

Searching for Own Self: on the Boundary between the Ethical and Religious Stage

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Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.
(Ludwig Wittgenstein)

ABSTRACT

In the article the author deals with an analysis of Kierkegaard's categories of 'leap' and 'instant' which predicate of human existence in some way. Man as an original and unique being in himself is hard, apprehensible and effable. Kierkegaard's in some sense existential philosophy offers a conspicuous reflection of man and his inner life. The method of indirect communication used by Kierkegaard indicates that if we want to grasp the phenomenon of human existence we have to manage with only an indirect and particular assumption. Even a concrete man is not able to grasp his existence in a whole way and at any time. There is only one place where the possibility of self-understanding and self-ownership becomes open. This is the boundary or range of the ethical and religious stage of life. That is the reason why the aim of the article becomes a quest for an answer to the question: 'What happens on the boundary between the ethical and the religious?'

KEYWORDS

instant, leap, boundary, individual, God, either/or

Søren Kierkegaard has been considered the father of theistic existentialism.¹ His philosophy was reflected and popularized during the 20th century. The specific language and lyrical nature of his most famous works became a challenge for

¹ I want to thank prof. Ph.D. Silvia Gálíková, CSc. for cooperation and language correction at my paper.

the philosophical community to grasp his heritage and to interpret it *ex integro*. Kierkegaard reflected topics that are difficult to express and because of that also difficult to treat with intellect. He picks a concrete individual from the crowd and tries to describe his internal processes very carefully. His philosophy is the philosophy of a concrete individual. Man as an original being can live his life in various ways. Kierkegaard postulates three stages of human existence. The first is aesthetical, where man is fully grounded in the temporality of this world. He doesn't know about his subjectivity, he doesn't understand himself and he is still afraid of death, his life is meaningless. We can consider Johannes from Kierkegaard's *Seducer's Diary* as an example of the aesthetic living existence. The ethical stage is the second one. Man already knows about his own interiority, but he is still unable to grasp his Self and to find the meaning of life by self-understanding and establishing an appropriate relationship with God. His ambition failed again and he becomes unhappy. Kierkegaard's work *Repetition* offers us a paradigmatic example of an ethical existence. It refers to the young man who has truly fallen in love.

The last stage of man's life is the religious stage. Only here is it possible to constitute a relationship with God, which helps us to understand our own subjectivity and to find the meaning of life. Only this is the place where our searching mission is to be completed. For Kierkegaard, God is the only key, who can open the door to our Self. Without God's help, our existence remains hidden and mysterious for all of our life and there is no way to 'grasp' it. And this is also one of the main and the biggest problems of our own existence: it is impossible to define or to formulate it into notions of our intellect. There is no possibility to mediate our interiority and also there is no chance to share our inner living with other existences. It is very difficult but not impossible to find 'an exemplar' of religious existence. Kierkegaard found it in Abraham. He represents a concrete individual in the highest stage of his life. *Fear and Trembling*² deals with reflection on the Old Testament story of Abraham. Kierkegaard's interpretative subtlety opens a new horizon in understanding the story of Abraham. He widely uses biblical inspirations. The author of *Fear and Trembling* is one of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms — Johannes de Silentio. The choice of such a name can be understood as a kind of challenge for people and mostly for philosophers: Don't reflect upon this work, don't interpret it and also don't try to express it in philosophical terms. We have to remain in silence, because the topic of the work requires quietness. However, Kierkegaard himself did not remain faithful to his

² I will consider this Old Testament example of religious existence (Abraham) as my mainstream (and also Kierkegaard's interpretation of it). I intend to analyze the categories of 'leap', 'instant' or 'paradox', but not in relation to Christianity. To become a Christian is another big problem in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Putting together leap, instant, paradox and Christianity would cause the obscuration of the whole situation of a unique existence. An explanation 'without' the problem of Christianity will be more obvious and more simple.

symbolic pseudonym. He uses figurative language in his work, which explains many things. He presents us with a detailed analysis of such categories as instant, leap or faith, all lying in the area outside of words, terms, notions. These categories become actual on the boundary between the ethical and the religious way of life. That is why the aim of my paper is to clarify and analyze Kierkegaardian terms 'instant' and 'leap.' My main question is the following: 'What is happening to human existence on the boundary between the ethical and the religious stage?' If we want to find an answer to this question, we have to investigate what will happen particularly in the ethical and in the religious stage of a man's life. Only after such clarifications will we be able to 'record' what actually happens on the boundary between these two stages.

In the Old Testament story of Abraham, Kierkegaard acquaints us with a communicating God. God's existence is a hidden axiom and is unproblematic here. The story focuses entirely on other issues. Man is becoming more important in this parable. Only when we accept the premise that God exists as a discussing and listening personality, are we able to focus on man himself. Kierkegaard was deeply devoted to the analysis of human interiority. He has chosen a concrete situation of a concrete individual — Abraham. The individual is an entity that has its own inner life. This life is very plentiful, but mostly invisible. However, thanks to Kierkegaard, we have at least some kind of access to the roots of human existence, subjectivity and the secrets of our soul, ones fully filled with faith. Kierkegaard's descriptions are inadequate but also comprehensive, ambivalent but also high-class.

Kierkegaard introduces the concept of the subjective experience of faith in God, through which it is possible for man himself to constitute an appropriate relationship with God.³ This model of faith is in a direct counterpart to attempts at rational proofs of God's existence. Kierkegaard's philosophy doesn't give us a coherent attitude that directly refers to the author's objective belief or to his point of view. The Danish master precisely follows indirect communication, where things slowly reveal themselves and shine through various considerations and reflections. This strategy is similar to the phenomenological method equally in the patience waiting for the decisive moment which can detect existence and describe it, not define it. Kierkegaard prefers emotion,⁴ not reason. He is suspicious about reason and rather relies on the emotional aspect, which is essentially non-objectifiable. In silence things unlock themselves. Kierkegaard was fascinated by the difficulties of grasping non-intellectual categories intellectually. Thus the silent Johannes de Silentio ascends his secrecy and starts to reflect, analyze, synthesize, interpret and compare.

³ Still according to the well-known parable about Abraham and Isaac.

⁴ According to Kierkegaard, the term 'passion' means zeal for decision or personal involvement in choice and is built around an emotional basis. Faith is the highest manifestation of a passion not directed by reason.

ETHICAL STAGE AS A PASSION FOR DECISION

My aim is to clarify Kierkegaard's new categories, which are non-mediative, but belonging to the main and new characteristics of human existence. These are faith, paradox and leap. All of them could be seen only between the ethical and religious stage of human existence. That's why I consider analyzing the theoretical basis of the ethical stage of life first to be a useful step. An ethical way of life represents a prerequisite for a deeper understanding of the most valuable religious way of life. The ethical stage is characterized by choice, where existence acts. Man pulls the existence of aesthetic indifference, which is inadequate. The transition from the aesthetic to the ethical needs to be done by leaps⁵ and bounds. Existence wants to own its 'I', ergo it says resolutely 'no' to the aesthetic way of life and seriously starts to search for its own subjectivity. This decision is filled with passion. Existence is aware of the consequences and increased responsibility caused by the choice between good and evil. The aesthetic existence could also choose from among types of pleasure, offered alternatives, but this was not the right option. It was only a calculus in which the choice of a man was made merely with respect for his own goodness. His choice wasn't passionate. The ethical choice is already presented by a passion for the choice between 'either — or' where you may feel a greater degree of freedom but also responsibility. As far as attunement of the ethical existence is concerned, anxiety and regret dominate. It is regret that reflects the dissipation of time. While existence dealt with things and decisions in the general order of the world, it wasted a lot of time that could be used for an approximation to God.⁶ Despair from the aesthetic stage is transformed into regret.⁷

"Reviewing the history of his life and the history of all mankind with pity, temporality presents itself in its particular moments as a meaningful continuum" (RÖD, SCHMIDINGER and THURNHER 2009: 67). Man within the ethical mode of his existence can find deeper meaning in his activity. The character of his acts determines his life as a continuum. Man feels that he is able to change his life only with the support of his own virtues. "He, who chooses ethically, chooses as an individual person. Person becomes aware of himself as an individuum with specific capacities, leanings, instincts and passions, which are influenced by specific environment, a product of particular surroundings" (KIERKEGAARD 2006: 100). Here we can find a big gap between ethics and aesthetics. An aesthete is not able to find deeper meaning in the permanent stream of various kinds of moments accompanied by different attunements. "It is analogous with a man: if he forgets his way of life, an instant appears, where

⁵ In this context 'leap' is not the leap of the same quality as a leap which is made on the boundary between the ethical and religious stage.

⁶ Cf. KIERKEGAARD 2005: 200.

⁷ Cf. TKÁČIK 2006: 112.

there is no talk of either-or, not that he has already chosen, but because, he has not chosen, in other words, others have chosen instead of him for he has lost himself” (KIERKEGAARD 2007: 620). The aesthetic existence is fully conditioned outwardly, but in the ethical stage of existence man’s internality is beginning to awaken. He wants to grasp himself by his choice and he struggles to achieve a higher degree of self-understanding. In other words, he wants to constitute a relationship with himself. There is a significant shift in comparison with the aesthetic stage. Despite this shift, ethical existence is not completely satisfied. Ethical man makes an effort to achieve comprehensive self-understanding and self-owning, but he is still unsuccessful. Even if the ethical mode of existence drives the individual human being closer to his core-interiority, this awakened essence still remains unreflected upon.⁸ Therefore, a person already apprehends his internality, but is still unable to grasp it. The search for his own existence is not completed yet.

Kierkegaard considers himself to be an ethical existence. The next characteristic feature of this type of existence is the living ‘out of an instant.’ The notion of the instant is connected with truth and religiosity. Truth is revealed in the instant as a pure subjectivity. We can find the real truth only when we succeed in an absolute self-understanding of our unique and original existence. Every man is existence. The real (authentic and entire) truth lies only in the religious stage of human life.⁹ It can be uncovered only through the absolute grasp of our own existence. This can be made only with the help of God. Then, truth will appear both in total self-understanding and an absolute relationship with God. So the second necessary condition is the establishment of the correct relationship with God. “Oh, how great it is to be a writer. I adore the very contrary to the existence in an instant, mainly the remoteness from it” (KIERKEGAARD 2005: 27). Ethical existence is still far away from the real instant. However, there is a difference between the aesthetical and the ethical. This rests in their type of choice. The aesthete chooses ‘for’ the instant, and uses it for instrumental purposes. He doesn’t choose for himself, but for something else. He lives and decides because of a variety of moments. On the other hand, man in ethical existence is fully committed to his decision, he is present at the moment of choice. He doesn’t choose ‘for’ the instant, but he is implemented right ‘within’ the instant.¹⁰

There is no choice between either-or in the aesthetic way of life. An aesthete is incapable of making a choice. Only at the ethical stage is there a space to choose between good and evil. Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of distinct choice and that is why he offers the model either — or. For example, either yes — or not. No other option is available. The author is inspired by Aristotle’s

⁸ Cf. UMLAUF 2005: 156.

⁹ Each stage has its own intrinsic, particular truth. According to Kierkegaard the entire and genuine truth lies exactly within the religious stage.

¹⁰ Cf. UMLAUF 2005: 155.

exclusion principle. Either A is valid, or non-A is valid, there is no other option.¹¹ Answers like 'I do not know' or 'to a certain extent' are damnation for mankind. These kinds of decisions are not valid and they don't help us in seeking our Self. Here, existence is passive, static and unable to move or to leap. The choice should be decisive and resolute. Only in this way can we think about achieving the highest stage in human life.

Either-or is a word, in front of which the door is left wide open and ideals appear — a blessed sight! Either-or is a sign, which opens the door to the Absolute- bless God! Yes, either-or is a key to Heaven! And what is, what has been and what will be evil for mankind? The devilish, or miserable or cowardly cunning 'to a certain extent.' Either-or is an expression of majesty, Either-or is a divine duty (KIERKEGAARD 2005: 30–31).

Only through the use of univocal decisions about the next direction of our lives can we open the possibility of achieving the religious stage.

THE HIGHEST SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN THE RELIGIOUS STAGE

For Kierkegaard, the religious stage represents the highest level of the possibility for the realization of human existence. It is, therefore, the most valuable, only a few individuals can reach this stage of life. The absolute relationship with the Absolute is established between man and God. This relation is paradoxical, but the individual grasps his whole being. His existence is already not particular, but now man is the owner of his Self entirely. Man's interiority is finally full of the feeling of self-understanding and self-owning. We are standing face to face with God, alone with only our inner self, subjectivity and passion, which is manifested by endless faith. Faith is also the ultimate goal of man. Only with faith is there the possibility to create a personal and absolute relationship with The Absolute.¹² Man is constituted from the relationship with himself and with God. The relationship with God is absolute and mutual and the act of reference is made at the highest grade. The relationship is also absurd. Concepts of absurdity and paradoxicalness form also a part of the core of the religious stage. The transition from the ethical to the religious stage is accompanied by a teleological suspension of ethical values.¹³ If we accept this suspension, the paradox of Abraham's act of sacrificing Isaac becomes merely fictitious. After the suspension of ethics, the notion of absurdity necessarily emerges. The area of ethics includes human rationality and is limited by man's conceptual equip-

¹¹ Cf. UMLAUF 2005: 155

¹² Cf. PETKANIĆ 2010: 87.

¹³ Cf. KIERKEGAARD 1983: 54.

ment. Our world is limited by the terms which were produced by our intellect. We are not able to communicate without them. The case of Abraham is unique, because the category of faith cannot be mediated in words. We cannot find an expression for Abraham's faith. Our rationality hits against its bounds and fails. We become unable to take a stand on the domain of our rationality. Intellect has to be substituted by faith. But faith manifests itself in areas without words. After the failure of the intellect, Abraham's act became absurd, paradoxical and incomprehensible, because of its impossibility to be conceptually grasped. The transition from one stage to another stage is done by a leap again. This suggests that it will not be a continual and phased transmission, but a resolute leap into the higher level of the interiority of human existence.

The leap of human existence

The term 'leap' is a metaphorical expression of the activity which is performed by indefinable existence under certain conditions. Human existence cannot be located, specified with notions or expressed in language. In so far as the leap as a kind of ability or an attribute of this mysterious existence has to be also obscure and ambiguous. Nevertheless, it has some informational significance and provides us at least with some sort of approximation to human existence.

As a predator jumps on his prey, as the seagle downfalls, so the decisive act is performed: suddenly and intensive. And as a predator with cleverness and strength, firstly, wisely stands in an absolute silence and then concentrates on the lone leap or cliff — no tame animal is able to concentrate on or rise to such a jump: this is how a decisive act is done (KIERKEGAARD 2005: 29–30).

Not every man can make this kind of leap. The leap requires maximal concentration and manfulness. Leap is a synonym for a decisive resolute action, by which man is personally affected. The possibility of the leap grows in parallel with the degree of human spirituality. The higher the spirituality of man, the higher the chance to leap. The spirituality of a spiritual man is manifest by an appreciation of the duplicity which is displayed by our intellect. This duplicity is based on the fact that the spiritual man uses his intellect to understand what is against this intellect, something that is a counterpart of his own intellect. This 'something' is against intellect, even though man wants it.¹⁴ Abraham, as the father of faith, has overcome such a duplication. He realized that killing his own son contradicts his intellect. We have to keep in mind that Isaac was a gift from God. He was a promised reward for Abraham. And this is one of the reasons why Abraham tried to raise Isaac as best he could. When God gave him an opportunity to have a son, Abraham wanted to take care of him as well as he

¹⁴ Cf. KIERKEGAARD 2005: 105–106.

could. However, God has then asked for his sacrifice. Abraham understood that there was no way intellect could help him, therefore, he fully dedicated himself to faith and trust in God. He understood with his ratio that the act of sacrificing is against it, nevertheless (following Kierkegaard) he still wanted to do it. This is a very important moment in life between the ethical and the religious stage. Only thanks to an awareness of the strong barrier between ratio and faith could the transmission to religiosity be completed successfully. Kierkegaard's understanding of faith is very similar to the medieval understanding. In the story of Abraham faith doesn't emerge as 'I believe in order to understand,' known by Anselm of Canterbury, but as Tertullian's 'I believe because it is absurd.' "It is as if in Kierkegaard there is a re-echo of the Early Christian fideists, namely Tertullian's 'Credo quia absurdum est'" (ČAPKOVÁ 2005: 17). Only a man with high level of spirituality is able to make a resolute decision *et sic* to come closer to God. The spiritual man is characterized by the firm construction of his character and with an ability to suffer solitude. "The spiritual man distinguishes himself from us in that he can bear solitude, his value of a spiritual man is given to the extent to which he is able to bear solitude" (KIERKEGAARD 2005: 106).

The meaning of Kierkegaard's category of leap has a personal character, it always belongs to a concrete individual. Leaping is an action, when man is going to change his life stage. Life given as a certain degree of actuality changes to a life of a higher actuality, but only in the case of a transition from a lower to a higher stage of existence. Viewing leap as a regress, life falls into a stage of lower actuality. Existence is dynamic, it is always some kind of actuality, a happening and a process. Description of the situation of leap is possible only during the transformation of existence. No starting point and final status after the transformation is available for the intellect. The only evident information is that the leap is just happening 'somehow.'¹⁵ We know what and how it is happening, but we do not know by what means it is happening. The existence still stays mysterious, 'we do not know what' leaps and transforms into 'we do not know what.' Life from the first person point of view is so unique that it cannot be mediated. In the case of the leap from the ethical to the religious stage of human existence, an individual chooses passionately and the personal decision is made on the basis of faith, not intellect. Man is standing face to face with God alone, only with the highest degree of subjectivity and internality. He finally receives a real and true relationship with God and with His help man also finds a relationship with himself. Objective rationality loses its competences. As a consequence, the regularity of logic becomes non-functional.

Leap is truly happening in man's life, because he chooses the style of life towards (*vis-à-vis*) eternity, he decides *coram Deo*. But, for the lovers of wisdom, choices of faith are foolish,

¹⁵ Cf. UMLAUF 2005: 70–71.

paradoxical. Contradiction in the domain of logic has to start thinking in the domain of subjectivity (UMLAUF 2005: 72).

The concept of eternity also appears within the religious stage of existence. It is connected with the idea of God and in reference to Him.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of the aesthetic and ethical existence didn't expose the relationship with the Absolute in eternity to a purposeful constitution. God's activity was up to now only instrumental. Intentions of aesthetic existence were directed at the pleasures of the material world. If an aesthete needs God, it is only for other purposes, not for himself. In the ethical stage of existence man is embodied in the general system of the ethical rules which fully belong to the secular world. Moral convictions and decisions are included in the immanence of intellect and its terms. They in no way transcend this world. This means that neither ethical existence is concerned with the supersensible sphere of God. Kierkegaard, with the help of the collision of God's request and the human order of ethics, refers (the example of Abraham) to the incorrect reduction of the religious experience of faith to the pure phenomenon of the ethical, as Kant had it. For Kierkegaard God is not only a kind of moral regulator, but God stands above the general ethical order. God exists in a supersensible sphere, which cannot be reduced to Kantian phenomenon. Kierkegaard presents us with a God who is personal, concrete, justified, he doesn't vanish or melt away like a ghost into the whole world. God is a person who is available to communicate with.

Here de Silentio formulates and then questions the Kantian claim that religion is nothing but the recognition of all duties as divine commands. He maintains that this rational mediation of the ethical and the religious effectively absolutizes finite ethical existence and reduces divine transcendence to a function of human rational willing, stripping God of any independent reality or concrete role in human existence, except as an instrument of ethical self-realization (KRÁLIK, GARCÍA MARTIN and col. 2008: 167).

An instant

Neither aesthetical nor ethical existence is able to constitute a relationship with God. Both aesthetical and ethical existence are deprived of owning and understanding themselves. That is the reason why the term eternity appears mostly in the religious stage of human existence. Achievement of eternity together with the acquirement of a relationship with God are the most complicated missions in a human's life. The Danish writer is convinced that there is only one manner of how to make a relationship with God accessible. There are no more alternatives between which we can choose if we want to establish a relationship with God in eternity. Manner is characterized by complexity, the inability to achieve eternity

no matter who is reemphasized.¹⁶ Experience of the instant is the only and the most complicated manner. The instant mentioned in the aesthetic and ethical stage of life is not the correct and authentic instant. For Kierkegaard ‘instant’ at the aesthetic and ethical stage is a synonym for a short elusive moment. On the boundary between the ethical and the religious stage appears the authentic instant, which is not measurable. All temporality merges together, the present, past and future become a unity. The instant is a penetration into eternity. We cannot apply the term ‘duration’ for an explanation of eternity. Duration has its own beginning and also end. When something is in duration, it lasts for a limited period. Eternity is not a period, it is not in duration, it doesn’t last, it doesn’t have its beginning and end. Eternity is perpetual, eternal. The real authentic instant doesn’t have an elusive character as in the case of aesthetic or ethical existence. After experiencing the instant, this experience transforms, converts, changes man and the human being is fated by this rare and special experience. He will never forget it. For Kierkegaard the instant is ‘a touch with God’, where we stand before Him. This instant is never affected by external circumstances. The act of the instant is possible only for a spiritual man, who doesn’t avoid activity and is brave and capable of performing a resolute deed. “But if a true man arrives, yes, then an instant is possible. For an instant is just that which is not determined by circumstances, novelty, the hit of eternity” (KIERKEGAARD 2005: 233). The mind of a ‘believer’ is illuminated by God’s truth in the instant. Here the chasm between man and God is eradicated.¹⁷

Man, as a human being in existence, can experience leaps to the ethical or to the religious stage of his life. We cannot leap into the aesthetic stage, because it is the starting point of all people already at birth. Man at the ethical and religious stage is a kind of unique and immutable being, who is apprehensible. If we try to delimit this unique being there are only resolute leaps available, where the existence outmatches generic changes. Kierkegaard with his reflection tends to go along the border, where the illumination of existence during the leap can be viewed. Transition from stage to stage is for Kierkegaard a unique opportunity in which he tries to locate at least a little part of this shimmering existence. Leaps between life periods at least point to the ‘standing’ of a concrete existence, which is impossible to grasp by notions of the intellect, nevertheless a leap helps in indicating existence in an indirect way. The notion of a ‘leap’ is one of the further pieces of evidence that we cannot unravel the mystery of human existence with our speculative reasoning. Also we are unable to define it with our logical equipment. Kierkegaard emphasizes the impossibility of direct transition from system to existence. We can never grasp our whole existence through intellect.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cf. KIERKEGAARD 2005: 46–47.

¹⁷ Cf. HAJKO 1993: 83.

¹⁸ Cf. UMLAUF 2005: 73–75.

In the ethical stage we can find a man who is an objective thinker, he respects the ethics which arises from intellect and is general. The aim of ethical existence is to fulfill a desire for knowledge. "It is thinking in the traditional meaning of Greek *logos*" (RÖD, SCHMIDINGER and THURNHER 2009: 45). Religious existence is full of interiority and subjectivity, is consequently full of concreteness. Man performs a dialectical movement of finality and infinity. During these movements he comes up against the boundaries of his rationality. His intellect failed in reaching out for concreteness. Intellect cannot do this without thinking in universal general categories. On the border between the ethical and religious stage man feels despair again. In the ethical stage he lived under the supposition that he could approximate himself to the general ethical ideal only thanks to his own potency. Man has obtained the feeling that he knows 'how' he can find the meaning of life through absolute self-understanding merely by himself. But on the threshold of the ethical and religious way he finds out that ethics is canceled and his last confidence in himself is shaken to its very foundations. He again realizes his nothingness. This nothingness is expressed as uselessness of doing goodness on the way to ideality. It means that ethical existence can live according to moral commitments, man can be a 'good man', but this is still not enough. Ethical existence still does not 'find' and 'obtain' his own interiority and subjectivity. So, the final result of this situation is that the ethical stage of man's life is derived from the Absolute. The ethical stage of life is subordinated to the Absolute.

Only in deepening the relation to power which guarantees the meaningfulness of ethical acting lies the possibility to defend and confirm the good direction of the ethical existence. For Kierkegaard the outcome is nothing else than the uncompromised achievement of the demand of an absolute relationship with the Absolute. Ethical stance is, in its variety, conformed solely to this relationship, it is derived from it (MAREK 2010: 211).

Ergo, on the one hand Kierkegaard insists on the fact that the stages on the way of life are equal with regard to 'transition' through them. In other words, if we want to attain a religious way of life, we must go through the ethical and also the aesthetic stage first. It is important to pass through the aesthetic way of life accompanied by desperation and alienation from our own existence. All the same it is also important to experience regret and unsuccessful attempts to grasp and own our existence within the general ethical order, accompanied by the feeling of the duty to acting 'well'. On the other hand, it is a fact that the ethical stage of life is transitive, subordinated to the religious stage, it even stands in the way of the religious stage.

While the ethical stands in the way, it is impossible to fight through to the Absurd. Indeed, and that has to be stressed, until we do sweep the ethical out of the way, we cannot reach the Absurd (ŠESTOV 1997: 43).

If a man really wants to grasp his own existence, he has to pass from reasoning to faith, evidently, by a leap. The leap may be understood as a transition to a relationship in which there is no objective certainty for the subject, reasoning is suspended and this is paradoxical. A leap represents resoluteness, passion or zeal in undertaking our own existence independently from anything objectively certain. On the contrary, a leap is specific in remaining certain about the truthfulness of something objectively uncertain. Bare in mind, we passionately plunge ourselves into an unverified relationship, into relations with the Absolute, despite the fact that this is not verified.¹⁹ The religious sphere of existence rests on the leap into faith and in the double movement.

In postulating movement Kierkegaard openly sympathizes with the Aristotelian idea of movement:

It has not been explained in our own time how mediation comes about, whether it is a result of a movement of the two phases and in what sense it is already contained in them, or whether it appears as something new and, if so, how. In this respect, it is important to take the Greek ruminations on the concept of κίνησις which corresponds to the modern category of 'transition', into account (KIERKEGAARD 2009: 18–19).

Kierkegaard apprehends the Aristotelian idea of movement as an expression of the dialectics of reality and historical freedom. He highlights the dialectical method during the transition between the stages of man's life and also the term of freedom of existence. Movement is like the scene of historical freedom, where transition from possibility to actuality (in the Aristotelian sense) is conducted by a leap.²⁰ Movement by a leap is possible only thanks to freedom, which stands as a background for the transformation from possibility to actuality. Kierkegaard is here again influenced by Aristotle:

The change of becoming is actuality, the transition takes place with freedom. No becoming is necessary, not before it came to be, because then it could not come to be; and not after it has come to be, because then it has not come to be. All becoming occurs freely, not necessarily (KIERKEGAARD 2009: 143).

A leap is for Kierkegaard also an event, where the individual chooses, it is an act of choice itself, the act of choice between either — or. It is a moment of decision, the choice of an individual. The individual has to choose freely and only thanks to freedom as such is the act of decision possible at all.²¹ There are no such leaps in aesthetic existence. Living, like aesthetes, is about pleasure, conditionality, inauthenticity and the lack of freedom. A leap is indicated only in the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical stage. The leap between the ethical

¹⁹ Cf. RÖD, SCHMIDINGER and THURNHER 2009: 46.

²⁰ Cf. OLŠOVSKÝ 2005: 199.

²¹ Cf. OLŠOVSKÝ 2005: 200.

and the religious stage is on a higher level. On the boundary between the ethical and religious stage of life is a rupture between the reasoning of the universal and the faith of the concrete.

The individual and his movement of finity and infinity can be explained in the following: in an infinite movement the individual is able to tear himself from determinacy, from the world. This may be characterized as a movement of resignation. In this movement of infinity man wants to 'touch' God. God is already not like an impersonal ideality, who is specified in general, as ethics does it, but now it is all about a concrete relationship man — God. No mediator is necessary. The opposite movement (the movement of finity) is not resignation but movement of faith itself. Here is room for communication face to face with God. Man finds out what kind of plans God has for him and also man finds answers to the eternal questions of everybody's life. What should I do, how should I live, if I want to find the meaning of life? This means that man undertakes his own 'I' back from God. This 'I' is fulfilled with the highest degree of religiosity. Man realizes that he is unable to change himself simply through his own abilities, he lets himself be affected by God's grace. Now he feels hope and reliance.²² This is the place where man goes through the instant, here is the place where man insights God's truth. After the instant man descends back to his subjectivity (but this subjectivity is now filled with the eternal truth of God) and he places himself back into the temporality of the world. So, human existence lives his normal life again, but now his interiority and subjectivity are changed by the experience of God. According to Kierkegaard, this should be the meaning of our life.

CONCLUSION

What is happening to the man on the border between the ethical and the religious stage? He can perform a leap or he can go through the instant. But, of course, it is up to the individual if he chooses to do so. Kierkegaard doesn't give us any manual or guidebook on how to live or how to deal with difficult life situations. His philosophy is not like an invariable position or point of view. He always deals with a concrete individual, his philosophy is always subjective. We cannot build an objective world from Kierkegaard's considerations. He just tears out an individual from society and analyzes some of his actions (leap, instant), which can be done only inside a concrete man, invisibly and non-mediatively. Kierkegaard's individual is always treated separately. This means that man himself can establish an appropriate relationship with God and through it he can find his meaning of life in an absolute self-understanding, all these without 'the other'. Kierkegaard's singular is always *solitaire*.

²² Cf. RÖD, SCHMIDINGER and THURNHER 2009: 70.

Kierkegaard had a respectable skill to grasp the non-mediative categories of human existence as such. This is amazing and extraordinary. But if Kierkegaard himself could describe categories of concrete individual subjectivity and interiority which are non-mediative, is this not a kind of proof that these categories finally are mediative, at least in some way? I think so. In this way I sympathize with the personalistic opinion that the meaning of life of a concrete man is based not only on the development of his own interiority by himself, but that living in dialogue with others is the foundation which helps us to find ourselves. Personalism accentuates relationship as such. M. Buber called Kierkegaard's philosophy 'relational anthropology'. In this sense Kierkegaard could be seen as a personalist too, but he presents us only with a relationship between man and God. However, we live in the world together with other people, we are 'relational'. Searching for our existence is a very difficult task. I think it would be easier to search together with others. Kierkegaard's categories of leap and instant, which are performing on the border, are non-mediative. Despite that, Kierkegaard has presented them to us and mediated them in some way. This means, finally, that these categories are mediative, but inadequate. But even if the possibility of mediation is inadequate, it exists. Man on the border doesn't have to be silent, he can tell another what happened to him and what is the meaning of life. The other is here for sharing not only 'ordinary' things with us, but also we can share concerns which refer to intellectual explanations. Wittgenstein's statement 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' is then invalid in the case of the instant and the leap. Although inadequately, we can indeed speak about them.

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