Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Gino Elia April 8, 2016

Disunity and Paradox

by

Gino Elia

Professor John Stuhr
Adviser

Philosophy

Professor Thomas Flynn

Committee Member

Professor Wendy Farley

Committee Member

2016

Disunity and Paradox

By

Gino Elia

Professor John Stuhr

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Philosophy

2016

Abstract

Disunity and Paradox
By Gino Elia

In certain religious interpretations, there are those who believe that the will of God functions as a moral monism and the belief in community as moral otherness, and that behind the distinction exists a tension or incompatibility between these two moral locations (moral loci). This incompatibility gives rise to a disunity in the mind, and while the vast majority of moral actions in public sphere are unaffected, the contradistinction presents itself *in experience* with the resonance of an either/or. The purpose of this thesis was to address the incompatibility and attempt to unify conflicting moral loci within the methodological framework given by William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Along the way, I recast the incompatibility in Soren Kierkegaard's work *Fear and Trembling* as a 'conflict' (teleological suspension) between the religious and the ethical spheres. I extrapolate from the Abraham-Isaac story that a kind of private religious modality forms for the individual. A unification of being or of conscience emerges through partitioning religious and ethical commitments to different parts in one's life, and this partitioning restricts the possibility for unconditional community of otherness, in particular dialogue. Under the insights of Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, the incompatibility of moral loci is dissolved in the pre-reflective face-to-face interaction, and thus the distinction of moral loci in practice and its consequents, tension and dissonance, are precluded by the divinity found in the otherness immersed in lived experience. This gives rise to the restoration of unity I term 'unconditional unification'. With the addition of the second type of unification, I compare the two models and cast the incompatibility as an 'either/or' between the interiority and exteriority of the individual *in relation to God*. Kierkegaardean individualism corresponds to interiority, and exteriority corresponds to the infinity found in Levinas. As a seminal implication, the responsibility for the incompatibility is then weighed in the nature of the individual, rather than their interpretation of the divine will.

Disunity and Paradox

By

Gino Elia

Professor John Stuhr

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Philosophy

2016

Acknowledgements

I would offer thanks to my thesis adviser professor Stuhr for his critical guidance throughout the project.

Thanks to my committee members, professor Farley and professor Flynn, for their time reading my thesis, asking important questions, and offering valuable insights.

Table of Contents

Introduction

There are some who, in their faith, come to regard the morals of their religion as irreconcilable with the morality of their world. In context, this world is comprised by a pluralistic culture with a strong diversity of ideologies and religions, which is perceived as at odds with their particular religious doctrine. This is the incompatibilist view, and it is our starting place. This thesis applies to those who hold this view and to those who empathize with this view. It is by no means reflective of any religious association or identity, and the term 'incompatibilist' is a term that strikes away any particular religious or political affiliation. For religion and its morals are a diversity with an array of interpretations and ways of life.

The exposition that follows will explore various conflicts within the nature of morality from the perspectives of several religious philosophers and theologians. The purpose is to propose ways in which to unify the natures of a pluralistic morality and of a particular brand of religious morality. In doing so, we must address what the most fundamental nature to this interpretation could be because its form as the coarse grained conflict between the plural and the religious is not at all final. At eye level, we can only glimpse a characterization, and throughout the project, we certainly expect the nature of this perceived incompatibility to undergo several transformations. At a grander view, the pluralism of concern finds itself in a conflict of sorts with fundamentalism. However, a fair amount of groundwork is necessary in order to proceed because the inquiry is not formulated generally, but under stricter conditions.

We first observe this ideological divide is predominantly not related to practice. In daily life, we live in a 'great overlap' with a veritable assortment of different moralities. They all persist for different reasons, ranging from an emphasis on usefulness to duty to compassion. For myriad moral questions, these are reconciled insofar as they overlap, as their moral directions

have a common interest, namely the vaguely understood ‘wellbeing of humanity’. Thus for the most part, the question of ‘what should I do?’ does not speak to the felt impossibility of reconciliation for the view of incompatibility. The question ‘what should I believe about the nature of morality?’ resonates with its more fundamental concerns. What concerns the religiously minded is not the resolution of morals in terms of practice but within their reasons for existing. The problem lies in the nature of morality itself as an object for which we strive.

I think a good analogy for this view is a monist description of moral origin. For we can imagine that at the heart of one’s moral compass there is a locus of morality contained within it, and this locus serves as an object for a person’s moral beliefs. From it, we can trace a path of thinking from the fundamental moral belief to the tangible action itself, and this process, in an ideal sense, comprises the moral reasoning from this locus. Thus, when I say our project is to reconcile the natures of two seemingly opposed moralities, this nature I am referring to is the moral locus itself, perhaps as a specific kind of essence ripe for growth into system. For Christianity in particular, the locus in question is the Word of God interpreted as the law or God’s will. In addition to these names, several other designations exist to spell out this moral locus, but our treatment of the locus here is cursory and colloquial. We will return to this locus in Kierkegaard and add more precision to its nature. However for now, I think it fair to say that these designations suggest authority as an important mechanic for this moral locus. For those who grapple with this incompatibility, their divinely ordained moral locus appears fundamental precisely because it should form the basis of moral reasoning in daily life. Each locus is a fundamental end and as such constitutes a basis for the specific directives of action and being. These we will call moral beliefs, and each set of appropriate moral beliefs exist on behalf of its moral locus. Therefore, the problem for the incompatible position does not stem from a multitude

of moral beliefs, but a multitude of moral locus—moral loci. The objects of difference tense in relation to each other. The incompatible view sees the moral loci as a multiplicity of fundamentals, and this notion contradicts the monist assumption that morality originates in the one, not the many.

Based on this characterization, the issue for incompatibility within one's religious interpretation resembles similar problems for absolutism or system. That is, system problematizes the existence of moral otherness due to its domineering nature and its tendency to push out other moral loci. Likewise, it is tempting to attribute the preference for one moral locus to absolutism. After all, we could argue the absolute nature of one moral loci cannot help but invalidate all others, on the premise that the one true moral loci must pertain to all moral beliefs. However I do not think the singularity of the moral locus necessarily follows from the totalizing power of an absolute, not when there are plainer possibilities before us. Instead, I find it helpful to conceive the problem as an ideological one, of or relating to ideas, in experience. There are times and circumstances when moral loci 'contradict', and their moral equivalence is called into question. The logical framing brings with it its own universality insofar as we can initially view it as a contradiction among prescribed moral loci. However, the logical conception only extends to anyone who first *feels* the pulling power of the perceived conflict. It is a conditioned universal, because we cannot neglect the location of the conflict as within a specific religious interpretation. It is then discovered to be a logical conundrum for that interpretation. In other words, it is understood initially as felt, then reckoned as logical. We can appropriately say the above condition limits the scope of our inquiry, but it is a necessary one, since we only afford implicate authentic and already existing struggle. We cannot permit ourselves to overgeneralize and essentially *create* a struggle for all religious interpretations.

A compromised moral equivalence implies a choice for us. We must choose the appropriate locus for our needs and recognize that we prioritized a moral locus more than another, and sometimes decisively so, because it was in fact fundamental to us. We therefore, do not always create moral incompatibility as a bottom-up product of system. More so, this can occur just as well at the top of a developed pluralism. We perceive moral incompatibility in situations when we are given to doubt the continuity between different moral ends. In the religious mind, this constitutes a firm division of loci, for what was once was thought to be a matter of religious devotion could in fact lead to another set of moral beliefs and another way of life.

The plurality of loci is therefore not purely abstract but often noticeable, because within a pluralism, the overlap of moral beliefs and their prescribed actions do not extend perfectly. With this we are familiar. As a mundane example, we often find the moral loci of happiness and duty align only roughly, and the actions that follow from the reasoning of these two loci have been known to differ depending on the circumstances. Where duty seeks rigorous service to others even at the expense of personal wellbeing, happiness may see extend itself in another entity and opt out for the sake of itself. There are many familiar examples like this for the aforementioned assortment of moralities. Moral dilemmas and hypotheticals are useful for this reason of exposing the nuances and divisions of moral loci. The point is that these occurrences, like those posed in makeshift dilemmas like trolley problems, shake their continuity. From these discrepancies in moral loci, we conclude that moral beliefs cannot be attributed to one's desired moral locus arbitrarily. In other words, we cannot designate moral beliefs to correspond to whatever object of morality we like.

This perceived incompatibility, I think, is an understandable one. An otherwise singular locus of moral thinking is split at the source, and we find ourselves wielding multiple loci at once. I would even offer as the following as a postulate. It is just the nature of human life to see good sense in a variety of 'best practices' based on our experiences, and we routinely take them in to our moral code of beliefs without too much thought on the nature of its moral locus. Nevertheless upon reflection, we are caught in a state of *disunity* and wish to return to what was fundamental to us.

I will not attempt explain away the perceived need for certain religious interpretations to hold a singular, fundamental moral locus for all moral beliefs and consequential behaviors. This is not an exercise in the psychologism of moral monism or reductionism. Nor do I intend to evaluate the intellectual merit of the moral locus or contribute to another attack on system. Rather, we want to determine the various conditions of unification between moral loci of pluralism and the moral locus as service to God.

We are embarking to examine the fundamentals to religious interpretation, but in a sense, our inquiry is individualistic. A state of disunity in an object of belief is a conflict within oneself. When the question of why is such and such good is received by two independent answers prescribing two conflicting actions, we cannot expect the action chosen to come without the strain of an internal division. One is given to dissonance or worse an unconscious partitioning of morals into not only different, but contradictory contexts. The continuity of moral loci is lost, and with it, the continuity of moral beliefs that did not fall into the overlap is also lost. However this continuity is necessary for substantial unity, and below we see how a change in the world and a rigid choice make for poor alternatives.

The incompatibilist maintains less of a dispute with their world or their circumstances but rather emphasizes the schism of moral loci as a consequence for personal devotion. This only holds true as moral conscience, as a decision making faculty, appreciates or even holds sacred the values of a vibrant pluralism. Indiscriminate community, conceived as an axial moral belief for many moral loci (not only of the religious sort), stirs the moral conscience to communion with its world, deeply inclined to engage otherness and its untrodden ground. The moral conscience then seeks a kind of reconciliation in unification, whose nature is not yet known to us. Therefore, this conflict is active and ongoing, not complacent, nor resigned to the irreconcilable. It is in its disposition toward otherness that we know unification, in its mature form, does not mean to shun the world. Hence we cannot disregard the moral continuity between being and its world.

Furthermore, the incompatibility in its most contentious forms does not initially lead us to simply choose one side, committing unconditionally to a dichotomy. The clean cut of an either/or between the morality of pluralism and a fundamentalism will not suit us on the premise of our own authenticity. The incompatibility keeps moral loci and personal devotion apart from inner unity, and a paradox in Kierkegaardean sense forms when it becomes a moral problem to be a religious and a pluralistic being. And with it, this paradox brings the ideological consequence of a ‘logical’ conundrum and a psychological consequence of an incoherent belief system. This compromised moral equivalence instigates a choice, and all are free to choose one over the other. However, the difficulty pours in all the same, because the incompatibilist nevertheless finds good sense in their religion and their world. As a result, our inquiry is driven toward psychological and ideological unity because we would sooner find fault with the choice than the outcome of said choice. The integrity of the choice should be evaluated.

The either/or itself is up for questioning because the either/or 'given' by first impressions may deceive our lived possibilities to pursue other directions. To clarify, the *structure* of the either/or may in the end be unavoidable, but the *content* of these choices deserves close attention. Even when pressed under the thumb of a choice reminiscent of an either/or, unification may still be conceived so long as we are not transfixed by the potency of the exclusion. We will have more to say about unification and the either/or later, but for now, we should note the active state of this disposition toward unity, toward religion and community.

To expound on the nature of this conflict, it would be crude and inaccurate to depict the politics of religious life as a push-pull battleground between purely conservative religion and a liberally branded pluralism. For if we are to explore the critical differences for the world religions of monotheism, we cannot pretend all religious doctrine has but one interpretation. This would imply one orientation for religion toward the liberal values of the pluralism in which it resides, and this would dissemble a predilection for absolutes in favor of a binary opposition. If we are attentive to difference, we notice a great variety of interpretations of religious doctrine living in another multiplicity of interpretations of pluralism. If we are to explore how religious doctrine clashes with pluralism in the roughest sense, then we must be thoughtful in execution. We are dealing with *an interpretation of religion, not the religion itself*. And in this instance, moral incompatibility is the surest interpretation of one's religion to clash with pluralism, but the fundamentalism of the incompatibility is only found in some of these interpretations.

Pluralism of course has its own interpretations, and so it would be prudent to clarify what is meant by pluralism. If we focus on moral application of pluralism, then the pivotal values we include are coexistence and engagement among ideologies on the grounds of moral acceptance. Moral acceptance here denotes an active state of reconciliation within the inoculators and their

systems of value, whereas moral incompatibility initially rejects such compromise. I would further argue that moral acceptance is a necessary quality of pluralism because a pluralism as a lived concept in society requires its own sustainability. It must be perpetual and recognized, not fleeting and peripheral. Pluralism's perception as lived and relevant specifies this relation. Therefore, if one's disposition is for moral incompatibility, then the values of engagement are undermined by a more fundamental rejection of key principles. At worst, it is courtesy, the humane of others without an underlying commitment to humanity as a feasible locus. I do not think a genuine pluralism can retain its moral integrity if morality itself can be distinguished into the popular morality and religious morality, not when behind the discourse these two can do endless battle with each other. The only other avenue I see is for pluralism to divorce itself from a moral identity altogether, but this is not accurate. Pluralism, as Diane Eck realizes it, advocates dialogue, commitments to difference, and social interaction and union above and beyond mere tolerance ("Pluralism Project"). This concept is not morally neutral, but if left to practical belief and fundamental moral disbelief, then it could become self-defeating for the authentic moral conscience seeking the continuity of religion's and pluralism's moral spheres.

With these clarifications regarding pluralism and the inner workings of moral incompatibility behind us, it is due time for a shift in emphasis. We must direct our focus to the unity of beliefs within oneself. For clarity's sake, I will summarize the key elements of the inquiry and introduce the next segment.

The incompatibility view perceives *real* situations where their moral conscience would take both paths at a crossroads. It is a choice posed to the moral conscience as a result of a division in moral loci. Yet the contradiction for moral loci may be so stark and so moving that the choice comes across as exclusionary, hence the quasi-logical framing. Moral loci are free to

run parallel until they are divided before our eyes and in our reflections, revealing their exclusionary sources insofar as they are perceived as ends, or objects of moral beliefs. This is the quintessential expression of the issue and therefore if our purposes are for unification and its effects for moral conscience, we can paraphrase the driving question for the thesis as such. *What worldviews or methods permit the most gratifying expressions of a person's faith in the context of fundamental, exclusionary choices?* I specified several avenues for unification, which I will detail in the next section. Second, it is fairly easy to discern why unification correlates to gratification in one's faith. For we have said disunity is not only ideological but psychological. The psychical affection of an idea, when gripped close to the heart, has this potential to blemish or purify the moral conscience. Exclusionary choices denote the conflict between the moral locus of God, in law or in will, and that of another moral locus. The latter implies a variety, since nearly any moral locus can be produced within pluralism, and it is understandable then that moral pluralism really means an intentionally nonspecific otherness in moral loci. From here forward, I will usually refer to moral pluralism as moral otherness, and moral fundamentalism as moral monism. Indeed, William James believed "the difference between monism and pluralism is perhaps the most pregnant of all the differences in philosophy" (viii James). This may hold true for incompatibilist religion as well, where one finds themselves at last cornered by the divine one and the communal wealth of the many.

The otherness emphasizes that the tension in moral loci is fundamentally significant. We have spoken about our starting place—moral dissonance between the incompatible religious interpretation and pluralism—as essentially an environment where the critical distinctions between moral loci are revealed. However, to touch what is fundamental to the moral locus of

the incompatibilist view, we are compelled to examine the simpler cases that elicit the 'conflict' of moral loci, not the world surrounding the moral loci.

The world with its spiraling, diverging societies are not sources of interrogation, but the ideologies will invoke moral loci, *conceptual* practice, and individualism. Notice, this does not require the inquiry to remain in the realm of pluralism. In fact we must leave it. The relative complexity of pluralism is a macroscopic relation among a host of phenomena, and I do not think the bird's eye view of the world will help us discover the axes of religious morals. The either/or the incompatibilist *refutes* at the outset is between moral pluralism and moral fundamentalism. Consequently, we steer away from the externality of the plural sphere and toward the fundamental conflicts for moral loci—the religious and the ethical followed by exteriority and interiority—to be discussed in the following sections. One final corollary question follows from this. According to the incompatibilist view, *what is foundational to the religious conscience?* This question gets at the heart of things for us because unification will rely on this supposed fundamental answer, whatever form it may take.

Works Cited

1. Eck, Diane. "The Pluralism Project." What Is Pluralism? Web. 16 Mar. 2016.

2. James, William. The Sentiment of Rationality. London: Longmans, Green, 1905. Print.

Unification and Methods

I. Categories and Examples

The incompatibilist problem may appear counterintuitive insofar as it is perceived in experience within an individual, affecting one's psychological disposition, and thereafter, the problem has an ideological import, shouting demands right and left on the belief system of the individual. Although, I would argue the condensed version—a problem first felt as moral dissonance, then thought as moral contradiction—is more common than a rigid causal chain within a category. Logical problems must come from logical premises. Likewise, emotional issues are of an emotive class. The categories exist to distinguish the objects, not keep them separate, and true enough, the incompatibility could be kept in experience and we could absolve ourselves of any categorial treatment.

Indeed, we could chalk up disunity, as psychological and ideological, to the generality of experience I suppose. I could casually refer to experience as humanity and its perception of events and objects, a blanket term for occurrences not exclusively within one category or type. Significant and thoroughgoing problems for folks tend to affect multiple aspects of the human consciousness, especially if they happen at the platform where everything has the tinge of wholeness. Life as experience is a jumble of different kinds of qualities, and so I would conclude the duality of ideas and psychology is not a stretch of logic or a bad assumption.

However, the ideological, the psychical, and the experiential categories offer some nuance to the holism of the incompatibility. I could express generically the following: 'I feel a tension between the values of moral pluralism and moral monism, and I want to rectify this tension for belief.' This is a fine statement of the incompatibility, but it is rough and incomplete. With some purposive categories, unification and its methods may fit the curve better, so we

better introduce some ‘parameters’ to see what works and what will not work for unification. If the nature of the problem informs the nature of the solution, then the holism at the initial stage speaks to a possible holism seen later in the solution. We cover this by including the nature of the problem in the methods themselves.

Yet first, I would make concrete the incompatibility, for it may seem a hypothetical status as of now. We can more or less infer the incompatibility from experience in a couple of short examples. In them, exceptional practice reveals the absolutist tone of moral monism in those situation that deviate from the ‘great overlap’. Familiar cases such as the discord between the cultural morality and specific interpretations of the Christian bible, display this *kind* of problem. The essential monism prefaces the interpretation of the bible as *one,* a thoroughly enclosed, consistent, unified document, and this reading of the holy text repulses the bombardment of informative change from the world, which is in truth a pluralism—ideas about history, religion, and culture in constant exchange among inoculators. Morality is bundled up into conflicts of monistic, divinely ordained interpretation and pluralistic exchange when the question comes. What should I believe? How should I approach this conversation? Would either position stymie the acceptance of one ‘group’ or ideology? The incompatibilist leaning toward pluralism may lend an ear and a thoughtful look, but this same being is also cautioned by the disintegration of the textual monism.

Interpretation of a holy text like the bible is an especially rough example because one could argue science, politics, and religion are appropriated all the time into many ideological frameworks. Why in this case, should one believe it was moral otherness and moral monism all along? So while the merit of the great difference between the monist and the plural could be pursued, I would rather turn to other examples, for interpretation and truth engage *ideas in the*

context of arguments. However, religious consciousness and their moral conscience are more afflicted with the incompatibility of *community*. The exclusive moral loci generate proportional divides among people in conversation. Richer examples are found where the distinction between otherness and monism is created as a reckoned moral distinction.

Suppose a group of strangers sojourn to a deeply religious community for a prolonged period of time, and they wish to become a part of this community. Yet they hail from another walk of live and abide by another set of morals. Their otherness precedes them. Welcoming and hospitality are the natural modes of love to be given freely, but the incompatibility layers this interaction with a second set of concerns. Difference itself is benign to the hospitable, but the incompatibility dually stems from communal spirit and the monist one both ranging otherness in conflicting hues, one of social action and one of tension. For the incompatibilist questions the nature of their hospitality in the backdrop of their divine moral locus. It is a question for conscience about the degree and authenticity of what conversation is to follow. The tension does not give rise to hostility or cynicism, but it interrogates how moral otherness confers with a monism honing its moral beliefs to one focal point, the divine.

The incompatibilist is assailed with a flurry of these questions. Do I keep my world of God at a distance and perform customary hospitality, or does the incompatibilist tug for community pull me into a deeper friendship with these others? There are ideologies to think about. How do I engage their ideas in conversation, and is their acceptance conditioned by my ideology? If I believe in contrast from the other and believe in a set of values, interpreted by me to be incompatible, does this pose an issue for *unconditional* acceptance? For unconditional acceptance is precisely the condition of pluralism, but the moral loci themselves, implicating this pluralism, are a part of the incompatibility. In the end, should the difference between the will of

God and moral otherness be insurmountable by my belief system, would I feel a disunity within myself, should my efforts for hospitality, community, love, and acceptance feel to me hollowed out by ideological constraint? And would I launch my whole being to regain unity or feel unity for the first time?

For we could easily imagine another community that regards otherness and God in the same stroke of morality, and their acceptance of the strangers fires on all cylinders: moral locus, moral beliefs, love, tolerance, and comfort. This would constitute and unconditional acceptance, but it, in a sense, depends on the whole structure of morality keeping the obligation to community and God as pieces of a holistic religious orientation. Other examples of personal interaction go much like this, but they boil down to the questions 'how do I regard the other, given the incompatibility?' and 'how do exclusive moral loci affect the other-other interaction and the religious community?' Love exists always in good religion, but the question of 'how' love manifests varies in the extrema of compatibility and incompatibility.

Many if not most will have some preconceptions of the above examples because some folks in Christianity tackle these issues with several arguments and interpretations. Welcoming, hospitality, acceptance, and discourse flow in different views with varying emphasis. The pulling thread amidst them is the notion of the unconditional. The incompatibility of moral loci is not a practical problem per se, but it affects interpretation of their otherwise pluralist attitude insofar as it conditions and qualifies the other-other interaction and the world at large. With these examples, one should bear in mind the setting for the incompatibility is ordinary—communities in conversation. Or it could be two distinct others standing in a hallway, yet they maintain a complex, unexamined relation as they exchange dialogue, where their moral loci are implicitly engaged. The stakes for these question resolve in thinking of otherness in terms of intersections

and conceiving otherness by the way of parallels. One conceives moral otherness as conditioned in the religious community; the other approaches morality unconditionally and fails to make a distinction between moral monism and moral otherness.

Another point should be made clear. It makes a difference to claim instances like those above have psychological effects with ideological resolution that somehow alleviate them, instead of claiming an example has psychological effects that force us to realize a problem itself is of fundamental significance, demanding ideological considerations. Is the incompatibility internal or external? Suppose an ideological 'fix' remedies the deleterious effects we encountered initially because those effects were contingent on the ideology, and not the other way around. However, the effect is much the same regardless. The question of externality is a red herring to me, for incompatibility and its issues exist and persist in the minds of many religious folks. They adduce the scripture with an emphasis on the will of God; the opposition rests their argument in an unconditional community. They psychologize, reinterpret, and selectively emphasize each other and their arguments to the limits of the interminable. The incompatibility may reside in the ideology or in the psychical, but both of these rest in lived experience. We should assume the externality of the incompatibility due to its prevalence, but little would change if we assumed the opposite. What matters is practice and the interpretation thereof. Recognition of the other, acceptance, and reconciliation is not a simple task for the monist point of view.

We have assumed thus far that disunity returns to unity, but this would be false for various reasons (as the reader might have guessed). Those afflicted with perceived incompatibility are afflicted, not resigned to disunified passivity. Disunity left to time propagates on its own, becoming a habitual state of mind. The shock of disunity in the religious conscience

is a pulse, and the incompatibilist view can be seen as a type of hampered unity. Its effects as affections are diminished, not destroyed, and the complacent divide is internalized into a potential worldview. I would not hesitate to call this the worst case scenario for our inquiry. Nevertheless, disunity is a series of affections paired with beliefs, all woven together in being.

II. Unification and Methods

Disunity perturbs ideology and psychology in meaningful ways. Unification as a process must rectify both per the nature of the problem, and we are led to consider what the process entails for the mind. Unification is a term adopted from *the Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James (121 James). Of course, the meaning has changed from its original designation. For William James, unification of the divided self was conversion, the twice born character of the sick soul who sought a rebirth from their wickedness (146 James). In this comparison, the sick soul is analogous to the disunified religious conscience, but of courses the adjective 'sick' is a caustic hyperbole. The sick soul lives a melancholic existence because they perceive a "wrongness or vice in their essential nature" (98 James). Their being is constantly marred by guilt and sin, and they escape their unhappiness through a secondary revelation of being found only in conversion. In this process, conversion is a centering of religious ideas in the consciousness of one, where they rejuvenate in the fact that this new religious meaning "form the habitual centre of his energy" (146 James). Our broader notion of unification cannot stake any claim on dramatic excitement, but our aim is still to bring both God and otherness into holistic harmony like a 'conversion'. For this, we must thoughtfully employ several options and consider their merits carefully, according not only to the truth of the ideas, but in addition, the truth of the religious conscience. The disunified is similar only in the following respect. The sick soul and the disunified person are not concerned, strictly speaking, with their environment. The evil of the

sick soul is “no mere relation the subject to particular outer thing” (97-98 James). We could add this to the conditions of the project that incompatibilist is concerned with *their* morals, *their* character, and *their* community. The ideological expression of the incompatibility takes the center stage because the only meaningful unity can be gained by ‘figuring out’ or more exactly, resolving the exclusivity of moral loci. They have to be put to terms, sorted out, and not left suspended in the world as a contentious mess. The affection of dissonance in disunity relates strongly to the thinking behind their values. Hence, we can almost immediately exclude the next two methods, regardless of any convenience they bring.

The stressors associated with disunity may lead one to consider the resolution of disunity through psychological relief. This would be a method of unification through form alone. However, this conclusion would ignore the holism of the presentation of the disunity as idea and emotion in lock step. As a category, form can only address form, and one would seek to treat the symptom for its duration till the affection is diminished. This method as a short cut is tempting because it is unification as a function of time without a concerted will. Its temptation exists insofar as we misunderstand the significance of disunity and consequently mistreat its vocation as a ‘moral sensitivity to one’s environment’. Indeed as William says, “it all depends on how sensitive the soul may become to discord” (102 James). However, if we decide to keep the integrity of disunity, even as an experience possibly worthwhile to have, then we know the cognitive import would persist on varying levels. The lifeblood of disunity flows with religious interpretation in pluralism, in the nature of religious morals. The thoughtful pursuit of which may yield enduring *and* affectionate unity, despite the oftentimes vehement religious, political, and cultural tensions imbued with the discussion around plural value and religious morality.

In practice, I think the method of form functions as a therapeutic abandonment or suppression of the relevant affections. In a similar way to William James' healthy minded Christian, repentance means "getting away from the sin, not groaning and writhing in its commission" (94 James). If sin for some souls has less effect on conscience than attitude or rote action, then maybe the notion of 'getting away' would be appropriate. In the dual prongs of psychology and ideology, the stronger vibrations ring from the latter. The stakes are the monistic foundations of the religious conscience itself, as an ideology of the moral locus. As such, the potential consequence for value and in turn unity is pervasive, even if as we have said, it is not technically practical. Ideology is comprised by a system of beliefs in a syllogistic, interlocking manner, and thus, catharsis is not an effective remedy for the incompatibilist view. Resolutions that turn an eye away from the fullest implications of their religious morality may not be viable, particularly if my analogy for moral monism applies, the existence of which problematizes moral otherness.

To sum up, psychological ailments with rational solutions only clear up the emotive parts, whereas psychological effects signifying a deeper conundrum must go down another road. I believe many valid interpretations exist on behalf of religious thought to prevent any radical conflict with the moral otherness of pluralism, and these are likely reflected in the religious life behavior wise. As concluded, unification is a holistic process from a holistic set of causes. The necessary correspondence of the two components has implications for the final shape of the resolution, some of which we are now in a position to predict.

Resolution precludes the above method of form, but on the other hand, we also do not desire a strictly intellectual method. The logical, dichotomous portrayal of moral loci and its problems laid out before do not call for an onslaught of theologically consistent theory, if that

theory does not stir being to harmony. When the theory specifically informs the conviction, interpretation, and behavior of human beings, the ‘stirring’ presents itself more a requirement than a preference for the method. The problem is ideological with a set of deleterious affections, but these affections are ingrained in the ideology itself. Therefore, the solution must match the problem in its own kind.

In this way, the entrance of resonance as a measure in tandem with logical coherence is unsurprising, because it only exemplifies the religious consciousness as lived and not as indefinite abstraction. The abstraction of the incompatibility refers with some constancy to the world. Substantial unity could only be so if its logical consistency is conceived with respect to its entire purview of belief, and many of those moral beliefs flourish in the life of the community, religious or otherwise. The religious life surveys both an intellectual formation of its morality and a psychological one, whose most general form is a deep founded humanity. Resonance is an emotional stirring, but a thoughtful one. I recall a proposition of Spinoza, who appreciated the connection between reason and the affects. Spinoza writes, “*No affect can be restrained by the knowledge of good and evil insofar as it is true, but only insofar as it is considered as an affect.”* (553 Spinoza). Any inventive resolution concocted in the mind must be couple or organically grow its own set of affections. Dissonance can only be curtailed by resonance (kind against kind), but the resolution we uncover must resonate within ourselves (the affect of an idea).

Thus, unity occurs at the intersection of the divinity of a moral monism and the affections of this humanity. The morality of God and its directive for humankind conjoin in the religious conscience. How does one gauge the truth of an abstraction without reference to their world? For the ideology of the incompatibility roots itself in experience before its self-revelation of being ideology. This is tantamount to saying the power moral loci, as ideological subsets, receive their

lived, meaningful reality in experience. Any model of unification will then have to pull in the elements of the psychical/affective world: belief, practice, and *living* as a religious person.

In effect, this overdrawn emphasis wards against both ideology contrivance and otherworldly metaphysics. Ideology, when sought too eagerly, takes on a low humming dullness when all reconciliation amounts to is a reorientation of perspective or a "superficial rearrangement of the inner self" (98 James). Ideology, when elevated on high and systemic in form, absorbs too much abstraction and departs the religious life. The problems of religious philosophy are not necessarily those of religion. Thus, we cannot reorder moral categories under the supreme moral locus as an automatic measure. Categorial maneuvering displaces the tensions; it does not remove them. It is therefore prudent to use impersonal, atemporal abstractions sparely, keeping the intense metaphysical conclusions at arm's length.

Ideology and psychology are the sum in holism, but holism is the whole greater than the sum. It is the lived experience. Thus, it is prudent to designate one last condition of unification—the *feeling and ideological soundness of the resolution in lived experience.* I identify resolution apart from the idea and the psychology with statements like 'I am done' or 'I am unified'. These recognition, whose moments have a qualitative character of these own, and so I think it wise to include them.

The striving toward unity by means of some analysis has yielded methods and conditions, and this filing exercise is mostly finished. The incompatibilist has lost the quality of their fundamental ideology out to commune with moral otherness with nothing tied behind its back. It is a toolkit of sorts, useful in order to evaluate the nature of incompatibility. Below. I summarized the essentials for future sections.

Categories of the Incompatibility

1. Experience
2. Ideology
3. Psychology/Affection

Conditions

1. The holism of unification—the ideal unity is achieved whenever one no longer feels dissonance or being torn between moral loci (note: unity does not necessarily depend on resolving the disagreement among moral loci or melting them into one moral locus)
2. The ideology of the incompatibilist view must contain an affective part for one's psychological integrity in order to be gratifying.
3. The moral belief of community must be kept as practice in order for the resolution to resonate (another iteration of gratification)

Methods and Models

1. Either/Or
2. Unification of Partitioning Moral Loci
3. Unconditional Unification of Moral Loci

Over the course of the project, we will to develop two models for what unification can look like under these conditions. The primary method will be the either/or to be covered in the next section. I picked the either/or *because* it is appalling to the pursuit of unity of moral otherness and moral monism. But as we will see, if moral otherness and moral monism receive an alternative expressions in their transformations, it will be possible to preserve unity *and* perform an either/or. Choice does not hinder unity, but perhaps abrupt choices of the macrocosm jeopardize unity.

III. The Either/Or and Unity

The tension swelling in the incompatibilist view implies a choice, one that the desire for unity strives to negate. If this choice concerned the everyday life of habitual actions, then we would not strain our spirits with its impact, but as such this choice lies along a pathway of existential grandeur, reminiscent of the 'fork in the road' proposal of Kierkegaard's either/or. Unity defies the either/or for obvious enough reasons. The religious life perceives sense and fulfillment in a world with an obligation to either side of its conscience, moral monism and moral otherness. However, suppose we engage with the jarring of possibilities of an either/or for the religious being, the ideological partition of moral monism and moral otherness. The either/or may be the most jarring of all, but not without sincerity. Disunity faced with the either/or may not be destined to unity if no transformation can bring the choice out from moral otherness and moral monism. If these terms are irreducible, the experience of the incompatibility in practice reveals a set of exclusionary moral loci. If they are not, if the matter can be transformed to another either/or, the incompatibility may exist on other, less contradictory terms. In the end, it is possible one must make a choice, and this structure of decision making has a place in the either/or. For this reason, and for reasons to be discussed later, it is due time to give the either/or a less cursory examination.

The either/or is type of choice, one between two significant yet exclusionary options. The either/or flies from the mundane and lands in the rarity of a life altering decision, punctuating the spiritual life with a severe transition. To this end, the either/or bears its weight in the moment, and just as time does not wait for the quality of life, the either/or does not tolerate idle vacillation (97, 103 *Either/Or*). The subject handed the either/or is like the ship is pursuing its usual headway, moving forward regardless of any and all internal consideration of life's possibilities

(Either/Or 103), and with one of Kierkegaard's somewhat haunting insights, it is unsettling to leave a life decision purely to the powers of the unconscious. Such to the harsh interpretation would suggest a lack of reflection beforehand or a clumsy selfhood.

Indeed, this variety of choice does not leave adequate space to ponder the alternatives. Every second one wastes by deliberating the options diminishes the choice itself until the resonant transition has thus zoomed past (102-103 *Either/Or*). In good existential tradition, time is of the essence for life problems, and the issue of temporality means we cannot hold such a choice abstractly. Life itself is a holism, not an abstraction. Kierkegaard even implies such abstraction reduces the reality of the phenomenon itself, for the "longer one stares at it the less it exists" (similar to what I have done, bringing the perceived incompatibility to an ideological framing) (102 *Either/Or*). The either/or must be a decisive jolt for the faculties into action, otherwise it loses its integrity. To abstain and morph the choice, as unity does, allows the moment to pass into the unconscious or another to choose for them (103 *Either/Or*).

Of course, the bounds of the either/or do not stretch forever, and Kierkegaard restricts the either/or to instances with trademark uniqueness. By the eponymous feature alone, the nature of the choice points to events that transcend mediation of the dialectic, or casually, a compromise among oppositions. The choice that earns the category of either/or only contain two terms, but terms do not only exclude each other in their wholeness, but each aspect of each term. This pervasive exclusive prevents one from extracting the 'good sense' of one term and bringing it along in their decision. Therefore, synthesis is impossible in the part and in the whole.

The existential aspect of the either/or I understand to be of deep, personal meaning caught in time, but even more so as a choice directing the course of one's spiritual life. The perceived incompatibility is revealed at the level of experience. It is immersed in the world of the

perceiver and an integral part of their values, worship, personal expression, and the most casual of religious practice. With these enduring qualities, to divide them is a "question of a choice involving a life problem" (102 *Either/Or*). The choice between moral otherness and moral monism as one's primary moral priority could be considered a question of absolutes, altering the orientation of faith in a fundamental fashion. Exclusionary choice, not choice itself, defeats the aims of unity on nearly all counts, dismissing my previous phraseology like 'communion with the world' as avoidance, perhaps also as vacillation. The perceived incompatibility deserves the attention of the either/or for these reasons.

I initially dismissed the either/or on the basis that the incompatibilist is torn between obligations to moral loci, and the contradiction itself could be seen as an inner call toward unity. When the essential reside on either side of a wall, then the choice between absolutes is not as clean as the captain's choice to maneuver his ship, "either this or that" (103 *Either/Or*). However, the either/or shares this fundamental similarity with unity, as they are both instigated by life choice with these two key properties, vital enough to impose a twist in life direction and urgency.

I suppose we should not overlook the character of this choice, for one does may never intend to choose but nevertheless arrive at an either/or in their lifetime. Life choices are timely events, appropriate to the axial shifts of being that come and go without the cries of criticism. The either/or could have come and gone without one ever realizing it was thundering toward them. As unideal as that would be, the choices for the self, unified or divided, are rarely given with self-awareness. The notion of a life choice is ambiguous. The safer manner to determine a life choice may not be the instance of choice, but upon reflection, identifying the shifts in priorities and thinking. In this project, the application of such a moving decision would separate

moral otherness and moral monism by an insurmountable barrier and deny any commonality of the two. As Thomas Flynn paraphrases Sartre, this is a choice "that we find we've made implicitly all along" (34 Flynn). This characterization of life choice of course modifies the either/or. In addition to Kierkegaard's dramatic life choice of the present, we equate the shifting of the personality to a new life path with similar significance. This is something Kierkegaard refers to disparagingly as "the inner drift of the personality", but even if this reduces the ideal freedom of the movement, it adds realism and complexity to the ways in which being chooses, not necessarily unconsciously, but intentionally (103 *Either/Or*). At the same time, this life choice would be preverbal, unlike the original either/or.

If the either/or (or some event like it) had passed behind the eyes of the incompatibilist, I think there is a prior decision that could have occurred. In retrospect, the life choice or 'intentional shift' would have been done long before that between moral monism and moral otherness. The life choice would have been for unity itself. We can choose, neglect, or stave off the choice, but another species of choice is to recognize the choice itself as incomplete and in need of reevaluation. The incompatibilist chooses and must consciously elect over and over to engage in the struggle to keep its world whole. Dramatically put, but I notice and Kierkegaard notes the inevitability of the either/or. One who contemplates their existence will likely hear existential voices in their ears from time to time, and the ringing of the either/or may echo the most. Unity, in this way, is a choice, but not one made of complacency, rather one made for the sake of action, struggle, and eventual fulfillment.

Disregarding unity in order to not presuppose any post-decision rationalization, suppose we treat the perceived incompatibility as a dedicated sigil for an either/or. This has consequences as long as the choice between moral monism and moral otherness bears the marks. Any

abstention in the hour of decision gives up the cherished prize of choice, that is, self-acquisition (102 *Either/Or*).

No matter how one chooses, the judgment falls to us in the aftermath of the either/or to trust its warrant. There is a period if not a single instant when the ship must turn, as there is a fixed time frame when the conflict of religion and the world reaches a kind of breaking point. The resonance of the either/or is its psychical power in experience. It is revealed in situation, where the world offers a duality, and the choice weighs heavy on the chest. Here, the reader must trust that Kierkegaard's captain decided beforehand to consult a map. With the guidance of such tools, we could be sure that a decision of irreversible magnitude had boiled off its complexity, and we could be left with the choice of "this or that" (103 *Either/Or*). Without this assurance, the either/or appears out of context, as if the pieces in play lacked the time to align or to grow.

On the one hand, the life choices for the incompatibilist view require an incubation period before it achieves an understandable maturity. The choice itself constantly absorbs the dissonance of moral systems and every reflection until it resonates with the subject. In other words, the either/or intimates past rumination. The resonance I think is satisfactory enough in the eyes of either/or because perhaps the contrast picks up this stark dualism. Wherever one looks, a great bold line falls down the middle of moral monism and moral otherness. A canyon spans the length between them by the very power of resonance, so distant can they become to the mind. At the time of maturation, a choice is imminent, some action must be taken, or at least a conscious, thoughtful resignation regarding its existence. Afterwards, we can imagine there comes a time where one is obliged to say 'I can do this or that'.

On the other hand, the life choice must slice the world without hesitation, leaving two mutually exclusive spheres of being thereon. This is where the procession of an either/or

becomes unclear. If we determine the either/or from the terms themselves, the existence of an either/or denotes terms that are in a strict sense, a real contradiction with one another. We could scour their qualities forever and fail in perpetuity to uncover an aspect commensurable with the other. This direction would indicate that the life choice is simultaneously a fundamental one i.e. between simple, independent propositions.

However, this procession violates the character of the either/or by reversing the nature of an encounter with a life pathway. As if to say, the formal contradiction of the terms warrant a life choice to invent itself on its behalf. One does not conceive contradictory terms and toss them into the world, waiting for them to appear in the future. This would be both strange and disingenuous. Rather the character of the either/or is perceived from pivotal moments in reality. In his speech, the judge speaks of the either/or from past experience. He remarks "I think of the occasions in my later life when I stood at the crossways, when my soul was matured in the hour of decision." (97 *Either/Or*). Kierkegaard, through the judge, seems to believe the either/or is choice learned and confronted. This belief is consistent with his mantra of escaping thought experiments and bringing actual choice into selfhood. The judge lectures the aesthete on the either/or because it is in a simple sense, a life lesson, an essential stepping stone on the road to goodness and individuation. So too is it with the perceived incompatibility. I regard it as a life choice deeply ingrained in experience, pre-reflective in some way, but not cooked up in thought.

Oppositely, if we confirm the either/or from lived experience itself, the fundamental choice, which is truly exclusionary, will never catch up to the resonant life choice, too impatient slow its pace and instead disappears into the past. This is the trouble I perceive with the either/or. The life choice must account for subjectivity and situation, where often enough, some gap exists between them. From the point of view of the subject, the measure of a life transition is its

resonance. From the perspective of situation, the metric remains foggy without its own maturation, distinct from that of the subject. I assume the either/or retains this fundamental significance of a one way crossroads, and one cannot trace their steps backwards in case they were mistaken.

In which case, the either/or implies a fundamental choice and a life choice. If this is so, the either/or between moral monism and moral otherness cannot exist because they are not fundamental terms. At the height of experience, they are massive characterizations for two sets of moral systems with accompanying moral loci. Moral otherness consolidates the multiplicity of moralities existing in a pluralism and does not single out a particular system. Likewise, moral monism is an analogy for the omnipresence of the will of God in a moral belief system, but thus far, we have said nothing about what this will entails as a moral locus (about which there is much to say). An either/or does not suit the terms. Amidst the sheer generality and complexity, I would dispute that an either/or could accurately discriminate the necessary life pathways of the perceived incompatibility. A person caught in and reckoning an either/or could easily confuse the life choice for the fundamental choice. I would speculate that creating and following a false or avoidable life path would be the apparent consequence of such a confusion. Not to imply it is counterintuitive for one to have assumed that the perceived incompatibility was an either/or. I initially assumed so due to its likeness, but there is an emotional impact to Kierkegaard's either/or that displaces the concept of informed decision. That is, unless one restricts the jurisdiction of an either/or with a maxim like 'its resonance is its clarity'.

A predictable corollary is that the either/or should not be improvised because I understand now that the terms of the event must conclude at a terminus of fundamental terms. This either/or will have a certain depth to its history and a duration to mature before it becomes

truly relevant. Or practically speaking, they should be fundamental enough to comfortably claim ‘this or that’ in many contexts in addition to moral loci (dilemmas of career, school, love, etc.).

While the incompatibility should not be considered an either/or as such, an either/or may permeate the fundamental principles of moral monism and moral otherness underneath. Unfortunately, Kierkegaard (now in the *Stages of Life’s Way*) does not spare many details about the either/or as a general decision, but only those which bear the utmost weight in lived experience, of which there are two. One exists as an absolute decision between the aesthetic and the ethical spheres (97 *Either/Or*). It is absolute in the sense that one who chooses the ethical sphere and recognizes the existence of moral responsibility can never go back to the aesthetic sphere. The movement is final. The other exists between the religious and the ethical. This either/or is heavily qualified because it is not a rote negation but a suspension (85 *Fear*). We should consider the first transformation of the conflict. Is this a conflict between the religious sphere and the ethical sphere? Why might an incompatibilist perceive this tension? And finally, how do Kierkegaard’s insights about this framework address and resolve this conflict?

Works Cited

1. Flynn, Thomas. *Existentialism A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.
2. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Lexington: Renaissance Classics, 2012. Print.
3. Kierkegaard, Søren. "Either/Or." *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Ed. Robert Bretall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946. Print.
4. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Group, 1985. Print.
5. Spinoza, Benedict. "Ethics." Trans. Edwin Curley. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. Print.

The Religious and the Ethical

I. Introduction to the Inquiry

Those who doubt the ultimate coalescence of their sacred morals and the host of morals that litter the world may strain to keep this possibility of reconciliation and unconditional communion open, but there is some wonder to be had about it nature, which is uncertain at the level of existence. Of all the possibilities for the transformation of this tension within experience, the religious and the ethical is the most jarring. Kierkegaard champions this distinction with his interpretation of the Abraham-Isaac story, whose character is potentially hazardous to the ethos of the religious beyond Christianity. Its pathos for the ethical is in some sense why it resonates with Kierkegaard, whose philosophic orientation often turns toward suffering, loneliness, and despair for meaning. That aside, I understand his interpretation of the Abraham-Isaac story brings a tinge of glaring horror to the peripheral of the religious consciousness. It is the simple possibility that past generic religion, the faith of one may individuate them and give them the power to *will* to murder the other for the sake of God. It is the call away from the universality of the world toward their faith, hence as a fundamental distinction, the differing roles of the religious and the ethical, it parallels their qualms with the supreme moral locus and moral otherness. Kierkegaard does not shy away from the traumatic possibility of the faith that stands above the world, and so I would consider seriously this inner tension, this disbelief, as reflective of the conflict of the religious and the ethical.

II. The Ethical Sphere and the Communicable

First of all, we should discuss the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious as spheres. The term implies a spatial dimension, but it would be problematic to refer to them as realms of existing, not when so much depends on the interpretation of the subject. Instead, I would offer

that our dispositions and our choices alert us to the sphere in which we live. Do I sacrifice moral responsibility for my immediate and fleeting desires? If I do, consciously or not, I find myself in the aesthetic sphere until I perform an either/or at the appropriate time and enter the ethical sphere, at which point I can only return to the aesthetic sphere as an immoral being. The point is that from my perspective, the ethical sphere is constituted by ethical principles utilized by human beings without the abstract spatial connotation. I would categorize the ethical sphere as a type of being or way of living. When I establish a relationship with the ethical, I choose to live as an ethical being (not good or evil per se, but subscribing to the very concept of good and evil) (107 *Either/Or*).

Kierkegaard interprets the ethical sphere itself loosely in the Kantian sense of the term. The ethical is the universal and applies to everyone (83 *Fear*). Its moral content is dictated by the faculty of reason, falling back on the logical consistency of action, its universalizability for all members of the ethical. The ends of this system, therefore, do not indicate specific moral principles, but moral principles are determined by their consistency. As Kierkegaard writes, "as soon as the single individual wants to assert himself in his particularity, in direct opposition to the universal, he sins, and only by recognizing this can he again reconcile himself with the universal" (83 *Fear*). This I understand easily enough. Moral action, even if we would not necessarily regard the universal as an absolute of the universe, should not culminate in a free-for-all among the members of a community.

Despite the omnipresence of logical consistency, the ethical implicates the individual more than their world. For moral action, the normative consistency depends on a multiplicity. William James once remarked that if there were only one individual on an otherwise barren planet, ethics as a subject would cease to exist (205 James). Some otherness is necessary in order

to measure moral claims. I can implicate the human perspective even further. For in a sense, I discover the ethical sphere through the other; it is the manner in which ethical content is learned. The existence of the ethical, at least its piecemeal morals, was taught to me by my parents and my community. Its principles and virtues are communicated through individuals, and subject to reason, the ethical is a matter of discourse. The righteous act can be debated among inoculators or imported to one's education. All the while, the final action, after such and such discourse, can be observed, analyzed, and meaningfully judged by the other. In practice, the ethical sphere, I think, subsumes the individual via two mechanisms, communicability and accountability. The lens in which I would view Kierkegaard's universal is through the concept of moral criticism. The ethical is a conversation piece. The integrity of the field is compromised without moral criticism, revealed in dialogue and judgment, and this I assume to be the axis of moral otherness. I will take a moment to reflect on the parallels.

Among a host of moral systems with varying moral loci, the nature of coexistence and celebration is dialogue. As I referenced before in Diane Eck's interpretation of moral pluralism, there is an ethics to the conversation itself because the nature of the dialogue is self-perpetuating, returning over and over to the communion with moral otherness. If the communicative aspect of the ethic was not an ends in itself, then the logical consistency of action among individuals would either be self-negating or expressed only with a finite duration, but as such, the telos of the ethical as the universal is itself (83 *Fear*). Hence, these mechanisms to alert us to the ethical sphere, communication and accountability, also do not terminate themselves for some other ends. One may take this as an indication that moral otherness realized in consistency signifies an overarching morality. I would not be so daring as to project a universalism over a relativism, but

moral otherness in the ethical sphere is itself a value, and taken as such, moral otherness expressed universally spans the ‘great overlap’ (common moral application among moral loci).

This unifying principle of ethical sphere as logical consistency, now understood as moral criticism, is the same principle through which I understand the tragic heroes in Kierkegaard’s narrative *Fear and Trembling* (86-87 *Fear*). In the tale of Brutus of Rome, Brutus is commanded by Roman law to punish his son who violated the law (87 *Fear*). His ethical duty places a burden on him to slay his son, and in this same sphere, he was obliged to love his son (87 *Fear*). This of course is an ethical dilemma for the tragic hero, and I will return to the nature of this dilemma when I discuss the religious sphere. For now, Kierkegaard lists and expounds on a few of these tragic heroes who sacrificed a loved one for the law or for their people. He distinguishes them, principally I think, because he is attempting to show that there are firmly implanted in the ethical sphere and never perform the either/or to enter the religious sphere.

One of these signals for the ethical is the relation of the tragic hero to the observer. In these stories, a tone of sympathy run throughout. Kierkegaard could, even in retrospect, interpret and communicate why Brutus had to do what he did. A man broke the law, he was found guilty, and it fell to the man’s father to enact punishment. A whole nation watched and judged this action where “there will not be one, not even the son, who fails to admire the father…” (87 *Fear*). In his examples, there is a clear, communicable relation between Brutus, the moral agent, to the city of Rome, the observer external to the system. Communicability and accountability are naturally social elements, and from the perspective of the ethical, it is perhaps mundane to stress how the interactions of otherness, and likewise moral otherness, use these tools to bring folks together in their understanding. Kierkegaard could have chosen another class of examples to show the social relation, but there is something illuminating in that, even at the pinnacle of moral

dilemmas for the tragic hero, communicability and accountability hold as tenable concepts within the ethical sphere.

Consequently, moral otherness is tightly knitted to the ethical side of the conflict because it is a relational category, denoting both a recognition and interaction of the observer's morality to the morals of the world. There are many reasons why moral pluralism emphasizes dialogue, and this is just one of them, that communicability and accountability establish these relations among moral systems in an organic way. Moral criticism, which could not exist without the concept of judgment, is likewise bound up with universality, binding the moral agent to the observer and platforming the concept of moral responsibility in a religious community.

III. The Abraham-Isaac Story and the Religious Sphere

As the reader may be familiar, Kierkegaard expatiates the ethical sphere in contradistinction to the religious sphere. The ethical sphere does not form the whole of human existence; it bear limitations in relation to the religious sphere. Sociality breaks down entirely in the story of Abraham and Isaac, while the fundamental morality of other-other interactions become unintelligible. This story, while innocuous to some, is an incendiary example of the truly religious for Kierkegaard. As the infamous tale goes, Abraham receives a divine order from God to take his son onto mount Moriah and sacrifice him. To Kierkegaard, this story reveals the quintessential philosophical differences between the ethics of the community and the religious morals of the exceptions called by God to be tested. However, this divergence is not a matter of course. The sacrificial decree surely stunned Abraham as it stuns the reader, for it flies in the face of God's promise to Abraham regarding the success of his nation (51 *Fear*). Abraham believed that Isaac would be his heir, and that "all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed" (51 *Fear*). Suffice to say, the promise of empire was ruptured, for God effectively

requested of Abraham to throw away his legacy and his life on earth. God had in addition revealed Its will to be inconsistent in relation to humankind, at least for those three days before the sacrifice. The divine, in its particularity with Abraham and not its universality to humankind, had shown itself capable of betrayal.

The inconsistencies do not end with a contrary account of God's demands. God stirs within Abraham a discrepancy in his moral faculties, the possibility for justification in the *will* to do wrong. From this, Kierkegaard understood how a difference in moral content emerged between the religious and the ethical, or at least the possibility of difference, which to the impenetrable universality of the ethical, may be equally damning. Kierkegaard points out the implication even in Its commandments, that "love of God can cause the knight of faith to give his love of his neighbor the opposite expression to that which is his duty ethically speaking" (98 *Fear*). The potent, haunting question is then 'could this love cause the knight of faith to harm his neighbor?', if this is what we take the term "opposite" to indicate. However, since Abraham never came so far as to harm Isaac, this is still an open question, perhaps forever unanswered. If Abraham's faith was solidified with resolve and without a single crack of doubt, then the most one could claim is that he willed to murder in spite of the ethical. Similar to the aesthete becoming subject to the concept of good and evil, the truly religious for Kierkegaard recognize the risk of being called to the religious sphere. Wherein, they become subject to sin and grace instead of good and evil as moral systems. The inconsistency is this consequence of having the supreme moral locus of God's will shift away from those moral beliefs we attribute to right and wrong.

The religious sphere, by virtue of its holiness as opposed to its goodness, offers a special variety of exceptions and novels for morality. Dripping with sublimity or heart wrenching horror,

they nevertheless share the element of pulling from the world and striving toward faith. This interpretation of the religious as morally distinct lends to faith conceived not as a status of a religious person. Their religion did not give them faith in this context; their choice to have faith in the face of impossible trials means they have entered the religious. Abraham had faith, not just in the existence and benevolence of God, but he believed and never doubted he would lose Isaac (77 *Fear*). His faith, perpetually affirmed all the way up the mountain, according to Kierkegaard, was the sole reason God returned Isaac to him (77, 85 *Fear*). The former is a stagnate category of being a convert of religion, and the other is an active, trying category, where one may inadvertently slip out of the religious and return to the supposed comfort of the ethical.

IV. The Tornness of the Religious and the Ethical

Kierkegaard interprets the religious in this radical way, perhaps to develop and realize the will of God as its own moral imperative, its separate categorial implication. These reasons may be salient to the incompatibilist view. God is after all, above any logical consistency of the ethical, for the same reason It is above the rational. Therefore, there are those circumstances of trials and missions that are apart from the ethical, for God has Its own commandments to keep. God needed proof of Abraham, and so, in that case, the sacrifice was this unspeakable action (quite literally), the exception to any socially constructed relation. I would summarize this point by deduction; if God is above all, there may follow a moral imperative above all as well. God is greater; the religious is greater; morality is also greater. Faith takes advantage of this discrepancy, glimpses where the contours of the religious and the ethical fail to align, and taps into this greatness. Only then can one be justified as Abraham in the *will* to do wrong throughout his mission. The content of these moral imperatives, while not outright whim, lead the person of faith to consider the real bounds of morally justified behavior.

In the religious mode, there is a distinct withdrawal from those social grounds that permeate the ethical. They conflict absolutely, and for the incompatibilist, this withdrawal does not come without tornness. The intelligible other-other interactions that gave the religious community its life have no voice in the absolute duty, but it is those social workings—the dialogue and the judgment that made the religious community possible.

The heart of a religious soul must tear and delegate itself to realms if one accepts the doctrine of the religious sphere. All trails of faith in the religious can be traced back to the unbridled will of God, the call to serve. Kierkegaard conceives faith then as an absolute duty to God, the ultimate expression of Its will (88, 98 *Fear*). The ethical content is kept away from the content of religious normativity precisely because of the contingency of God's will. The religious is distinguished from the ethical because of the will of God. Which is to say, we note a possibility that God will not always be consistent. Kierkegaard illustrates the absolute duty with what he considers a controversial biblical passage in the Christian faith.

> As everyone knows, Luke 14:26 presents a remarkable teaching on the absolute duty to God: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' This is a hard saying, who can bear to hear it? And for this reason it is heard very seldom. Yet this silence is only a futile evasion. (99-100 *Fear*)

While perhaps an exaggeration, the message of moral priority is at least clearer than ever, so too is the distinction between moral monism and moral otherness. The will of God is a kind of unbounded, contingent moral monism; the universality of the ethical is a full acceptance of moral otherness as other. The freedom of the divine and the horrific implication are unabashedly realized. Kierkegaard later states it "is God who demands absolute love" (101 *Fear*). The absolute duty is primary, and all other love is secondary.

In Kierkegaard, we are given paradoxes and conflicting expressions at every turn. However, the paradox of the absolute duty conveys more than an ideological expression. In accordance with our criteria, this is no logical contrivance; the love of communion is compromised. More so, there is a level upon which hate is necessitated in the act of loving God at the expense of otherness. Kierkegaard writes that the ethical expression for Abraham's sacrifice is "he hates Isaac" (101 *Fear*). In this relation, the love for Isaac which brings out the turmoil of the sacrifice is contrasted with its ethical consequent to the observer, the hatred. But he must love Isaac with all his might for the sacrifice to be worthy as a proof. The passions are polarized and combined into one expression. The tragic emotion of love-hate does not constitute the gratifying expression the incompatibilist seeks in their faith.

The entirety of the withdrawal is a multistep process. The faithful incompatibilist realizes the nature of their allegiance to the supreme locus of the will of God and perhaps has two accompanying revelations. One pertains to the distinction of the religious and the ethical—that one can be in a relation to God without being in a relation to the other; the second denotes the practical aspect, the will to do act contrary or independent to the ethical. The will to wrong or the will to contingency perhaps resonates the most because its reality leaves the textbook so to speak. If the love of God with the same stroke begs the hate of the other, one is torn. If the gratitude of faith in a community that *refers to* God conflicts with the faith of Abraham, who willed to throw it all away in the sacrifice, one is torn.

On the one hand, Kierkegaard affirms the experiential observation that the incompatibility may not be purely situational or psychological. In this way, the will of God explains the nature of the moral monism up to the level of practice. On the other hand, his

revelation and acceptance of the duty can only bolster the dissonance of the incompatibilist. Unification is left in dire straits.

In absolute duty, the infinity of love is tempered and its direction is altered, discriminating its objects into moral priorities. At the same time, this same affection of the faith relates itself to a moral belief in community; the two are not separate. Two kinds of communion now exist, one love for otherness and one for God. The latter implies at the very least an ideological withdrawal from the world, but the mission of Abraham and the priority of God problematize too the unbridled effluence of love, a wholly intimate level of feeling.

Kierkegaard might embrace the withdrawal from moral otherness and cling to the exceptionalism of the religious sphere. It is supposed to invoke the sense of tornness, despair, loneliness. We will see these feelings of dread to an extent affirm the faith of the individual in the religious. The resulting movement reduces and limits other-other communion to context, to a qualitative dependency, to spheres of living where this morality is prevalent. If that is all to be said, this culminates in tension ad infinitum for the incompatibilist with the barebones of ideological unification. The unified idea would just be the recognition that the religious and the ethical explains the incompatibility. The other elements, community, gratification, and the holism of the religious conscience, are thrown out as life paths. Resonance within a life on the border of the religious and the ethical is also left to fluctuate in the paradoxical tension. God is the origin in space from which we love the other, but *unconditional* communion with the otherness is fundamentally distorted in the Abraham-Isaac story. This idea becomes particularly clear in the conception of the knight of faith discussed later on. So are these the consequences for the faithful being in an *unlimited, radical sense*, without any attention to the scope of the religious and the ethical distinction.

V. Criticism of the Religious and the Ethical and the Knight of Faith

After all that, Kierkegaard's authentic conception of the religious and the ethical is not without criticism, both ideological and practical. Before, pursuing other arguments, we should address the elephant that forever occupies Kierkegaard's account of the tale. Namely, as one argument goes, the Abraham-Isaac story cannot be imported in its dramatic interpretation into a contemporary context at all. It is unusable for many reasons. How would one interpret a call to God without explicitly being told as in the case of Abraham? His mission was a direct as one could ever expect, and I would, safely I think, assume such calls are miraculous and without much repetition. If all the details of the setting were essential to the driving morals of the story, one would need the divine command given in words. If the idea of the exceptional mission is the essential piece, one could be led out of the ethical into the religious, but the nature of the call would be forever ambiguous. I will not dwell too much on this, but a notable implication, put bluntly, is self-justified religious violence. Who could be trusted to have received the call? And who could be said to be stable and not subject to delusions? I only mention this interpretation of the story, because if unaddressed, one could preclude the Abraham-Isaac story as a case study of the will of God. In other words, one may be tempted to throw out the religious and the ethical characterized in *Fear and Trembling*.

To this criticism, I could only say the 'self-justification' reading overreaches itself and becomes somewhat absurd (not in a positive way) when the reading brushes past the criteria Kierkegaard himself gives to the absolute duty. Below I compiled several indicators for the religious sphere. But to their credit, Kierkegaard lambasts the reader for their temptation to consider Abraham justification only *after he got back Isaac*, when he writes "one flirts with the outcome aesthetically; it comes…as effortlessly as a prize of the lottery" (92 *Fear*). From one

perspective, faith would not be faith if there was certainty. Kierkegaard embraces the affective portion of faith with all the loneliness, distress, and terror packed neatly in its luggage. Admittedly, one of the more memorable responses Kierkegaard lashes back to the lackadaisical view is if one "should judge himself according to the outcome, he would never begin" (91 *Fear*). The reading of risk and unknown possibilities is evident, but this does not mean there are no markers of a being of true faith before the act. I find this expressed most clearly in his description of a knight of faith. We want to satisfy ourselves about two things: how we know if one is indeed a knight of faith (therefore are justified in Kierkegaard's framework), and if this is true, how through their faith, they return to their pacifist sensibilities.

The agents who undertake the divine mission do indeed step apart from any moral system capable of being actualized or conceived by humanity. Or even simpler, they decide to keep their faith and never convert it into its own rationality. Martyrs and heroes like Abraham are examples of knights of faith. To reiterate the nature of the faith, the knight of faith is not a knight because their faith drew them toward religion or a religious community. They are knights because they make the final movement from understanding to pure belief *in a radical way.* The canonical leap of faith is not just trust in the "objective uncertainty" of the situation (306 "Faith"). It is not as though the knight reflects, inquires, and collects all the pertinent information, and then they resolutely decide to act anyways. This formulation implies the faith depends on the relation of the subject to the object, the object becoming more probable or more improbable all the time. Kierkegaard is careful to distinguish this question of the *relation* of knower to known from the *relationship*, which entails a personable element (302 "Faith").The movement of faith refers to the latter because the leap toward objective uncertainty is complemented by subjective reflection. The knight reflects not on the truth of their relation to the object such as an external piece of

knowledge. They point their passion to themselves and examine their own integrity in the relation to the object. This is the relationship. The consequence, as one could predict, is that there exists circumstances when the relation to the object could be falsified, but the relationship could still remain intact. For faith certainly, this relationship of the knight is a "God-relationship" (302 "Faith"). Without the subject implicated in the belief, faith defined in this way is 'objectified' or turned into evidence gathering. With the subject as involved in the truth of the relation, Kierkegaard instead suggests a move to stick to objective uncertainty, and in those cases where the relation to the object is shown false, this uncertainty becomes impossibility. The impossibility in understanding litters the Abraham Isaac story.

Kierkegaard shows this by contrasting his types of knights. When the heroic figures of the ethical find themselves caught in a dilemma between two goods, they may recognize the impossibility of their situation. Kierkegaard posits two knights who both love a princess (73-75 *Fear*). The first knight grasps their passion for the princess and perhaps makes reflects in their own subjectivity infinitely (Kierkegaard associates the infinite to passionate expression). However, when the potential of being with the princess fades, the unknown receives its final negation. The knight *knows* it is now impossible. The knight of resigns infinitely; they direct their passion away, to giving up. Their passionate love for the princess never dies, but the knight renounces all possibility of its reality (73 *Fear*). These knights of infinite resignation reject their claim on blessedness or a positive outcome (73 *Fear*). The knight of faith, in the same situation understands this much. They even would acknowledge the impossibility of being with the princess, but they take the critical step. With a nonrational aplomb, they believe in blessedness anyways (75 *Fear*). Kierkegaard calls this movement the one of faith, for faith in this case is an arduous, perplexing, incomprehensible belief; it is believing in the absurd (76 *Fear*) or relying on

the "strength of the absurd" (85 *Fear*). Of course, absurdity need not be irrational, so much as escaping the dichotomy of logic and illogic altogether. However, to believe in the impossible after recognizing it as impossible is where the absurdity steps into play, hence how knowing becomes believing.

The knight of faith brandishes a handful of markers prior to the either/or to enter the religious sphere. While we cannot coerce the auguries of the call to portend the result, we can to some extent answer the question of whether or not a knight is in a state of faith without reference to the Abraham-Isaac story. For the practical import of absolute duty finds its voice in a singular individual. The religious sphere has to lose its historicism. Thoughtful inheritance and intentional extraction are the games of self-knowledge. Its reality in lived experience comes down to the wonder of a state of faith *is* without instantaneous relation to Abraham. The wisdom, often remarked as application, materializes as a general disposition, the state of being faithful. Such is why we should note the faith of the knight and not specifically Abraham. While it is not attractive to consider the absurd, and especially in the emotional distraught, the knight of faith is not bemused by the sheer possibility of the mission.

First, the religious action must run counter to any desire. The knight in both their resignation and their faith; they resolutely abandon their emotional and intellectual wants. For what did Abraham have to renounce before the sacrifice? Isaac, the one he loved most in the world. In order to have faith, he had to recognize the impossibility of Isaac's survival unless he doubted the divine command (he could not think 'God is lying'; Abraham received the command in sincerity). The proof of the trial had its own measure, Abraham's love of Isaac. Only when the action that relies on the absurd is "in absolute contradiction with his feeling" is the sacrifice possible (102 *Fear*). If Abraham for whatever reason had his faith align with his desire to

murder, then the sacrifice would have been null, pointless. Only when the rational, the loving, and any communicable expression of good ran antiparallel to the religious did the act of murder become meaningful, worthy of faith. Abraham wills the opposite of what he desires; hence there comes the despair and anguish. Kierkegaard elucidates this further in a footnote, which probably should have been in the main text. The knight of faith gives up desire and duty (of the ethical kind) in order to properly express his absolute duty (105 *Fear*). They lose both security and the right to any positive emotion. The consequence applies to the desire to justify wrong. If one *wants* the evil, the murder, or the act of hatred, they simply cannot be a knight. Distinctly prejudiced and sadistic expression cannot authentically fall under faith.

The divergence of the religious and the ethical signifies a just being elevated to the higher sphere of action. It is not a pleasure; it is not an obligation to another being, a community, or a state. The justification of the *will* to such violence possesses a transcendent, intrinsic quality. The divergence depends on the absolute to supply this intrinsic value, and therefore, bears with it the tantalizing prospect of self-satisfied violence, a circular affirmation of prejudice. The political appropriation of the Kierkegaard, of the Abraham-Isaac story, is so very far from any viable reading it has no value in the religious sphere. It is the apocalyptic faith that *loves* to doom itself as it *loves* to doom others. Sometimes, the term pluralism may have relativistic, democratic, and therefore political connotations, but political appropriation gets far away from the observations of Kierkegaard and the incompatibilist where they may express ‘my religious values may not be commensurable with the values of my culture, the moralities of others, or a universal ethic’. These are personal considerations. One is armed with a set of conflicting obligations about the nature of communion. To whom, God or the neighbor? What does my morality (locus, beliefs, and action) express in this act of communion?

This points to the second marker of privacy, and perhaps the most salient reason for Kierkegaard, for "absolute isolation" is the only criterion he mentions explicitly (106 *Fear*). The knight of faith does not boast or express their ideals. They live a solitary life, finding themselves "alone about everything" (106 *Fear*), and they never console themselves by relating their mission to amicable relations. The religious community can only hinder the knight. For example, the trial of Abraham was between him and God; the proof of his faith had no weight for the tribe. Their presence and involvement in the sacrifice would have been an irrelevant burden. Further, they risk pulling Abraham out of the religious with what could have only been many questions and challenges. So the knight of faith does not say anything. The exceptions recognize their task is a "private undertaking" (88 *Fear*). The practice of silence is the most intimate sign of the call, for it is in direct contrast to the practicality of the ethical, communicability and accountability. More will be added in the next section when I address communication explicitly.

Suppose now that we know well enough how to discern a genuine knight of faith. If the knight was still driven in our eyes to do evil, would we not rush to stop this person? I believe this too is resolved in the gratification of faith, for Abraham makes the final movement and has faith in God's promise for him to be blessed in this life (51, 53-54). The faith enables Abraham to overcome all temptation, satisfies the proof, and brings Isaac back to him. It dictates the terms of the interaction between the infinite will of an individual in relation to the infinite will of God. The individual taps into this greatness of the absolute, expressing themselves infinitely as a particular knight of faith.

These ideas are encapsulated in Kierkegaard's famous phrase, "teleological suspension of the ethical" (85 *Fear*). Irrespective of the mission, the knight of faith only suspends the ethical to embark into the religious; they are destined to find their way back. They withdraw from the

world, made to prove, and dreadfully isolated. They act in a realm of superior contingency, where all their positivity experiences a tremendous reversal. Surely they are 'greater' but in agony and despair. Their faith is their pillar, but the resolve does not bless the religious realm. The religious sphere must be a temporary state of affairs. To clarify, faith is *not* the elision of the will of God and the will of humankind, but it arbitrates the will of God in temporary relation to the one and the will of God in constant relation to humankind. The latter relation touches the heart of blessedness in this life—a reunion with community, loved ones, etc.

This all goes to the claim that, for all its uncertainty, the religious cannot shake the element of destiny. The moment the religious and the ethical diverge as courses of action, they are simultaneously bound to converge sooner or later. Faith has its object firmly grounded in the blessedness of lived experience. In the Abraham-Isaac story at the very least, there is a self-corrective mechanism working in the suspension that allows it to be so. The negation of the ethical, one may conclude, would mean a trip to the religious implies wrongdoing, but it only ever reaches the *will* commit atrocities.

It would be well argued that this discussion on the knight of faith runs independent of all strains of reality. I have done my best to reduce the impact of the radicalism of Kierkegaard's interpretation by sorting out the criteria. However, this still is not truly satisfactory. The miraculous nature of faith in the end should not be concerned with ensuring the impossible belief in modern times. The danger lingers in the possibility of violence, justified or not, faithful or unfaithful. One last quality strips the knight of faith of its proper reality, and it will direct us to consider alternative routes for the incompatibilist.

That is, the most faithful of souls may go their entire lives without being called or encountering another knight of faith. The last criterion is the marvel itself—the exceptionality of

the journey. While the knight of faith informs us about illusionary faith or a false religious sphere, the exception of the concept also serves as a basis of legitimate criticism. The knight of faith is recognized as rare by Kierkegaard himself. He confesses to having little to no examples except of course the lionized Abraham, and he jokes that one may look like a "tax-gatherer", or in modernity, an IRS employee (67-68 *Fear*). This raises the most practical of all objections. For all intents and purposes, the knight of faith has little claim to existence as such. The concept of the knight is for the most part a thought experiment explicated from the Abraham-Isaac story, although I would note the concept is not dependent on it. The sphere of morals for the knight in the religious may also be recovered as deduction from the contingency of the will of God.

Regardless, does this mean the force of the either/or between the ethical and the religious due to its divine privilege? No at all, although, it would be an interesting project to lay out the privileged action of knights of faith (the mission) and the privileged knowledge of prophets (revelation). We should instead re-evaluate the scope of the Abraham-Isaac story on behalf of the incompatibilist because there is way in which the tale and Kierkegaard's take speak deeply to them. At the same time, the knight of faith is a being of affective destruction, wrought with their imposed negativity. Their state is brought about from their exception because the religious sphere is very real to them, but while the incompatibilist and other religious souls should not ignore the gravity of the will of God, the scope of the distinction should not speak only to exceptions. We must find a way to elicit contemporary meaning of Its will without becoming knights ourselves. So I propose an alternative interpretation.

In dealing with preciously few examples, Kierkegaard was undoubtedly aware of the limited idealization that is the knight of faith, despite how in *Fear and Trembling* he treats the subject with literalism. Yet it is doubtful Kierkegaard explored the religious in painstaking detail

as this ultimate sphere of being because he was interested in uncovering the rarest of gems. The religious sphere may not have had a profound effect on as a devout Christian. Similarly, children and adults may learn the trial of Abraham in classes on religion with little import elsewhere depending on the interpretation. I find the story has the least weight if we interpret it as a guide for action or the prospect a higher sphere of possibility. Perhaps some are drawn by the individuation or empowered by the thought of double crossing the world. If we idolize Abraham, we may yield to the tendency of imitation. And if a religious text offer a cavalcade of righteous models, maybe our intuition tells us to approximate our own character to fit, but the knight of faith, as said many times by now, is the exception. Quite literally no one, not a pedestrian or another knight of faith, could follow Abraham up the mountain, such was the unmatched privacy of the deed.). I am reminded of the advice of Jaspers—"Our task is: to philosophize, *without being an exception, in view of the exception*" (51 Reason). Kierkegaard is clearly drawn to the character of Abraham, just as Jaspers portrays the reader as drawn to the characters of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Generalization of principles from examples is commonplace, but in this scenario, the task is particularly challenging. The story is tailor-made for divine intervention and it remains a singularity among myriad tales of love for another, unconditional communion, and the acceptance of other human beings in spite of all difference.

But can the trial speak its nature to the religious consciousness without ever appearing again in the world? There may be larger conclusions at work within *Fear and Trembling* if we expand our understanding. As a book of maxims, the story is limited since it does not effectively prescribe action. Kierkegaard was rightly concerned with what it meant to be religious, truly religious. He states over and over if faith is not this paradox, then Abraham is done for (85, 98, 108, 144 *Fear*). Meaning, if Abraham was not justified, the role of faith in human existence

would have been nulled. Faith would not signify the divine relation to God and execute Its towering will. It would cease to be the hazardous, paradoxical expression of the religious. This is tantamount to claiming that the reader and Kierkegaard himself were done for. Faith is the only aspect Abraham shares with the reader—the one commonality amidst the first and final marvel. Imitation is futile; faith is necessary. I recognize conventional and exceptional religion are distinct, but the two are in constant dialogue with one another. Faith mediates this dialogue and makes generality of the trial possible because Abraham represents faith (85 *Fear*). His actions in the religious become a model for us to glimpse, but it is simultaneously out of bounds, impossible to repeat. That is the service of Abraham. We can conceive the story as a trial, a tale of mercy, etc., but existentially, Abraham brings to our awareness the limits of the ethical sphere. Through this revelation, the incompatibilist must orient themselves by his example by means of their faith. Without the tale of the sacrifice, faith as capable of risk and horror possibly would have never been realized. With the "view" as Jaspers puts it, Abraham relieves the reader of the cogitation of the ethical boundary. Therefore, the scope of the religious and the ethical as actions were for the exceptions, who then give the reader the lasting knowledge of the limitation of the ethical, the revelation of the transcendence of the will of God.

If we restrain the scope of the religious, one is ironically given a liberated interpretation to think on other modalities. The scope of the religious and the ethical mimics these modes of existence. It surveys the person, their actions, their beliefs, and their moral locus.

For Abraham, the scope of the religious covers all modalities of being. In particular, he expresses both a belief and an action; it is the faith and the sacrifice. Perhaps one would have the faith, as truly *hard* as one may realize, but the action is still a marvel for the few knights of faith.

The knight of faith feels the brute force of this contingency. They live in "constant tension" of the possibility of making the movement to the will of God (106 *Fear*).

For the rest of the religiously minded, what precedes the moral belief and the religious practice? It would be a recognition of the breadth of the will of God in the world, how it may surge straight past the ethical realm without qualification. At no point in the inquiry can one arbitrarily truncate the moral locus as the will of God, but the tension of the exception shines light on chinks in the armor. We can reasonably grasp the distinction, but only the knight can live the horror. This can lead one to believe the following. The will of God and the rational ethic, *as moral loci*, need to be placed in the palm of each hand and treated differently. The will of God would naturally extend more broadly than the limited space of the ethical life within humanity. That is the message, but all the while, the veritable overlap never loses its integrity. Few feel their faith direct them to this radical particularity. The impact lies in the belief of moral locus of the will of God. Therefore, the religious, I think, speaks to the religious life without necessarily, perhaps never, existing within it. Kierkegaard presents this unsettling conflict, and categorially, we could treat this conception of God and Its consequence as an ideological component to the perceived incompatibility without the affection of the love-hate paradox or the *will* to wrong.

Works Cited

1. James, William. “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life.” *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy*. Ed. John J. Stuhr. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000. 504-17. Print.
2. Jaspers, Karl. *Reason and Existenz*. Trans. William Earle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955. Print.
3. Kierkegaard, Søren. "Faith and the Absurd." *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*. Ed. Paul Edwards and Richard Popkin. New York City: The Free Press, 1969. Print.
4. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Group, 1985. Print.

Unification of Being in the Religious and the Ethical

I. Inquiry into the Religious Being

The religious and the ethical distinction affirms the ultimate priority of locus of moral monism, the absolute duty to God to the detriment of moral otherness. The discriminated loci in the Abraham-Isaac story cracks open lived experience in a way not many other tamer stories manage to do. Numerous moral pathways and enlightened interpretations of these moral loci can result, and Kierkegaard pushed the most radical possibility to its farthest extent, the exceptional mission for the justified murderers: knights of faith and lonely martyrs. Their modalities were infected with the immeasurable consequence of the distinction, the gravity of which put their beliefs of faith and their actions well beyond the sphere of intelligibility. To the astonishment of the other, their belief of faith drew them away from their belief in community. Further still they willed to do *wrong*, something singular and horrific, but through the faith that made it possible. This same faith brought the knight of faith a grotesque negativity. They felt the despair of their condition—a mute loneliness—that distinguished their sublime emotion from the weariness of ethical tragedy. It was a sadness made possible by their commitment to the will of God.

The exceptionality of the task would naturally make moral of the story difficult to import into contemporary life. The knight of faith is an idealization, and the sacrifice of Abraham is inimitable. It is perplexing to grasp the essentials in a tale inclusive of divine intervention. Enamored as one may be by Kierkegaard's contributions to the radical division of neighborly love and the love of God, exceptions are not good case studies of general principles. Does the marvel efface the moral? The paradoxical affection—the love for Isaac expressed as 'hatred' in the murder itself—tears the religious soul between the religious and the ethical and does not provide a convincing model to follow, for the same reason trials, missions, and sacrifices exist

only for the knight of faith. They simply are not for us, and this raises the question of what we can learn by their example. Faith and devotion for us does not make one a knight in the same sense Kierkegaard spoke of them. The tornness in the paradox only offers a substantive contribution to the dissonance in the incompatibility. It is the affective consequent in the will to do wrong because it is the relevant action that truly resonates and gives a divisive reality its authentic gravity.

It is an open question for me whether or not the knight of faith would experiences a tornness between the religious and the ethical. Certainly if our religious and ethical commitments drove us toward otherness, the tear of the paradox would sting our conscience, but the knight of faith is ready to suspend the ethical. They feel the distress, but the tornness may not apply due to their impervious resolve. As a noble would weep for the tragic hero, the knight of faith may tell them, "weep for yourself" (94 *Fear*). The suspension of the ethical, if such a movement is practically possible, may cut off the pull of the rope, but as a pedagogy, the suspension functions like the pure idea of the dominion of the will of God and of humanity, yet another recognition of the boundary.

I proposed to refrain from the interpretation of the Abraham-Isaac story as a moral code and to exercise caution in the employment the religious-ethical distinction. The temptation I think is to view Kierkegaard's framework as a full set of beliefs about what morals the religious person is supposed to have, but this turns faith away from daily concern and toward the imitation of a miraculous temperament. The implications of the distinction for action permeate every modality, but we should leave the mission for the knights and focus on the directives of faith as belief. Faith as the absurd attempts to outperform understanding, but faith as the belief recognizes the limitations of understanding. The divine boundary of intelligible, finite, human

existence is what births the distinction between the religious and the ethical. This I called the ideological component of the incompatibility, the will of God reigns supreme over otherness. Yet one can acknowledge the supremacy of their moral locus without the affection of despair since they are not a knight. So while the moral of the tale is not done away with, we have after the idea of these loci, but have we nevertheless diminished it? Does it never find its way into lived experience?

Thus far, we have primarily dealt with the absolute duty and the will of God as ideas with moral implications. To get closer to lived experience, we must interrogate how the paradox affects the religious being.

Knowledge is the service Abraham gives to the reader, but as said before, the knight of faith as a concept does not need its origin in the story, only its archetypal example. Thus, the knowledge is not necessarily the distinction between the religious and the ethical. Abraham relates how the will of God, as a moral locus, manifests itself in the world. It answers the question 'what does it mean to have faith?' After the fulfillment of his faith, Abraham received everything he had before, but everything was different after he came down the mountain. His religiosity had reached a new height; his faith had individuated him in the most intimate of relations to God. To employ dialectical language, the negation of the mission propagates a shift in being, such that the 'return' was itself a novelty. Abraham *changed.* Just as the human being subjugated to the horrors cannot be restored by the promise of peace. "It does not restore to the alienated beings their lost identity" (22 *Totality*). But if the trial was only an act, if his faith only surged to the front for the sacrifice, the trial is only about a deed revoked for the mercy of God. Quickly the story becomes a great recovery of sameness, where Abraham could be made "insignificant" according to Kierkegaard (81 *Fear*), but this is not the case. Abraham reveals for

the reader the secrecy of the religious being, the privilege, and the risk of faith for the community at large. This knowledge, I think, revealed the weight of the will of God, but in addition, the inherent incommensurability of the religious being with the other.

Through this analysis of the religious being, I think we can draw a handful of meaningful conclusions from the Abraham-Isaac story. These would be relevant to the lived experience of the incompatibilist, and therefore inform the nature of the unification to be had. If no moral of the story can find itself in the world, we end with a throwaway, trivial resignation. The incompatibilist will simply remained immersed an ideological conflict between the religious and ethical, but the exception will never perturb the overlap of practice.

II. The Paradox and the Religious Infinity

I would ask, 'what does it mean to be religious?' rather than "how would one act as a knight of faith?'. How does one live with an awareness of the distinction? What would unification mean ideologically, psychologically, and existentially with this knowledge? The nature of the religious being begins with the most explicit formulation of the paradox. Kierkegaard describes the paradox of faith thusly.

> Faith is just this paradox, that the single individual as the particular is higher than the universal, is justified before the latter, not as subordinate but superior, though in such a way, be it noted, that it is the single individual who, having been subordinate to the universal as the particular, now by means of the universal becomes that individual who, as the particular, stands in absolute relation to the absolute (84-85 *Fear*).

We have explained plenty about what faith is, or at least what faith meant for Abraham (belief in the will of God, the absolute duty, etc.). Beyond this, faith is an intimate construction for the human in absolute relation to the absolute, in glorious and mundane instances. We can now say casually the ethical sphere can denote a community that references God in relation to others and

the religious sphere is a relation to God in for those of faith. The reference and the direct relation for Kierkegaard denotes another difference between the religious community the individual because the "duty to love one's neighbor" only refers to God but has nothing in direct association to God Itself (96 *Fear*). The objects of the relation differ.

The paradox is not a real, logical contradiction however; the language of 'tension' or 'experiential and psychological dissonance' better suits the nature of the conflict. For the diametric objects are contained within the individual *in existence*. Existence of course implies a lived temporality beyond the suspension of dimensionality within the abstraction of contradictions. This means for the individual the terms of the paradox, the particular and the universal, are not given simultaneously. Through faith, individual, as a singular being, may rise above the universality of the ethical into the particularity of the religious. It becomes paradoxical for an individual, as a part, to become greater in quality than the whole of society. Abraham lives paradoxically as both an ethical and religious being, but given in the reality of the trial, the paradox is lived in experience. We can reasonably conclude the faith of the trial did not reside in abstraction or in verbalized ideology. In this way, this conflict was imminent and incoming for Abraham. He contradicted himself, but formally, the ethical and the religious spheres did not exist for one in a single time frame. The religious persists for the duration of the trial, and in this period, Abraham had to be nonethical, expressing himself contrarily to all his love for Isaac that preceded him. Terminologically, the paradox is associated to suspension, while the negation of the ethical would have been permanent.

What exactly are the terms of the paradox? They appear in many places throughout the story implicitly. Ideologically, we could leave the paradox of the individual because the will of God and the ethical both exist for them. This would be a mere restatement of the moral loci, but

it is more than that. Faith is a paradox for existence because it cannot be thought (85 *Fear*). One might claim the terms are comprehension and incomprehension. It is a paradox to be both a religious and an ethical being. In this way, the paradox could be the coexistence of the religious and the ethical spheres themselves as pertaining to one individual, despite their conflict for belief, action, and now for the religious being. It is a paradox of affections, for the sacrifice is only possible because of love, yet the intelligible judgment of the sacrifice is hatred (101 *Fear*). Now the terms are love and hatred. The paradox, closer to Kierkegaard's description, is how the particular individual, the part, should be subordinate to the universal humanity or human existence generally, the whole, but the individual in relation to the absolute rises above the universal (85 *Fear*). The terms here are the particular and the universal. The individual in the absolute relation becomes more *because they are an individual*. The term I am looking for is *individuation*. The paradox culminates in the exaltation of the individual; otherwise, the grace of the justification would cease to apply.

The paradox I think is still more fundamental than this, although the above terms of the paradox are valid. The paradox appears in the religious sphere, a sphere of living, and naturally the paradox exists for every modality of existing within said sphere. However, something about the individual permits the language to call the relation with God an absolute relation and makes the transaction possible. The individual as religious and having the faith to enter the religious sphere intimates a quality about their nature. This nature is not innate or mystical, for the same reason an individual was born religious. It enables the relation to God an absolute being transcend of any familiar quality. The act of this relation reveals the nature of the religious being commensurable with God, for the relation itself expresses what is common. Analogously, the other-other interaction presupposes the commonality of the nature of the ethical being, so the

paradox enables a nature that validates the God-human interaction. Therefore, the account of the paradox I would put forward points to the individual rather than God.

The nature itself I think is expressed in the act of faith. The knight of faith moves in twos before this action. Their infinity resignation exhausts their understanding along with any tactile route of possibility, and this movement preconditions faith to express its resolve absolutely and in absurdity, as given in his account of the knight of faith (75-77 *Fear*). The absolute expression of faith in the second movement results in this relation to God beyond the intelligible, and as we may deduce from the effect, the final state of the individual in the absolute relation is exalted and above the finitude of human existence. During this interaction, the faith amplifies the aspect of the individual capable of receiving the mission from God. There is a kind of matching in play because faith moves the individual into absolute relation via a movement of impossibility, nonrationality, absoluteness, and contingency. The absurd quality of the individual is the most godlike, and like God, the absolute relation is expressed infinitely over the finity of the ethical realm demarcated by rationality. By the result of the absolute relation, the nature exemplified in the individual is their infinity expressed in a religious mode. The paradox could then have its origins the incommensurability of the infinite and finite.

To reiterate, the individual is extoled in the 'presence of God' or in direct relation to God because they had faith. However, their belief that predicates the relating specifies commensurability with the absolute. The nature of the individual that matches the absolute is the godliness elicited by the religious being, and for them to preside over the finite (as long as the ethical is suspended), this nature must be the infinite of their subjectivity, interpreted now as religious. This is a double stroke because in the instance faith empowers the individual into the divine relation, the paradox of the individual comes full circle from their finite secularity to their

infinite religiosity. Hence, faith is the belief that specifies or singles out the religious infinity of the individual and affirms it. Therefore, paradox of faith is the infinity and the finity simultaneously held within the individual.

Kierkegaard generically opines that "the human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite" in *The Sickness unto Death* (41 Sickness). However, the religious sphere changes the nature of our existential modalities. As stated earlier, the spatial language of a sphere better speaks to a psychical dimension, where the nature of the sphere specifies the nature of the inner life. The knight of infinite resignation unleashes their passion infinitely, but the infinite is directed with understanding and necessarily resigns itself of desire. The individual expresses their philosophical infinity up to the edge finite existence. The inference I made refers to another species of infinity, one very much contingent on belief. The individual expresses their religious infinity in a state of faith towards spiritual existence, and this perchance elevates them to the religious sphere. Kierkegaard distinguishes the spiritual and the finite by claiming "everything is possible spiritually speaking, but in the finite world there is much that is not possible" (73 *Fear*). The infinity of the relation gives faith a reality, for the impossibility only exists in the "finite world" (75 *Fear*). He separates them practically, by the action, but it is predicated in the paradox by 'pure' belief (nonrational). The religious infinity could be taken theologically if one interprets this private relation with God as an exchange of infinities, where the faith has made them commensurable.

The abeyance of the finite explains the extent to which Abraham could be viewed as incommensurable. The public, intelligible, and communicable are distorted by the priority given to the individual in their infinity. All at once, Abraham's beliefs, intentions, and consequential actions change, especially his orientation towards others, only when his infinity is understood as

of the religious variety. Principally, his incommensurability became evident when Abraham could not speak (89 *Fear*). The justification for the trial was premised in the absolute duty or intrinsic moral authority, and so Abraham could not make his intentions plain. More so, reaching out to finity could return him to normality; he could lose his state of faith. Or if one excoriated Abraham, the martyr may be tempted to repent to the other for their will to wrong. Silence then, as Kierkegaard calls it, is "divinity's communion with the individual" (115 *Fear*). The knight of faith achieves a kind of authentic concealment because they cannot be revealed to the other. Disclosure appropriates secrecy on behalf of the universal and brings them transparency, as is the case of the tragic hero, who must revealed themselves (114 *Fear*). Faith cannot compromise itself in the same fashion. Part of the religious being is hidden in this oxymoronic category. Communicability and accountability satisfy community, but when the individual is in a state of faith, they are incommensurable. There are no valid inoculators; there is nothing to be said.

III. The Incommensurable Being and Lived Experience of the Paradox of Faith

The nature of the individual in the absolute relation is tacit, but the language of the religious infinite within the subject provides excellent contrast to the modes Kierkegaard lists in the paradox: the nonrational or unintelligible, privacy, isolation, the affection of loneliness, and silence. This exclusion shows up again in the faith of an individual. For faith in this scenario is belief in the will of God that validates spiritual existence. Its dominion is infinite, and therein lies the contradiction—the impossible becomes possible. The individual who possesses this faith emulates this same infinity in relation to God, otherwise the individual would not be individuated by their relation to the divine. Their infinity would be left untouched, unblessed; their faith would leave them stuck in finite existence. At its core, faith allows transcendence for the individual. However, the individuation of faith makes the religious being incommensurable to

otherness, for the same reason the infinite cannot commune with the finite. The religious infinity masks their commonality with otherness. The ultimate syllogism of the paradox lends to the interpretation that the exclusive moral loci likewise creates an incommensurable being.

The careless import of the Abraham-Isaac story falls trap to the problem of the miraculous temperament and the imitation of singular characters. Second, the religious infinity and the incommensurable being present themselves as a technical formalism. They are bound by the particular qualities of the story without clear exit. The paradox in one form or another must plow a path into the world for Abraham-Isaac story to escape the realm of ideas.

Faith is the source of commonality because our actual or imagined belief in the divine elements twists our dismay into admiration for Abraham at the moment of sacrifice. There is an intersection of understanding (or no lesson would be possible). Yet the murder is precisely what we cannot do, make pretend of the "one and only marvel" (143 *Fear*). What traps the paradox within itself is the exceptional mission, but now I would argue faith persists beyond the mission. The paradox is given voice by the religious being, which leads the incommensurable being to partition their commitments to God and those to the other.

Of course, faith may not understand itself until the idea of 'lived' is squared in experience. If Abraham's faith had reached its zenith, its total resolution, the sacrifice would have rendered itself unnecessary. The essence of the sacrifice was the proof of the faith, but the silence, the journey up the mountain, the moment of intervention, and the trek downward all contribute to a renewed, substantive faith. Abraham returns with the knowledge the distinction, but faith itself undergoes an awakening of its own existence. The awakening I would liken to the aftermath of the either/or, where the sphere of living has changed from the ethical to the religious, but this interpretation of the religious sphere now distances itself from the teleological

suspension. The inner life of faith, especially for Abraham, remains a conundrum for the other to understand. And this is only possible if faith persists in the religious consciousness once it 'knows' itself, its role in lived experience, which I outlined as the concealed relations to the divine. Faith perseveres, which transitively, means the religious infinity is perpetual, if we believe the belief in the will of God did not *only* coincide with a trial, a mission, a radical departure of action. If it did, then the proof of faith was merely a recovery—a stringent tale of mercy to forget as one leaves the classroom. The mission is strictly conditioned to the notion of trial.

On the other hand, if the awakening of faith, the impact of the either/or to choose faith, matters for the rest of Abraham's life; the religious infinity never dies down. The fundamental ideology through a series of kept beliefs and experiences births the religious modality. In other words, the incommensurability of Abraham never fully dissolves because his religiosity has *changed* even as he returns to the familiar religious community. In practice, this holds if during the mission and after his pact with God has resolved, he could still not articulate the power of the silence and of the journey. If faith persists, the paradox does also, and the incommensurable being exists outside the Abraham-Isaac story. It becomes an aspect of faith we can add to our original submission, the ideological component of the incompatibility.

The incommensurable being lives with a foot in both of its worlds. In the religious mode, their faith draws on the infinite, the exclusion, and cultivates meaning in the private communion with God. God, the absolute duty, the divine reality, etc. are the direct supernatural referents in the relation. When the emphasis falls on the faith, the religious being is engaged in a sacred relation. Solitary prayer, religious introspection, and conversion all serve as fine examples because they confront faith without the secondhand act of referencing the other. Their religiosity

works with their faith—their belief in the divine element—rather than the communal other. The religious infinity rushes to orient their experience from the finite to the spiritual. It is a contextual transformation, similar to how a multitude of personal identities fluctuates in relevance depending on the environment. The gradation of incommensurability is fluid because the context of faith depends on the religious atmosphere and activity.

The religious being appropriates the faith into their character, and faith resembles less and less a belief and more as a disposition. Thomas Flynn supposes a choice like the either/or into the religious sphere could be called a "'conversion' experience, where the decisive more is not purely intellectual but a matter of will and feeling" (10 Flynn). Faith in this model would constitute such a conversion, where the leap of faith dramatically changes being in these ideological and psychical dimensions. The positivity of this disposition is its holistic unity; when faith finds itself in the subject, the beliefs, reflections, and rituals are unified under the identity of the religious individual, the being of faith. They receive this unity in the act of spiritual identification. Thereafter, their religiosity separates itself from their conventional individuality and apart from any particular belief. The subject appropriates faith in the 'naming' or realization of faith as part of their being, but the act is not a mere labeling like a postage stamp on a letter. Just as Abraham came down the mountain a changed being, the ontological faith signifies the change of the subject from a finite individual to a religious one. The subjectivity coupled with faith seems greater than the sum of parts, more than an individual with a certain belief system.

I would reformulate this orientation to being as a conception of the religious sphere without the teleological suspension of the ethical and the exceptional mission because the divine changes the psychical dimension of existence changes all the same. However, the identity as religious or the revelation of faith Abraham went through is not purely psychical. The religious

infinity is also an existential mode, and as a mode, it is infectious for behavior. The yield for the sphere of action is far greater because the faith of the religious infinite becomes lived in ordinary expression. A constant and resonate identity covers and informs action. Faith projects itself into experience as a stark belief in God and an interpretation of experience. This interpretation I understand to be spiritual existence or the infinity of reality given by the transcendence of the religious *over* the ethical; categorially, this faith is played in a metaphysical key. It orients the religious being to spiritual existence. The divine is the lens, and God has a hand on the shoulder of the one with resolve.

The negativity of this quality is the partitioning; faith keeps the world at a distance by firmly demarcating moral monism from moral otherness. Each side of this divide maintains several beliefs. In one sphere lives the great overlap—community, the public consciousness, and the intelligible other and in the other resides the will of God—the isolated religious identity, the private consciousness, and the incommensurable. The unity occupies only half the ideology, that of faith.

The privation of the other in faith builds a figurative wall of nonunderstanding, for the glaring consequent of the incommensurable being is conditional dialogue. The faith of divisive moral loci upholds a segregated consciousness, and while we need not submit ourselves to the most radical "Abraham cannot speak" (89 *Fear*), the private subjectivity obstructs the communicable. Abraham is the paradigm of silence, for at the pinnacle of anguish he could not let out a futile scream, for such would dismantle his resolve and the paradox. However, the condition of the dialogue is the futility of revealing. The incommensurable being realizes and accepts they cannot say everything. They can direct the infinite with their passion toward religious ends, but they cannot lay it before the other. The unconditional communion we set out

to retrieve from the outset has since been broken because within the religious being lives two, the incommensurable being and the intelligible other. The ‘acts’ of faith polarize God and the other with the same impact as the moral loci, and the religious modality cannot be commensurate with the other. In the story, of Abraham lies a powerful analogy for the religious speaker, the relation to the divine and only the divine cannot be properly nor fully expressed. The authentic concealment *cannot* reveal itself fully because the religious infinity blankets the subjectivity itself.

The religious infinity exists only in the paradox based on our suppositions about what would potentially bring the religious individual into an audience with God. Outside the Kierkegaardean framework, we deduce the existence of a religious modality from the wide breadth of activity of the religious life, but the religious perspective, now realized in the Kierkegaardean sense of incommensurability, makes religiosity itself an onerous, problematic definition. With too much mysticism in the scope of the word ‘religiosity’, terms the religious infinity could appear as a placeholder for a magical, transcendent subject such as a soul in the throne of the mind. With too little, another observer could drain the religious infinity devoid of the paradox, its commensurable relation to God, and the term, like the individual, hollows itself into an empty, throwaway abstraction or a mere psychology. The middle term always comes back to the lived experience of the religious. For a more proper analogy, I could liken the finity and the infinity of the paradox practically to the intrinsic and extrinsic relations within the religious being. The intrinsic manifests itself as the concealed perspective, the ‘whole above sum’ of the religious life that exist without a good phenomenological account, particularly from the perspective of the intelligible other. The extrinsic of course is the intelligible other of the religious being, covered by normal description of the ‘everything else’ in the sphere of finity.

That is the abstraction of dialogue from the perspective of faith, but what about the observer? The religious infinity appears to the observer as intrinsic religious experience or a *religious perspective*. I am able to recognize in the religious being a set of beliefs, practices, rituals that become more than themselves. When I encounter a religious other like Abraham, I do not see an individual with a set of religious beliefs; I interpret a religious or faithful being, a person who manages to live and to rejoice in the paradox of faith. The religious modality emulates a constant, lived identity distinct from the insertion points of commonality.

To contextualize the lack of understanding in the other-other interaction, the intrinsic perspective offers the most clarity. Concretely, this type of faith supposes its inherent difficulty to make intelligible an outlook on existence, for similar reasons perfect empathy is an ideal. I can empathize with the expression of God as an idea; the intellect can conceptualize the notion. This is a point of rich conversation for the religious being and otherness, but when faith transcends belief and places itself in the subject, in existence. This same dialogue is conditioned, perhaps not by individuality itself, for different models of individuality lend to differing opinions on whether beings as such are commensurable. Rather, the dialogue is conditioned by the religious infinity of the subject, and so the faith can only be explained by living it. The faith is not just an idea; it is who the religious being is. I speculate that beings cannot be objectified or explained away by others; they cannot be made objects to intelligibility. The infinity of this kind lies behind the eyes. If my belief system privatizes my subjectivity, the other can only approximate what it is like to 'live in my shoes'. I speculate or reasonably guess my imagined model for their general circumstance is at all an accurate one.

Informally, the religious identity should extend to groups because those practices that bring the individual into the absolute relation are often performed with the religious other. The

movement of faith is done in sync with the neighbor. Group reflections, prayer, and worship add a sphere of being to the individual incommensurability that also to the observer appears as intrinsic religious experiences.

Thus, the religious mode cannot be intellectualized (fully described). The ontological understanding of religious otherness must fall back on a reiteration of common content. It fixates the being into a realm of intelligibility through external and fundamentally familiar relations, belief, ideas, and a context 'put to paper', but the language of content does not suffice to treat perspective without a severe approximation. We are leaning now toward theories of perspectival epistemologies possible through cultural identity, inherent identity, and in the case of religion, awakened or converted identity. For example, depending on how the identity (or the faith) invokes a model of being (like the religious), one could say it is not possible for a white person to fully commensurate with a person of color because the category or lived experience of race has produced two interpretations of experience in fundamental contradistinction. The attitude I carry about an interaction like this is a respectful resignation. I cannot comprehend the essential identity of the other is simply because one cannot occupy another throne of perception descriptively. Character creation and fashioning an ersatz accomplishes this feat, but creation relinquishes the attempt to identity what lies before itself. I do not share the existential perspective, or perchance I do, but the intrinsic interpretation itself is not salient (such as when two folks of similar religion do not coalesce in their interpretation of faith).

I speak on this cursorily. Perhaps a more rigorous project could flesh out the exact nature of individual-individual interaction to group identity-group identity interaction. I deduced an analogous relation by simply expanding the model of faith to produce a similar incommensurability between the believer and nonbeliever. Incommensurability, like all

quantities with some color to them, is a spectrum. The gradation that concerns us is empathy or on a ontological key, the sense or feeling of oneness from one subject to other, and I assumed between similar religious identities or folks who claim intrinsic religious experience, those differences would be diminished compared to observers (like myself) without these experiences.

Further, the terminology of interpretation, orientation, outlook, and perspectival experience has not been given much attention, but I hope the overarching meaning of the incommensurable being is at least clear. When the derivation of a manifold concept hoists itself by the aberrant behaviors of Abraham, there are no doubt some issues of intangibility. The ordeal seems formal, but with the right set of questions, the context of the incommensurable being should become more apparent. Are there instances where the experience of being religious do not admit rational expression? Is this a weakness of mind, or rather, do the adequacy of the words depend less on their conceptual clarity and more on their salience to the listener? The first category I think relates back to the intelligible other, and the second spells out the resonance of like minds. However, if the truth of the matter inhabits the religious perspective, the empathy of faith can only be imagined or approximated in the conceptual act of ‘understanding’.

The powerful tranquility of calm water under the watchful eyes of God gives much solidarity to the religious being, for the spiritual being benefits from their inner life rather than a burst of will unto the world. And this serves as an example for the religious perspective in the relation to nature, but how should we, the others, identify the interior religious otherness? This will complete our analysis of the incommensurable being from its formulation and from the side of otherness.

Interpretative metaphysics is the appropriate diction for this experience and pinpoints for one context, a naturalistic faith for a view of the world brimming with spirituality. However, the

language I use here is misleading because intrinsicality does not attribute to God as an endpoint; the proper account, I think, begins with the divine. If we hone in on the difference, the mood of faith or psychology of faith risks an initial assumption of a purely material world and then adds the element of the divine in the act of belief. This may be the first step for the development of the faith. However, the transition to the language of modality occurs when the will of God and its manifest, the whole of creation, melds and returns a conditioned divinity with a natural component. Through the concept of intentionality, the expression of the religious perspective could be put as the inseparable subject-world. The effect of this difference can be found in religious activity and the sociological identity, but more specifically, the fluidity of belief. We regularly significantly or trivially exchange ideas and naturally, as a result of this exchange, change our views. However, there is a difference in quality when the exchange imitates conversion itself and not self-image, but self-identity, shifts in the reconceptualization or consolidation of 'who you are'. One should look for these subtly or profound of qualities to address the religious consciousness and distinguish it from ordinary belief or the psychological effects of belief versus those of being. The research method for these purposes has some good footing in models of identity. However, the purely psychological emphasis could belie religious otherness and fail to recognize when the ineffability of perspective evinces the true, albeit concealed integrity of religious experience.

IV. Conclusions and Unification of Partitioning

Is the incommensurability a problem for the incompatibilist? An exclusive ideology does indeed create a divisive modality, but the distance or gradation of the incommensurability varies I think. When the religious being predominantly resides in the community, salient experience of otherness will always have tremendous resonance for the subject and cover the inner life of faith.

Here the distance is trivial, but can we imagine those times when the community must give way to faith, when the religious soul or those of the same religious identity must concern themselves with God? In these periods, the paradox keeps the tension taught. The observer and the religious soul feel the ideological exclusion when the religious perspective in the aforementioned instances of reflection, prayer, and dialogue. However, it would be a mistake to call the incommensurability a straightforward problem.

The infinity of a religious soul or a religious identity prevents the notion of unconditional, infinite union between subjectivities, but the problem itself depends on the rationality of the person. If the goal of the incompatibility was to first and foremost, identify with rigor the nature and implications of the experiential dissonance, the ideological tension at the level of pluralism, this transformation suits those aims. After all, if there was a truth for the incompatibilist to be had in the distinction—the division of moral loci, we could not ignore it on the premise of undesirable affections. Rather, the nature of the unification turned its head from ideological unity to unity in the will of God.

What follows for the incommensurable being is a unification of partitioning. Religious and ethical commitments are separated. Moral otherness and moral monism live with differing roles for the incompatibilist, and for the live of one individual, their conflict in ideology is left unresolved. The religious and the ethical fails to be a suitable affection for the incompatibility, but the moral belief in community is conditioned not destroyed. The belief of community is intact when we do not interpret faith for the knight as asceticism. In this way, the psychological and experiential components are addressed. The dissonance of the push-pull of obligation is mostly resolved by role recognition of the community, and the conflict of moral loci in lived experience is resolved by their practical functions, which is to say the overlap of practice ought

to be preserved. Further still, there is a resonance to the invocation of faith and in the comfortable presence of otherness. We should not overlook the potential, contrary to Kierkegaard, that a religious being may feel comfort in their faith, in their religious infinity over the presence of otherness, such as their relation with the will of God may be.

The communion sought by the incompatibilist itself is split between the other and God, and this implies being a good neighbor is not enough to be religious. Such is the case for Unamuno's priest, as he cares deeply for the village, but keeps no faith for himself (280 Unamuno). One must accept the religious modalities of faith if the will of God cannot be brought into the world of otherness.

If this is the route, the religious being can do without the tornness and isolation as affections, but the faith awakens the paradox as a mode. Abraham's faith was affirmed a new understanding—the blunt impact of being a religious being. This among many, is a lesson the story has for the reader.

As we considered the myriad possibilities that follow the divisive moral loci, we recover an interpretation of faith and an interpretation of religious individuality, but these are only for a specific ideology. Likewise, the religious perspective and its intrinsic grounding are ideologically oriented; it is similarly conditioned by the model of moral loci derivative from the paradox. Perhaps, one could claim the resonance of the intrinsic perspective for their own religion, but the secrecy of the religious mode to me is thoroughly unique feature of Kierkegaard's account of faith. At least, the religious perspective brought on by exclusive moral loci deserves more adjectives: incommensurable, secret, private, silent, concealed, godly, infinite, and intrinsic. Regardless, the particular transformation of the incompatibility is only for the idea of differing moral loci, and as such, so is the resolution of the unification of partitioning.

The incompatibilist can work through the movements. The unification is a recognition, acceptance, and appropriation of the divide, analogous to the Kantian partition of religion and science (36-37 Kant). The faith gives rise to the religious modality and achieves a partial unity as follows. The religious being *remains themselves* in the presence of otherness a finite individual, but this identical individual becomes infinite in the eyes of God, absolutely thrown to Its will.

Works Cited

1. Flynn, Thomas. *Existentialism A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.
2. Miguel, Unamuno. "Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr." *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. Ed. Gordon Marino. New York: Modern Library, 2004. Print.
3. Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Ed. Allen Wood and George Giovanni. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.
4. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Group, 1985. Print.
5. Kierkegaard, Soren. "The Sickness Unto Death." *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. Ed. Gordon Marino. New York: Modern Library, 2004. Print.

Unification and God as the Absolute Other

I. Introduction to the Inquiry and the Formal Structure of Unification

In Abraham's example, the incompatibility mimicked its presentation in the sacrifice. Does one feel tension in the moral otherness and moral monism when they realized these moral loci produce conflicting moral beliefs? I must act according to the will of God, but I must commune with the other. The example is miraculous and without empirically verified repetition, and so we managed to carve out a moral of the story to redeem its exceptionality. The paradox of faith had to find meaning for the religious being without seeming so estranged from *my* reality as to be relevant. The paradox reaches its climax when the individual stands before God, and one is called to wonder. What did humankind become before God? In Kierkegaard, consistent with the label of 'proto-existentialist', the individual achieved an infinity within themselves to layer justification in the act over finite existence. To distill the long syllogism, the moral loci revealed themselves similarly divided within the individual. The incommensurable being represents the faith of Abraham, and gives an answer to the question, 'what does it mean to have faith?' The unification of partitioning is folded into layers. The incommensurable being delegates their moral loci between the disclosed and authentically concealed in the multiple facets of being, ideas, and practice. As Kierkegaard would say of Abraham, the tension, the shocking split of his affections, was the confirmation he "did right" (119 Fear).

I would strive for unconditional unification, not the bounded, qualified unification of partitioning. Unconditional unification shares the same essential structure as unification of partitioning. In designating the incompatibility regardless the nature of transformation as within experience, unification follows the nature of the problem in the same way solutions are in lockstep with the form of their 'givens'. Both forms follow a unification from the existential and

the experiential nature of the incompatibility—the either/or structure and the components of lived experience. This is unsurprising, since the formal structure of unification reflects the conditions set out in the methods section. However, where the unification could not be properly referred to as a perfect or holistic unity except in the relief of factors such as dissonance and community, the unity of unconditional unification naturally accommodates a perfect holism of moral monism and moral otherness. *That is, if experiential categories, like the divine communion, effectively produce the exclusivity of moral loci as ideological demands on the intellect, to judge and enter the either/or process, then the resolution of these experiential categories will give us a parallel model to the incommensurable being, one that achieves ideological unity.*

Now there are two kinds of ideological unity, either the tension, ideological, psychical, and therefore experiential, between moral monism and moral otherness is dissolved, or the categories moral monism and moral otherness *themselves* dissolve into a singular notion. To reach this currently hypothetical state of the religious consciousness, any unification is preceded by the inquiry, which as we did with the religious and the ethical, must be put to a transformation of terms. However, I would like to refrain from giving said terms now because unlike the religious and the ethical, which Kierkegaard puts forth with uncanny vehemence, the transformation I have in mind is not so clearly evident without some development. That being said, the question itself can be submitted. For unconditional unification, we should eschew questions like ‘is this a conflict of…’ because for the sake of unity, I would not presuppose any conflict as before. I would reverse the order of proceedings to reflect how the conflict or the distinction is produced in experience (instead of the ideas producing the incompatibility) by asking the following. How does the nature of the individual change before God?

The alternate approach will naturally commend another kind of unification because the religious and the ethical leaves a term of the divine communion assumed and unexamined. That is, the role of individual in the paradox is assumed to attain infinity even as they are humbled and put off their finity for the suspension. In doing so, we benefit from the prescience of 'naming' the incompatibility a problem of lived experience and revealed in practice. For this practice has a potent influence on the creation of the incompatibility, insofar as the incompatibility could finally be understood as resonant. It is only when I act in the will of God against the world of my community, for example in the act of withdrawal, does the dissonance of moral loci weigh on my conscience decisively. The divergence splits the world into two, but the divergence is precisely the act. Here, the act and the concept or hypothesized act are conflated for the incompatibility because all it takes is the perception like a close reading of Abraham to produce to the revelation of conflicting practice. Before Abraham heard the call, the ethical and the religious hummed their resonance in God's promise for the nation (the will of God in alignment with community). After the call, they split shook his world, and only then, does one grasp the hidden potential of the division of moral loci. The conceptual creation the exclusivity of morals does not capture the 'essence' of the will of God except as a kind of ideological mantel piece. Thus, multiplicity of moral loci are effectuated by concretion: imagined, read, or directly felt. They all relate with varying degrees of affection to lived experience, contributing some needed mass to the anemic concept.

This shift in understanding is not uncommon I think; a cause is often taken to be an effect and vice versa. For when an event of magnitude present itself to me, I attribute its significance with the weight of my culture behind me, which casts it opinion always in favor of its most apparent trends. If I were an incompatibilist, I may infer the cause of the split between moral

pluralism and moral fundamentalism to be moral monism and moral monism ideological, and attribute its essential 'revealing' to experience (practice, feeling, etc.). However, the opposite may be true depending on the initial perspective, for one could attribute the incompatibility to the ideology itself and infer the cause to be within experience.

The unconditional unification set in our sights will have then experience for its setting, but now instead of Abraham and an angel on Mt. Moriah, we have experiential reports of the other-God interaction. Previously, the individual of Kierkegaard received their religious expression as an infinity, the will to act above finity. The God-other interaction, however, may differ from the cascading paradox into all the aspects. The *force* of God on the other may evince a contrary quality to that of the religious infinity.

Only the divine should not be labeled exclusively as God because God Itself contains a surplus of meaning. God acts as both a supreme entity and a benevolent and rational reflection of human kind, but like Kierkegaard, there lies some divinity farther still, in the realm of the nonrational. The nonrational for Rudolph Otto lurks in religious experience precisely because there exists "a peculiar difference of *quality* in the mental attitude and emotional content of the religious life itself" (3 Otto). In the story of Abraham, prophets, and martyrs, their revelation illuminates this peculiarity as they 'encounter' God, but we now consider these experiences more closely with an examination of the religious consciousness in the divine communion. Otto characterizes the nonrational quality as a "unique original feeling response" and an "elementary datum" within religious experience (6-7 Otto). The term "numinous" encompasses this over-and-above nonrationality (7 Otto). For my assumption, I will treat the God of the Old Testament and the numinous as perfectly identical in the divine communion because Otto in part explicates the

numinous of the Old and New Testament, but further as an experience generally characteristic of many mystical religions.

II. The God-Oher Interaction and the Annihilation of the Self

To explicate the various names for coming into contact with the absolute, the God-other interaction must be 'broken up' into steps and categories, as we saw with unification. The first component is how one 'knows' or rather 'feels' the numinous, such that one cannot be mistaken as a witness. The God-other encounter must distinguish itself from the wonders of the natural world like a romantic sunset or northern lights. It is only capable of comprehension on its own terms and cannot be related through familiar routes. Otto gains access to the divine presence through the psychical affections of the individual. He credits Schleiermacher for first noticing this "elementary datum" within those quintessentially mystical experiences like those of Abraham. Otto calls it "creature-consciousness" or "creature-feeling" (10 Otto). When the individual encounters or at times invokes the numinous, they are imbued with a unique feeling again indescribable and incompatible with token analogies. The emotion indicates this creature is "submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures" (10 Otto).

Otto's observation clearly combines the reality of the divine with its power. Spinoza makes a similar move in the *Ethics*, but as an experience, the individual feels lesser in the domination of the numinous. Perhaps, this is because we typically ascribe a certain power or force to an independent subject, who we believe can constrain 'their reality' into a passive existence. However, the experience of the divine may be the double stroke. Its tangible, perceptible existence may come across to the observer as 'powering' rather than 'existing with

power' because 'powering' or 'dominating' can be expressed as affections of being diminished by means of *feeling* this way, whereas existence on its own cannot.

However, the translator John Harvey notes that the insertion point of the numinous is revealed through the subjective reaction and constitutes the beginning of its analysis an idea, but the term feeling is indicative, not creative. The feelings connects to the numinous as a "form of awareness" (xvi Harvey). The emotion of the subject points to the deity outside itself because the quality of the emotion, "uncanniness", reflects a like kind habituated in the world (16 Otto). Otto, perhaps to avoid dubious associations, coins the affection itself as *mysterium tremendum* (12 Otto). The power of the numinous thrown upon the individual has nothing to do with the intensity of the emotion, but its quality (16 Otto). It sweeps over me with as little impact as "a gentle tide" or such knocking power as "vibrant and resonant" (12 Otto). This is the second part of the divine communion, the recognition of the numinous. After I am struck to the core with the unique affection, I cannot but subordinate myself to the numinous.

Mysterium tremendum (aweful mystery), in my view, gives equal weight to the numinous of God and the other at their intersection. The *mysterium* constitutes the conceptual negativity of the numinous because the numinous refers to the mystical, that which is "hidden and esoteric" (13 Otto). The mystery of course does not denote the 'not known', as one imagines a quizzical scientist pondering a daunting system. The mystery of the numinous appeals to intrinsic religion. The mystery of the numinous constitutes the "wholly other" (26 Otto), and in comparison to the individual, the divine can only be defined in the negative. No conceptual links exist to bridge the "usual, intelligible, and familiar" with the mystery (26 Otto). The numinous aspect of God is absolutely Other, and while not constitutive of God as a whole, comprises the nonrational relation. What affect accompanies mystery? Like the wonder of Spinoza, no connections can be

made within the individual to relate them to another idea or affection. Hence, the only affection proper to *mysterium* is "*stupor"* or "blank wonder and astonishment" (26 Otto).

A clarification: the mystery, both conceptually negative and inducing stupor, may imply that the absolute otherness of the numinous is *too different*. So for example, Abraham could not access or express his religious infinity because no piece of his spirit was commensurable with the monumental otherness, and the incommensurability if absolute would preclude the divine communion. But as Harvey clarifies, the otherness of God does not isolate It from us, but rather designates the over-and-above nonrationality of the divine (xviii Harvey). However, the mechanism of this divinity emphasizes the unfamiliarity, the difference within the numinous while doing so.

The *tremendum* is the locus of positivity in the numinous, for it is given "absolutely and intensely" in human feeling (13 Otto). Within the *tremendum*, which approximates to the "aweful" (14 Otto), we find the aforementioned uncanniness that evokes the stranger sentiments. Otto proposes also the affect of "'Religious dread'" as a designation (14 Otto). Otto explores several affects in the numinous, but for our purposes, no affect proves stronger for the *reality* of the individual in the vicinity of the numinous than "aweful majesty", or the absolutely weird coupled with the might of the numinous (19 Otto). The majesty component denotes the sheer, unbridled "'absolute overpoweringness'" of the numinous (19 Otto).

When we combine these, the ultimate effect represents the straightforward terms like 'strange power', but it gives the interaction a deep sense of nullification, as though one were shrouded like a great shadow was cast over them. Hence, the transparency of the power relation, the putting the act of oppression to a menacing force or a malevolent face, is effaced by the sheer, uncanny otherness of the numinous. The individual relents unconditionally in the

encounter. In full, the *mysterium tremendum* instigates with acute spontaneity the annihilation of the self. Otto recounts the essence of the individual in the God-other as follows,

> We come upon the ideas, first, of the annihilation of the self, and then, as its complement, of the transcendent as the sole and entire reality. These are the characteristic notes of mysticism in all its forms…For one of the chiefest and most general features of mysticism is just this *self-depreciation* (so plainly parallel to the case of Abraham), the estimation of the self, of the personal 'I', as something not perfectly or essentially real, or even as mere nullity, a self-depreciation which comes to demand its own fulfilment in practice in the annihilation of the self (21 Otto).

In the realization or awareness of this unaccountable otherness, Otto claims the individual is effectively annihilated as a presence on par with the numinous. The literalism of this annihilation again implicates both what we would call their 'reality' or ontological status and their power to maintain said reality. Otto abbreviated the experience of the individual nothingness with the phrase "'I am naught, Thou art all'" (21 Otto) and further connects the nothingness to religious humility (20 Otto). The contrast from the speciality of the individual immersed in the paradox and the faded individual in the grasp of the numinous is plainly evident. Kierkegaard employs it to levitate the individual and permit their legislation of the will of God, but the *religious experience of the absolute* (the moment of divine communion) where I argued the religious infinity was supposed to be dragged to light receives a very different, opposite, interpretation according to Otto's report of the numinous.

And to the scope of this mysticism, Otto argues the individual nothingness recurs in all forms of mysticism (22 Otto), which is a claim of some grandeur. However, the mark of the numinous with all its concomitant affections does escape the doctrine of religion. Otto reckons

some of William James' accounts in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* as evidence of the numinous.

> The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that *He* was there than I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two (66 James).

Again, the divine interaction traces a similar narrative in the limits of the numinous and the feeling as though the individual buckled under the 'weight' of the divine until they were nothing.

The religious infinity and the religious nothingness serve as a basis for competing models for multiple forms of the religious individuality as well as unification. We could pause to reflect on the interpretations of moral loci from these two accounts, but Otto grounds his analysis of the numinous with respect to mysticism. As such, if we stopped here, we would find ourselves again faced with exceptional mystical experiences, but our interests rest with a broader analysis of the individual before God and their moral compass. However, in the numinous, we glimpse a religious character so possessed by its presence it is dumbfounded in the relation, an individual whose religiosity sparks their humility and impactful finitude. Even less so, the finitude of the everyday spontaneously crashes to a crass nothingness in the divine relation, if we consider the *mysterium tremendum* and the Otherness of the God. Possibly overlooked by Kierkegaard, a foreignness, strangeness, and a transcendence exist in this Otherness that do not exalt but preclude the reality of the individual.

In considering God as the Absolute Other, the subjective reaction was not the leap of faith toward godliness, but rather the individual was confronted with their finitude to the divine. How does this perplexing transaction inform moral loci? One could suppose Kierkegaard confused the paradox and the empowerment of Abraham above the universal in the absolute

relation[1]. However, Abraham, while in the absolute relation or the divine communion, did not remain *physically* in the presence of the numinous. A distinction of time and place must be made, for Abraham was in a state of faith, exaltation, in proximity to otherness—his community and his son Isaac. The faith in the presence of the extraordinary should be differentiated from the faith in the ordinary setting (exceptions and commonalities). To understand and expand the concept of God as Absolute Other. We must consider the other as an absolute other. For now we understand that the potentiality to act against the other or withdraw from their gaze contributes highly to the division of moral loci, but the nature of the individual in their religious interpretation, that of the divine communion, enables or disables this potentiality.

To supplement a second form of unification salient to the daily religious life, we must again transcend the purely mystical and search for a commonplace modality, a foothold to platform our moral sensibilities in the contexts where we cherish both their usefulness as well our reverence for them. I would transition again from the loftier miracles of religion to their comparatively mundane counterparts. As we moved from the hyperbolic religious act, the murder, to a subtler consequence of these moral loci, the silence of Abraham in the other's wake, we now reconsider the other-other interaction from the perspective of absolute otherness. Such an analysis can be found in *Totality and Infinity* by Emmanuel Levinas, whose insights will complement our ongoing search for unconditional unification. For Levinas, the empowerment of the individual carries the caveat of the face of the other or the other-other contact, and like Otto, does not gain the absoluteness of paradox as Kierkegaard would have it.

[1] The language matters I think. Abraham was not only empowered but his power was directly externally toward murder. Power denotes the external willing to manifest the will of God. Empower refers to the consolidation the will of God in being (hence the analogy of calm water in the previous section).

I should first note that the other-other interaction naturally appears an unnecessary or arbitrarily privileged conceptualization for a trivial moment of daily life, person to person talk or facial recognition. Unlike the divine communion, God-other interaction, or absolute relation, which one could argue, sanction their own phraseology, usually one would not label a meeting, passing by, or chat as other-other interaction. However, trivializing the terms does not succeed as a reduction of the complexity. Levinas with tremendous care unpacks this 'trivial' moment to shine light on its essential significance and the morality involved (created rather). Levinas does not formulate a conceptual argument for their right in the presence of the individual; their priority and our responsibility to them is rather founded descriptively in the other-other encounter. Thus, Levinas prefers a phenomenology over a string of syllogisms.

Second, a cross reading of these figures, Kierkegaard and Levinas, is inevitable, for the opposite is argued, implicitly and explicitly in numerous facets of individuality from the locus of infinity, to privilege, and to discourse. However, it worth noting the primary focus is to develop a second model based on another transformation of the terms of the incompatibility.

Finally, in Levinas an ethical theory of hospitality, responsibility, pluralism, reason, and open discourse is derived from the face-to-face interaction. However, it will not be necessary to explicate the origin Levinas provides. For one, it was done much better by Levinas himself. For two, in reading Levinas from the perspective of the incompatibility, we import the existing moral loci moral monism and moral otherness, and instead of reinventing the face, we must allow the phenomenology of the other to inform the nature of these moral loci. For unity analytically is predicated by unification, act of unifying, the nature of which must reconcile the terms by dissolution or by a pulling-together. In concretion, the moral system of each side is prefaced by

the same adjective, the moral, and it will turn out, in Levinas will combine the loci, otherness and the godliness, into a single resemblance.

III. The Other-Other Interaction and the Divine

The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the nature developed by our existence ~ Levinas pg. 194 Totality and Infinity

What is the nature of the individual in the other-other reaction, and what marks the nature of the other? The otherness of God *is* the otherness of the other insofar as when I meet the other, I note immediately that they are *other*. In the ethical sphere, the intelligibility of the other is over emphasized, and according to Levinas, we overlook the incredible signification of the face-to-face contact when we forget, for example, that the "absolutely other is the Other" (39 *Totality*). Their otherness is given not so much by their transcendence to my subjectivity, for this would not distinguish their otherness from that of an object. The alterity of the other establishes itself with the "common frontier" of the face, but this face does not function as a sameness (39 *Totality)*. The other maintains its absolute otherness because they are strange to *my* world.

The break of the boundaries of my world is denoted by the term infinity, for it complements my totality. Totality is the first term to be discussed because infinity is preconditioned by it. The privacy of my existence and the familiar self-enclosure of my existence express my totality or 'whole'. Principally, Levinas suggests totality manifests itself an egoism, indulging in itself and in activities of enjoyment. He describes a series of hedonistic joys and jobs such as eating and working which feed "the independence of happiness" (110 *Totality*). Formally, he calls this mechanism "nourishment", which is "the transmutation of the other into the same" (111 *Totality*) because the individual acquires this joyful independence by manipulating their external implements for personal use. The enjoyment adorns them and keeps

totality in its enclosure. This life is not a "*bare* existence", nor is it purely negative (111 *Totality*). "The human being", he claims, "thrives on his needs" (114 *Totality*). However one takes Levinas' claim of essential egoism in our happiness, the issue of enjoyment is its closure, contentment, and life as "the love of life" (112 *Totality*). Totality, especially from the perspective of a private, *personal* faith, certainly does not mandate an egoism. Despite the penchant of Levinas for intimate analysis, the manipulative egoism of totality seems exaggerated, and in practice, one may admit a multitude of lifestyles situated in totality. However, totality is defined as a whole, and they share those boundary-creating qualities: the solitude, the withdrawal, and the secrecy. "Enjoyment", Levinas says, "is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution. What is termed an affective state does not have the monotony of a state, but is a vibrant exaltation in which dawns the self (118 *Totality*). Happiness and autonomous activity nurture an individual concept within totality, such that self-celebration occurs in the act of withdrawal. Neither quasi-hedonism of individuation nor the individuation of faith beckon the other. According Levinas, this is a sketch of the individual prior to the face-to-face, and without a phenomenology of the individual perfectly shut up within itself, it would easy I think to underestimate the inevitable breach of this inner world. Totality is a component of our existence, but without the infinity to come, it is an incomplete subjectivity.

The linguistic expression of subjectivity is the 'I', but this 'I' incorporates both totality and infinity, a 'being beyond being'. The second half to the relation reveals the nature of the individual in the presence of the other as an individual directed away from themselves. They desire to commune with the absolutely other, and in this way, Levinas attends to the often unspoken, primordial desire for others, a sentiment strongly held by the community driven incompatibilists. For if a religious divide in the mind could fasten itself so tightly as to never

look to the *world at large*, the gaze of otherness would be permanently averted. The consequence of the multiplicity of moral loci would consist in this aversion to love; totality could look to the same always, fixate its eyes on its comfort always. Levinas considers this impossible in its primacy. To be sure, need permits the being of "independent of the world" (116 *Totality*). It 'saves' one from the other of being, but the desire for otherness exists with severe primacy.

The desire for otherness earns a metaphysical designation because the field is concerned with the other or that which is outside (33 *Totality*). It also serves to separate metaphysics from ontological desire, which as a theory seeks to apprehend being (42 *Totality*). However the ontological being, Levinas argues, "reduces the other to the same" and does not allow the essential, primordial alienation of the other (42 *Totality*). Knowing is grasping, but to hold the concept before the mind's eye delineates being effectively into a category. The definition of a category etymologically depends on demarcation and must strike away the alterity of the other to a common concept, "a reduction of the other to the same" (43 *Totality*). The metaphysical desire transcends the sameness permeating the rims of totality in the face of the other, and the concept "of this transcendence is expressed by the term infinity" (25 *Totality*).

It is important to note that this infinity is in essence a revelation of motion, not a stoic category (mathematically this is also true), and it is posited "in *me*" (26 *Totality*). That is, infinity is not produced as a boundary or limit to a finished, total being, for this would recall the otherness *of me* and define me in opposition. This notion presupposes the totality of being "if the same would establish its identity by simple opposition to the other" (38 *Totality*). Levinas repeats this point many times (38, 40, 150, 194, 197, 199 *Totality*). Perhaps this negativity must be refuted over and over because it is easy to succumb to the tendency to define oneself as same, familiar, or known territory or slip back into popular conceptions of demarcated being. Ethically,

the negativity or inherent opposition would instead of "gentleness" espouse violence (150 *Totality*) Nevertheless, infinity[2] is not a negation of the 'I'; it is a revelation within myself (26 *Totality*).

The metaphysical desire is transcendental to the break with totality and the consequential infinity because the face answers to "the unquenchable Desire for Infinity" (150 *Totality).* A new dimension of my existence is unlocked in their literal presence. I welcome and respond to them. Their power and their independence do not dazzle my own individuality to submission or resistance. The communion with the face corresponds to a 'higher' desire, thus adding my exteriority to my interiority. In the face of the other, I am not reduced or disemboweled by their gaze, but my "spontaneity" and "power" are interrogated by the face (43, 198 *Totality*). I objectify or 'make mine' an object or thing for it is given to me, but the face infinitely tests the ability for *need* to accomplish its ends (194 *Totality*). However, I fancy myself a metaphysician instead of a being, and I never experience a limit situation or trial for my totality. The feats of infinity are addition; the other "introduces into me what was not in me" (203 *Totality*). This rough description denotes the individual in the other-other interaction.

The other is absolutely other as Levinas tells us, but the God of the other is more than the quality of otherness, but a temporality. It persists continually. The otherness of the other ignites my desire to approach the face, but the infinity should not be regarded as a temptation for totalization. The face of the other "remains absolute within the relation" (195 *Totality*); the distance between me and the other cannot be closed, for language itself deals with "separated term" (195 *Totality*). I once said carelessly something to the effect that dialogue opens the

[2] Infinity seems to be a popular term in philosophy, for now three uses of the term have appeared. The first two are the infinities we found in Kierkegaard, the infinity of resignation and the religious infinity. The latest infinity to join us is the infinity that expresses transcendence—"the overflowing with what exceeds its capacity" (197 *Totality*).

horizon to look on another human subjectivity, and this was the nature of perfect commensurability. While dialogue constitutes a revealing, this is not the appropriate diction. In dialogue, the other remains a barrier of total otherness. That is, in the *experience* of the other face, the alienation from my conceptual grasp is inexorable, and the only method I can appropriate their subjectivity rests within system or a host of falsities identifying themselves as logical categories. The discourse animates the commonality, but this cannot mean discourse unwraps the intelligibility of the other in the act. Unless we neglect what discourse discovers, the otherness of the other cannot be effaced by any tool of investigation.

Dialogue establishes the absolute difference when it presents the other's expression as transcendent (195 *Totality)*. The other speaks words that I seem to comprehend, but the words themselves do not hide the other. What is exchanged are the "verbal signs" (202 *Totality*), but these signs do not bring the other with them. In the everyday conversation, the other may "present himself as a theme" (195 *Totality*). However, when I receive the 'said', the other has already "quit the theme that encompassed him" (195 *Totality*). I interpret this as a perpetual dynamic to the otherness in language that prevents absorption. The other produces themes in their dialogue each moment, and no matter the trend of the theme, the other removes themselves from the theme with each expression. The face of the other as infinity when resisting the "meaning I ascribe to my interlocutor" (195 *Totality*), affirms their transcendence. This is certainly a quality that bubbles up in richer conversation. The more dialogue I have with the other, the less control I *perceive* to have other them; instead, I desire more dialogue, more otherness, more friendship, and more transcendence. The exhaust of conversation persists only in the "verbal signs"; it says and concludes nothing about the other. This infinity revelation in discourse is not entirely positive, for by the token of their constant break with a theme, the other

can become capricious in their evasion. The possibility of inconsistency denotes the flux of truth and lies, and in this way, the other does not "consist in *giving* the Other's interiority" out of their freedom to lie (202 *Totality*). The dialogue, for better or worse, should not be interpreted to reduce the incommensurability of the other. Rather, language and the face, break "the continuity of being" and contributes only to infinity (195 *Totality*).

The nature of the other in this relation is more complex, partly due to Levinas in his framing. He portrays totality with transparency which literally implies more definition. Enjoyment, familiarity, happiness, and solitude adorn the walls of the subject with the charged term the ego. However, while this may hold truer for the aesthetic sphere, totality as we saw may express an inner infinity for the faith directed toward the private absolute. The infinite individuation may lend to the partitioning or distinction of moral loci, but it is worth repeating this is no egoism despite the markers. The incompatibilist and Kierkegaard who could discern the being of Abraham would have to refute the connection of interiority purely as totality. Another species of infinity is embedded in the character of the incommensurable being, who humble themselves more so to God than the face. Now returning to Levinas, the incommensurability is transplanted to the other with a similar, ill-defined magnitude of absoluteness. I would begin however with a brief distinction of God analogous to other and the God as other.

Difference and likeness are the stomping grounds of analogy, tempting us always to associate a little more than we should. I have paralleled the otherness of the face to the otherness of God. The metaphysician and the being are images and faint shadows to the divine, but if the divine element is there, this informs the thinking behind the human countenance, independent of their jubilance or melancholy. Their sacred relation blends them, and the ethical in truth would

boil over into the religious. The God and the other only merge if the concepts resembles each other, but also if they are qualitatively similar. Otto remarks on the overgrowth of similarities between the numinous and the sublime because the sublime "exhibits the same peculiar dual character as the numinous" (42 Otto). However, perhaps by intuition alone, their similarities end with their affections. Otto proposes the "sublime is itself first aroused…from the rational spirit of man and its *a priori* capacity" (44 Otto), and this is obviously not the nonrational invocation of the numinous. The danger is that the concepts could be coupled by association alone. Indeed, the ethical relation of the face-to-face is spared from mystical relations in Levinas (202 *Totality*). Further still, the transcendence of the numinous could not be reconciled with my expression, for the God-other relation is incommensurable and one-sided. However, language permits me to attend to the other in the infinite wake of their incommensurability; language in Levinas' view freshens "any odor of the "numinous," his holiness." (195 *Totality*).

We should acknowledge the perspective of Levinas on this matter, for the numinous was a confrontation of incalculable proportion, bringing the reality of the individual into question. Levinas perceives "theology imprudently treats the idea of the relation between God and the creature in terms of ontology" (293 *Totality*). Certainly in the case of the numinous, the negativity of oppositional defining Levinas eschewed shows up in full force, turning otherness into a destructive maelstrom again a neatly closed-up being. However, this does not put away the divinity of the other.

The reader was likely familiar with the image of humankind in God and the divine element of the human soul. The former privileges totality with being as likeness; the latter is thoroughly non-corporeal. The qualitative intersection of God and the other lies in the infinity revealed by the face. The numinous is not only wholly other in its nonrationality; it is other for

its impenetrable transcendence to being, it strangeness to the individual. The analogue beyond analogy is the otherness, but if we delve deeper, the otherness spawns from the infinity or the exteriority of being. "The overflowing of exteriority…constitutes the dimension of height or the divinity of exteriority" (297 *Totality*). I stumbled upon a more intimate passage in *Difficult Freedom* that, in light of what we know of the face, seals the otherness of God and other as a commandment.

> To see a face is already to hear 'You shall not kill', and to hear 'You shall not kill' is to hear 'Social justice'. And everything I can hear [*entendre*] coming from God or going to God, Who is invisible, must have come to me via the one unique voice. 'You shall not kill' is therefore not just a simple rule of conduct; it appears as the principle of discourse itself and of spiritual life (8-9 *Difficult*).

To summarize and conclude this segment, if the God of myself can be found in the face of the other, the transformations proceed upward. At the scale of the individual, several reversals from the model of individuality posited by Kierkegaard occur. From Otto, we dealt with mystical, nonrational experience in order to chip away from the exceptions encountered in *Fear and Trembling*. And the contrast was plain. The individual infinity was mulched underfoot by the numinous until it become skeptical of its existence. As we turned to the everyday, the otherness of the numinous received some qualified analogy in the otherness of Levinas. First and foremost, the religious infinity and the realm of private faith was supplanted by the species of infinity flowing from the face. The interiority of the individual (the infinity within totality, the withdrawal, the being) was reversed to the exteriority of the individual (the infinity outside totality, the transcendence, the metaphysician). This reversal could also be expressed by saying the incommensurability of being I derived previously is transferred to the other. Finally on incommensurability, these models resonate in the religious life in very different ways. The

incommensurable silence is exchanged for the incommensurable dialogue, where the intelligible other is flat out denied. The distance between me and other cannot be reduced.

At the level of ideology, the moral otherness and moral monism are dissolved into a single moral expression, the divine otherness. The exceptions to moral practice are rebuffed by the commandment of the face, and this elevates to experience as unconditional unification. I do not see a need for a follow through in the ideological, psychical/affective, and experiential categories because of the unicity of God and otherness. The tension of the incompatibility is resolved as "violence and contingency" is resolved in the other-other relation (203-204 *Totality*), undoing in a sense the arbitrary exertion of the will of God despite the kismet of faith. Nor is there a unique model of being to be had, for instead of faith conditioning the face-to-face, their countenance informs the faith of its relation to community and discourse. We propitiate the God by flourishing with the religious community, or so the implication of this unification goes for the religious life.

At the level of experience, moral pluralism is reconciled with moral fundamentalism, although in such a way as to give preference to the pluralism, which espouses acceptance and dialogue. However, in this model, the incompatibilist lays the problem of experience to rest by embedding the plurality of otherness and by extension, moral otherness, into its structure. We had to avoid with prudence the logical contrivance of such a move, revealing like a logician that the term of otherness we were looking for was in between the parentheses of the will of God. For then logician would not mean itself, but a synthesis of logic and magician. The experiential phenomenology as method integrates the care and authenticity of this move. One could demand proof, and one could reply 'look to those around you; look to the love of the face. The reflection of divinity live there.' In a sense then, the faith driven pluralism cannot support pluralism

generally. Another route would have to produce the universality of pluralism. Levinas himself believed that the answer rested in reason. Near the end of his phenomenology, he concludes “the pluralism of society could not disappear in the elevation to reason, but would be its condition.” (208 *Totality*). From the perspective of the (former) incompatibilist who subscribes to this unification, pluralism would be pivoted on the divine, whose elements eclipse totality.

Works Cited

1. Harvey, John W. Preface. *The Idea of the Holy*. Ed. Rudolph Otto. Trans. John W. Harvey. Second ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. Print.
2. Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Group, 1985. Print.
3. Levinas, Emmanuel. *Difficult Freedom*. Trans. Sean Hand. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. Print.
4. Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969. Print.
5. Otto, Rudolph. *The Idea of the Holy*. Trans. John Harvey. Second ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. Print.

Conclusions and the 'Either/Or' of the Individual in the Divine Relation

The role-reversal of the individual in Kierkegaard and in Levinas (and to some extent Otto) impels us to reevaluate the tone and the nature of the prevalent discussion in religion about moral loci. Like many philosophical conversations, the truth of it has no end, but the conflict for moral monism and moral otherness (broadly pluralism and fundamentalism) becomes irresolvable or interminable over a disagreement about the nature of God. For it is well argued that religious morals and their jurisdiction for us implicates the divine (the adjectives of absolute, supreme, omnipresent, etc.). The move culminates in the question of intrinsic moral authority which brings the force of religious violence to will. One perspective would seek to delimit any possibility of such an interpretation, but this attempt to air-seal contingency is quickly rebutted by those who put the emphasis on another aspect of the Word, the wrath of God, for the following reason. To truncate the arbitrary flash of contingency effects the belief in a finite God, or a God who logically *cannot* effect its will, rather than chooses not to. The middle ground of course distinguishes contingency from intentionality. In this position, 'cannot' reverts back to 'does not', and so forth, these camps of thinking debate on. However, the divine, its action, and its nature dominate in the God-other interaction so definitively it is easy to forget the question of humankind. For the divine communion, the intersection, names both the infinity and the finity in reciprocation, and the communion, as opposed to a stringent analysis of God's nature, coincides with practice, which on our grounding assumption, command resonance for lived experience. In abstraction, the conflict of moral loci interrogates God, but in practice, the debate just as much concerns the nature of the other.

The formation of these two perspectives raises the question in exigency. How is the individual exalted in the divine? Are they given power or are they humbled? The first construct

of Kierkegaard, taken rashly I think, speaks to the terrifying dominion of the will of God. Interpreted as a mode of living and effectual for being itself, the individual is still given a brand of religious otherness centered on the privilege of withdrawal. The second, more phenomenological face-to-face prioritizes the other in the other-other relation and as Levinas ventures to claim "the Other…resembles God" (293 *Totality*). The individual in the God-other interaction, the divine communion, univocally commits to the other, for the visage of the other outlines the face of God and the face of human kind. The two orientations of selfhood derived from Kierkegaard and Levinas was noticed elsewhere. Michael Michau quotes the thoughts of Calvin Schrag on the suspension of the ethical in Kierkegaard. In doing so, I think he effectively captures the reversal with the concepts of radical interiority and radical exteriority. Michau writes on Kierkegaard and Levinas, "it is through radical exteriority and self-emptying that we respond to the face of God and/as the face of the other individual" (5 "Levinas"). The 'it' to clarify is the teleological suspension of the ethical. And he notes of Kierkegaard without the input of Levinas, "it is through radical interiority and self-emptying that we come into contact with the face of God (3 "Suspension").

The interiority and exteriority prescribe polarizing directions for the individual in the world. The interior faith invokes those by now familiar strands of thought (the private, concealed, silence, etc.), and the exteriority provokes the other in an ethical and in a divine relation (for these are now same) with dialogue (*ranged* discourse) and openness (welcoming expression).

The exteriority, for myself, I find the more complex of the two because interiority falls back on totality, an arguably more familiar being concept. The terms of the exteriority or of

infinity do not implicate the self but rather the commensuration of the engagement with the other; they exist outside 'being', which Levinas argues theology "presupposes the logical privilege of totality" (293 *Totality).* However, the 'conflict' of interiority and exteriority is not between the internal and the external, for "infinition is produced as revelation…in *me*" (26 *Totality).* My conception of being is superseded in the face of the other, but the transcendence occurs within my subjectivity (41 *Totality*). Being as self-enclosed commonality itself is a deficient category because within the subject lies the exteriority. When we place the 'I' of Kierkegaard and the 'I' of Levinas, the 'conflict' does not impose positivity and negativity (I and a limited not-I). The individual is not limited by their exteriority, as though one draws their being in contrast to the present of the other. The religious infinity is given by the revelation of God alone, and the idea of the infinity is given by the revelation (or revelatory resemblance) of God in the face of the other.

These two modalities of the individual transform the incompatibility from ideology to some degree, responsibility, because the either/or we have 'fixed up' in the second transformation reaches into questions of empowerment. Does the faith keep me from or draw me to the world? What recognition should I expect in the presence of the other? And what virtues does my faith compel me to accept—the authenticity and reverence for the unsaid, or the insatiable desire for transcendence and dialogue? Certain factors have given away my preference for unconditional unification based on the initial goals of the project and even in ordering the section on Levinas to follow Kierkegaard as the 'last word'. However, the purpose of the project is to follow the paths of unification and less so to pass judgment on them. It is for example, Levinas, not Kierkegaard, who does justice to the metaphysical desire of the incompatibilist to commune, which serves as an apt basis for his erudite phenomenology. However, Kierkegaard

tackles without restraint the implicit horror in the Abraham-Isaac story many others would have gladly glossed over, and through his analysis of Abraham, the faithful is revealed with some verve. The only issue with Kierkegaard is that while the exception abates the implicit violence in his philosophy, it remains vestigial, not nonexistent. Every choice negates another life path, but the fault of the either/or can be its constrictive form—the giveness of two and only two. Unification of partitioning and unconditional unification absolve dissonance with the same significance of the either/or, for the interior could encourage the religious soul to itself and the exterior to a faith-born community. The either/or at work is not toward a higher realm but a dual set of effects, positive and negative, and so this choice absolves the individual of its pretension. Unification leads the ascent to thinner air in variety of forms, and we abstain from judgment.

I would stress and over-stress as Otto states of mysticism that neither model in truth pulls the nature of God into the either/or (29 Otto), for the breath of life for moral loci, the location of sacred moral beliefs, is practice. The individual must act, but the act reflects and self-expresses their being, on which they will have self-perception. The existential currents run through any life pathway, but it should not do to place all the weight on metaphysical concepts. The individual must reckon a comparable burden, and this either/or interrogates not the ideology, but the individual. The most obvious strength of this either/or is this question of individuation compared to the more ideocentric[1] religious and the ethical. The either/or places responsibility firmly before the individual in such a way it cannot be scapegoated to supernatural transcendence. In my morality, I must consider myself, my nature, in the faith and allow that to condition the leap to the absolute God or absolute other, or so one maxim of this either/or might be voiced.

[1] Ideocentric—meaning ideologically oriented; the religious and the ethical were focused on human existence through the lens of universal requirement or the will of God, which are spheres with a blooming psychical dimension like the love-hate paradox of Abraham. However, they remain as ever ideas about what one should do, what morality is.

The failings of either model, it could be objected, are their asymmetry or appeal to extrema. Neither Kierkegaard nor Levinas could claim the possibility of an isometric relation. If the awakening of faith coincides with the religious infinity, the priority stems from the withdrawal itself. The religious being takes solace in the will of God without otherness because their perspectival structure enables, among other things like activity, the privacy. To sum up, their authority of belief points inward to the individual. We see an equivalent magnitude diametrically opposed in Levinas, where the infinity lends to the priority of the other. Coupled with faith in the divine, the authority of the belief points outward to the other. However, the asymmetry does not suggest a power relation, for neither strives for the push-pull dominance in the social sphere. Domination and objectification disdain dialogue for the same reasons power sees language as a means to an end rather than a deepening, livelong respect for otherness.

The intrinsicity of the individual and the otherness is preserved in opposing form. The incommensurable being cannot disclose itself and the secrecy designates *their* faith and *their* religious perspective, and the incommensurable other cannot be revealed by the individual in their desire for otherness. The ego sees the other as alien, foreign, but the language does not reduce the absoluteness of this relation. It only satiates the desire for the sake of more dialogue. Indeed, the terminology of lucidity I employed liberally, the intelligible other and the commensurable relations of a community in flux, bubbling with the vibrancy of its members. These positive forms are fixated in the scope of the universal because they are rational, but their intelligibility extends only so far as their communicability.

Disunity contains within it many dimensions. Moral monism leaves moral otherness estranged, and the paradox never disallows the tension of ideas. Unification of partitioning resigns the incompatibilist desire for unconditional communion in the religious perspective, and

the communal forms are preserved but never consummated by an act of faith. Faith must look to its own, not indicative, but directly to the face of God. Unconditional unification dissolves the paradox swiftly as it arises in the mind, and it leaves on the terms of its creation, that is, in the mind of an individual with existence.

It is in this place I encounter God and the face. The ineffable experience of God, in its extremity, annihilates the self, diminishes its reality, like the calculus of an infinite limit. Kierkegaard himself may have affirmed God as the wholly other, the nonrational, but the mysticism changes when put to experiential reporting, in particular the overbearing creature feeling. The transference of the holy to the user only appears at the exaltation of affections, fascination and domination, wonder and awe. Therein the positivity of the holy appears as the "harmony of contrasts" (41 Otto). I see the prodigious otherness then leaves the individual dumbfounded and curious in the wake of the Strange. Levinas, without the mysticism, nevertheless posits those shards of divinity in the eyes of other. A person of faith or without sees the face, and their morals dance to the infinity of the other instead of the infinite ipseity. The moral monism and moral otherness collapse without ceremony, in the most intimate, trivial encounter we as human beings know, but good philosophy should elicit the stinging shock and fundamental profundity from encounters passed over by a thick shroud of normality. A jaded gaze looks to the skies and sees tall, overbearing structures of moral pluralism and moral fundamentalism. However, the appraisal of their power with judgment may match their given reality as ideas, or I think could be demonstrated, immeasurably exceed or indeed constitute their whole existence. In which case, the lasting dissolution of religious morals pitted against the morality of the other may end with the simple countenance, far estranged from the busy cogs of the political machine.

Levinas himself was apparently troubled by the clear and absolute separation of God and other found in Kierkegaard, especially in the teleological suspension of the ethical (4 “Levinas”), where the divergence of moral monism and moral otherness is most evident. It is unsurprising Levinas has his own interpretation of the Abraham-Isaac story, where Abraham drops the knife not at the call of the angel, but at the sight of the face of his son Isaac (“Voice”).

Works Cited

1. Katz, Claire E. "The Voice of God and the Face of the Other." Journal of Textual Reasoning. 2001. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
2. Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969. Print.
3. Michau, Michael R. "Levinas and Kierkegaard: Judaism, Christianity, and an Ethics of Witnessing." *Soren Kierkegaard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
4. Michau, Michael R. "Suspensions in Kierkegaard and Husserl." *Soren Kierkegaard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
5. Otto, Rudolph. *The Idea of the Holy*. Trans. John Harvey. Second ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. Print.