

Kierkegaard on Religious Belief and Risk

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In the *Postscript* Kierkegaard gives a definition of subjective truth. Subjective truth, he says, is an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness. Further down in the *Postscript* he gives another but equivalent formulation of the same definition. He says that faith is the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. He also explains that the definition of subjective truth which he has given is an expression of faith. Without risk, he says, there is no faith.

From these passages we learn that subjective truth is a venture and that it involves a risk. The famous metaphor, so often associated with Kierkegaard, is found in the same context:

If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith (182).

Why does Kierkegaard stress the importance of risk when it comes to religious belief? One reason could be the fact that risk is an expression or perhaps even “measure” of what something means to you. That you are willing to take a great risk in order to achieve some good, “proves” that the good is of considerable importance to you. Considered in this way two individuals could have the same faith, or the same faith-content in the sense that they both believe in the same God, but differ considerably in their willingness to take a risk for their faith. The one lives comfortably as a bourgeois, the other as a Socratic outsider intent upon questioning the tacit assumptions of the bourgeois lifestyle.

Now all this seems to fit perfectly with Kierkegaard and his Climacus works. But there is a problem. The problem is that Kierkegaard

seems to assume that there exists an internal connection between faith and risk, and not simply an external connection as in the examples above. Risk is a necessary condition of faith, so that if there is faith, there is also risk. In this essay, I try to explain and comment on this idea of an internal connection between faith and risk.

Pascal and Risk

Some authors have pointed out that there must be a rather close connection between Pascal's wager argument and the definition of subjectivity as truth in the *Postscript*. Let us begin by briefly recalling Pascal's argument. The main idea is that it would be wise to believe in Christianity, and perhaps also some other religion promising an eternal blessedness, even if the probability of its truth were very small. The reason is that the value of the good promised by Christianity is infinitely great. No matter how small, or how big for that matter, the probability of Christianity, it would be wise and rational to live as a Christian and believe in Christianity, since the value of the good promised in Christianity is infinitely high.

What is the risk involved in choosing Christianity according to the argument in Pascal's wager? The argument is instructive in the sense that it shows that the risk involved is not identical with the negative value of the sacrifices of a Christian life, nor is it identical with the probability of the falsity of the Christian faith, rather it is identical with the sum product of probability and negative value. In Pascal's argument it does not matter whether the probability and negative value are big or small, since he has introduced the idea of an infinite value on the positive side. But if he had assumed, instead, that the positive value of eternal blessedness is very high, but not infinitely high, the magnitude of probabilities and values would matter very much indeed.

We said that the risk involved in Pascal's argument is identical with the sum product of probability and negative value. If, for instance, the probability of Christianity being false is very high and the sacrifices of a Christian life are considerable, we do have a serious risk connected with choosing Christianity instead of a life of a non-believer. Although the conclusion of Pascal's wager argument is the same whatever the probabilities, it has helped us clarify a concept of risk which presupposes knowledge of both probabilities and values.

The Paradox

Kierkegaard discusses the relevance of empirical evidence for religious belief in different ways, and its relevance seems to depend on the object of belief. In Christianity the object of belief (“troens gjenstand”) is, according to the *Philosophical Fragments*, a paradox. The Christian paradox is further described not only as improbable, but as the greatest improbability. One might think, then, that what renders the paradox improbable is an overwhelming amount of empirical evidence, and that empirical evidence does in fact have relevance, although negative. But this is not the way Kierkegaard regards the paradox. If empirical evidence had negative relevance in the sense that it rendered the paradox improbable, he would have to admit that it could also have positive relevance. More historical knowledge could render the paradox probable. And this, Kierkegaard contends, is not the case. No amount of historical knowledge could increase or decrease the probability of the paradox. The point is rather that the paradox is paradoxical because it contains a conceptual contradiction. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of empirical investigation whether the paradox is true or not.

But before Kierkegaard confronts the problems connected with the paradox and the decisive moment in the *Fragments*, he has come a long way in the *Postscript* through the so-called religiousness A, a kind of religiousness that is founded on a concept of God that is in a sense “philosophical” or perhaps better: “Socratic”. (Although the *Postscript* was published after the *Fragments*, the *Postscript* is “systematically” prior to the *Fragments*.) I do not think, however, that the idea is to show that Christianity presents a solution to the problem of the “lower” stages. The idea is rather that Christianity presents us with a challenge and a risk much greater than in the “philosophical” or “Socratic” view. As assumed above, “improbable” is probably too weak a word to describe the object of belief in Christianity; it is not more or less probable, but a kind of “coincidentia oppositorum”, i.e. a paradoxical union of the eternal and the historical.

Philosophical Fragments

In the *Fragments* Kierkegaard (Climacus) considers the *a posteriori* arguments for God’s existence as either inconclusive, circular, or impossible.

Kierkegaard's view on the arguments for God's existence has been discussed by Terence Penelhum and John H. Whittaker, and I will not go into any details of the argument. The main idea seems to be that the *a posteriori* arguments are either inconclusive or circular when some concept of God is presupposed. In the *a posteriori* arguments we describe empirical reality as evidence in light of the presupposed concept, i.e. we describe empirical reality as a work of God. We can say that the empirical world is taken to be evidence for the existence of God when this world is described on the assumption that it is the work of God, and we try to infer the existence of God from the existence of the world described in this way. Several different scenarios could conceivably obtain, but Kierkegaard seems to consider only two: the evidence is inconclusive or it is conclusive. If it is inconclusive, we have no proof (no room for more or less probable arguments); if it is conclusive, in describing the world in a way that fits entirely with the assumption that the world is the work of God, we have not proved, Kierkegaard says, but presupposed the existence of God. On the other hand, if no concept is assumed, if God is conceived as unknown, we have no possibility of finding any evidence for his existence. We simply do not know what to look for as evidence.

This is Kierkegaard's version of the dilemma in Plato's *Meno*, a dilemma that is cited by the pseudonymous author on the first page of the *Fragments*. Truth cannot be sought, it says, for in order to seek it, we have to know what we are searching for, and then we already know it. On the other hand, if we do not know what we are searching for, we cannot seek it. The argument in the *Postscript*, however, is not of this well-known type, and the dilemma in the *Fragments* is not the kind of dilemma that I want to explicate here.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript

We now turn to the *Postscript*. The essential contrast in this work is between the objective and the subjective problem, or between objective and subjective reasoning. The pseudonymous author wants to show the difference between an objective and a subjective approach to Christian and religious truth, and further he wants to show that one cannot base religious belief or faith on objective reasoning. Both in the *Fragments* and in the *Postscript* the problem is expressed in the following way: is it

possible to build an eternal happiness on historical knowledge? A more specific version of the problem should probably be as follows: is it possible to base religious belief or faith on historical knowledge, or more generally, on empirical knowledge?

One of the ideas in the *Postscript* is the rather uncontroversial idea that an empirical investigation only gives an approximation to the truth of the proposition we are interested in. Objective and empirical reasoning never give us certainty. Another, controversial, idea is that we cannot base religious belief on objective, empirical reasoning. This is strange since it is only reasonable to assume that even if objective, empirical investigations are incapable of giving us certainty, they nevertheless give us approximations, so that the more and better evidence we find, the more reason we have for believing the propositions we are investigating. One reasonable argument might go as follows: objective reasoning shows us that the truth of religion, the existence of God for instance, is more probable than not. To believe in the existence of God would not be irrational for a person under these circumstances, if he or she is supposed to take great interest in the truth of religion and in the good promised by religion. You have three alternatives. First, you can reject the existence of God. Secondly, you can suspend judgement. And thirdly, you can accept the existence of God. A rejection would not be wise under the circumstances, since objective reasoning has shown that the existence of God is more probable than not. You could, however, suspend judgement. But that would not be wise either, given the circumstance that you take great interest in the good promised by religion. There is a leap involved, but the leap is not unwarranted by objective reasoning and your personal, practical aim.

Now Kierkegaard does not envisage this situation, neither in the *Postscript* nor, to my knowledge, in any other work. But Climacus clearly thinks that objective reasoning and objective evaluations of evidence are of no help for the believer or the potential believer. One reason is that he thinks that objective, empirical investigations never end and the persons occupied with such investigations will gradually lose their ability to come to a decision and their interest in the promised good. It would be foolish to deny that Climacus' reflections on this issue have a good deal of truth, but they cannot be of principal importance since they do not show that objective reasoning cannot be of any help to the believer or the potential believer. It cannot be the psychological effects of objective reasoning that give us reason to believe that objective reasoning

cannot be of any help. It must be some essential element in faith itself that makes it impossible.

This essential element is, according to Climacus, that the believer or the potential believer take an infinite interest in the good promised by Christianity, and by religiousness A – the “Socratic” position. Climacus describes himself as a thinker infinitely interested in the good that Christianity promises. This good is the highest good, eternal happiness. And faith contains, in his view, such an interest. In order to attain the highest good he thinks further that it is necessary to act on the belief that there is such a good, and in order to achieve this belief or faith he will have to trust those promising this good, God or Christ.

We shall assume, then, that Climacus is infinitely interested in attaining the highest good.

Objective Uncertainty

In the *Postscript* the object of faith in religiousness A is not objectively improbable, but objectively uncertain. The idea of objective uncertainty can be interpreted in different ways, but it seems to have two central elements. First it is uncertain whether the concept that we have of God is the true concept, and, secondly, it is uncertain whether God exists. When Climacus says that the existence of God is objectively uncertain, he is not implying that our hypotheses about God have a more or less definite probability, i.e., that God is uncertain in the sense that he is “only” probable. His argument concerns historical, empirical investigations in general as evidence for religious belief. Now, the problem is not that these investigations cannot give us anything, since they can give us approximations to truth. The problem is that approximations can be of no help to the religious individual since he or she is supposed to be infinitely interested in the highest good:

The contradiction first emerges in the fact that the subject in the extremity of such subjective passion (in the concern for an eternal happiness) has to base this upon an historical knowledge which at its maximum remains an approximation (510).

It is the combination of empirical, historical evidence and an infinite interest that keeps the uncertainty alive, and the task is not, Climacus con-

tends, to get rid of the uncertainty. On the contrary the subjective thinker must preserve both the uncertainty and the infinite interest.

Kierkegaard's reliance on sceptical arguments has been emphasized by some writers. In the *Fragments* a distinction is made between faith and doubt, and both are related in different ways to objective uncertainty. Faith and doubt are both described as exertions of the will. Doubt is an exertion of the will in the sense that the doubter, who is a kind of sceptic in the *Fragments*, decides to withhold assent or suspend judgement. The doubter can describe in every detail how something seems, but withhold assent – and dissent – on all objective issues. The essence and being of things are, it seems to the sceptic, objectively uncertain. Faith, on this level, is a dialectical concept, and it is difficult not to look to Hegelian ideas when interpreting it. Being an exertion of the will, faith is not indifferent to objective uncertainty, and not to be understood as a kind of *Aufhebung* of objective uncertainty, but a continual overcoming of objective uncertainty.

Resignation

Faith, we said, is a continuous overcoming of objective uncertainty. Religious belief is, according to Kierkegaard, on all levels a double movement. It is a double movement in religiousness A, the “Socratic” standpoint in Abraham's faith in *Fear and Trembling* and in Christianity. The first element in the double movement is resignation, and the kind of resignation will vary, again, with the level of religiousness and inwardness. But resignation will on all levels, of course, concern our confidence in human powers and abilities, our confidence in our abilities to achieve our desires.

It might seem natural to consider the recognition of objective uncertainty as a kind of intellectual resignation, and that religiousness A accordingly has intellectual resignation as a necessary requirement. But this verdict must be qualified. It is true in the sense that the man of faith does not continue to try out different proofs for the existence of God: the way of proof is renounced and the man of faith comes to regard the desire for a proof as a kind of “disproof” of faith. But it is false considering that objective uncertainty is not some definite result, but an intellectual process to be kept constantly alive. In religiousness A, intellectual scepticism and passion are put together in faith as a double movement.

And it is false, I think, in view of the fact that the “dialectical difficulties” elaborated in the *Postscript* have their origin in the combination of existence and thinking: Johannes Climacus is an existing thinker. One could perhaps say that religiousness A is not a human defeat directly. It is, however, a defeat of the human being as existing, i.e. it is a defeat called forth by the “conditions” of existence.

Two alternatives are considered in the *Postscript*. (Perhaps three, depending on how you divide the alternatives). The first alternative is that the potential believer continues to investigate the existence of God objectively. From the viewpoint of “theoretical man”, there is no reason to draw any conclusion concerning the question of God’s existence before you think you have reasons that are good enough, and the question is not seen as a practical one in the sense that there is any practical need to decide the question within a certain time limit – a lifetime for instance. Theoretical man is not trying to decide the question for himself only, but objectively, i.e. for all reasonable men.

The existing thinker, however, is aware of problems that are hidden to theoretical thinking and theoretical man. The existing thinker has practical aims, and is therefore aware of the fact that one has to exist and act while seeking God objectively. Now, while he is seeking God by means of objective reasoning, the existence of God is not (yet) among the beliefs he is acting on. It is further assumed that the existing thinker has an infinite – or very strong – interest in attaining the highest good. Under these conditions, it might be thought, the existing thinker will find no rational solution. But, on the other hand, time limits are always important in practical decisions. To postpone the choice in order to collect more information is sometimes wise, but not always, and sometimes, i.e. in emergencies, it is impossible. But all this is obvious. The point is, however, that the existing thinker has to know when it is a time for choice and when it is right to postpone the decision. The right moment for choice, one could perhaps say, is the moment when he knows the probability of the existence of God. But this is not so. Assuming that the existing thinker is infinitely interested in attaining the highest good, he has an option whatever the probability. The moment of choice seems to be, according to both *Fragments* and *Postscript*, “the moment of resignation” i.e., the moment when you give up the proof, and the Climacus works seem to assume that the potential believer has been genuinely interested in finding an answer through objective reasoning.

The *Postscript* does not, however, discuss the role of objective rea-

soning and arguments based on evidence from the standpoint of a person who already believes. Climacus is clearly concerned to elaborate difficulties confronting the potential believer, i.e., one who wants to know how to acquire faith. But it seems to be a historical fact that the proofs of God's existence have been undertaken from the standpoint of the believer, and the intention has not exclusively been to convince "the fools", i.e., those who have no faith, but also to secure faith objectively. Now, one essential element of faith in the *Postscript* is that faith is a risky project, and the higher the risk, the more passionate the belief. But if the risk involved is objective uncertainty, there seems to be no pragmatic inconsistency involved when the man of faith tries to prove the existence of God. On the other hand: faith in Kierkegaard's work is a personal trust in God as "subject", and faith is clearly thought to be unconditional. Now it might be said that a man who is trying to prove the existence of God is setting up conditions of belief, conditions that would force the believer to give up his or her belief if they should be unfulfilled. But a man arguing for the existence of God is only trying to find evidence sufficient for belief. If, on the other hand, the man of faith should declare some conditions necessary for belief we would have not unconditional, but conditional belief.

The second alternative is the subjective way of religiousness A, and I have already mentioned the existential and practical difficulties that "motivate" the subjective choice. The objective way is given up, but not objective uncertainty. Objective uncertainty seems to be a necessary condition for faith in the *Postscript*. The standpoint is described as faith or belief. Climacus is not saying that the subjective thinker chooses to believe in a direct sense, i.e., that you choose to believe that God exists, and then you believe it. Climacus says, in the *Fragments*, that faith is an exertion of the will, but not that you choose to believe. Considering the lengthy discussions on the relationship between passion and dialectic, or feeling and thinking, in the last part of the *Postscript*, one plausible interpretation is that the subjective thinker chooses to act on the hypothesis that God exists, and that faith is acquired in acting.

What kind of risk?

We have now come to a point where I can explain what I see as a kind of dilemma in the conception of religious belief in the Climacus works.

The problem connected with the view that religious belief or faith, if not all kinds of objective reasoning, ought to be based on evidence, is not only that the basis of belief might change with changes in knowledge, but first and foremost that the believer ought to be prepared to change and give up his or her belief.

But now we have seen that the task of the subjective thinker is to combine objective uncertainty and infinite interest. The danger, so to say, for the subjective thinker is to fall into objective thinking. If you fall into objective thinking you prove that you did not love, that you did not trust, i.e., that you were not subjective enough.

According to the Climacus works religious belief or faith requires objective uncertainty. Objective uncertainty is a sceptical notion. Now it is of some importance to see that it makes a difference whether objective uncertainty is established on objective grounds, or whether it is pre-figured by the desire for faith and by faith itself. If it is established on objective grounds, objective uncertainty is part of reason's own self-critique and self-reflection, and as we have seen, a kind of intellectual resignation. If, on the other hand, objective uncertainty is motivated by the desire for faith, objective uncertainty is in a sense itself subjective.

Now think of the existing thinker on the level of religiousness A in "strategic" terms. Under "normal" conditions you will, when you value some object very highly, seek to protect it in the best possible way. You will care, and you will care in a protective way. If now the processes of the world and conflicts in world-history are seen as evidence for or against the existence of God, you will worry about the world and the world as a work of God, and your control of what happens is very limited indeed. Against this background, one could see objective uncertainty as a kind of safety zone between the subject and the world. For the Greek sceptics uncertainty had this function. Suspension of judgement created a distance between the sceptic and the world. The sceptic did not get seriously involved. Now the man of faith gets involved, faith is, as we have seen, a double movement: you disengage in sceptical distance and you engage in faith. But is there really any big risk involved?

Take the case where the existence of God is reckoned to be objectively uncertain on objective grounds, i.e., that it has been shown through philosophical argument that God is objectively uncertain. Many people would say that Hume and Kant have presented philosophical arguments to the effect that God is objectively uncertain. But if objec-

tive uncertainty is all that we have, it will be impossible to tell the difference between the risk involved in believing and the risk involved in not believing. The risk of not believing could, for all we know, be bigger than the risk involved in belief.

There is also a problem of this kind in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. An important issue in the *Works of Love* is the thought that faith and love are "absolute" in the sense that they are intended to be unchangeable, they do not vary with changes in the "evidence". And this does not mean that faith and love are indifferent to knowledge, that, for instance, we continue to have faith in other persons no matter what objective evaluations of their credibility tell us. What it means is that the evidence of the world does not change at all. The world is "neutralized" in knowledge. Both in the *Postscript* and in *Works of Love* knowledge is described as an impersonal awareness of possibilities and neutral with respect to belief and disbelief. One can perhaps say that the man of knowledge formulates sentences, but no judgements. In knowledge, Kierkegaard says, opposite possibilities are kept in balance. Knowledge is, according to Kierkegaard, ambiguous and - objectively uncertain. Knowledge is neither belief nor disbelief, it keeps opposite possibilities in sceptical balance. But then, again, there can be no bigger risk involved in belief than in disbelief.

On the other hand, it seems to be a fact in the *Postscript* that faith requires objective uncertainty and that objective uncertainty is something one is especially aware of from the standpoint of faith. The life of faith is not only thought to be more difficult but also more interesting, intense and fulfilling than other "lives". Now I did say above that an infinite interest in attaining the highest good did not exclude objective knowledge of probabilities, and there is, of course, no sense in saying that the probability of God's existence is low or objectively uncertain because one is infinitely interested in attaining the highest good. What one can say, however, is that any degree of uncertainty will be more deeply felt by one who is infinitely interested in attaining the highest good than by one who is not. In this sense we can say that the infinite interest creates more tension and a higher feeling of risk than more moderate aims.

Turning now to *Works of Love* again, we find that the risk involved in having faith in interpersonal relationships is more of the psychological kind, the risk involved being that your fellow-men will consider you unsophisticated and simple-minded because you seem unable to see the

difference between friends and foes, persons to be trusted and persons not to be trusted. It is important for Kierkegaard, then, to show that faith is not just simple-minded faith in the sense of believing whatever comes to one's ear, but a double-movement of objective uncertainty and faith.

We must conclude, then, that the risk involved in faith in religiousness A is not bigger than the risk involved in taking the opposite standpoint. But then it is also clear that the real target of Climacus' criticisms is not the doubter or the disbeliever at all, but all those thinkers who try to secure faith objectively. Compared to the objectivists both the believer and the disbeliever take risky actions. But the risk they take is not that it might be proved by objective reasoning that they are wrong, the risk they take is that they give up the "security" of objective reasoning.

The Absurd

Let us now move to the religiousness B as conceived by Johannes Climacus, and see how objective uncertainty is developed on this level. In the *Postscript* Climacus describes the difference between the two levels of religiousness in the following way:

To anticipate here what will be developed later, let me make the following remark. Socratic ignorance is an analogue to the category of the absurd, only that there is still less of objective certainty in the absurd, and in the repellent effect that the absurd exercises. It is certain only that it is absurd, and precisely on that account it incites to an infinitely greater tension in the corresponding inwardness (183-84).

More strongly, but in the same spirit, Climacus describes the difference a little later in the following way:

When Socrates believed that there was a God, he held fast to the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness, and it is precisely in this contradiction and in this risk, that faith is rooted. Now it is otherwise. Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd and this absurdity, held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith. The

Socratic ignorance is a witty jest in comparison with the earnestness of facing the absurd and the Socratic existential inwardness is as Greek light-mindedness in comparison with the grave strenuousness of faith (188).

Climacus immediately goes to explain why the content of faith in religiousness B is absurd:

What now is the absurd? The absurd is – that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth, precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals (188).

First some reminders of the Socratic standpoint and objective approximation. Every objective approximation presupposes, of course, that we have some idea or hypothesis about what we are seeking evidence for or against. In religiousness A it is possible to have such an idea or hypothesis, not necessarily the true idea, of course, but some idea is possible and always presupposed. The objective way is still open in religiousness A. Climacus:

Socratically the eternal essential truth is by no means in its own nature paradoxical, but only in its relationship to an existing individual. This finds expression in another Socratic proposition, namely, that all knowledge is recollection. This proposition is not for Socrates a cue to the speculative enterprise, and hence he does not follow it up essentially. It becomes a Platonic principle. Here the way swings off. Socrates concentrates essentially upon accentuating existence, while Plato forgets this and loses himself in speculation (184).

In religiousness A there is a residue of objectivity in the sense that some – recollected – idea of God is presupposed, but it becomes uncertain when one is trying to argue for the existence of God *a posteriori*. In religiousness B, however, there is a certainty: it is certain that the content of belief is absurd, and it is certain, therefore, that it cannot be known. And it is not the evidence that we might collect for or against the content of faith that renders it absurd, it is conceptually absurd. It is also

important, of course, to know what is absurd, that it is that God has become man. But then it not only unwise to investigate God objectively by looking for evidence. It has been made impossible, since God has become “precisely like any other individual human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals”.

In religiousness B, then, the objective approach is made impossible by means of the absurd, and there is according to Climacus nothing to see for objectively interested man. Climacus can argue, now, that the uncertainty on this level is much “deeper” than the uncertainty in religiousness A. The uncertainty on level A was an expression of the fact that we lack conclusive evidence, we had, however, some evidence. The uncertainty on level B is an expression of the fact that there is nothing to look for as objectively relevant evidence. In explaining the problem in the *Fragments*, the problem that something has become historical “which by virtue of its essence cannot become historical, and must therefore become such by virtue of an absurdity” (345), Climacus has the following to say about “evidence”:

The existing individual who pathetically and existentially expresses the pathetic relationship to an eternal happiness in absolute passion, must now in addition bring himself to confront the dialectical decision. As great as his pathetic tension is in relation to his eternal happiness, so great also will be his Socratic fear of the danger of error. His exertion will therefore be the greatest possible, so much the more as deception is rendered easy by the absence of anything external to look at. The individual who loves has to do with another human being, whose yes and no he can hear in connection with every enterprise of enthusiasm there is at least something external to lay hold of. But in his relation to an eternal happiness the individual has to do solely with himself in inwardness (346).

We have seen above that the risk involved in religious belief in the Climacus works is of a special kind. The risk is not that evidential reasons might falsify your belief, the risk is that you are leaving the “security” (and some would say “the risks”) of objective reasoning. In religiousness B there cannot even be approximations, since there seems to be no answer to the question, approximations to what? And the reason why this question has no answer in religiousness B is not that belief on this level

has no content, but that the content is a paradox. It cannot be made more or less probable.

I began this essay with some remarks about the rationality of religious belief in the Climacus works. Now, religious belief or faith in the *Postscript* is not one thing only. It is not only reason and it is not only passion, it is both reason and passion. The decisive point, however, is that passion has the upper hand in this combination, and the most important element in faith is passion. Reason is, in the *Postscript*, the instrument of passion, and this instrumental reason is not dogmatic, but sceptical.

Notes

All quotations are taken from:

Concluding Unscientific Postscript, translated by D.F. Swenson and W. Lowrie, Princeton, 1941 (1960, sixth Printing).

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Whittaker, John H.: "Kierkegaard on Names, Concepts, and Proofs for God's Existence", in: *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 10, 1979, p. 117-129.