

Ethics as the connexion between subjectivity and intersubjectivity

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Resumen

En este artículo se reconsidera el punto de vista tradicional sobre la ética de Kierkegaard. En dicho punto de vista, tal y como está presentado por Th. W. Adorno, M. Buber y E. Levinas, se relaciona la ética solamente con el Yo, mientras que la intersubjetividad, i.e. la relación entre el Yo y el Otro, se deja fuera de la discusión al opinarse que tal noción nada tiene que ver con la comprensión kierkegaardiana de la ética. Oponiéndose a tal (mala)interpretación, y contra la crítica a Kierkegaard que se deduce de ella, la crítica al solipsismo y al acosmismo, se argumentará que la ética en los trabajos kierkegaardianos está estrechamente conectada a la relación entre la subjetividad y la intersubjetividad. Sin una relación positiva —una relación éticamente regulada con el Otro— el Yo se pierde en la abstracción y la discontinuidad. Contrariamente, la relación con el Otro proporciona continuidad y concreción al Yo.

Palabras clave: Kierkegaard, ética, subjetividad, intersubjetividad, Yo, Otro.

Abstract

In this article I wish to reckon with the traditional view of the Kierkegaardian ethics. This view, in this context presented by Th.W. Adorno, M. Buber and E. Levinas, is a view that is combining ethics solely with subjectivity, i.e. the determination of the Self, whereas intersubjectivity, i.e. the relation between the Self and the Other, is left out of the discussion as it is thought to have nothing to do with Kierkegaard's understanding of ethics. In opposition to such a (mis-)interpretation, and against the critique of Kierkegaard that follows from it, the critique of solipsism and acosmism, I wish to argue that ethics in the Kierkegaardian works is closely connected to the relation between subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Without a positive, i.e. an ethically ruled relation to the Other, the Self loses itself into abstractness and discontinuity. On the contrary, the relation to the Other provides the continuity and the concreteness of the Self.

Key words: Kierkegaard, ethics, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, Self, Other.

In terms of ethics one is accustomed to distinguish between, for example, duties toward oneself and duties toward others. When one explores the former, the result is a theory of subjectivity, whereas when one explores the latter, the

result is a theory of intersubjectivity. The standard picture of Kierkegaard regards him as having an elaborate, indeed self-indulgent, theory of subjectivity, whereas he purportedly lacks an account of intersubjective human relations. Kierkegaard has been regarded both as a solipsist, concerned only with the internal moral life of the «Single One», and as an acosmist, wholly concerned with the private relation to the divine and wholly oblivious of the ethical relation to other human beings.

I wish to argue against these widely accepted conceptions of Kierkegaard's position on ethics. Contrary to the standard view, I wish to claim that Kierkegaard in fact has a theory of intersubjectivity —and that this is closely connected to his theory of subjectivity, so that the one is inconceivable without the other.

My thesis is based on a thematic reading of Kierkegaard, with the purpose of deducing the ethical aspect from some example texts: *The Concept of Irony, Either-Or* (part two), *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition* and *Works of Love*¹. I will hereby try to give a new understanding of the meaning and function of the ethical —*not* as a stage, but as a fundamental aspect of humanity that resides in the connection between subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

My hope is that this will give us an occasion to *reconsider* the accepted picture of Kierkegaard as a solipsist and acosmist, and thereby reconsider his theory of subjectivity in the light of intersubjectivity.

1. The ethical as a stage

The connection between «the Self» and «the Other», has until recently been a poorly investigated subject in Kierkegaard research. The central theme of this research has usually been the determination of Kierkegaard's concept of subjectivity, whereby the ethical aspect has been drawn exclusively from the self-relation and the transcendent determination of Selfhood, that is the relation to God. The ethical is hereby regarded not only as a stage, but as a very boring one. The ethical stage is seen only as a thoroughfare on the individual's long way from the unserious esthetical stage to the very serious religious stage. As a stage, the ethical is therefore not seen as anything of particular value. It's a boring, semi-serious place in life, where responsibility and choosing oneself is important —but only to go further to the religious stage. Judge William, in the second part of *Either-Or* and in *Stages on Life's Way*, is used in such an interpretation as the pure incarnation of the ethical: He is seen as the spokesman of ethics as a bourgeois, mediocre and duty-bound stage that

1. All quotations from Kierkegaard's works will have a double reference, given in brackets behind the quotation. The first section of the brackets refers to *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*, 3. udgave, ed. by A.B. Drachmann, J.L. Heiberg and H.O. Lange, vol. 1-20, Copenhagen 1962/1982. The second section refers to *Kierkegaard's Writings*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, vol. I-XXVI, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978/1988.

has only one purpose: To be abandoned. This very married husband, whose wildest entertainment is to sit in his livingroom listening to the regular strokes of his grandfather-clock has, according to the interpretation of the «stage-theory», been used as a frightening example of how bad it will end, if you do not perform the very well-known and graceful «leap» to religiousness. This picture I have painted is of course a caricature. But it is painted due to the fact that it is a traditional interpretation that ethics in Kierkegaard is strongly influenced by the Hegelian and Kantian concept of ethics. This means that ethics is seen as the universal, and since in Kierkegaard everything has to do with being the individual or «The Single one», («*den Enkelte*»), ethics has to be abandoned to give space to the religious determination of the Self in its singularity.

I would like to argue that such an interpretation misses the whole point of the Kierkegaardian ethics. It is clear that Kierkegaard is influenced both by the Hegelian and the Kantian way of thinking, but it is almost just as clear that he is not just unconsciously reproducing it. He is doing something with ethics that makes it new in a radical way. The above mentioned interpretation is not only wrong, but it also produces a massive critique of Kierkegaard for abandoning the ethical relation to the other person in favor of an exclusive and therefore acosmic relation to God.

2. Critique of Kierkegaard: Buber and Levinas

Already in Adorno's Kierkegaard book from 1933 the ethical is made not only a «passage-stage», but a passed stage². I have chosen to deal with this kind of critique in the works of Martin Buber³ and Emmanuel Levinas⁴. The reason for making these two thinkers representative of such a critique is twofold. Firstly both have written articles that deal directly with the critique of Kierkegaard, and both have incorporated this critique into their main works. Secondly, both Buber and Levinas represent a kind of thinking that focuses on the other person and his decisive importance for the Self's being itself; that is, both Buber and Levinas stress that subjectivity is determined by intersubjectivity, even though they make this point in very different ways.

In the case of Martin Buber, the argument is that Kierkegaard makes the relation to God into an exclusive relation. Kierkegaard therefore purportedly forgets the relation to the world and the other person and leaves the Self

2. «*Die Unterscheidung von gut und böse gilt nicht unter der Herrschaft des Todes. Darum bildet bei Kierkegaard Ethik ein "Durchgangsstadium"; kein Leben ist ihr vergönnt, sich zu erproben.*» Th. W. ADORNO: *Schriften band 2-Kierkegaard-Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*, p. 157
3. The critique is explicit in *Die Frage an den Einzelnen*, in Martin BUBER: *Schriften über das dialogische Princip*, (1994), Gerlingen (1962), p.197-267, but is also present in *Nachwort zur Gesichte des dialogischen Principis*, *op. cit.* p. 299ff.
4. Explicitly in the article *Noms propre* (1976), Paris: Fata Morgana, p. 77-92, but also in *Totalité et Infini*.

to itself in isolation and loneliness. Buber's own presupposition is a dialogical ontology, as he states that true subjectivity is not realized until it encounters the other person as a Thou. According to Buber's interpretation, Kierkegaard forgets the social surroundings of the Self and stresses that to be yourself you have not only to stand alone in front of God, but also directly to dissociate yourself from the rest of the world. For Buber, Kierkegaard therefore advocates an acosmic relation to God, which means that he spurns the whole creation of God.

In the case of Emmanuel Levinas, the critique of Kierkegaard is precisely that mentioned above: Since Kierkegaard adopts the Hegelian and Kantian view of ethics he is forced to abandon ethics in favor of religiousness. If ethics is only understood as the universal and everything in Kierkegaard has to do with the individual in his own singularity, ethics as a positive and universal relation to the other person has to be eliminated. For Levinas, this elimination of ethics is not only a forgetting of the Other that leaves the Self in isolation with itself, but this elimination is directly understood as an encroachment or more strongly, as an assault on the Other. The presupposition in Levinas' view is that subjectivity is not realized until the ethical relation is created by the confrontation with the face of the other. This fundamental ethical obligation is what Kierkegaard, according to Levinas, refuses to see. What Kierkegaard calls ethics has only to do with the Self's relation to itself —the relation of the Same to the Same, whereby it causes a kind of «Ontological Imperialism»; a brutal exploitation of the other as it fails to see the fundamental ethical obligation that lies in the Other's otherness. According to Levinas, Kierkegaard has overlooked the fact that it is not the I who can't fit into the system, which was his argument against Hegel, but it is the other person. The other person breaks the understanding of the Self by the ethical demand. For Levinas subjectivity is not prior to the Other but rather the Other is prior to the Self, which Kierkegaard, according to the interpretation of Levinas, is said to have misunderstood as he only sees ethics as a part of the self-relation.

3. Inspiration

This critique and its background are, as mentioned, massive and common. I would like to take this critique seriously, as it is forged by dialogical philosophy, because this critique can form the basis of a very fruitful rereading of Kierkegaard. It is not only in order to reject the critique, that I take it into account, but what is more important is that it throws a new light on the Kierkegaardian texts. Specifically, it sheds light on the importance and relevance of the connection between subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

The inspiration for such a controversial reading is indirectly given by Michael Theunissen. In his Habilitationsschrift «*Der Andere*»⁵ from 1964,

5. Michael THEUNISSEN (1977). *Der Andere*, - *Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart*. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Theunissen investigates the differences between transcendental philosophy, especially the transcendental theory of intersubjectivity developed by Edmund Husserl, and dialogical philosophy, in particular the connection or the «*Zwischen-Sfære*» between I and Thou in Buber's work by the same title. In the «Nachschrift» to «*Der Andere*», Theunissen states that neither the transcendental philosophy nor dialogical philosophy can capture the problem of subjectivity. Both end up by giving the Self or subjectivity supremacy over the other person —albeit an unintended one⁶.

What I try to do is, inspired by Theunissen, to reread Kierkegaard's authorship with a thematic perspective —a perspective that focuses on the relation between the Self and the Other, and is thereby strongly influenced by dialogical philosophy. This is done from the assumption that it is not only the transcendent determination of the Self, i.e. the relation to God, but also the intersubjective assignment that constitutes the concreteness and the continuity of the Self. Thus, subjectivity in Kierkegaard avoids the danger of both acosmism and solipsism as the ethical is not a stage, but the basic way in which a person must relate both to himself and to the Other. In other words: I inquiry how the identity of the Self in Kierkegaard's writings has an intersubjective dimension —conditioned by interaction and determined by an ethical engagement with the Other as the Other.

4. Example readings

4.1. *The Concept of Irony*

I would like to begin with a short reference to *The Concept of Irony*, as this work introduces the problem to be dealt with in the following.

Kierkegaard claims that socratic irony is completely negative. Socrates tears everything down, without building up something new and positive. A new construction must be raised by the single pupil's subjectivity. In this way Socrates sets a person free, makes him an individual who has rights that transcend the laws of the state. But as Socrates leaves nothing for the pupil to build upon, further continuation in life becomes a problem —the pupil is left alone—, which of course was the whole reason for the socratic teachings.

Shortly before Kierkegaard published *The Concept of Irony*, the manuscripts of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*⁷ had been published. Here, Hegel describes Socrates as a tragic hero but, at the same time, he emphasizes that Socrates had to die for the sake of the continuation of the state. The subjectivity is seen as a threat to the objective laws of the state and therefore it has to surrender. Hegel stresses that Socrates relies upon his con-

6. «Sie will also aufzeigen, dass die Philosophie des Dialogs das der Tranzendentalphilosophie entgehende Phänomen selber im wesentlichen nur vom Boden der Tranzendentalphilosophie aus zu entdecken vermag.» (1977), p. 485.

7. G.W.F. Hegel (1840). *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Berlin.

sciousness—but as consciousness is a subjective thing—and no nation, especially a free one, can recognize the authority of consciousness, he has to die. The first principle of a state is that there is no higher reason than the law, objective laws can never be defeated by subjective ideas.

Quite another view of the concept of irony from Kierkegaard's time is represented by the Romantics, who looked upon irony as an opposition to all objective laws externally imposed on man. Romanticism—Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck and others, argued that irony was an expression of the subjectivity of the genius, and that it could and should break every objective law.

In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard takes a position between the Hegelian and the romantic view of irony—but thereby he also introduces a new kind of ethics. He argues, in the last part of *The Concept of Irony*—in line with Hegel—that the Romantics place the individual in a negative arbitrariness, since the liberation of the individual from the chains of objectivism makes him a supreme lawgiver and gives him unlimited rights as a genius—but this only becomes a cult of nothingness—an esthetic game that would lead to boredom.

On the other hand Kierkegaard saw Socrates as the liberator of subjectivity, was not ready to give in to the objectivity Hegel proclaimed. The problem was to reach a *new* lawfulness, without renouncing to the freedom of the individual. Or, to put it in another way: Was it possible that man could at the same time be ironic, recognize the full rights of subjectivity, and still live a moral life by means of this inwardness?

In a way, it could be said that this is the whole problem of combining subjectivity with intersubjectivity. Or the problem could be formulated in this way: Is it possible that a religiously based anthropology that puts subjectivity in the center, at the same time can argue for an intersubjective obligation to determine for subjectivity. To answer this question I will now look at selected parts of the authorship.

4.2. *Either-Or* (part two)

Beginning with *Either-Or* part II, it is striking that Judge William does not distinguish between a purely ethical and a religious point of view. He uses both concepts at random and mostly side by side in the same sentence. When he, for example, talks about marriage, he says that in marriage both the ethical and the religious are present. The Judge stands in an ambiguous, and as I see it, unreflective place between the ethical and the religious and does not see a problem in combining them. My point is that this ambiguity is a result of Judge Williams' very strong belief in humanity—or, rather, in the Self.

In his view, being oneself is merely a question of choosing oneself in the right way—which means in the ethical way, and in this choice the religious is automatically included. The possibility of choosing is open to everyone, the problem, here, is only *to do it*.

Further on, the Judge describes choosing oneSelf as a twofold operation

that unites to become one. (SV3 3, 222/KWIV, 351) First you have to isolate your Self—and then you have to turn back to the world—to specific relations with other people, because only in these relations you can maintain your Self. The Judge uses the word *continuity* in two ways here (SV3 3, 243/ KW IV, 264). The first movement, isolation, gives the Self its continuity with its former history. The second movement, relation to the world and other persons, gives the Self its continuity with its future history. Both movements are required if one wishes to be a concrete and consistent Self. This implies that being oneself is not something gained once and for all, but a continued movement (*en Vorden*). Being oneself includes an experience and an acceptance of one's own former history, the past. But this acceptance must be made in the present and have influence on the future. Subjectivity is a movement. A movement in time and in temporality. Therefore, intersubjectivity is a part of this movement. The influence of intersubjectivity on subjectivity is not created by ethics, as something coming from outside making rules. But it is ruled by ethics in the sense that ethics takes care of the dangers that are always present in a relation between two or more: the danger that one takes supremacy over the other or reduces his existence to a part of one's own being oneself.

In his first letter, *The esthetic validity of marriage*, the Judge says: «*The duty is only one thing: it is to love in truth, in one's inmost heart*». (SV3 3, 140/ KW IV, 148). But in the second letter, *The balance between the esthetic and the ethical in the development of the personality*, he says that there are different kind of duties; duties to God, oneself, and one's neighbour. But this is irrelevant, the ethical is not a matter of the multiplicity of duties but of its intensity. There is, it seems, a difference between the purely ethical and the ethical-religious duties. But, as the Judge states with confidence: «The religious is not so alien to human nature that here must first be a break in order to awake it» (SV3 3, 87/ KW IV, 82).

Nevertheless, one could argue that the possibility of a conflict between an ethical and a religious obligation is grounded in the distinction between different kinds of duties. Could perhaps one of the duties suspend the others? In fact, the Judge speculates a little about this. He asks whether the love of God could possibly suspend the love of one's parents. But he immediately answers «No», and substantiates his refusal with these words: «*if there actualy were a conflict between love of God and love of human beings, the love of whom he himself has implanted in our hearts, it would be hard to imagine anything more horrible*.» (SV3 3, 227/ KW IV, 245)

The reason this would be hard to imagine is that such a conflict would tear apart the movement in the Self. It would tear apart the relation between subjectivity and intersubjectivity and leave the Self in isolation with itself.

4.3. *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*

How horrible this imagination might be is what occupies Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*— and in a way also Constantin Constantius in *Repeti-*

tion. Both works are described as experiments. A religious and a poetical one. And both works deal with the question of the influence of the other on subjectivity. But here, the point of departure is not a positive relation, like that of marriage in the Judge's letters, but the negation of a positive relation, and the problems this negation causes.

These two texts also have other problems at stake than the ones I am dealing with. But they show a tension within the authorship. They literally show a performative struggle with the relation to the other. In the textual form of an experiment they negate the presuppositions of the role of intersubjectivity in *Either-Or*, but the negation is not a very successful one. The negations create a problem that lies underneath the whole authorship.

One could say that Johannes de Silentio takes seriously the conflict that the Judge did not consider a problem. He takes the problem or the possible dilemma seriously, but he is not arguing against the Judge or, if you like, he is not arguing against ethics. Johannes de Silentio is not advocating of an *elimination* of ethics, but only for a possible *suspension*, a momentary suspension for teleological reasons. Abraham is *the* perfect example of such a suspension.

As we all know, *Fear and Trembling* deals with the problem concerning the universal and the particular. The Judge also refers to this problem in his second letter, of course in another context, but still without considering the connection to be a problem. He states that the individual is simultaneously the universal and the particular. (SV3 3, 243/KW IV, 263)

One could also say that the problem in *Fear and Trembling* lies in Abraham's understanding of himself. Can he combine the understanding of himself as a person who *must* love his son with the understanding of himself as a person who has been given an absolute duty, which implies a denial of this command of love and thereby a denial of his former understanding of himself? Or: Is the teleological suspension of the ethical not also a suspension of Abraham's former understanding of himself? The story about Abraham has, as we all know, a happy ending. God takes the ram instead of Isaac, and Abraham can turn around with his donkey and go back to Sarah. But is this return really possible? Johannes de Silentio does not have anything to say about that, here the story simply stops.

The main conflict in the story, the conflict between an ethical obligation to love one's child and an absolute duty to God was solved when God took the ram instead of Isaac. Johannes de Silentio understands this conflict so perfectly, that in the first pages of the book he is actually riding beside Abraham, as he realises the desire of the man he is writing about, whose wish was «to go along on the three-day journey when Abraham rode with sorrow before him and Isaac beside him» (SV3 5, 13/KW VI, 9). Johannes understands the three days of despair, and he understands so well that this despair is brought to the very edge because of silence. Abraham could not speak about his mission to anyone, nor make himself understandable. He could not speak, for what God had told him, he was told *privately*: it only concerned him and his relation to God. «Abraham cannot speak, because he cannot say that which would

explain everything (that is, so it is understandable): that it is an ordeal such that, please note, the ethical is the temptation. Anyone placed in such a position is an emigrant from the sphere of the universal.» (SV3 5, 103/KW VI, 115)

Johannes de Silentio is able to understand and literally identify himself with the dilemma, and its worsening through the silence. (Just think of his name!) But what he cannot understand, or what he at least doesn't talk about, is how Abraham can return to Sarah, to normal intersubjective relation, and live happily ever after with a wife whose only child he was about to kill; and with this only child, whom he was about to sacrifice because God had told *him*. The problem here is that although the dilemma *was* solved when God took the ram instead of Isaac, *Abraham still cannot speak*: He stays an emigrant from the sphere of the universal. Even though he returns to normal life, to the intersubjective relation to other people, he cannot really comply with the demand of openness which is the basis of these relations.

That is to say that the teleological suspension, the *momentary* denial of the duty to love, or the duty to stand in a positive relation to other people, can be understood, not in a logical but only in an existential way, for it only occupies a moment in a person's life, but the person's further life with the consciousness of this suspension remains an enigma to Johannes de Silentio.

Is Abraham really the same after this event? *Can* he return to normal life? Can he maintain a positive relation to other people? And if not, has Abraham not suffered a damage in his soul and lost himself?

If the Self can only maintain Itself, its continuity, in a positive relation to other persons, as Judge William stated in *Either-Or*, and the teleological suspension of the ethical is a suspension of this relation, then the suspension could be called a suspension of the Self, and this suspension you can't live by or in?

In *Fear and Trembling*, the relation to other people is suspended in favour of an immediate relation to God, but thereby any further human relation becomes problematic this implies a problem in Abraham's understanding of himself: in which way is he an exception? Maybe the exception does not only consist in having an absolute duty to God but in that, as a consequence of this, the person loses the possibility of having a positive relation to other people and thereby to oneself.

But can this form a basis for totally abandoning ethics in favour of an absolute duty to God? Is existence at all possible, if existing means choosing oneself according to one's former history in relation to one's future history, which specifically means in relation to other people?

In a way, it is the very same problem *Constantin Constantius* deals with in *Repetition*, but he turns the problem upside down. In *Repetition*, the young man is an exception. He is an exception because he lacks the ability to become and stay himself in relation to another human being, which was defined as the universally human in *Either-Or*. The young man lacks the ability to become and maintain himself in relation to another (that is the young girl), and this is exactly what indicates his exceptional position. The exception consists in the fact that he can only become himself *without* her. Only

by losing her to another, can he get himself back. Only in her recollection, can he possess her, and thereby possess himself, his Self.

In *Repetition*, the problem is, as mentioned, turned upside down in relation to *Either-Or*: as the young man is not becoming himself through a *positive* relation to another person but, on the contrary, through a *negation* of this positive relation. He cannot win himself unless he loses the girl. But the young man is only, as Constantin Constantius clearly stresses, a poetic exception. It remains an open question if this can happen in reality.

The problem can be illustrated by Johannes de Silentio's description of *the Knight of Faith*: «*who in the loneliness of the universe never hears another human voice but walks alone with his dreadful responsibility*». And a little further down on the same page: «*The knight of faith is assigned solely to himself; he feels the pain of being unable to make himself understandable to others*» (SV35, 73/KW VI, 80). But is this knight of faith a universally human possibility or, rather: is his form of existence a necessity for a successful self-relation. Is he not an example of a split-self-relation. And can a Kierkegaardian anthropology cope with that?

4.4. Works of Love

In a way, *Works of Love* gives an answer to this question. Maybe one could say that in *Works of Love* Kierkegaard uses the fact that the command to love Isaac in *Fear and Trembling* is also religiously grounded and meant to secure the relation between human beings. This means that Abraham's dilemma does not consist in wanting to follow two masters, on the contrary he only wants to follow *one* but, at the same time, to remain in a positive relation to other persons, in this case Isaac.

This dilemma is solved in *Works of Love*, as it is stressed that the Christian demand of charity *does not* contradict a purely human ethic, but *converts* it by the demand to love one's neighbour.

The background for *Works of Love* is the negative knowledge from *The Concept of Anxiety*, where it was concluded that the Self basically is in conflict with itself. This knowledge forms the presupposition for a specifically religious definition of ethics, which does not eliminate purely human ethics, but takes into account its *limitation*. In *Works of Love*, the universally human urge to love, which on a purely ethical level forms the intersubjective relation, is known to be grounded upon selfishness and therefore, the relation, even though desired, is destroyed. But this very same relation is converted by the duty to love one's neighbour. Instead of making the desire for company and communication, the basis for both an ethical and a religious determination of the Self, Kierkegaard, unlike the Jurge, *does not* eliminate in *Works of Love* this naturally felt desire, but he looks through it, sees its ambiguity and converts it by making it a specifically religious duty. This means that the Self is turned into a whole because, in compliance with the demand to love one's neighbour, the Self can draw itself out of the dilemma of *either* loving God

or loving the fellow human being, and thereby remain in a personal ethical relation to the other person, for the love of God is defined as the love of one's neighbour.

In *Works of Love* the relation to the other person is *no longer a rival* to the relation to God, but the relation is rather accomplished through the specifically religious dimension. Only in the prescribed relation to the other person can the Self maintain itself as a created Self, which means a Self that has not been made for isolation but for engagement, because only here the Self gets continuity in its history, continuity that does not make or create it, but which it is made *for* and which therefore makes it remain itself.

5. Conclusion

I make this distinction between becoming and remaining oneself in order to distinguish between a purely dialogical position, where the Self is not created but in relation to the other person, and a moderated form of the dialogical position, where the Self is not created, but is coming to itself in this relation.

A purely dialogical position such as that of Martin Buber claims that the Self or subjectivity does not exist until the I-Thou relation has been established. «Es gibt kein Ich an sich, sondern nur das Ich des Grundworts Ich-Du und des Grundworts Ich-Es.» Or: «Der Mensch wird am Du zum Ich»⁸. It is not possible to read Kierkegaard in this strictly dialogical way, because he maintains that the Self is there *before* it chooses itself, and is thereby not *constituted* by the relation to the Other. But at the same time the Self can only maintain what it has chosen in a relation to a concrete other person, which makes Kierkegaard's position twofold: on the one hand he wishes to maintain the importance of subjectivity, the choosing of oneself as a unique individual, but, on the other hand, a complete insistence upon subjectivity can lead to arbitrariness and boredom, as already stated in *The Concept of Irony*, and to the loss of a concerned ethical relation to the other person which is also a part of becoming oneself.

One could say that Kierkegaard has a *moderated* dialogical view, where the Self is not *constituted*, but it gets its *continuity*, its *self-realization* or *self-fulfillment* in the relation to the Other.

This doubleness could be explained as a kind of combination of dialogue and dialectics. Basically dialectics in a Hegelian sense can be seen as a way of connecting different individuals keeping their individuality. In Kierkegaard, then, the dialectical moment can be seen as the guarantee of an underlying relation between the Self and the Other that protects the Self against isolation even though its subjectivity, and thereby its uniqueness, is maintained. But if this is not only done for the sake of the Self, which means, if the relation is not only thought of as necessary for the Self to become itself, which

is a danger in the hegelian dialectics of recognition, but as ethical also for the sake of the Other then the dialogical aspect, which means looking at the other as a «You» in responsibility must be stressed.

Kierkegaard takes into account in *Works of Love* this problem and states that love is dialectical in the sense that it combines differences, without making them the same. But doing so by separating them at first, whereby it also becomes dialogical, as it is nothing but self-love if one only sees the other person as an other Self and not as an independent individual, a «You», so the love becomes love between two different personalities an «I» and a «You». Love is not mutual in the way that it is only successful if returned. But it is based on a created interdependence between people, which it is the role of ethics to rule, but not to create, whereby Kierkegaard differs from Levinas.

What I here have been trying to show that subjectivity and intersubjectivity are very closely connected in the works of Kierkegaard. I am not making the banal claim that the Self must always have both a social and an individual side. What happens with ethics in Kierkegaard is a totally new determination, both of the ethical and of selfhood. Ethically, the other person must always be the genuine object for the relation, but at the same time Kierkegaard argues that this relation has decisive importance for the Self's staying itself. In the ethically governed relation to the Other, the Self does not have supremacy, which was the case in the thought of both Husserl and Buber, as Theunissen argued. But neither does the Other have the supremacy as Levinas claims. For Kierkegaard, the ethical relation between the Self and the Other secures *both* the Self and the Other: the Other is secured against encroachment and assault, and the Self is secured against the despair of losing itself in abstraction and discontinuity.