

## THE CONCEPT OF LEAP IN KIERKEGAARD A Phenomenological Description

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The concept of "leap" has recently been almost exclusively associated with the writings of Soren Kierkegaard in both scholarly and population discourse. Nowhere in the immense literature on his many-leveled intellectual expressions do we find an adequate account of the intentionality of such a concept and its "existential" and logical implications and the role it plays in his thinking. It is my view and a basic presupposition of this paper that the concept of the leap is the significant index of the horizons and pretensions of the rest of Kierkegaard's authorship, and that without a clear understanding of such a concept, his basic intellectual determinations remain unintelligible.

Apart from showing that some interpretations of the leap by recent writers are mistaken, I shall present an exposition and critical evaluation of his conception of (a) the leap as a general existential concept and (b) the leap as a special and fundamental religious modality. Also I shall point out and attempt to justify by description and analysis that the leap (a) is not a quantitative modality and, cognitively speaking, it is neither true nor false, and, existentially speaking, it is neither rational nor irrational. The last point (a), if established, would hopefully rid Kierkegaard once and for all of the unwarranted charge of being an irrationalist, an apostle of contradictions and an enemy of reason.<sup>1</sup>

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## I. DESCRIPTIVE STRUCTURE OF THE SELF

### (a) The Three Spheres of Existence

Despite his prolific authorship and the multifarious objectifications of his intellectual expression, Kierkegaard does not seem to abandon his reader to a state of philosophic, theological or literary confusion. He advances his theory of *spheres of existence* to delineate, what he believes to be an immanent yet dynamic structure of human emotions. Such structure is meant to show that the emotional modifications of our consciousness, for instance, passions and feelings, are not simply undisciplined array and mosaic of haphazard subjectivity. This structure reverberates in his writings with decreasing and increasing clarity which imbues his thought with general direction and dynamic (not systematic) unity whose revolving nexus is the category of the Single One – The Self.

This structure is embedded in Kierkegaard's early works, *Either/Or*,<sup>2</sup> *Stages on Life's Way*,<sup>3</sup> and also later in the *Philosophical Fragments*<sup>4</sup> and the *Postscript*.<sup>5</sup> It is composed of three well-outlined stages or spheres of existence, the Aesthetic, the Ethical and the Religious. In addition to these three spheres, there are also two other transitional spheres on the boundaries between the others called the Ironic and the Humorous. In these spheres Kierkegaard seems to be a competent and highly skilled insight psychologist by describing faithfully various dimensions and pretensions of different manifestation of human experience as they *announce* themselves to an unbiased observer. The human self here is not transformed into logically abstract elements, but is descriptively, in the vein of a phenomenologist, *ideated concretely* in a neutral manner into three essential structures in which the human experience is qualitatively and ontologically different and out of which the self is woven. In so doing, Kierkegaard demonstrates that we can be dispassionate and detached with our own passions and subjective modification without ever extinguishing their facticity and spontaneousness.

Descriptively speaking, according to Kierkegaard, the *behavioural* life of the individual from a psychological as well as

existential stance, falls between three *dynamically* (and not abstractly) possible levels of consciousness. From the life of the most ordinary individual to the life of the most exceptionally great, their encounter with life, and the repercussions this encounter has on their subjective component is channeled through three progressive stages of development.

The stages are possible modes of existence within one and the same personality. They comprise the "cross-section of the self" and "co-exist simultaneously" (interdependently), and not successively, through the history of the self. *A stage is an independent state of consciousness of one's own being which differs ontologically from other stages, yet it can hardly have an isolated existence in the individual.* Furthermore, these stages are not stages in the sense that, in the procession from one to the other the former is, to a certain extent, superseded or left behind. On the contrary, Kierkegaard maintains that when the individual reaches a higher stage, the past or lower stage is not completely extinguished, but is subordinated to the higher. These stages are not movements in an evolutionary flux that are linked with one another in a form of a teleological determinism. The individual must, so to speak, freely determine which stage he belongs to. He is entirely free to decide whether to chose the one or the other. This is Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: *either* the aesthetic and speculative, *or* ethical and religious. Kierkegaard's theory of spheres of existence allows then for alternatives. Such alternatives render the individual in possession of freedom which, according to Kierkegaard, and later existentialists is the ontological essence of the human condition. It is this freedom (which is intimately and instinctively connected to the human self) that gives man the possibilities of moving from one mode of existence to the other. But such a movement is not in a Hegelian manner a matter of rational smooth transition, but instead a matter of dynamic choice which is discontinuous with reason. This brings the notion of the "leap" into play.

However, the goal of the present project is not to provide an elaborate and exhaustive analysis of the contents of the spheres of existence; such an endeavour needs separate study which is

beyond the compass of this paper. The spheres have to be dwelled on here in so far as they present a background for the analysis of the concept of the "leap". With this notion of the "leap" and the movement from one sphere of existence to the other, goes the concept of passion which, according to Kierkegaard, is the motive power that propels the individual to make significant decisions which colour the whole personality.

**(b) Passion Determines the Value  
and the Breach Between the Stages**

The spheres as alternative modes of existence are determined and differentiated from one another by a specific passion. The more the self has passion in each stage the more it belongs to that stage. Besides, if the stages differ in their qualitative modes of living, they are necessarily more so in the qualitative difference of their passions.

The aesthetic passion is essentially a *zest for pleasure*, however, not in strictly hedonistic terms, but in a more general fashion. The ethical passion is a *zest to abide by the moral law*, and the religious passion is suffering on whose grounds religious faith emerges.

In any stage, therefore, if the "single one" loses his passion or allows it to recede, then his singularity starts receding too; for what makes a man what he is, is the intensity and kind of passion he possesses. Passion, Kierkegaard holds, is, in the last analysis, what is essential.<sup>6</sup> Whether is one stage or the other, the individual can only realize himself fully by living very intensively, a way which is a vital condition for the personality: "Passion ... is the real measure of man's power. And the age in which we live is wretched, because it is without passion."<sup>7</sup> This point is emphasized in order to remark the movement which Kierkegaard is going to take later on. Humanity is defined by sensibility, and not by reason. The *authentically* human is passion, Kierkegaard says.<sup>8</sup> If humanity is feeling and passion, human perfection is constituted in the greatest possible energy, that is passion, the most perfect expression of existence.

However, the individual in each sphere of existence, whether in the aesthetic, ethical or religious, should very dynamically converge his passions on the *contents* of every stage. But, whether *consciously* or *unconsciously*, passion in every stage labours in a double movement. On the one hand, it seeks satisfaction and realization in the sphere it belongs to; on the other hand, it strives to go beyond itself and to become transfigured to another sphere. On this basis, Kierkegaard finds an escape for the individual from being imprisoned and stifled in one of the spheres. Therefore, it is the passion which drives the individual to effect a transition from one sphere to the other. But this transition is described by Kierkegaard as always a crisis, a *breach* of continuity.

The breach of continuity between the stages means three things for Kierkegaard: (1) The values in each stage are determined by specific passion or enthusiasm, qualitatively different. (2) A person whose life is in the one sphere cannot by a mere process of reflection transport himself into the other; for this *a passionate resolution of the will is necessary*. (3) The change from one sphere to the other is never necessary, but always contingent; if it presents itself as possible, it also presents as possible of non-realization. It is in this breach, between the stages and even in the acts of choice in the same sphere that the notion of the leap becomes central in Kierkegaard's descriptive account of the personality.

## II. THE LEAP AS OPPOSED TO MEDIATION OF REASON BETWEEN THE SPHERES

The transition from one sphere to the other was described in the preceding section as a *crisis* and a *breach* of continuity. The subsequent remarks will, therefore, be focused on this notion of "breach", which Kierkegaard calls the leap. However, it is obvious by now that the leap is contrary to mediation, and that mediation being a quality of the continuous process of reason, will naturally confront us with Hegel's notions of *continuity* and *becoming*. Furthermore, it is perhaps erroneous to believe that Kierkegaard does not discuss the "leap" except where he openly mentions the word "leap". For in many contexts, if he does not

explicitly mention the term, he either presupposes it or uses different terminology to convey precisely the same meaning. For instance, terms or phrases like "qualitative dialectic", "dialectic of life", "breach", "discontinuity", "objective uncertainty", "intervention of the will", "decisive choice", "an act with infinite passion", "halt", etc., all essentially mean the same thing as "leap" for Kierkegaard.<sup>9</sup>

### (a) The Leap: Some Preliminary Remarks

Kierkegaardian scholars do not agree upon a common source of this idea of the "leap". Some interpreters like Bishop Bohlin<sup>10</sup> maintain that it is derived from the qualitative leap which Hegel describes in *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Reuter<sup>11</sup> expresses the opinion that the idea is derived from Kant's theory of the jump which takes us beyond experience. This sounds closer to Kierkegaard with one important difference, and that is the leap which Kierkegaard stresses is a particular thing and not a general assertion of something epistemological. Hoffding<sup>12</sup> says that the source of the idea is Schelling who lectured at Berlin, and Kierkegaard heard his lectures.<sup>13</sup> Schelling, Hoffding says, emphasized strongly that speculative philosophy (Hegelianism) could not get further than the abstract and the universal; and the relationship to absolute reality which religious faith clings to, can only be regarded as *an act of the will* induced by practical and personal needs or, as Kierkegaard puts it later, by a leap. The opposition between the universal and the individual, and the impossibility of a continuous transition between them impressed Kierkegaard so forcibly that he never forgot it.<sup>14</sup>

Kierkegaard himself in the *Postscript*,<sup>15</sup> attributes the leap to Lessing.<sup>16</sup> He expresses his admiration for Lessing's concern with the personality, and with it the idea of historical contemporaneity from which Kierkegaard, I believe, acquired the concept of the leap. Kierkegaard's own account of the source of the leap as he points to it in the *Postscript* is more than satisfactory for the present undertaking. While leaving this scholarly aspect of the origin of the leap to be studied by competent historians,<sup>17</sup> one thing remains certain and that is

Kierkegaard utilized the "leap" in his writings more than anyone of his predecessors.

Whatever the case may be, it is perhaps unfortunate that many of those who dealt with the concept approached it in a cursory fashion. They did not concentrate on the logical and epistemological grounds, and the necessary implications of such grounds which may justify Kierkegaard's extensive use of it. Such unintended negligence is mostly responsible for categorizing Kierkegaard as a radical irrationalist on this issue. For instance, Bonifazi<sup>18</sup> in his interesting account of Kierkegaard's thought overlooks "the leap", and Grene<sup>19</sup> unsympathetically calls him a lover of paradoxes and the Apostle of absurdity without taking the pains to look at Kierkegaard's leap from within to find out how much of his seeming absurdity remains. Another observer, Roberts,<sup>20</sup> is content to mention only that "... the transition from the ethical to the religious is made not by thinking but by what he called a "leap"."<sup>21</sup> Also the same writer states "once absurdity, contradiction and irrationality begin to be prized ..." how can we understand what Kierkegaard is talking about?<sup>22</sup> Jean Wahl,<sup>23</sup> one of the most influential writers on Kierkegaard, unjustifiably says, "Cette théorie du saut est l'affirmation pour Kierkegaard du discontinu et de l'irrationnel."<sup>24</sup> (By this theory of the leap Kierkegaard affirms the discontinuous and the irrational.)

Bearing the foregoing in mind, one should emphasize the dangers of considering Kierkegaard an irrationalist. Here, rationalism or irrationalism, as I shall argue later, may not be the sort of terms to be used in connection with Kierkegaard without a possible misunderstanding of his thought. For example, his claim that the movement from one sphere to the other takes place by a decisive leap, and not by a rational discursive manner, does not necessarily render him an irrationalist.<sup>25</sup> However, the reason why Kierkegaard recommends the leap is partly due to his critique of intellectualism whose prototype is Hegel and whose logic cannot account for movement in existence. This leads to the consideration of Kierkegaard's utterance that logic<sup>26</sup> cannot move.

### (b) In Logic no Movement is Possible

In order to show why, according to Kierkegaard, logic<sup>27</sup> cannot on its own ground move or provide a transition from one sphere to the other, we have to look back to Hegel. Hegel held his celebrated principle of identity<sup>28</sup> which contends that *thought and being are one*. Reality is in a constant state of becoming, where existing differences and oppositions can be reconciled into a "higher unity". But, in becoming, both being and non-being are contained. For when a thing "becomes" it is now what it was not before, and it will be later what it is not now. To put it in Aristotelian language, it has moved from potentiality to actuality. Therefore, for Hegel there is a perpetual unceasing becoming or coming into being. For him truth moves and grows<sup>29</sup> continuously. Also, truth for Hegel lies in nature, history, and thought. In being, there is no dichotomy between the "inner" and the "outer",<sup>30</sup> they are one and the same. The outer world is the demonstration of an inner power (Idea) which permeates all being and is objectified in varying degrees in the physical world, and man is its highest objectification.

Now Kierkegaard does not deny in the manner of Hegel that reality is in a constant flux. But this flux can only take place in the *actual* existent reality and not in the realm of thought or *logic*. When Hegel holds the identity of the subject and object, the identity of the "outer" and the "inner", then the result is a conceptual monism which stands against and over *existence*. This Hegelian understanding of reality is what Kierkegaard vehemently rejects. Reality, as conceived by Hegel, says Kierkegaard, must be static and cannot be in a state of becoming. For becoming is not an attribute of thought, it is an attribute of existence. But why cannot "becoming" be attributed to thought but only to existence? This is because a concept is an abstract general idea which does not change either to what it is not, namely, to another concept, or to something factual and concrete. Therefore, *the transition between two existential alternatives or "spheres" is made by a leap* and not by the mediation of concepts. Furthermore, Kierkegaard contends that becoming can only take place in freedom which implies the absence of



necessity; hence logic with its necessary linked processes cannot move. Let us listen to Kierkegaard:

“The past has come into being; becoming is a change in *actuality* brought about by freedom. If now the past becomes necessary it would no longer belong to freedom, *i.e.*, it would no longer belong to that by which it came into being. Freedom would then be ... an illusion, and becoming no less so; freedom would be a witchcraft and becoming a false alarm.”<sup>31</sup>

He also says:

“... let logic tend to its own affairs. The word “transition” cannot be anything but a witty conceit in logic. It belongs to the sphere of historical freedom, for transition is a *state*, and it is actual.”<sup>32</sup>

Kierkegaard adds:

“In logic no movement can *come about*, for logic is and everything logical simply is, and this impotence of logic is the transition to the sphere of becoming where existence and reality appear. So when logic is absorbed in the concretion of the categories it is constantly the same that it was from the beginning. In logic every movement ... is an immanent movement, which in a deeper sense is no movement ...”<sup>33</sup>

From the above we can infer the following:

- (1) Reason or “logic” cannot account for the contingent nature of actual existence within reason’s own realm of logical relations.
- (2) In the realm of the actual there is no possibility of transition; all transitions take place by a dynamic decision, by a *leap*.
- (3) As against Hegel, Kierkegaard maintains that, “*that which really changed*” since it belongs to concrete existence, namely, to time, space and history is *contingent* and not necessary. Hence, that which “really

changed” must have taken place in freedom, which means it was not necessarily “bound” to be so but could have happened otherwise. Consequently, freedom belongs to existence, and being so, freedom makes possible the act of choice,<sup>34</sup> and this act of choice is always a matter of a *leap*.

- (4) All movement, according to Kierkegaard, implies a *transcendence* which logic cannot qualify for.

In addition to these points Kierkegaard would add two others:

- (5) It is meaningless to talk about the leap in the areas of quantitative sciences, mathematics, and logic. Hegel’s mistake was to assert the emergence of a new quality in logic which is an assertion of no meaning. Because if logic is to accept this, it must straight away change both its nature and its meaning.<sup>35</sup>
- (6) For Kierkegaard, from an existential point of view, the individual cannot be absorbed and transformed to an ideality by logic. Even if it were possible for the individual to become pure thought, then the being with which thought will be concerned is not the real being, but the being of thought.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, personality affirms the principle of contradiction, that of existence and thought, and this contradiction enables the personality to make existential choices that result in a leap. Personality, says Kierkegaard, will forever repeat its immortal dilemma of Hamlet, to be or not to be, that is the question.<sup>37</sup>

**(c) The Leap – Neither Rational  
Nor Irrational – Faith and Reason**

The above discussion shows clearly why Kierkegaard employed the “leap”. Whether in the aesthetic, ethical or religious sphere, all behaviour is an existential behaviour, a matter of a leap which does not belong to the realm of logic and mediation. The Hegelian individual lives in the “illusion” of the

smooth harmony of thought while in actuality, he is mostly gripped by the "open" contradictory alternatives of existence. In fact, the Hegelian individual does not really *live*. His life is as semi-real as a concept may be. This sort of a "pseudo-life" should not and cannot be lived in any of the spheres of existence, and especially the religious sphere. To say the least, this life cannot be the sort of life a man of *faith* lives. For faith is not a concept; it is as *real* as existence and no "concept-juggling" can help a man to move from one existential situation to another, be it a situation of personal interests, or a situation of altruistic moral obligation or a situation of confidence in the *Divine* – (Faith). The Hegelian thinker, "the concept", can forget in all his thinking to think that he is an *existing individual* and will never be able to explain life. He will merely make an attempt to cease to be a human being, just in order to become a book<sup>38</sup> or an objective something.<sup>39</sup>

Accordingly, for Kierkegaard, in life, in existence, in the act of existing, there is continuous striving against contradictory alternatives.<sup>40</sup> Here there is no "higher unity" in which the *either/or* or these alternatives can be happily resolved. We are thrown into the field of open contradictions, so to speak, and we are forced to act; we are faced with many chasms and precipices that are so infinitely wide<sup>41</sup> to the extent that they can only be bridged by a decisive *leap*. Therefore, for Kierkegaard, a leap is a *jump* between two existentially (not rationally), discrete spheres of being; an act that bridges the "gulfs" between existential possibilities and contradictions. Consequently, we can safely stipulate that *leaps are many; but one in kind* for Kierkegaard. Most behavioural decisions involve a leap, and not only the movement from one stage of existence to the other. Every transition, from the individual instance of observation in the inductive procedure to the ideality of universal laws of science, involves a leap. The movement from skepticism to belief is a leap of basic significance. Even the passage from the philosophical realm to the realm of religion, and from the realm of religion in general to a particular religion, each passage involves a leap. Yet in most cases this leap is a leap of faith, it is a religious movement. This movement always entails an

adventure, an act of courage and risk, a trust in the other end. This risk-taking, Kierkegaard observes, is always dynamic; for without risk faith, any faith, becomes impossible. Here one should observe that Kierkegaard does not necessarily mean by "faith" the religious faith only. The leap is called a leap of faith (trust), in so far as every leap is made with passion and confidence in the other end, any end, be it God or a stage of existence. Here faith means trust in either, an act of marriage, an aesthetic mode of life, or in God. All leaps have a common quality, namely, *passion and trust*.<sup>42</sup>

Among those many "leaps" that the individual is challenged to perform in the existential striving of his everyday life, there is one form of leap which Kierkegaard stresses very much and he regards it as of utmost importance. This is the *leap par excellence* by which the religious passion emerges. When performing this leap the transition is not made only by an act of the will as it is in other leaps, but also by divine assistance, by God granting the condition to man.<sup>43</sup>

On the basis of this leap, the *religious faith becomes an existential fact and not a rational one*. It becomes a confidence, a jump into a vacuum without a good reason for hope. In other words, this leap par excellence,<sup>44</sup> which belongs to the behavioural realm, makes religious faith contrary to the continuous processes of reason. In short, as has been previously remarked, Kierkegaard says that the positive can be conquered only by the negative. To the mediacy of reason, then, must be opposed the immediacy of faith; to continual reasoning, the passionate and pathetic lyricism of affirmation and intuition; to the reasonableness of logical thought and objective reflection, the existential leap of faith made with passionate inwardness. This is what Kierkegaard means by saying that the understanding is the death of faith. But why is it necessarily the death of faith? Kierkegaard answers that the death of faith is due to the approximation processes of reason. This approximation makes faith, the leap par excellence, probable, but when faith is made probable it definitely becomes impossible. For that which is very probable we can almost know, or as good as know, yet it is

impossible to believe,<sup>45</sup> and it is not commensurate with the intensity of the leap of faith.

What follows in consequence of this Kierkegaardian understanding of the approximation of reason, is that reason cannot and must not give faith. Reason must understand itself and know what it has to offer without taking anything away. But usually reason does not abide by this rule, and when it does not, then it will be hard to find among those who devote themselves to rational speculation and experimental procedures, a will at their heart, a conviction, a faith,<sup>46</sup> says Kierkegaard. Such people would want to understand, would want to explore and receive ideas without believing or being determined by them.

However, if the speculative life of reason weakens the will, and if it makes it hard for the individual to prompt the leap of faith, this does not necessarily mean that the leap of faith is completely supported by reason. It is supported by reason in so far as reason holds faith in honour while it cannot fully understand it.<sup>47</sup> Reason at least can know the leap negatively.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Kierkegaard maintains that the man of religious faith, both has and uses his understanding. By and large he respects what is human and does not put it down to lack of understanding if anybody does not possess religious faith.<sup>49</sup> The Kierkegaardian believer, therefore, does not move in absurdity, whimsically, unintelligently and at random when he performs the leap of faith. On the contrary, reflection can be halted by a leap of faith, this leap of faith is a process up to which rational analysis can lead, preparing the way, but cannot grasp it essentially.<sup>50</sup>

After the above characterization of the leap in general and the religious in particular, and after showing that the leap is contrary to the mediation of reason, it is certainly possible to still hold that Kierkegaard is not an enemy of reason nor is he preaching irrationalism or anti-intellectualism the way the previously mentioned writers believe. This point can be illustrated in the following manner:

In conclusion (4) of section (b) above, it was stated that all

movement, according to Kierkegaard, implies a transcendence which logic cannot qualify for. Now, if this conclusion can be granted, then we can say that the leap for Kierkegaard, being *existential*, is necessarily *outside* the *static* domain of logic, being thus it makes no sense to say that Kierkegaard's concept of the leap is rational or irrational. For *these two categories cannot be predicated of the leap without doing violence to language*. This is, in very much the same way that we cannot predicate tooth aching or its absence to "Friday" or "Tuesday". Furthermore, on the same grounds, when rationalism or irrationalism are attributed to Kierkegaard's employment of the leap the outcome is a *category mistake*. The leap belongs to a different order of being. We can even push the matter further and say that faith, for Kierkegaard, from a *cognitive* point of view is neither *true* nor *false*, but simply exists. This is so because existence, or that which exists, cannot be true or false, it is *real*. Truth and falsity can only be predicated of the rational processes of reason. It is on this basis that Kierkegaard hated to hear somebody saying that religious faith is to a certain degree true.<sup>51</sup> We may also add, on the basis of conclusion (5) of section (b), that the leap which is involved in the act of faith is not at all a quantitative leap, but a qualitative one which stamps the mode and personality of the individual. The leap of the faith, therefore, leads to a drastic qualitative change in one's own being.

The preceding argument warrants the following conclusions:

- (1) The leap is not quantitative.
- (2) Cognitively speaking, it is neither true nor false.
- (3) Existentially speaking, it is neither rational nor irrational.

Once again, the third point just mentioned brings us to the limits and scope of reason in the act of faith. Faith itself, being not rational, does not come within the realm of reason to reason about. However, this does not mean that Kierkegaard depreciates reason or that he rejects its validity when reason operates in its proper household, *viz.* Mathematics, Logic and Empirical Science. In fact, Kierkegaard stresses that reason should guide us

in everyday life and that we ought to be quite cognizant of the difference between a conscious responsible act, especially that of faith, and a whimsical irresponsible one.

This last point calls for a remark concerning certain misunderstanding which Kierkegaard's thought seems to have suffered. For instance, Walter Kaufmann, in his two notable volumes, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*<sup>52</sup> and *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*,<sup>53</sup> despite his illuminating critique of Kierkegaard, very reservedly discloses an unwarranted bias and repeatedly, though unfairly, says: "He ... attacks Hegel of whom he lacked any thorough first-hand knowledge ..." <sup>54</sup> and "the crucial difference between informed and uninformed, a reasoned and un-reasoned, a responsible and irresponsible decision, escapes Kierkegaard."<sup>55</sup> Kaufmann adds: "Reason alone, to be sure, cannot solve some of life's most central problems. Does it follow ... that reason ought to be abandoned altogether? Kierkegaard rashly renounced clear and distinct thinking altogether."<sup>56</sup>

Now, if we consider Kierkegaard's views concerning "logic" and "leap" in the manner they were discussed earlier, it would then be possible to show that the above charges against Kierkegaard are unfounded. For example, concerning Kierkegaard's first hand knowledge of Hegel, Kaufmann seems to be wrong for the following reasons:

- (1) Hegelianism during Kierkegaard's time was dominant in Denmark, and a considerable part of Kierkegaard's terminology is quite clearly Hegelian. Terms like "mediation", "opposition", "mediacy", "immediacy", "ideality", "reality", "immanence", and "dialectic" are expected to have been drawn from Hegelian texts. Besides, Kierkegaard in his writings refers to particular sections and titles of Hegel's works. For example, in *The Concept of Dread*, Kierkegaard says that Hegel entitles the last section of his logic "Reality".<sup>57</sup> Then, of course, someone who can locate titles of sections of Hegel's writings cannot be properly accused of not reading Hegel.

- (2) Kierkegaard, himself, complains about the difficulty he encountered while reading Hegel:

“I for my part have devoted a good deal of time to the understanding of the Hegelian philosophy, I believe also that I understand it tolerably well, but when in spite of the trouble I have taken there are certain passages I cannot understand, I am foolhardy enough to think that he himself has not been quite clear.”<sup>58</sup>

This passage, together with point (1), would leave no doubt that Kierkegaard had a first hand knowledge of Hegel. Consequently, Kaufmann’s indictment that Kierkegaard had no first hand knowledge of Hegel is left groundless.

Also, the other charges would lose their significance, when we realize that Kaufmann in most cases does *not argue* for his point but he simply presents it. Moreover, if Kierkegaard asserts that reason *alone* cannot relieve us from the need of decisions, it does not follow at all, the way Kaufmann puts it, that reason should be abandoned altogether. For, in many contexts, Kierkegaard asserts that reason, although necessary, is not sufficient for making existential leaps; it must be corroborated by interests and passion. Furthermore, if “leaps” live in passion and especially the leap of faith, then reason, says Kierkegaard, can lead to the leap yet cannot grasp it fully.<sup>59</sup>

As a result, it seems to make no sense to say that Kierkegaard cannot differentiate between reasoned and unreasoned form of decision and behaviour.

Such were the views of Kierkegaard on the concept of leap and its various modifications. It is impossible to claim in the limited compass of this paper, that Kierkegaard’s views on the leap have been exhaustively described and discussed. The “leap” seems to be the substratum which underlies most of Kierkegaard’s description of human experience, and the tension which accrues as a result of real and behavioural choices which the individual is called upon to make on the roads of life. Kierkegaard is no more an irrationalist than Kant in his



epistemology, both thinkers were delineating the bounds and limits of human reason, each in his own different field of investigation. Kierkegaard knew very well that one cannot violate the rules of reason and still make sense.

### NOTES

- 1 Reference to writers who made such claims will be mentioned in due course. I am employing "irrational" to mean self-contradictory or that which is logically inconsistent with rational processes.
- 2 Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2 Vols. Doubleday and Co. New York, 1984. Henceforth referred to as *Either/Or*.
- 3 Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, Scholsen Books, New York, 1975. Henceforth referred to as *Stages*.
- 4 Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980. Henceforth referred to as *Fragments*.
- 5 Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton University Press, 1980. Henceforth referred to as *Postscript*.
- 6 See *The Journals of Soren Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press, 1982. Henceforth referred to as *Journals*. P. 201, year 1847, sec. 652, Kierkegaard says that "What the age needs is *pathos* ... The misfortune of the age is understanding and reflection ... That is why it requires a man who could reflect the renunciation of all reflection ..."
- 7 *Journals*, pp. 102-3, year 1841, sec. 396.
- 8 Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, The Sickness Unto Death*, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984, p. 130. Henceforth referred to as *Fear and Trembling* and as *Sickness Unto Death*.
- 9 Kierkegaard's work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, abounds in such terms.
- 10 Soren Kierkegaard, *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est and a Sermon*, Stanford University Press, 1980, pp. 77-84. Henceforth referred to as *Dubitantum Est*. See introduction by the editor.
- 11 *Ibid.*

- 12 *Dubitandum Est*, pp. 81-82.
- 13 In a letter to his brother from Berlin, Kierkegaard says that he attended Schelling's lectures and that later he found himself too old to hear such lectures, and that Schelling was too old to give them. Cf., *Journals*, p. 104, year 1842.
- 14 *Dubitandum Est*, p. 81.
- 15 *Postscript*, pp. 86-97. In page 90 Kierkegaard says the following: "It is a leap, and this is also the word that Lessing has used about it, within the ... distinction between contemporaneity and non-contemporaneity."
- 16 Henry Chadwick, *Lessing's Theological Writings*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956, pp. 52-53.
- 17 The reader is referred to *Dubitandum Est*, pp. 77-83.
- 18 Conrad Bonifazi, *Christendom Attacked*. London: C. Tinling and Company Limited, 1983.
- 19 Marjorie Grene, *Dreadful Freedom*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, Chap. II.
- 20 David E. Roberts, *Existentialism and Religious Relief*, ed. Roger Hazelton, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- 21 *Ibid*, p. 71.
- 22 *Ibid*, p. 108.
- 23 Jean Wahl, *Etudes Kierkegaardiennes*, Paris: Fernand Aubier, n.d.
- 24 *Ibid*, p. 145 "n".
- 25 A justification of this contention will follow later.
- 26 By logic Kierkegaard means the Hegelian type of logic, or the dialectic. Cf., *Postscript*, p. 107.
- 27 *Ibid*, p. 112.
- 28 The stress on the nature of logic is done here because Kierkegaard considers faith as something actual, namely, existential and not logical or ideal.
- 29 *Dubitandum Est*, p. 74.
- 30 *Postscript*, p. 112.

- 32 Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophie*, New York: Princeton University Press, 1975, p. 64. Henceforth referred to as *Fragments*.
- 32 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 73-74. Referred to hereafter as *Dread*.
- 33 *Ibid*, p. 12.
- 34 Kierkegaard's concept of choice is discussed in *Either/Or*, Vol. II.
- 35 *Dread*, pp. 27-28. Also see note p. 28.
- 36 *Postscript*, p. 112.
- 37 *Journals*, p. 74, year 1839, sec. 286. Also *Dubitandum Est*, p. 78.
- 38 *Postscript*, p. 85.
- 39 It is noteworthy here to observe that Kierkegaard does not depreciate reason or objective attempts when they are in their right order. "It is not denied that objective thought has validity; but ... where subjectivity must be accentuated, it is a misunderstanding." *Ibid*, p. 85.
- 40 *Ibid*, p. 84.
- 41 *Ibid*, p. 90.
- 42 *Journals*, p. 368, year 1850, sec. 1044.
- 43 See *Fragments*, pp. 17-55.
- 44 I have discussed this form of leap elsewhere. See S. S. Hawi, Kierkegaard: On Truth and Communication, *Iqbal Review*, October 1994. In this paper the different aspects of this leap are seen in operation in various areas of Kierkegaard's notions of truth as subjectivity, and the apprehension of truth.
- 45 *Postscript*, p. 189.
- 46 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, London: Collins Type Press, 1968, p. 18.
- 47 *Journals*, p. 362, year 1850, sec. 1033.
- 48 *Ibid*, pp. 362-363, year 1850, sec. 1033.
- 49 *Postscript*, p. 504.
- 50 *Ibid*, pp. 105-106.

- 51 *Postscript*, p. 209.
- 52 Walter Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1980.
- 53 Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York: Meridian Books Inc., 1976.
- 54 *Ibid*, p. 16.
- 55 *Ibid*, p. 17.
- 56 *Ibid*, p. 18.
- 57 *Dread*, p. 9. See also *Ibid*, p. 146, "n".
- 58 *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 43-44.
- 59 *Postscript*, p. 105.