seems that he is closer to Kant in the understanding of the ethical choice: "In the choosing the personality declares itself in its inner infinity and in turn the personality is thereby consolidated." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167) In this formulation one can see the glimpses of Kantian origin of freedom as the self-grounding infinite element, which becomes the basis for ethics that Kant explores in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Kant famously looks for one principle of ethics that has to be universal in order to have serious meaning and dissolve ethical relativism. If it is to be universal, he concludes, it has to be valued by itself and in itself. He identifies good will as such a principle: "A good will is good not because of what it effects, or accomplishes, not because of its fitness to attain some intended end, but good just by its willing, i.e. in itself." (Kant 2011: 17) As only human beings are capable of good will, the practice of good will must become the only goal and thus reasonable, rational estimation has to guide will towards the good and away from evil. "This estimation thus lets us recognize the worth of such a way of thinking as dignity, and puts it infinitely above any price, with which it cannot be balanced or compare at all without, as it were, violating its sanctity." (Kant 2011: 99)

However, Kant does not use the category of infinity as a technical term.[52] For him it is merely a description of the vast – essential – difference between the multitude of choices in terms of results or consequences and the two choices one has in terms of willing or intentions. One can get a better idea of what Judge William means by 'inner infinity' by turning instead to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel is reworking Kantian concepts:

> The universality of this will which is free for itself is formal universality, i.e. the will's self-conscious (but otherwise contentless) and simple reference to itself in its individuality [Einzelheit]; to this extent, the subject is a person. It is inherent in personality that, as this person, I am completely determined in all respects (in my inner arbitrary will, drive, and desire, as well as in relation to my immediate external existence [Dasein], and that I am finite, yet totally pure self-reference, and thus know myself in my finitude as infinite, universal, and free. (Hegel 1991: 67-68)

Outwardly human existence is limited, while inwardly it has a free will as an inward reference point, which absolutely bounds and yet in the same time creates freedom by setting up the alternatives for choice. This allows Judge William to take these dynamics of ethical choice even further: "Therefore, even though a person chose the wrong thing, he nevertheless, by virtue of the energy with which he chose, will discover that he chose the wrong thing." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167) It seems that even the wrong choice in ethical terms has a beneficial aspect. On the one hand, a wrong choice is comprehended as the wrong choice, on the other hand, this comprehension brings one into the relation with the religious: "In other words, since the choice has been made with all the inwardness of his personality, his inner being is purified and he himself is brought into an immediate relationship with the eternal power that omnipresently pervades all existence [*Tilværelse*]." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167) Judge William at this point does not qualify, how the consciousness of having done wrong establishes the religious dimension. He merely makes sure to stress that such a relationship works only within the realm of the ethical choice: "The person who chooses only esthetically never reaches this transfiguration, this higher dedication." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 167)

Thus, if the choice is reformulated in this framework, the title of the book is misleading:

> Consequently, either a person has to live esthetically or he has to live ethically. Here, as stated, it is still not a matter of a choice in the stricter sense, for the person who lives esthetically does not choose, and the person who chooses the esthetic after the ethical has become manifest to him is not living esthetically, for he is sinning and is subject to ethical qualifications, even if his life must be termed unethical. You see, this is, so to speak, the character indelebilis of the ethical, that the ethical, although it modestly places itself on the same level as the esthetic, nevertheless is essentially that which makes the choice a choice. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 168)

There is no either/or between the esthetic and the ethical, as the aesthete, strictly speaking, does not choose, and the ethical consciousness cannot choose the esthetic. Judge William here again

[52] Roe Fremstedal argues against Kant's position as agnosticism and understands it as theistic (cf. Fremstedal 2011, Fremstedal 2013). Even if he were right, for the present work it is important that *Kierkegaard* held that Kant was agnostic or at least saw a danger in the ascribing to divine infinity a mere function in a rational system.

introduces religious vocabulary within the ethical context. He seems to equate sinning and ethical qualifications and yet again one can find a possible explanation in Hegel's work. In his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel, on the one hand, equates ethics with the state (cf. "The state is the actuality of ethical Idea." (Hegel 1991: 275)), on the other hand, equates state with God (cf. "The state consists in the march of God in the world." (Hegel 1991: 279)) In this sense, one could say, as Judge William certainly does, that committing an ethical offence is at the same time breaking the law *and* at the same time offending God, i.e. sinning.

For Judge William, there is one more aspect, in which the real either/or is not between the esthetic and the ethical. Even if one chooses evil, it is not a throwback to the esthetic: "That the person who chooses good and evil chooses the good is indeed true, but only later does this become manifest, for the esthetic is not evil but the indifferent." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 169) Thus, strictly speaking, the actualization of free will in ethical terms cancels the esthetic as an option altogether. The progression from the esthetic to the ethical is not a matter of choice and, furthermore, is irreversible.

And, coincidentally, although the ethical formally posits the choice between good and evil, evil, when recognized as such, strictly speaking is not an option of choice either. Thus again the choice, according to Judge William, is narrowed down: "Therefore, it is not so much a matter of choosing between willing good or willing evil as of choosing to will, but that in turn posits good and evil." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 169) Thus, it seems, that for Judge William the very recognition of the possibility of choice, the very awareness of the possibility of good and evil is what already sets in motion the transition from the esthetic to the ethical. In the echo of Kant's discovery of good will as a good thing in itself, Judge William proposes that the very postulate of the ethical indicates the will to choose the good by one's own volition. One is always inclined to choose well: "The person who chooses the ethical chooses the good, but here the good is altogether abstract." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 169) However, the very postulate of the ethical choice is still lacking in content, which would allow one to make an informed choice. The individual, although already possessing the notions of good and evil, does not have a fully developed understanding of what they consist of. One can easily see the parallels with the book of Genesis (Gen 2-3) and the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When God tells Adam and Eve not to eat from this tree, they can be said to be familiar with the notions of good and evil, as they have been introduced to them, yet they lack in understanding what it really means to be good or evil.

Therefore, the possibility of a mistake or a wrong choice can not be excluded: "But its being is thereby merely posited, and this by no means precludes that the one choosing cannot in turn choose evil even though he chose the good." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 169) Nevertheless, Judge William argues that it does not diminish the importance of making the choice, rather it requires a

certain shift in attitude: “Here you see again how important it is that a choice is made and that it does not depend so much upon deliberation as on the baptism of the will, which assimilates this into the ethical.” (Kierkegaard 1987b: 169)

Thus there are two choices within the transition to the ethical: the choice to will, which is part of deliberation, and the actualization of that will, which subsequently informs the individual of the correctness of the choice made. And, consequently, one could say these two choices are never morally wrong if they choose the ethical (the choice to will), and at the same time, paradoxically, they are bound to be ethically wrong (actualization of the will), for the individual does not really know what he chooses. Nevertheless, as this is the only meaningful – the absolute – choice, it means that it has lasting and irreversible consequences: “The original choice is forever present in every succeeding choice.” (Kierkegaard 1987b: 219)

However, the choice of the ethical does not mean the neglection of the esthetic in personal life. Although “the ethical is posited by the absolute choice” (Kierkegaard 1987b: 177), the esthetic remains in terms of relative modalities. One could interpret this in terms of the Kantian distinction between the categorical and hypothetical imperatives. The ethical is the absolute choice in the sense that it does not include any conditionality, namely, that the choice is determined and made only within the parameters found in the choice itself. The good will is not dependent on anything outside of it. Yet the ethical does not exhaust all the contingencies of life – it rather informs them. Thus, the conditionalities or the relative choices remain, but are subjected to the ethical imperative.

In the formation of the individual subjectivity this difference is formulated as the dynamics between being and becoming: “The esthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is; the ethical is that by which he becomes what he becomes.” (Kierkegaard 1987b: 178) and with the introduction of the ethical the individual acquires a split consciousness: “In choosing itself, the personality chooses itself ethically and absolutely excludes the esthetic; but since he nevertheless chooses himself and does not become another being by choosing himself but becomes himself, all the esthetic returns in its relativity.” (Kierkegaard 1987b: 177) The ethical does not mean the annihilation of the esthetic. To exclude the immediacy of the esthetic would mean to deny one’s own being. At the same time, conversely, being oneself is presenting us with choices that ultimately lead to a requirement to become oneself.

Thus, the ethical choice is the relation to oneself as the immediate being, which is mediated. The reflective character of the ethical entails the need of recognition and reconciliation with oneself as oneself. At the same time it creates a circular and dialectic movement. Human being is immediate and spontaneous, and at the same time he is reflective of this immediacy and

spontaneity of his self. The reflection negates the spontaneity, while the spontaneity negates the reflection. The self "has resulted from a choice and is the consciousness of this specific free being who is himself and no other. This self contains in itself a rich concretion, a multiplicity of qualities – in short, it is the total esthetic self that is chosen ethically." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 222)

For Judge William it is only in this unity or synthesis of the ethical and the esthetic that the self emerges at all. When the individual posits his own free will, "when the passion of freedom is awakened, it is jealous of itself and by no means allows what belongs to a person and what does not to remain unspecified and confused." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 223) Thus the ethical consciousness works as a delineation of the personality, of his autonomy that excludes him from the limitations of the exteriority, while inwardly introducing infinity as the defining element of self: "Thus his infinite personality is now made infinite in the choice, in which he infinitely chooses himself." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 223)

The difference between good and evil is not something that can be thought, as the reflection cannot think in absolute terms:

> As soon as I think, I am related necessarily to what I think, but that is the very reason the difference between good and evil does not exist. Think what you will, think the most abstract of all categories, think the most concrete – you never think in the categories of good and evil. Think of history in its totality – you think the necessary movement of the idea, but you never think in the categories of good and evil. You continually think relative differences, never the absolute difference. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 223)[53]

Therefore, the difference between good and evil has to be posited as existential stance rather than the categories of thought. But that leads to a rather disturbing conclusion: "The good is because I will it, and otherwise it is not at all. This is the expression of freedom, and the same is also the case with evil – it is only inasmuch as I will it." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 224) If good and evil can not be considered as rational conclusions, if they are to be posited existentially, then it is the self which defines and declares what it is to be good and what it is to be evil or, in other words, the ethical becomes the subjective.

Judge William vehemently denies this charge:

> This in no way reduces or lowers the categories of good and evil to merely subjective categories. On the contrary, the absolute validity of these categories is declared. The good is the being-in-and-for-itself, posited by the being-in-and-for-itself, and this is freedom. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 224)

However, he does not provide any elucidation, how exactly this validity is declared. Yet once again one could be forgiven for hearing strong Kantian overtones in Judge William's position. In *Groundwork* Kant defines every rational being as 'universally legislating through all the maxims of its will' (Kant 2011: 95) and this is actually a duty of the rational being: "A rational being must always consider itself as legislating in a kingdom of ends possible through freedom of the

[53] Compare this with Kant's position: "It is just as impossible for the subtlest philosophy as for the commonest human reason to rationalize freedom away." (Kant 2011: 141)

will." (Kant 2011: 97) The universal validity of these categories appears precisely from the subject's willing for the maxim to become the universal law: "I ought never to proceed except in such a way *that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*." (Kant 2011: 33) Thus Kant's ethical freedom or, in Judge William's terms, the ethical is self-legislating, yet must have an aspiration to universality which does not allow it to remain in mere subjectivity.

The subjective affirmation of the self as free will is the foundation of ethics:

> Not until I absolutely choose myself do I absolutely infinitize myself, because I myself am the absolute, because only I myself can choose absolutely; and this absolute choice of myself is my freedom, and only when I have absolutely chosen myself have I posited an absolute difference: namely, the difference between good and evil. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 223-224)

Judge William here clearly follows Kant's metaethics. That is to say, he believes that ethics is impossible without the postulation of subjective free will, yet precisely this subjective postulation allows it to claim the self-determining aspect of good and evil. Importantly, it is not good and evil, which are posited, rather the postulation of free will establishes the distinction as the framework within which all ethical activity will take place:

> It might seem dubious for me to use the expression 'to choose oneself absolutely', because this might seem to imply that I chose both the good and the evil just as absolutely and that both the good and the evil belonged to me just as essentially. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 224)

This aspect is important as it implies that evil is an essential part of what constitutes human. Judge William does not deny this, however, the dynamic understanding of the self allows him to suggest important corrections to this charge. The crucial part in this is played by the category of repentance:

> Repentance specifically expresses that evil essentially belongs to me and at the same time expresses that it does not essentially belong to me. If the evil in me did not essentially belong to me, I could not choose it; but if there were something in me that I could not choose absolutely, then I would not be choosing myself absolutely at all, then I myself would not be the absolute but only a product. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 224)

One could draw on the previous distinction between being and becoming. Evil is that what the self is, while repentance shows what it might have become. If this interpretation is correct, then the sensual, the esthetic, is closely related with evil, while the ethical is the domain of the good. Judge William does not qualify repentance – it remains unclear whether it is a deliberate choice or a psychological mood, to what extent it is a personal choice, etc. For the moment, it is merely presented to the reader as an existential phenomenon that is used as a proof of the distancing oneself from the evil one has committed.

Thus evil is essential in human being in the sense that it is a possibility of the natural ethical choice, presented by the postulation of one's own free will. This does not, however, have to mean that evil will become a determining factor in individual's life: "And if he finds more of

evil in him than of good, this still does not mean that it is the evil that is to advance, but it means that it is the evil to recede and the good that is to advance." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 226)

The interiorization and subjectivization of the ethics is reflected in one of the key notions of Kierkegaard's ethics, namely, earnestness, which makes its entrance already in *Either/Or*. Judge William makes another strong distinction between the esthetic and the ethical existence:

> It was said that every esthetic view of life is despair; this was due to its having been built upon that which can both be and not be. This is not the case with the ethical life-view, for it builds its life upon that which 'to be' essentially belongs. The esthetic, it was said, is that in a person whereby he immediately is the person he is; the ethical is that whereby a person becomes what he becomes. This by no means says that the person who lives esthetically does not develop, but he develops with necessity, not in freedom; no metamorphosis takes place in him, no infinite internal movement by which he comes to the point from which he becomes the person he becomes. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 225)

The inwardly established freedom that allows for personal development and the metamorphosis at the same time establishes the inward rupture within the person. This dialectically charged personality with the dual contrasting impulses of immediacy and reflection, of necessity and freedom, of the esthetic and the ethical is faced with a constant task of always affirming the good, yet being the only one that is capable of confirming this affirmation. Earnestness becomes a compass that guides one through the process of self-becoming. "It takes a high degree of ethical earnestness never to want to conceive of evil in esthetic categories." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 226) And it can even be applied when one indulges in the esthetic pleasures:

> When the individual develops ethically, he becomes that which he becomes, for even when he lets the esthetic within him (which for him means something different from what it means for one who lives only esthetically) have its validity, it is nevertheless dethroned. Like all earnestness, even esthetic earnestness is beneficial for a person, but it can never rescue him entirely. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 226)

Again, Judge William does not propose a formal definition of what he means by earnestness, yet it is clear by the examples he provides (Kierkegaard 1987b: 225-227) that for him the ethically earnest person is the one who does not allow himself to be distracted by external circumstances from his own inward ethical task. One has to admit that it is a rather peculiar understanding of earnestness. One is not to be earnest with the others, with one's fellows, but, on the contrary, one has to detach oneself from the social encounters in order to be earnest. The inward foundation of freedom and thus of ethical distinction between good and evil also interiorizes the judgment about the choices one makes. Judge William emphasizes precisely this point by stressing the distinction between the particularities of the outward world and the universal law that one finds within oneself: "It takes considerable ethical courage to will in earnest to have one's life not in differences but in the universal." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 228)

Another way to frame the distinction, which Judge William is concerned with, is to emphasize the consistency with which one leads his life. The mood here is the category that has to be mastered and made into possession as opposed to being in it:

> The person who lives ethically is also familiar with mood, but for him it is not the highest; because he has chosen himself infinitely, he sees his mood beneath him. The 'more' that refuses to be absorbed in mood is precisely the continuity that to him is the highest. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 230)

Thus the ethical thinking, by bringing in the reflection, brings in the continuity by way of self-memory, and thus, self-identity: "The person who lives ethically has a memory of his life (to recall an earlier expression); the person who lives esthetically does not have it at all." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 230) The mood that was so important to be lived to the full for A becomes the one that has to be conquered.

> The person who lives ethically does not exterminate the mood. He looks at it for a moment, but this moment saves him from living in the instant; this moment gives him supremacy over the desire, for the art of mastering desire is not so much in exterminating it or utterly renouncing it as in determining the moment. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 230)

Again, it is not something that has to be negated. A person cannot escape having moods. However, it is not one finds oneself in; rather, it is 'acquired' and therefore in that sense can be mediated, made into a tool of existence that helps to 'fix' the right attitude with the exteriority. The right mood is a certain balancing rope that allows one to juggle between the interior and the exterior, the eternal and the temporal, the universal and the particular. If one is to have sublated the esthetic moods and has passed onto the one choice that matters, namely, the choice between good and evil, one is in danger to go to the other extreme:

> But can the person who has chosen himself infinitely say: Now I possess myself; I ask for no more, and I meet all the ups and downs of the world with the proud thought: I am the person I am? By no means! If a person were to talk this way, it would be easy to see that he had not, strictly speaking, chosen himself; he had, no doubt, chosen himself, but outside himself; he had conceived of choosing altogether abstractly and had not grasped himself in his concretion; he had not chosen in such a way that in the choice he remained in himself, arrayed himself in himself; he had chosen himself according to his necessity and not in his freedom; he had taken the ethical choice esthetically in vain. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 231)

The ethical choice cannot be realized as a result. It is a constant striving. It cannot be, it can only become. It cannot be achieved, only sought after. In this sense no individual can ever be said to be 'ethical' – he can be described only as moving in the direction of the 'ethical'. Judge William provides a striking description of what one could call a moralizer, a person that is fixed on his morality:

> When the individual has grasped himself in his eternal validity, this overwhelms him with all its fullness. Temporality vanishes for him. At the first moment, this fills him with an indescribable bliss and gives him an absolute security. If he now begins to stare at it one-sidedly, the temporal asserts its claims. These are rejected. What temporality is able to give, the more or less that appears here, is so very insignificant to him compared with what he possesses eternally. Everything comes to a standstill for him; he has, so to speak, arrived in eternity ahead of time. He sinks into contemplation, stares fixedly at himself, but this staring cannot fill up time. Then it

> appears to him that time, temporality, is his ruination; he demands a perfect form of existence, and here in turn there appears a weariness, an apathy, that resembles the lethargy that accompanies enjoyment. This apathy can so engulf a person that suicide seems the only escape for him. No power is able to tear him from himself; the only power is time. It certainly cannot tear him from himself either, but it stops him and delays him; it retards the embrace of the spirit with which he grasps himself. He has not chosen himself; like Narcissus, he has become infatuated with himself. Such a condition has not infrequently ended in suicide. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 231)

The denunciation of the temporal within the person is not the right choice. What seems to concern Judge William here is that the ethical has to be chosen not as something that is found in the exteriority in the form of the law or the command that is cast upon the individual as a part of the world process. The individual has to make the choice freely, and that means himself, on his own, without any interference or outward qualification.

This radical demand for individual freedom draws a rather strict line with exteriority that encapsulates the individual inwardly and makes the inner being the only playing ground in which freedom can originate. As Judge William states in no uncertain terms, "The first form the choice takes is complete isolation." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240) This means that in terms of social interactions one is cut off from meaningful relations with regard to ethical choice. This also means that with the absolute choice there takes place an important development of the emergence of the self: "In choosing myself, I separate myself from my relations to the whole world, until in this separation I end in an abstract identity." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240) The outwardness, which for Judge William is connected with temporality and the particular, is a derivative in this choice, a by-product (albeit necessary) that is informed by the radically individual ethical choice one made in the first place. "At the very moment one chooses himself he is in motion." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 231) The subsequent choices are practical choices, the choices that manifest themselves in the everyday behaviour and individual actions: "He who has chosen himself on this basis is *eo ipso* one who acts." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 232) Yet it is also clear that they are made according to the one choice that matters and in this way are informed by it.

One cannot help ignoring how withdrawn the ethical personality is for Judge William. The absolute choice can only be made inwardly, disattached and isolated from outside influences, while all the subsequent choices are informed and guided by this very first choice. Even if there is a distinction (that Judge William makes himself) between a completely alienated monastic type of existence and the ethical individual, who participates in the social encounters and does not try to evade them, it is still difficult to justify such a proposition. As Judge William unambiguously claims, "Yet his action has no relation to anything in the surrounding world, for the individual has completely exterminated this and is only for himself." (Kierkegaard 1987b:

240) It is safe to say that this ethics is quite clearly lacking in social aspect and, even further, proposes an egotistical and even narcissistic picture of the ethical individual.

Paradoxically, Judge William, in search of radical freedom, has to denounce all the necessity that one encounters in actuality and exteriority. Ethics, by forming the personality, by performing this task of delineating the limits of the self-identity, encapsulates the individual in a nutshell which is to guard and protect the individual from the distractions of others. The good in this framework is not something that is done towards the others, but rather despite the others – the ethical behaviour is not informed by the well-being of the other people, but requires to isolate oneself from the demands and wishes of other people and concentrate only on the inwardly found ethical compass.

The understanding of necessity as exteriority and freedom as interiority is, of course, the distinction that is prevalent in the whole of the tradition of German Idealism, perhaps most succinctly formulated by Fichte in his *First Introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte tries to bridge the gap that was set up by Kant's transcendental system between the rational free subject and the object ruled by necessity. He famously looks for a starting point for philosophy and declares that it either can start from the subject (what he calls idealism) or from the object (what he calls dogmatism). As Fichte says, "Neither of these two systems can directly refute the opposing one." (Fichte 1994: 15) and, therefore, "the decision between these two systems is one that is determined by free choice; and thus, since even a free decision is supposed to have some basis, it is a decision determined by *inclination* and *interest*." (Fichte 1994: 18) Thus, already with Fichte the epistemological problem of the inward and outward becomes the ethical problem of what one is or will become: "The kind of philosophy one chooses thus depends upon the kind of person one is." (Fichte 1994: 20) Fichtean epistemologico-ethical distinction between exteriority and interiority seems to have had the influence on Judge William, as he operates in exactly the same terms and distinctions. In that sense he is on the side of Kantian-Fichtean axis, which emphasizes the incommensurability of the divide between transcendental subject and thing in itself, while the opposing axis would be formed by another branch of German Idealism, as exemplified by Schelling and Hegel, who do not find this divide unbridgeable and, thus, as problematic. In this sense Judge William is clearly not a Hegelian ethicist, but rather more a Kantian one.

Yet what is much more radical than one finds in Fichte and Kant is Judge William's insistence of the strong relation between the ethics and the religious:

> The Christian view attributes everything to sin, something the philosopher is too esthetic to have the ethical courage to do. And yet this courage is the only thing that can rescue life and humankind, unless one according to whim interrupts one's skepticism and joins some others who are likeminded about what truth is. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 239-240)

Such an insistence is not backed up in any systematic sense, however, it might be foolish to demand such an explanation. Religiosity is clearly not something that can or must be explained neither for Judge William, nor for Søren Kierkegaard. As Kierkegaard says himself while commenting on *Either/Or*: "The aim of the sermon is not to lull, not to win a metaphysical position, but to motivate to action." (Kierkegaard 1967: 5634)

Another great interiorization and personalization of ethics is, of course, found in virtue ethics and its first and most profound formulation, Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. Judge William is unambiguous in his negative interpretation of this kind of ethics:

> The deficiency of this life-view is easy to see. The error was that the individual had chosen himself altogether abstractly, and therefore the perfection he coveted and attained was just as abstract. This was my reason for emphasizing that choosing oneself is identical with repenting oneself, because repentance places the individual in the closest connection and the most intimate relation with an outside world. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240-241)

However, it is not so clear what precisely Judge William finds detestable in the content of virtue ethics. It seems that, paradoxically, he finds his version of ethical life-view as more involved in the social or civic life than that of the virtue ethics. According to Judge William, virtue ethicist is too focused on himself as his intention lacks the dimension of the social life:

> [h]e withdrew from active life, not in order to lose himself in metaphysical speculations but in order to act – not outwardly but within himself. This internal action was simultaneously his task and his satisfaction, for it certainly was not his intention to discipline himself to serve the state all the better at some later time. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240)

According to Judge William, the paragon of virtue is thus "to himself enough and he abandoned civic life never to return to it." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240), moreover, "civic life as such had no meaning for him; by some magic formula, he had rendered it harmless, indifferent, meaningless for himself." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240) and, finally, "the virtues he developed were not the civic virtues [...] they were the personal virtues." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 240)

It is not clear yet why Judge William thinks that his own version of ethics is more civic than the virtue ethics. The most articulate answer is formulated a bit later: "The reason that they [the Greek paragon of virtue and the mystic – *VB*] do not succeed is that the individual has chosen himself in his isolation or has chosen himself abstractly." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 250) Ethics, thus, has to have a connection with outwardness if it strives to answer the question already formulated by Kant: "What should I do?"[54] Or, as Judge William says himself, "He therefore has no connection with actuality, and when that is the case no ethical view of life can be put into practice." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 250)

However, practice does not seem to be sufficient distinction – after all virtue ethicist also practices virtues vigorously and his activities are informed by his understanding of virtue in a similar way Judge William's ethicist is informed by his understanding of personal freedom. Yet

[54] cf. Kant 1998: 677.

what Judge William seems to try to point out is that ethics can never become an idealized abstraction, a theory that is immune from particularities of immediate contexts. "The person who chooses himself ethically chooses himself concretely as this specific individual." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 250-251), that is, the individual is not denouncing the immediacy of his existence as something that has to be negated. Rather it has to be embraced and engaged with not merely as a playing field in which the ethical personality is expanding his virtues and moral superiority. To choose concretely means to choose oneself "as this specific individual with these capacities, these inclinations, these drives, these passions, influenced by this specific social milieu, as this specific product of a specific environment" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 250), thus, to accept and to affirm oneself as not withdrawn from the particular into the ideality, but to remain in the particular and at the same time strive for ideality.

The choice of oneself in ethics provides continuity, the prolongation of identity:

> An individual thus chooses himself as a complex specific concretion and therefore chooses himself in his continuity. This concretion is the individual's actuality, but since he chooses it according to his freedom, it may also be said that it is his possibility or, in order not to use such an esthetic expression, it is his task. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 251)

Virtue ethics makes one wish for being someone else, for being what one is not, while Judge William's version of ethics demands the opposite: one has to choose to be what one already is, this particular individual with this particular story and these particular circumstances. Thus, the intentional ethics provides a possibility of a continued self-identity, while virtue ethics in that sense is always seeking to be someone else.

The postulation of freedom as the inward condition of the ethical allows Judge William to stress the concretion of the ethical tasks. It is not an abstract theory of rules: "Ordinarily we view the ethical altogether abstractly and therefore have a secret horror of it. In that case the ethical is viewed as something alien to the personality." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 253) Here, on the contrary, it is a look back, a reflection, at himself, at what one really is, that makes up the essence of the ethical: "If a person fears transparency, he always avoids the ethical, because the ethical really does not want anything else." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 253-254)

Judge William moves onto the role duty has to play in ethical life: "In contrast to an esthetic life-view, which wants to enjoy life, we often hear about another life-view that places the meaning of life in living for the performance of one's duties. This is supposed to signify an ethical view of life."[55] (Kierkegaard 1987b: 254) He disagrees with such an understanding, because "The mistake is that the individual is placed in an external relation to duty." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 254)

[55] Compare this with what Hegel says in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: "The state is the actuality of the substantial *will*, an actuality which it possesses in the particular *self-consciousness* when this has been raised to its universality; as such, it is the rational in and for itself. This substantial unity is an absolute and unmoved end in itself, and in it, freedom enters into its highest right, just as this ultimate end possesses the highest right in relation to individuals [*die Einzelnen*], whose *highest duty* is to be members of the state." (Hegel 1991: 275)

Thus duty has to be encountered internally and individually and not be thrust upon the individual externally.

This understanding of duty seems to criticize Hegel's position on duty, which in its ideal version equates individual inclination with the law of the state. Judge William wants to completely evade any outward or objective conditioning of duty: "If the ethical is regarded as outside the personality and in an external relation to it, then one has given up everything, then one has despaired." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255), because he believes that in that case "the ethical is the abstract and as such is without the means for accomplishing the least thing." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255) It cannot accomplish anything because it subjects itself to the particularities of the outside world. As soon as "the ethical takes the form of law […], as soon as the ethical is prescriptive, it already has something of the esthetic." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255)

The crucial category, where the disagreement with Hegel comes to the fore, is conscience. For Hegel, conscience "is merely the *formal aspect* of the activity of the will, which, as *this* will, has no distinctive content of its own." (Hegel 1991: 164) It is a part of subjective morality and "the objective system of these principles and duties and the union of subjective knowledge with this system are present only when the point of view of ethics has been reached." (Hegel 1991: 164) Thus, the ethics as the universal system has to be synchronized with individual subjective conscience.

Not so for Judge William. If the ethical is founded outwardly, it "is still abstract and cannot be fully actualized." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255) Thus, it has to be founded within the individual *qua* individual: "Not until the individual himself is the universal, not until then can the ethical be actualized." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255) And the conscience here plays the central role as the founding factor: "This is the secret that lies in the conscience; this is the secret the individual life has with itself – that simultaneously it is an individual life and also the universal." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 255)

For Judge William the preservation of the individual is at stake in this departure from Hegel. "He makes himself the universal human being, not by taking off [*afføre*] his concretion, for then he becomes a complete non-entity." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256) Morality has to find a universal validity, yet by imposing morality on the individual outwardly we risk that we will be left with no individual to speak of. The universal human being as an abstract idea is a 'phantom', rather one has to postulate that "every human being is the universal human being" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256), which he actualizes by making a choice for oneself. It is not an imposition, but rather a self-imposition, not a disciplinarian, but rather self-discipline. It is a subtle, yet important difference from Hegelian understanding of the ethical universality. If the task of making oneself a universal human being is an inward task, the society or the state have neither access to, nor

control over the state, the progress, and the direction of the moral *status quo* of a particular individual.

On the one hand, the relation between right and ethics becomes problematic, if not outright impossible. The interiorized ethics becomes completely a matter of a particular individual. Conscience is withdrawn from political field, and, furthermore, the moral education as such becomes a problematic notion, as it is not clear how one can know about the other's moral inclinations and choices.

On the other hand, and with much wider implications, the interiorization of the universal within the individual establishes the dual structure of individual – he is at the same time the concrete, yet also sets himself a task to become the universal without giving up his concreteness: "His self in its immediacy is defined by accidental characteristics; the task is to work the accidental and the universal together into a whole." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256) In other words, the task is to unite the opposites in a bigger whole that is the self. Naturally, the self appears as a torn, split, dual entity that should be characterized by tension.

This tension is given an extensive treatment in a book by another pseudonymous author, namely, Johannes de silencio's *Sickness unto Death*, but for Judge William, whose goal, as we remember, is to convince rather than present, this does not seem to possess any problematic consequences. Thus his interest is to delineate the essential difference between the ethical consciousness and the esthetic individual: "Of the ethical individual it may be said that he is like the still waters that have a deep source, whereas the one who lives esthetically is only superficially moved." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256) The ethical individual is engaged in his worldly activities to a much higher degree than the esthetic individual, his whole existence is shaken up by the choices he makes, and by making these choices "he has become the unique human being – that is, there is no other human being like him" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256), that is, he achieves what is the highest goal of the esthetic individual, and at the same time "he has also become the universal human being." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256)

Judge William makes another important jibe at the esthetic existence: "To be the unique human being is not so great in and by itself, for every human being shares this with every product of nature." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256) In other words, to have as a goal merely unique existence is to destine oneself not to rise above nature. Yet "to be that in such a way that he is thereby also the universal – that is the true art of living." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 256) To indulge in what is the particular in us does not add any value to human existence and, conversely, the ability to combine what is the particular within us with the universal that we discover as a task is the unique possibility available to every human being.

In summary, Judge William could be said to work in the tradition of German idealist philosophy. Together with Kant and Hegel he clearly believes that universal ethics is possible, yet he suggests certain important features in his ethics that distinguish him both from Kant and from Hegel. In contrast to Hegel, Judge William seems to see more positive value in conscience as the originator of ethics. While in contrast to Kant, Judge William seems to search for another – deeper and more meaningful - role of religion in the formation of ethics.

13. First Ethics II: Case Study of Marriage

In his first letter Judge William sets himself a very peculiar goal. As he himself puts it: "There are two things that I must regard as my particular task: to show the esthetic meaning of marriage and to show how the esthetic in it may be retained despite life's numerous hindrances." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 8) This, presumably, on the one hand, will show the limitations of A's attitude towards marriage and, by implication, towards erotic love, on the other hand, will show that the ethical commitment strengthens rather than distorts the erotic love. Thus for Judge William marriage becomes a crucial question, as it combines all the aspects which he feels are important for A and which he feels that A completely misunderstands. Therefore, similarly as in the second letter Judge William sees a fertile ground for 'edifying' work with A.[56]

Now, A's attitude to marriage is well documented. In "Rotation of Crops" A presents a passionate and persuasive case against marriage. According to him, in marriage there is a promise of eternal love which can not be given, as love is accidental by nature (Kierkegaard 1987a: 296); marriage deprives individual of his individuality, as it requires one to become a multitude (Kierkegaard 1987a: 297); and, as this "A *contra* marriage" case is presented in the context of two other cases (against friendship and taking up official posts), one can conclude that marriage is also detrimental in the sense that it is a commitment. Thus, marriage is a lie in the sense that it requires committing to what one cannot promise to deliver, and it deprives the individual of his freedom. As "Diapsalmata" puts it succinctly, "Marry, and you will regret it.

[56] Although I will concentrate solely on *Either/Or*, it is important to keep in mind that the same position recurs in a later work *Stages on Life's Way*, where a figure indicatively referred to as a "Married Man", in essence repeats Judge William's position. For example, in contradiction to A's position, Married Man says: "My dear reader, if you do not have the time and opportunity to take a dozen years of your life to travel around the world to see everything a world traveler is acquainted with, if you do not have the capability and qualifications from years of practice in a foreign language to penetrate to the differences in national characteristics as these become apparent to the research scholar, if you are not bent upon discovering a new astronomical system that will displace both the Copernican and the Ptolemaic – then marry; and if you have time for the first, the capability for the second, the idea for the last, then marry *also*. Even if you did not manage to see the whole globe or to speak in many tongues or to know all about the heavens, you will not regret it, for marriage is and remains the most important voyage of discovery a human being undertakes; compared with a married man's knowledge of life, any other knowledge of it is superficial, for he and he alone has properly immersed himself in life." (Kierkegaard 1988: 89)

Do not marry, and you will also regret it. Marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 38)

Apart from these direct arguments against marriage, one can safely say that for A marriage is not even an important issue – it is more of a secondary topic in his musings. For A the issue is the sensual, or, more precisely, the erotic. The sensual allows the individual enhance his own experiences and therefore should be sought after. And in the context of marriage his task is merely to reassure his readers that "Just because one does not become involved in marriage, one's life need not for that reason be devoid of the erotic." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 297) On the contrary, if the logical conclusion of love is the erotic, then it is essential not to complicate it with other, additional, issues: "When two people fall in love with each other and sense that they are destined for each other, it is a question of having the courage to break it off, for by continuing there is only everything to lose, nothing to gain." (Kierkegaard 1987a: 298)

In this context Judge William's plan seems to be a cunning one: it is not to convince A of the merits of the ethical marriage versus the esthetics of erotic love, but to show that within the commitment that marriage requires there is space for the esthetic. In other words, Judge William could well rephrase A's conclusion: "By marrying there is nothing to lose, everything to gain."[57]

Judge William repositions the opposition – for him it is the romantic love versus the reflective love. The romantic love is 'immediate' (Kierkegaard 1987b: 19), 'based on beauty' and 'the sensuous', 'momentary', and is 'noble by virtue of the eternity' (Kierkegaard 1987b: 21), yet that eternity is 'little eternity' as it does not have temporal continuity and remains merely a feeling of the passing moment (Kierkegaard 1987b: 21). The reflective love, according to Judge William, takes one of two directions: either "instead of assimilating the eternal into its consciousness it assimilates the temporal" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 23) and thus becomes a mere civil partnership, where commitment is conditional rather than absolute, or it takes a form of 'marriage of convenience', in which 'the sensual' and 'the eternal' are eradicated. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 27) No doubt, as Judge William indicates, in the present age marriage is not something that the advocate of romantic love would look upon positively.

Thus reformulated goal of Judge William is "to show that romantic love can be united with and exist in marriage." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 31) One can easily detect the shades of Hegelian dialectic movement here. The romantic love as the immediate is negated by the reflective love, which has to be negated in a higher unity, which would unite the eroticism of the romantic love with the institutional, premeditated character of the reflective love, embodied in marriage. In

[57] It is striking – and, of course, has been noted and rightly criticized -, how one sided and masculine-centred Judge William's understanding of marriage is. As it is beyond the topic of this thesis, one can only refer to the works, where this problem is discussed, e.g. Kay Young "Kierkegaard's Claim of Mutuality and Its Problem of Representation" (Young 2011).

terms of the life-views, the dialectic pans out as the unity of the esthetic (as erotic love) and the ethical (as committed love) in the religious (as infinite love).

> It is now sufficiently clear that reflective love continually consumes itself and that it altogether arbitrarily takes one position and then another; it is clear that it points beyond itself to something higher, but the point is whether this something higher cannot promptly enter into combination with the first love. This something higher is the religious. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 30)

By the way, Judge William is keen to point out that he is talking about the religious not in abstract terms, but presumes Christianity as a proper space to practice marriage. (Kierkegaard 1987b: 28) In such a tripartition the ethical in marriage represents the social or the civic aspect of it. It is the communal obligation and responsibility that two persons commit to each other.

Next Judge William introduces the notion of erotic love [*Elskov*], without which "married life is either merely a satisfaction of sensuous appetite or it is an association, a partnership, with one or another object in mind" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 32). Erotic love for Judge William is qualitatively different from lust [*Vellyst*], as it, like all love [*Kjærlighed*], "bears a stamp of eternity" (Kierkegaard 1987b: 21).

Now, there is an issue of marriages, where erotic love has long vanished and this example is being used as the proof that erotic love is incompatible with marriage and that it rather belongs in the pre-marriage period. In disagreement Judge William employs a sort of formal counterargument. The separation of erotic love and marriage can be explained by two possibilities: a) "Either it might be because erotic love cannot be preserved at all." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 34) But in this case it says nothing about the compatibility of erotic love and marriage, for then the petering out of erotic love is due to the nature of erotic love itself. b) "Or it might be because the ethical and the religious, which enter in with marriage, would turn out to be so heterogeneous to erotic love that they cannot be united, so erotic love presumably would be able to battle through life victoriously if it were permitted to be self-contained and to depend upon itself alone." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 34) Thus the real issue is if the religiously and ethically informed love necessarily disqualifies erotic love.

Judge William postulates his thesis: "The substance in marriage is erotic love." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 35) In other words, Judge William is willing to argue not just that erotic love is compatible with religiously and ethically informed love, but a much stronger point – erotic love is the essential, it is what makes a marriage marriage, it is the reason why marriage should take place in the first place. However, "Marriage, then, ought not to call forth erotic love; on the contrary, it presupposes it not as something past but as something present." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 36) The immediacy of the erotic love must be preserved in marriage. This conflict of immediate sensual attraction and reflective premeditated relation can be solved only by commitment to a higher immediacy - the promise of infinite love, which can make sense only in religious terms:

"The way it happens is that in taking their first love to God the lovers thank God for it. Thereby an ennobling change takes place." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 57)

The promise of eternal love presumes that, strictly speaking, there must be only one love in individual's life, which consequently is also the first one. "One loves only once in one's life; the heart clings to its first love – marriage. Listen to and admire this harmonious unison in different spheres. It is the same subject, only expressed esthetically, religiously, and ethically." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 60)

In this context, the ceremony of marriage as the societal affirmation of the erotic relationship plays an important role: "It affirms the universally human, and in this sense sin also." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 93) The sensuousness, which erotic love entails and which in Christianity is deeply connected with sinfulness, is partly offset by the ceremony: "Sin has come in, but when the individuals have humbled themselves under this, they stand higher than they stood before." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 93) The ethical and the religious in this sense play an important role: "But marriage has an ethical and religious element that erotic love does not have; for this reason, marriage is based on resignation [*Resignation*], which erotic love does not have." (Kierkegaard 1987b: 36) The ethical dimension to marriage disciplines the erotic love and enriches it.

As it is evident by now, Judge William pursues a double strategy. On the one hand, he is trying to incorporate the esthetic categories within the ethical sphere and to show that these are not merely compatible, but mutually complimentary. On the other hand, he is trying to equate the ethical and the religious. His third letter indicates that the religious is the weakest part of his exposition – he 'does not have the authority' to speak of the religious, nevertheless, has intuitions of the insufficiency of the ethical. I will turn now to the discussion of what this insufficiency entails.

14. Limits of the Ethical Stage

In this section I will discuss the limits of the ethical stage and show that Kierkegaard's texts have enough evidence of another type of ethics that I shall term the second ethics. I will argue that understanding of individual freedom denotes the crucial difference between the two conceptions. Secondly, I will discuss, how Kierkegaard and some of his pseudonyms see the communicative aspect of ethics. My contention is that the understanding of the possibility to communicate ethics is unnecessarily stringent.[58]

[58] The crucial text in this regard is the Introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety*, which has been somewhat overlooked in the secondary literature. Darío González's article "The Triptych of Sciences in the Introduction to *The Concept*

The best place to start the discussion of Kierkegaard's notion of ethics is the ethical stage, which is presented most thoroughly in part II of *Either/Or*. As we have seen, Judge William, trying to promote the ethical life to A, equates it to obedience to the prevailing legal, social, and cultural norms. Ethical individual should identify the normative contents of his or her living context and actively apply them in daily practices. Institutions, that establish and preserve social bonds like marriage, become the benchmark and the goal of ethical living. Thus ethical life for Judge William in essence equates to decent, law-abiding and tradition-loving life of a citizen.

Similarly ethics is described by another Kierkegaard's character, the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling* Johannes de silentio who, in unison with Judge William, connects ethics with social morality and stresses the extraordinary and paradoxical nature of the Biblical story of Abraham in the context of this ethics. (Kierkegaard 1983: 55) It is not difficult to reconstruct the origin of this concept of ethics and, as we have seen, both Kant and Hegel serve here as guiding signposts. Hegel in his *Philosophy of Right* provides the division between universal ethics, *Sittlichkeit*, and individual morality, *Moralität*. (Hegel 1991: 189-190) The task of the individual, according to him, is to adjust individual morality to the universal ethics, which unfolds in reality as a prevailing normative context of right (laws) and culture (traditions and customs). The ethical stage, as Judge William presents it, in its philosophical implications matches the implications provided by *Sittlichkeit*. It is, of course, a higher existential tier than esthetic stage, in which the individual gives in to his own subjective whims and lives according to the moods of the moment, because the ethical stage draws individual's attention from the particularities of reality to the ideality and the search for universal order.

Nevertheless, in the overall corpus of Kierkegaard's authorship the notion of ethics is anything but unambiguous. For example, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* another Kierkegaard's literary character Johannes Climacus strictly criticizes Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit* from the position of individual subjectivity. (Kierkegaard 1992: 134-135) In *Works of Love*, which appeared a year later, one encounters ethics that emphasizes Christian devotion and not appropriation of the rules and norms of the social. And even in already mentioned *Fear and Trembling*, although the concept of ethics used is clearly Hegelian, nevertheless it is stated quite controversially that there are cases when the suspension of ethics is necessary. (Kierkegaard 1983: 55) Finally in the Introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety* its pseudonymous author Haufniensis talks about ethics that is shipwrecked into the concept of sin, and about the second ethics that is the only one capable of explaining the phenomenon of sin. (Kierkegaard 1980a: 17-20)

---

of Anxiety" (González 2001) is a pleasant exception that has proven to be extremely helpful in its clear and systematics approach.

Probably most concisely the problem that Kierkegaard sees in *Sittlichkeit* is formulated by Haufniensis. In *The Concept of Anxiety* his critique unfolds in the context of psychological experiences of various forms of anxiety. In the present context the most relevant is analysis of the appearance of spirit, which Haufniensis understands as a basic premise of individual self. Haufniensis says:

> Innocence is ignorance. In innocence, man is not qualified as spirit [...]. The spirit in man is dreaming. [...]
> In this state there is peace and repose, but there is simultaneously something else that is not contention and strife, for there is indeed something against which to strive. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. (Kierkegaard 1980a: 41)

Individual tries to overcome anxiety by action, by realizing the possibilities that are yet unknown or unactualized, in other words, by converting ignorance into knowledge. It is important to note that anxiety manifests itself as inwardly controversial phenomenon, as a mixture of attraction and fear, as a contraposition between curiosity and prohibition. This tension between ignorance and attraction and at the same time fear to know means that individual inescapably will make wrong choices and this means that this conversion from ignorance to knowledge will also take place on the other side of the component – the state of innocence will inescapably be converted into the consciousness of guilt.

It is possible to look at it from another angle. Spirit posits itself as freedom. The application or cultivation of freedom from ethical perspective suggests two possibilities – ethical choices or violations of ethics. The individual can comprehend freedom fully only by having tried both possibilities – only then freedom opens in its full scope. But this means that in order to comprehend freedom, or in Haufniensis' words, to awaken the spirit, it is necessary to make an ethical violation. Only then the individual will be able to authentically comprehend and practice his or her own freedom and to accept responsibility for its implications. This clearly echoes the view presented by Judge William, while in his diaries Kierkegaard formulates it in his own name in this way:

> If freedom [in repetition as a religious movement] now discovers an obstacle, then it must lie in freedom itself. Freedom now shows itself not to be in its perfection in man but to be disturbed. This disturbance, however, must be supplied by freedom itself, for otherwise there would be no freedom at all or the disturbance would be a matter of chance which freedom could remove. The disturbance which is supplied by freedom itself is sin... (Kierkegaard 1967: 1246)

In a simplified and schematized form this problem of the emergence of individual self can be expressed in the following sequence: individual is spirit, spirit is freedom, freedom is anxiety, anxiety is sin, sin is an ethical violation *ergo* individual is sin or, more precisely, to be an individual means to violate ethics. Thus to be an individual means to be free, to be free means to

feel anxiety, to feel anxiety means to sin.[59] Of course, one might counter that this scheme is lacking in argumentation, and Haufniensis would most probably agree himself – *Concept of Anxiety* after all is 'a simple psychologically orienting deliberation', as its subtitle tells us, which means it does not have pretensions of a philosophical treatise.

However, we can look at other texts. De silentio reformulates this very problem in the terms of Hegelian philosophy. In Problema I of *Fear and Trembling* he writes: "As soon as the single individual asserts himself in his singularity before the universal, he sins." (Kierkegaard 1983: 54) At the same time he unfolds the problem and shows its implications. In order to posit individuality one does not merely have to go against the universal. The bigger problem is that one has to go against the universal continuously, on a permanent basis. This is not some once in a lifetime initiation, during which the individuality is formed and after which one can successfully move forward within the limits of ethical life. To the contrary, individual singularity has to be and will be conformed against the universal continuously, again and again, and this means that one will sin again and again. This, undoubtedly, is a much more significant problem. Understanding of the positing of individual not as a problem of becoming, but as a problem of being, individual self emerges as a constant impediment to the universal, normative and normalizing ethics. This problem raises a question: if sinfulness is a part of nature of singular, particular identity, then isn't Hegel right when he identifies individual as a 'moral form of evil', and if so, shouldn't then individuality be directed towards the universal and finally subjected to it.

In order to answer this question, we have to go back to the notion, which we already used, but haven't unfolded. Both Haufniensis and de silentio use the notion of sin in a Christian context – it is a violation of divine laws. Thus it is first of all a religious notion and its content is formulated by theological and dogmatic context.[60] And precisely here, according to de silentio, the misunderstanding emerges – sin in its essence is not (although in its content can coincide with) a violation of the first ethics, *Sittlichkeit*. It cannot be equated to a crime, neglect of traditions, disrespect of the customs or a simple social indecency. The essential difference is that if other ethical violations can be punished and in this way forgiven, thus negated and forgotten in the past, then in the case of sin there is no punishment that can redeem sin – the logic of negation here is powerless.

[59] This notion is clearly extremely unstable in terms of temporal continuity, thus there is another category, crucial for fully understanding Kierkegaard's notion of freedom, namely, repetition. M. Jamie Ferreira has written an insightful essay on relation between freedom and repetition (Ferreira 1989).

[60] Green sees in the emergence of the notion of sin the self-implosion of philosophy: "In neglecting sin philosophy becomes a futile discipline. But if it takes sin seriously, then it has outstripped its own categories or abilities." (Green 1986: 102) While this contention is agreeable in its general spirit, it is clearly wrong in its specifics. It would be much more precise to speak of rational ethics rather than philosophy in general in this context.

It is also a question of administration. Violation, of whichever kind it might be, can be annulled, redeemed or revoked only by the one who formulated it and made it a norm. Kierkegaard here clearly is a representative of Christianity – sin, unlike crime or violation of social conventions, is administered not by people, but by divine institution.

Having discussed religious implications, we can try to 'translate' the phenomenon of sin into more secular terms. Speaking phenomenologically (and in essence Haufniensis does exactly that), sin emerges as 'I-have-not-acted-in-a-right-way' consciousness. Even if the individual abides by all the rules, laws, habits, and traditions, that are prevailing in one or another context, he or she can not be sure that he won't feel guilty at some point. The experience of guilty or unclear conscience is specific in the sense that it does not always coincide with universally accepted ethical standards. However, this does not mean, that these are not connected domains. For example, stealing is a sin in all cases, yet it is not difficult to imagine a situation, when having done this deed the individual does not feel guilty. The same applies in the other direction – social conventions might not require one or another limitation of action, yet the particular individual might feel guilty having acted in that particular way. Thus *Sittlichkeit* as universalizing ethics and individual consciousness of guilt are parallel domains with different sources of normativity and whose interconnection is rather accidental than systematic.

The consciousness of being guilty without any real (in a Hegelian sense), rational reason does not have a clear religious connotation yet, however, Haufniensis clearly implies that only the introduction of theological concepts (such as sin) can explain this consciousness of guilt:

> So the new science begins with dogmatics in the same sense that immanental science begins with metaphysics. Here ethics again finds its place as the science that has a task for actuality the dogmatic consciousness of actuality. This ethics does not ignore sin, and it does not have its ideality in making ideal demands; rather, it has its ideality in the penetrating consciousness of actuality, of the actuality of sin. (Kierkegaard 1980a: 20)

Ethics as *Sittlichkeit* is the first ethics both chronologically and genealogically, however, this ethics is limited and doomed to failure because of its incapability to solve the consciousness of guilt that one finds in every individual or, more precisely, that every individual finds within himself. Thus, the second ethics that is capable of explaining the consciousness of sin and thus will save the human individuality as morally justifiable must be formulated. As we noted already, in Kierkegaard's opinion, this ethics must be grounded in religious categories.

Having discussed the assumptions of the second ethics we can turn back to probably the most often repeated critique of Kierkegaard's ethics. That is, of course, the presumed danger of it being too oriented toward immanence, that gives birth to the risk of moral subjectivity or even moral relativism. Ethicists like Emmanuel Levinas see this as not merely the weakest, but also the most dangerous aspect of Kierkegaard's existential triad of existential stages. Levinas approvingly mentions Kierkegaard for his 'rehabilitation of subjectivity' to the degree that it is

freed from the totalizing grip of Hegel's systematic thought. However, according to Levinas, this is achieved at too high a price: "[...] in protesting against the absorption of subjectivity by Hegel's universality, he bequeathed to the history of philosophy an exhibitionistic, immodest subjectivity." (Levinas 1996: 76) This immodesty is described by Levinas as 'tensing on oneself' [*tension sur soi*], which constitutes the subjectivity of the subject as "impatience that the outer world (of people and things) […] cannot satisfy." (Levinas 1996: 67) Although Levinas is in agreement with Kierkegaard's assertion that immanence cannot be integrated into the language of totalization, nevertheless, he is wary that finally this will give birth not to the radicalization of ethics, but its rejection.

In order to respond to this serious argument let's turn back to *The Concept of Anxiety*, where in the Introduction Haufniensis grounds the insufficiency of the first ethics, while at the same time laying the ground for the second ethics:

> The first ethics was shipwrecked on the sinfulness of the single individual. Therefore, instead of being able to explain this sinfulness, the first ethics fell into an even greater and ethically more enigmatic difficulty, since the sin of the individual expanded into the sin of the whole race. At this point, dogmatics came to the rescue with hereditary sin. The new ethics presupposes dogmatics, and by means of hereditary sin it explains the sin of the single individual while at the same time it sets ideality as a task, not by a movement from above and downward but from below and upward. (Kierkegaard 1980a: 20)

The introduction of dogmatics saves the individual from the completely radical ethical subjectivity. The turn towards the absolute, in Kierkegaard's case, towards the immanent divine transcendence, has to serve as a universal compass, the reference point of the individual. This simple move – the possibility of direct revelation in immanence – allows Kierkegaard to keep a more or less balanced ethical structure and not to go down the road of, for example, Levinasian ethics of infinite asymmetric responsibility for the Other. In the face of God we are all equal. The other individual is as much the creation of God as I am and, conversely, I am the creation of God as much as another individual. In other words, "The commandment said 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself', but if the commandment is properly understood it also says the opposite: *You shall love yourself in the right way*." (Kierkegaard 1995: 72) The duty of the individual is to love oneself as much as one's neighbor. Accordingly, the infinite duty to the other can be interpreted as infinite duty to oneself.

The consciousness of sin does not merely lead to religious terminology, it is also, as we already mentioned, the movement of immanence. Ethics is interiorized as the immanent activity of individual mind. In this way the second ethics is understood as immanently realized task, and not an outward order. And in this way the gap between the singular reality and absolute ideality is not a permanent humiliating and ever deepening abyss crushing the individual in his poverty, but the task experienced as a particularly personal involvement.

This movement of interiority provoked another line of critical argumentation. By interiorizing ethics or at least its source, ethics becomes not merely subjective, but also incommunicable. It is practiced privately, in silence, without any reference to public, common space. Moreover, since it is interiorized, another person here acquires a derivative, secondary character.

In fact, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works are full of places that seem to support these charges. Let's mention one: in *Fear and Trembling* Johannes de silentio (!), while talking about Abraham, mentions a few times: "Abraham can not speak." (Kierkegaard 1983: 118) If he cannot speak, the critics argue, he cannot explain, if he cannot explain, he is beyond the limits of the rational communal space.[61] Ethical-religious sphere is not only individual in the sense that it conditions personal singularity, it also negates community, for it negates communication and in this sense the social space for human interaction.[62]

Although this line of argumentation is reasonable, the incommunicability of the second ethics is not as radical as it is often portrayed. First of all, it needs to be mentioned, that this silence does not apply to the whole of the ethical-religious sphere. It is remembered exclusively in the context of the transition from the first ethics to the second, of the leap of faith that the individual has to enact. As is well known, the leap of faith for Kierkegaard is not something that can be communicated and for a good reason – the premises of faith are irrational, thus by default they cannot be subsumed by rational discourse. From the point of view of rational discourse the mere fact of faith is always already a paradox. Yet the religious sphere itself, it seems, is open to direct communication, as is attested by numerous religious and Christian writings of Kierkegaard himself. Undeservedly forgotten *Works of Love* is a splendid and extensive presentation of precisely such religious ethics.[63]

---

[61] There is of course a long running debate on the meaning of *Fear and Trembling* and the exhaustive overview of critical assessments would require a separate research. The question we are concerned with, namely, the silence in *Fear and Trembling*, is most notably discussed by Green (Green 1993), Jung H. Lee (Lee 2000), Michelle Kosch (Kosch 2006), Aaron J. Simmons (Simmons 2007), and Lippitt (Lippitt 2008).

[62] This tempts quite a few commentators to talk about a secret that lies behind this direct discourse and at the same time to talk what this secret means, without noticing the contradiction, which this entails. Sometimes it is taken even further, when Kierkegaard is seen as a sort of the master-possessor of this secret knowledge: "That's what Kierkegaard actually wrote, but who can still understand it? Totally opaque, totally untranslatable and unpresentable as it is, that very simple sentence whose thought is absolutely interrupted and thus sealed in the secret of its Danish fragments. To those who can read it, and their number, obviously, is all to small indeed, Kierkegaard leaves a compact but inexhaustible source of posthumous papers: *Efterladenskab/Efterladenhed*, things left behind, unfinished things, things left behind as inheritance, heritage, or estate, posthumous property, unfinished business, things overlooked or neglected, and things taken care of in a slovenly manner. The secret is ours for the taking. We are all secret agents." (Newmark 1997: 748)

[63] In Kierkegaardian scholarship there are quite a few commentators, who seem to deny this pretty obvious point. For example, Matthey Gerhard Jacoby states that, according to Kierkegaard, "the only one who can communicate truth is God." (Jacoby 2002: 43)

One can also look at it formally[64] – paradox is a logical category that marks the limit of formal continuous logical sequence. However, if there is no logically mediated transition between the stages, it does not mean that such a logical mediation does not happen within the stages. Both ethical and religious stages separately succumb to rational discourse, even if they do not have a continuous rational connection between themselves.

One can find a similar argument in Joseph M. Bocheński's *Logic of Religion* (Bocheński 1965). Every religious discourse (in fact, as every science) has what it calls the collection of convictions or unverifiable statements. Nevertheless, having identified the first unverifiable statements, all the following statements of the discourse will be derived from the first according to rational, logical rules and following the principles of consistency and compatibility. The subsequent statements are not merely derived from the first, but also verified against them. It seems that Kierkegaard, the author of numerous religious discourses, would agree with this, as would even some of the pseudonymous authors, for example, Haufniensis who in the already quoted Introduction talks about the science of dogmatics that, according to him, is the only one capable of explaining sin. Thus ethical-religious stage has inner logic that can be and usually is communicated directly.

Thus, the problem of communication is narrowed to the leap, the moment of religious transformation, the origins of religious consciousness. This moment does not succumb to rational discourse, yet this is understandable – as it is a logical paradox. Yet the silence, which the individual has to endure during this moment, at least to the author of *Fear and Trembling* de silentio, it seems, is not the opposite of communication:

> But a final word by Abraham has been preserved, and insofar as I can understand the paradox, I can also understand Abraham's total presence in that word. First and foremost, he does not say anything, and in that form *he says what he has to say*. (Kierkegaard 1983: 118)

In fact, conversely, silence is an integral part of communication (in the same way as pause is an integral part of musical composition), because it can supplement language, an utterance, a word and even conceal its shortcomings. To know how to be silent is an ability or, more precisely, to know how to use silence as a communicative tool is an ability: "the good [demonic] [...] is absolutely able to keep silent". (Kierkegaard 1980a: 125) And, conversely, language can be a deceiving and distracting instrument, a tool to conceal as, for example, while being anxious about the good: "A man with a bad conscience can not endure silence." (Kierkegaard 1980a: 125) Thus the community, that what is common, not necessarily is what is expressed, outward and spoken. The silent community of those, who have nothing in common, is more a community of those who are silent about what they have in common.

[64] A short, but qualitative overview of the secondary literature on the paradox is provided in C. S. Evans' "Is Kierkegaard an Irrationalist? Reason, Paradox, and Faith" (Evans 1989).

Summing up we could say that Kierkegaard's texts are full of references that ethical stage is not the only conception of ethics that Kierkegaard operates with. Having reconstructed the concept and contents of the second ethics we discover that it is to be associated with the religious stage. This allows us to rethink Kierkegaard's theory of existential stages in general, and also the relation between religiousness and ethics in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Based on Kierkegaard's religious texts and *Works of Love* we can conclude that religious ethics, albeit with limitations, is not an ethics without communicative content. It is to be concluded that this content is meaningful only to those, for whom the first statements of the Christian religious discourse do not require verification.

15. Second Ethics

While discussing the notion of the second ethics, I will try to emphasize its religious presuppositions and to discuss its several critical aspects. The crucial text in this regard is *Works of Love*, which, until recently, was ignored and, one could say, even forgotten by Kierkegaard's scholars. Recent works by scholars like M. Jamie Ferreira (Ferreira 2001) have done a great deal in compensating for this oversight.[65]

The title of the book is indicative – at the centre of this ethics stands love. We have seen how Judge William discussed love, yet there are two important differences between Judge William's account and the one, presented in *Works of Love*. The first difference is that Judge William is interested in marital love, which for him is the focal point of ethical life, while the departure point and the focus of attention of *Works of Love* is neighbourly love. In essence it is an extensive deliberation on what the commandment "You shall love thy neighbor as yourself" means and entails. Thus, at the outset this ethics is Christianly oriented and centred ethics. The second difference is that *Works of Love* is much more interested in love as passion, while Judge William's interest could be best described as to provide balanced rational account of love.

In the initial comments one can immediately see a connection to the first ethics – in both the crucial point is the attitude of the individual rather than results. In his ethical theory Kant

[65] The most comprehensive overview of the second ethics as it is presented in *Works of Love* is offered by Ferreira (Ferreira 2001), critical assessment has been offered by Mark L. McCreary (McCreary 2011), two types of love in second ethics discussed by Sharon Krishek (Krishek 2008), second ethics as suffering explored by Kevin Hoffman (Hoffman 2002), second ethics as self-love is expounded by Lippitt (Lippitt 2009). The debate about the second ethics and divine command theory is ably summarized by R. Zachary Manis (Manis 2009), while the debate regarding the radicality of special relationships in the second ethics is reviewed by Lippitt (Lippitt 2012). The relation between *Works of Love* and *Fear and Trembling* is explored by Amy Laura Hall (Hall 2000), the understanding of friendship in the first ethics and the second ethics is analysed by Brian Gregor (Gregor 2008), Kierkegaard's understanding of the other is explored by Leo Stan (Stan 2010), the difference between Kierkegaard's second ethics and Alasdair MacIntyre's ethics is expounded by Matthew D. Mendham (Medham 2007).

famously opted for the means over ends. For him the problem with the ends oriented ethics is that the ends are relative and contextual, while Kant is looking for something that would make ethics unconditional and universal. Only a good will, he concludes, can be unconditional and good in itself. Kierkegaard uses a similar argument in relation to love:

> There is no word in human language, […] about which we are able to say: If a person uses this word, it is unconditionally demonstrated that there is love in that person.
> There is no work, […] about which we unconditionally dare to say: The one who does this unconditionally demonstrates love by it. It depends on *how* the work is done. (Kierkegaard 1995: 13)

In short, there is nothing in the actions of love that can be absolutely interpreted as a sign of love, thus the only indication, that will be used, is the intention or the *how* of the particular act.

But what does this *neighbor* mean? "The neighbor is the person who is nearer to you than anyone else, yet not in the sense of preferential love." (Kierkegaard 1995: 21) Then in what sense is the neighbor closest to you? "The concept 'neighbor' is actually the redoubling of your own self; 'the neighbor' is what thinkers call the 'other', that by which the selfishness in self-love is to be tested." (Kierkegaard 1995: 21) In other words, this is not a particular type of people, but a feature of other people, something in them that challenges the self-love of the I.[66] Consequently, the only person that does not qualify as a neighbor is the I: "If there are only two people, the other person is the neighbor; if there are millions, everyone of these is the neighbor." (Kierkegaard 1995: 21) Thus, Christian ethics is understood as a love of other people, yet this love is highly personalized, as opposed to the love of abstract humanity. And it is very concrete – there is always a criterion for the depth of love present. Loving someone as oneself as a criterion suggests a highly egotistical nature of a human being, however, at the same time it offers a vision of ethics that is meant to overcome this egocentricity.

One could note that the formulation of the commandment is similar in its structure to the formulation of Kant's categorical imperative. Yet with Kant one has to keep in mind that his chief ambition is to provide a universally valid formula, devoid of any subjectivity. Thus, even if it is obvious that Kant kept this commandment in mind, it is also pretty clear why he would be wary of including the subjective inclinations of the ethical subject. We might conclude that albeit it served as a precursor of categorical imperative, it was too subjectively charged for Kant.

These observations also help to clarify why Kierkegaard was not too preoccupied with this. Kierkegaard is not as obsessed with the universally valid, i.e. rationally justifiable, ethics as Kant (and incidentally Hegel) is. Or, more precisely, he believes that there is ethical universality, yet does not think that this universality is communicable by means of rational discourse.

[66] It is remarkable how close this description comes to the Levinasian account of what the *face* of the Other is even to the point of the coincidence of the vocabularies, e.g. "The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, call for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question." (Levinas 1989: 83)

There is yet another notion, which immediately invokes Kantian ethics, emphasized by Kierkegaard, namely, duty. Kierkegaard says: "To choose a beloved, to find a friend, yes, this is a complicated business, but one's neighbor is easy to recognize, easy to find if only one will personally acknowledge one's duty." (Kierkegaard 1995: 22) Thus, duty appears as a moral compass, which is there to assist in identifying the subjects of ethical relations.

One would note that there is a certain contradiction in terms of equating love with duty. Love, especially in contemporary context, is frequently understood as either voluntary, where one chooses whom to love, or involuntary in the sense that it just 'strikes the individual', but it is extremely paradoxical to claim that one has to love because he is commanded to. One might ask, how can anyone tell me whom to love?

For Kant, of course, there is no such contradiction, as the commandment is reformulated in non-personal terms. Kierkegaard, however, does not shy from this paradox, but makes it the focal point of his argument. He sees the role of duty as one which ensures that love is more than a momentary passion and provides its temporal continuity: "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secured against every change, eternally made free in blessed independence, eternally and happily secured against despair." (Kierkegaard 1995: 29) What Kierkegaard seems to be preoccupied with is that the very nature of love is requiring this temporal continuity, but can not ensure it itself: "However joyous, however happy, however indescribably confident instinctive and inclinational love, spontaneous love, can be itself, precisely in its most beautiful moment it still feels a need to bind itself, if possible, even more securely." (Kierkegaard 1995: 29) In other words, love without duty will be just a passing moment – duty will secure that it does not evaporate as spontaneously as it appeared.

Kierkegaard also suggests a certain hierarchy of love:

> The Christian love commandment commands loving God above else, and then loving the neighbor. In erotic love and friendship, preferential love is the middle term; in love for the neighbor, God is the middle term. Love God above all else; then you also love the neighbor and in the neighbor every human being. (Kierkegaard 1995: 57-58)

It is obvious why Kierkegaard is wary of erotic love – erotic love always places the object of its passion above anything else. It elevates its beloved by discriminating, diminishing the significance of others. Neighbourly love, because it is informed by the love for God, is indifferent to peculiarities of individuals and manages to see in everyone that what is lovable in him or her.

Always unashamedly Christian, Kierkegaard makes clear that for him God is the genesis of love: "Ultimately, love for God is the decisive factor; from this originates love for the neighbor." (Kierkegaard 1995: 57), while the neighbor, in complete coincidence with Levinasian ethics, is that in another person, what creates in me an ethical sentiment. Importantly though, the essential

distinction is in the difference: for Kierkegaard, God generates love of the neighbourly love and is the one who brings it into the world; for Levinas, the face of the other person is where one finds the trace of God. In Levinas the other person serves as an indirect pathway to God, in Kierkegaard God serves as a direct way to find a correct relation with the other person. One could say, that Kierkegaard presents a metaphysical view, while Levinas clearly is inspired by phenomenological tradition.

There is also another important distinction in the dynamics of the ethical relation. For Levinas, there is an inherent and essential asymmetry of the relation – I have an infinite responsibility for the other person without caring too much if there is a response from the other side. Kierkegaard in developing his love ethics has a way of circumnavigating this difficulty – if the ethical relation originates in God, then the neighbor is not the only relation the self has. This also helps to redress the balance: "He is your neighbor on the basis of equality with you before God, but unconditionally every person has this equality and has it unconditionally." (Kierkegaard 1995: 60)

In this way then Kierkegaard can emphasize that the commandment also means that self-love is not discarded: "The commandment said, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' but if the commandment is properly understood it also says the opposite: *You shall love yourself in the right way*." (Kierkegaard 1995: 22) Knowing how to love oneself is a precondition for the right love of one's neighbor, not the obstacle to the latter.

While Kant identified free will as the only thing that can be good in itself and of itself, and thus the only suitable basis for ethics, Kierkegaard proceeds in a very similar fashion in regards to neighbourly love: "Erotic love [*Elskov*] is defined by the object; friendship is defined by the object; only love for the neighbor is defined by love [*Kjærlighed*]." (Kierkegaard 1995: 66)

There is another difference from the erotic love. It is often said that erotic love makes a person blind: "blind from love, blind to every defect, to every imperfection in the beloved, blind to everything else but his beloved" (Kierkegaard 1995: 68). It is a peculiar form of blindness, as Kierkegaard notes, for the person in love becomes blind to everything, except "to this one's being the one and only in the whole world" (Kierkegaard 1995: 68). Neighbourly love also makes the person blind, yet this blindness is completely the opposite: "Love for the neighbor makes a person blind in the deepest and noblest and most blessed sense of the word, so that he blindly loves every human being as the lover loves the beloved." (Kierkegaard 1995: 69) Thus, neighbourly love allows to see in every human being what is worth loving, namely, his own humanity.

If for Levinas the face of the other person can be described only in negative terms, for Kierkegaard his open Christian orthodoxy allows to see in neighbour 'the pure category of spirit'

(Kierkegaard 1995: 68). Thus, its Christian flavour allows Kierkegaard to introduce dogmatics – that what is lovable in other person is precisely that what makes him human, i.e. the spirit.[67] When loving other person one not merely has a duty toward another, but it is precisely the duty towards another human being as human being what makes up the Kierkegaardian understanding of ethical love.

As we have seen, Kierkegaard second ethics is first and foremost ethics of love, yet this love, in echoing Kantian ethics, is charged and bounded by duty to love. One is obligated, more – commanded, to love other human being as human being, while the commandment originates in religious terms, rather than in the internal *a priori* make up of consciousness as in Kant's theory.

16. Summary

As I argue in this chapter, Kierkegaard's authorship entails two separate notions of ethics. The first notion of ethics is found and presumed in *Either/Or*, specifically in volume II, where Judge William embarks on an attack of esthetic life from the point of view of ethical world-view. In the first two sections of this chapter I analyse what this understanding of ethics entails. The first section is devoted to situate Judge William in the context of the tradition of German Idealism. I argue that despite seemingly evident influence of Hegel, Judge William is more of a Kantian ethicist, in the sense that he is more concerned with the preservation of the autonomy and authentic choice of the individual rather than his submission to the customs of the day. At the same time, I stress that more important than his allegiance to Kantian or Hegelian camp is Judge William's opposition to what he terms the esthetic life and what I argue is comparable to the Romantic life of irony as a position. Therefore, the second section of this chapter is intended as a counter-example to the esthetic life of the Romantic individual. I show that marriage, which for Judge William is the focal point of his understanding of ethical life, draws on the aspects of all three existential spheres.

Admittedly, the ethical stage is a well-known and rather trivial point of Kierkegaardian thought. More controversial is my claim that the first ethics is insufficient and bound to be found lacking. I base this claim on several passages in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous texts, most notably Johannes de silentio's *Fear and Trembling* and Vigilius Haufniensis' *The Concept of Anxiety*, which, in my opinion, show unambiguously that the universal rational ethics which Judge William seems to present are insufficient to explain sin-consciousness.

[67] For the definition of human being *as* spirit one should see *The Sickness unto Death*: "A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation." (Kierkegaard 1980b: 13)

Contrary to many commentators, I argue that this does not render the ethics (or the existence-sphere), which emerges with the sin-consciousness, incommunicable. I maintain that Kierkegaard's numerous religious discourses and his *Works of Love* are precisely the communication of this second ethics. I contend that the communication, or direct communication to be precise, is impossible between the stages rather than within them. Therefore, I conclude, it is only in those situations that other than direct means of communication might be useful.

Finally, I discuss what I consider to be Kierkegaard's second ethics, as they appear in *Works of Love*. I agree with Ferreira that this ethics is Christianly charged ethics of neighbourly love, where the source of moral obligation is divine revelation. I argue that for Kierkegaard the two notions of ethics are in hierarchical relationship.

The last chapter will discuss the relation between Kierkegaard's notions of irony and the notions of ethics as they appear in his authorship.

IRONY & ETHICS

> The fact of the matter is that we must acknowledge that in the last resort there is no theory.
>
> *Journals and Papers, 2509*

In this chapter I will look closely at the relation between irony and the ethical, as it appears in various works by Kierkegaard. I discuss what Climacus means by irony as the incognito of the ethical and where irony stands in the structure of the existence spheres. Then I proceed to qualify irony as indirect communication – a type of communication, which Kierkegaard believes is the only communicative method, capable of overcoming the enclosedness of the ethical individual and pushing the unethical individual toward the ethical existence. I have noted previously that already in Kierkegaard's dissertation the Romantic irony is criticized from ethical presuppositions. I will come back to this work and investigate more elaborate hints at the relation between irony and ethics, the most important of which is the last part of the dissertation. I will argue that even in this early stage of his authorship, Kierkegaard has a worked-out conception of ethically charged irony. Next I will look at Socrates, as he is viewed by Climacus in *Postscript*. I argue that he is the most elaborate example of ethical ironist for Kierkegaard. Importantly, this portrayal signifies a shift in Kierkegaard's interpretation of Socratic irony. I argue that this is a change of mind regarding merely Socratic irony, but not irony in general. Finally, I conclude with the discussion of irony as a therapeutic tool, which allows to interpret Kierkegaard's authorship as his own elaborate attempt at controlled irony.

17. Incognito of the Ethical

Irony is not a central topic of Climacus' *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* by any account. Although it is mentioned a few times, Climacus' main concern is completely different,[68] thus irony remains a secondary topic. Nevertheless, the pages devoted to irony are illuminating and important both because they help to elucidate the interpretation of irony encountered in the thesis and also because they touch upon irony as indirect communication, the topic which was not explicated in Kierkegaard's thesis. Furthermore, Climacus discusses irony as the transitional phase in the individual's existence and gives a convincing account of irony as the social mask of

[68] As he states himself, his main question is: "how can I, Johannes Climacus, share in the happiness that Christianity promises?" (Kierkegaard 1992: 17)

the ethical person. Thus in this section I will discuss Climacus' understanding of irony as the incognito of the ethical and its relation with humor as the incognito of the religious.

Johannes Climacus devotes only 25 pages to irony in his huge *Postscript*, yet those pages are extremely dense and rich in interpretative detail. He comes to the topic by announcing the three existence-stages (the esthetic, the ethical and the religious) and the border territories that correspond to them. (Kierkegaard 1992: 501) Irony, he says, is a *confinium* between the esthetic and the ethical and humour is the *confinium* between the ethical and the religious. One is entitled to ask, what shape does irony take as the border between the two existence-spheres? Is it a necessary transition? How does one make it? Finally, can't irony (or humour to that extent) be qualified as another two existence-spheres?

Let's deal with these questions one by one. According to Climacus, neither irony, nor humour can qualify as existence-spheres, because they condition only the external existence of the human being. They do not penetrate the inward being of the individual and are manifest only in externality. This betrays their essentially social character. The opposition of inwardness and outside world is a crucial one, for in the wake of it humour appears as the incognito of the religious person and irony as one of the ethical person. Climacus writes: "The meaning of religious suffering is dying to immediacy; its actuality is its essential continuance, but it belongs to inwardness and must not express itself externally." (Kierkegaard 1992: 499) Climacus does not explain why religious person must become 'the knight of hidden inwardness', why one has to remain silent about one's own religious suffering, yet precisely this prohibition creates the contradiction of religious person: "He, with all his inwardness hidden within him, with his suffering and benediction in his inner being, looks just like all the others – and inwardness is indeed hidden simply by his looking exactly like the others." (Kierkegaard 1992: 499) Precisely this creates the humour of the religious person, for, as Climacus notes, it is comical that the religious person (that is qualitatively completely different person) looks just like 'ordinary man'. Only the religious person himself can see this comical side, for it is only him who knows the real state of affairs.

Similarly the ethicist evokes irony: "The irony emerges by continually joining the particulars of the finite with the ethical infinite requirement and allowing the contradiction to come into existence." (Kierkegaard 1992: 502) Apparently, the particulars of the finite, which are encountered in the everyday life clash with the infinite ethical requirement found within the individual. Such an understanding is at odds with Hegelian ethics[69] where ethics and social order are closely connected and Climacus understands it himself – Hegelian ethics, he says, "is a

[69] If anything, Climacus' understanding of ethics, or at least his stressing of the inward infinite requirement within himself is reminiscent of Kantian ethical imperative.

highly unethical attempt to finitize individuals, an unethical flight from the category of individuality to the category of the race." (Kierkegaard 1992: 503n) This betrays Climacus' understanding of ethics as a primarily individual concern – the ethical requirement, found within the individual, appears as an individual, and therefore subjective, task. Understanding this subjectivity within society and still being receptive to the absoluteness of the requirement in inward existence of the individual is what expresses itself as irony in the ethical person.

However, does it mean that every ironist is an ethical person? Does seeing an ironist mean seeing an inwardly ethical individual? Irony, as it was noted, is only a border territory, which leads to the ethical, yet, according to Climacus, not every ironist is a sure sign of an ethicist. "The ironic rejoinder […] betrays that the speaker has made the movement of infinity, but no more." (Kierkegaard 1992: 502) Therefore, irony is only the transitional existence qualification – it is to be passed as the ethical requirement emerges as an absolute and unconditional maxim. However, Climacus remains silent whether the transition is an objective (and therefore inescapable). It is clear though that individual must strive for it, as it is a stage in 'cultivation of the spirit'.

Yet, what is irony for Climacus? We have seen that in the dissertation irony was moved away from purely linguistic sphere and was seen as existentially determining. Climacus also speaks out against a purely linguistic understanding of irony: "Nothing is more ludicrous than regarding it as a style of speaking or author's counting himself lucky to express himself ironically once in a while." (Kierkegaard 1992: 504) Irony is an attitude towards life, an ability to see the contradictions, which may be expressed in words. "The person who has essential irony has it all day long and is not bound to any style, because it is the infinite within him." (Kierkegaard 1992: 504) In more general terms the contradiction, which an ironist has an ability to see, can be defined once again as the opposition between the inward ethical requirement and the outward context which shapes our social life: "Irony is the unity of ethical passion, which in inwardness infinitely accentuates one's own *I* in relation to the ethical requirement – and culture, which in externality infinitely abstracts from the personal *I* as a finitude included among all other finitudes and particulars." (Kierkegaard 1992: 503) The human being is seen by Climacus as split into a series of oppositions: inwardness/infinity/passion is set up against externality/finitude/abstraction.

We asked in the previous chapter what makes irony controlled. This question now can be reshaped – what makes an ironist into an ethicist? If the Romantics have taken irony as the main principle of their existence, the ethicist uses irony as a tool. For him the most important thing is the inward ethical requirement. However, as it was noted, externally one cannot see the difference between a romantic and an ethicist, for one can see only irony in relation to them. One

can easily mistake a real ethicist for a moody, careless romantic.[70] How does one see the difference?

Before we address this question, we should answer another, prior question – why an ethicist should hide behind the mask of irony at all? Why wouldn't he come out and say that he is an ethical person who follows the inner imperative he finds in himself? Wouldn't this be a more honest and sincere approach than letting all people believe that he is a careless mocker of all that is sacred and important in society and culture? According to Climacus, placing the ethical requirement above all forces the ethicist to put some distance between the outer world and himself.

> In order not to be disturbed by the finite, by all the relativities in the world, the ethicist places the comic between himself and the world and thereby makes sure that he himself does not become comic through naïve misunderstanding of his ethical passion. (Kierkegaard 1992: 504)

Therefore, irony serves as insurance from the crowd and its trivial expectations. It helps to preserve the ethical requirement from relativity and trivialization. Climacus evokes the memory of Socrates who kept his distance with the polis - although he never argued against the polis, it was his understanding of the polis as the secondary issue in comparison with the ethical demands that shook the foundations of the polis itself. (Kierkegaard 1992: 504n)

It is no surprise then that a real ethicist in social life emerges not as a positive and constructive character, but actually quite the opposite. Climacus confronts him with the enthusiast and in this juxtaposition an ethicist gets the upper hand:

> An immediate enthusiast bawls out in the world early and late; always in his swagger-boots, he pesters people with his enthusiasm and does not perceive at all that it does not make them enthusiastic, except when they beat him. No doubt he is well informed, and the order call for a complete transformation – of the whole world. Indeed, it is here that he has heard wrongly, because the order calls for a complete transformation of oneself.[71] (Kierkegaard 1992: 504)

Therefore, the ironic attitude of the ethicist serves two purposes – not only it helps the ethicist to concentrate on his own ethical tasks, but also it does not disturb the same activity of other individuals. As Climacus goes on to point out, "the ethicist, however, is sufficiently ironical to be well aware that what engages him absolutely does not engage the others absolutely."[72] (Kierkegaard 1992: 505)

---

[70] Perhaps Magister Kierkegaard's opinion about Socrates as an ethicist is a good example of such mistake.

[71] Also cf. "A wishing, hoping, searching individual can never be ironical. Irony (as constitutive of an entire existence) consists of the exact opposite, of situating one's pain at the precise point where others situate their desire. The inability to possess one's beloved is never irony. But the ability to possess her all too easily, so that she begs and pleads to become one's own – and *then* to be unable to possess her: That is irony." (Kierkegaard 1967: 3421)

[72] Climacus touches upon a very deep problem here, for the ethical requirement of an ethicist remains absolute even in the social sphere, which creates clashes of different ethical requirements. The problem is epitomized by Socrates' trial and death. Socrates refused to give in his ethical maxims and therefore was condemned to death. The recent story of the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed is another example of such clash. Climacus' advice for an ethicist to employ humour as the 'lightning bolt' for such clashes does not sound too convincing.

Similarly, a religious person lacks precisely the same assurance as an ethicist: "The religious person discovers that what engages him absolutely seems to engage others very little, but he draws no conclusions from that, partly because he has no time for that and partly because he cannot know for sure whether these people are not knights of hidden inwardness." (Kierkegaard 1992: 506) The certitude of the faith, constant bragging about it for Climacus is a sign of precisely the opposite, namely the lack of real faith. "The certitude of faith is indeed distinguishable by uncertainty, and just as its certitude is the highest of all, so this same certitude is the most ironic of all, otherwise it is not the certitude of faith." (Kierkegaard 1992: 506)

Climacus stresses that irony is legitimate only as an existence-art, but not as an abstract idea that an individual has to follow. Presumably, here he argues with the romantics again, who made irony into the prevailing principle of human existence. Existence-art, in turn, is not a principle, but an outward expression of human existence. It is the means or the mode of human behaviour, which, as it was pointed out, is legitimate only when it is forced upon by the contradiction deriving from the ethical requirement and the outside social/cultural demands. Therefore, Climacus states: "Irony is legitimatized in connection with immediacy, because the balance, not as abstraction, but as an existence-art is higher than immediacy. Therefore only an existing ironist is legitimized in connection with immediacy." (Kierkegaard 1992: 520) The existing ironist can be contrasted with a rational ironist, namely the ironist, who like a German Romantic comes to irony by thinking. Irony becomes an abstraction to follow, a self-serving ideal, which does not, in Climacus' point of view, engage the individual sufficiently. Irony, to be sure, is a concept and an abstraction, but a legitimate usage of a concept, any concept, is an appropriation and an expression of it. Therefore, although having a concept of irony is already a step above immediacy, for it allows an individual to see the contradiction of his existence, that concept must become a controlled one in order to serve the social demands and the ethical requirements of the individual.

Irony also differs from immediacy in another important aspect. "Immediacy has the comic outside itself; irony has it *within* itself." (Kierkegaard 1992: 521) For an ironist the comic side of things is revealed and he is able to laugh at himself while the immediate person only serves as a laughing stock of the others.[73] There is also another sense, in which ironist has the comic within himself. According to Climacus, an ironist cannot slip out of irony, for then he risks becoming comical himself. Irony is an existence-art, which is not worn on occasions – it is rather a mode of existence, which has to be switched on all the time, for otherwise it cancels all the irony.

[73] Climacus here refers to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: "Irony better befits gentleman than buffoonery; the ironical man jokes to amuse himself, the buffoon to amuse other people." (*Rhetoric* 3, 18)

The ethicist, however, slightly differs from the ironist in that he sees the comic as irrelevant and unessential, as a secondary issue. As Climacus points out, "The ethicist who has irony as his incognito is able in turn to see the comic in irony, but he has legitimation to see it only by continually keeping himself in the ethical and thus sees it only as constantly disappearing." (Kierkegaard 1992: 521) The ethical requirement remains the main issue and therefore the comical side of things for the ethicist is only a temporal attraction of attention – he keeps himself in check by concentrating on his ethical tasks. The ironist sees the comic of the immediate person, the enthusiast and makes a comical capital of him. The analogy with the religious person is valid here, too. Although a religious person sees the comical side of the pretentious religiosity, he does not dwell on it for long. "The religiousness that has humor as its incognito is able in turn to see the humorous as comic, but it has legitimation to see it only by continually keeping itself in religious passion oriented to the relationship with God, and thus perceives it only as continually disappearing." (Kierkegaard 1992: 522)

We have already noted that for Climacus there is a strong analogy between the ethicist and his ironic attitude towards the world and the religious person with his humorous attitude towards his God-relationship. What they have in common is the comic. The comic, according to Climacus, is the element, which is a passing, yet necessary phase. Both the ethicist and the religious person

> Must […] discover the comic, which is present not because the religious person is different from others but because […] he is just like everyone else. He discovers the comic, but since in eternal recollecting he is continually relating himself to an eternal happiness, the comic is a continually vanishing element. (Kierkegaard 1992: 555)

Thus both humor and irony are transitional phases, which have to be overcome inasmuch as the person is relating to the ethical requirement of the ethicist or the eternal happiness of the religious person.

But what does incognito mean for Kierkegaard? In *Practice in Christianity* Kierkegaard describes incognito as that what "shows [someone] far lowlier than he is". (Kierkegaard 1991: 129) Thus, incognito implies not merely pretending to be someone else – it necessarily means to pretend as worse or of lower status than one truly is. This is attested by Jesus Christ, who, according to Kierkegaard, as 'the most profound incognito' (Kierkegaard 1991: 128), put on the cloak of unrecognizability and in this way made himself impossible to recognize as God directly. Thus, as Mark L. McCreary notes, "to adopt an incognito is to make oneself look worse, more base, more despicable than one truly is" (McCreary 2011: 32).

Another important aspect, often overlooked by Kierkegaard's readers, is that indirect communication is not supposed to be a permanent means of communication. In *The Point of View* Kierkegaard emphasizes its temporal character: "Since the movement is to arrive at the simple, the communication must sooner or later end in direct communication" (Kierkegaard

1998: 7) Thus, indirect communication has to have a clear outside goal, so as not to be self-serving and once it is achieved, must be abolished.

As we have seen, Climacus is in agreement with the understanding of irony, presented in Kierkegaard's dissertation. Furthermore, he develops this understanding further and proposes to see irony as the borderline of the ethical individual. As it was established, both concepts of ethics in Kierkegaard's authorship imply the inwardly enclosed ethical life. Irony here emerges as the connection point between the ethicist and the social sphere. Climacus also provides important qualifications that allow distinguishing an ethicist, who only wears a mask of ironist, from a pure ironist.

18. Indirect Communication

In this section I will discuss what is meant by the qualification of irony as indirect communication and will show that for Kierkegaard this understanding is crucial in terms of overcoming the inherent inwardness of the individual.[74]

A good place to start the discussion of indirect communication is the distinction between the subjective and objective thinking, proposed by Climacus in the *Postscript*. Climacus describes the difference in the following terms: "Whereas objective thinking is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker as existing is essentially interested in his own thinking, is existing in it." (Kierkegaard 1992: 72) Thus subjective thinking invites the individual to appropriate the results of his thinking, while objective thinking leaves the individual detached and disinterested in his own thinking. Ethical and religious truth is the matter of subjective thinking, for according to Kierkegaard, (1) everyone possesses it; (2) it becomes meaningful only through personal appropriation. (Kierkegaard 1967: 649 section 10) These two presumptions imply a problem that could be defined as the central concern of Kierkegaard's understanding of communication.

Objective thinking is described as that, which deprives human being of his essential characteristics, namely, the interest in one's own life. It tempts the individual to put his own existence in the perspective of other things and in such a way distance himself from his own immediate being in the world. The result of such a temptation is the indifference to one's own existence and a distance from it. As Climacus points out, objective thinking is that, which makes the human being "to be tricked into becoming objective, into inhumanly becoming speculative thought." (Kierkegaard 1992: 73) However, how does this trickery function? What makes

[74] The relation between lack of passion leading to the need of indirect communication was discussed by Jacob Golomb (Golomb 1992).

human being to turn to objectivity and away from his own existence? According to Climacus, the deceit of objective thinking consists in the false promise to provide results, a sort of ready-made answers for everyone. This promise "assists all humankind to cheat by copying and reeling off the results and answers." (Kierkegaard 1992: 73) Thus, the critique, which Climacus aims at objective thinking, is based on the assumption that the individual has to come to the 'results' of his thinking by himself, without 'copying' them from standard handbooks and compendiums, for otherwise he does not appropriate these results as his own. Individual, Climacus seems to imply, must find the answers to the questions of his own existence by himself, for every human being is particular and needs particular answers. Thus objective thinking can be described as not belonging properly to the individual. It is something, which stands outside and merely provides the rules.

Therefore, the main difference between the objective and subjective thinking can be said to consist in the possession of thought – while the objective thinking merely 'throws' the results to the thinking subject, makes them obligatory and essentially deprives the subject of his freedom, the subjective thinking allows the thinking subject to retain the freedom of the subject and the possession of his thoughts.

Thus, the subjective thinker, implies Climacus, does not forget that he is not merely a thinker, but also an existing individual with his own limitations and possibilities. Moreover, to think subjectively is to understand that thinking is only *my* thinking, that it belongs only to *me* and therefore does not have the absolute validity for the others. In such a way exposing the individual subjective thinking forces upon him the appropriation of the responsibility for his thoughts. One might object that objective thinking or claims to objective truth are also the responsibility of the individual. Is not someone, who states the objective truth that 'the Earth goes round the Sun', acquiring responsibility for it? To be sure, he does, but it is precisely this responsibility, which will make up the subjective element of that truth. Objective truth has neither responsibility, nor passion, for the sole requirement of the objective thinking is not to have passion and to be only rational. By contrast to objective thinking, where the thought is reflected only once, in subjective thinking "the reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection." (Kierkegaard 1992: 73) The double reflection is a reflection on the first, initial reflection and is opposed to it. Therefore, to sum up the distinction between objective and subjective thinking one can say that in objective thinking life is subdued to objective understanding, while in subjective thinking objective understanding remains secondary to concrete existence.

However, this does not mean that there is or must be a clear-cut choice between existing and thinking. Climacus does not call for abandoning thinking in favour of what we could call lived

life. Yet, how is one to find a balance between life and thinking? How to think and live at the same time? In his diary Kierkegaard writes:

> Philosophy is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other clause – that it must be lived forward. The more one thinks through this clause, the more one concludes that life in temporality never becomes properly understandable, simply because never at any time does one get perfect repose to take a stance – backward. (Kierkegaard 1967: 1030)

The same as Climacus, Kierkegaard in this remark operates within a distinction between (objective) understanding and concrete life. Life must be understood and philosophy is right in demanding such understanding, however, a too big involvement with such understanding leads us to forget that life must be lived as well. The consequences are twofold. On the one hand, one who is busy with understanding of life, cannot, according to Kierkegaard, live his life 'forward'. Reflection distances individual from his own existence – he looses an immediate relation to it and becomes merely an objective observer of his life. Such an individual lacks responsibility for his own life, for all his existence becomes just another aspect of understanding. On the other hand, one who tries to live his life 'forward,' cannot gain objectivity about life. His immediate relation with his own existence deprives him of the possibility to look at life objectively. It seems that what is needed is a double-reflection, that is, a reflection, which would be capable of objective understanding and still would choose to live 'forward'. In such a way, an individual makes a circle of reflection – one reflection moves him away from existence, while with the second he closes the circle and comes back to existence. Such thinking could still be called subjective, for it remains in the immediacy, yet it is a reflected or second immediacy, for it also incorporates objective thinking.

The distinction between subjective and objective thinking transmits to communication. Climacus raises the requirement for the subjective thinker to express as much reflection in communication with others as he possesses himself. The indirect communication has to do so, because, according to Climacus, the secret of all communication consists in 'setting the other free'. Such in essence ethical requirement is inspired by the subjective thinker's refusal to become an authority or to claim any universal knowledge. As Climacus writes, this applies "if the communicator is not God himself or does not presume to appeal to the miraculous authority of an apostle but is just a human being and also cares to have meaning in what he says and what he does." (Kierkegaard 1992: 74) Thus, the subjective thinker has to apply indirect communication, for otherwise he would come back to the domain of the objective thinking. He encounters a problem, which could be defined thus:

> The subjective individual […], existing in the isolation of inwardness, wants to communicate himself, consequently that he simultaneously wants to keep his thinking in the inwardness of his subjective existence and yet wants to communicate himself. It is not possible (except for

> thoughtlessness, for which all things are indeed possible) for this contradiction to become manifest in a direct form. (Kierkegaard 1992: 73n)

The paradox, which a subjective thinker encounters, consists in his wish to remain in inwardness and yet to communicate. Any direct communication, according to Climacus, is bound towards outwardness and thus throws the subjective individual out of his inwardness. Remaining in inwardness, on the other hand, deprives him of a possibility to communicate.

What is needed, according to Climacus, is a communication that would correspond with the double reflection achieved by subjective thinking. Indirect communication consists essentially in not stating directly what one wants to say. In order to explain what he means, Climacus employs the example of secret. How does one tell a secret without losing it? Secret, once communicated to someone else, loses its essential feature – that it is secret. A secret, which does not belong to one person, is essentially not secret anymore.[75] According to Climacus, "everything subjective, which on account of its dialectical inwardness evades direct form of expression, is an essential secret." (Kierkegaard 1992: 80) Thus, the communication of such a secret, a secret of inwardness, is possible only in indirect form. Yet, how does one define this form of communication? Climacus remains rather ambiguous about it and mostly talks about it in negative terms. Yet, he refers to some examples of it, which might provide a better understanding of what it is. In a passage, where he discusses all pseudonymous works of Søren Kierkegaard, Climacus refers to them as exemplars of indirect communication. Thus, not speaking in one's own name is a characteristic, which shapes indirect communication. For a writer it is rather easy to acquire a different name, as Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms shows. Yet, it is much more difficult to achieve it in a face-to-face conversation. Indeed, how does one remain hidden while still talking to someone else and achieving a fruitful communication? How does one preserve one's inwardness and still communicate it? Keeping in mind what has been said about irony as a mask for the speaker, it is fair to assume that irony might provide means for such communication. Indeed, to remind of what has been already said, irony refers to the inwardness of the speaker, allowing the audience to know that there is something, yet without permitting them to know what that something exactly is. As if concealed behind an opaque glass, inwardness of the speaker in irony is preserved, yet the communication is achieved.

Further evidence, although indirect, for interpreting irony as indirect communication Climacus has in mind might be found in another of Kierkegaard's attempts to explain his position as an author. In *Point of View* he writes: "'Direct communication' is: to communicate the truth directly; 'communication in reflection' is: to *deceive into truth*." (Kierkegaard 1998: 7) Again

[75] For a difference between secret and problem see Gabriel Marcel's *Être et Avoir*: "A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety. It is as though in this province the distinction between *in me* and *before me* loses its meaning." (Marcel 1949: 100)

Kierkegaard emphasizes the liberating aspect of indirect communication, which also points to the effects on the audience. Deceiving into truth, as Kierkegaard calls it, is not a new method in the history of philosophy and Kierkegaard himself points this out. Merely two sentences later, after admitting that all his pseudonymous works are indirect communication, he writes: "It began **maieutically** with esthetic production, and all the pseudonymous writings are *maieutic* in nature."[76] (Kierkegaard 1998: 7) Socrates, the instigator and the most prominent example of maieutics, a philosopher synonymous with it, is also almost as much synonymous with irony. As we have seen, irony clearly certainly was the essence of Socratic approach for Kierkegaard.

In *Point of View* Kierkegaard gives another indication when indirect communication might be preferable. It is best understood in the difference between ignorance and delusion: "one is ignorant and must be given some knowledge […] and one who is under a delusion that must be first taken away." (Kierkegaard 1998: 53-54) In the case of delusion, direct communication is simply not efficient enough or fails altogether.

Here we also find what Kierkegaard believes is his own reason for employing indirect communication and a clearest example of a type of delusion he has in mind. He makes a distinction between what he calls Christendom and Christianity. Christendom is the official Church, where the state and the religion are equated. In this version of social arrangement of Christianity Kierkegaard is not satisfied with the qualification of all the citizens of the state as Christians. In Christendom one does not have to become a Christian – he already is by virtue of his belonging to the state:

> If it is an illusion that all are Christians, and if something is to be done, it must be done indirectly, not by someone who loudly declares himself to be an extraordinary Christian, but by someone, who, better informed, even declares himself not to be a Christian. (Kierkegaard 1998: 43)

The difficulty lies in the fact that those, who are not true Christians, consider themselves to be such, and thus the requirement might be that a true Christian might have to declare that he is not one, i.e. to employ indirect communication in order to destroy that delusion.

As a way of conclusion, we can note that irony acquires its importance as indirect communication in the light of Climacus', and by implication, Kierkegaard's understanding of the dialectics between subjective and objective thinking. In his attempts to redress the balance between these two types of thinking about existence, Kierkegaard emphasizes the subjective engagement, which by definition is always personal and thus cannot be directly exchanged or

[76] Indeed, an early note in the diary concerning Plato could be as well referring to Kierkegaard himself: "The fact that many of Plato's dialogues end without a result has a far deeper basis than I had thought earlier. They are a reproduction of Socrates' maieutic skill which makes the reader or hearer himself active, and therefore they do not end in a result but in a sting." (Kierkegaard 1967: 4266).

transmitted. Thus, a need arises for other ways to deceive into truth. Climacus suggests that irony is precisely such a way.

19. Controlled Irony

Certainly the most puzzling part in Kierkegaard's dissertation is the last and the shortest one, entitled "Irony as a Controlled Element, the Truth of Irony". The natural way to read the thesis seems to divide it into three parts, where the first part would be devoted to Socratic irony, the second would discuss the Romantic irony, and the third, naturally, the controlled irony. This would complete the dialectical three-step movement and therefore the third part would expose the author's view on the shortcomings of the two previous positions and show his understanding of the 'truth of irony'. However, such interpretation has been subjected to severe criticism. First, it has been pointed out that the contrasts between the parts are more than striking: while Socrates takes up about 230 pages and Romantic irony more than 50, then controlled irony, where one would expect the author to be at his freest and most elaborate, occupies mere 6 (!) pages. Therefore, such criticism concludes, Kierkegaard merely succumbed to the scholarly fashion of the day by trying to evolve a three-step movement, but his real dissertation was about Socratic irony and the part on controlled irony should be read with extreme caution, if not discarded completely.

However, such criticism is if not incorrect, then at least insufficient. Even if one agrees that Kierkegaard was forced by the scholarly requirements or fashions of the day to write a third, completing, part of the thesis, it does not mean that what he actually wrote there does not represent his views. The shortness of the section actually might prove the opposite than what is assumed. Kierkegaard wrote little because he had only that little or that much to say. The brevity, if anything, might be the sign of honesty rather than dishonesty on his part.

The text itself has nothing that would prove this interpretation to be wrong. What strikes a first time reader is the almost complete lack of references to the other two main parts of the thesis. Socrates is not mentioned even once, while of the Romantics only Solger is mentioned in the first sentence as a theorist of irony who made irony into a condition of any artistic work. After that the third part seems to stand on its own – it is as if finally unshackled from the limitations of academic requirements, Kierkegaard goes on to explicate what the *true* worth of irony is or should be.

Structurally the text can be split into two parts – one concerns itself with irony in the esthetic production, while another is of a more broad character and concerns itself with irony in one's individual existence.

Kierkegaard immediately draws a line between irony in the esthetic sphere and the irony he just discussed throughout his thesis. For him esthetic irony is characterized first and foremost by the distance, which the artist gains from his own work by employing irony. Such a distance, on the one hand, allows the artist to detach his own personality from his work, while, on the other hand, it allows the perceivers of the artwork to view it without the interference with the artist's personality. Although agreeing with Solger on the main point that irony has to be 'the condition of every artistic work' (Kierkegaard 1989: 324), Kierkegaard quickly moves away from the Romantic understanding of the role of irony in art.

As Kierkegaard is convinced, the Romantics were primarily concerned with irony as a tool of artistic production, while for Kierkegaard irony in art is described predominantly as shaping the artist's attitude toward his own work. He makes clear that, although irony can be present in a particular work, it is not the sort of controlled irony he is discussing here: "Irony is not present at some particular point of the poem, but is present everywhere, is omnipresent in it, so that the irony visible in the poem is in turn ironically controlled." (Kierkegaard 1989: 324) Such an attitude allows the artist not to get entangled with his work and invites the others to deal with the work on its own terms and for its own sake, regardless of the personality of the author. Moreover, it enables the author to detach himself from his own subjective meanings and convey the meanings, which can be shared by others. Kierkegaard makes this point in relation to Shakespeare:

> Shakespeare has frequently been eulogized as the grand master of irony, and there can be no doubt that there is a justification for that. But by no means does Shakespeare allow the substantive worth to evaporate into an ever more fugitive sublimate, and as for the occasional culmination of his lyrics in madness, there is an extraordinary degree of objectivity in this madness. When Shakespeare is related ironically to what he writes, it is precisely in order to let the objective dominate. (Kierkegaard 1989: 324)

Thus mastered irony, as opposed to pure irony in Romantic art, is not a dominant factor in art. It is itself dominated by objective aims of an artist and therefore the work of art does not fall into ironic playfulness and chaos. Furthermore, the artist, who mastered irony, preserves his own individual existence unperturbed by his work. The reader is left alone with the work, for the presence of the author and his opinions are minimized. As paradigmatic examples of such mastered irony in addition to Shakespeare Kierkegaard points to the figures of Goethe and Heiberg.

At this point Kierkegaard introduces a notion of 'personal life' that will play an important role throughout his authorship. In the immediate context of the thesis, personal life appears in opposition to the artist's work: "This does not always mean that just because a poet manages to be master over the irony at the time of writing he is master over it in the actuality to which he himself belongs." (Kierkegaard 1989: 324) In this context the distinction is between *what* and

who the person is. In other words, personal life is individual's existence, considered without his social roles or functions. It is, so to speak, a poet minus his poetic work, a poet, who is being considered *not* as a poet, but as a mere human being. In any case, Kierkegaard does not elaborate on this notion and leaves his readers with merely a reductive understanding of what it might be.

Yet this distinction allows him to make a shift in his exposition and to broaden the context, in which controlled irony might be of benefit. After a brief discussion on the merits of Shakespeare's, Goethe's, and Heiberg's usage of such irony in their artistic production, Kierkegaard suddenly makes an important analogy: "After all, what holds for the poet-existence holds also in some measure for every single individual's life." (Kierkegaard 1989: 325-326) One is left in no doubt that this is not a merely empty rhetorical expression. Kierkegaard tries to elaborate what he means by that. If placing irony as a tool between himself and his work helps the poet to produce better art, it seems that in personal life irony has no less significance:

> To be controlled in this way, to be halted in the wild infinity into which it rushes ravenously, by no means indicates that irony should now lose its meaning or be totally discarded. On the contrary, when the individual is properly situated – and this he is through the curtailment of irony – only then does irony have its proper meaning, its true validity. (Kierkegaard 1989: 326)

Thus, irony becomes a tool, a methodological device: "What doubt is to science, irony is to personal life." (Kierkegaard 1989: 326) Doubt is used in science as a point of departure – nothing is taken for granted and initial skepticism requires that all the observations have to be verified in order to become scientific facts. If one follows the analogy, it seems that irony should play the same role in one's personal life – nothing should be taken as personally beneficial without first having checked its validity with ironic wit. Kierkegaard tries to elaborate on how this method of placing irony between the self and the actuality might be helpful: "Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency." (Kierkegaard 1989: 326) In short, "Irony is a disciplinarian." (Kierkegaard 1989: 326) and, one might conclude, precisely in this way it belongs under ethics.

Additionally, in the same fashion as in art, mastered irony has to play a positive role in one's individual existence. Mastered irony in life makes an individual free, yet, contrary to the pure irony, this freedom is positive, for it allows the individual to situate himself in world-history and in his concrete social circumstances.

> As soon as irony is controlled, it makes a movement opposite to that in which uncontrolled irony declares life. Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency. […] Anyone who does not understand irony at all, who has no ear for its whispering, lacks eo ipso what could be called the absolute beginning of personal life. (Kierkegaard 1989: 326)

Thus irony emerges as a necessary element of one's individual existence, which helps to achieve the balance. The balance and consistency which mastered irony evokes is, as Kierkegaard points

out, the opposite of the movement of pure irony. Pure irony, as we remember, is absolutely negative and goes to the extreme of denying any validity of actuality. Another extreme is the position of an enthusiast who happily affirms any social conformity. Mastered irony helps to achieve the balance between these extremes. In this sense it is analogous to the mastered irony in art, because it creates the distance between the person and his day-to-day activities. However, it is different from artistic irony in one important aspect in that it evokes in the individual a concern for his existence. Precisely in this sense it is the 'beginning of the personal life'. Such irony is not antisocial and nihilistic. On the contrary, it is the teacher of engaging in actuality and fulfilling one's social roles. As Kierkegaard puts this point, "Irony as a controlled element manifests itself in its truth precisely by teaching how to actualize actuality, by placing the appropriate emphasis on actuality." (Kierkegaard 1989: 328) Mastered irony, thus, plays a positive role in the upbuilding of one's existence. It teaches the right ways to engage in one's public life. Such teaching can again be described as avoiding two dangerous extremes. As Brad Frazier puts it, the individual who mastered irony "neither divinizes her social order nor carelessly deconstructs it in order to disengage from it." (Frazier 2004: 471)

Thus mastered irony has two positive roles to play. In the esthetic sphere it allows the artist to disengage from his own artistic production, while in the ethical sphere it teaches the individual to engage in his life-tasks without avoiding one of the extremes. In this particular discussion Kierkegaard is very economical with examples of mastered irony – except three afore-mentioned writers, the reader gets no more illustrations of how controlled irony functions in concrete cases. Even the three authors are merely name-checked, yet no qualifications or examples from their *oeuvre* are provided. For this one has to look elsewhere.

20. Socratic Irony as Controlled Irony

In this section I will look at particular historical examples of mastered irony, that one encounters in Kierkegaard's authorship. The first is Socratic irony, discussed by Climacus in the *Postscript*. It is a crucial presentation, as it almost completely revaluates Socrates as ironist, undermining a huge portion of what was said in the dissertation. At the same time it provides a rather informative picture of how mastered irony appears in action. The second, perhaps surprisingly, is the controlled irony of Hegel, which is mentioned and briefly discussed in Kierkegaard's dissertation. I argue that Kierkegaard thought of Hegel as the best example of controlled irony during the writing of his dissertation.

As discussed previously, in his master thesis Kierkegaard had an ambiguous opinion about Socrates.[77] On the one hand, Socrates was the first to introduce irony as a position in the world-historical process and therefore played a positive role in reshaping Greek culture forever. Yet, such a role was played, according to Kierkegaard, somewhat unwillingly. Socrates as an individual was rather an accidental figure to introduce irony; he lacked clear awareness of his own position and perceived ideas of the good, the beautiful and the true only as a possibility. (Kierkegaard 1989: 197) Quite different perception of Socrates is manifested by Climacus, the pseudonym of Kierkegaard, credited with *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

Climacus is not interested in Socrates' role in world-history, but concentrates much more on him as an ethicist. However, curiously, this does not lead Climacus to denouncing Socratic position as ironic. Irony still remains an essential feature of the Socratic position, yet it is reinterpreted within the ethical realm. There are two explicit critical references to Kierkegaard's thesis in the book and a few quite significant implicit differences from the opinion expressed in the thesis. I will comment on these references in order to show that in Climacus' interpretation Socrates becomes the exponent of the mastered irony rather than pure irony.

Climacus mentions directly Kierkegaard's thesis while discussing prayer. (Kierkegaard 1992: 90n) He uses Socrates as an example of a right balance between the highest pathos and the comical, which, according to him, necessarily occurs in relationship to the divine. Magister Kierkegaard, according to him,

> has scarcely understood this, as can be inferred from his dissertation. Citing the dialogue *Alcibiades secundus*, he mentions Socrates' negative relation to prayer, but, as might be expected of a positive graduate in theology in our day, he cannot refrain from informing Socrates (in a footnote) that this negativity is true only to a certain degree. (Kierkegaard 1992: 90n)

Kierkegaard indeed discusses Socrates' caution about prayer in order to show that Socrates' position is negative and therefore ironic. (Kierkegaard 1989: 176-177) And in the footnote he goes on to point out that by contrast "in the Christian consciousness prayer has its absolute validity"[78]. On the surface, the disagreement is merely theological, for it concerns the prayer and relationship with God. Nevertheless, underneath it there is a disagreement, which is also closer to our topic, for it concerns different understandings of Socratic irony. As mentioned, in Magister Kierkegaard's interpretation Socrates' relationship with the divine is merely negative

[77] Although it is not uncommon to recite merely the first understanding of Socrates, which was presented in the thesis, e.g. John Christian Laursen's attempt at overview repeats precisely the opinion that "Kierkegaard acusó a Sócrates de una 'negatividad absoluta e infinita' por su ironía." [Kierkegaard accused Socrates of an 'absolute and infinite negativity' because of his irony.] (Laursen 2005: 6).

[78] The full quote is the following: "To prevent any misunderstanding and, if possible, to illuminate this comment from a completely different position, may I point out that in the Christian consciousness prayer has its absolute validity; the Christian knows what to pray for, knows that when he prays for it he will be absolutely listened to, but this is expressly grounded in his knowing himself to be in a real relationship with his God." (Kierkegaard 1989: 177n)

as is his irony. For Climacus, on the other hand, the same passage serves as the example of the balance between the comic and pathos. Normally, according to him, we take the opposition between the comic and pathos as a given. It is described purely empirically, by merely stating that this person has more pathos and is not so keen on the comical side of things, while another is a big joker and has only limited passion about things. For a subjective thinker, however, "the proportion is this: just as much of pathos, just as much of the comic." (Kierkegaard 1992: 87)

Paradoxically, the subjective thinker here emerges as a person in possession of measure, which is normally associated with an objective thinker. Climacus lays out an ethics reminiscent of Aristotle. The proportion, which takes in precisely equal amounts of the opposite extremes, is meant to serve as a safeguard. According to Climacus, "the pathos which is not safeguarded by the comic is an illusion; the comic that is not safeguarded by pathos is immaturity." (Kierkegaard 1992: 87)

Unsurprisingly, Socrates emerges as an example of such balance. Climacus refers to a passage in *Gorgias*, where Socrates talks about the captain of the ship who is not sure whether he helped or undermined the person whom he brought across the sea (*Gorgias* 466 c-d). Therefore, claims Socrates, he is not too proud of what he has done and goes about with due modesty. According to Climacus, when Socrates gives his example, he is referring to himself and therefore with a rather comical example provides a stunning illustration of his views and an earnest insight into his inwardness.

Climacus goes on to claim that the essential character of Socrates was that he knew the right proportion between these two extremes and, what is more stunning, found it so important that he never ceased to practice it. Knowing that truth cannot be communicated directly is one thing, says Climacus. It is "what every sixteen-year-old girl knows." (Kierkegaard 1992: 88) However, practicing it is much harder and "even in his seventieth year, he [Socrates – *VB*] was not finished with his striving to practice [the difference between the comical and pathos – *VB*]." (Kierkegaard 1992: 88)

Climacus turns again to Socrates while discussing his most (in)famous thesis that "subjectivity is the truth" (Kierkegaard 1992: 203). The thesis was taken to mean by many commentators as a slogan of relativism, denying any objective knowledge and thus ascribing Climacus (and Kierkegaard behind his back) a position of a father of postmodernism. However, it is highly doubtful that such an interpretation is correct and there are a few arguments against it. I will concentrate on one, which is related to our topic.

It is Socrates whom Climacus uses to illustrate the thesis, therefore it is safe to assume that the Socratic position was the example of what it really means that subjectivity is the truth. Climacus says, "The thesis that subjectivity, inwardness, is truth contains Socratic wisdom, the undying

merit of which is to have paid attention to the essential meaning of existing, of the knower's being an existing person." (Kierkegaard 1992: 204) According to Climacus, Socrates understood that it is not his knowledge, but his own, concrete existence that makes him the wisest person in the Antiquity. Climacus extends his wisdom even further, for he contrasts it to speculative thought: "To comprehend this, that the misfortune of speculative thought is simply that it forgets again and again that the knower is the existing person, can already be rather difficult in our objective age." (Kierkegaard 1992: 204) Therefore, Climacus, unlike Magister Kierkegaard, does not view the Socratic position as the one, which was a matter of historical accident. On the contrary, Socrates was actively engaged in his becoming the wisest person in Ancient world.

Moreover, in a significant sentence (which might be just a 'slip of the pen', for it speaks in the first person) Climacus writes: "Whether it is true or false it is of no concern to me, since I am only imaginatively constructing, but this much is required, that it be clear that the Socratic is presupposed in it, so that *I at least do not end up behind Socrates again*." (Kierkegaard 1992: 204, italics mine) If this 'I' is the reference to the thesis, it is clear that Climacus reproaches Magister Kierkegaard for going behind Socrates and looking at him from a distance. In other words, Magister Kierkegaard did what the speculative thought does – he became objective and forgot that he is 'the existing thinker' and thus forgot what he can learn from Socrates. In order to understand Socrates one has to presuppose the Socratic, that is to acquire the same position as Socrates. Presumably this, in Climacus' point view, is what Magister Kierkegaard failed to do.

In another passage Climacus is more explicit. While discussing irony he writes: "What, then, is irony, if one wants to call Socrates an ironist and does not, like Magister Kierkegaard, consciously or unconsciously, want to bring out only one side?" (Kierkegaard 1992: 503) The definition of irony, which follows immediately, gives us a clue to what Climacus means by one-sidedness of Magister Kierkegaard's position. Irony for Climacus is the unity of the internal ethical requirement and the external cultural and social pressures. Magister Kierkegaard, presumably, accentuated only one side of this unity. As I have noted in the first section of this chapter, Socrates in the *Concept of Irony* is shown as completely asocial and even antisocial figure. In Climacus' reinterpretation of Socratic position, his detached attitude toward the state and society becomes a sign of an ethicist. It must be stressed, however, that such reinterpretation does not contradict any of the definitions of irony encountered in the thesis. It is more of a reinterpreting Socrates' position as a master of irony rather than a pure ironist.

There are few more references to the *Concept of Irony* in the *Postscript*. All of them deal exclusively with the supposed misunderstanding of the Socratic position, yet none of them mention that Magister Kierkegaard in one way or another misunderstood what irony is. For example, in the draft, which did not make the final version of the *Postscript*, Climacus writes:

> In his dissertation, Magister Kierkegaard was alert enough to discern the Socratic but is considered not to have understood it, probably because, with the help of Hegelian philosophy, he has become super-clever and objective and positive or has not had the courage to acknowledge the negation. (Kierkegaard 1967: 5796)

Ironic sting aside, it is clear that what Climacus reproaches Magister Kierkegaard for is the attempt to ascribe to the Socratic position some positivity. Climacus, of course, is notorious for his suspicious attitude towards objective truth and positivity. In *Philosophical Fragments* he writes: "To have a position for me is both too much and too little: it presupposes a security and well-being akin to having wife and children in this mortal life." (Kierkegaard 1985: 7) Thus it is unsurprising that he would adopt irony as 'absolute negativity' and would see in it something to hold onto rather than something to be snared at.

If earlier we have noted that irony as an absolute infinite negativity might provide security and wellbeing as it does for the Romantic individual[79] - one sees irony as the way to avoid responsibility and uses its destructive force to evade any questions. Climacus, however, notes that positive, objective knowledge does the same in the sense that it also deprives the human being of responsibility for the truth, for then it becomes an outside force, which is obligatory to everyone. What Climacus seems to offer is a third way – a way of irony, which is mastered by the ethically charged inwardness.

In summary, we can conclude that contrary to Kierkegaard's conviction at the time of writing the dissertation, when he thought that Socrates was not the master of irony – he lacked positivity and did not develop the concept to its fullness, Climacus seems to think differently – Socrates is the *only* master of irony he ever mentions; moreover, Socrates is the only historically real example, which is available to us.

21. Controlled Irony as Therapy

Kierkegaard's dissertation undoubtedly does not develop the relationship between irony and ethics. It is devoted solely to the concept of irony and even, when there are references to that relationship, as I have shown in the discussion on Romantic irony or controlled irony, they are always implicit rather than explicit. In fact, irony seems so remote from ethics that it prompted some commentators to note that "for Kierkegaard ironist operates upon aesthetic not the ethical plane" (Muecke 1969: 94) or even to go as far as to claim that for Kierkegaard irony is unethical (Soderquist 2013: 107-108).

Keeping this in mind, it is perhaps surprising that ethics finds its way into one of the fifteen theses that Kierkegaard assembled as his findings. Thesis No. XI states: "The more recent irony

[79] One could add that such a role irony plays also in the existence of contemporary relativist like Richard Rorty.

belongs essentially under ethics." (Kierkegaard 1989: 6) This formulation, curiously, is not repeated in the body of the dissertation, thus it is left to the reader to locate what kind of irony the young author means. It would seem that more recent irony should be the irony of the Romanticism, which is the only one that is given any extensive deliberation in the text (with the exception of Socratic irony, of course). However, the textual evidence denies such a possibility. In the dissertation Kierkegaard explicitly states the disruption between the Romantic ironist and the ethical:

> The ironist is the eternal I for which no actuality is adequate. Here we also perceive the implications of the ironist's placing himself outside and above morality and ethics, something that even Solger declaims against in pointing out that this is not what he means by irony. It cannot really be said that the ironist places himself outside and above morality and ethics, but he lives far too abstractly, far too metaphysically and esthetically to reach the concretion of the moral and the ethical. (Kierkegaard 1989: 283)

For Kierkegaard, the Romantic ironist's attempt to place himself beyond, if not above, morality is evident, despite attempts by the Romantics (or at least some of them) to prove the opposite. The problem seems to be the instrumental attitude towards the ethical issues:

> He himself repents, but he repents esthetically, not ethically. In the moment of repentance, he is outside and above his repentance, testing to see whether it is poetically appropriate, whether it could do as a line in the mouth of a poetic character. (Kierkegaard 1989: 284)

Thus, the only possible candidate for the version of a recent conception of irony that would stand under ethics is, of course, the philosophical system, proposed by Hegel. Kierkegaard himself seems to suggest as much. After discussing the inadequacies of Fichtean and Schlegelian conceptions of irony, Kierkegaard says: "Finally, here irony also met its master in Hegel." (Kierkegaard 1989: 242)

Within the text of dissertation itself, Kierkegaard is not afraid to state clearly if he disagrees with Hegel. For example, in Part I, while discussing Hegel's view of the sophists, Kierkegaard clearly has a differing opinion from the one he associates with Hegel:

> It seems, however, that Hegel makes the Sophistic movement too grandiose, and therefore the distrust one may have about the correctness of his view is strengthened even more by the presence, in his subsequent discussion of Sophistry, of various points that cannot be harmonized with it. (Kierkegaard 1989: 207)

Or even when asserting Hegel as the master of irony in the Introduction to part II, merely a page later Kierkegaard expresses dissatisfaction with Hegel:

> At the point in all his systems where we could expect to find a development of irony, we find it referred to. Although, if it all were copied, we would have to concede that what is said about irony is in one sense not so inconsiderable, in another sense it is not much, since he says about the same thing on every point. (Kierkegaard 1989: 244)

This is an important quote, as it is related with our problem. Kierkegaard is unhappy with Hegel not for being wrong about irony, but for failing to develop the concept. What Hegel said about irony, Kierkegaard does not find problematic. The issue is that he has not said enough.[80]

One, of course, is tempted to ask – how would Hegel as a practitioner of controlled irony look like? Or, to formulate it less provocatively (although it amounts to the same thing), how would a Kierkegaardian controlled ironist look like? Perhaps the answer is Kierkegaard himself. Yet such an answer would need serious qualifications. It is clear that the strategy that was so common among Kierkegaard's scholars until recently[81] to simply document the samples of rhetorical irony as representations of Kierkegaard as ironist is misleading and does not match the criteria of controlled irony laid out in the last chapter of Kierkegaard's thesis. The one fundamental feature of irony as a controlled element is that it is supposed to be helpful to an individual in his attempts to become the individual he wants to be. Therefore, it is not surprising that the object of irony is the individual himself – it is directed at the individual who employs irony first and foremost. Or, as Johannes Climacus puts it while discussing Socrates, "his irony was precisely inclosing reserve" (Kierkegaard 1980a: 134).

Such an understanding of irony is deeply embedded in the understanding of subjectivity that is ever in tension. The tension could be characterized as the tension between the present and the future, the being of what one is now and the possibility of becoming what one can become in the future, the limitations of the actuality and the infinity of possibilities. The equal importance and simultaneity of both of these contradicting aspects is a crucial idea within Kierkegaard's thought, most evocatively expressed in Johannes de silentio's attempt to provide the definition of the self in the first pages of *The Sickness unto Death*: "A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis." (Kierkegaard 1980b: 13). However, de silentio hastens to add that the mere acknowledgement of the fact that a human being is a synthesis of the two contradictory impulses does not constitute a human being as a self. There must be another level of unity that would encompass that synthesis:

> In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation

[80] Stewart makes exactly the same point: "One might wish to argue that the criticism is in fact not aimed at Hegel's methodology itself, which Kierkegaard seems clearly to affirm. Rather, the criticism is that Hegel does not stick to his own methodology. Specifically, the upshot of Kierkegaard's introductory comments was that a balance between the empirical and the idea should always be maintained, a plea that he takes directly form Hegel's own methodological statements. However, when he sees Hegel's treatment of Socrates, Kierkegaard feels that Hegel does not adequately preserve the balance since he has put too much weight on the ideal at the expense of the empirical. On this interpretation, Kierkegaard would be seen, somewhat ironically, as rebuking Hegel for not being Hegelian enough." (Stewart 2015: 193).

[81] There are too numerous examples to be listed in full, but Roy Martinez's *Kierkegaard and the Art of Irony* (Martinez 2001) is a great example of such analysis.

> between the psychical and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self. (Kierkegaard 1980b: 13)

In other words, the relation as a positive force has to be able to hold the two contradictory impulses together in a constructive way. As we have seen, irony as absolute infinite negativity is doing precisely that. As Jonathan Lear, one of the most insightful contemporary writers on irony, notes: "The act of becoming ironic is an act of unifying the psyche." (Lear 2003: 176) Thus irony is a conscious attempt by the individual to keep the contradictory impulses of his own nature intact without annihilating one of them. It is important to keep in mind that this task is understood by Kierkegaard as a 'life-task', thus one, which is always in front of the individual, never-completed as such. This allows Lear to see in irony a therapeutic role, yet the role, which is supposed to answer the most fundamental ethical questions:

> Psychoanalysis is not concerned with the development of any particular *moral* trait, but it is concerned with the *ethical*. That is, it abjures "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots," but it *is* concerned with the fundamental question, "How shall I live?" Ethics is the enquiry into how to live one's life. It is the fundamental question facing every human being (whether she likes it or not, whether she ignores it or not, and whether she evades it or not). Psychoanalysis is a peculiar raising of this fundamental question. It is tempting to think that psychoanalysis is not concerned with the development of any particular trait like courage. This is because psychoanalysis, properly construed, does avoid all moralizing, and it is not concerned with the development of the superego in any particular direction. (Lear 2003: 174)

Although in this passage Lear talks about psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis, 'properly construed', for him means employing irony. Or, to be more precise, psychoanalysis for him means developing the capability of the analysand, the individual, to employ irony precisely as a means of finding autonomously and individually the right balance between this fundamental tension of what it means being a self: "The transition from the sexual drive to love is precisely the transition from viewing humans as inevitable *candidates* for irony, to viewing them as capable of *becoming ironic* with respect to themselves." (Lear 2003: 178)

Lear, of course, is interested in finding the application of irony in psychoanalysis *as* a psychoanalyst and, thus, always talks from the third person perspective. But if one assumes for a minute that Kierkegaard is exactly that ideal analysand of the psychotherapy, who has managed to be able to work with himself autonomously, in Lear's words, has *become* ironic with respect to himself, then it becomes clear not merely in which way the authorship of Kierkegaard is important first and foremost for Kierkegaard as an ironic kind of conceptual therapy, but also in what sense he can proclaim that 'irony is a disciplinarian'.

As for Hegel – Hegel, having stumbled upon the definition of irony, which is much more metaphysically insightful than Quintilian's, clearly does not understand the application irony might have in individual existence. Haufniensis' words are loaded with meaning when he says that

> Hegel was the first to discover this explanation, but strangely enough, he did not know much about irony. That it was Socrates who first introduced irony into the world and gave a name to the child, that his irony was precisely inclosing reserve, which he began by closing himself off from men, by closing himself with himself in order to be expanded in the divine, who also began by closing his door and making a jest to those outside in order to talk in secret – this is something no one is concerned with. On the occasion of one or another accidental phenomena, this word "irony" is brought up, and so it is irony. (Kierkegaard 1980a: 134)

22. Summary

This chapter focuses on Kierkegaard's understanding of irony, which is ethically permissible and beneficiary. In the chapter I argue that this type of irony already appears in Kierkegaard's dissertation *The Concept of Irony* as a 'controlled element'. I show that even in a very brief exposition of this type of irony in his thesis Kierkegaard is unambiguous in his understanding that such an irony is morally permissible, important, and beneficial for the individual. I further claim that it is precisely his redefinition of the previous descriptions of irony, especially Hegelian definition of irony as 'infinite absolute negativity', that allows him to make this move toward ethics.

In the first two sections of this chapter I discuss what irony entails as the incognito of the ethical. I show that for Kierkegaard proper application of irony is ethically informed irony, which is supposed to be used as the destructive tool against the esthetic stage. Furthermore, it is to be understood as a part of the maieutic strategy, devised by Kierkegaard, which he calls indirect communication. Although Kierkegaard implies that indirect communication involves other means, and not merely irony, I argue that irony here plays a crucial and central role as a communicative tool.

Further, in contrast to historical examples of pure irony, presented in the second chapter, I discuss the examples of controlled irony, which can be derived from Kierkegaard's authorship. The first one is Socrates, as presented by Johannes Climacus in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. I argue that Climacus regards Socrates as the exemplar of controlled irony, as opposed to Socrates the pure ironist of *The Concept of Irony*. This, however, does not mean that there is a contradiction in terms of understanding what irony is between these two particular texts. To the contrary, I show that the textual evidence from Kierkegaard's diaries, as well as from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, suggests that the very shift in the understanding of Socrates proves that the understanding of irony remains intact.

In the following section I discuss the very strong suggestion in *The Concept of Irony* that Hegel is the best contemporary exemplar of the controlled irony in opposition to what Kierkegaard sees as pure irony in German Romantics. This, however, does not mean that Kierkegaard is

completely satisfied with Hegel as an ironist – I discuss the shortcomings of Hegel as ironist in the eyes of Kierkegaard. Furthermore, I argue that Kierkegaard himself is an example of such a controlled ironist. I show that it is only by keeping in mind Kierkegaard's concept of the self one can understand the importance of irony both for Kierkegaard's authorship, and for his own life.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I have discussed the multi-faceted notion of irony and its relation to the ethical in Kierkegaard's authorship. I have argued that there is coherent and consistent notion which Kierkegaard makes use of both in his signed texts (*The Concept of Irony*) and pseudonymous works (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*).

Conceptually Kierkegaard defines irony as absolute infinite negativity. Although the formula is borrowed from Hegel, Kierkegaard uses it as a definition rather than a description in order to be able to use it as an existential and, subsequently, ethical category.

Kierkegaard performs a similar transfer of meaning with another classical definition of irony, namely, Quintilian's formula that irony is meaning the opposite of what is said. I show that Kierkegaard extends this formula to non-linguistic realm in order to be able to investigate irony as more than mere rhetorical tool.

These two extensions of the meaning of irony are supplemented by the typology of irony. Kierkegaard maintains that there are two types of irony: irony as a position (pure irony) and irony as a controlled element (controlled irony). Irony as a position is equated with German Romantics and Socrates (in *The Concept of Irony*), while irony as a controlled element is equated with Hegel and Socrates (in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*).

On the other hand, I show that Kierkegaardian authorship contains two distinct notions of ethics, which are related in hierarchical order. The first ethics is a system of universally valid and rationally grounded norms, while the second ethics is Christianly inspired and informed ethics of the neighborly love.

Despite the fact that the first ethics acknowledges a notion of God, I argue that it is merely presupposed as a function within the rational system. Therefore, God acts as factor of this rational system. Kierkegaard argues that it is not Christian, as the crucial truth of Christianity is that God is a living being. This is one of the points why the first ethics is bound to fail. Another point of failure is encountered in the consciousness of guilt, which, according to Kierkegaard, every individual encounters. This consciousness is psychologically encountered as anxiety. Only the second ethics, according to Kierkegaard, is able to deal with the consciousness of guilt.

In both ethical theories the intention of the individual rather than the results of the actions are the morally valuable factors, thus the problem of inwardness is posited. The problem of inwardness signifies that in ethical sphere the individual is left essentially alone with his ethical intentions. This unfolds as a communicative impasse – he is neither able to prove his intentions, nor is he able to use them for didactic reasons. This is especially valid in the second ethics. Controlled irony is a means to solve this communicative impasse – it allows the ethicist to signal his own

ethical existence and, more importantly, it serves as a communicative tool to point away from objective thinking toward the authentically personal engagement with existence.

Most importantly, in the ethical sphere controlled irony serves as the incognito of the ethical person. The mask of irony allows the ethicist not to get distracted from his own ethical tasks; furthermore, it allows him not to interrupt the same activity of the other ethicist. Therefore, controlled irony in ethics serves as the border between one's external relations to his culture and internal relation to his ethical tasks.

APPENDIX. KIERKEGAARD'S RECEPTION IN LITHUANIA

First appearance of Kierkegaard in Lithuanian language occurred in 1974 as a part of anthology meant to showcase the developments of the so-called bourgeois philosophy in the Western world in 19-20th c. Kierkegaard was represented by the selected extracts from the chapter "The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality" from *Either/Or II* (Kjirkegoras 1974). The introduction, written by Jonas Repšys, quite succinctly summarizes the Soviet approach to Kierkegaard – he was an insightful thinker who saw the social alienation brought about by idealistic philosophies of the Enlightenment, however, he was too reactionary (read: politically conservative) and idealistically oriented (read: religious) himself in order to provide practical solutions to alienation. (Repšys 1974)

A few years later the first two articles on Kierkegaard appeared, penned by at the time young and promising philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris, who went on to become by a general consensus the most important Lithuanian thinker of the second part of the 20th century. The first article, entitled "The Problem of Being in the Philosophy of G. Hegel and S. Kierkegaard" (Šliogeris 1977), presents Kierkegaard as another (next to Karl Marx) reaction to the (ultimately failed) Hegelian attempt to equate Being and Reason. Šliogeris points out what he perceives as similarities between Kierkegaard and Marx: (i) both thinkers come to the conclusion that "human existence cannot be described by or even less so substituted for pure thinking"; (ii) and they both introduce "a new dimension that was *terra incognita* for previous philosophy: it is the everyday human experience, a struggle for improvement of material existential conditions" (Šliogeris 1977: 29-30). However, as Šliogeris points out, unlike Marx, "who described concrete human existence in objective socio-economic parameters, Kierkegaard looked for the abode of existence in the inwardness of the individual" (Šliogeris 1977: 32). That abode for Kierkegaard, as opposed to Marx's preference for materialism, was religious existence. And even if his dislike for *status quo*, which he shared with Marx, materialized in his attack on official Christendom, it 'lacked real, social revolutionary content' and was 'purely idealistic'. (Šliogeris 1977: 32) Kierkegaard's suggestions of overcoming the "alienation between reality and society" are 'utopian, even reactionary' in contrast to Marx's "real plans of revolutionary reorganization of society" (Šliogeris 1977: 32). Another limitation of Kierkegaard, according to Šliogeris, is that his "depictions of unhappy consciousness" necessarily lack in objectivity, because, as Šliogeris puts it, "phenomenological description can not equate to scientific analysis", while "Marxist methodology enables to deterministically explain the ontic, i.e. social, causes of deformed phenomena of consciousness". (Šliogeris 1977: 33) In other words, Šliogeris equates Kierkegaard's way of doing philosophy to phenomenological description and sees this as a

fundamental flaw, because phenomenology has the very same idealistic tendencies which Marxist approach tries to show as evasive and ultimately too subjective to have any pretense to truth. In the end Šliogeris concludes that Marx and Kierkegaard are two completely opposite directions of post-Hegelian philosophy, where Kierkegaard represents the way of doing philosophy, which "places philosophy in opposition to reason, existential openness to being – in opposition to the methods of objective cognition and therefore (implicitly or explicitly) debates with the philosophy that has as its credo a rational knowledge of reality." (Šliogeris 1977: 33)

One of the problems of analysing philosophy of the Soviet period is that one is never sure which part of the philosophical endeavour one is to take seriously and which part is merely a nod to the ideological requirements of the time. Šliogeris is a case in point – despite an apparently unfavourable first article on Kierkegaard in 1977, it seems that there is more to Šliogeris' opinion, as a year later he authors another article devoted to Kierkegaard, entitled "The Principle of Irony in S. Kierkegaard's Philosophy" (Šliogeris 1978). Šliogeris sees Kierkegaard as the one who formulated best the problem of contemporary philosophy, namely, the problem of man's existence in the world. This, according to him, distinguishes contemporary philosophy, which Šliogeris identifies as postrationalist, from rationalist philosophy, which attempted to solve the problem of being merely theoretically, basing its attempts on the premise that being is ontologically rational. In contrast to this philosophy, which finds its beginning in doubt, "postrationalist philosophy begins in despair", which originates in the conflict between the rational "project" of being, created by man itself, and the real being." (Šliogeris 1978: 28) According to Šliogeris, "Kierkegaard defines the relation between the individual and being with the category of 'irony'". In contrast to doubt, irony "moves not in cognitive, but existential space", however, it is a "negative ontological openness to being". Šliogeris identifies two types of irony in Kierkegaard's thinking - irony as play and existential irony. After having described irony as a play, Šliogeris concentrates on the "second" irony, which he claims is "the basis of the whole Kierkegaaard's world-view and his irrationalist concept of man" (Šliogeris 1978: 32). Šliogeris claims that this second irony is a historical neccesity, which plays a role of individuation in a specific way, "by juxtaposing existential ideality [of the individual] to universality of communal life" (Šliogeris 1978: 33). Šliogeris points out that nevertheless this opposition or negative relation to the universality of the society "emerges only in the ideality of the ironist, thus ironist's revolt against universality is merely theoretical. If the negative attitude were realized in practical terms, i.e. in everyday living relations, ironist would not be ironist, but an egoist, dangerous to the society. Society usually does not tolerate such an egoism." (Šliogeris 1978: 33)

Socrates is evoked as an historical example of irony. Šliogeris sees Socrates as the product of the broader historical process – the demise of Athenian civilization. And it is in this sense that for Šliogeris Kierkegaard is the Socrates of contemporary times, as contemporary culture is for him one of the demise and decadence.

Šliogeris stresses that Kierkegaard sees positive value in irony – irony, which Šliogeris equates with infinite resignation, is "the porch of the temple of the absurd religion". (Šliogeris 1978: 36) Finally, the distinction between Socratic (Kierkegaardian) and Romantic irony is made – Romantic ironist is not existentially comitted and remains merely in "publicist relation" with reality. (Šliogeris 1978: 38) In this sense Šliogeris agrees with Kierkegaard, however, once again, he concludes the article by criticizing Kierkegaard's ironist from a Marxist perspective – ironist remains in opposition to the prevailing bourgeois etiquette and norms, but merely spiritually, yet in everyday life he in no way differs from philistine and his opposition does not materialize.

Needless to say that the ideological and political climate of Soviet period was not exactly the most fruitful time for Kierkegaard studies in Lithuania and thus it is not surprising that after Lithuania regained Independence, interest in Kierkegaard increased exponentially. Nevertheless, it is still surprising and a question of some puzzlement that Kierkegaard attracted comparably more attention than any other philosopher (with the possible exception of Plato). Since 1990 no less than five books by Kierkegaard were translated and published in Lithuanian: *Fear and Trembling* (Kierkegaard 2002), *Lily of the Field, The Bird of the Air* (Kierkegaard 1997a), *Sickness unto Death* (Kierkegaard 1997b), *Philosophical Fragments* (Kierkegaard 2000), and *Point of View to My Authorship* (Kierkegaard 2006) in addition to separate publication of *The Woman Who Was a Sinner* (Kierkegaard 1997c). Furthermore, in December 2003 a conference, devoted solely to Kierkegaard, "Kierkegaard's Relevance: Philosophical Interpretations" was organized and the proceedings of the conference were published as a separate book (Andrijauskas 2006a).

The most prominent Kierkegaardian commentator and the only one who can be called a Kierkegaardian scholar is Jolita Q. Pons[82]. She defended her PhD at Cambridge University on Kierkegaard's usage of pseudonyms (Pons 2004) and she is responsible for the translation of four of Kierkegaard's books. In her Introduction to *Sickness unto Death* (Adomėnienė 1997) Pons provides a historical context, relates the writing of the book with the religious experience that Kierkegaard documented in his diary in April 1848 and attempts to give a textual overview of the book. According to Pons, at the heart of Kierkegaard's interest is a question of how a human being can be free and at the same time dependent. Kierkegaard's answer, according to

[82] Up to 2003 – Jolita Adomėnienė.

Pons, is that philosophy is incapable of solving this problem and only faith can solve "the dialectical tension between the transcendent and the immanent, the eternal and the temporal" (Adomėnienė 1997: 22). At the same time, failure to understand that this is the only possibility to solve this tension causes illness, which Kierkegaard terms despair. Although despair is closely linked with sin and anxiety, their relation is not straightforward. To begin with, they belong in different domains: sin is a theological, despair – an ethical, and anxiety – a psychological concept. Yet, according to Pons, "despair participates in sin as a specific aspect of sin – that, which creates and encourages the continuity of sin." (Adomėnienė 1997: 25) And, as Anti-Climacus makes us aware, despair can take many forms.

In the Introduction to *Philosophical Fragments* (Adomėnienė 2000) Pons provides a summary of the book and sees it, based on Niels Thulstrup's suggestion, as "a drama of five acts" (Adomėnienė 2000: 11). Pons sees *Fragments* as similar to Platonic dialogue in the sense that it is philosophizing 'live' – the concepts are being discussed and redefined in progress and the reader can follow their emergence and refinement. *Fragments*, according to Pons, are really about two historical figures, whose characters are being analyzed and commented upon in the book. The first three chapters are devoted to Socrates, while the last two depart from Socratic viewpoint and Jesus Christ emerges as the main character. Thus Pons concludes that the main question of the book - "Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness?" – is answered in the affirmative: it is the appearance of Christ – "a moment in time, when eternity miraculously intrudes temporality" (Adomėnienė 2000: 19).

Finally, in her article "Actuality, Possibility and the Possibility of Actuality" (Pons 2006) Pons turns her attention to *Concluding Unscientific Postcript* and the dialectic between actuality and possibility in Climacus' text. What, according to Pons, many of Kierkegaard's scholars miss is that "Kierkegaard always clearly understands that while speaking about the actuality and possibility of existence, he always already is in the secondary, mediated sphere, in which the relations between actuality and possibility are already different and only indirectly point to what actuality and possibility is" (Pons 2006: 199). Kierkegaard regards abstract language as especially unfit to talk about actuality, because actuality is not a stable being, but a process of becoming. Another problem, according to Pons, is that abstract language is unable to express the difficulty of existence, i.e. "the relation of the individual with his own existence, when he is not next to it, but fully in it, although always only becoming, never entrenched in existence." (Pons 2006: 201) Thus, the difficulty is the very individual's interest in his existence. Additionally, Pons points out that not merely abstract thought poses problems for the understanding of actuality – any second degree attempt to grasping it is inescapable and at the same time problematic. Reflection and understanding are the modes of possibility, thus any grasped

actuality is already transferred into the realm of possibility. The only actuality that remains actuality for the individual is his own actuality, thus "it is the only actuality that functions in two realms – it is actuality and it is conceived as actuality." (Pons 2006: 202) However, Pons concentrates on the transformations that actuality undergoes within the realm of thinking. "Since thinking can not cancel actuality, it means that it can not create or provide it." (Pons 2006: 203) More to the point, precisely because of this any meaningful direct ethical relation between individuals is impossible – "they cannot 'touch' each other's actuality, but necessarily make it into possibility." (Pons 2006: 203)

Another scholar who has expressed more than a passing interest in Kierkegaard's thought is Tomas Sodeika, whose Introduction to *Fear and Trembling* "On Søren Kierkegaard, his Fear and Trembling" (Sodeika 1995)[83] became somewhat of a standard-bearer in Kierkegaardian studies in Lithuania. Sodeika sees Kierkegaard first and foremost as an 'existing' thinker, i.e. a thinker whose very own particular existence – and private life – had not merely an accidental and thus inessential role in his writings, but is crucial in order to understand them. Thus, Sodeika sketches a kind of intellectual biography of Kierkegaard, where the crucial events in Kierkegaard's life (his father's curse of God, theological studies, trips to Berlin, dandy's life, engagement and subsequent breakup, *Corsair* affair, attack on Danish Church) are interpreted as Kierkegaard's (ultimately failed) attempts to engage with actuality. The dialectic of actuality and possibility, which Pons analyses as categories for Kierkegaard the Philosopher, Sodeika interprets as a life task for Kierkegaard the Individual. In this interpretation the very activity of authorship, Kierkegaard's 'poetic existence', is ultimately understood as an inescapable and unwanted, therefore, tragic substitute for actuality.

Sodeika explores this theme further in "Text and Reality: Søren Kierkegaard's 'Lessons'" (Sodeika 2001)[84]. Here he registers the parallels between the literary strategies of German Romantics like Ludwig Tieck and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann on the one hand, and Kierkegaard on the other. The positive approach to irony as a communicative device puts Kierkegaard on the one side with the Romantics against Hegel, who qualified irony as 'pure negativity'. Romantics and Kierkegaard also share the conviction that actuality is incommensurable – it is not, like Hegel maintained, transparent to consciousness. Yet, according to Sodeika, for Kierkegaard – *unlike* Romantics and *in agreement* with Hegel – literary endeavor is not a way of expressing inwardness, but rather forming it. Precisely this, according to Sodeika,

[83] A shorter version of this text subsequently was reprinted in the book *Paradoxes of Existence: Kierekegaard's Philosophical Interpretations* (Andrijauskas 2006a) under the title "Kierkegaard's Indirect Communication" (Sodeika 2006). This version later was reprinted as a chapter "Søren Kierkegaard: Bio-graphy" in Sodeika's monograph *Philosophy and Text* (Sodeika 2010: 108-131).

[84] Subsequently reprinted as a chapter in Sodeika's monograph *Philosophy and Text* (Sodeika 2010: 132-161).

gives Kierkegaard's project an ethical character. Kierkegaard has two teachers of how to approach this formation of inwardness, namely, Socrates and Jesus Christ. According to Sodeika, Kierkegaard attempted and aspired to become like Socrates, while Christ was a source of continuous inspiration.

Rita Šerpytytė is interested in Kierkegaard within the framework of her broader interest in the history of Western nihilism. In her monograph *Nihilism and Western Philosophy* Šerpytytė attempts to describe various ways Kierkegaard approaches the question of nothingness which Šerpytytė broadly associates with nihilism (Šerpytytė 2007a). At first she looks at the way Climacus sees the limits of reason in *Fragments* (Šerpytytė 2007a: 234-244)[85] and distinguishes between Kant's approach and Climacus' approach. Kant, as is well known, attempts to show that all atempts to prove the existence of God are futile – they lead to an impasse. Climacus, according to Šerpytytė, goes one step further – he is suspicious and skeptical about rational thinking itself. "He does not criticize the proofs of God (as Kant did, at the same time attempting to open the way for new proofs), but deconstructs the proof itself." (Šerpytytė 2007a: 235) Šerpytytė claims that God for Climacus remains and is bound to remain the great Unknown, which leads to explore the analogy between Climacean understanding of God and what is known in Christian theology as *via negativa*. Drawing on such various sources as Pseudo Dionysius, Angelus Silesius, Meister Eckhart, and Jacques Derrida, Šerpytytė suggests that in both of these approaches to God, "the direction of annihilating effort [is] language itself" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 239). Despite her claim that for Climacus the effort of annihilation is directed toward thinking, she argues that "the representativity of thinking, its expressability in notions and representations is an indicator of the connection between reflective thinking and language" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 240). Šerpytytė concludes that this attempt to annihilate language should be seen as part of the drive toward the movement of faith or direct experience of God. Despite having this as an aspiration, both Climacus ("who is unable to negate himself, to get outside himself" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 242)) and Kierkegaard (who "reminds of a dance teacher, who wants to show how to make a move which he does not know himself and is not willing to demonstrate by dancing" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 243), in Šerpytytė's opinion, fail to realize this aspiration.

Another aspect, which Šerpytytė investigates as a nihilistic trend in Kierkegaard's authorship, is the treatment of the tragic in *Either/Or I* (Šerpytytė 2007a: 245-251)[86]. Šerpytytė draws her attention to a rarely commented upon text "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic

[85] The chapter "Kierkegaard and *Via Negativa*" first appeared as an article "Was Kierkegaard a Nihilist?" (Šerpytytė 2003) and later was reprinted in Latvian (Šerpytytė 2006b).

[86] This chapter first appeared as an article "On the Tragic and the Possibility of Its Alternative in Kierkegaard's Thinking" (Šerpytytė 2004) and subsequently was reprinted with minor stylistic corrections in Andrijauskas' collection (Šerpytytė 2006a).

in Modern Drama", however, the length and the quality of Šerpytytė's analysis leaves the reader with a lot to be desired. Nevertheless, Šerpytytė's claims that tragic thinking is "a perspective of thinking that, on the one hand, is related to nihilism, while, on the other hand, does not coincide with it" and that it is "a non-nihilist answer to the question of nihilism" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 251) are at least indicative of the direction, which she intended to go.

Šerpytytė is also the first one to discuss the themes of *The Concept of Anxiety* in Lithuanian. In the chapter "Ontology of Anxiety and Nihilism: S. Kierkegaard" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 252-268) Šerpytytė tries to cover the main themes of this particular text: the distinction between anxiety and fear, the origin of anxiety and its "ontological" interpretation by Kierkegaard. In line with her previous interpretations Šerpytytė stresses the 'existential' aspect over the 'philosophical' one – anxiety is interesting as understood in relation with the distinction between actuality and possibility. According to Šerpytytė, "within the perspective of this fundamental distinction the difference between *fear* and *anxiety* is situated" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 256). Despite a new Kierkegaardian theme one big downside of this particular discussion is Šerpytytė's unclear and uneven use of the terms fear and anxiety. At some points she seems to acknowledge the difference between those terms (eg. quote above), while for the majority of her analysis, to the contrary, she seems to equate those terms (eg. "It is obvious that for Kierkegaard fear (anxiety) 'is' essentially related to actuality" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 257)). Nevertheless, it seems that Šerpytytė correctly identifies that anxiety is a type of fear that has no object or, as Šerpytytė prefers it, "whose 'object' is Nothing" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 267), while the problem of psychology, as she sees it, is precisely in attempting to make this Nothing of anxiety into the Something of fear. This, in Šerpytytė's eyes, is to miss the essential maieutic feature of anxiety, namely, that "the relation of fear (sic!) with actuality is encountered not in a theoretical conception, but in our concrete experience" (Šerpytytė 2007a: 268).

Another important category to be approached by Šerpytytė is Kierkegaard's notion of paradox. (Šerpytytė 2007a: 269-278)[87] She approaches this topic from the context of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg's views of logic. Šerpytytė explores the similarities between the paradox of faith, presented in the *Postscript*, and a classical logical paradox of liar. Liar lies only and only when he says the truth, and tells the truth only and only if he lies. The same 'logic', according to Šerpytytė, is encountered in the paradox of faith: to rationalize faith is to destroy it, while leaving it beyond discourse risks having faith without content. Finally, in an article "Repetition and Nihilism" (Šerpytytė 2013) Šerpytytė is also the first in Lithuanian scholarship to make use of Kierkegaard's concept of repetition. She productively engages Kierkegaard's understanding

[87] This chapter first appeared as an article "The Paradox of Faith and the Logic of 'Nihilism': S. Kierkegaard" (Šerpytytė 2007b).

and use of repetition as a background to explore and enlighten the concept of repetition as it appears in the work of Giorgio Agamben, while her chapter "Religion between Secularization and Nihilism" in *Secularization and Contemporary Culture* (Šerpytytė 2013a) juxtaposes this analysis with the work of Marcel Proust and extends it to Richard Kearney.

The remaining Kierkegaardian scholarship of the Independence years (i.e. since 1990) takes one of the five approaches: (i) Kierkegaard as a 'alternative' philosopher (ii) Kierkegaard as a philosopher of religion; (iii) Kierkegaard as a theorist of aesthetics; (iv) Kierkegaard as 'existing' thinker; (v) and a comparative approach, where Kierkegaard is juxtaposed to other philosophers or philosophical theories.

(i) The first approach is the one that treats Kierkegaard as a representative of a broader trend of Western philosophy, broadly understood as non-classical, irrationalist or existentialist. Admittedly, it is an inevitably overgeneralized description, which is meant only for the practical purposes of this categorization. Antanas Andrijauskas in his article "Non-Classical Principles of Thinking in Kierkegaard's Philosophy" (Andrijauskas 2006b)[88] provides what he regards to be an overview of the context of Kierkegaard's thinking: the turn towards the particular individual existence, parallels with Nietzsche, influence by Romanticism and attempts to situate Kierkegaard in the tradition of philosophy which he terms non-classical. Laimutė Jakavonytė attempts to answer a question "Was Kierkegaard a Volitionist?" (Jakavonytė 2006), drawing on Alasdair McIntyre's critique of Kierkegaard's ethical views. Tomas Kačerauskas in "Existential and Poetical Thinking in the Philosophy of Kierkegaard" (Kačerauskas 2006) investigates the poetical inspirations in Kierkegaard's existential thinking, while Naglis Kardelis in his "Kierkegaard's Philosophy and The Existential Profiles of Religiosity" (Kardelis 2006) suggests that religiosity B should be viewed as a form of non-classical faith, as it has the aesthetics of absurd inherent in it. Finally, Arūnas Sverdiolas explores Kierkegaard's relation with hermeneutic tradition in his paper "At the Tail of Abraham: Antihermeneutics of Søren Kierkegaard" (Sverdiolas 2006).

(ii) The second approach is more specific as it is interested in Kierkegaard as philosopher of religion, who suggested a new and interesting reinterpretation of religious faith. Stanislovas Mostauskis in "A Stance in the Presence of a Trifle" (Mostauskis 2006) and Šliogeris in "Kierkegaard: Paradox of Faith" (Šliogeris 1992)[89] try to explore the nature of religious faith

[88] This article is a revised and expanded version of a chapter "Reflections of 'Existential Crisis in Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Conception" from Andrijauskas' book *Beauty and Art* (Andrijauskas 1996: 461-472) and an article "Non-Classical Principles in Kierkegaard's Philosophy of 'Existential Crisis'", serialized in journal *Logos* (Andrijauskas 2003a, Andrijauskas 2003b, Andrijauskas 2004).

[89] In an interview (Šliogeris 1995) Šliogeris confesses that the article was written in 1975 - in the midst of Soviet rule, thus it is not surprising that it was published only in 1992. Curiuosly this might be the first written (if not published) text on Kierkegaard in Lithuanian and was written a year after the appearance of the first Kierkegaard's

and its relation to paradox, while Vytautas Radžvilas in his paper "The Interplay between the Divine and the Demoniac in the Kierkegaardian Concept of Faith" (Radžvilas 2006) investigates the demonic and the divine in the relation to the individual. My own article "The Ethical Stage and Its Limits in Kierkegaard's Philosophy" (Bachmetjevas 2012) attempts to show how the consciousness of guilt renders the secular ethics insufficient and turns us towards religiously charged ethics. Andrius Bielskis in his monograph *The Unholy Sacrament. Ideology, Faith and the Politics of Emancipation* devotes a chapter to *Fear and Trembling*, where he critically examines what he takes to be Kierkegaard's understanding of ethics (Bielskis 2014: 64-74). Although he commends Kierkegaard for emphasizing the necessity of the leap for faith, Bielskis criticizes Kierkegaard's "stylistic hyperbolization and bourgeois approach to ethics" (Bielskis 2014: 74). Finally, in his monograph *Resignation, or the Challenge of the Philosophy of Death to Modernity* Krescencijus Stoškus makes use of the forms of despair, presented in *Sickness unto Death*, in order to categorize possibilities for resignation (Stoškus 2011: 177).

(iii) Yet another direction which Lithuanian readers of Kierkegaard take interest in is Kierkegaardian aesthetics. For example, Leonarda Jekentaitė in "Kierkegaard and the Main Features of Demonic Aestheticism in Lithuanian Culture" (Jekentaitė 2003)[90] employs Kierkegaardian concepts to analyze contemporary Lithuanian theatre, art, and literature.

(iv) One more way of looking at Kierkegaard's *oeuvre* is a biographical approach. In addition to Sodeika and to a certain extent Šerpytytė, this way of reading Kierkegaard was attempted by Arvydas Liepuonius in "Psychoanalytical Aspects of Kierkegaard's Personality and Creation" (Liepuonius 2004)[91].

(v) Perhaps the most fruitful and most widely practised approach is comparativist attempts of juxtaposing certain aspects of Kierkegaard's thought with some other thinkers or schools. Vaida Asakavičiūtė in "The Problem of the Person's Spiritual Improvement in Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's Philosophy" (Asakavičiūtė 2006) compares Kierkegaard's knight of faith and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Jūratė Baranova in "Seduction and Death: The Motives of Kierkegaard in the Postmodern Discourse" (Baranova 2006) situates Kierkegaard's thought in the context of Derrida's and Jean Baudrillard's theories. Agnieška Juzefovič systematically explored the parallels between Kierkegaard and Zhuangzi in terms of individual's spiritual development (Juzefovič 2004), the role of paradox and absurdity (Juzefovič 2006c), and the understanding and use of indirect communication (Juzefovič 2006a, Juzefovič 2006b). The

text in Lithuanian. It was subsequently reprinted with significant typographical mistakes and ommissions in Andrijauskas' collection as "The Paradox of Faith in Kierkegaard's Philosophy" (Šliogeris 2006).

[90] Subsequently reprinted in Andrijauskas' collection with slight stylistic modifications under the title "Kierkegaard and the Main Features of Demonic Aestheticism in Lithuanian Culture" (Jekentaitė 2006).

[91] Subsequently reprinted in Andrijauskas' collection, cf. Liepuonius 2006.

parallels between Kierkegaard's knight of faith and the man of faith in mystical traditions of Zhuangzi, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila are explored by Agnė Budriūnaitė in "Knight of Faith – Between Existentialism and Mysticism" (Budriūnaitė 2009a, Budriūnaitė 2009b). Bronius Kuzmickas compares the faith as existence between Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel (Kuzmickas 2006), while Mindaugas Briedis compares the approaches to faith of Kierkegaard and Paul Tillich (Briedis 2006). Jekaterina Lavrinec investigates the ways Kierkegaard and Franz Kafka employ the genre of diary (Lavrinec 2006). And Rūta Marija Vabalaitė sees in Kierkegaard a correction of Kantian ethics (Vabalaitė 2006). Finally, Kačerauskas carries on his investigation into poetical thinking and compares Kierkegaard's approach to Aristotle's and his contemporary Nietzsche's (Kačerauskas 2004).

Finally, secondary literature is full of references to Kierkegaard, where he most of the time is invoked as the representative and the founder of exitentialism, one, who rehabilitated religion in the secular age, faith in the age of reason, and incommensurability of human in the age of transparence. In summary, one has to conclude that in Lithuanian philosophical context Kierkegaard remains one of the most read and quoted philosophers of any century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS BY KIERKEGAARD

1. Kierkegaard, S. (1967). *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
2. Kierkegaard, S. (1980a). *The Concept of Anxiety*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
3. Kierkegaard, S. (1980b). *The Sickness unto Death*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
4. Kierkegaaard, S. (1983). *Fear and Trembling. Repetition.* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
5. Kierkegaard, S. (1985). *Philosophical Fragments. Johannes Climacus*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
6. Kierkegaard, S. (1987a). *Either/Or I*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
7. Kierkegaard, S. (1987b). *Either/Or II.* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
8. Kierkegaard, S. (1988). *Stages on Life's Way*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
9. Kierkegaard, S. (1989). *The Concept of Irony*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
10. Kierkegaard, S. (1991). *Practice in Christianity*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
11. Kierkegaard, S. (1992). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
12. Kierkegaard, S. (1995). *Works of Love*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
13. Kierkegaard, S. (1997a). *Laukų lelija ir padangių paukštis.* Vilnius, Vaga.
14. Kierkegaard, S. (1997b). *Liga mirčiai*. Vilnius, Aidai.
15. Kierkegaard, S. (1997c). "Nusidėjėlė (Lk 7, 47)" in *Naujasis židinys-Aidai*, vol. 7-8: 277-281.
16. Kierkegaard, S. (1998). *The Point of View*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
17. Kierkegaard, S. (2000). *Filosofiniai trupiniai, arba Truputis filosofijos*. Vilnius, Aidai.
18. Kierkegaard, S. (2002). *Baimė ir drebėjimas*. Vilnius, Aidai.
19. Kierkegaard, S. (2006). *Požiūrio taškas į mano autorinę veiklą*. Vilnius, Baltos lankos.
20. Kjirkegoras, S. (1974). "Arba - arba. Estetiškumo ir etiškumo harmonija asmenybės vystymesi" in B. Genzelis et al. (eds.) *Filosofijos istorijos chrestomatija. XIX ir XX amžių Vakarų Europos ir Amerikos filosofija*. Vilnius, Mintis**:** 107-124.

OTHER WORKS

1. Adomėnienė, J. (1997). “Įvadas” in S. Kierkegaard *Liga mirčiai*. Vilnius, Aidai. 9-29.
2. Adomėnienė, J. (2000). “Įvadas” in S. Kierkegaard *Filosofiniai trupiniai, arba truputis filosofijos*. Vilnius, Aidai. 7-20.
3. Andrijauskas, A. (1996). *Grožis ir menas*. Vilnius, VDA leidykla.
4. Andrijauskas, A. (2003a). “Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaard’o ‘Egzistencinės krizės’ filosofijoje” in *Logos*, vol. 34: 65-75.
5. Andrijauskas, A. (2003b). “Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaard'o 'Egzistencinės krizės' filosofijoje” in *Logos*, vol. 35: 41-52.
6. Andrijauskas, A. (2004). “Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaardo 'Egizstencinės krizės' filosofijoje” in *Logos*, vol. 36: 28-32.
7. Andrijauskas, A. (ed.) (2006a). *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas.
8. Andrijauskas, A. (2006b). “Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaardo filosofijoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 15-58.
9. Aristotle (1991). *On Rhetoric*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
10. Asakavičiūtė, V. (2006). “Asmenybės tapsmo problema Kierkegaardo ir Nietzsches filosofijoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas: 59-74.
11. Bachmetjevas, V. (2012). “Etinė stadija ir jos ribos S. Kierkegaard'o filosofijoje” in *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 14 (4): 92-97.
12. Bachmetjevas, V. (2015). “Immanuelio Kanto etikos įtaka Søreno Kierkegaard’o etinės stadijos sampratai” in *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 17 (4): 94-108.
13. Baldwin, B. (1989). “Irony, that 'Little, Invisible Personage': A Reading of Kierkegaard's Ghosts” in *MLN*, vol. 104 (5): 1124-1141.
14. Baranova, J. (2006). “Gundymas ir mirtis: Kierkegaardo motyvai postmoderniajame diskurse” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 75-80.
15. Bielskis, A. (2014). *Nešventas sakramentas: ideologija, tikėjimas ir išsilaisvinimo politika*. Vilnius, Demos.
16. Bocheński, J. M. (1965). *The Logic of Religion*. New York, NY, New York University Press.

17. Booth, W. C. (1975). *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.
18. Bové, P. A. (1976). "Cleanth Brooks and Modern Irony: A Kierkegaardian Critique." In *boundary 2*, vol. 4 (3): 727-760.
19. Bretall, R. (ed.) (1946). *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
20. Briedis, M. (2006). "'Stovėjimo ant ribos' metafora P. Tillicho sistemoje ir S. Kierkegaard'o religijos filosofijoje: *gnosis* ar *pistis*?" in *Logos*, vol. 48: 63-74.
21. Budriūnaitė, A. (2009a). "Tikėjimo riteris - tarp egzistencializmo ir misticizmo" in *Logos*, vol. 61: 31-42.
22. Budriūnaitė, A. (2009b). "Tikėjimo riteris - tarp egzistencializmo ir misticizmo" in *Logos*, vol. 62: 24-34.
23. Burgess, A. J. (2001). "The Upbuilding in the Irony of Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*" in R. L. Perkins (ed.) *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 2. Macon, Mercer University Press. 141-160.
24. Buttigieg, J. A. (1983). "The Interest of Irony" in *Notre Dame English Journal*, vol. 15 (2): 29-47.
25. Colebrook, C. (2002). *Irony in the Work of Philosophy*. Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press.
26. Cross, A. (1998). "Neither Either Nor Or: The Perils of Reflexive Irony" in A. Hannay, G. D. Marino (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press. 125-153.
27. de Sousa, E. M. (2008). "Kierkegaard's Musical Recollections" in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, vol. 24: 85-108.
28. Easterbrook, N. (1995). "'By Indirections Find Directions out': Kierkegaard's Socratic Attractor" in *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 28 (2): 89-104.
29. Evans, C. S. (1989). "Is Kierkegaard an Irrationalist? Reason, Paradox, and Faith" in *Religious Studies*, vol. 25 (3): 347-362.
30. Ferreira, M. J. (1989). "Repetition, Concreteness, Imagination" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 25 (1): 13-34.
31. Ferreira, M. J. (2001). *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love*. Oxford, New York et al., Oxford University Press.
32. Fichte, J. G. (1994). *Introductions to Wissenschaftslehre*. Indianapolis, Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company.

33. Frank, M. (2004). *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
34. Frazier, B. (2004). "Kierkegaard on Mastered Irony" in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 44 (4): 465-479.
35. Fremstedal, R. (2011). "Kierkegaard's Double Movement of Faith and Kant's Moral Faith" in *Religious Studies*, vol. 48: 199-220.
36. Fremstedal, R. (2013). "The Moral Argument for The Existence of God and Immortality: Kierkegaard and Kant" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 41 (1): 50-78.
37. Garff, J. (2005). *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
38. Golomb, J. (1992). "Kierkegaard's Ironic Ladder to Authentic Faith" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 32 (2): 65-81.
39. González, D. (2001). "The Triptych of Sciences in the Introduction to *The Concept of Anxiety*" in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, vol. 1: 15-42.
40. González, D. (2008). "La hermenéutica de la Ironía: Visibilidad y discursividad en la interpretación kierkegaardiana de Sócrates" in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, vol. 64 (2/4): 971-979.
41. Gouwens, D. J. (1982). "Kierkegaard on the Ethical Imagination" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 10 (2): 204-220.
42. Green, R. M. (1986). "Deciphering 'Fear and Trembling's' Secret Message" in *Religious Studies*, vol. 22 (1): 95-111.
43. Green, R. M. (1993). "Enough is Enough! 'Fear and Trembling' is Not about Ethics" in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 21 (2): 191-209.
44. Gregor, B. (2008). "Friend and Neighbors: Kierkegaard and the Possibility of Transformative Friendship" in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, vol. 64 (2/4): 921-941.
45. Hall, A. L. (2000). "Self-Deception, Confusion, and Salvation in 'Fear and Trembling' with 'Works of Love'" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 28 (1): 37-61.
46. Hegel, G. W. F. (1892). *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. London, Paul, Trench, Trübner.
47. Hegel, G. W. F. (1991). *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge, New York et al., Cambridge University Press.
48. Hegel, G. W. F. (1993). *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. London, Penguin Books.
49. Hinman, L. M. (1980). "Philosophy and Style" in *The Monist*, vol. 63 (4): 512-529.
50. Hoffman, K. (2002). "Suffering and Discourse Ethics in Kierkegaard's Religious Stage" in *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 82 (3): 393-410.

51. Holdcroft, D. (1983). “Irony as a Trope, and Irony as Discourse” in *Poetics Today*, vol. 4 (3): 493-511.
52. Young, K. (2011). “Kierkegaard's Claim of Mutuality and Its Problem of Representation” in *Religion & Literature*, vol. 43 (3): 25-47.
53. Jacoby, M. G. (2002). “Kierkegaard on Truth” in *Religious Studies*, vol. 38 (1): 27-44.
54. Jakavonytė, L. (2006). “Ar Sørenas Kierkegaardas buvo volicionistas?” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 97-108.
55. Jekentaitė, L. (2003). “Demoniškojo estetizmo pavidalai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos kultūroje” in *Logos*, vol. 34: 165-179.
56. Jekentaitė, L. (2006). “Kierkegaardas ir demoniškojo estetizmo pavidalai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos kultūroje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 109-122.
57. Juzefovič, A. (2004). “Zhuangzi ir Kierkegaard'as apie individo dvasinės raidos kelią” in *Logos*, vol. 34: 74-87.
58. Juzefovič, A. (2006a). “Netiesioginės komunikacijos ypatybės I: autoriaus santykis su tekstu ir skaitytoju” in *Logos*, vol. 45: 144-154.
59. Juzefovič, A. (2006b). “Netiesioginės komunikacijos ypatybės II: autoriaus santykis su tekstu ir skaitytoju” in *Logos*, vol. 46: 188-200.
60. Juzefovič, A. (2006c). “Paradokso ir absurdo vaidmuo filosofiniame tekste” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus Aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 123-138.
61. Kačerauskas, T. (2004). “Įvykio poetika ir egzistencinis mąstymas” in *Logos*, vol. 36: 78-85.
62. Kačerauskas, T. (2006). “Egzistencinio ir poetinio mąstymo sankirta Kierkegaardo filosofijoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 139-150.
63. Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge, New York et al., Cambridge University Press.
64. Kant, I. (2002). *Critique of Practical Reason*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company.
65. Kant, I. (2011). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge, New York et al., Cambridge University Press.

66. Kardelis, N. (2006). “Kierkegaardo filosofija ir egzistenciniai religingumo profiliai” in A. Andrijauskas *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 151-160.
67. Kaufer, D. (1977). “Irony and Rhetorical Strategy” in *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 10 (2): 90-110.
68. Khan, A. (1985). “Melancholy, Irony, and Kierkegaard” in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 17 (1/2): 67-85.
69. Kipperman, M. (1984). “Fichtean Irony and Some Principles of Romantic Quest” in *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 23 (2): 223-236.
70. Kirmmse, B. H. (2001). “Socrates in the Fast Lane: Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* on the University's *Velocifère*. Documents, Context, Commentary, and Interpretation” in R. L. Perkins (ed.) *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 2. Macon, Mercer University Press. 17-100.
71. Kosch, M. (2006). “What Abraham Couldn't Say” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 82: 59-78.
72. Krishek, S. (2008). “Two Forms of Love: The Problem of Preferential Love in Kierkegaard's ‘Works of Love’” in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 36 (4): 595-617.
73. Kuzmickas, B. (2006). “Tikėjimas kaip egzistencija: S. Kierkegaardas ir G. Marcelis” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 161-166.
74. Lang, B. (1996). “The Limits of Irony” in *New Literary History*, vol. 27 (3): 571-588.
75. Laursen, J. C. (2005). “Ironía, escepticismo, cinismo” in *Pasajes*, vol. 16: 2-11.
76. Lavrinec, J. (2006). “Istorijos apie save: autoriai-personažai ir viešieji dienoraščiai (skaitant Kierkegaardą ir Kafką)” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 167-174.
77. Lear, J. (2003). *Therapeutic Action. An Earnest Plea for Irony*. London, New York, Karnac.
78. Lear, J. (2011). *A Case for Irony*. Cambridge, London, Harvard University Press.
79. Lee, J. H. (2000). “Abraham in a Different Voice: Rereading ‘Fear and Trembling’ with Care” in *Religious Studies*, vol. 36 (4): 377-400.
80. Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press.
81. Levinas, E. (1989). “Ethics as First Philosophy” in S. Hand (ed.) *The Levinas Reader*. Oxford, Cambridge, Basil Blackwell. 75-87.

82. Levinas, E. (1996). *Proper Names*. Stanford, CA, Sranford University Press.
83. Liepuonius, A. (2004). "Psichoanalitiniai Kierkegaardo asmenybės ir kūrybos aspektai" in *Logos*, vol. 39: 88-96.
84. Liepuonius, A. (2006). "Psichoanalitiniai Kierkegaardo asmenybės ir kūrybos aspektai" in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 175-184.
85. Lillegard, N. (2002). "Passion and Reason: Aristotelian Strategies in Kierkegaard's Ethics" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 30 (2): 251-273.
86. Lippitt, J. (2000). *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
87. Lippitt, J. (2008). "What Neither Abraham nor Johannes De Silentio Could Say" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 82: 79-99.
88. Lippitt, J. (2009). "True Self-Love And True Self-Sacrifice" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 66 (3): 125-138.
89. Lippitt, J. (2012). "Kierkegaard and The Problem of Special Relationships: Ferreira, Krishek and The 'God Filter'" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 72: 177-197.
90. Manis, M. Z. (2009). "Kierkegaard and Divine-Command Theory: Replies to Quinn and Evans" in *Religious Studies*, vol. 45 (3): 289-307.
91. Marcel, G. (1949). *Being and Having*. Westminster, Dacre Press.
92. Martinez, R. (2001). *Kierkegaard and the Art of Irony*. New York, Humanity Books.
93. McCreary, M. L. (2011). "Kierkegaard on Mystification and Deceiving into the Truth" in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 39 (1): 25-47.
94. Mehl, P. J. (1986). "Kierkegaard and the Relativist Challenge to Practical Philosophy" in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 14 (2): 247-278.
95. Mendham, M. D. (2007). "Eudaimonia and Agape in MacIntyre and Kierkegaard's 'Works of Love': Beginning Unpolemical Enquiry" in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 35 (4): 591-625.
96. Merrill, R. (1979). "'Infinite Absolute Negativity': Irony in Socrates, Kierkegaard and Kafka" in *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 16 (3): 222-236.
97. Mininger, J. D. (2009). "The Insistence of Desire: Paul de Man on Kierkegaard on German Romanticism" in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook: Kierkegaard's Concept of Irony*, vol. 25: 167-183.
98. Mooney, E. F. (2008). "Kierkegaardian Ethics: Expoloration of a Strange Yet Familiar Terrain" in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, vol. 64 (2/4): 859-878.

99. Mostauskis, S. (2006). “Kierkegaardas: stovėsena nieko akivaizdoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 185-198.
100. Muecke, D. C. (1969). *The Compass of Irony*. London, Methuen & Co.
101. Nehamas, A. (1999). *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
102. Newmark, K. (1997). “Secret Agents: After Kierkegaard's Subject” in *MLN*, vol. 112 (5): 719-752.
103. Nietzsche, F. (1994). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
104. Olesen, T. A. (2001). “Kierkegaard's Socratic Hermeneutic in *The Concept of Irony*” in R. L. Perkins (ed.) *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 2. Macon, Mercer University Press. 101-122.
105. Pattison, G. (2008). “How Kierkegaard Became ‘Kierkegaard’: The Importance of the Year 1838” in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, vol. 64 (2/4): 741-761.
106. Perkins, R. L. (ed.) (2001). *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Irony*. Macon, Mercer University Press.
107. Plato (1997). *Complete Works*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company.
108. Pojman, L. (1990). “Kierkegaard on Faith and Freedom” in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 27: 41-61.
109. Pons, J. (2004). *Stealing a Gift: Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms and the Bible*. New York, Fordham University Press.
110. Pons, J. (2006). “Tikrovė, galimybė ir tikrovės galimybė - Kierkegaardo *Baigiamasis nemokslinis prierašas*” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 199-206.
111. Quintilian (1986). *Institutio Oratorica*. Harvard, Harvard University Press.
112. Radžvilas, V. (2006). “Dieviškumo ir demoniškumo sampyna Kierkegaardo tikėjimo sampratoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 207-222.
113. Repšys, J. (1974). “S. Kjirkegoras ir egzistencializmas” in B. Genzelis et al. (eds.) *Filosofijos istorijos chrestomatija. XIX ir XX amžių Vakarų Europos ir Amerikos filosofija*. Vilnius, Mintis.
114. Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

115. Roy, A. (2009). “Hegel contra Schlegel; Kierkegaard contra de Man” in *PMLA*, vol. 124 (1): 107-126.
116. Salvatore, A. (1985). “Socratic Midwifery: Greene and Kierkegaard” in *College Literature*, vol. 12 (1): 26-32.
117. Sarf, H. (1983). “Reflections on Kierkegaard's Socrates” in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 44 (2): 255-276.
118. Schlegel, F. (1958 ff.). *Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke*. Paderborn, Schöningh.
119. Schleifer, R. (1979). “Irony, Identity and Repetition: On Kierkegaard's ‘The Concept of Irony’” in *SubStance*, vol. 8 (4/25): 44-54.
120. Simmons, A. J. (2007). “What About Isaac? Rereading ‘Fear and Trembling’ and Rethinking Kierkegaardian Ethics” in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 35 (2): 319-345.
121. Smith, R. L. (1998). “Morals and Their Ironies” in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 26 (2): 367-388.
122. Sodeika, T. (1995). “Apie Søreną Kierkegaardą, jo baimę ir drebėjimą” in S. Kierkegaard *Baimė ir drebėjimas*. Vilnius, Aidai.
123. Sodeika, T. (2001). “Søreno Kierkegaardo ‘pamokos’” in *Darbai ir dienos*, vol. 27: 275-296.
124. Sodeika, T. (2006). “Kierkegaardo netiesioginė komunikacija” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 223-244.
125. Sodeika, T. (2010). *Filosofija ir tekstas*. Kaunas, Technologija.
126. Soderquist, K. B. (2013). *The Isolated Self. Truth and Untruth in Søren Kierkegaard's* On the Concept of Irony. Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press.
127. Stan, L. (2010). “A Reconsideration of Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Human Other: The Hidden Ethics of Soteriology” in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 38 (2): 349-370.
128. Stewart, J. (2003). *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*. Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press.
129. Stewart, J. (2015). *The Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age. Heiberg, Martensen and Kierkegaard*. Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press.
130. Stoškus, K. (2011). *Rezignacija, arba mirties filosofijos iššūkis modernybei*. Vilnius, Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla.
131. Strawser, M. (1997). *Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification*. New York, Fordham University Press.

132. Sverdiolas, A. (2006). “Įkandin Abraomo. Søreno Kierkegaardo antihermeneutika” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 245-274
133. Šerpytytė, R. (2003). “Ar Kierkegaardas buvo nihilistas?” in *Logos*, vol. 33: 92-99.
134. Šerpytytė, R. (2004). “Apie tragiškumą ir jo alternatyvos galimybę Kierkegaard'o mąstyme” in *Logos*, vol. 36: 101-105.
135. Šerpytytė, R. (2006a). “Apie tragiškumą ir jo alternatyvos galimybę Kierkegaardo mąstyme” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 275-280.
136. Šerpytytė, R. (2006b). “Vai Kirkegors bija nihilists?” in V. Vēvere (ed.) *Eksistence un komunikācija. Sērena Kirkegora filosofija*. Rīga, Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts. 103-113.
137. Šerpytytė, R. (2007a). *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*. Vilnius, Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
138. Šerpytytė, R. (2007b). “Tikėjimo paradoksas ir nihilizmo ‘logika’: S. Kierkegaardas” in *Religija ir kultūra*, vol. 4: 38-44.
139. Šerpytytė, R. (2013). “Pakartojimas ir nihilizmas” in *Problemos*, vol. 84: 46-59.
140. Šerpytytė, R. (2013a). “Religija tarp sekuliarizacijos ir nihilizmo” in R. Šerpytytė (ed.) *Sekuliarizacija ir dabarties kultūra*. Vilnius, Vilniaus universitetas. 25-117.
141. Šerpytytė, R. (ed.) (2013b). *Sekuliarizacija ir dabarties kultūra*. Vilnius, Vilniaus universitetas.
142. Šliogeris, A. (1977). “Būties problema G. Hegelio ir S. Kjerkegoro filosofijoje” in *Problemos*, vol. 19: 23-34.
143. Šliogeris, A. (1978). “Ironijos principas S. Kjerkegoro filosofijoje” in *Problemos*, vol. 21: 27-39.
144. Šliogeris, A. (1992). *Sietuvos*. Vilnius, Mintis.
145. Šliogeris, A. (1995). “Jei Dievas būtų žalias paukštis su raudonu snapu” in A. Petraitytė (ed.) *Nuo Kierkegoro iki Kamiu*. Vilnius, Pradai. 7-28.
146. Šliogeris, A. (2006). “Tikėjimo paradoksas Kierkegaardo filosofijoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 281-302.
147. Tietjen, M. A. (2013). *Kierkegaard, Communication, And Virtue: Authorship as Edification*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.

148. Vabalaitė, R. M. (2006). “Du Kanto etikos papildymai Kierkegaardo teorijoje” in A. Andrijauskas (ed.) *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofinės interpretacijos*. Vilnius, Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas. 303-312.
149. Vlastos, G. (1991). *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Cambridge, MA, Cambridge University Press.
150. Williams, R. R. (2003). “Hegel on Socrates and Irony” in D. A. Duquette (ed.) *Hegel's History of Philosophy: New Interpretations*. Albany, State University of New York Press. 67-86.
151. Wolfsdorf, D. (2007). “The Irony of Socrates” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 65 (2): 175-187.

Viktoras BACHMETJEVAS

RELATION BETWEEN IRONY AND ETHICS IN S. KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

Doctoral Dissertation

Išleido ir spausdino – Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto bibliotekos Leidybos skyrius
(S. Daukanto g. 27, LT-44249 Kaunas)
Užsakymo Nr. K15-017. Tiražas 15 egz. 2016 03 25.
Nemokamai.