

Lund University
Centre for Theology and Religious Studies
Studies in Faiths and Philosophies
Philosophy of Religion
Advanced Essay (C-uppsats)
Examiner: professor Catharina Stenqvist
Date: 070604

On a Paradoxical Jouissance, or the Limit of Desire and Fantasy
Kierkegaard Through Lacan

Admir Skodo

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3
 The Thesis..... 3
 The Problem of Theory and Methodology..... 4
 Sources..... 8
I. Impossibility and Prohibition: Dogmatics 9
 The Subject of the Lack, or the Structural Function of Impossibility..... 9
 The Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real in Kierkegaard's Dogmatics: Impossibility Maintained..... 13
II. Jouissance as Transgression and Sinthome: Anxiety..... 20
 Jouissance as Transgression..... 20
 From Jouissance to Jouis-sense: Sinthome..... 21
 Kierkegaard: Anxiety as Jouis-sense 22
Concluding Summary..... 27
References..... 29

Introduction

A lot can be said about the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981): for instance, that he is impossible to understand, that he is the one who revitalized psychoanalysis by reinterpreting it through structural linguistics, that he has been one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century, and so on. Equally, a lot can be said about the Danish philosopher and/or theologian Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855), namely that he is the father of existentialism. I will not delve into such descriptions here, since it is not my task.

I find both the works of Lacan and those of Kierkegaard highly stimulating, because I believe that they have something fundamental to tell us about our existence as *subjects*.¹ What if we were to put these two together? What can Lacan tell us about Kierkegaard? What can Kierkegaard tell us about Lacan? The basis for this inquiry is Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, i.e. it is in the first instance Kierkegaard that is studied *through* Lacan, and not the other way around. Nonetheless, it would be foolish to think that Lacanian theory is flawless, and can explain everything; this is certainly not the case. So let us leave the question whether Kierkegaard can tell us something about Lacan open. But why have I chosen Kierkegaard? It is because I have found that Kierkegaard truly shows the kernel of what it *means/to be* a subject, and in many cases his thought is similar to Lacan's, one could say, provocatively, and *retroactively*, that Kierkegaard is a Lacanian, he just doesn't know it.

The Thesis

In this essay I will argue for the following: *Kierkegaard is a subject of the lack², and his writings are a modality of existentially handling this fundamental and constitutive lack.* I will argue for my thesis by conducting a Lacanian psychoanalytic analysis of some of Kierkegaard's main works.

I have to say a few words about the question whether Kierkegaard should be viewed as a philosopher or a theologian. In this inquiry I view him as both. He is a theologian in that his thought is intimately tied to God, and he is a philosopher in that the problems that he deals with can be said to be the problems of existentialist philosophy. Not to mention that Hegelian philosophy is one of Kierkegaard's major (negative) influences. However, in the Lacanian context it does not, in the last instance, matter whether he is seen as philosopher or theologian, because Lacanian theory, I believe, entails both. According to Lacan the psychic universe is constituted by

¹ Note that I do not use such descriptions as "individual", "person", and so on. I use subject in the Lacanian sense, which will be elaborated later on. Suffice it to say that it is a use that conforms to the etymology of the word, viz. the Latin *subiectus*, whose concrete and literal meaning is "subjected", "subordinated" or "obedient".

² I have appropriated this formulation of the Lacanian subject from the political philosophers Ernesto Laclau and Lilian Zac, who use it to characterize the Lacanian subject. See e.g. Laclau, Ernesto & Zac, Lilian, "Minding the Gap. The Subject of Politics", *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Laclau, Ernesto, London, New York 1994.

three wholly intertwined dimensions: the Imaginary (*l'Imaginaire*), whose name stems from the Latin *imago*, i.e. image, is the dimension of sense-perception, mental images, but also, I add, moods and feelings since this is a wholly subjective dimension³; the Symbolic (*le Symbolique*, or the big Other, *le grand Autre*) is the linguistic dimension, i.e. that the structure of language is fundamental for the constitution of the subject; and finally, the Real (*le Réel*), which can be said to be the *inherent lack in and thereby failure* of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, not just *between* them, but also *within* them taken as separate categories.⁴ Indeed, the lack in one dimension propels a displacement into another.⁵ The point being that these dimensions essentially relate to one another. This means that basically everything we experience (in terms of sense-perception) and say and write (and, indeed, think) has implications for our constitution as subjects. Basically, *what* we think about (philosophy or theology) is secondary, since it follows the same logic.

Now, my thesis implies a *theoretical* study, i.e. a methodological *application* of Lacanian theory. But is it really that simple?

The Problem of Theory and Methodology

What does it mean to *apply* a theory? Does this not imply that between the theory and the object of study there exists a *gap*, i.e. are we not here, whether we want to or not, making an (Kantian) epistemological distinction which denies us (ontic) access to our object of study? This is certainly the case, I believe, in studies where one attempts to answer questions such as: "What is it like *to be* a bat [my italics]"?⁶ This question is aporetic, since *what it is* like to be something implies that we can consciously reflect on this (other) being *as* that other being. In this case being is experiencing, i.e. sense-perception, but experience is wholly subjective, it requires a single spatio-temporal point of view. So the question what it is like to be something can only be read as what it is like *for me* to be something other than me. One cannot escape the essentially subjective nature of experience (this goes whether we want to understand bats or humans). This is why Thomas Nagel asserts that any attempt (reductionist or physicalist) of the objectification of experience takes us further away from its true nature. This has the consequence that what I am studying I am studying as it is *for me* and not *in itself*, viz. Kierkegaard. Is there, then, no *tertium quid* where I can meet Kierkegaard (and Lacan)? Yes, there is, and this is *language* as an

³ In cognitive science one often distinguishes between *lower level cognitive processes*, such as sense-perception and memory, and *higher level cognitive processes*, such as decision-making and problem-solving. A spontaneous thought comes to mind: could Lacanian theory benefit from this distinction? From cognitive science in general?

⁴ It must be noted that these three concepts are not at all clearly formulated by Lacan, I am here interpreting them in my own manner. These concepts are to be discussed further later on.

⁵ I will elaborate on the logic of these dimensions later on.

⁶ I am here of course referring to Thomas Nagel's "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", *Philosophical Review* 1974:4.

intersubjective structure. But, then, can I make any justified claims about Kierkegaard and Lacan? In terms of *their* experience, no. Nonetheless, I must assume that we, as humans, have at least *similar* experiences, so that we may *speak* about them, and I must (or I already have) assume(d) that the realm of experience is closely tied to the realm of language. But you see, already here I am in a situation of failure, what I say about Kierkegaard and Lacan will always *lack* something, but then again, this is exactly how *desire* is kept in motion; this lack propels me always to say something *more* or *again* (*encore*, as Lacan puts it). It is the saying itself which instates a lack.⁷ But is this not how we on the one hand reproduce society, and on the other, how we recreate and/or advance society?

Lacan has defined the being of humans with the neologism *parlêtre*.⁸ The human being is a "being-of-language", which means that there is no access to a an external *noumenal* being. I would say, in addition to Žižek's translation, that the human being is a being-*in-and-through*-language. Lacan writes that "language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it".⁹ This is the Lacan of the 1950's that is speaking, the "structuralist" Lacan, but I claim that Lacan never radically breaks with the notion that language holds a primacy in the constitution of the subject. Indeed, becoming a subject means introjecting the structure of language, it is primarily language that the subject is subjected to. This is what is meant by being-in-language. But I also add being-through-language to highlight *how* this being-in-language is structured, because we are talking about a *formal* linguistic structure and its rules of formation; this is *intersubjective*. This, then, is the *tertium quid*, viz. the linguistic structure of our psyche. One of Lacan's most famous statements is that "the

⁷ Lacan comes very close to Nagel when he states that the order of the Imaginary is unanalysable, to be analysable we must be able to discern another function, the Imaginary must represent something other than itself, viz. the Symbolic: "En fait, il faut bien voir que l'imaginaire est loin de se confondre avec le domaine de l'analysable. Il peut y avoir une autre fonction que l'imaginaire". [...] "le fantasme dont il s'agit, l'élément imaginaire, n'a strictement qu'une valeur symbolique que nous avons à apprécier qu'en fonction du moment de l'analyse où il s'insère". [...] D'une part, qu'il ne suffit pas qu'un phénomène représente un déplacement, autrement dit s'inscrive dans les phénomènes imaginaires, pour être un phénomène analysable. D'autre part, qu'un phénomène n'est analysable que s'il représente autre chose que lui-même". Lacan, Jacques, *Des-noms-du-Père*, Paris 2005, p. 23; p. 25. Lacan is in effect expressing a gap between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, this gap is the Real. I would also like to point out a possible similarity between Lacan and (the later) Wittgenstein (something I hope to be able to develop in the future). In *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford 1968, p. 36 Wittgenstein writes: "Compare *knowing* and *saying*": "how many feet high Mont Blanc is"; "how the word 'game' is used; "how a clarinet sounds". Then he writes: "If you are surprised that one can know something and not be able to say it, you are perhaps thinking of a case like the first. Certainly not like the third". If "How a clarinet sounds" can be said to fall under the Imaginary, then we might say that with "not be able to say it" Wittgenstein expresses the notion that sensory knowledge cannot be expressed through language. But we still *do* speak of such things, thus, when we do, sensory knowledge becomes something else, thereby instating a gap between sensations and language.

⁸ Lacan, Jacques, *Le triomphe de la religion précédé de Discours aux catholiques*, Paris 2005, p. 88. See also Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York 1999, p. 113. The neologism is a contraction between the verb *parler* (to speak) and the verb *être* (to be).

⁹ Lacan, Jacques, "Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud", *Écrits. A Selection*, Translated by Alan Sheridan, London and New York 2004, p. 163.

unconscious is structured like a language".¹⁰ I am not claiming to be *outside* of the structure of language, rather I, like the American psychoanalyst Bruce Fink, try to elucidate the structure from *within*.¹¹ On a *formal* level¹², my study applies as much to me and you (the reader) as it does to Kierkegaard and Lacan, but then, there is something, more, to be said, that will come to be said, then said again, always already.

I have decided not to lay out my theoretical and methodological premises in a separate chapter, and then apply them to the source material. Instead, I have chosen to juxtapose theory and analysis, discussing Kierkegaard side by side with Lacan, and thereby elucidating one through the other.

I would finally like to say a few, more, words about my interpretation and understanding of Lacan. I am in complete agreement with the Swedish psychoanalyst Jurgen Reeder when he states that his interpretation of Lacan is to some extent wrought with aggressiveness and destructiveness. But we must understand aggressiveness and destructiveness in their Lacanian context (which according to Reeder constitutes Lacan's interpretation of the death drive), which Reeder is very well aware of. Reeder makes it clear that aggressiveness and destructiveness are imaginary functions (in the sense of abstract or non-physical) that aim at destruction, and manifest themselves in a demanding tone, disrupted sentences, slip of the tongue, phantasmatic fears, emotional expressions of anger, and so on. Around this imaginary function of the

¹⁰ See for instance Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Translated by Alan Sheridan, New York, London 1998, p. 20 ff.

¹¹ Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject. Between Desire and Jouissance*, Princeton, New Jersey 1995, p. 137.

¹² By formal I do not mean metalanguage, since, clearly, my previous statement denies the possibility of such a thing. How can a metalanguage be constructed with the use of the rules of the object language? Whether one is constructing a metalanguage or studying and using an object language (usually a natural language), one is obeying the same logic. This is why Lacan says that his formalisations, which belong to the Symbolic, only bear *ex-sistence*. The neologism *ex-sistence* was introduced by Lacan to signify that the only way to attain an-other jouissance, God, the eternal, is to make it *ex-sist*. Bruce Fink explains: "Lacan uses it to talk about 'an existence which stands apart from', which insists as it were from the outside; something not included on the inside, something which, rather than being intimate, is 'extimate'", Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, p. 122. Similarly, a metalanguage can only be named a metalanguage if it claims to stand *outside* of the object language, but yet, the logic of this metalanguage is the same as that of the object language. In positing this outside, what one is doing is essentially making the inside *ex-sist*. The crucial point here is that this operation *within* language will create something not accounted for *within* language, something which cannot be defined, and which undermines the structure of *all* of language. This is exactly what is shown by, e.g. the liar paradox: what makes the proposition "this sentence is not true" true? The proposition attempts to apply the logical conditions of truth. What are these conditions?. They are: "In order for an FOL [First order language, my remark] sentence to be a good translation of an English sentence, it is sufficient that the two sentences have the same truth values in all possible circumstances, that is, they have the same *truth conditions*", Barwise, Jon & Etchemendy, John, *Language, Proof and Logic*, Stanford 2003, p. 84. It would thus seem that it is a question of *reference*. So, what does our proposition refer to? Itself. So, the proposition is true if and only if what it refers to obtains a state of affairs. What state of affairs are referred to? The state of affairs that the sentence is "not true". So, if the proposition is true, the state of affairs that it is "not true" obtain, therefore it is false. What if it is false? Then the state of affairs do not obtain, i.e. it is not false, therefore it is true. Either way, we reach a contradiction. Applied to the metalanguage itself, the conditions that are supposed to apply only to the object language turn out to apply also for the metalanguage, which makes a meta-perspective impossible. However, this does not mean that the logic one discerns is completely useless, indeed, it is still a logic to which an object of study obeys, but it is also a logic to which the constructed metalanguage which is used to explain the object of study obeys.

aggressive and the destructive the subject forms a way to appropriate the world. Man thus selectively creates his/her world or reality. This stems from *symbolic castration*. This is the (mythical) stage where the child's relationship to his/her mother is broken due to the intervention of the symbolic father, or *the Name-of-the-Father* (*le Nom-du-Père*). In this relationship the mother incarnates the Other (mOther), but when the child realizes that there is a lack in the mOther, that her *desire* remains unsatisfied, he/she places himself/herself as the one who can fulfill that desire, by offering her what she lacks, the *phallus*. The intervention of the symbolic father means that the child is symbolically castrated, he/she does not have the phallus, the father does, and if he/she does not *have* it, he/she can never *be* it for the mOther, thereby never being able to satisfy the desire and achieving some sort of harmonious totality or unity. But even when the child accepts symbolic castration, he/she then simply shifts (to the unconscious) the dialectic of desire to anOther, a lover for example, thereby never being able to evade the castration.¹³ The crucial point here is that the phallus is a *signifier*, and as such its meaning is symbolic and relational, not literal and concrete, it is the signifier for the lack-in-the-Other. Its *place* in the chain of signifiers may change (e.g. mother, lover, nation, and so on), but its *function* remains the same. What is really castrated, cut of, is not simply the tie between language and being (which I interpret as a conception of a harmonious unity) where language instates a lack-of-being (*manque-à-être*) in the subject which is fundamental for his/her existence. What is more important is that *the subject is cut of from itself in language*, it does not know what its essence is, what it is in-and-for-itself, it is *alienated*. The subject is therefore doomed to search for a (mythical) origin where this alienation did not exist, and where there was unity (*Y a de l'Un*, "there is the One" or "there's such a thing as One" as Lacan says in Seminar XX), but this search can only be done in-and-through-language, and the best that language can do is *repeat* and *transfer* within the closed system that is language, thereby never achieving this unity. So the subject's construction of his/her world is ultimately relying on a *misconstruction* and *misrecognition* (*méconnaissance*) of that same reality. Its desire for unity can only be maintained through a phantasmatic construction of reality, as Reeder states: "And what the I [jaget] thus defends is nothing else than its specific degree of misconstruction, its systematic distortion of the real circumstances [my translation]".¹⁴

¹³ For what happens if the castration is *wholly* refused is the development of *psychosis*. Lacan shows this through an interpretation of the Schreber case (which in turn is a Freudian analysis). A simple description of the Schreber case: the German Daniel Paul Schreber (1824-1881) in his forties and early fifties fell into delusional psychoses after failures in his political career as well as in his personal life. His delusion consisted of him prophetically being called by God to redeem the world. How? By a gradual transformation or evolution into a woman. He believed that only by dying as a woman could he redeem the world. The Lacanian interpretation is that Schreber's psychosis is due to the lack of symbolic castration. For Schreber the Name-of-the-Father was never internalized, thereby never breaking the belief in a unity with the mOther. See Scott, Charles E., "The Pathology of the Father's Rule. Lacan and the Symbolic Order", *Lacan & Theological Discourse*, ed. Crownfield, David, Wyschogrod, Edith, Raschke, Carl A., New York 1989.

¹⁴ Reeder, Jurgen, *Begär och etik. Om kön och kärlek i den fallocentriska ordningen*, Stockholm/Stehag 1990, p. 59. The

Reeder thus knows that there is an element of *méconnaissance* in his exposition, and so am I. The point of this discussion can be summarized in this question: Not in spite, but *because of* this element of misconstruction/misrecognition and never satisfied desire, what consequences does it have for my [Kierkegaard's, Lacan's, yours] very existence?

Sources

Due to the shortage in time, and space, this study must be viewed in lacking a truly proper treatment of the works of both Kierkegaard and Lacan; however, I do maintain that I am dealing with central issues in the works of both these thinkers, obviously, since otherwise I could not have permitted myself to argue for anything. Which texts will I mainly rely on then?

When it comes to Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske Smuler* (1844) *Begrebet Angest* (1844) and *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, part II (1846) will be the primary objects of study.¹⁵ When it comes to Lacan, the works that I will be relying on is *Écrits* (a compilation of his articles from 1933-1966), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964); *Le triomphe de la religion précédé de discours aux catholiques* (which gathers a lecture from 1963 and an interview from 1975); *Des-noms-du-père* (which gathers two seminars from 1963 and 1973), and *On Feminine Sexuality* (the seminar from 1972-73).¹⁶

Other works by other philosophers and/or psychoanalysts will also be employed in order to clarify Lacan's theses and arguments (as has been made evident already).

discussion of Reeder is loosely based on chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, Søren, *Philosophiske smuler*, København 1977; *Begrebet Angest. En simpel psykologisk-paapegende Overveelse i Retning af det dogmatiske Problem om Arvesynden. Af Virgilius Haufniensis, Samlede Værker. Bind 6. Philosophiske Smuler. Begrebet Angest. Tre Taler ved tænkte Arvesynden. Af Virgilius Haufniensis, Samlede Værker. Bind 6. Philosophiske Smuler. Begrebet Angest. Tre Taler ved tænkte Leiligheder*, København 1991; *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift til de philosophiske Smuler. Mimisk-pathetisk-dialektisk Sammenskrift, Eksistentielt Indlag. Af Johannes Climacus. Udgiven af Søren Kierkegaard.. Samlede Værker. Bind 10. Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift. Andet halvbind*, København 1991

¹⁶ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*; *Des Noms-du-père*; *Le triomphe de la religion*; *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX. On Feminine Sexuality. The Limits of Love and Knowledge. Encore 1972-1973*, Translated with Notes by Bruce Fink, New York, London 1999; *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, Translated by Bruce Fink, New York, London 2006.

I. *Impossibility and Prohibition: Dogmatics*

The Subject of the Lack, or the Structural Function of Impossibility

In my reading of Lacan thus far I have found *On Feminine Sexuality. The Limits of Love and Knowledge* to be a central work of his theory. One could say that it is the Lacan of the 1970's that is my textual matrix for reading the earlier Lacan, but as I have mentioned earlier, I do not see a radical break in Lacan's intellectual voyage through the years. Thus, e.g., I maintain that the basic structure of desire and *jouissance*¹⁷ in the "graph of desire"¹⁸ from 1960 is still adhered to by Lacan in *On Feminine Sexuality*. The main argument being that Lacan never dissociates himself from the thesis that the mainspring of desire and *jouissance* is language: "Reality is approached with the apparatuses of *jouissance*". [...] there's no other apparatus than language".¹⁹ This does not mean that *jouissance* is purely linguistic in essence, this would be absurd. The statement rather says that the way man approaches and obtains *jouissance* is essentially *related* to man's existence as "un animal parlant".²⁰ But enough of this, let us turn to the subject of lack, albeit we have (always) already turned to it.

Lacan bases his definition of the subject on the minimal formulation that the subject is the "subject of a signifier".²¹ The signifier is the technical term coined by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure to characterize one of the two most basic elements of language: the *signifier* (*signifiant*, the vehicle of the meaning of the sign, i.e. a sound or written letters in a sequence) and the *signified* (*signifié*, the concept of that which the signifier represents) who taken together constitute a *sign* through the process of *signification*. However, for Lacan, the most important feature of this dyadic structure of the sign is the *bar* that divides it: S/s (to be read as "signifier over signified", indicating the dominance of the signifier). But even for Saussure, the signified was not to be taken as a referent to something material or physical, but as a mental concept. Meaning arises on a mental level where the two elements of signs refer only to one another in a differential logic. So the distinction between S and s is a purely *formal* one even for Saussure.²² But Lacan goes even further. For him there is no stopping of signification, it is the

¹⁷ *Jouissance* is the French term for enjoyment. However, Lacan preferred to maintain the French word even in English translations of his texts, because it has one connotation in French that it does not in English: "to come" (as in have a sexual orgasm).

¹⁸ See Lacan, Jacques, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious", *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, translated by Bruce Fink, New York, London 2006, p. 681-692.

¹⁹ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 55.

²⁰ Lacan, *Le triomphe de la religion*, p. 88. Keep in mind that *Le triomphe de la religion* is from 1974.

²¹ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 142. Lacan's most elaborate, or one of the most elaborate, reflections on this can be found in "The Agency of the Letter".

²² Some interpreters of Saussure have tried to make the S/s dyad into a referential matter. The Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, for instance, used "expression" for signifier and "content" for signified, which has been interpreted as a referential theory, where "content" is said to be something in external reality. See Chandler, Daniel, "Semiotics for Beginners", <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem02.html>, april 6 2007.

very process of signification that *retroactively* constitutes meaning by contingently giving one signifier the status of a concept or "thing", thus rendering the signified out of reach. But this meaning "is never it", even on a formal level there is a bar that resists signification, the bar itself, if conceived as a signified, refuses as the American religious scholar Mark C. Taylor puts it.²³ The signified always "slides" (*glisse*) under the signifier, so that even *within* the formal structure of language there is a lack which propels us to say something more. The subject is a signifier, that which we call "identity" is a chain of signifiers. What does this tell us? Nothing other than that "a signifier represents a subject to another signifier".²⁴ But, as Lacan states, there is something else to the subject than merely signifiers, viz. desire, need and demand. For what? This *question* reveals that desire, demand and (biological) need are intimately connected to the logic of the signifier. Desire is a very important concept in Lacanian theory, it is that which is *beyond* and/or *in addition to* (conscious) demand and need, since both can be satisfied. (Unconscious) desire can never be satisfied.²⁵

The reason that desire remains unsatisfied is precisely its *aim* at something *impossible*: the subject as completely self-identical or One; this is impossible, since the subject is always already, or *a priori*, *barred from itself*. The impossibility is in essence a lack which is impossible to fill or erase. The Name-of-the-Father amounts to a *prohibitory* symbolic function, the No-of-the-Father (*le Non-du-Père*) as Lacan puts it. This prohibition is purely functional, it seeks to conceal the true impossibility by making it a *beyond* of prohibition, which is an-other jouissance, i.e. not jouissance in or from the Other, but jouissance that goes beyond it. What is prohibited is precisely the One (Y a de l'Un), the Good, the Beautiful, the True, and so on, as universals. What is prohibited is unity or totality. This is exactly what symbolic castration amounts to: it is the loss of something one never possessed, a traumatic event which cannot be symbolized since it never occurred. This is the very precondition for our desire, but also for our enjoyment, i.e. the *impossibility turns out to be a negative as well as a positive condition for our existence as "speaking animals"*. How?

First I will deal with the impossibility as a negative condition (the positive condition will be dealt with in the next part). Here Lacan's concept of the *objet petit a* (*a* as in autre, other), the object-cause of desire, is crucial. The question here is not so much *what* you desire (what object), but rather, what *causes* the desire (in the object). The objet a is something "in you more than you", and two of Lacan's most elementary examples are the gaze and the voice. Let us elaborate a bit

²³ Taylor, Mark C., "Refusal of the Bar", *Lacan & Theological Discourse*, ed. Crownfield, David, Wyschogrod, Edith, Raschke, Carl A., New York 1989, p. 39.

²⁴ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 142.

²⁵ But we should not view the unconscious as wholly separate from conscious thought. Rather, the statement "the unconscious is structured like a language" means that its structure is, on a formal level, the same as that of conscious thought, which has the consequence that the unconscious is always already at work in conscious thought. A simple argument that Lacan offers is hesitations, slips of the tongue, or interjections when we speak, see Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 26.

on the gaze. We never, in effect, *see* a gaze. Here Lacan is in a dialogue with Sartre. According to Sartre, if we see the eye, we do not see the gaze, and reversely, if we see the gaze we do not see the eye. In any case, something *evades* our field of representation, there is an *absence*, a *lack*. Lacan goes even further than Sartre – albeit that he claims that even Sartre realized this: ”The gaze I encounter – you can find this in Sartre's own writing – is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other”.²⁶ The objet a as gaze is founded upon our misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of it as *something* other than absence or lack, namely that which could cause the satisfaction of desire. But it is precisely this misrecognition that makes possible a (mis)construction. We see here an example of how the the dimensions of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real are intertwined:

(i) the sense-perception and some sort of feeling accompanied with it (Imaginary) of the gaze is at hand, since we are *looking* at a (physical) somebody. The gaze is, however, precisely that which *eludes* sense-perception and causes our desire²⁷; (ii) which is situated in the field of the Other (Symbolic). So, desire produces and reproduces itself by means of linguistic strategies in which the field of the Imaginary is *displaced*²⁸: these strategies are *metonymy* and *metaphor*. It is best if I exemplify. The gaze is often very important when human beings fall in love with a person, when we see/recognize/construct something special or unique in that person. The very possibility for falling in love stems from the objet a: we can, thus, in the gaze (mis)recognize/(mis)construct some sublime essence, i.e. in a metonymical fashion, where the part (gaze) stands for the whole (essence), and/or we can in the gaze (mis)recognize/(mis)construct something else which heightens our love, e.g. ”Your gaze has the blue of ether and waves ” as the poet Renée Vivien writes, thus in a metaphorical fashion where one signifier is replaced for another. The point is that we construct a *fantasy*²⁹ through endless chains of signifiers (and intertwined representations), that can be formed in endless formations. The fantasy, therefore, sustains our desire. The crucial thing here is that all these formations are derivations from this simple formula: S/s, which means that the signified (objet a) will always slide under the signifier, propelling the subject to say more or again (*encore*)³⁰:

²⁶ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 84.

²⁷ This is, I believe, why Lacan calls this dimension ”the Imaginary”. Sense-perception turns out to come to a halt in the field of representation, which renders its representation of something ”real” faulty, something in need of something else, thus imaginary.

²⁸ The relation between the Imaginary and Symbolic is not one of symmetry, but, rather, asymmetry. What a signifier does when the movement from Imaginary to Symbolic takes place is not to represent the sense-perception, mood or feeling, it is not a representation. What the signifier does is to fill the void that is created from the Imaginary representation, the objet a. This is why Lacan speaks of the Freudian *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, i.e. ”the representative (*la représentant*) [...] of representation (de la représentation)”, Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 217.

²⁹ I equate the Lacanian concept of fantasy with the Foucauldian notion of *discourse*, i.e. a pre-conscious linguistic structure that is the very form of thought as well as the construction of human society.

³⁰ The same goes for ”the Symbolic” as for the Imaginary as was shown in note 27. It is called the Symbolic

It is in that respect that the subject turns out to be – and this is only true for speaking beings – a being (*un étant*) whose being is always elsewhere, as the predicate shows. The subject is never more than fleeting (*ponctuel*) and vanishing, for it is a subject only by a signifier and to another signifier.³¹

(iii) finally, the Real: "it is in relation to the real that the level of phantasy functions. The real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real".³² The very function of objet a is to project the lack as something *external* to the subject itself, and in this "persuading the other that he has that which may complement us, we assure ourselves of being able to continue to misunderstand precisely what we lack".³³ So what we lack is *impossible* to fill: the Real is this failure of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, precisely their aim at something impossible. But this impossibility has nonetheless crucial effects for the constitution of the subject, its distortive presence as lack is *a priori* to it.³⁴

Now, a subject can deal with this impossibility in the following modalities: it can either maintain the fantasy as something which can satisfy the impossible aim of desire, thus truly believing that desire can be satisfied (the hysteric); or it can "play along" in fantasy: The French psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni has elaborated the formula "I know very well...but still" ("je sais bien...mais quand même"³⁵) to describe the logic behind this "playing along" in fantasy. "I know very well that political universal do not exist, but still, I strive towards and say I believe in them"; "I know very well that my son has murdered and raped many women, but still, he is my son, there must be some good in him", and so on. Now, since this "playing along" in fantasy, obviously, cannot erase or fill the lack, it is itself a "pathological" condition (the effects of handling lack can also regress to other "pathological" conditions: neurosis, hysteria, and so on). However, what some call "pathological", I call essential for human existence. The question is which modality Kierkegaard can be said to follow? Is there a way of believing or "playing along", and accepting impossibility *as such*? If one truly *believes* then logically we must exclude at the same time maintaining impossibility. Therefore Kierkegaard, I claim, "plays along" and maintains

because it cannot be reduced to something "real".

³¹ Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 142.

³² Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 41.

³³ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p.133.

³⁴ We recall note 27 and note 29. If it was the case that the two dimensions that have some sort, no matter how inadequate, of relation to the external physical world are named in such a manner as to dissociate them from their relation to the "real", why is the dimension of "the Real", which is wholly dissociative from "the real", called "the Real"? I believe that Lacan uses this formulation to show us that the Real is the closest thing to reality, conceived both as *noumenal* and as some sort of unity or totality, we get. We might conceive of the Real as the "disjunctive synthesis" of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, not just because they are incommensurate between them, but also because they are lacking reference and totality as separate. Indeed, their displacement into one another stems from this inadequacy.

³⁵ Mannoni, Octave, "Je sais bien, mais quand même...", *Clefs pour l'imaginaire*, Paris 1968. Quoted in Žižek, Slavoj, *On Belief*, London and New York 2001, p. 160.

impossibility as such.

The Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real in Kierkegaard's Dogmatics: Impossibility Maintained

On ne peut même pas imaginer comme c'est puissant, la religion. [...] On doit pouvoir s'habituer au réel.³⁶

Men indenfor Troens Sphære kan aldrig det Moment indtræde, at han forstaaer det Paradoxe [...]: thi skeer det, saa gaer hele Troens Sphære ud som en Misforstaaelse.³⁷

The literary theorist Roger Poole claims that Kierkegaard's writing is "always adversarial". His thought comes to its peak when he is in fierce polemic with some dogma, person, or text. Kierkegaard's main adversary throughout his whole life was Hegelianism, especially as it was appropriated in Denmark by J.L. Heiberg and H.L. Martensen.³⁸ But Kierkegaard's polemic against Hegelianism must be seen in relation to his dogmatics, indeed, in *Philosophiske smuler*, one of Kierkegaard's main works on dogmatics, he argues that the relationship between speculative thought (which entails "ældre og moderne Speculation") and Christianity is one of total opposition. They both, however, *aim* at the same thing, which is the Truth (Sandheten): "Hvorvidt kan Sandheten læres?"³⁹ But Kierkegaard is well aware that this aim fails to reach its *goal*, the aim strives at the *impossible*. What he opposes in speculative thought is its reduction of everything, concrete and abstract, to *abstract* thought. On this account everything possesses an inherent self-identity at negation with itself. Thus Truth, which is eternal, is something that is the very presupposition of finite being as such. But since Truth is not in-and-for-itself, is not pure self-identity, the idea is that there is a (dialectical) movement, or mediation, between entities whose ultimate *telos* is Spirit, since it is Spirit at negation with itself. This movement can only be grasped *in abstracto*, thus presupposing the *in concreto* as its self-negation. According to Kierkegaard this "modern speculation" is the same as "the older" one, the latter incarnated in Socrates, where the claim is that the Truth has been present in man from eternity, and the way to gain access to this Truth is through recollection. In Lacanese, speculative thought presupposes the "Y a de l'Un", an-other jouissance if you will. It sees the lack, the lack of pure self-identity, of eternity, as a moment in the dialectical movement of self-determination. *Kierkegaard*, on the other hand, *maintains the lack as such*.

In opposition to the positing of the abstract as the essential Kierkegaard posits *existence* as

³⁶ Lacan, *Le triomphe de la religion*, p. 79; p. 95.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 247.

³⁸ Poole, Roger, *Kierkegaard. The Indirect Communication*, Charlottesville and London 1993, p. 2.

³⁹ Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske smuler*, p. 7.

the true sphere for understanding the Truth. Here Kierkegaard refutes Hegelianism with a *reductio ad absurdum* argument: According to Kierkegaard, abstract thought helps him become immortal by killing him as an individual, therefore: "Selvmord er den eneste Existent-Consqvents af den rene Tænken".⁴⁰ The point is of course that in order to posit a unity between abstraction and existence, existence has to be negated in an *aufhebung* (sublation), i.e. one has to die in order to negate finity and become infinite, therefore, one should commit suicide. But according to Kierkegaard one must understand abstraction *in* existence, which means that thought becomes essentially subjective; Kierkegaard calls a person who thinks in this manner a subjective thinker (subjektive Tænker). The subjective thinker's task is to understand himself in existence, which is the Christian principle (det christelige Princip). This thinker is suffering, because all existential problems are wrought with suffering. He is, further, a dialectician, but he practices *qualitative dialectics* (*qvalitative Dialektik*), where he maintains the *qualitative disjunction* (*qvalitative Disjunktion*) between existence and abstraction. This reality of existence (Existent-Virkelighed) is not communicable or intersubjective, because the moment somebody tries to understand somebody else's existence (*esse*) he turns it into thought, and thereby only possibility (*posse*), he simply imagines (indbilder) himself understanding.⁴¹ The ultimate Truth lies, then, in subjectivity: "Sandheden er Subjektiviteten".⁴² However, it is my contention that we cannot read this statement as: subjectivity *is* Truth, but rather as: Truth is gained *only through* subjectivity. This is important, since it allows Kierkegaard to incorporate an intersubjective dimension, viz. Christian dogmatics. Based on the discussion in this chapter, my claim is that we can view subjectivity as the dimension of the Imaginary, and Christian dogmatics as the Symbolic; not only that, we can in Kierkegaard find the notion that subjectivity must be posited with dogmatics in order for it to be able to reach the Truth. In *Begrebet Angest* Kierkegaard argues that the *possibility* of the consummation of Spirit (Aand) lies in the mental (subjective) state of anxiety (Angest), *but* in order to fully come to the *condicio sine qua non* of salvation, viz. *faith* (Troen), anxiety must be handed over to dogmatics: "Saasnart Psychologien er færdig med Angesten bliver den at aflevere til Dogmatiken".⁴³ (Part two of my inquiry will in depth deal with *Begrebet Angest*, in this part I am dealing with dogmatics). The consummation of Spirit, or the Truth, is on Kierkegaard's account, of course, *eternal bliss* (*evig Salighed*). Eternal bliss can, however, never be attained through an abstract conceptualization that is perfectly knowable, that identifies the single subject *as* time, generations, century, mankind, Truth, and so on; simply put, as a *quantitative moment* therein, this is

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, Søren, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 15.

⁴¹ It should be noted that this is a crucial part of Kierkegaard's thought, the so-called "indirect communication" (indirekt Meddelelse).

⁴² Kierkegaard, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 68.

⁴³ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 240.

exactly why Kierkegaard exercises qualitative dialectics, the moments are not qualitatively (or essentially) the same, but different, they can therefore not be reduced to a quantitative chain. In other words, there is a fundamental *lack* at work here, and for Kierkegaard it is expressed thus: "Christendommens Existents-Modsigelse har jag søgt at udtrykke i det Problem: at en evig Salighed afgjøres her i Tiden ved et Forhold til noget Historisk".⁴⁴

For Kierkegaard, Christianity is primarily an existential communication (Existents-Meddelelse), and existential contradiction (Existents-Modsigelse). For it is not just that man is in existence, and thereby finite and imperfect, but rather that "Existents er sammensat af Uendelighed og Endelighed, den Existerende er uendelig og endelig".⁴⁵ What is lacking is the eternal Truth. Already here we see how Kierkegaard expresses the dimension of the Real, by showing that existence as finite subjectivity which is wrought with *suffering* (Lidelse, Imaginary) and eternity (Symbolic) renders a fundamental incommensurability between them, there is no self-identity here in the Hegelian sense. Between finity and eternity there is a fundamental *gap*, a qualitative disjunction, or *absolute difference* (*absolute Forskjellige*), *yet we are to maintain this very gap in our existence*. This according to Kierkegaard is pathetic, as it should be: "det Pathetiske ligger ikke i at vidne om en evig Salighed, men i at forvandle sin egen Existents til et Vidnesbyrd om den".⁴⁶

Kierkegaard truly accepts impossibility as constitutive for our existence and relation to God. Since our knowledge is insufficient to determine what the True is in a *positive* manner, we must accept the fact that *the positive* is only knowable *in the negative* of knowledge (det Positive er kjendeligt paa det Negative), thus revelation (Åbenbaringen) is known in the secret (Hemmeligheden), bliss (Saligheden) in suffering (Lidelsen), certainty of faith (Troens Vished) in uncertainty (Uvisheden), Truth (Sandheden) in absurdity (Absurditeten), and so on.⁴⁷ For Kierkegaard the only access to the impossible is *in the impossible*, the impossible in knowledge: God. This is why there is no prohibition for Kierkegaard, since this would conceal the true impossibility. This is exactly what the *absolute paradox* (*absolute Paradox*) amounts to: that your eternal salvation is determined in a historical *moment* (*Øieblikket*). How is this possible? I.e. God, the eternal (den Evige), allknowing (Alvidende), and omnipresent (Allestedsnærværende) becomes man, finite, not allknowing, and spatio-temporal. In a historical moment He gives man, *sub specie aeternitatis*, the condition (Betingelsen) for learning the eternal Truth, and thereby the Truth, viz. eternal bliss. We are here talking about "det Historiskes Eviggjørelse og det Eviges Historiskgjørelse".⁴⁸ If we follow (Hegelian dialectical) reason, i.e. the knowable, we will not be

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 85.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 88.

⁴⁷ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 120.

⁴⁸ Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske smuler*, p. 58.

able to come to the Truth. Only when reason is set aside can we fully understand what the Truth is: the Truth is only accessible in *faith* (*Troen*) in the absolute paradox, which Kierkegaard also calls the absurd (det Absurde) and the incomprehensible (det Uforstaaelige).

But is not Kierkegaard *projecting the lack*? I argue that he, in effect, is not (which makes him come very close to Lacan). We recall that Kierkegaard is critical towards the self-identity between man and Truth. He argues that man is in the condition of untruth (Usandhet), and the only one who can give man the condition to learn the Truth is someone who knows it, i.e. God. But why is man in the condition of untruth? Kierkegaard claims it is man's *own fault*, viz. because of the *sin* (*synden*). Man had the possibility to choose, and he chose to sin, which was a free choice, which makes man free. However, in the quality of this freedom to sin man is excluded from the Truth by being tied to the sin. In this latter sense, then, man is not free. And since man is self-responsible for being the serf of sin (Sydens Træl), his salvation must come from outside of himself, since he cannot go back to the moment (Øieblikket) when he chose sin. This salvation comes from God as Saviour (Frelser), who saves man from unfreedom; as deliverer (Forløser), since He delivers man who has doomed himself; as Redeemer (Forsoner), who gives man the condition for the Truth, thereby removing the wrath that layed over him; as judge (Dommer), since man must remember that God is the ultimate authority. But why would God want to save man? Since he is omnipotent and eternal there is nothing that can make him do this. Kierkegaard's claim is that it is a question of *unfathomable love* (*uudgrundelig Kjærlighed*). God wants to bridge the gap between Himself and man and bring forth an *absolute similarity* (*absolute Lighed*), the "Y a de l'Un" in Lacanese, but one cannot understand this through human knowledge, since this reduces God to the human sphere. On the other hand we have to assume that God gives man, *sub specie aternitatis*, the condition (Troen) in temporality (Øieblikket) to reach the eternal Truth, which is a paradox. The problem is that man wants to "opdage Noget, den ikke selv kan tænke. Denne Tænknings Lidenskab er i Grunden overalt tilstede i Tænkningen, ogsaa i den Enkeltes, forsaavidt han jo tænkende er ikke blot sig selv".⁴⁹ God is beyond the limit (Grændsen) of knowledge, He is absolute difference, which man nonetheless *aims at in* knowledge. I argue that Kierkegaard is here expressing the dimension of the Real: an inherently negative dimension of the psychic economy that nonetheless is necessary for it. Kierkegaard's proximity to Lacan lies, then, in that he fully assumes this negativity as a positive condition for the Truth, what we might call *knowledge in the Real*. The Truth, then, lies *in* absolute difference: "[...] Lader nu Forskjelligheden sig ikke fastholde, fordi der intet Kjendetegn er, sa gaer det med Forskjelligheden og Ligheden som med alle saadanne dialektiske Modsætninger, de ere identiske".⁵⁰ So if try to understand God

⁴⁹ Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske smuler*, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske smuler*, p. 43.

as anything other than absolute difference, viz. as self-identity, it will render a fundamental misunderstanding (Misforstaaelsen) of Him. It is the absolute difference *as such* that is to be maintained, and this happens in the absolute paradox: ”samme Paradox har den Dobbeltthed, ved hvilken det viser sig som det absolute; negativt ved at bringe Syndens absolute Forskjellighed frem, positivt ved at ville ophæve denne absolute Forskjellighed i den absolute Lighed ”.⁵¹ Is this not a full acceptance of the Lacanian *méconnaissance* as a positive instance? Kierkegaard knows that this leads to suffering (Lidelse) and uncertainty (Uvished), but these are precisely the characteristics of leading a true religious existence (as opposed to an aesthetic one):

Den Religiøse forholder sig til en evig Salighed, og Forholdet er kjendelig paa Lidelsen, og Lidelsen er Forholdets væsentlige Udtryk – for en Existerende. [...] Tager jeg Uvisheden bort – for at faae en endnu høiere Vished – saa faaer jeg ikke en Troende i Ydmyghed, i Frygt og Bæven, men en æsthetisk Frisk-Fyr, en Satans Karl, der uegentligen sagt vil fraternisere Gud, men egentligen sagt slet ikke forholder sig til Gud.⁵²

We have shown that for Kierkegaard maintaining the lack is crucial for reaching the Truth. How does he ”play along” then? If the Kirkegaardian faith is subjective, in the last instance belonging to the inner individual sphere, how can one live in an intersubjective ethical and political community? Intersubjectively, the Kierkegaardian faith is an impossibility, since one cannot base intersubjective relations on paradoxes. So how does one lead an external life in a community according to Kierkegaard? Here we find that Kierkegaard's answer is equivalent to ”playing along” in fantasy. The answer is, thus, that a truly religious person leads a life in the communal sphere wholly separated from the subjective sphere, or as Kierkegaard puts it: ”Maximum: paa engang at forholde sig til det absolute τέλος og til det relative – ikke ved at mediere dem, men ved absolut at forholde sig til sit absolute τέλος og relativt til det relative”.⁵³ So the true believer should always keep a distance between his inner and outer (Udvortes) life. Everybody does not do this, and this is why Kierkegaard speaks of the three existential spheres (Existents-Sphærer): the aesthetical (den æsthetiske), the ethical (det etiske), and the religious (den religiøse) which in turn is divided in religiosity (Religiositeten) *A* and *B*. The aesthetical sphere is separated from the ethical through irony, and the ethical is separated from the religious through humour (Humor). Thus only the ethical and religious spheres keep a distance between inner and outer life, while the person immersed in the aesthetical sphere is wholly immersed in outer life, seeking

⁵¹ Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske smuler*, p. 45.

⁵² Kierkegaard, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 139-140.

⁵³ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 99.

wordly pleasures such as wealth, happiness, the most beautiful girl, and so on. Here the aesthetic breaks with the ethical. Existing in the ethical sphere means that one assumes an infinite or absolute principle, or demand (Fordring), but this can only be done in intimacy (sit Inderste), so any attempt to make this principle external will render a contradiction. Here irony comes in, because irony is the ethical's incognito (Incognito) in the external world. By distancing himself in this manner, the ethicist does not allow any intermingling between his true inner principle, and the external principles.⁵⁴ It is exactly the same with humour, it is the incognito of the religious individual, his/her way of protesting against the commensurability (Commensurabilitet) of the external with the internal. The individual is here intimately religious, and uses humour as a front for the external world, and for this the individual suffers. What, then, is the difference between religiosity *A* and *B*? Kierkegaard defines *A* as the dialectics of intimacy (Inderliggjørelsens Dialektik); *A* does not relate itself to eternal bliss through a certain something (Noget); the individual is instead wholly immersed in himself/herself. Religiosity *B*, or the paradoxical religiosity (paradoxe Religieusitet), or the religiosity that has dialectics at another place (paa andet Sted) on the other hand, is related, or has its condition in a certain something, and this something determines eternal bliss. This something is the historical moment when God, the eternal, became at a determined temporal moment (bestemt Tidsmoment) a simple man, i.e. the absolute paradox. This is what faith has to express in existence: "Vanskeligheden [...] ligger i subjektivt at ville eftertrægte Kundskab om det Historiske i interesse af sin evige Salighed; og Den som ikke har denne høieste subjektive Lidenskab, han er ikke en Christen [...]"⁵⁵ This also means that the individual now has to express a conviction of sin (Synds-Bevidstheden); whereas the conviction of guilt (Skyld-Bevidstheden) is strictly internal, the conviction of sin has its root externally.⁵⁶ Does this not mean that Kierkegaard, after all, is projecting the lack? From a psychoanalytic point of view, no, since he is explicit with the fact that one cannot understand the paradox, *go beyond subjectivity*, for if one does, the faith is misunderstood: "Men indenfor Troens Sphære kan aldrig det Moment indtræde, at han forstaaer det Paradoxe (i ligefrem Betydning): thi skeer det, saa gaaer hele Troens Sphære ud som en Misforstaaelse"⁵⁷ But again, this is the very meaning of "det absolute Paradoxes qualitative Dialektik"⁵⁸

Kierkegaard is thus aware of the gap between *S* and *s*, or, more precisely, between desire

⁵⁴ This is why Kierkegaard calls Hegelian ethics unethical, since it makes the state the foremost instance of ethics, thereby omitting the absolute principle.

⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 244.

⁵⁶ And here Kierkegaard is talking about total (Totale) guilt and sin, because as soon as the concept of God is involved there can only be qualitative determination. But we must also remember that the positive is known only through the negative according to Kierkegaard, so guilt and sin are signs of a pathetic relation to eternal bliss: "nu er det negative Udtryk afgjort stærkere: Forholdet kjendeligt paa Skyld-Bevidstheden Totalitet", Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 205.

⁵⁷ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 247.

⁵⁸ Kierkegaard, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 230.

(for the Truth) and its satisfaction, and he *assumes this gap as the expression of the Truth*. So any attempt to try and bridge the gap takes us further away from the Truth. This is why according to Kierkegaard to live according to a relative *telos* is, *in the last instance, unethical*: ”Knuden er imidlertid, at det netop er uethisk at have sit Liv i det Comparative, det Relative, i det Udvortes[...]”.⁵⁹ What this means is that it is impossible for the individual to be true to him or herself in a community, because the individual would then forsake his or her subjectivity, which is the very precondition for reaching the Truth. Kierkegaard's view on political participation amounts to the same conclusion.⁶⁰ Over the Imaginary and the Symbolic, Kierkegaard thus places (knowledge in) the Real, which subsumes the former two in the form of faith in the absolute paradox, i.e. that one is in absolute difference from God, and yet *in* this very difference has a relation to Him. So, because access to God is, in terms of knowledge (Imaginary and Symbolic) impossible it must, *eo ipso*, be maintained as such. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard does ”play along”. What other psychic effects does this have for Kierkegaard? Does he ever manage to enjoy (*jouir*)? These are the questions that we will deal with in the next part.

⁵⁹ *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 203.

⁶⁰ *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 281: ”Af alle Regjeringsformer er den monarchiske den bedste, fremfor nogen anden begyndtger den og omfreder de Privatiserendes stille Indbildninger og uskyldige Galskaber. Kun Demokratiet, den meest tyranniske Regjeringsform, forpligter Enhver til positiv Deeltagelse, hvilket allerede vor Tids Selskaber og General-Forsamlinger ofte nok kan paamine En om. Er det Tyrannie, at Een vil regjere, og saa lade os Andre være frie? Nei, men det er Tyrannie, at Alle vil regjere, og ovenikjøbet forpligte Enhver til at deeltage i Regjeringen [...]”.

II. *Jouissance as Transgression and Sinthome: Anxiety*

Jouissance as Transgression

How does one enjoy (jouir)? Certainly, if desire can never be satisfied there must be some other mental state that provides us with a breathing space, so to speak, to cope with our lacking existence. The important thing to remember is that enjoyment is inextricably linked to the logic of desire. What, then, is enjoyment, and how do we attain it? To put it succinctly, enjoyment means transgressing impossibility and prohibition. But in what sense? Prohibition is nothing other than the father function, i.e. symbolic castration, which is essential for any speaking animal. Symbolic castration instates a prohibition to something one never had, i.e. to *be* the complement to the Other's lack. In terms of desire this means that this lack is its propulsion: one maintains that it is possible to fill the lack; *the lack itself*, manifested in the objet a, causes the subject to ask the question *Chè vuoi?* ("What does he want from me?"), which is the question of the Other.⁶¹ Around this lack the subject thus forms a fantasy and thereby sustains desire.⁶² Now, since symbolic castration is a linguistic phenomenon which in the last instance amounts to barring the signified from the signifier, and since this is essential for our very existence, this means that jouissance can only be attained "after the letter", it is essentially tied to language. As Lacan says apropos the drive, viz. that it is a "grammatical artifice".⁶³ We enjoy through a partial object, the objet a, by circumventing it, setting it aside, since it *sensu stricto* does not exist: "The *objet petit a* is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object".⁶⁴ If the objet a is a *negative* precondition for the satisfaction of desire, it is *positive* for attaining jouissance, but this can only be the case if one situates oneself on the side of "not-whole".⁶⁵ It is in this, and only in this, sense that we speak of *transgression* of impossibility and

⁶¹ This is elaborated by Lacan in "The Subversion of the Subject".

⁶² The Lacanian fantasy, I claim, can in essence be equated with the Foucauldian notion of discourse in terms of its constitutive logic, viz. fantasy is a system of signifiers through which we construct our reality.

⁶³ Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject", p. 692.

⁶⁴ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 180.

⁶⁵ This goes for women as well as for men. In *On Feminine sexuality* Lacan elaborates on the way women and men, respectively, desire and enjoy. We recall the famous formulas of the sexual relation: the male pole is defined first as $\forall x\Phi x$, i.e. "man as a whole (the universal quantifier here does not mean "all x", but rather "all of x") falls under the phallic function"; second as $\exists x\sim\Phi x$, to be read as "there is at least one x (existential quantifier) which does not fall under the phallic function" (here the existential quantifier is to be read in the sense of formal logic, i.e. "some x"), viz. the father function. The father function is the exception that proves the rule. If one is inscribed on this side, *both women and men can do so*, it means that one has placed oneself on the side of desire and fantasy, this is what the formula $\mathfrak{S}\rightarrow a$ means, i.e. it is the formula of fantasy ("the barred subject desires objet petit a"). The paradox is that the only way to assume a universal identity is first by positing a *universal prohibition* ($\forall x\Phi x$), and then positing an x which is not prohibited ($\exists x\sim\Phi x$). There is no way out of this prohibition, *eo ipso*, it being universal. The way out is instead offered by the female pole (and again, both men and women can chose to inscribe themselves in either pole): The first formula for the female pole is $\sim\exists x\sim\Phi x$, to be read as "there is

prohibition. Thus what transgression amounts to is wholly setting aside, so to speak, desire and fantasy.

From Jouissance to Jouis-sense: Sinthome

The transgressive jouissance as outlined above is summarized sometimes as "going through fantasy" (*traversé du fantasme*). It is when one realizes that fantasy is simply a way of sustaining the desire which can never be satisfied, when one realizes that the Other itself is barred: $S(\bar{A})$, to be read as "signifier of the lack in the Other". However, in the later Lacan's teaching there were patients who increasingly "went through the fantasy", realized that it only served to sustain desire, and could, thereby, distance themselves from it. Nonetheless, their symptoms still remained, they continued, *knowingly*, to construct fantasies they knew could never satisfy desire. For these patients the symptom was no longer something negative, on the contrary, it was through the symptom that these patients enjoyed. This led Lacan to form a new neologism for a paradoxical jouissance: *sinthome*: "Symptom as a *sinthome* is a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense".⁶⁶ This is, indeed, the inverse of the jouissance which is attained by placing oneself on the side of the "not-whole". It is a jouissance that can be equated with Kant's notion of the Sublime, as Žižek argues:

Above all, however, Beauty and Sublimity are opposed along the axis pleasure-displeasure: a view of Beauty offers us pleasure, while 'the object is received as sublime with a pleasure that is only possible through the mediation of displeasure' (Kant, 1964, p. 109). In short, the Sublime is 'beyond the pleasure principle', it is a paradoxical pleasure procured by displeasure itself (the exact definition – one of

no x that does not fall under the phallic function". Here I believe, again, that Lacan is using the existential quantifier in the way it is used in formal logic, i.e. as "some x", which means that *nobody* escapes symbolic castration, *not even women*; second, the formula $\sim \forall x \Phi x$, to be read as "not all of x falls under the phallic function". This is what is meant with "not-whole". Thus female jouissance is not *instead*, or *beyond of* phallic jouissance but *in addition to it (en plus)*. Only by seeing herself as "not-whole", i.e. not universal, symbolized in barred Woman (with a capital W). Situated on this pole one has a relation to the signifier of the lack in the Other, $S(\bar{A})$, meaning that jouissance on this pole is wholly dissociated from desire and fantasy. It is my claim that this jouissance is *not* a complete dissociation from *language*, i.e. it is not a mental state that is wholly beyond the linguistic order. Instead it is a jouissance that is attained *within* the Other (and indeed the Imaginary) by the realization that language itself provides this jouissance by ways of circumventing *desire* and *fantasy*, by realizing that jouissance is that which serves nothing (*ce qui ne sert à rien*), thus one simply lets it come, takes signification and representation for what it is, and that is it. Woman is "not-whole" because language is "not-whole". But in actuality Lacan says something similar when he says that "Woman has a relation with $S(\bar{A})$, and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ ", Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, p. 83.

⁶⁶ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 75.

the Lacanian definitions – of enjoyment [*jouissance*]).⁶⁷

What is this Sublime that we can experience only in displeasure? It is the realization of the very impossibility of representation to attain the *noumenon*, but, it is this *a priori* failure of representation that provides us with "the true dimension of the Thing".⁶⁸ There is a displeasure in this, i.e. in the fact that the Truth is impossible to reach through representation and signification, but the very realization of this *a priori* condition brings forth pleasure in displeasure, which makes it paradoxical.⁶⁹

Kierkegaard: Anxiety as Jouis-sense

Comme l'a vu tout aussitôt le contemporain du développement du système de Hegel, qui était alors le Système tout court, comme l'a vu, chanté, marqué Kierkegaard, l'angoisse est ici le signe ou le témoin d'une béance existentielle. J'apporte le témoignage que la doctrine freudienne est celle qui en donne l'éclaircissement.⁷⁰

Here Lacan practically says it all: Kierkegaard shows, in-and-through the Hegelian system, an existential gap (béance existentielle) whose sign is anxiety – and this Kierkegaardian insight comes to its peak when it is enlightened through psychoanalytic theory.

Kierkegaard deals with anxiety in *Begrebet Angest*. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, Kierkegaard is in fierce polemic with Hegel. In this work he attempts to show that the consummation of Spirit (Aand) cannot be fathomed by any logic, it goes beyond the scope of our knowledge and being. Yet, somehow it is there, or the *possibility* of its consummation is there. Kierkegaard's main thesis is that this possibility is there in the mental state of anxiety. We can thus see that anxiety (belonging to the Imaginary) shows an absence, a lack, but this lack is according to Kierkegaard, as we already have seen, a positive precondition. It is through anxiety that the individual is to be lead to the *condicio sine qua non* of salvation: faith, and this can happen, as we recall, only when anxiety is handed over to dogmatics (afleveret til Dogmatiken). Again, if we interpret anxiety as belonging to the Imaginary, and I believe we are justified in doing so since anxiety is wholly subjective, i.e. no one can experience anxiety for me, it can only lead to the Truth when it is displaced in the Symbolic (dogmatics). The Real is what both spheres are

⁶⁷ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 202.

⁶⁸ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 203.

⁶⁹ But then so is sado-masochism and other forms of perversions of this type, i.e. through inflicting *pain* one attains *pleasure*.

⁷⁰ Lacan, *Des-Noms-du-Père*, p. 75.

founded upon, and Kierkegaard knows it: We will recall that according to Kierkegaard the positive is known (kjendt) *only* in the negative, in absolute, or pure, negativity: God. So anxiety, in being negative, is, *eo ipso*, positive, so one should not try to overcome it. This, I argue, amounts to the Lacanian notion of the paradoxical *jouis-sense*. Indeed, Lacan himself points out that God can only be met in the Real, and since the Real is inaccessible, impossible for knowledge to grasp, it manifests itself in anxiety: "qu'un Dieu, ça se rencontre dans le réel. Comme tout réel est inaccessible, ça se signale par ce qui ne trompe pas, l'angoisse".⁷¹ I believe that Žižek's equating the Kantian Sublime with Lacan's *jouissance* (as *jouis-sense*) is entirely correct. In Kierkegaardian this means that the Sublime is *not* beyond the absolute paradox, it *is* the absolute paradox. Throughout *Begrebet Angest* Kierkegaard tries to show how the mental state of anxiety is a pathway to this. Let us examine this work a little, more, closely.

One central problem for Kierkegaard is the notions of sin and original sin. How can the sin of the one (Enkeltes Synd, Adam) apply to the whole species (Slægtens Synd)? Here we come, again, to a crucial distinction, namely that between the qualitative (Qualitative) and quantitative (Quantitative). Sin, every sin, is qualitative, it is determined by the qualitative determination (Qualitetens Bestemmelse). Here, Kierkegaard is in polemic with Hegel, in that he claims that no new quality can emerge from continuing quantitative determination, i.e. thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Instead: "Den ny Qualitet fremkommer med det Første, med Springet, med det Gaadefuldes Pludselighed. [...] Ved den første Synd kom Synden ind i Verden. Aldeles paa samme Maade gjælder det om ethvert senere Menneskes første Synd, at ved den kommer Synden ind i Verden".⁷² This means that we cannot account for the emergence of sin in the individual through some dialectical (quantitative) chain, but, rather, as something mysterious (det Gaadefuldes Pludselighed), that, only through a qualitative leap (Spring) emerges in the individual. So the quality (sin) emerges through a leap, and as soon as the quality is posited so is, in the same moment, the leap retroactively posited by the quality. This reason (Forstanden) cannot comprehend, so it conjures up some fantasy (phantasie) on how man was before the Fall (Syndefaldet) in order to deny the leap: this fantasy is the age of innocence (Uskyldigheden), but, again, Kierkegaard's claim is that innocence is lost only in the *individual's* qualitative leap. What,

⁷¹ Lacan, *Des-Noms-du-Père*, p. 92. This does not mean that in anxiety desire is forsaken. On the contrary, desire of/for the Other (the "de" in "désir de l'Autre" can be interpreted as both "of" and "for"), in Kierkegaard's case God, affects the subject, but in a non-dialecticizable way (non dialectisable): "Dans l'angoisse, vous ai-je dit, le sujet est affecté par le désir de l'Autre, *d(A)* ici au tableau. Il en est affecté d'une façon immédiate, non dialectisable. C'est en cela que l'angoisse est, dans l'affect du sujet, ce qui ne trompe pas", p. 70. We see here how truly close Lacan comes to Kierkegaard, since for Lacan also anxiety is something which does not fool (ce qui ne trompe pas) the subject, since it is a sign of that pure negativity (the Real) which is constitutive for it.

⁷² Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 126. However, Kierkegaard maintains that there is such a thing as quantitative sin, but it is incommensurable with the qualitative sin: "Angest betyder da nu to Ting. Den Angest, i hvilken Individet sætter Synden ved det qualitative Spring, og den Angest, der er kommen ind og kommer ind med Synden, og som forsaavidt ogsaa quantitativt kommer ind i Verden, for hver Gang et Individ sætter Synden", p. 146.

then, is innocence on Kierkegaard's account? It is the condition (Tilstand) of unknowing (Uskyldighed er Uvidenhed). In innocence man is not determined as Spirit, Spirit is dormant (drømmende) in man. Here all is peace and rest, but there is also something else, which is not discord (Ufred) and battle (Strid), for there is nothing (Intet) to battle with. And it is this nothing that causes anxiety: "Angest er Frihedens Virkelighed som Mulighed for Muligheden. [...] Angest er *sympathetisk Antipathie* og *en antipathetisk Sympathie*".⁷³ This is a key statement. Freedom is here identical to Spirit, as its non-realized (dorment) form. But this means that it is not Spirit, not freedom. Herein lies the paradox: Spirit (or freedom) cannot actualize itself through some dialectical process⁷⁴, its actualization is something that it really cannot comprehend, and this manifests itself in anxiety, for it is at the same time attracted to and repelled from its possibility for actualization, this is what is meant by "*sympathetisk Antipathie* og *en antipathetisk Sympathie*", one can liken it to Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*. Man is here still in innocence (unknowing). But now comes the word (Ordet), the prohibition not to eat from the tree of knowledge. But man does not yet possess knowledge, he cannot distinguish good from evil, why then does the prohibition cause anxiety in him? Because it awakens the possibility of freedom. It is the possibility (Mulighed) of "can" (at kunne). *What* he can, he does not *know*, this both frightens and attracts him. It is the "uendelige Mulighed af at kunne".⁷⁵ In a logical system (Hegelian) it is, according to Kierkegaard, easy to say that possibility turns into (gaaer over til) reality (Virkelighed). In reality it is not that easy, a mediating determination (Mellembestemmelse) is needed, which is anxiety. The paradox is that anxiety neither explains the leap (from possibility to reality), nor ethically justifies it: "Denne Mellembestemmelse er Angesten, hvilken ligesaa lidet forklarer det qualitative Spring, som den ethisk retfærdiggør det".⁷⁶

⁷³ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 136.

⁷⁴ Kierkegaard shows just how deeply he resents Hegelian philosophy when he claims that "som Aandens Drømmen, er denne Angest; og jo dybere den er, jo dybere er Nationen". Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 137. Of course, we know that the nation was for Hegel the highest manifestation of the dialectic of the Spirit to this (his that is) day.

⁷⁵ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 139.

⁷⁶ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 142. Kierkegaard continues with this aporetic definition of anxiety as neither a determination of necessity (Nødvendigheden), nor freedom. Anxiety is a held back (hildet) freedom, where freedom is not free in itself, "hvor Friheden ikke er fri i sig selv". The contradiction is that it is not freedom, yet it is not necessity (determination) either. To put it provocatively: It is freedom, it just does not know it yet, and it does not know it because of the finiteness and imperfection of being and knowledge. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has come to an equivalent formulation when it comes to Kierkegaard's notion of despair: Haberman, Jürgen, "Communicative Freedom and Negative Theology", translated with Notes by Matušík, Martin J. and Huntington, Patricia J., *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, ed. Matušík, Martin J. and Westphal, Merold, Blomington and Indianapolis 1995, p. 188. There are, Habermas highlights, two modalities of despair in Kierkegaard: (i) "In the despair of not willing to be oneself, we experience that we cannot escape ourselves, that we are condemned to freedom, and that we must posit ourselves"; (ii) "But in the next stage of in despair willing to be oneself as a self by our own power. In the end, we can wrest the despair of *defiant* self-grounding from ourselves only by becoming aware of the finitude of our freedom and in that fashion become cognizant of our dependence on an infinite power". Habermas, of course, refuses to accept Kierkegaardian thought in his "this-worldly" philosophy of "communicative action" and "communicative freedom". However, it is not my task to deal with Habermas philosophy in this essay, so I will leave it at that.

What is the mental state of anxiety, according to Kierkegaard, if not objet a *as such*? I.e. it is *pure possibility*, bereft of all concrete actualization. We recall that the objet a as an absence in the object is the very condition for "filling" it with Imaginary and Symbolic presence, i.e. forming a fantasy. This is explained by Lacan in the formula $\$ \diamond a$, to be read as "the barred subject desires objet petit a" where objet petit a is presupposed as a presence in absence. But what we have in the case of anxiety is precisely the inverse formula: $a \diamond \$$.⁷⁷ I.e. in anxiety one (Kierkegaard) assumes the position of objet a, that absence (Spirit) which cannot be grasped as presence (actualized Spirit) by any form of knowledge. I.e. Kierkegaard on the one hand maintains that his scope of knowledge allows him to conceive of himself as finite, imperfect, subjective etc.; on the other hand he realizes that in this knowledge there is an absence, pure possibility *as such*, Spirit. And it is in the infinite possibility of can (uendelige Mulighed at kunne), which is manifested in anxiety, that one gets the feeling of the eternal Spirit *in* finiteness (we will remember that man is both finite and infinite according to Kierkegaard), but only as that which is absent; this means that the subject is split, barred from itself: $\$$. But, again, this splitting is according to Kierkegaard a positive condition for the consummation of Spirit (or eternal bliss). There is something in the individual, objet a (Spirit), which cannot be fathomed by knowledge, but which nonetheless is part of him/her, in Lacanese: it ex-sists⁷⁸: "Blive af med sig selv kan Aanden ikke; gribe sig selv kan den heller ikke, saa længe den har sig selv udenfor sig selv".⁷⁹ When Spirit is posited as Spirit (through a dialectical leap), then, in the same moment, eternity is posited. Before this happens Spirit is dormant, but it has a sense of eternity in its relation to the future (Tilkommende). The future is equivalent to the possibility (Det Mulige svæver aldeles til det Tilkommende), i.e. it is anxiety: "saaledes er her igjen det Tilkommende det Eviges (Frihedens) Mulighed i Individualiteten som Angest".⁸⁰ But freedom can here fold for temporality, it is overwhelmed by the possibility, and this is the Kierkegaardian notion of sinfulness: "Idet da Frihedens Mulighed viser sig for Friheden segner Friheden, og Timeligheden fremkommer nu paa samme Maade som Sandselighed i Betydning av Syndighed". The moment sin is posited "er Timeligheden Syndighed".⁸¹

I believe that this discussion is sufficient for showing that Kierkegaard's anxiety is, in effect, a *jouis-sense*. Not only that, even when anxiety is "handed over" to dogmatics, and becomes truly *meaningful*, one's existence is still wrought with suffering and is, indeed, pathetic,

⁷⁷ This formula can be found in Lacan, *Des-Noms-du-Père*, p. 82. There you will find another element in this formula, a Hebrew word situated under the *a*, but I believe that it is not essential for the understanding of the formula.

⁷⁸ I ask the reader to go back to note 11 if this term is still unclear.

⁷⁹ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 138.

⁸⁰ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 179.

⁸¹ Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*, p. 179; p. 180.

since nothing else than faith, which is something absurd or unfathomable, can be the absolute *telos* in one's existence. So we see that there is an essential lack in anxiety (Imaginary) itself *as well as* in dogmatics (Symbolic) itself, *and* even when anxiety is handed over to dogmatics. One crucial question remains to be answered. Are we really talking about Kierkegaard? Is this suffering and anxiety something that he himself experienced? Here I can do nothing else than cite his own words: "Undertegnede, Johannes Climacus, der har skrevet denne Bog, udgiver sig ikke for at være en Christen; han er jo fuldt op beskjæftiget med, hvor vanskeligt det maa være at blive det [...]. Han er en Humorist".⁸²

⁸² Kierkegaard, *Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*, p. 278. They are his own words since he in the very end of this book reveals that he is Johannes Climacus and all other pseudonyms used by him earlier.

Concluding Summary

The thesis that I have tried to defend in this essay has been to show, from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, that Kierkegaard is a subject of the lack, and that his writings are a modality of existentially handling this lack.

In part I of the inquiry I tried to discern what the concept of "the subject of the lack" means in Lacanian theory in relation to other fundamental Lacanian concepts. It was established that the subject's desire aims at something impossible, viz. an-other *jouissance*, that which could satisfy desire by making the subject reach Oneness, Truth, Beauty, and so on. But this is an impossibility, since the subject is *a priori* split from itself, and this is best shown by the fact that the subject is a subject of the signifier, and that the process of signification always already institutes a lack, since it renders the signified out of reach: there is no stopping of signification. So what the subject tries to signify, viz. itself, is always barred, impossible. To cope with this impossibility the father function steps in, and prohibits access to an-other *jouissance*, thereby instituting a possibility, a beyond of this prohibition: the loss of something one never had. To mask this impossibility the subject either truly believes that desire can be satisfied (by fantasy), or plays the game of "je sais bien...mais quand même" (in fantasy). Kierkegaard does not believe that desire (for the Truth) can be satisfied *solely* through knowledge (or fantasy), but he does play along in the "je sais bien...mais quand même" when it comes to the communal life. The Truth, according to Kierkegaard, can only be reached *through* subjectivity and existence when posited with Christian dogmatics. This was elucidated by showing that the three Lacanian dimensions constitutive for the subject were evident in the thought of Kierkegaard, and that the Real can be said to be given primacy:

(i) the Imaginary: the wholly subjective dimension of sense-perceptions, moods and feelings were evident in Kierkegaard in his giving primacy to subjectivity and existence, which leads to suffering and anxiety according to Kierkegaard;

(ii) the Symbolic: the dimension of language, which is intersubjective. In Kierkegaard's case the Symbolic is manifested in his dogmatics. And, as with Lacan, where the Imaginary is displaced in the Symbolic, so is subjectivity displaced in dogmatics with Kierkegaard.

(iii) finally, the Real, which is the inherent failure of the two former dimensions, not just within, but also between them. This is the dimension of lack or impossibility: it is the *negative result* of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, of their representation (we recall the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*) and signification respectively. Nothing can be fully represented, nor signified, certainly not the Truth. In Kierkegaard, the primacy of the Real was shown in his "absolute paradox", viz. that eternal salvation (or bliss) is reached at a temporal moment (or, in finite existence). No representation,

feeling (anxiety) or signification (dogmatics) can lead to eternal bliss, the Truth, other than through absurd or unfathomable faith, since it is pure difference, therefore it must be maintained as such, i.e. Kierkegaard espouses what I have called knowledge in the Real.

If desire can never be satisfied, how does the subject enjoy? This was the starting question for part II of my inquiry. The answer that I offered was, first, that if the impossibility is a negative precondition for the satisfaction of desire, it is a positive one for attaining enjoyment (jouissance). Jouissance means transgressing impossibility and prohibition, but in a certain sense, viz. by situating oneself on the side of "not-whole". It was my claim that this jouissance amounts to setting aside, or circumventing, desire and fantasy by realizing that there is a lack in the Other. One simply realizes that representation and signification really serve nothing in terms of satisfying desire, so one enjoys when one realizes that one does not have to represent or signify towards an aim, but simply distance oneself from this aim, and enjoy. However, it was also shown that Lacan encountered patients that realized this, i.e. that there is a lack in the Other, that they formed fantasies to conceal this lack, and that these fantasies had symptomatic effects where the lack in the Other was shown. They nonetheless persisted in their fantasies, their symptoms (i.e. their failure to conceal the lack in the Other was manifested) were penetrated with *jouis-sense*, enjoy-meant, which drove Lacan to call this type of symptom *sinthome*. As Žižek has pointed out, this *jouis-sense* is paradoxical, which he has shown by discussing the Kantian Sublime, i.e. the pleasure of the Sublime can only be reached in a feeling of displeasure. My claim was that Kierkegaard's positing of the mental state of anxiety as a positive precondition for actualizing Spirit and reaching eternal bliss can be equated with the Lacanian *jouis-sense*.

Can we today, then, learn something from the Kierkegaardian modality of handling the lack? Yes, absolutely, and it is (i) that if we follow Kierkegaard we will ethically and politically accept the *status quo*, whatever this *status quo* may be, as long as it does not interfere with the absolute *telos*. It would thus seem that in order for us, as single subjects, to actively participate in an ethical and political community we need to mask impossibility and believe or "play along" in desire and fantasy; and (ii) any communication between two people will with necessity turn out as a misunderstanding, since subjective existence is an essential determination. The only communication that is possible, according to Kierkegaard, is indirect communication. And, is this not what Lacanian theory also amounts to? I ask this last question as a challenge and provocation. I leave it at that.

References

- Barwise, Jon & Etchemendy, John, *Language, Proof and Logic*, Stanford 2003.
- Chandler, Daniel, "Semiotics for Beginners", <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem02.html>, april 6 2007.
- Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject. Between Desire and Jouissance*, Princeton, New Jersey 1995.
- Haberman, Jürgen, "Communicative Freedom and Negative Theology", translated with Notes by Matušítk, Martin J. and Huntington, Patricia J., *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, ed. Matušítk, Martin J. and Westphal, Merold, Blomington and Indianapolis 1995.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Philosophiske smuler*, København 1977.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Begrebet Angest. En simpel psykologisk-paapegende Overveielse i Retning af det dogmatiske Problem om Arvesynden. Af Virgilius Haufniensis, Samlede Værker. Bind 6. Philosophiske Smuler. Begrebet Angest. Tre Taler ved tænkte Arvesynden. Af Virgilius Haufniensis, Samlede Værker. Bind 6. Philosophiske Smuler. Begrebet Angest. Tre Taler ved tænkte Leiligheder*, København 1991.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift til de filosofiske Smuler. Mimisk-pathetisk-dialektisk Sammenskrift, Eksistentielt Indlæg. Af Johannes Climacus. Udgiven af Søren Kierkegaard. Samlede Værker. Bind 10. Afslutende videnskabelig Efterskrift. Andet halvbind*, København 1991.
- Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Alan Sheridan, New York, London 1998.
- Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX. On Feminine Sexuality. The Limits of Love and Knowledge. Encore 1972-1973*, Translated with Notes by Bruce Fink, New York, London 1999.
- Lacan, Jacques, "Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud", *Écrits. A Selection*, Translated by Alan Sheridan, London and New York 2004.
- Lacan, Jacques, *Le triomphe de la religion précédé de Discours aux catholiques*, Paris 2005.
- Lacan, Jacques, *Des Noms-du-père*, Paris 2005.
- Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, Translated by Bruce Fink, New York, London 2006.
- Lacan, Jacques, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious", *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English*, Translated by Bruce Fink, New

York, London 2006.

Laclau, Ernesto & Zac, Lilian, "Minding the Gap. The Subject of Politics", *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Laclau, Ernesto, London, New York 1994.

Nagel, Thomas, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat", *Philosophical Review* 1974:4.

Poole, Roger, *Kierkegaard. The Indirect Communication*, Charlottesville and London 1993.

Reeder, Jurgen, *Begär och etik. Om kön och kärlek i den fallocentriska ordningen*, Stockholm/Stehag 1990.

Scott, Charles E., "The Pathology of the Father's Rule. Lacan and the Symbolic Order", *Lacan & Theological Discourse*, ed. Crownfield, David; Wyschogrod, Edith; Raschke, Carl A., New York 1989.

Taylor, Mark C., "Refusal of the Bar", *Lacan & Theological Discourse*, ed. Crownfield, David; Wyschogrod, Edith; Raschke, Carl A., New York 1989.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford 1968.

Žižek, Slavoj, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York 1999.

Žižek, Slavoj, *On Belief*, London and New York 2001.