

4-1-1991

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Recommended Citation

Evans, Stephen (1991) "The Epistemological Significance Of Transformative Religious Experiences: A Kierkegaardian Exploration," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol8/iss2/3>

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THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSFORMATIVE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES: A KIERKEGAARDIAN EXPLORATION

C. Stephen Evans

This paper attempts to explore the notion that some religious experiences may have value in justifying or making religious belief rational without those experiences being considered as evidence. Rather, the epistemological value of the experiences is seen as transforming the individual to make it possible for the person to gain religious knowledge, either by giving the person skills or abilities needed properly to consider other evidence, or by activating some basic belief-forming disposition. The distinction Alvin Plantinga draws between evidence and ground provides an initial starting point for considering the significance of such experiences. Kierkegaard's analysis of the experience of encountering God in Christ is then explored as a concrete illustration of the possibilities of transformative religious experience.

Most of the epistemological attention given to religious experience in the philosophy of religion centers on the evidential value of such experience. Of course philosophers are aware that religious experiences may have value in other respects. That is, religious experience may produce more saintly lives, give the experiencer a sense of peace and tranquility, and so on, and these fruits of the experience may far exceed in value any epistemological value. Nonetheless, insofar as religious experience is thought to have any value for the project of showing that religious convictions are rationally justifiable, or amount to knowledge, it has often been thought that such experiences must be conceived as providing evidence. Even the non-epistemological fruits of the experiences may have some epistemological weight, but only if one can somehow show that they amount to evidence. For example, one might try to show that an experience which led to more saintly living was more likely to be veridical.

I wish to explore the notion that what I shall call the transformative character of religious experience has epistemological value in its own right, independently of any consideration of the evidential value of such experiences. Not every religious experience has this transformative character. Those experiences which do are those which lead to a significant change in the personality of the experiencer, including changes in such things as emotions,



attitudes, skills, and belief-structures. Typical examples of transformative religious experiences would include the following kinds of cases:

(1) A young adolescent who has been burdened with feelings of guilt comes forward at the close of an evangelistic meeting to give his life to Christ. Afterwards he feels much less guilty, and has a new sense of zest and purpose much of the time. (2) A young person who has been practicing Zen suddenly feels that she has come to understand the key to peace and wholeness. She is unable to explain to others how to achieve a similar state, but she has gained a serenity and relief from certain types of questions and worries which formerly plagued her. (3) A middle-aged executive who is exhausted by his responsibilities has an experience of oneness with nature while on a walk in the woods. He feels a deep kinship with all that is around him, and gains a new perspective on the importance, or lack thereof, of his daily tasks.

1. *Plantinga's Distinction Between Evidence and Ground*

One philosopher who has recently explored the way religious experience might have epistemological value which is obscured by treating it as evidence is Alvin Plantinga. In the course of defending the claim that belief in God may be properly basic for some people, Plantinga has made a distinction between evidence for a belief and a ground for a belief.¹ If one claims, as Plantinga does, that for some people belief in God may be "properly basic," reasonable but not based on any evidence for the belief, then it might appear that one has opened the floodgates for nonsense. Doesn't this mean that any belief, say the belief of Linus in the Great Pumpkin, could be properly basic?

In such a situation it appears that which beliefs are properly basic will be highly arbitrary. Plantinga argues that this is not so. Properly basic beliefs may be grounded in certain experiences, even if those experiences are not evidence for the beliefs in question.² Such experiences therefore play a role in justifying the belief, without being evidence. When I see a tree I believe there is a tree in front of me. On Plantinga's view, this belief may be basic; it is not something I hold on the basis of any other beliefs I have. Nevertheless, the belief is not arbitrary, and the experience plays a role in its justification.

Some have objected that such an experience can be considered evidence after all. In one sense this objection is perfectly correct. Plantinga is clearly operating with a conception of evidence as something that is propositional in character, and which has some logical relation to what it is supposed to be evidence for. Since an experience of being-appeared-treely-to is not a proposition, for Plantinga it does not count as evidence. There are other ways of construing the concept of evidence on which such experiences might be said to be evidence. That is, there is an older concept of "evidence," which does not restrict evidence to propositions, but regards anything that can make a belief more "evident" as evidence. On such a view of evidence, it could be argued that we do have evidence for those beliefs that Plantinga regards as basic.

To take this objection as decisive, however, is to obscure what is really interesting and original in Plantinga's proposal. I do not think that Plantinga is denying that it is possible to consider such experiences as evidence, given certain concepts of evidence. Indeed, perhaps it is possible for the experiences to provide evidence for the beliefs for some people, even on Plantinga's concept of evidence. At least many philosophers have attempted to show how experiences of trees can be said to constitute sufficient evidence for belief in trees. Rather, Plantinga is suggesting that the experiences do not *have* to be construed in this way.

One might, for example, see belief in the tree as an immediate result of a natural disposition. When human beings are appeared to in the appropriate way, they simply believe in the tree without any considerations of evidence and argument. They may have evidence for their belief in some sense of the term, but they do not consciously arrive at the belief on the basis of any other beliefs or data. Rather, they simply have the experience and form the relevant belief. Perhaps some of our basic beliefs are properly formed through such dispositions. To return from the example of the tree to the philosophy of religion, Plantinga says that the difference between a basic belief in the Great Pumpkin and a basic belief in God is that God has implanted in us human beings "a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us."³ This suffices to distinguish the two cases, "there being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept beliefs about the Great Pumpkin."⁴ That of course does not mean that there could not exist a sincere believer in the Great Pumpkin who treats his belief as properly basic; it simply means such a believer would be deluded, if Plantinga is correct in his assertions.

So for Plantinga a person contemplating a flower or the vastness of the universe might properly be led by the experience to believe in God. Of course the flower or the universe could be construed as evidence for God's existence, but must they be so construed? Could we not also see them as activating a natural disposition, occasioning the operation of what one might term a reliable, belief-forming mechanism? The point is that thinking of the experience solely as evidence obscures one important function of the experience, namely that it produces changes in the subject of the experience. These changes may have epistemological significance of a type which is missed when we focus solely on the concept of evidence.

In Plantinga's own examples, the experience seems mostly to provide the input to this belief-forming disposition or mechanism. Thus, the transformation in the subject does not seem to be highly significant, but is simply the kind of change a person undergoes in having a new experience. However, it seems completely consistent with Plantinga's position to regard the experience as changing the subject in more radical ways. For example, one might view the experience as facilitating the operation of the mechanism, or as

eliminating a barrier to its operation. Given the fact that the belief-producing mechanisms Plantinga discusses do not seem to be universally shared in their operation, seeing experiences as transformative in this manner would appear not only to be consistent with Plantinga's position, but as strengthening it. It would do this by giving one potential explanation for a difference between the universality which seems to attach to many of our belief-producing mechanisms, such as sense perception, and the mechanism that is alleged to produce belief in God.

2. *The Role of Subjectivity in Acquiring Religious Knowledge*

The reason it is important to look more closely at transformative religious experiences is that it forces us to look more closely at the role of subjectivity in the acquisition of religious knowledge. Even in cases where religious beliefs are founded on objective evidence, it is clear that subjectivity does play such a role. It is not enough that there be evidence. The evidence must be grasped, understood, weighed, or somehow enter into the life of the believer if it is to have any significance. Yet in order for this to occur the believer must be capable of grasping, understanding, weighing, or perceiving (or whatever else she must do) the evidence.

I think that the implicit assumption in many epistemological discussions in the philosophy of religion is that this subjective dimension may be ignored. Whatever abilities or skills that may be necessary to gain the necessary evidence are assumed to be widely present or easily acquired. The real questions concern whether a proof is sound, or whether an experience constitutes evidence; there is much less discussion of whether I might be capable of discerning that a sound argument is sound, or perceiving that evidence is good evidence. Yet this assumption, which tends to be an *a priori* one which is not defended, looks dubious in light of actual religious traditions, which often stress how difficult it is to become the kind of person one must become to acquire religious truth. Years of meditation, ritual participation, or saintly, sacrificial living are often said to be prerequisites for gaining at least the higher forms of religious knowledge. The acquisition of moral and spiritual character of a particular type is often alleged to be especially important.

The skeptic may rightly wonder whether such arduous personal training is worth it. Don't I have a right to know that a religious perspective contains truth before I spend valuable years of my life following its teachings? Such an attitude may sometimes be reasonable, but, as Hegel and Kierkegaard often remind us, it also may have its price. If one demands that one know how to swim before going into the water, one will never learn to swim. It is worth noting that the novice in almost all human fields of endeavor, including science, must begin at least by taking many things on faith. As the aspiring young scientist learns to use instruments, read scholarly papers, and decipher

the significance of statistical data, his labor is based mostly on his faith that the community of scientists which employs these methods knows what it is doing. He may of course have good reasons for his faith in this community, but it is not immediately evident that the same could not be said for the aspiring religious knower with respect to some religious communities.

There are philosophers who have given at least brief attention to what might be termed the "subjective requirements" for attaining religious knowledge. One who has taken some notice of the role of subjectivity in acquiring religious knowledge is George Mavrodes. In his book *Belief in God*, Mavrodes points out that many of our significant epistemological concepts are "person-relative."⁵ To say that a proposition is known is to say that it is known by someone. If we say that to qualify as a proof, an argument must not only be logically sound, but must be capable of being known to be sound, and if we recognize that a person must be able to know the premises of a proof in order to determine that the proof is sound, then it is easy to see that even the seemingly objective concept of "proof" has a heavy subjective component. An argument may well constitute a proof to one individual and not to another. Mavrodes does not really develop this theme in *Belief in God*, which is a very brief book, but the point is nevertheless significant, and cries out for further elaboration.

William Alston, in his work on religious experience, has also noted the importance of subjective requirements for religious knowledge. For example, in "Religious Experience and Religious Belief," he regards the following proposition as plausible: "God has decreed that a human being will be aware of His presence in any clear and unmistakable fashion only when certain special and difficult conditions are satisfied."⁶ Alston obviously thinks that some of those conditions are subjective, since he goes on to say that "it is a basic theme in Christianity, and in other religions as well, that one finds God within one's experience, to any considerable degree, only as one progresses in the spiritual life. God is not available for voyeurs."⁷ Though this theme is once again undeveloped in this article, these comments are very suggestive.

Given these considerations, which seem to me to be obvious, practically platitudinous, God may well have had an effective response to Bertrand Russell, should the latter actually have had the chance to give his famous complaint to God, if he did, much to his surprise, encounter God after his death. Russell is frequently quoted as saying that in such a situation, if queried about his own unbelief, he should simply say to God, "Not enough evidence." If Russell did deliver this line, perhaps God responded by asking Russell if he had assiduously worked at becoming the kind of person who could have recognized the evidence God had actually provided.

If one asks exactly how subjective transformations in the individual might make religious knowledge possible, at least two general types of answers are

possible. Each type of answer reflects a characteristic underlying epistemological perspective. One line of response, which we might term the evidentialist view, sees the role of subjectivity as enabling the individual to properly grasp or receive objective evidence. Many particular versions of this type of view are possible, depending on the different kinds of evidence which are thought to be decisive, the different ways that evidence is thought to be apprehended, the different subjective qualities which are thought to be essential to apprehend the evidence, and the different ways those qualities are believed to be acquired or developed.

The second possible response is the one which I suggested at the end of section (1) would be a natural extension of Plantinga's approach. Here the subjective quality is seen, not as making it possible for the individual to apprehend evidence, but as facilitating the operation, or perhaps eliminating a barrier to the operation, of some natural, belief-producing disposition or mechanism in the individual. Obviously, here again a great variety of specific views are possible, depending on the nature of the dispositions in question and their conditions of actualization.

Though I have complimented Plantinga for directing attention to the non-evidential value of religious experiences, I think it is fair to say that he can be faulted for failing, at least up to this point, to explore the specific character of such experiences. He does imply that such an exploration would be worthwhile: "There are therefore many conditions and circumstances that call forth belief in God: guilt, gratitude, danger, a sense of God's presence, a sense that he speaks, perception of various parts of the universe. A complete job would explore the phenomenology of all these conditions and of more besides."⁸ It seems to me that this kind of phenomenological exploration is crucial if the account of religious knowledge Plantinga gives is to appear more than a dogmatic one. The skeptic will naturally be suspicious of any talk about natural belief-producing dispositions in this case, and curious about why they seem to operate in some circumstances and not in others. Only a concrete account of how the mechanisms are supposed to operate is likely to be helpful in response to such worries, but such an account will certainly have to analyze the subjective conditions which mediate the operation of the alleged mechanisms.

3. Kierkegaard's Account of Faith as the Result of an Encounter with the Incarnation

I should like, in the remainder of this paper, to try to give an example of the kind of phenomenological account Plantinga needs to fill out his account. The example I shall employ is the account of faith given by Kierkegaard (or his pseudonym Johannes Climacus—I shall not here tackle the problem of pseudonymity⁹). The example is chosen for several reasons. One is that the

object of religious knowledge in this case is God conceived in the form of a particular historical figure; this is more challenging than mere belief in God. A second is that the object of religious knowledge in this case more closely approximates the actual content of a living religion. In addition, I have in a previous paper said some things about the relevance of Kierkegaard's account of subjectivity for Plantinga's view of belief in God.¹⁰

The view of Kierkegaard which underlies the account I shall give differs in many respects from the usual picture. Though I believe that the view of Kierkegaard which I offer is correct, I shall make little attempt to argue that here, though I have done so elsewhere.¹¹ In this context, if I am wrong in my view of Kierkegaard, it makes no difference, since the position is offered only as a possibility which illustrates a way of conceiving of religious experience.

It is well known that Kierkegaard, in *Philosophical Fragments*, as well as other works, describes Christian faith as faith in the incarnation conceived as "the absolute paradox." Such a faith is supposed to be "against the understanding," and in fact it presents the potential believer with "the possibility of offense." This faith is only acquired by the believer in an act of will, often referred to as "the leap." This is not, however, an act of will which the individual can carry out by her own power. It can be accomplished only when the individual receives "the condition," which is the result of a first-person encounter with the God who has appeared in history.¹²

These claims are often interpreted along the following lines. The paradox is understood as a logical contradiction, which naturally enough can only be viewed rationally as an impossible event. One can acquire faith in such a thing only if God supernaturally alters the will so as to make it possible for the individual to choose to believe something which reason must reject as impossible. If a person wills to put reason aside, then faith is a possibility, and she will avoid being offended.¹³

On my reading of Kierkegaard, this interpretation is almost completely wrong. I will try to briefly sketch an alternative.¹⁴ Suppose that the incarnation is not a logical contradiction, but is rather a mystery, something that is truly above reason. If reason insists on trying to understand the incarnation, it falls into contradictions. One could say that the incarnation is an apparent contradiction, at least to a person determined to understand it. It is against reason only when reason insists that there is nothing which cannot be understood by reason.

Why is the incarnation a paradox, an apparent contradiction? On the view I am rejecting, it is because the incarnation requires that we believe that God, who is essentially eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and so on, has become non-eternal, limited in knowledge and power, and so forth. On the alternative view I am sketching, these contradictions are at most apparent, because to claim they are real contradictions is to presuppose that we have reliable

knowledge as to what God's nature is. We can only know that a round square is a contradictory concept if we have a clear understanding of what it means to be round and what it means to be square. Similarly, we can only know that the concept of the God-man is contradictory if we have a clear understanding of what it means to be God and to be a human being.

Suppose that we lack such knowledge, and that the purpose of the incarnation is to remedy this defect by giving us reliable information about God. In such a case, it is reasonable to think that the new insight about God would contradict at least some of our previous pseudo-knowledge of what God was like. Thus, paradoxicalness is what one would expect in a genuine revelation from God, and the fact that the incarnation is an apparent contradiction is not decisive evidence that it is a logical contradiction.

The incarnation is a paradox to us because of "the absolute difference between God and man."¹⁵ On my alternative, this difference is not primarily a metaphysical difference, but a spiritual, moral one. "What then is the difference?" asks Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of *Fragments*. "Indeed, what else but sin," is the clear answer.¹⁶ There is a natural tension between human reason and the paradox, but that tension stems from the fact that human reasoning is carried on by sinful human beings. That sinfulness supports a negative reaction to the paradox in part because sin represents an attitude of prideful rebellion and autonomy. A mystery which is above reason is an insult to our pretensions of self-sufficiency and will naturally be resented as such.

Even more significant, however, is the fact that the incarnation is an act of a completely unselfish, loving God. Our human thinking is limited by our human experience, which is always tainted by our own selfishness. We would have enough trouble believing that a human being had abandoned some high position for the sake of a lesser person. Imagine that a king were to give up his throne for the sake of the love of a young woman. Even in such a case we would be inclined to be cynical, to impute hidden, selfish motives, and if we could not find such motives, we might be skeptical that the act took place at all.¹⁷ Since the difference between a king and a commoner is a jest in comparison with the difference between God and an ordinary human person, it is no surprise that we find the idea of the incarnation the "most unlikely event possible."¹⁸ It goes against all our ordinary standards of probability, founded as they are in our experience, which is bereft of any genuinely unselfish actions.

With this alternative reading of what Kierkegaard means by the paradox, we are now ready to examine an alternative understanding of faith and the leap, one which will allow a decisive role for a transformative religious experience. Kierkegaard insists that faith is not something that can be understood as a natural capacity of a human being, but must be received as a gift from God when we encounter God incarnate. We are told repeatedly that faith

is a condition which “the god himself must provide,” and that it can only be provided through a first-hand encounter.¹⁹ On my reading this first-hand encounter is crucial because it is a transformative religious experience. The encounter does not so much provide evidence for the reality of the incarnation but rather changes the person to make it possible for her to become a believer.

How does this occur? Various accounts are possible, but one which I find plausible lays stress on the fact that the encounter is an experience of the love of God. It is well known that being loved can produce significant changes in people. Psychologists say that all kinds of problems result when children do not gain a sense that they are loved by their parents. An experience of absolute, unconditional love could conceivably so transform a person that her embedded conviction that unselfish love was impossible might be shaken. Such an experience might be enough to shatter a person’s whole structure of attitudes and beliefs. Instead of judging, on the basis of my standards of what is likely and unlikely, that the incarnation is impossible, I might come to question those evidential standards themselves.

What role is there for the will to play on this view? It is clear enough why Kierkegaard should insist that faith is not simply the result of an act of will on the part of the believer, since it is made possible by what God gives to the believer.²⁰ There is still room for will to play a role, however. The role is not, as many have supposed, to get myself to believe something I know isn’t true; thus the popular conception of Kierkegaard’s leap of faith as a kind of manipulation of my belief structure is completely wrong. Rather, what I must will to achieve is an openness to having my natural attitude of self-sufficiency and selfishness overturned. In the encounter with the God, love is offered but not forced. The person who insists on autonomy will find such an encounter painful, since it is humbling to discover that there are mysteries one cannot understand, and even more painful to discover what true love is like, when this discovery means I discover how unloving I am at the same time. The encounter with love makes it possible for the individual to put aside one’s pride and achieve the humility of faith, but an act of will on the part of the individual is necessary as well.²¹

Such an encounter with an incarnate God could, I believe, function in either of the two ways I sketched in section (2). That is, one can imagine the experience as providing the occasion for the creation of a Plantinga-style basic belief, or as providing a new perspective on evidence for the belief, evidence which was perhaps there all along, but which the individual was previously unable to appreciate. The first option clearly seems to be the one preferred by Kierkegaard. The following account of an experience, which comes from Anthony Bloom, a Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church, who was transformed from a militant atheist to a believer, might serve to illustrate Kierkegaard’s view of the way faith comes into being in an individual:

While I was reading the beginning of St. Mark's Gospel, before I reached the third chapter, I suddenly became aware that on the other side of my desk there was a presence. And the certainty was so strong that it was Christ standing there that it has never left me. This was the real turning point. Because Christ was alive and I had been in his presence I could say with certainty that what the Gospel said about the crucifixion of the prophet of Galilee was true, and the centurion was right when he said, 'Truly he is the Son of God.' It was in the light of the Resurrection that I could read with certainty the story of the Gospel, knowing that everything was true in it because the impossible event of the Resurrection was to me more certain than any event of history. History I had to believe, the Resurrection I knew for a fact. I did not discover, as you see, the Gospel beginning with its first message of the Annunciation, and it did not unfold for me as a story which one can believe or disbelieve. It began as an event that left all problems of disbelief behind because it was a direct and personal experience.²²

This account may not seem Kierkegaardian in all respects, particularly in its emphasis on the Resurrection, which Kierkegaard does not talk much about, though it could be argued that the Resurrection is presupposed by Kierkegaard's stress on a first-hand encounter with Christ. However, in essentials Bloom's account illustrates the points I wish to stress. The primary notion is that faith is the result of a first-person encounter with Christ. In Bloom's account, this encounter comes by means of an historical record, rooted in the accounts of contemporaries and passed down from generation to generation, but that record is merely the means. This is precisely the formula Kierkegaard gives for the acquisition of faith: "The person who comes later believes *by means of* (the occasion) the report of the contemporary, by the power of the condition he himself receives from the God."²³

It is also clear in this account that Bloom's faith is basic for him in the way Plantinga describes, yet it nevertheless clearly has a ground, namely the experience. Bloom clearly does not decide to believe the historical account as a result of evidence for its trustworthiness; rather he comes to evaluate the historical trustworthiness of the account on the basis of his encounter with a living Christ. Notice also the characteristic Kierkegaardian perspective on faith as a certainty concerning something which from one perspective appears absurd, or, in Bloom's words, impossible.

There is one noteworthy difference between this case and Plantinga's case of a basic belief in God. Plantinga conceives the transformative experience in his case as triggering a natural disposition. On the Kierkegaardian case, where the basic belief is in the God in time, the disposition to believe must be construed as something which is created in the individual in the experience, not as a natural capacity which simply was dormant. Thus on the Kierkegaardian case the transformative experience is decisively important in a way that is not the case for the Plantinga example. In Plantinga's example, the experience is an occasion, but presumably other experiences could equally

well serve as an occasion. His view is thus Socratic, in the language of *Fragments*. The believer in the incarnation, however, cannot possibly view her experience as merely an occasion, since the experience is one which created the necessary disposition within her.

As noted above, though it may be unKierkegaardian, one could also construe the transformative experience, while not itself evidence, as making it possible for the individual properly to consider and appreciate evidence for the belief. Or, one could even construe the experience as functioning in two different respects, as itself providing evidence and also as transforming the individual to make it possible rightly to consider that evidence. This way of construing the experience has the merit of explaining why believers often are concerned with evidence or reasons for their faith, while at the same time holding on to the Kierkegaardian insight that what is decisive is not the evidence but the subjectivity of the individual who is viewing that evidence.

On this view, one cannot properly say that faith is opposed to reason, as Kierkegaard so often does, but merely that it is opposed to the thinking patterns of the unbeliever. On this perspective, reason itself is one of the things changed by the transformative religious experience. Such a perspective asks, in effect, why the standards of probability and evidence of the untransformed individual should own the title of "reason." Perhaps Kierkegaard, in his zeal to protect Christianity against selling its soul by altering its core to make it palatable to contemporary society, was too quick to give away the word "reason," a word many Christians have wished to reclaim and redeem.

In Kierkegaard's defense, however, we might consider the contributions of contemporary sociologists of knowledge. It is important to recognize that terms like "reason" and "knowledge" often function as instruments of control, means by which those with social power attempt to legitimate their ways of seeing the world and acting in it. If Kierkegaard is right in thinking that human beings are in the grip of something like original sin, it is all too natural that these sorts of words will necessarily carry with them a commitment to anti-Christian ways of thinking. If that is so, then the attempt to justify Christianity before its "cultured despisers" will likely be a betrayal of Christianity. Such defenses will tend to convert Christianity to Christendom, and eliminate the possibility that an encounter with God in Christ will have, as one of its outcomes, a prophetic critique of the social order.²⁴

This extended discussion of a Kierkegaardian analysis of an experience of the incarnation is not, of course, exhaustive of the possibilities of transformative religious experience. Indeed, the experience I have examined is probably not even typical. It does, however, deal with a type of experience which has had surpassing importance to many people within the Christian tradition. I hope that the exploration will show how fruitful such phenomenological analysis can be, and that the consideration of transformative religious expe-

rience raises many issues which are often overlooked or slighted in the philosophy of religion. Many more questions have been raised by this than answered, but I do not think that there is much hope of answering such questions without paying close attention to the specific character of the different forms of transformative religious experience.²⁵

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NOTES

1. Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, edited by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, University of Notre Dame Press (Notre Dame: 1983), pp. 16-91. The distinction between evidence and ground is employed particularly on pp. 78-82.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

4. *Ibid.*

5. George I. Mavrodes, *Belief in God*, Random House (New York: 1970), pp. 36-41.

6. *Nous*, 16 (1982), p. 10.

7. Alston, p. 11.

8. "Reason and Belief in God," p. 81.

9. Readers who would like the benefit of my perspective may consult Chapter 1 of my Kierkegaard's *Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus*, Humanities Press (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: 1983).

10. See my "Kierkegaard and Plantinga on Belief in God: Subjectivity as the Ground of Properly Basic Religious Beliefs," *Faith and Philosophy* (V, 1; January 1988), pp. 25-39.

11. See particularly Chapters 11 and 12 of Kierkegaard's *Fragments and Postscript*.

12. All of these claims, with the exception of the assertion that faith involves the leap, can be found in *Philosophical Fragments*, edited and translated by Howard V. and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press (Princeton: 1985), chapters 3-5. The concept of the leap occurs in *Fragments* only in connection with a discussion of proofs of God's existence, but it figures prominently, of course, in the sequel to *Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

13. For an interpretation which corresponds closely to this sketch, see Louis Pojman, *The Logic of Subjectivity*, The University of Alabama Press (University, Alabama: 1984), p. 136.

14. A fuller account of this alternative is found in my Kierkegaard's *Fragments and Postscript*, chapters 11 and 12. Other philosophical readings of Kierkegaard very much in agreement with the one given here can be found in Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society*, Mercer University Press (Macon, Georgia: 1987), particularly chapters 6 and 7, and in Robert Roberts, *Faith, Reason, and History: Rethinking*

Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments, Mercer University Press (Macon, Georgia: 1986).

15. *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 44-46.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

17. *Practice in Christianity* (Training in Christianity) and *The Sickness Unto Death* contain many illustrations of the way in which negative reactions on the part of human reason to the incarnation are grounded in selfish moral attitudes. See, for example, p. 83 of *Sickness Unto Death*, Hong translation, Princeton University Press (Princeton: 1980), or almost any page in Part II of *Practice in Christianity*.

18. *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 52. This is my translation.

19. *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 55-56, and 102.

20. *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 62.

21. See *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 14, where it is said that the individual must recognize his own ignorance, even if the one who reveals this ignorance to him is the god.

22. Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*, Paulist Press (New York: 1970), p. xii. I am grateful to Robert Roberts for calling my attention to Bloom's book, and this passage in it.

23. *Philosophical Fragments*, IV, 266; p. 104.

24. For more on this see Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society*, particularly chapters two through four.

25. This paper was written with the support of a Fellowship for College Teachers from N.E.H.