FLESH AND BONE: UNAMUNO’S “QUIXOTISM” AS AN INCARNATION
OF KIERKEGAARD’S “RELIGIOUSNESS A”

A Dissertation in
Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores the philosophical kinship between the existentialist thinkers Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) in an attempt to resurrect an ethically religious way of life.

In Kierkegaard’s writings one can find a description of a passionately committed way of life that is distinguishable from both his conception of ethics and his version of Christianity. He calls this form of ethical religion or religious ethics “Religiousness A,” but he fails to give a vivid illustration of it that definitively distinguishes it from ethics and Christianity. As a result, the scholarship on Religiousness A is impoverished, and what would otherwise amount to a promising new way of being religious in a secular world has been largely regarded as unimportant or simply a watered-down version of Christianity.

Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) read the complete works of Kierkegaard in the original Danish, and he was largely responsible for introducing Kierkegaard to the Spanish-speaking world. Unamuno’s Quixotism, modeled after Miguel de Cervantes’ fictional hero Don Quixote, unites passion with commitment while emphasizing community, effectively combining the best aspects of both ethics and Christianity while rejecting their mythic incompatibility. In other words, Unamuno’s Quixotism is a vivid example of Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A.

In short, Kierkegaard theoretically developed but did not describe Religiousness A, and Unamuno described but did not theoretically develop Quixotism. Given this state of affairs, my dissertation has two main goals: 1) to argue for the value of Religiousness A on the basis that it is a robust and attractive way of life that combines the passionate elements of Kierkegaard’s Christianity with the communally committed aspects of Kierkegaard’s ethics, and 2) to develop Unamuno’s Quixotism as a working model of Religiousness A in order to give flesh to the ways in which Religiousness A is neither ethics nor Christianity.

My dissertation is comprised of four chapters: in the first, I give an overview of Kierkegaard’s ethics, concluding that in his pseudonymous works there is not just one but two portraits of ethics. This will be useful for assessing which portrait of religion presented in the next chapter is compatible with ethics. In chapter two I revive Religiousness A as it is described by Johannes Climacus in Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846). After analyzing the other versions of religion that Kierkegaard provides (which I consider to be undesirable and unlivable), I make the case for the recovery of Religiousness A on the grounds that it is an ethical religion, but it is also a passionate religion. In chapter three I turn to Unamuno, whose descriptions of Quixotism in Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho (1905), Tragic Sense of Life (1913), and Manual de Quijotismo (1924-1931) are vivid if not theoretical, and I combine and analyze them in order to develop Quixotism as a robust religion instead of as a mere portrait. In chapter four I combine the language of Kierkegaard and Unamuno to show how Quixotism can be read as a concrete example of Religiousness A.

Ultimately, I conclude that Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A, incarnated as it is in Unamuno’s Quixotism, is a desirable way of life, because it combines passion with commitment and community. In short, Unamuno’s underdeveloped Quixotism could be read as a prime example of Kierkegaard’s undervalued Religiousness A, and as such it can help us understand Religiousness A, which both points out the philosophical distinctions between ethics and religion, and still provides a vision of how they might be peacefully united.
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Abbreviations

I will use the following abbreviations in parenthetical and footnote references for Unamuno’s works:


TSL Tragic Sense of Life. New York: Dover Publications, 1954; the original Spanish printing is the following: Del Sentimiento Trágico de La Vida. Madrid: Renacimiento, 1913.


VQS Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho Según Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra Explicada y Comentada Por Miguel de Unamuno. Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1905.

I will use the following abbreviations in parenthetical and footnote references for Kierkegaard’s works:


I will use the following abbreviations in parenthetical and footnote references for Cervantes work:

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“Mira, lector, aunque no te conozco, te quiero tanto que si pudiese tenerte en mis manos, te abriría el pecho y en el cogollo del corazón te rasgaría una llaga y te pondría allí vinagre y sal para que no pudiese descansar nunca y vivieras en perpetua zozobra y en anhelo inacabable. Si no he logrado desasosegarte con mi Quijote es, créemelo bien, por mi torpeza y porque este muerto papel en que escribo ni grita, ni chilla, ni suspira, ni llora, porque no se hizo el lenguaje para que tu y yo nos entendiéramos” (VQS, 322)

“[The Religious individual] is cognizant of the negativity of the infinite in existence [Tilværelse]; he always keeps open the wound of negativity, which at times is a saving factor (the others let the wound close and become positive—deceived); in his communication, he expresses the same thing” (CUP, 85).

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1 “Reader, listen: though I do not know you, I love you so much that if I could hold you in my hands, I would open up your breast and in your heart’s core I would make a wound and into it I would rub vinegar and salt, so that you might never again know peace but would live in continual anguish and endless longing. If I have not succeeded in disquieting you with this Quixote of mine it is because of my heavy-handedness, believe me, and because this dead paper on which I write neither shrieks, nor cries out, nor sighs, nor laments, and because the language was not made for you and me to understand each other” (OLDQ, 305).
Introduction

A growing amount of literature is devoted to the relationship of Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) and Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Unamuno writes that though he learned Danish to translate Ibsen, “it has been the words of Kierkegaard, [Ibsen’s] spiritual father, that have made me especially glad to have learned it.”² The biographical and philosophical similarities are striking: both Unamuno and his “brother”³ Kierkegaard are philosophical poets (and poetic philosophers); both are often (mis)taken for “irrationalists;” and both are loved and hated by their respective societies. Kierkegaard is lambasted by a local newspaper and Unamuno is exiled by the government of Spain; both question common sense and reject intellectualism; both redefine and revalue concepts like madness, faith, and love; and, finally, both are philosophers who take religion seriously, each earning the not uncontrovertial title of “religious existentialist.” A similarity that has yet to be addressed is that both Kierkegaard and Unamuno describe what seems to be the same religion, one that is loosely related but not equivalent to Christianity.

Side-by-side analysis of what Kierkegaard calls “Religiousness A” and what Unamuno calls “Quijotismo” or “Quixotism”⁴ leads me to conclude that Quixotism can fruitfully be read as an incarnation of Religiousness A. The aim of this dissertation is twofold, and consists in defending the following claims: 1) Religiousness A is a worthwhile Kierkegaardian religion that

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³ TSL, 109.
⁴ For the purpose of this project I do not distinguish between these, though I believe that in the future, a distinction between the original Spanish and its translation would be appropriate.
ought to be given more attention in the Kierkegaard secondary literature, and 2) Quixotism can fruitfully be read as an incarnation of Religiousness A. Unamuno’s descriptions of Quixotism give life to an otherwise almost unimaginable Religiousness A, and, in turn, Religiousness A helps give conceptual structure to a somewhat formless Quixotism.

My first goal in this dissertation is to make the case for analyzing Religiousness A as its own existential sphere. In Religiousness A lies dormant an exceedingly rich existence possibility which is unfettered in the way that Kierkegaardian Christianity is. Under normal circumstances and for most of the time, Kierkegaard’s Christianity is perfectly compatible with Kierkegaardian ethics. There are times, however, when his account of Christianity turns out to be incompatible with, if not completely divorced from ethics, unlike Religiousness A, which is, in every circumstance, compatible with it. Where Christianity painfully scrapes against and cuts across Kierkegaardian ethics, Religiousness A weaves close to the line of ethics, but never crosses it. Because Religiousness A is compatible with Kierkegaardian ethics, it can provide an alternative religion to Kierkegaardian Christianity. In short, Religiousness A has the exciting and attractive components of Christianity, without the drawbacks that make it impossible to live out in society.

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5 Some people consider Religiousness A to be a “fourth” category of existence (the aesthetic, the ethical, Religiousness A, and Christianity), which I would be in favor of, except that typically, proponents of this idea like Bert Dreyfus and Jane Rubin, for example, want it to be a fourth category not because it is valuable in and of itself, but because it is incommensurable with Religiousness B. In other words, they cannot see how Religiousness A can be transitional to B, therefore it must be its own category. I would only be interested in thinking of Religiousness A its own sphere of existence if it meant that Kierkegaard scholars would take it more seriously apart from Christianity. For more, see Hubert L. Dreyfus and Jane Rubin, "Appendix: Kierkegaard, Division II, and Later Heidegger," in Being-in-the-World : A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) and Merold Westphal, Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996), 169.

6 This is not to say that Kierkegaard’s Christianity is not valuable, only that it is incompatible with ethics.
The terminology that I am using is quite tricky because I am dealing with not only Kierkegaard and Unamuno’s technical interpretations of the terms, but within Kierkegaard himself I am treating his pseudonyms independently of one another, to the greatest extent possible, which I will explain shortly. In addition, these terms are loaded not only by the history of philosophy, but have colloquial and common sense meanings, which I am certain are anything but common amongst my readers. I will take a moment here to briefly define my terms.

When I use the umbrella term “religion” throughout this dissertation, I mean something very basic. If a person is religious, then for Kierkegaard and Unamuno, it means that they primarily have a relationship to god, which mediates the relationship to the self or to others. However, religion is not predicated on believing in a divine God. Roughly, I use “divinity” to mean something supernatural that exists outside of time and space, like the God of traditional monotheistic religions. In this dissertation, I distinguish between God and god. God always implies divinity as I have defined it here, while god does not. This will become clearer in my second chapter, which is dedicated to spelling out Kierkegaard’s three senses of the term religion. Likewise, I explain how Unamuno’s Quixotism is a religion in chapter three. It is not only because an individual’s relationship to god is primary that I consider it a religion, but also because Quixotism looks surprisingly like many other religions: Quixotism has a god-figure, worshippers, a sense of prayer, an eschatology, a definition of faith, and a Bible; all of which would be superfluous on Kierkegaard’s baseline description of religion, but bring it closer to what we associate with religion.

For Kierkegaard, religion is always defined in relation to ethics, and so it is necessary to understand what ethics means, but this term is also multi-faceted in Kierkegaard. I can only give
a very simple definition of it here, but I will elaborate on it in chapter one. Briefly, if the religious individual’s primary relationship is to god, then the ethical individual’s primary relationship is to himself, to his neighbor, or to his community. On this model, even if a person believes in god (or God) but his primary or defining relationship is to himself, neighbor, or community, then Kierkegaard would call this ethics.

Found in the pseudonymous *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), the category of Religiousness A brings these two categories together in what Kierkegaard calls the *ethico-religious*, and it is an example of a religion with a non-divine god. Unfortunately, Kierkegaard did not leave us with a vivid illustration of Religiousness A, but only a skeleton upon which one can only imagine a living, breathing religion. Most likely as a result of this void, the secondary literature on Religiousness A is also impoverished; leaving Religiousness A under-theorized. It is unfortunate that Christianity has eclipsed Religiousness A, but it is understandable given the fact that Kierkegaard, through his pseudonym Johannes Climacus, provided a vivid and compelling description of Christianity, but less so of Religiousness A. Even the term—Religiousness A—is generic and unappealing; it is no wonder that it has had little success as a concept. Literally and metaphorically speaking, what Religiousness A needs is a new name. It is very difficult to grasp what Religiousness A is without help from outside, but by reading Unamuno, we can see that it is worthy of as much (if not more) attention as Kierkegaard’s Christianity. The first half of my dissertation is devoted to reading Kierkegaard against his own

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7 Though many books and articles on Kierkegaard’s “existence spheres” mention or discuss Religiousness A, there is no one single book dedicated to it. C. Stephen Evans rightly notes that Religiousness A is the most underdeveloped in terms of the secondary literature. He argues anecdotally that philosophers are usually interested in *Postscript*’s ethics, while theologians are typically more interested in the description of Christianity. See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1983), 138.
reluctance to explain Religiousness A, in order to draw out, as best as I can without Unamuno, what Religiousness A entails, and then to make and defend the claim that Religiousness A is a valuable existence sphere.

One could say that where Kierkegaard supplies the backbone, Unamuno provides the flesh and blood that brings Religiousness A to life, and reading them together makes Religiousness A come to life. To this end, my second goal is to defend the claim that since Kierkegaard himself failed to provide a living portrait of Religiousness A, we can better understand it by looking at Quixotism. Briefly, Quixotism is modeled after the Cervantine fictional Spanish hero Don Quixote, and is for Unamuno a way of life that values faith, action in the face of uncertainty, risk, and commitment. He reads Quixote as a self-proclaimed knight-errant who devotes himself to chivalry in a post-chivalric age by fighting virtuously for love, justice, and the future of humanity. Unamuno considers Quixote wise because of his willingness to make himself look foolish for the sake of others, and because he rejects the advice of the crowd which tells him to quit knight errantry, and instead Quixote persists in his commitment to justice. Unamuno’s descriptions and illustrations of Quixote and Quixotism are anything but impoverished: they are vivid, detailed sketches of human existence. What Unamuno perhaps lacked was the patience to develop Quixotism, so I have done so here out of the sketches and descriptions he left. The second half of this dissertation is devoted to developing and then attempting to hang the flesh of Quixotism onto the skeleton of Religiousness A to create a living version of this religion.

In the remainder of this introduction, I 1) briefly describe the historical tensions between philosophy, religion, and ethics, followed by a 2) philosophical, religious, and biographical
pairing of Unamuno and Kierkegaard, and finally, 3) provide a succinct outline of the dissertation.

**Philosophy, Religion and Ethics**

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” asked Tertullian in 220 CE, metaphorically solidifying a divide between philosophy (Athens) and religion (Jerusalem). Arguably, in academia Athens and Jerusalem still rule over two discrete jurisdictions, whether they are called the secular and the divine, the immanent and the transcendent, etc. In other words, it would not be strange in a contemporary philosophy class if religion were never addressed, and oftentimes when it is addressed it is to ask the question of how philosophy and religion can come to terms with each other. Both Kierkegaard’s and Unamuno’s works are examples of this kind of coming to terms: for each, religion and philosophy attempt to answer the same question of how to live well; for each, both philosophy and religion come down to a *way of life*. This idea reaches back to Plato and Aristotle, and peaks early in Stoicism and late in Existentialism. It resurfaces in

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8 Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Hereticorum*, VII.

9 The concerns of Stoicism that I have in mind are: controlling what one can with one’s will, and accepting what one cannot control—non-attachment to temporary pleasures or beings—and living a life in accordance with one’s ideals.

10 Though “existentialism” is a tricky term and even more so when applied to Unamuno and Kierkegaard, I simply mean those thinkers whose primary concerns are: the gravity of living and dying, human existence as the starting point of all thought, and a careful concern for so-called “irrational” concepts such as love, anguish, immortality, God, and human nature. Though no set of terms could capture all of the existentialists, I do not find this to be a sufficient reason to discard the term. In the group of existentialists I include Pascal, Kierkegaard, Unamuno, Sartre, Camus, Jaspers, Marcel, Dostoyevsky, and Heidegger, among others.
Classical American pragmatism\textsuperscript{11} which embraces the uncertainty and fallibility in human existence.

My dissertation falls under this general umbrella and asks the more specific question: \textit{is there any religion that is always compatible with ethics without being reducible to ethics?} The battle between religion and ethics is often loosely referred to as that between faith and reason, where faith represents religion and reason, ethics.\textsuperscript{12} In the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, Kant asked if an ethical religion were possible, which Hegel answered in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century by fitting Christianity into the history of ethics. Arguably, both thinkers ended up reducing religion to ethics. I believe that Kierkegaard describes an ethical religion that maintains its structural integrity as a religion, instead of collapsing into yet another description of ethics.

**Why Unamuno and Kierkegaard?**

The various philosophical, religious, poetic, and biographical similarities and differences in the worlds and works of Kierkegaard and Unamuno justify and even demand their philosophical pairing on the topic of religion. The comparison can be broken down into five distinct categories: 1) Kierkegaard’s influence on Unamuno, 2) the difficulties of reading Kierkegaard and

\textsuperscript{11} As for the pragmatists, I am thinking of John Dewey, Josiah Royce, William James, and Sidney Hook. The pragmatist who, in my reading is also an existentialist, is James, because he shows concern for the tragic sense of life as presented by Unamuno. Unamuno was fascinated by James, and considers him, too, a “brother.” In turn, Hook was influenced by Unamuno, and re-conceptualized the tragic sense of life. See Sidney Hook, \textit{Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life} (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

\textsuperscript{12} I avoid tethering the term “philosophy” to “reason” because analyzing what the reason is belongs to a different discussion. Therefore, my working definition of philosophy has less to do with reason than with a way of life.
Unamuno, 3) their reputations as irrationalists, 4) their prophetic nationalisms, and 5) their inconsistent views on Don Quixote.

**Kierkegaard’s Influence on Unamuno**

The answer to the question of whether Kierkegaard influenced Unamuno runs the gamut from “definitely not” to “undeniably” in Unamuno literature. I will turn to this debate only briefly, and point more interested readers to Jan Evans’ book, *Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction*. Evans details the history of the Unamuno-Kierkegaard connection back to 1955, with Francois Meyer and Oscar A. Fasel, both of whom almost deny all influence of Kierkegaard on Unamuno.13 Taking more of a middle road, Jesus Antonio Collado and Sánchez Barbudo think that Unamuno used Kierkegaard for his own purposes.14 Finally, Gemma Roberts and Ruth House Webber think that though Kierkegaard did influence Unamuno, Unamuno was not simply an imitator of Kierkegaard.15 Evans says that these last two scholars choose to focus on “affinity” rather than “influence,” and agrees with them in general. Like Roberts and Evans, I also think that whether or not there was any influence is a less interesting question than whether or not there is any confluence of their thought, to which the answer is, in my view, a definitive

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“yes.” The fact that Unamuno himself says that he was influenced by Kierkegaard should have some weight in the debate, however. He wrote a special introduction for the Danish translation of *Sentimiento*, in which he claims to have been influenced by Kierkegaard:

> Like the influence of this formidable sentient spirit—more than a thinker he is a resigned hero of despair—which is the same as a desperate hero of resignation, this absolute Christian, irrigated my heart, as one who reads my book and knows Kierkegaard can judge.16

As I said, I am less interested in debating whether or not Unamuno had formed all of his thoughts prior to reading Kierkegaard, in part because I think that claim cannot be said to be true about anyone. So long as a mind continues to grow, it continues to change.

Evans focuses on the ways in which Unamuno’s affinities may be more appropriately described as being with Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms, and not with Kierkegaard himself. The problem, for Evans, is that for decades, scholars have read Kierkegaard mistakenly: instead of paying attention to the pseudonymous element of his authorship,17 they conflate Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms, and so easily conclude that Unamuno was influenced by Kierkegaard, where it would be more accurate to say that Unamuno was influenced by Silentio, Climacus, or any of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms. For this reason, Evans cautions readers against a hasty dive into the “commonalities” between Kierkegaard and Unamuno. The pseudonymous authorship

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16 “Cómo la influencia de este formidable espíritu sentiente –más que pensador este resignado héro de la desesperación –que es el mismo que el desesperado héro de la resignación este absoluto cristiano, irrigó mi corazón, puede juzgarlo quién lea este libro mío y conozca a Kierkegaard.” See the introduction to Miguel de Unamuno, *Den Tragiske Livsfolelse Hos Mennesker Og Folkeslag* (København: P. Haase, 1925) and Javier Teira, "La Influencia de Kierkegaard en el Pensamiento De Unamuno. Sk, Enten-Eller (1843)- Unamuno, Periodo 1904-1905." (Universidad de Salamanca, 2006), 15. All of the translations are mine in the cases where the books have not been translated into English.

has presented a roadblock for Kierkegaard scholars, for which reason it is necessary to decide not only how to approach Kierkegaard, but also what Evans might mean when she declares that Unamuno and some of his commentators read Kierkegaard incorrectly.

The Difficulties of Reading Kierkegaard and Unamuno

Scholars agree that reading Kierkegaard or Unamuno alone presents a challenge to the reader, and so one can imagine how reading them together compounds that difficulty. Kierkegaard wrote under more than fifteen pseudonyms, removing and inserting himself into his work to differing degrees. He calls his oft-used method “indirect communication,” and says it consists of not only using pseudonyms but also of writing entire books in order to lure readers in to his more religious texts. Any attempt to state what the “real” Kierkegaard wrote is practically futile, leaving a reader no choice but to creatively piece together a coherent approach to reading Kierkegaard. There are several established approaches to Kierkegaard among which one may choose, or one can opt to forge one’s own way of reading Kierkegaard. What is crucial is to choose a way of reading Kierkegaard, and to state it up front to avoid confusion. I discuss both the problem of reading Kierkegaard and my particular way of reading him in depth at the beginning of the next chapter.

Not quite as difficult but still complicated is choosing a way to read Unamuno. More specifically, one must choose a way to read Unamuno reading Kierkegaard. Because the topic of how one reads Kierkegaard can be controversial, how one judges Unamuno’s reading of Kierkegaard can also be complicated, and it involves understanding the way that Unamuno read all authors. As I mentioned, Evans alludes to the idea that perhaps Unamuno missed or
misunderstood Kierkegaard’s use of indirect communication, and because of that he ignored the use of the pseudonyms and ultimately ended up equating Kierkegaard with them. In other words, Evans is charging Unamuno with misunderstanding Kierkegaard’s project and conflating Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms.

There is no doubt that Unamuno read Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms as one entity, but I suspect that this has more to do with Unamuno’s own idiosyncratic theory about authors and characters than about a mistaken reading of Kierkegaard. In other words I am unwilling to say that Unamuno read Kierkegaard incorrectly, but I will say that he read him Unamunianly.

Today we might consider Unamuno’s approach to reading ahead of its time. Far from giving an author authority over his or her own text and its meaning, for Unamuno an author is merely a vehicle through which a text comes alive. After that, the text becomes as or more important than its author, and all interpretations of the work are up for debate, and are not restricted solely to the author’s intentions. In the case of Don Quixote, Unamuno all but discards the author—Miguel de Cervantes—to the point where he rejects not only Cervantes’ interpretation of his Quixote’s actions, but also demotes Cervantes beneath Quixote on the chain of existence. For Unamuno, no author has authority over his or her characters (or authors,

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18 Ibid., 5.

19 I will explain this example in detail later, but, briefly, Unamuno rejects Cervantes’s interpretation of Quixote as foolish when Quixote confronts a lion in Don Quixote (OLDQ, 189).

20 Unamuno says: “I do not believe I need repeat that I consider myself more Quixotist than Cervantist, and that I attempt to free Don Quixote from Cervantes himself, permitting myself on occasion to go so far as to disagree with the manner in which Cervantes understood and dealt with his two heroes.” See the 1914 Forward to the 2nd Edition of Vida (OLDQ 4).
in the case of Kierkegaard), and at best can only claim to be an interpreter. Reading Kierkegaard and Unamuno together presents a challenge that reading either alone does not. That both need to be read carefully and with these particulars in mind brings them together as authors who would agree to differing degrees about the non-importance of an author as well as the harm that an author’s presence can do to a text.

**Kierkegaard and Unamuno on Irrationalism**

Another trait that Kierkegaard and Unamuno share is that they are often swiftly and unsurprisingly filed into the camp of “irrationalist” thinkers, given their common vitriolic critique of intellectualism. Unamuno referred to himself as an irrationalist and proudly believed he shared the title with Kierkegaard. On both counts he was mistaken. Kierkegaard’s and Unamuno’s so-called irrationalism was primarily a rejection of the perhaps hyper-rationalism of the time, so instead of being anti-Reason, Kierkegaard could be considered anti-Hegelian, and Unamuno, anti-Intellectualist, or even anti-European (where Europe at the turn of the century represents scientism). Each also at times rejected the term “philosophy,” though clearly they both dealt with philosophical issues. In effect, while neither was an irrationalist, it is understandable why each gets branded as one today.

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21 In his novel *Niebla* (*Mist* 1914), Unamuno’s main character, Agosto, goes to Unamuno’s apartment in protest of the fact that he is a fictional character, and this results in a philosophical discussion about who is more real: author or character? See Miguel de Unamuno, *Niebla* (Madrid: Catedra, 1985) and *Mist: A Tragicomic Novel*, trans. Warner Fite (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

22 I am partially reading Unamuno against himself in this dissertation, against his sense that both he and Quixote are irrational, because I think that neither one is.
It is not illegitimate to construe Kierkegaard as an anti-intellectualist, however. In both his pseudonymous and his signed works, Kierkegaard poked fun at, chided, antagonized, and finally rebuked “sensible” people, who think of themselves as reasonable, rational, self-controlled, etc. In Fear and Trembling, the “frogs in life’s swamp” or “slaves of misery” hedge their bets and refuse to take life’s risks. In Two Ages, Kierkegaard disparaged the ‘public’ and the ‘crowd’ accusing them of what he calls “leveling,” which can be equated with nihilism. Kierkegaard complained that the present age was filled with people who lacked faith, misunderstood love, and failed to see the value of madness, all of whom were avoiding living altogether. Kierkegaard took pains to reject and dismiss those who lived for nothing and who tried to level the surrounding society. Likewise, pseudonym Johannes Climacus reserved the title of “assistant professor” for those whom he considered hyper-rational; the clear implication being that academia itself was corrupt. Kierkegaard shared with his pseudonyms a bitter hatred for those he would call reason-worshippers, putting Hegel at the top of the list.

Ed Mooney defends Kierkegaard against the charge of irrationalism by pointing to the ways in which Kierkegaard was fighting what he calls a historical beast. “his much advertised

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24 See, for example, Dreyfus and Rubin, "Appendix: Kierkegaard, Division II, and Later Heidegger," 283-284.

25 Whether Kierkegaard’s characterization of Hegel is fair or not is not the subject of this investigation, though it is an interesting and important question.

26 Vernard Eller claims that while Kierkegaard is not anti-intellectual, and thinks that reason has its place, that Kierkegaard does ultimately put philosophy or reason second to religion, implying that reason is not sovereign. See Vernard Eller, Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship: A New Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 132.

27 Mooney is principally defending Kierkegaard against Alasdair Macintyre who accuses Kierkegaard of being an irrationalist for not providing a basis on which to choose to be ethical rather than aesthetic, accusing Kierkegaard of “thoroughgoing subjectivism.” See Edward Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation: Reading Kierkegaard's
“irrationalism” is less a critique of reason or deliberation than an exasperated reaction to the bloated intellectualism, hyper-rationalism, and anti-individualism of his time.”

Kierkegaard was reacting against hyper-philosophicalism, and unfortunately came across as anti-rational and anti-philosophical. Mooney continues “for [Kierkegaard], philosophy is a pejorative he reserved for bankrupt intellectual system-building.”

Perhaps for this reason, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms sometimes chose to write “dialectical lyrics” instead of strict philosophical treatises. Mooney would argue that Kierkegaard was attempting to awaken Denmark to the pomposity of philosophy in order to revive a different and ancient brand of philosophy, which often took the form of myth or allegory, and which centered on questions of existence. Mooney reminds us that Socrates—who is anti-systematic but still philosophical—was a model for Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard was no irrationalist, but the venom he directed at Hegel and his followers has led to a general confusion about his position, which Unamuno himself fell into. For Unamuno the case is strikingly similar, except that, unlike Kierkegaard, Unamuno called himself an irrationalist, which makes digging him out of the sand trap of the title much more difficult.

Unamuno unrepentantly worshipped all that he considered to be irrational, from which it is reasonable to assume that the title irrationalist would fit him perfectly. He called faith “contrarational,” and claimed that philosophy and religion were enemies (TSL, 198). Unamuno’s intention was to avidly reject reason, but, as in the case of Kierkegaard, what Unamuno ended up

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28 Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation, 7.
29 Ibid., 2.
30 Mooney defends the anti-philosophical stance of Fear and Trembling pseudonym Johannes de Silentio while implying that it is still, at bottom, philosophical: “conceptual analysis alternates with evocative, lyrical narration. Dialectical argument interweaves with story, metaphor, and allegory.” Ibid., x.
fighting against was the over-valuation of reason, not the legitimacy of reason itself. Like Kierkegaard, Unamuno employed certain terms that were meant to be disparaging towards what he considered the hyper-rationalist climate of his age. These terms are: “curates,” “barbers,” and “university graduates,” and all refer to the type of person who thinks that he or she already knows everything there is to know, whether through common sense or education. The curates and the barbers appear in *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho segun Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: Explicada y Comentada por Miguel de Unamuno (The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho according to Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: Explicated and Commented on by Miguel de Unamuno, 1905)*, and represent people who appeal mainly to *common sense* for their arguments. The mistake of this type, for Unamuno, is that it only sees what lies on the surface, and it dismisses what fails to make immediate sense. As we will see, Unamuno used Quixote’s niece, Antonia, as the prime example of the common-sense position, though the curate and the barber are also vivid examples (OLDQ, 163-166). These, like Silentio’s frogs in life’s swamp, symbolized for Unamuno those people who have traded their imagination for so-called sensibleness (FT, 41-42).

The case of the university graduates is a bit different, and Unamuno used these terms to refer to academics and intellectuals who think they are “too smart” for faith. This group parallels Kierkegaard’s “assistant professors” in that the flaw does not consist of having too little information or education, but rather, too much (FT, 62). Unamuno thought that these were corrupted by the academy, which he thought worshipped reason in place of God. Unamuno’s intolerance for this type is understandable given that most of his philosophy revolved around questions of faith and love of God. He criticized those who thought that in order to believe in God, one needed certainty, and he opted instead for endorsing faith in uncertainty.
Like Kierkegaard in his own context, Unamuno was primarily responding to what he considered Spain’s desire to become more European, i.e., more scientistic. Unamuno spent the last chapter of his *El Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida en los Hombres y en los Pueblos* (*The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations*, 1913) defending Spain for its *soul*, of which he says:

For the conviction continually grows upon me that our philosophy, the Spanish philosophy, is liquiscent and diffused in our literature, in our life, in our action, in our mysticism, above all, and not in philosophical systems. It is concrete. And is there not perhaps as much philosophy or more in Goethe, for example, as in Hegel? (TSL 309).

Unamuno rejected the idea that Spain should “catch up to” the rest of Europe and follow its philosophical trends. Instead, Unamuno saw philosophy in literature, and suggested that the Spanish people ought, like Don Quixote, to “make ourselves ridiculous” (TSL, 306). Unamuno’s desire to see Spain refuse to follow the tide of Europe was one of the causes of his own so-called irrationalism. The desire to see Spain independent of Europe did not make Unamuno an irrationalist any more than Kierkegaard’s anti-Hegelian stance made him one.

**Prophetic Nationalism**

Both Kierkegaard and Unamuno accused their respective ages of intellectual or spiritual sloth, of wanting to follow the crowd instead of passionately fighting against the status-quo. Each had a particular interest in rescuing his ‘people’ from the clutches of Christendom and Scientism, respectively. What Unamuno wanted for the Spanish is what Kierkegaard wanted for the Danish: to stop following Germany and instead to develop a unique national identity. Kierkegaard and Unamuno can both be considered nationalistic prophets in that they stood alone as critics of their
ages, and were ostracized as a result. They were nationalists to the core, and were willing to suffer for their societies as a result of trying to effect change. One gets the impression upon reading his works that Kierkegaard was obsessed with Denmark, and specifically Copenhagen. His pages are lined with names of local cafes and streets, and he left Denmark only three times. He spoke about the Danish people mostly in his later works, but all throughout his career it is clear that he was as invested in changing their hearts and minds as Unamuno was in changing the Spaniards’. The difference lies in this: Kierkegaard took what I call a “negative” approach to the problems that he saw; i.e., he “attacked” contemporary Danish Christian society. “Christendom,” as he called it, was the society in which no one in a Christian because everyone is. Instead of guiding the member of Christiandom to true Christianity, that is, in a positive way, Kierkegaard shot daggers at the hearts of his fellow Danes. For Kierkegaard, all were to some degree guilty of deflating Christianity, of letting the ‘fear and trembling’ seep out of it.

Unamuno, on the other hand, loved his people into change, and he took what I call a “positive” approach. Using praise and flattery, Unamuno tried to dissuade the Spanish people from attempting to compete in the world’s science-race, and toward being content to be the reigning literary Romantics. Unamuno fought for the intellectual reputation of Spain against the scientistic advancements of Germany and the rest of Europe. From Unamuno’s perspective, Spain began trying to catch up to Europe in order to gain respect. Unfortunately, he saw a Spain that began shedding her literary reputation, so in response, Unamuno made it his mission to convince Spain that his country’s worth was not found in the hard sciences, but in literature (and also mysticism). Unamuno publicly favored what he considered the warm heart of Spain over the cold logic of Germany. Praising literature over science, Unamuno joined the ranks of the anti-positivists all over the world. Whereas Kierkegaard diminished the value of the Danes, Unamuno
acted as an uplifting force for the Spaniards. Both Kierkegaard and Unamuno, however, were rejected because of their message. Kierkegaard was rejected by his society, and was publicly ridiculed to the point that street children and others shouted at and mocked him. Unamuno not only lost his chair at the University of Salamanca (more than once) but was exiled from Spain and finally placed under house arrest until his death in 1936. Very similar in attitude but very different in tactic, Unamuno and Kierkegaard were both invested in the welfare of their people, bringing them together as prophetic thinkers.

**Kierkegaard and Unamuno’s Inconsistent Relationship to Don Quixote**

In the whole of Kierkegaard’s corpus we find Don Quixote and/or Miguel de Cervantes mentioned 26 times, 10 in the so-called “aesthetic works,” and 16 more in the *Journals and Papers*. The first reference to Quixote was made in 1835, and the last in 1852, and both can be found in the *Journals*. In these 16 journal references, we can notice a shift in Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Quixote. Eric Ziolkowski argues that Kierkegaard, though always clearly interested in Quixote, began to appreciate him in a qualitatively different way after 1848, and claims that Quixote becomes a religious—a Christ-like—figure for Kierkegaard after 1848. Ziolkowski says that prior to that entry Quixote is used mainly as a comic figure of which Kierkegaard is critical. I will explain this change in depth in the fourth chapter.

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31 The aesthetic works are the ones written under pseudonyms between 1843-1846.

32 The following are all of the references to Quixote or Cervantes from JP: I A 95, I A 145, I A 122, VIII A 59, II A 740, V B 1, VIII A 519, X A 32, X A 646, X2 A 396, X2 A 633, X A 150, X4 A 412, X A 581.

33 In this article, Ziolkowski uses Kierkegaard’s Journal entries on Quixote to argue that Quixote came to play a religious role for Kierkegaard in his later works. See Eric J. Ziolkowski, "Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual," in *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community*, ed. George B Connell (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1992), 130-143.
Unamuno underwent a similar but starker conceptual reversal on the theme of Quixote than Kierkegaard. In 1897 Unamuno called for the death of Don Quixote in his “¡Muera Don Quijote!” (“Die Don Quixote!”), an essay that suggests that Spain would be better off conforming to European intellectualism instead of revering a madman. His turn did not come until 1902, after which Unamuno remained consistent in his understanding of Quixote as a kind of Christ figure and leader of the religion called Quixotism.\footnote{For more information on Unamuno’s turn and attitude toward Don Quixote, see Walter Starkie’s introduction in OLDQ xxvi-xxvii.} I explain this turn in detail in chapter three, but for now it is enough to understand that both Unamuno and Kierkegaard experienced an about-face on the subject of Quixote, and for each it was intertwined with his assessment of society.

In sum, I am pairing these philosophical giants on the topics of religion and ethics for the following reasons: Unamuno read Kierkegaard (and was reading Kierkegaard at the same time as writing about Quixotism), they share the traits of being difficult to read, they are both mistakenly considered irrationalists, they were both controversial nationalists, and they both radically altered their views on Don Quixote. Having given a summary of the dissertation and a justification of uniting Kierkegaard with Unamuno on religion and ethics, I now turn to a brief description of the chapters.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of four subsequent chapters and some concluding questions and suggestions. In the first chapter, I outline a working definition of Kierkegaardian ethics, using
Either/Or (1843) and Fear and Trembling (1843). In this chapter I conclude that there is not just one “ethical” sphere in Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous works, but two. Either/Or’s ethics centers on the creation of the self out of a merely aesthetic and uncommitted existence, and Fear and Trembling’s ethics is a communal ethics, which takes into account other people, laws, and societal norms. Silentio calls this the realm of understanding, communication, and compassion. Both of these portraits of ethics will set the foundation for the later chapters where I consider Religiousness A’s and Quixotism’s compatibility with Kierkegaardian ethics.

In chapter two I discuss Kierkegaard’s religious sphere, which, like his ethics, turns out to be multi-faceted. Both what Kierkegaard calls “Religiousness A” and “Religiousness B” in Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846) are different from what he calls “faith” in Fear and Trembling, even though Religiousness B and Silentio’s faith are very similar. In this second chapter I make the claim that Religiousness A is a religion unto itself, and it exhibits certain characteristics that make its recovery a worthwhile pursuit. The most important of these features is Religiousness A’s compatibility with both Either/Or’s and Fear and Trembling’s ethical sphere. I conclude in that Kierkegaard, through Climacus’s Religiousness A, has described a religion that does not require that its followers violate the ethical realm. Conceptually, at this point I know that Religiousness A has potential as a religion; the only problem is that Kierkegaard failed to provide a living breathing example of it.

It is at this point in the dissertation that I turn to Unamuno. In chapter three, I attempt to develop Unamuno’s Quixotism using Vida and Sentimiento. I conclude that Quixotism is a

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35 It is not a coincidence that I am only using Kierkegaard’s non-Christian authors. I want to get the perspective of an outsider on religion because, presumably, they are not interested in conversion. While Silentio is taken to be an aesthetic poet, (even though he denies it), Climacus insists that he is not a Christian but instead a “humorist”. See Evans, Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript, 51.
robust religion which is similar to, but crucially distinct from, Christianity. The most important difference between Christianity and Quixotism is that the latter erects a fictional god in Quixote, instead of a God-man in Christ, and that alone has far-reaching consequences.

It is in chapter four that I combine Kierkegaard’s and Unamuno’s vocabularies to clarify the ways in which Quixotism can be read as a fleshing out of Religiousness A. Though he did not intend it to be used for this purpose, Quixotism turns out to be helpful for looking at Religiousness A, because in Quixotism we find what Kierkegaard failed to provide, namely, a lived example what he calls a “religion of immanence.” In the second half of this chapter, I trace Quixotism in Unamuno’s later exile work, the *Manual de Quijotismo* (Manual of Quixotism) (1924-1930)\(^{36}\) where Quixotism takes on a fully lived quality, evidenced by the fact that Unamuno begins to refer to it as a religion of “contemplative action” instead of “active contemplation.” In other words, for the exiled Unamuno, Quixotism is no longer primarily a theoretical religion, but is a practical and political religion. This adds a political dimension to the potential of Religiousness A. In short, this dissertation claims that Unamuno’s Quixotism puts flesh on the bones of Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A, and it provides a portrait of a religion that is compatible with Kierkegaardian ethics and which has political potential in the world.

Chapter 1: Kierkegaard’s Ethical Spheres

Scholars traditionally understand Kierkegaardian ethics, or what he calls the ethical “sphere,” or “stage,” to be the middle stage between the aesthetic and the religious spheres. According to the Kierkegaardian schema, one can either choose to be aesthetic, ethical, or religious. Frater Taciturnus, the pseudonymous author of *Stages on Life’s Way* (1845) describes the stages (or existence spheres), and he calls the ethical a “transitional phrase” from the aesthetic to the religious.37 In this chapter I do not treat the ethical sphere as merely transitional, but as an independent sphere in which a person could spend his or her whole life. After a brief introduction to the aesthetic sphere, I describe the ethical as it is presented in *Either/Or* (1843), *Postscript* (1846) and *Fear and Trembling* (1843).38 This chapter is dedicated to formulating a working definition of what Kierkegaard means by “ethical” in order to contrast it to his religious spheres in chapter two. The difficulty of this task, as I mentioned earlier, is that Kierkegaard does not supply one, but two versions of the ethical sphere in his pseudonymous writings.39 Comparing the texts makes it possible to highlight the similarities, but also to point out the

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37 In *Stages on Life’s Way*, Taciturnus explains that “There are three existence spheres: the esthetic, the ethical, the religious…the ethical sphere is only a transition sphere…The aesthetic sphere is the sphere of immediacy, the ethical the sphere of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt), the religious the sphere of fulfillment, but, please note, not a fulfillment such as when one fills an alms box or a sack with god, for repentance has specifically created a boundless space, and as a consequence the religious contradiction: simultaneously to be out on 70,000 fathoms of water and yet be joyful.” Merold Westphal suggests that we might call the Kierkegaardian spheres a kind of *Weltanshaungen*, or “a habit of seeing the world in a way that gives to my beliefs and practices whatever coherence they may have”, or “modes of being-in-the-world.” See Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way: Studies by Various Persons*, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Hatlestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 476-477 and Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 22.

38 I am not considering *Stages on Life’s Way* (Hereafter, *Stages*) in depth in terms of the ethical because it is mainly dedicated to the spheres of the aesthetic and the religious, and the transition from one to the other.

important differences that will help explain why I consider Religiousness A compatible with Kierkegaardian ethics. My claim in this chapter is that Kierkegaard presents two ethical portraits: one that is rooted in the individual and is more of a personal morality, while the other looks more like a set of generally accepted norms and is what I consider to be a social morality.\footnote{Another way of differentiating between these two without is to think of the portrait of ethics presented in \textit{Either/Or} and \textit{Postscript} as more or less Kantian, and the portrait of ethics described in \textit{Fear and Trembling’s} as more or less Hegelian, though these connections are loose, and are only appropriate insofar as they are helpful; if they are not helpful then they can be discarded. These distinctions, far from being irrefutable, are made for the functional purpose of seeing the ethical in competing but also complementary ways, and are not meant to imply that Silentio and Judge William are describing incommensurate ethical spheres, or even that Judge William and Climacus represent the character of Kant and Silentio the character of Hegel. The Kant-Hegel connection is used to help distinguishing the orientation of each author’s description of ethics.}

A reading of Kierkegaard cannot be undertaken without an explanation of method. As I mentioned in the introduction, Kierkegaard is an extremely difficult philosopher to get hold of because of his pseudonymous authorship and other “indirect communication,” so it is necessary to state up front how I am interpreting Kierkegaard \textit{qua} philosopher.\footnote{For an analysis of Kierkegaard’s use of indirect communication, see Evans, \textit{Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction} and Roger Poole, \textit{Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication} (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).} After briefly presenting my reading of Kierkegaard, I will begin the explication of Kierkegaard’s ethics.

In an essay entitled “A First and Last Explanation,” found at the end of (the pseudonymous work) \textit{Concluding Unscientific Postscript} (1846), “S. Kierkegaard” simultaneously takes responsibility for the works written by the pseudonyms, and distances himself from them, calling himself merely the \textit{author of authors}.\footnote{Instead of \textit{pseudonymous}, we ought to consider calling Kierkegaard’s authorship \textit{heteronymous}, which is a concept invented by the Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa, in distinction from a pseudonymous authorship. Pessoa’s (and Kierkegaard’s, in my reading) authorship is not pseudonymous because the authors are not generated for the purpose of anonymity, but represent entire life-views of different characters, making it heteronymous. Special thanks to Nicolás Parra for introducing me to Pessoa’s concept of heteronymity.} Kierkegaard begs that his
readers do not mistakenly attribute anything to him which ought to be attributed to his authors.  

Early readers often used a blunt approach to Kierkegaard—meaning they paid no attention to the fact that Kierkegaard used pseudonyms—and, as a result, they attributed positions to Kierkegaard which should have been attributed to the proper pseudonym. Most contemporary scholars agree that it is important to avoid a blunt reading and to keep the pseudonyms apart, though occasionally even this is disregarded.

In *On My Work as an Author* (1850), and *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* (1859) Kierkegaard also insists that his writing was religious from first to last (though even he didn’t always know it), and that his “strategy” was to lure his readers in with his “aesthetic” (read: pseudonymous) writings in order then to be able to feed them the religious writings they need but might not otherwise crave. This has led many critics to read Kierkegaard’s authorship

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43 In this essay we find what is an oft-quoted passage by Kierkegaard: “Therefore, if it should occur to anyone to want to quote a particular passage from the books, it is my wish, my prayer, that he will do me the kindness of citing the respective pseudonymous author’s name, not mine—that is, of separating us in such a way that the passage femininely belongs to the pseudonymous author, the responsibility civilly to me.” (CUP, 627).

44 Roger Poole coins the term “blunt reading” to mean a reading of Kierkegaard which does not take into account the pseudonyms. See Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication*.

45 Merold Westphal claims that to read the pseudonyms as though they expressed the thought of Kierkegaard is as irresponsible as to mistake Raskolnikov for Dostoyevsky. Although I think the analogy is flawed, the basic point stands: Kierkegaard is not equal to the sum of his authors. See Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 9. For an example of a blunt reading, see Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (Princeton University Press, 1965). Lowrie was one of the earliest translators and interpreters of Kierkegaard, and he was also very religious, so it is unsurprising that he read Kierkegaard bluntly.

46 Stephen Evans is a good example of someone who warns readers not to confuse Kierkegaard with his pseudonyms and yet, in *Faith Beyond Reason*, falls into the habit of conflating them. I suspect that those who write about Kierkegaard’s works from a religious point of view tend to make this kind of move, and I admit it is very very difficult to discuss Kierkegaard without doing so. See C. Stephen Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998).

47 The fact that this book was published posthumously should give us pause when reading it. However, he did publish “On My Work as an Author” (1851), which suggests that he was conflicted about one or more of the dangers of trying to comment on one’s own works. See Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Hatlestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

48 Ibid.
as entirely devoted to Christianity, *because he said so*. There are certainly non-blunt readers who employ this kind of reading for the purpose of unifying Kierkegaard’s thought. 49 On the other hand, there are other scholars who also read Kierkegaard non-bluntly, and who wish to challenge Kierkegaard’s authorial voice for hiding behind his pseudonyms. Such thinkers opt for a more postmodern reading of Kierkegaard’s corpus, and would likely even treat “S. Kierkegaard” as a pseudonym. From this point of view Kierkegaard becomes a non-authorial reader of his own works, (which is, coincidentally, how he claims to want to be read in “A First and Last Explanation”). The danger of this position is to create such a fragmentary Kierkegaard that he amounts to saying nothing, or little. 50

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49 See for example, C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard’s “Fragments” and “Postscript”: The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1983). Jan Evans follows Sylvia Walsh’s suggestion that to be responsible to Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous authorship, one ought to, before attributing a thought to Kierkegaard, reference his signed works (including his *Journals and Papers*) for congruence of thought. I find this approach problematic because, beside the fact that Kierkegaard’s thought changed over time, which Walsh acknowledges, his *Journals and Papers* should not be assumed to contain only his thoughts and not those of his pseudonyms. Overall, I think the project of finding out what “Kierkegaard” really meant is not as interesting as some of the alternative interpretations of his works. See Evans, *Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction* and Sylvia Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard’s Existential Aesthetics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

50 Josiah Thompson, Roger Poole and Joakim Garff argue against a blunt reading in favor of a postmodern reading, or, in Poole’s case, a humoristic reading. This kind of non-traditional reading challenges Kierkegaard’s authority over his own works, and stays away from an all-inclusive explanation of the authorship. This position argues that Kierkegaard does not have authority over his own authorship; by taking on pseudonyms, “Kierkegaard” has renounced Kierkegaard. Sylvia Walsh, Stephen Evans and Vernard Eller stand on the opposite pole, with a more religious and traditional (though not necessarily blunt) reading of Kierkegaard. These two camps have fought for years over a kind of “right reading” of Kierkegaard, a debate which I intend to stay out of. I am more interested in attempting an illuminating reading of Kierkegaard rather than a definitive reading. David Gouwens summarizes the literature neatly, claiming that there have traditionally been four different ways of reading Kierkegaard’s work: biographically (Walter Lowrie and Josiah Thompson), philosophically/theologically (Stephen Evans), as a primarily literary figure (Louis Mackey), and using a deconstructionist method (Mark C. Taylor, John Caputo). See David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), introduction. See also Jan Evans’ explanation of the different camps of Kierkegaard scholars in Evans, *Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction*, chapter 1. For more specific positions, see Josiah Thompson, *Kierkegaard* (New York: Knopf, 1973) and Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication* and Joakim Garff, "The Esthetic Is above All My Element," in *The New Kierkegaard*, ed. Elsebet Jegstrup (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) and Walsh, *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard’s Existential Aesthetics* and Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript* and Eller, *Kierkegaard and Radical Discipleship: A New Perspective*. 
In this study I consider Kierkegaard to be primarily a reader of his pseudonymous authorship, and so I reject his later claim that the pseudonymous works were written in the service of religion. I am interested in the ideas that the pseudonyms provide, not whether the biographical Kierkegaard happens to agree with them. When it comes to comparing Kierkegaard to Unamuno, I use the proper name “Kierkegaard” as the umbrella under which the various pseudonyms huddle, and by doing this I risk my readers’ conflating the different and nuanced Kierkegaards. What I never mean when I say “Kierkegaard” is the biographical Kierkegaard; I only ever mean that Kierkegaard is the physical author of a given philosophical idea or position, not that he holds it “in real life.” Now that I have described my general hermeneutical position on Kierkegaard, I can begin my interpretation of the two pseudonymous ethical spheres.

In *Either/Or*, Judge William, or the pseudonymous author called “B” describes ethics as inherently bound up with choice, and ethics consists of the individual’s taking responsibility for his choices.\(^51\) When a person accepts the terms of the ethical, (“good” and “evil,” \(^52\) as will become clear), then he has joined the “ethical game,” so to speak, and is accountable to everyone in this realm. As an ethical individual, he is no longer entitled to blame outside forces for the events in his life, as the aesthete does, and it is here that he actually becomes a self with a history and a memory. He becomes a unique individual who can write and narrate his own story. Judge William presents the ethical realm as a personal journey. Johannes Climacus portrays a similar kind of ethics in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and he stresses its personal aspect rather than its societal aspect. Climacus’s description of ethics is slightly different from Judge

\(^{51}\) I refer to the characters in the masculine because Judge William does. When I reach the individual of Religiousness A in chapter two, I switch to the feminine.

\(^{52}\) In *Stages*, Frater Taciturnus calls the ethical the realm that of “guilty and not guilty,” a description which is apt for both *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling* (See *Stages*, 444).
William’s, but ultimately those differences collapse for the purpose of this study. They both can be said to present a personal, rather than a social, model of ethics.

In contrast, *Fear and Trembling*’s pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio accentuates the role of the public and the larger community over the individual; he presents a public ethics. Silentio insists that by virtue of the fact that I am a human being living in society, my actions are accountable to others. An ethical action is one in which I do nothing to violate the public’s conception of morality, or, if I do, then I can at least explain my behavior in such a way as to garner sympathy from others. He focuses little on personal growth as the aim of ethics, and even suggests that in this realm becoming a radically single individual is a threat to, and is discouraged by, ethics. Because one is always subject to the judgment of others, then one must be able to make oneself understood to them. In Silentio’s vision, one is accountable to others and must be prepared to face the consequences if one violates the ethical realm.

Though I have just said that *Fear and Trembling* describes the social side of ethics, and *Either/Or* and *Postscript* the private, or personal side of ethics, I do not mean to imply that each portrait works to the exclusion of the other. The focus of the ethical in *Either/Or* and *Postscript* is the self becoming a self which then contributes to the larger society, and the focus of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling* is the larger society, and what effect it has on the individual. In other words, the personal side of ethics—one’s becoming an ethical individual who then acts on the world—is not incompatible with the public side of ethics, how the greater community or society affects the individual.

I begin the exposition of the two portraits of ethics by turning to the two-volume *Either/Or*, in which the ethical sphere (volume II) is set over and against the aesthetic (volume
In order to understand the ethical, it must first become at least partially clear what the pseudonyms mean by the “aesthetic” so that we know what one is getting away from in the move toward the ethical. Unsurprisingly, this project is not simple, because just as what it means to be ethical is not consistent over all of Kierkegaard’s works, what it means to be an aesthete is not consistent in Either/Or. Nonetheless, the importance of gaining at least a vague idea of the aesthetic is critical if we are to understand the ethical.

In Either/Or, Kierkegaard employs three pseudonyms: Victor Eremita, the editor; “A”, (the unnamed pseudonym given that title by Eremita) who is almost unanimously taken to be the portrait of the aesthetic life; and “B”, or Judge William (as Eremita claims he comes to find out), who is the portrait of the ethical life in Either/Or. Both A and Judge William offer an interpretation of the aesthetic life, but most critics agree that they are not describing the same thing, since Judge William himself is not an aesthete. I will sketch out the aesthetic stage from

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53 One question that has haunted Kierkegaard scholars and critics has been: is Either/Or a book that presents a solemn choice between two almost incompatible ways of life, OR is Either/Or simply an amusing work of art? Roger Poole blames the Hong translation of the book (1987) for giving the otherwise humorous and irreverent work a somber tone, which for him resembles an “academic treatise.” Poole is highly influenced by Louis Mackey, who first and foremost sees Kierkegaard as a poet, and so who sees his works as poetic and not meant to be a treatise of any kind. Traditionally, and maybe with the help of the Hongs, Either/Or is taken as a stern choice between two ways of living: aesthetically and ethically. Gordon Marino seems to fall somewhere in between these two views—the traditional and the poetic—acknowledging that this work, like any given human being, is still aesthetic even if it is also meant to compel readers toward the ethical. Marino takes Either/Or to be a book about choosing oneself, and ultimately about choosing the ethical, but he does not take the either/or to be a strict choice: on Marino’s reading, one can never leave the aesthetic behind though one may prefer and prioritize the ethical. Alasdair MacIntyre is an example of a critic who sees in this work a solemn choice. He sees this work as trying to (and failing to) provide a reason for one to choose the ethical over the aesthetic life. See Roger Poole, "Reading Either-or for the Very First Time " in The New Kierkegaard, ed. Elsebet Jegstrup (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Louis Mackey, Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971). Gordon Daniel Marino, Kierkegaard in the Present Age (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), Chapter 3. MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 38-52.
the point of Judge William, mindful of the fact that his explanation lacks the nuance of A’s explanation.54

The Aesthetic

Judge William condemns the type of life which considers pleasure to be the highest aim, and responsibility and duty the lowest, and so he tries to convince his young friend to choose the ethical in part II of Either/Or. Either/Or II is a book composed of two very long “letters” to A written by Judge William, and a sermon entitled “Ultimatum”, which Judge William claims to have heard from a pastor in Western Denmark. In the letters, Judge William advises A to fight against being a slave to outside forces, and to become master over himself.

         From Judge William’s point of view, A neither takes control of his life nor does he take responsibility for his actions. Judge William considers the gaping hole of the aesthetic life to be its reliance upon “externals.” He argues that the aesthete is moved and motivated from without instead of from within, and therefore lacks agency; for Judge William, it is A’s lack of power over the events in his life that leads him to encourage others to also give in to their aesthetic craving when he says: “Hang yourself, and you will regret it. Do not hang yourself, and you will also regret it. Hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way” (E/O I, 38). If

54 A presents the aesthetic realm as comprised of “immediate” and “reflective” aesthetes, and considers himself to be a reflective aesthete. A and Judge William present such different portraits of the aesthete that Joakim Garff questions whether or not Judge William ever read A’s papers (which appear chronologically first in the first volume of the book) on what the aesthetic implies, or if he is simply responding to his existential knowledge of A and therefore painting the aesthetic life in accordance with A’s character. I share Garff’s suspicion and would generally conclude that A is describing the reflective aesthete where Judge William is describing the immediate aesthete, but the aesthetic realm plays such a small part in this investigation that it is best to stay out of that debate. See Garff, "The Esthetic Is above All My Element."
for A, says Judge William, all there is is (possible) temporary happiness and (guaranteed) lifelong regret, then it is logical for one to choose to enjoy oneself.\textsuperscript{55} But this is not the case, says Judge William, and instead it is the dependence on externals that guarantees failure; while a life of happiness awaits he who takes responsibility for his life.\textsuperscript{56}

One cannot move from the aesthetic directly to the ethical by heading straight toward it, according to Judge William. Instead, one must be ripe to enter the ethical, and be ready to choose it. How does one become ready? Judge William suggests that despair serves as a catalyst for the ethical. In his second letter, “The Balance Between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality,” Judge William accuses A of being an aesthete in despair, but, perhaps surprisingly, he considers despair healthy, and the only condition for the possibility of the ethical life.\textsuperscript{57} Though it belongs to the aesthetic sphere, despair is enough to make an aesthete want to choose something, and this is where the authentic life begins, says Judge William. That something amounts to nothing more than despair itself: “Choose despair then, because despair itself is a choice, because one can doubt [\textit{tvivle}] without choosing it, but one cannot despair

\textsuperscript{55} Stephen Evans claims that A is jealous of Don Juan because he himself cannot live in that kind of immediacy, and so though A is a reflective aesthete, he might wish he were more of an immediate one. This interpretation would fit B’s understanding of A. For more on the clarification between the immediate and the reflective aesthete, see Evans, \textit{Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript}, 34-36.

\textsuperscript{56} A never suggests that an aesthete ought to rush from one pleasure to another, or that we ought to seek pleasure unthinkingly. In fact he says the opposite in “Rotation of Crops.” As I said earlier, Garff accuses Judge William of treating A as though he were an immediate aesthete, whereas for Garff, A is decidedly a reflective aesthete. Judge William seems to equate aestheticism with hedonism, but A’s description of reflective aestheticism involves choosing and deliberate action and is therefore not tied to unthinking pleasure-seeking, as Judge William makes it seem. Perhaps Judge William’s criticism is more rightly aimed at the immediate aesthete. Garff, "The Esthetic Is above All My Element."

\textsuperscript{57} On Gordon Marino’s interpretation, it is despair that pushes but \textit{longing} that pulls one out of despair and into the ethical. In this work, Judge William only explicitly addresses despair as a catalyst, though longing is implicitly credited for helping people transition. Marino, \textit{Kierkegaard in the Present Age}, Chapter 3.
Judge William wants A to choose despair, not because despair is a good state to live in permanently, but because choosing is the gateway to the ethical life, and it is a sign that one is already (in some sense) beyond despair: “Generally speaking then, a person cannot despair at all without willing it, but in order truly to despair, a person must truly will it; but when he truly wills it, he is truly beyond despair” (E/O II, 213). For Judge William to claim that A is in despair is to acknowledge that A is exerting his capacity to choose. A is not yet ethical, but, in Judge William’s eyes, he has agreed to play the game in which choosing is the highest priority.

The Ethical In Either/Or

In Either/Or II the ethical realm is portrayed as the mental place where an individual goes to become a self. The aesthete begins his journey to selfhood, says Judge William, by taking responsibility for his choices instead of allowing himself to be swept away by external forces. The ethical realm is the level in which an individual becomes unified and can narrate a story of a life. According to Judge William, when an aesthete resolves to commit to the project of creating a unified self, he has begun to rise out of the aesthetic and into the ethical. For this reason, Judge William says of the two spheres: “the aesthetic in a person is that by which he spontaneously and immediately is what he is; the ethical is that by which he becomes what he becomes” (E/O II, 178).

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58 If one cannot despair without choosing it, then it seems that the person in despair has already chosen it, making “choose despair” an oxymoron.

59 It is helpful to keep in mind that Judge William says that one never fully leaves the aesthetic realm. Aesthetics is not harmful, per se, but it is harmful if it is all there is in a person’s life.
Choosing to be responsible for one’s course in life pinpoints the difference between the ethical and the aesthetic spheres for Judge William. Judge William says that the aesthete cannot be properly said to “choose,” unless he is choosing the ethical. What the aesthete does as an aesthete may resemble choice but is ultimately no choice at all, for Judge William:

Your choice is an aesthetic choice, but an aesthetic choice is no choice. On the whole, to choose is an intrinsic and stringent term for the ethical. Wherever in the stricter sense there is a question of an Either/Or, one can always be sure that the ethical has something to do with it (E/O II, 166-167).

Haphazardly seeking pleasure will never yield a unified self, for Judge William, and when externals drive an aesthete through life, it makes him only a passive recipient instead of a self. What the aesthete fails to comprehend, Judge William insists, is that choosing the movements of one’s life is the most important aspect of living meaningfully.

If Judge William equates an aesthete’s being carried away by external forces to failing to choose, then choice, for Judge William, it is because choice is closely linked to becoming internally motivated. If, as Judge William argues, choosing despair means refusing to allow oneself to be pulled and pushed by external factors, then despair marks one’s first internal

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60 Jan Evans draws special attention to the choice involved in becoming ethical. See her treatment of the aesthetic and the ethical. Evans, Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction, 52-56.

61 Judge William argues that A cannot even enjoy what he thinks he enjoys because it comes from an external source. If A enjoyed something that did not come from within but was a kind of accident, for example, a sunny day, then Judge William would say that A did not really enjoy it (because it came from outside of himself), and so at most he enjoyed the enjoyment of it, making the enjoyment reflective. (See E/O II, 191).

62 A might make a rejoinder by defending his claim to live according to principles. Does the choice to live according to externals really not constitute a choice? Is Judge William really only condemning those who seek passing pleasures (i.e. the immediate aesthete)? A says that the reflective aesthete will often forego a momentary pleasure in favor of a more lasting one, so, in this sense, A does not quite fit the character that Judge William is condemning. Judge William would likely respond that yes, even the reflective aesthete ultimately prioritizes pleasure above all else, even when it means a lasting instead of immediate pleasure; therefore his point would still stand.
choice, which will precipitate a number of similar internal choices. Judge William concludes: “of the ethical individual it might be said that he is like the still waters that have a deep source, whereas the one who lives aesthetically is only superficially moved” (E/O II, 256). For Judge William, choosing to be ethical means choosing to run one’s own life instead of allowing oneself to be run by it.

On the road to becoming a self, Judge William claims that an individual realizes that he has more control over his situation than he once thought; the ethical self no longer lives subject to the winds that blow him to and fro. If A were to choose the ethical, says Judge William, he would gain control over his life and circumstances, and would thus become his own editor:

To be sure, the ethical individual dares to employ the expression that he is his own editor, but he is also fully aware that he is responsible, responsible for himself personally, inasmuch as what he chooses will have a decisive influence on himself, responsible to the order of things in which he lives, responsible to God (E/O II, 260).

The ethical character blames nothing external for his lot in life, and he does everything he can to turn that life into a work of art, says Judge William.63 The ethical individual is fully responsible for his life, and will make choices that will have a good impact on his life, instead of (immediately or reflectively) chasing pleasure.64

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63 One way that Judge William tries to convince A to become a self is by painting the ethical life as a beautiful life. By appealing to beauty, Judge William speaks to A where A is, and in that way tries to entice him to strive for the universal. Interestingly, Judge William makes a point of saying that the ethical life is still aesthetically pleasing (E/O II, 275). Notice, B’s first letter to A is not an ethical defense of marriage, but is rather an aesthetic defense of marriage. One might argue that Judge William is defending marriage on aesthetic grounds only because A is an aesthete, however, this assumption limits the possibility that Judge William is in earnest about the importance of the aesthetic.

64 For more on the ethical life as it involves choice, see Evans, Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript, 41.
Judge William says that when an aesthete chooses to be ethical, he gains “eternal validity,” which means gaining a history and constructing a consistent story (E/O II, 214). In essence, eternal validity means selfhood. For Judge William, the aesthete is not yet a self, so, logically speaking there are more people in the world than there are selves. The individual who is pulled and pushed by externals cannot be a self, for Judge William, not only because he refrains from choosing, but also because his life lacks unification. A’s life is made up of haphazard externals, whereas the ethical individual’s life is made up of deliberate choices. Judge William can tell a history about himself using the choices he has made in his life, which A supposedly cannot. Judge William would say that the aesthete’s life is schizophrenic, and made up of unrelated moments which fail to string together. The details blow away as quickly as they blew in, because the aesthete chases temporary pleasures. Unity is essential to selfhood, and a split personality has no unity (E/O II, 160).

In his essay entitled “Kierkegaard: the Self and Ethical Existence,” George Stack argues that the ethical realm portrayed by Judge William in Either/Or II is primarily about self-knowledge. But, not to be confused with a mental list of attributes, Judge William’s self-knowledge is tied to action:

The ethical individual knows himself, but this knowing is not simply contemplation, for then the individual comes to be defined according to his necessity. It is a collecting of oneself, which itself is an action, and this is what I have with aforethought used the expression “to choose oneself” instead of “to know oneself” (E/O II, 258).  

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65 Gordon Marino points out the importance of the ethical character’s unity in B’s letters to A. See Marino, Kierkegaard in the Present Age, 50.

66 Here Judge William is clearly separating self-knowledge from self-choosing, shaking Stack’s foundation. However, I believe that Stack remains faithful to the definition of self-knowledge that implies action (choosing) whereas Judge William stays away from the word “self-knowledge” because its commonsense meaning does not
In other words, self knowledge for Judge William has less to do with passively taking stock of who one already is, and more to do with choosing who one will be through his actions. When an aesthete decides to choose himself, Judge William would say that he does not yet know himself, but as he begins to make choices, he begins to unify his life, and little by little he can begin to construct a coherent story about himself. If one never chooses, then one never begins to develop a history, and, ultimately, according to Judge William, one will never become a self. According to Stack, “not to take responsibility for oneself is to lose the possibility of being a self.”

Once one chooses oneself, though, self-knowledge becomes one’s responsibility, and requires that one continue to make choices, for Judge William. We are called, as humans capable of a history, to make that history instead of floating through without continuity. In Stack’s interpretation of Judge William, it is because one can be ethical that one must be ethical. Stack explains that for Judge William: “an individual who chooses himself ethically chooses himself as this concrete individual who exists here and now and whose present existence has connote action. All told, I find Stack’s interpretation to be accurate, even if he flagrantly uses a term that Judge William cautiously avoids.

Stack puts it this way: “an ethical individual is one who has continuity, who has a history, who is guided in his choices and actions by a telos which is repeatedly projected as a possibility.” George J. Stack, "Kierkegaard: The Self and Ethical Existence," *Ethics* 83, no. 2 (1973): 116.

Jan Evans claims that we may begin as aesthetes, but to become selves we must make choices and take responsibility for our lives. Judge William would say that through choice we gain unity. See Evans, *Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction*, chapter 2.


Consider the case of animals: since they do not have the same kind of knowledge that we do, they are not expected to act like we are. One can argue that most types of knowledge implicitly call us to act in some way or other.

been shaped by causal factors which he appropriates.”72 The self-knowledge that one gains by choosing drives one to continue choosing, and to continue constructing one’s own narrative. Stack concludes that the ethical, for Judge William, is not a series of rules that one ought to follow concerning how to treat others, but rather is about gaining self-knowledge through action and choice. When one chooses oneself, one gains both unity (a story to tell) and self-knowledge (a narrator to tell it), but the process of becoming a self never ends because one can never know oneself completely, which leads Judge William to say: “when the individual knows himself, he is not finished; but this knowing is very productive, and from this knowing emerges the authentic individual” (E/O II, 258-259).

Judge William says that when an aesthete chooses despair and thus begins the chain of making choices, he moves away from the terms of the aesthete—interesting and boring—and adopts the terms of the ethical—good and evil: “the only absolute Either/Or is the choice between good and evil, but this is also absolutely ethical” (E/O II, 166-167). Judge William does not mean that the person who is becoming ethical (for the ethical is always a becoming) will always choose the good, and in fact he argues that “it is not so much a matter of choosing between willing good or willing evil as of choosing to will, but that in turn posits good and evil” (E/O II, 169). The ethical self will occasionally still see the world in terms of interesting and boring, but he guides his choices by the terms good and evil. Judge William continues: “rather than designating a choice between good and evil, my Either/Or designates the choice by which one chooses good and evil or rules them out” (E/O II, 169). One either chooses good and evil or

72 Ibid.: 116.
rules them out as categories, but the importance of choosing good and evil is that one escapes indifference, which Judge William equates with the aesthetic (E/O II, 169).

Good and evil are universal categories, for Judge William, who suggests that in choosing to live in the categories of good and evil, the ethical-novitiate steps out of himself and into the universal. Judge William claims that in living ethically (i.e., choosing good and evil), an individual becomes the universal: “the task the ethical individual sets for himself is to transform himself into the universal individual” (E/O II, 261). Judge William then explains how an individual can also be considered universal:

[W]hen the ethical individual has completed his task, has fought the good fight, he has come to the point where he has become the unique human being—that is, there is no human being like him—and he has also become the universal human being (E/O II, 256).

To be ethical is a disposition that each individual takes on, which is why the individual can remain unique in the universal. Everyone trying to become a self has a universal project in common, and yet every project is particular to an individual. In the ethical universe, one finds others who are involved in the task of becoming a self, but each does so in his own way.

Instead of seeing the world as full of possibilities and accidents, the ethical individual is attuned to the good and evil that happen in it. It is at this point that duty steps in as a universal term in the ethical, and Judge William says: “duty is the universal, it is required of me” (E/O II, 263). By equating duty with the universal, Judge William is zooming out to present a bigger picture of the ethical in which, guided by good and evil, everyone has duties. Duty is what compels one toward the good and away from the evil, just as in the aesthetic realm the interesting compelled one away from the boring. The aesthete lives in a world of possibilities, and the
ethical individual lives in a world of duties, or tasks: “the person who lives esthetically sees possibilities everywhere; for him these make up the content of future time, whereas the person who lives ethically sees tasks everywhere” (E/O II, 251). For Judge William, he who is becoming ethical does not wander aimlessly like a distracted aesthete, but intentionally heads toward the tasks that will ultimately become part of the story of the self.

Ultimately, Judge William argues that we ought to choose the ethical for the sake of happiness. The person who lives in the ethical has a chance for genuine happiness, unlike the aesthete, who can never truly be happy. Judge William claims that an aesthete could not appreciate happiness because happiness involves looking back on one’s life as a consistent journey. Whereas the aesthete has no history, the ethical individual does, and so can grasp and hold onto true happiness:

The reason the person who lives aesthetically can in a higher sense explain nothing is that he is always living in the moment, yet is always cognizant of it only in a certain relativity, within a certain limitation […] in the ethical I am raised above the moment (E/O II, 179).

An aesthete can never recognize any more than fleeting pleasure, which is not the same as happiness. Because the ethical individual can be conscious of his happiness, Judge William claims that the ethical sphere is higher than the aesthetic sphere (E/O II, 178, 237). It is not until one gets to the ethical that one can look down to the aesthetic to value it for what it is. For Judge

73 In “The Place of Reason in Kierkegaard’s Ethics,” Gordon Marino criticizes Alastair MacIntyre for having conflated Kierkegaard with Judge William in *After Virtue* (1981), and for claiming that Kierkegaard failed to provide rational grounds on which to choose the ethical above the aesthetic. Marino argues that while Kierkegaard may have underestimated the role of reason in such choosing, Judge William does provide a reason, namely, happiness, for choosing the ethical over the aesthetic: “Everyone wants to be happy, therefore one should choose the ethical, for it is only by that act of choice that a person can create the ballast that makes unity and happiness possible” Marino, *Kierkegaard in the Present Age*. 
William, the aesthete (perhaps ironically) can never see the universal as beautiful, but the ethicist has the right perspective from where he sits to see beauty in the ordinary.\footnote{In this sense, Judge William does not disparage aesthetics, he only wants to see it in its proper place, i.e., at the service of ethics: “[I]t is not until I look at life ethically that I see it according to its beauty; not until I look at my own life ethically do I see it according to its beauty” (E/O II, 275). Beauty is not to be renounced by the ethicist, but it is to be tamed by duty.}

Judge William describes ethics primarily in terms of the self’s relationship to itself, and secondarily in terms of its relationship with others. In other words, the gaining of a self precedes (not ontologically but existentially) that self’s interactions with others. Others exist for an ethical self in a different way than they do for an aesthetic individual. Surely the aesthete encounters and interacts with others, but Judge William says that an individual cannot behave ethically toward others until he accepts the terms of the ethical. In other words, for Judge William, an aesthete cannot technically behave ethically, and what may look like an ethical move is simply a coincidence. To behave ethically is, above all, a personal endeavor. *Either/Or* for the most part presents a vision of ethics that hinges on the self—self-knowledge and becoming a self. Judge William claims that this life can be a beautiful one, and ought to be regarded as higher than the aesthetic life because the ethical individual is conscious of his choices and he has a history that he can narrate. What is tricky about the ethical is that there are no detailed instructions on how to be ethical; Judge William provides general guidelines, but cannot tell A which specific choices to make. Now I will turn to *Postscript* for a brief explanation of the ethical found there, which I have said is similar enough to Judge William’s that I will eventually collapse the two for the purpose of this work.
The Ethical in Concluding Unscientific Postscript

*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is the sequel to pseudonym Johannes Climacus’ *Philosophical Fragments*, published two years earlier. In *Fragments*, Climacus detailed what he called an *imaginary* alternative to the Socratic maieutic ideal (in which a teacher is considered inessential to her students’ learning). Climacus stated his three main questions as: 1) “can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness,” 2) “how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest?”, and 3) “can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?” (CUP, 15). Without naming it, Climacus described Christianity, and left the reader with the promise that his next work would “clothe the issue in a historical costume” (CUP, 10). *Postscript*, then, is the explanation of Christianity as a historical point of departure (but with more than merely historical interest), upon which one might build an eternal happiness, told from the point of view of a non-Christian.75 The heart of *Postscript* is Religiousness—A and B—which will be dealt with in the next chapter, but here the task is to outline its portrait of ethics. In this section I argue that Climacian ethics is similar to Judge William’s ethics in *Either/Or*, both of which will turn out to be very different from the *Fear and Trembling*’s version, which I will cover immediately following this section.76

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75 Climacus dismissingly refers to *Postscript* as an “imitation” of *Philosophical Fragments*, and constantly reminds his reader that he is not an authority as he is not a Christian, as the extreme of which in the end he revokes the whole book (CUP 11, 619). Merold Westphal claims that “revoking is not the same as not writing!” For more on this, see Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 193.

76 Interestingly, in *Postscript* Climacus actually comments on *Either/Or*. In the section entitled “A Glance at Danish Literature,” Climacus reviews all the pseudonymous works of Kierkegaard published previously, and he claims that *Either/Or* is the esthetic and the ethical merging in an individual existence. Further, Climacus claims that A has not existed, though he has thought everything possible, which makes A a better thinker and a dialectician than B, but not yet an existing individual (CUP, 253).
Recall that for Judge William ethics concerns an individual’s becoming a self. The choice comes first, after which others exist to be treated ethically. In the ethical, the self becomes unified and can narrate its own story. The process of becoming a self never ends for Judge William, and the same endlessness is true in Climacus’s description. Where Judge William used the term “becoming,” Climacus calls it “striving” (CUP, 121).

In what I consider to be a perfect description, Stephen Evans calls the Climacian ethic a “soul-making” project. In “Existence and the Ethical: Becoming a Self,” Evans claims that the ethical life as described by Climacus aims at the cultivation of a moral character. Climacus says: “in order to study the ethical, every human being is assigned to himself.” Like Judge William’s account, where one becomes a self, Climacus’s description of striving hits the same note. Climacus presents another model of private ethics in which morality is primarily gauged by an individual’s relationship to himself, and secondarily by how he treats others. Unlike other understandings of ethics which measure ethical worth according to how well one conforms to societal norms (which measure Climacus would dismiss as ethics on the ground that no one can be ethical accidentally), Evans reminds us that Climacus measures ethics by intentions. For this reason, Climacus’s ethics is often categorized as deontological; Climacus is focused on the motive for action, not whether the action happened to benefit anyone or not.

77 See Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, Chapter V.

78 See Ibid., 81. Climacus emphasizes the self-consciousness of ethics here: “Yet ethics and the ethical, by being the essential stronghold of individual existence, have an irrefutable claim upon ever existing individual, an irrefutable claim of such a nature that whatever a person achieves in the world, even the most amazing thing, is nevertheless dubious if he himself has not been ethically clear when he chose and has not made his choice ethically clear to himself. The ethical quality is jealous of itself and spurns the most amazing quantity” (CUP, 134).
Another similarity between the two pseudonymous portraits of ethics is that they both assume that the self is the highest concern. Evans turns to Judge William to explain Climacus’s definition of self: “it is the self as conscious of its eternal significance, which is realized through the choice of one’s duty.”\footnote{See Evans, \textit{Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript}, 82.} The ethical individual for both Judge William and Climacus realizes that being ethical (re: soul-making or becoming a self) acknowledges one’s eternal significance. In other words one is ethical because one realizes that cultivating the self is the most important thing a person can do. Though this is Judge William’s explanation, it mirrors Climacus’s, which states that “the person who does not comprehend the infinite validity of the ethical, even if it pertained to him alone in the whole world, does not really comprehend the ethical” (CUP, 143). In other words, for Climacus whoever does not begin the project of soul-making cannot possibly realize the importance of it. Once one realizes it, though, one cannot turn away from ethics; for Climacus, ethics is relentless.

In the transition from the aesthetic to the ethical, Climacus says that the individual realizes an infinite and personal requirement to cultivate the soul: “the ethical grips the single individual and requires of him that he abstain from all observing, especially of the world and of humankind, because the ethical as the internal cannot be observed by anyone standing outside” (CUP, 320). In response to the ethical requirement, Climacus emphasizes the self-sufficiency found in the ethical realm: the ethical individual can become what he wants to become by his own strength, without help from God. Of course this does not preclude the possibility of an ethical theist, but, as we will see, God for this individual performs a very different role than it
does for Kierkegaard’s other religious individuals. Being an ethical theist, for Climacus, requires one to use one’s own strength to form a relationship with God, and then using that relationship to reflect on oneself. One can make oneself ethical through one’s own power, and, if one does believe in God, then one can relate to God through one’s ethical actions. This portrait of ethics forms the jumping off point for Climacus’ explanation of religion, in which the individual is no longer self-sufficient, but needs God’s help. I will discuss Climacus’s portrait of religion in detail in the next chapter.

Ethics, says Climacus, is not something primarily shared with others but is painstakingly personal. The focus of both Postscript and Either/Or is on the self, the soul, and the individual’s private striving to become a self, rather than on society or the public. Of course society plays a role in the ethics of Either/Or and Postscript, but the prerequisite aim is the self, in order that one may then intentionally instead of accidentally take on societal roles and follow society’s rules.

Judge William and Climacus use ethics to talk about a personal morality in which motives and not consequences determine whether a person is ethical or not. Now I turn to Silentio’s Fear and Trembling, which portrays a very different ethics.

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80 Evans addresses the ethical theist: “Man, in encountering the ethical, encounters God, since God is the supreme realization of the ethical.” Evans, Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript, 65-66.

81 Evans explains the God-relationship in the ethical this way: “The distinction between the ethical and the religious life is drawn on the basis of the nature of the God-relationship. The difference lies in the individual’s attitude toward himself and God. The ethical individual sees himself as self-sufficient, at least partially or potentially. His existential task is to relate himself to God by positively actualizing his duty. It is apparent from this that some world religions, and even some versions of Christianity would be classified by Climacus as falling under the category of ethical views of life.” Ibid., 139-140.
The Ethical in *Fear and Trembling*

Silentio’s ethics in *Fear and Trembling* is a counterpart to the personal morality described in *Either/Or* and *Postscript*. The ethical in *Fear and Trembling* is an historical and social phenomenon. In Silentio’s world, it does not matter why one behaves according to the accepted laws, but it is that one behaves that way that makes me him an ethical person. Additionally, the ethical realm for Silentio is a given, it is neither achieved nor chosen by the individual. Of this realm one could say that most people are ethical most of the time, unlike in the more Kantian framework of Climacus and Judge William, where to be ethical requires an ethical maxim. Finally, good and evil reign in *Fear and Trembling* as they do in *Postscript* and *Either/Or*, but in a different way: instead of an individual’s choosing these terms, everyone already lives under them and is subject to judgment based on good and evil.82

The portrait of ethics in *Fear and Trembling* does not directly contradict the one in *Either/Or* and *Postscript*, though it has a different emphasis, beginning with its author. Judge William calls himself an ethical individual and Climacus is a student of philosophy, but Silentio calls himself a “dialectical poet” (FT, 90). From this alone we can assume that he is prone to metaphor and lyricism, which makes it tricky to determine if he is being literal or not.83

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82 This is not to say that in Judge William’s world, for example, an aesthete will not also be judged according to given societal standards, but for someone like Judge William, soul-making and not rule-following is at the heart of ethics.

83 Interpreting *Fear and Trembling* is particularly difficult because one never knows if Silentio is describing the ethical critically or admiringly. As for Silentio’s opinion of Abraham, scholars are divided between those who think that he believes Abraham to be the father of faith as well as a knight of faith, and those who think that he is condemning Abraham and warning us to steer clear of that kind of “faith.” In my opinion, Silentio is a very confused character who at once reviles the thought of Abraham and yet is drawn to him, perhaps as we are often drawn to heinous people. As for Abraham’s being a man of faith, I believe that Silentio thinks he is. The question of Abraham’s being a knight of faith is not resolved in this book. The discrepancy between the beginning and the end of the book may simply be a reflection of Silentio’s confusion. In this dissertation I am more interested in sketching
Likewise, it is difficult to determine if he is writing about ethics as a critique of ethics or as a proponent of this type of ethics, but this particular problem will be addressed in chapter two.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Silentio retells and analyzes the Biblical story of the Akedah, or the binding of Isaac by Abraham. In doing so, Silentio admits that while he admires Abraham, he is simultaneously appalled by him. Silentio says that in the ethical realm, what Abraham agreed to do and almost did was to *murder* Isaac:

> The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac—but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is (FT, 30).

There is no question for Silentio that, in killing Isaac, Abraham would be violating his ethical responsibilities, because “there is no higher expression for the ethical in Abraham’s life than that the father shall love the son” (FT, 59). Abraham’s ethical responsibility is to his family and to those nearest him. The ethical, in this portrait, binds us to others.

Silentio says that the ethical is universal in that everyone always has obligations (and those obligations always apply to everyone) within the ethical realm: “the ethical as such is the universal, and as the universal it applies to everyone, which from another angle means that it applies at all times” (FT, 54). The ethical applies to everyone at all times, and it is our duty to respond to by acting ethically.\(^{84}\) Acting ethically primarily means for Silentio (as it does only

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\(^{84}\) This point of view is different from Judge William’s in *Either/Or*, in which the individual is stressed and others are minimized. The views are not contradictory, but they are differently focused.
secondarily for Judge William and Climacus) to carry out one’s duties to those around us. The difference is that for Silentio, actions themselves are the measure of ethics, before choice, soul-making, striving, etc.⁸⁵ To be ethical means to act within the societal confines, according to Silentio’s description. Andrew Cross explains the demands of the ethical (or what he calls the universal) in *Fear and Trembling*: “to be within the universal is to guide oneself epistemically and practically by norms that any rational, well-informed person would acknowledge to be authoritative.”⁸⁶ Everyone is expected to behave according to societal norms, and those who do not are punished, or at least ostracized; the ethical sphere, as Silentio describes it, is always subject to public scrutiny.

The circle of those to whom one is responsible may be as small as one’s family or as large as the whole world, says Silentio, and the particulars may differ from individual to individual, depending on the circumstances.⁸⁷ As opposed to a divine or religious realm outside of human understanding, the ethical represents a fully human realm for Silentio,⁸⁸ it does not make room for God or a divine law outside of the ethical. In the ethical realm, Abraham is

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⁸⁵ This is an interesting reversal from Judge William, for whom we have seen that the choice to be ethical precedes becoming ethical.


⁸⁷ For example, Silentio claims that Abraham’s highest responsibility is to his family, while someone like Agamemnon’s highest responsibility would be to Greece.

⁸⁸ I see no difference between the ethical and the “divine” in *Either/Or* (keeping in mind that this is not my definition of the divine as something supernatural). Likewise, in *Fear and Trembling*, from the point of view of the ethical, the ethical is the divine, and there is no need (and no way) to go further than the ethical. From the point of view of the religious, however, the ethical and the religious are opposites to such a degree that, if I am going to be religious, I must “suspend” the ethical in favor of the religious (FT, 68). Here I am only dealing with the ethical realm, and will address the religious sphere in detail in chapter two.
considered a murderer, which is why Silentio is horrified. Abraham renounces the ethical by accepting the command to kill his son. Today, if someone decided to kill his son because he thought God told him to, then he would be judged insane by the ethical, and Silentio claims that it falls within the rights of the ethical to punish that character in that circumstance—regulation is the job of the ethical.

Not only must one love one’s neighbor, but to truly be part of the ethical realm, one must also be willing to lose oneself, says Silentio. For Abraham to be considered a truly ethical figure, he must be willing to renounce the private and become part of the public. It is the ethical duty of the individual to renounce singularity and become universal, says Silentio. In contrast, he who wishes to stand out as an individual is considered a sinner from the point of view of ethics:

The single individual […] has his τέλος in the universal, and it is his ethical task continually to express himself in this, to annul his singularity in order to become the universal. As soon as the single individual asserts himself in his singularity before the universal, he sins, and only by acknowledging this can he be reconciled again with the universal (FT, 54).

In other words, for Silentio human beings are not solitary creatures; we have connections with others that are regulated by the ethical, and if we behave according to those laws, then we are

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89 Silentio’s involvement in the story of Abraham is highly personal. Andrew Cross claims that the book is as much about Silentio as it is about Abraham, and claims that the book’s “dialectical” quality lies in its being reflexively about Silentio. See Cross, “Faith and the Suspension of the Ethical in Fear and Trembling,” 5, and n.8.

90 To prove his point, Silentio imagines a situation in which a modern day religious man decides to sacrifice his son, as Abraham did, upon hearing a sermon on Abraham. Silentio envisions the pastor flying into a rage over this man, calling him possessed and despicable, all the while not realizing the discordance between this furious rage and the unbelievable calm and approval with which he preached about Abraham on Sunday. Silentio conjures this image to remind us that the ethical expression for what Abraham did was murder, and we should react to him as a murderer before we can call him the father of our faith (FT, 28-29). To sharpen the point, Silentio asks: “Is it possible to speak unreservedly about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will become unbalanced and do the same thing?” (FT, 31).
living in accordance with ethics and can properly be called ethical. Therefore, Abraham betrays the ethical in two ways: by neglecting his duty not to consent to murder his son, and by standing out as an individual in the face of the public.

Silentio illustrates the importance of understanding in the ethical realm, by constantly repeating that he cannot understand Abraham:

Thinking about Abraham is another matter, however; then I am shattered. I am constantly aware of the prodigious paradox that is the content of Abraham’s life, I am constantly repelled, and, despite all its passions, my thought cannot penetrate it, cannot get ahead by a hairsbreath. I stretch every muscle to get a perspective, and at the every same instant I become paralyzed (FT, 33).

Silentio says over and over again that Abraham cannot be understood, and anything that falls outside of the understanding falls outside of the ethical. If Abraham were to stay in the ethical, then he would have to be able to make himself understood, which would be a burden lifted:

[Abraham] knows that it is refreshing to become understandable to himself in the universal in such a way that he understands it, and every individual who understands him in turn understands the universal in him, and both rejoice in the security of the universal (FT, 76).

He who does not transcend the ethical can always be understood, which brings me to Silentio’s alternative to Abraham, whom he calls the tragic hero.

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91 By distancing the singular from the ethical, Silentio departs from Judge William, who values interiority and individuality. For Silentio, the individual is sin in comparison to the universal. In other words, for Judge William, to be individualistic is not in direct contrast to being ethical, but for Silentio, to be an individual is to go against the ethical, which we will see in chapter two.

92 I will discuss the paradox of faith in chapter two, and reserve this section for the understanding.
The Tragic Hero

The ethical figure in *Fear and Trembling* is the tragic hero. He too, like Abraham, is called to do something difficult, to sacrifice a loved one, but, unlike Abraham, he can disclose his situation.

For Silentio, the tragic hero—in this case Agamemnon—receives consolation:

The tragic hero does not know the dreadful responsibility of loneliness. Moreover, he has the consolation that he can weep and lament with Clytemnestra and Iphigenia—and tears and cries are relieving, but groanings that cannot be uttered are torturing (FT 113,114).

For Silentio, Agamemnon is the classic example of the tragic hero because he too, like Isaac, must sacrifice his offspring, but, unlike Abraham, he receives sympathy and consolation for doing so. In contrast, Silentio says that

Abraham is at no time a tragic hero but is something entirely different, either a murderer or a man of faith. Abraham does not have the middle term that saves the tragic hero. This is why I can understand a tragic hero but cannot understand Abraham, even though in a certain demented sense I admire him more than all the others (FT, 57).

Abraham is incomprehensible because, unlike Agamemnon the tragic hero, cannot speak.

Speaking for Silentio implies mediation, and there is no mediator between Abraham and the world:

Abraham cannot be mediated; in other words, he cannot speak. As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me. As soon as Abraham want to express himself in the universal, he must declare that his situation is a spiritual trial [*Anfægtelse*], for he has no higher expression of the universal that ranks above the universal he violates (FT, 60).
Abraham cannot speak, but “ethics demands that he speak,” so Abraham is left out of the ethical sphere (FT, 92). If Abraham could be understood, then he would be a tragic hero and nothing else. If he were a tragic hero, then Abraham would be in a position to garner compassion.

Silentio says that if Abraham had killed himself instead of killing Isaac, then “[h]e would have been admired in the world, and his name would never be forgotten” (FT, 21). Silentio is implying that if Abraham had killed himself, everyone would have understood, and therefore would have had compassion on him. The tragic hero can only receive compassion if he is understood. Silentio explains: “[W]hen the soothsayer carries out his sad task and announces that the deity demands a young girl as sacrifice—then the father must heroically bring this sacrifice” (FT, 57). Upon hearing this news, the tragic hero must perform, with everyone watching; it is a public task. The public then agrees on what must be done, and offers sympathy to the tragic hero who must perform this task. Everyone can understand the pain of the tragic hero, because the message is public, but, God’s order that Abraham sacrifice his son was private. In this scenario, compassion is replaced by anger:

The difference between the tragic hero and Abraham is very obvious. The tragic hero is still within the ethical. He allows an expression of the ethical to have its τέλος in a higher expression of the ethical; he scales down the ethical relation between father and son or

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93 Silentio clarifies that it is not the case that Abraham is literally mute, only metaphorically. Abraham can form words, but to no avail. Which words could Abraham use to convince other people that he ought to kill his son? Silentio explains: “Abraham remains silent—but he cannot speak. Therein lies the distress and anxiety. Even though I go on talking night and day without interruption, if I cannot make myself understood when I speak, then I am not speaking. This is the case with Abraham. He can say everything, but one thing he cannot say, and if he cannot say that—that is, say it in such a way that the other understands it—then he is not speaking. The relief provided by speaking is that it translates me into the universal” (FT, 113).

94 Whether Abraham is a knight of faith is unclear from this work. It is at least clear that Silentio does not consider Abraham a tragic hero.

95 Silentio describes the scene: “when in the crucial moment Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus heroically have overcome the agony, heroically have lost the beloved, and have only to complete the task externally, there will never be a noble soul in the world without tears of compassion for their agony, of admiration for their deed” (FT, 58).
daughter and father to a feeling that has its dialectic in its relation to the idea of moral conduct. Here there can be no question of a teleological suspension of the ethical itself (FT, 59).

While the tragic hero garners sympathy and compassion, Abraham inspires hatred and horror:

One cannot weep over Abraham. One approaches him with a *horror religiosus*, as Israel approached Mount Sinai. What if he himself is distraught, what if he had made a mistake, this lonely man who climbs Mount Moriah? (FT, 61).

Abraham receives no compassion and cannot be understood because his message from God was private, and the ethical is public.

At the end of *Fear and Trembling*, we are left with the idea that we live in the ethical realm whether or not we choose it, and we are subject to its laws and rules. As long as an individual can be understood by others, that individual is in conformity with the ethical. If not, then he is transcending or transgressing it.

**The Ethical as the Universal**

Calling the ethical “universal” ties together the portraits of ethics in *Either/Or*, *Postscript*, and *Fear and Trembling*, but the three Kierkegaardian authors use the term in as diverging ways. For Judge William what is universal about ethics are not the particular rules, but how the striver decides what to do in a situation (“soul-making” ethics). Climacus’s ethics is universal on the same ground as Judge William’s: the universal in *Either/Or* refers to a way of seeing the world which is shared among individuals who have chosen the ethical path, while in *Postscript* the
ethical is universal in that it pertains to everyone; everyone is called to be ethical. In *Fear and Trembling*, Silentio presents a different sense of the term *universal*; ethics is universal not primarily in that everyone ought to strive to be ethical in their own individual way, but, more concretely, everyone must obey the same rules (societal ethics). If one lives in a society, one must behave ethically or suffer the consequences. It is Silentio who says that whether or not one is considered ethical depends on whether or not one obeys the rules.

Judge William, Climacus, and Silentio all talk about ethics, but while the first two imagine it as integrally tied to the individual, Silentio describes it as fundamentally social. In the next chapter I will discuss what religion means for these thinkers, in order to demonstrate more fully how what Silentio calls *faith* necessarily includes the risk of transgressing, or what he calls “transcending” ethics, and how Climacus’s Religiousness B (which he calls Christianity) resembles Silentio’s “faith,” and so shares a transgression of ethics. On the other hand, out of the three pseudonymous portraits of religion, Climacus’s description of Religiousness A never suggests any violation of ethics; it is a model in which ethics and religion can be in harmony. Despite this, Religiousness A has been virtually ignored in the philosophical literature on Kierkegaard, and it is passed over for Silentio’s faith and Climacus’s Christianity. Since I find these two latter portraits of religion unlivable (as I will explain), at the end of the next chapter I will suggest that we turn our attention to Religiousness A precisely because it does not transgress ethics. Projecting forward, I then turn to the second half of the dissertation in which I use Unamuno to help flesh out a better portrait of Religiousness A, in order to show more clearly why Religiousness A is the most desirable of the Kierkegaardian religions.
Chapter 2: Kierkegaard’s Religious Spheres

In this chapter I make the case for Religiousness A as a viable religion by examining the three different portraits of religion presented in Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous texts.\(^{96}\) I relate each of these portraits of religion to the two senses of ethics (soul-making and societal) discussed earlier. From this analysis, I conclude that of the three religious portraits, two risk transgressing ethics: “faith” in *Fear and Trembling* and Religiousness B or “Christianity” in *Postscript*. Both of these religions violate the ethical, meaning that they tear individuals away from society, either by the religious person’s making himself unintelligible to the community or unintelligible to himself. In the case of *Fear and Trembling*, the religious individual must accept what Silentio calls an absolute paradox, which no one using the understanding would be able to accept. In the case of *Postscript*, it is clear that the requirement to be in Religiousness B is to renounce one’s understanding. Both of these cases result in an end to discussion, and that is unacceptable from the point of view of the ethical. And, I would add, it is unnecessary. I reject both of these ways of being religious because they strip humans of their understanding and thus pull people away from rational discourse, which pulls them away from each other. *Postscript*’s Religiousness A, in contrast, promotes passion and adventure without that entailing becoming unintelligible.

Religiousness A manages to combine passion, understanding and community. At this point I will

\(^{96}\) I will not discuss Judge William’s version of religion here because he draws virtually no distinction between the ethical and the religious life. For him, the ethical theist relates to God through his ethical actions; in other words, a relationship to God is born from a relationship to others, and not vice-versa. God is not, in any tangible way, the motivating factor for ethical action. What Judge William represents is always, at bottom, the ethical. Most commentators agree that Judge William’s strength is ethics and not religion. Anthony Rudd makes this point succinctly when he says: “[Judge William’s] outlook is essentially secular, and his religion is an adjunct to his ethics.” Anthony Rudd, *Kierkegaard and the Limits of the Ethical* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1993), 141-143.
explain why I find the first two portraits of religion unacceptable, and then I will present a positive account of Religiousness A.

_Fear and Trembling’s “Faith”_

_Fear and Trembling_ presents ethics and religion at the height of their tension, at which point they become mutually exclusive, and faith demands that one must choose between them. Granted, most of the time ethics and (even this kind of) religion do not conflict in such a violent manner, but this book provides the extreme case, which is useful for identifying the stakes involved in adopting this kind of faith. Since the religion described here does not refer to all religions, or even to Christianity specifically, when I use the term “faith” in this section, I am using it strictly in Silentio’s technical sense, not an a synonym for something like “belief.” Silentio says that faith requires that a person be prepared to transgress the ethics that is found in this same text, which I described in the last chapter as the world of social morality. Additionally, I am not attempting to judge whether Silentio is endorsing or dismissing the portrait of faith he presents in this book; so when I use the term “Silentian faith” I am not implying that it is his in the form of endorsement, only that it is his in the form of its being his description.  

97 It is important to remember that Silentio’s portrait of faith is always given from the outside; although he is able to describe the movements, Silentio denies being able to make the second movement into faith; he stands outside of faith, and this may have an effect on how much credibility we ultimately want to give him on this matter. In one sense it seems as absurd to learn about faith from Silentio as it is to learn how to cliff dive from someone who is afraid of heights. The relationship between ethics and faith in _Fear and Trembling_ is complicated by the fact that it is written by a pseudonym who is “silent.” The discussion of Silentio’s role in this book is important, but is better left out of this discussion. John Lippitt discusses the various pseudo-psychological perspectives on Silentio’s relationship to _Fear and Trembling_. Stephen Evans goes so far as to claim that “it is a mistake to take _Fear and Trembling_ as giving us a positive account of faith.” While I disagree with this, I acknowledge the limits that confront Silentio as a (silent) outsider. See C. Stephen Evans, "Faith as the Telos of Morality: A Reading of _Fear and Trembling,_" in _International Kierkegaard Commentary: Fear and Trembling and Repetition_., ed. R.L. Perkins
by claiming that Silentian faith rips the faithful individual away from his society by making him unintelligible, and so since it fails to provide a positive account of the relationship between religion and ethics, I consider it a poor account of religion.

In the last chapter, I described Silentio’s faith very quickly, so now I will fill out the description. Silentio describes faith as a double-movement, the first part of which he calls “infinite resignation,” and the second—simply—“faith.” Silentio illustrates these two movements by using two paradigmatic characters: the knight of infinite resignation and the knight of faith. He says that the knight of resignation can make the first movement, which consists of renouncing the finite, though resignation is by no means a small feat. In fact, Silentio says that most people could not muster the requisite courage and discipline to renounce Isaac, but those who can, will experience peace:

In infinite resignation there is peace and rest; every person who wills it, who has not debased himself by self-disdain—which is still more dreadful than being too proud—can discipline himself to make this movement, which in its pain reconciles one to existence (FT, 45).

By the power of the will, the knight of resignation can give up what he loves most.98 Silentio says that though he himself could give up (read: kill) Isaac, he could never expect to get Isaac

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98 In John Lippits recounting, Ronald Hall rejects the standard interpretation of infinite resignation as giving up Isaac and expecting to never get him back. Instead, Hall concludes that when Silentio says that infinite resignation is the first step to faith, Silentio actually is referring to the “perpetual annulment” of resignation, which is almost the opposite of the traditional view. In Hall’s interpretation, Abraham constantly fights the temptation of infinite resignation, and for him this explains how infinite resignation is the first movement of faith. Hall compares Abraham’s refusal to resign Isaac to a husband’s perpetual refusal to cheat on his wife. Refusing the temptation to resign the beloved is the first step to faith, in Halls’ understanding. While John Lippitt seems intrigued by this interpretation of infinite resignation, and also believes that Abraham never really lets himself believe that Isaac will die, I reject this reading on the basis that it does not provide a good foot bed for a paradox. If the first step of faith is
back, and if he did miraculously get Isaac back, then he would be in the “awkward position” of not being able to respond appropriately to such a gift. Abraham, who for Silentio was able to make the second movement of faith, was happy to get Isaac back, and that happiness is incomprehensible to Silentio.

All knights of faith have renounced the finite, but also believe, unlike the knights of resignation, that they will get it back:

Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith, for only in infinite resignation do I become conscious of my eternal validity, and only then can one speak of grasping existence by virtue of faith (FT, 46).

The most important difference between the knight of resignation and the knight of faith is that the latter is, in Mooney’s words, “born as the particular with the universal as his home.”

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99 Silentio imagines himself as Abraham: “by my behavior I would have spoiled the whole story, for if I had gotten Isaac again, I would have been in an awkward position. What was the easiest for Abraham would have been difficult for me—once again to be happy in Isaac!—for he who with all the infinity of his soul, proprio motu et propriis auspiciis [of his own accord and on his own responsibility], has made the infinite movement and cannot do more, he keeps Isaac only with pain.” (FT, 35).

100 Ed Mooney argues that the knight of infinite resignation must learn to part with the beloved object using discipline. He links love to “proprietary rights” over the beloved, and so for him the resignation is primarily of those proprietary rights and not of the individual itself. The end result is what he calls “diminished care” for the object. He says that the knight of resignation looks like a Stoic, but is not because Stoics learn to rid themselves of attachment, whereas the knight of resignation transforms it into love of the eternal. In a worldly sense the knight of resignation can no longer love the object, though he may continue to in an eternal sense. Lippitt objects to the distinction, claiming that, despite protests, Mooney’s picture of the knight or resignation is fully Stoic. While the strength of the knight of infinite resignation consists in giving up the finite—writing it off—the knight of faith continues to love it. Contra Mooney, Lippitt argues that Abraham never renounces proprietary claims on Isaac. See Lippitt, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook, 58. See Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation, 50, 53, 43. For Lippitt’s objection, see Lippitt, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook, 55.

101 Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation, 91. Mooney complains that far too often Abraham’s resignation of Isaac is seen as the demonstration of his faith when, according to Silentio, faith is the movement of expecting the
Silentio claims that to the knight of faith, “the finite tastes just as good” as the infinite, which leads him to say that the knight of faith looks like a “tax collector” or a “pen-pusher.” While knights of resignation are “aliens in this world” (meaning that they have given up the finite for the sake of the infinite and no longer feel comfortable in this world), Silentio says that the knights of faith make the movement of infinity but then land perfectly back on earth (FT, 41). I think this description makes the knight of faith appear to have a “leg up” on the knight of resignation; it makes faith look desirable instead of dreadful.

The Paradox

Silentio calls the move of faith a paradox, which he leaves intentionally and says even he cannot understand it, so Kierkegaard scholars are left clawing to make sense of the paradox. Their explanations, added to Silentio’s lyrical description, make faith attractive and courageous. The problem is that these interpretations (of this book in particular) tempt us to make all of Kierkegaard less controversial than he is; they seemingly smooth out any rough edges by giving faith a pleasant façade. It is important that I take time here to explain my reading of Kierkegaard in a more nuanced way, because it will shed light on why I think that critics who present the beauty of faith without presenting its danger misread this book.

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102 Silentio paints an image of the knight of faith, who, on his way home from work, may for no logical reason expect his wife to have prepared a decadent meal such as a roasted lamb’s head with vegetables. However, when he arrives home to a meager meal, he is equally content (FT, 39-40).
Whoever does not get ruptured by *Fear and Trembling* is not reading well. Reading the account of faith in this text is not like curling up with some good bedtime reading. Kierkegaard is not a teddy bear; he is a porcupine holding a stick of dynamite. In an encounter, at best one is only lacerated, and at worst, one’s *Weltanschauung* is left in pieces. Kierkegaard’s self-proclaimed task was to deliver a thorny message to the Danes, and that applies no less to us, his readers. An appropriate response to reading this book would be to hate Kierkegaard (as the Danes did), for revealing a frightful but logical consequence of this type of faith. In other words, offense is an appropriate reaction to Silentio’s message. Those who attempt to be the exception, or the solitary individual who is exempt from Kierkegaard’s vitriolic critique, are in the worst danger, because they fail to realize that his message applies to them too. If we learn anything from *Fear and Trembling*, it is that Kierkegaard is not a sympathetic friend, but a political and social critic who even (or especially) today would lambaste anyone who dared to call himself a Christian. Those who think they are “on his side” rather than being the object of his criticism are severely mistaken. Silentio tried to warn us against this kind of reading by complaining that we have come to regard the story of Abraham like a bedtime story (FT, 28-29). The lesson to learn from Silentio is that we ought to approach *Fear and Trembling* in fear and trembling, and it is a dangerous and erroneous (but common) task to try to make the offense disappear.

The biggest mis-step that commentators make in reading this work is to take the heavy paradox out of faith in an attempt to smooth over the jagged edges of religion. Both Ed Mooney and John Lippitt argue that there is no *logical* contradiction in Abraham’s belief that he will both give up Isaac and then get him back. Mooney believes that although Abraham knows that it in a worldly sense it is impossible to get Isaac back after killing him, ultimately nothing is impossible
with God, and Lippitt agrees that Abraham is not required to believe something logically impossible, but rather that he believes two separate things on two different levels: the God-level and the human-level. It is precisely the positing of two levels that takes the paradox out of the paradox and renders the text harmless.

In what way Abraham can be said to face a paradox depends on what Silentio means by the “absurd,” on which strength he says Abraham believes that he will get Isaac back. Mooney, Lippitt, and now also Stephen Evans believe that the use of the word “absurd” is something of a flourish, and has more to do with traditional and historical accounts of reason than it does with contradiction. They say that just as it is only an apparent and not a logical contradiction, it is only apparently absurd to believe that Abraham will get Isaac back. For these scholars, the absurd is only absurd to those outside the sphere of faith, and that what appears to be a contradiction of beliefs is actually not. Mooney says that “the concepts of faith apply to a dimension of thought and experience other than, or perhaps richer than, the strictly conventional, worldly, or ordinary,” and he calls his view a “teleological suspension of ordinary meaning.”

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103 Mooney, *Knights of Faith and Resignation*, 56.

104 Mooney denies any logical contradiction, and instead calls it an apparent contradiction. For an example, he uses “love is hatred of self”: it is an apparent contradiction, but is not a logical contradiction. Mooney claims that commonplace definitions of words obscure how love and hate can be spoken of on two different levels. See Ibid., 37-38. Lippitt considers this explanation weak. See Lippitt, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook*, 58.


106 The category of the absurd is further developed in *Postscript*, though I am reluctant to equate them in this dissertation for fear of generalizing “Kierkegaard’s” thought.

107 In the following passage, Lippitt summarizes and then quotes Stephen Evans: “according to Evans, once we realize that for Kierkegaard, what counts as ‘reason’ is socially and historically conditioned: “insofar as God transcends the social order, and insofar as the social order tries to deify itself and usurp divine authority, there is a necessary opposition between faith and ‘reason’, just as there is a tension between faith and what in *Fear and Trembling* is called ‘the ethical.’” See Lippitt, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook*, 56-57.

These authors have brazenly taken the paradox out of the paradox by claiming that the terms work on different levels, and that ordinary meaning cannot be employed when it comes to faith. This means that, although the opposing viewpoints might jarringly clash, they will be resolved in time.109

If, as Lippitt and Mooney argue, there is no logical contradiction, and instead there exist two only apparently contradictory levels which, in actuality and from the point of view of faith can exist harmoniously, then how are these two reconciled?110 Lippitt believes that faith for Abraham means believing that God will not demand Isaac, but that Abraham still must be willing to go through with the sacrifice. In other words, since Abraham trusts God over and against all human reason, Abraham only believes that Isaac will be spared, according to Lippit.111 What began as a paradox ends with Abraham believing that Isaac will be spared. Mooney similarly attempts to dilute the paradox by saying that “a kind of deep structure opens up to ease the logical offense.”112 Why do these commentators think it necessary to “ease the logical offense”?

Is the paradox really just “apparent”? Is the absurd no longer absurd? Is Abraham simply just thinking on two different levels: the human and the divine? Let us not fear a true paradox,

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109 Mooney summarizes the resolution but also the conflict: “dialectical analysis can clear the air of outright contradiction lurking here. But it is also true that conflicting feelings are often illogically intertwined.” Ibid., 57.

110 Mooney argues that the absurd refers to emotional and cognitive clashes, not logical impossibilities. Ibid., 131. I locate the trouble in his argument in the idea that Fear and Trembling is an allegory. Silentio warns us against avoiding the flesh and blood Abraham and Isaac when he complains that too many people turn Isaac into the abstract “best” that Abraham has to offer instead of Isaac as a real living child, the beloved son of Isaac (FT, 28).

111 What matters for Lippitt’s argument is that although Abraham does not believe that Isaac will die, Abraham is willing to go through the act of killing Isaac. Lippitt, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook, 71.

112 Mooney presumably is referring to the way that dialectic can push us through jarring complex contradictions. Again, I understand Mooney’s reconciling the paradox to be a result of his reading the story as an allegory, which I think is dangerous. See Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation, 56.
and instead let us turn bravely back to Silentio, who forbids us from reasoning our way out of the paradox:

[T]he prodigious paradox of faith, a paradox that makes a murder into a holy and God-pleasing act, a paradox that gives Isaac back to Abraham again, which no thought can grasp, because faith begins precisely where thought stops” (FT, 53).

If he is clear on nothing else, Silentio is clearly stating that thought cannot grasp this paradox. He makes no mention of two levels of understanding. To make matters worse, Silentio adds that Abraham’s life

[N]ot only is the most paradoxical that can be thought but is also so paradoxical that it simply cannot be thought. He acts by virtue of the absurd, for it is precisely the absurd that he as the single individual is higher than the universal (FT, 56).

Silentio is not painting a portrait of an Abraham who is, underneath it all, an individual who can be understood and is therefore not unintelligible for almost killing his child. If Abraham could be understood, then he would be Agamemnon, and then presumably even a lyrical (non)-poet like Silentio could understand him. If Abraham could be de-thorned, then Silentio would have done it. But he did not.

It is understandable to want to take the paradox out of Abraham, because then it would make sense. But, this is exactly Silentio’s point about the ethical: it wants to make sense out of everything, and feels extremely uncomfortable with irresolvable paradoxes. However, Silentio clearly states that Abraham becomes unintelligible when he leaves the ethical. Whoever attempts to grasp the paradox of faith in thought is calling Silentio either mistaken or a liar. If Abraham could be understood, then this book would not be saying anything new about faith. I believe that
Abraham in fact believes two contradictory things at the same time and on the same level, which explains his anguish. Faith in *Fear and Trembling* is not something that can be thought or lived inside the ethical realm.

**The Teleological Suspension of the Ethical**

If we take the paradox to be a real paradox, then we must look to *Problema I*, where Silentio asks if a ‘teleological suspension of the ethical’ exists or not.\(^\text{113}\) This suspension is ultimately what the faithful must be prepared for (but may never be called to perform). Silentio says that the suspension of ethics takes place when an individual becomes higher than the universal, and he describes the tension here:

> Faith is precisely the paradox that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, is justified before it, not as inferior to it but as superior—yet in such a way, please note, that it is the single individual who, after being subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now by means of the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute (FT, 56).

In other words, Silentio is saying that in the movement of faith, the single individual rises over and outside of the universal (i.e. ethics), for a higher *telos*, namely, the absolute. Silentio claims that the single individual is now engaged in a new relationship, not primarily to the universal, but to the absolute, and that that relationship is unmediated. In the example, Abraham’s having an

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\(^{113}\) Silentio’s argument is that if there is no teleological suspension of the ethical exists, then “faith has never existed in the world precisely because it has always existed.” In other words, for Silentio, if faith is not something radically different from ethics, then faith is nothing more than a synonym for ethics (FT, 55).
unmediated relationship to the absolute means that he has direct access to God, and he got there by stepping outside of ethics.\textsuperscript{114}

Silentio explains that all acts of faith are interior and closed off from ethics: “the paradox of faith is that there is an interiority that is incommensurable with exteriority” (FT, 69). Because of this, Abraham’s act is incomprehensible; not even Abraham can explain what he has done. Abraham cannot express the universal because he has left the universal for a higher telos; he now acts as a single individual above the universal, and the result is that he can no longer speak to the universal about it:

Abraham remains silent—but he cannot speak. Therein lies the distress and anxiety. Even though I go on talking night and day without interruption, if I cannot make myself understood when I speak, then I am not speaking. This is the case with Abraham. He can say everything, but one thing he cannot say, and if he cannot say that—that is, say it in such a way that the other understands it—then he is not speaking. The relief provided by speaking is that it translates me into the universal (FT, 113).\textsuperscript{115}

Faith cannot be mediated;\textsuperscript{116} it is incomprehensible and incommunicable from the point of view of ethics, in which communication and comprehension abide.\textsuperscript{117} Silentio clarifies that it is not the

\textsuperscript{114} John Lippitt concludes that although Abraham may have direct access to God, that relationship is inaccurately labeled an \textit{unmediated} relationship, for there is always mediation when there is a relationship. See Lippitt, \textit{Routledge Philosophy Guidebook}, 94-95. I disagree with this, because Silentio very clearly tells us that it is unmediated, and that our understanding cannot grasp this.

\textsuperscript{115} Silentio adds: “Abraham cannot be mediated; in other words, he cannot speak. As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me. As soon as Abraham want to express himself in the universal, he must declare that his situation is a spiritual trial [\textit{Anfægtelse}], for he has no higher expression of the universal that ranks above the universal he violates” (FT, 60).

\textsuperscript{116} Silentio paints a dreary picture: “Faith itself cannot be mediated into the universal, for thereby it is canceled. Faith is this paradox, and the single individual simply cannot make himself understandable to anyone” (FT, 71).

\textsuperscript{117} Silentio describes the plight of the type of person who has faith: “He knows that it is refreshing to become understandable to himself in the universal in such a way that he understands it, and every individual who understands him in turn understands the universal in him, and both rejoice in the security of the universal” (FT, 76).
case that Abraham can speak and doesn’t, but that upon suspending the ethical one renounces the benefits of the ethical, including language. Speaking would require Abraham to be within the ethical sphere, which is clearly not the case since he stepped outside of it as the particular. Because he cannot speak, there is no possibility of understanding Abraham.

Because Abraham is unable to communicate or render himself understood, his actions can receive no compassion—which is another benefit that only comes when one agrees to the terms of the ethical. For Silentio, the ethical is a realm in which one is in communion with others. In this world, faith is the rupture by which the single individual give up the benefits of the ethical, meaning that he gives up communication. When one suspends the ethical, one becomes unintelligible, and that is unacceptable to ethics. The ethical does not look kindly upon a ‘single individual’ who has ‘faith.’ Silentio drives this point home by imagining a modern day Abraham who decides to sacrifice his son after being inspired by Abraham. He pictures the pastor condemning the man without realizing the discordance between his rage and his calm approval of Abraham who did the same thing. Silentio reminds us that the ethical expression for what

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118 Silentio adds yet another dimension: “He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer—who, after all, could understand him, for did not the nature of the temptation [Fristelsen] extract from him the pledge of silence?” (FT, 21).

119 Lippitt rightly claims that a moral community is impossible without communication, and that there is no hope of mutual understanding “if utter silence is maintained.” Lippitt, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook, 111.

120 Mooney thinks that Silentio exaggerates the ineffability of Abraham. He thinks Abraham can speak but that it is really difficult because no one will understand him, which is what Silentio plainly states. Furthermore, he locates Abraham’s silence as coming from a surplus of meaning, not a deficit. In a dilemma, for Mooney, both choices have force, so putting them together in the formation of an either/or gives them only more force, and he says: “this is especially true when one is struggling to become a Christian, to become ethical—when one finds oneself in the midst of a shift in life-perspectives. There is too much, too much agonizing turbulence, to easily express.” Additionally Mooney says that no word seems adequate for Abraham’s situation, or one in which ethics clashes with religion: “A multiplicity of overlapping meanings vie for simultaneous expression.” What Mooney is referring to is a difficulty of communicating, what he calls an “inescapable silence,” but not an incomprehensible, irreconcilable paradox. Again, I think Mooney is trying to push the dialectic into a resolution, or compare it to an ethical either/or, and is thus diminishing the force of Silentio’s clash. See Mooney, Knights of Faith and Resignation, 128-129.
Abraham did was murder, and, as to be in a society for Silentio means to be within ethics, we should think twice before calling Abraham the father of our faith (FT, 28-29).121

The Tragic Hero Revisited

Recall that for Silentio the tragic hero remains within the ethical. Even if the tragic hero were to be called upon to sacrifice a child, for example, like Agamemnon was, Silentio says that the cases will be completely different. The tragic hero never has to leave the ethical because, in the eyes of the ethical, the sacrifice is done for a greater ethical purpose. Silentio tells us that Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia and the world wept with him. His reason for killing her was for the sake of the society, a public reason, while Abraham’s reason—‘spiritual trial’ [Anfægtelse]—was purely personal and private, and did not not suffice.122 Agamemnon did not develop an absolute relation to the absolute, and he never suspended the ethical. At that time and even now one may disagree with Agamemnon’s choice, but the very fact that it can be up for debate means that it is still within the ethical. Once one leaves the ethical, one renounces its protection in the forms of language, understanding, and compassion. Abraham cannot have both the ethical and the religious; in choosing an unmediated relationship to God, he chose against the ethical, and has to stand alone for having done so.

121 Interestingly, Silentio questions his own part to play in paying tribute to Abraham: “is it possible to speak unreservedly about Abraham without running the risk that some individual will become unbalanced and do the same thing?” (FT, 31).

122 In the case of Abraham, Silentio claims that the ethical is the temptation: “A temptation—but what does that mean? As a rule, what tempts a person is something that will hold him back from doing his duty, but here the temptation is the ethical itself, which would hold him back from doing God’s will. But what is duty? Duty is simply the expression for God’s will” (FT, 60). In the case of Abraham, the temptation he resist is not sacrificing his son.
Faith in *Fear and Trembling* necessarily includes a break with the ethical,\(^{123}\) the universal, and society. One cannot feel compassion for Abraham because he violated the ethical realm by becoming a single individual and going higher than the universal. The Silentian definition of faith requires that one be ready to reject community, and one ends up becoming single, private, and incomprehensible. Whether Silentio is challenging Hegel’s notion of ethics in this book, or whether he is using the Abraham story to warn us about the threat that faith poses to the ethical, the point stands that in Silentio’s description, faith and ethics are violently opposed. Faith in *Fear and Trembling* makes an individual unintelligible. The community is sacrificed for the sake of the God, and this is no way to live considering community is what we have as human beings. If faith means violating ethics and becoming incommunicable, which it does for Silentio, then an individual is choosing God against his society. Endorsing faith would be the equivalent of societal suicide, because it would metaphorically mean breeding a world full of murderers. From the point of view of the ethical, faith is an attack on ethics. In my view, faith and ethics ought never to engage in such a devastating tension, so I do not consider this portrait of faith to be part of any viable religion.\(^{124}\) There is a different story to be told, one in which religion and ethics are not at odds with one another, but it is not found in *Fear and Trembling*.

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\(^{123}\) An interpretation like Mooney’s is potentially inspiring: a book about self-appropriation and breaking out of the accepted system of ethics while staying within a bigger ethical realm would be uplifting, and, while I agree that the book can be read this way, and it is an interesting interpretation, it is not the best reading. It is too difficult to see past the notion that the example Silentio chose is not of a man who suspends a narrow-minded outdated rule of ethics, but a serious, almost universally and trans-historically accepted imperative: one ought not murder one’s child. Reading this story allegorically requires ignoring its most important detail, and, incidentally, what Silentio claims we ought never to forget. There is no fear and trembling involved in reading the story the way Mooney proposes. Silentio claims that Abraham cannot be understood, despite Mooney’s understanding him. I propose that readers of *Fear and Trembling* take seriously the paradox, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us to leave it unresolved.

\(^{124}\) As I said earlier, it is not my intention to decipher whether Silentio is a champion of faith or ethics, or if he has a secret message to tell us about the values of faith over ethics, or ethics over faith. It is enough for my analysis if I can successfully demonstrate that in *Fear and Trembling*, faith and ethics are irreconcilably at odds.
Postscript’s Religiousness B

Religiousness B, or what Kierkegaard calls “Christianity,” has all of the qualities of Religiousness A, which we will see later, but ups the theological ante by adding what Climacus calls the *absurd* and the *offense*, and in these two traits we can see where Christianity violates ethics. Although it will quickly become clear that the categories of *Postscript* are not drastically different from (and are actually quite similar to) those in *Fear and Trembling*, I am reluctant to subsume both under the category “Christianity” in order to try to protect two things: the pseudonyms and Christianity itself. When I can, I stay away from phrases like “in Kierkegaard’s Christianity…” and instead prefer “in Climacus’s version of Christianity…” (although admittedly, I get caught in the trap for the sake of a clear argument). I fear losing the pseudonymous nuance to a synthesized and un-complicated version of “Kierkegaard” –aside from the technical nuance; the fact that Silentio is a poet and Climacus a philosopher makes a difference for the description of and approach to religion (even if that is not the focus of this paper). My second reason for treating Climacus’s Religiousness B as distinct from Silentian faith is that the term “Christianity” already signifies too many different things, and it is already too easy to slip our own ideas of what Christianity is into this dialogue. As you will see, Unamuno will mean something different by “Christianity” than Climacus, though they use the same term. Add to that an erasure of Climacus’s and Silentio’s minor differences, and Christianity soon comes to encompass anything and everything. Silentio himself did not even confine faith to Christianity (Abraham, the “father of faith,” is a Jew). Lastly, I think it is just good scholarship not to subsume Religiousness B and Silentian faith under the title of *Christianity*. The
pseudonyms choose different terms, and I will try to keep those differences alive. That being said, I do not deny the striking similarity between Climacus and Silentio on this issue.

Climacus says that his task is to make it “difficult” to be a Christian, and he pulls no punches in telling his readers that the life of the Christian entails courage but also ostracism. His goal is to remind us that the Christian looks nothing like what he sees around him, and that Christianity takes a commitment that most people would not agree to, and do not realize they would even have to agree to, to become real Christians. Although he calls himself a humorist, I think Climacus is dead serious when he paints the Christian life as repugnant. If one takes him seriously before superficially applauding the Christian or even becoming inspired by him, then it is possible to realistically assess the cost of Christianity. Like Fear and Trembling, I consider Postscript’s description of Christianity to be untenable and a poor example of Kierkegaardian religiousness.

The terminology that Climacus uses to distinguish Religiousness A from Christianity is helpful: he calls Religiousness A “immanent” and Christianity “transcendent.” As Stephen Evans points out, it might be tempting to interpret those terms to mean that the God of Religiousness A exists and acts in world, and that the God of Christianity somehow transcends or is beyond the world. One might then conclude that God is tangible in Religiousness A but

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125 Climacus explains: “My intention is to make it difficult to become a Christian, yet no more difficult than it is, and not difficult for the obtuse and easy for the brainy, but qualitatively and essentially difficult for every human being, because, viewed essentially, it is equally difficult for every human being to relinquish his understanding and his thinking and to concentrate his soul on the absurd; and it is comparatively most difficult for the person who has much understanding, if one recalls that not everyone who has not lost his understanding over Christianity thereby demonstrates that he has it” (CUP, 557).

126 Climacus often describes Christianity over against Religiousness A, which comparisons I will attempt to clarify as they surface.

127 Evans, Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript, 148.
somehow out of reach in Christianity. This would be a misunderstanding of Climacus’s terms, because what he means is almost the reverse: God is more “in-the-world” in Christianity than he is in Religiousness A. What Climacus is referring to with the terms immanence and transcendence is not God himself, but rather one’s relationship to God, according to Evans. In Religiousness A, knowledge of God is immanent because revelation is unnecessary; everyone has equal access to God. In contrast, Climacus tells us that in Christianity one’s relationship to God has everything to do with God’s having entered the world. In Christ, God literally broke through time to become human: the infinite became finite; Christianity is essentially a revealed religion. In contrast, in Religiousness A, one need not believe that God broke through time, only that something like a god exists, and that can be very broad. In other words, one can partake in Religiousness A without ever having heard of Christ, who need not even be the god of Religiousness A. On the other hand, Christianity is transcendent because it depends on believing in the God in time, which concept, for Climacus, is absolutely paradoxical and absurd.

The Absurd

For Climacus, what is absurd about Christianity is that the eternal enters time:

What, then, is the absurd? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, etc., has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, inasmuch as all immediate recognizability is pre-Socratic paganism and from the Jewish point of view is idolatry (CUP, 210).

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128 Evans elaborates: “A religion that knows God through particular historical acts would be a “transcendent” type of religion, but Climacus is attempting to analyze the possibility of a religion of “immanence.”” Ibid., 147.
It does not make any sense that an eternal truth can come into time, which is why Climacus calls this tenet of Christianity an *absolute* paradox.\(^{129}\) The incarnation is paradoxical in two ways: it is both a paradox to reason and an existential paradox.\(^{130}\)

In a similar way to how faith is a paradox for Silentio—giving up the finite and getting it back—and I argued that this was not an apparent paradox on two levels, but a real and gripping and terrifying paradox that requires a break between the individual and his community, so too the Christianity’s paradox irreversibly boggles the mind. Climacus explains that this is because the understanding is the wrong tool with which to grasp Christianity, and he insists on the Christian’s checking his understanding at the door.

To the understanding, Christianity is absurd because Christianity and the understanding have nothing in common, which leads Climacus to say:

* Suppose that Christianity does not at all want to be understood; suppose that, in order to express this and to prevent anyone, misguided, from taking the road of objectivity, it has proclaimed itself to be the paradox. Suppose that it wants to be only for existing persons and essentially for persons existing in inwardness, in the inwardness of faith, which cannot be expressed more definitely than this: it is the absurd, adhered to firmly with the passion of the infinite. Suppose that it does not want to be understood and that the maximum of any eventual understanding is to understand that it cannot be understood (CUP, 214).

\(^{129}\) Stephen Evans claims that in *Postscript*, the “absurd” and the “paradox” are virtually synonyms. While for the most part I agree, it might be helpful to think of the absurd as the manner of belief, and the paradox refers to the belief itself, namely, that God was also man. In other words, one could say: “the Christian absurdly believes in the paradox,” or “it is absurd that the Christian believes in the paradox.” In this way one can distinguish between the paradox and the absurd, but acknowledge that they refer to the same thing. Climacus complicates this distinction at times by referring to the absurd as the belief, or the object of faith: “the absurd is precisely the object of faith and only that can be believed” (CUP, 211). See Ibid., 210.

\(^{130}\) There is a debate in Kierkegaardian literature over the term *paradox*. As we have seen, at times both Westphal and Stephen Evans believe that what Kierkegaard calls a paradox or even a contradiction is not a logical or formal contradiction, but takes on a Hegelian air of being a jarring set of opposites. Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 125, 124. Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 214, 213, 220, 221. In addition, Merold Westphal characterizes the contradiction as “existential” rather than “epistemological,” but I think it is both. Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 181.
To be Christian means to give up on the understanding; Christianity can only be lived, it cannot be understood. For Climacus, once one sees that Christianity cannot be an object for the understanding, maybe one will stop trying to understand it and start living it. At his extreme, Climacus calls Christianity “a martyrdom of believing against the understanding, the mortal danger of lying out on 70,000 fathoms of water, and only there finding God” (CUP, 232). As Climacus says, the Christian must believe against his understanding without any help from the understanding.

131 It is crucial to be clear about what “belief” means for Climacus. Evans asserts, correctly, that belief is never simply belief in the way we think about it, but always involves action: “Climacus understands Christian belief as not merely accompanied by action but as essentially expressing itself in action.” In other words, belief without action would not be a belief for Climacus Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 210.

132 By “martyrdom of the understanding,” I think Climacus means that trying to understand the paradox is erroneous, though Evans might disagree. Climacus says the following, which I think makes the issue clear: “What can and shall and will be the absolute paradox, the absurd, the incomprehensible, depends on the passion in dialectically holding fast the distinction of incomprehensibility. Just as in connection with something that can be understood it is ludicrous to hear superstitious and fanatical, abstruse talk about its incomprehensibility, so its opposite is equally ludicrous—to see, in connection with the essentially paradoxical, attempts at wanting to understand it, as if this were the task and not the qualitatively opposite: to maintain that it cannot be understood, lest understanding, that is, misunderstanding, end up by also confusing all the other spheres” (CUP, 562). Evans thinks it is perfectly acceptable and even appropriate to keep using the understanding: “Calling the paradox the boundary of reason by no means implies that it is illegitimate for reason to attempt to understand it. It is precisely by attempting to understand the paradox that reason can discover that it is truly the paradox, not merely a relative paradox […] In the attempt to understand, reason discovers the inadequacy of its concepts also, and is thereby prevented from making a definitive judgment that the paradox is logical nonsense.” Although I think Evans’ argument is strong, I think Climacus would ultimately disagree. See Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 222.

133 The term “against the understanding” is controversial and leads to the discussion of Kierkegaard’s (or Climacus’s, to be accurate) irrationalism. Climacus says this: “To believe against the understanding is something else, and to believe with the understanding cannot be done at all, because the person who believes with the understanding talks only about job and wife and fields and oxen, and the like, which are in no way the object of faith, since faith is always thanks God, is always in mortal danger in that collision of the infinite and the finite that is precisely a mortal danger for one who is composed of both. The believer cares so little for probability that he fears it most of all, since he knows very well that with it he is beginning to lose his faith” (CUP, 233). Evans concedes that Climacus might be considered an irrationalist, depending on what the boundaries are: “Climacus does hold that reason has limits and that Christianity lies outside those limits. Such a view may indeed be irrationalistic. Whether it is depends on how the limits of reason are drawn.” Westphal does not think that either Kierkegaard or Climacus is an irrationalist, and he justifies this by claiming that Kierkegaard, in general, is responding to a hyper-rationalist climate: “This “irrationalism” is rather a protest against exorbitant claims made on behalf of human thought that wishes to deify itself, without really seeming to, by calling itself reason.” While I technically agree with this, I insist
Climacus says that the absolute paradox is *objectively* a paradox. Like Silentio’s description of faith’s paradox in *Fear and Trembling*, it is not an apparent paradox that can be solved with enough thought, but is a joining together of two unlike categories: the finite and the infinite, or, the *existing* and the *being*:

God does not think, he creates; God does not exist [*existere*], he is eternal. A human being thinks and exists, and existence [*Existents*] separates thinking and being, holds them apart from each other in succession (CUP, 332).

Climacus says that Christianity cannot be mediated; it cannot be thought through and relieved of its contradictions (CUP, 379). Evans says that Climacus calls the incarnation an absolute paradox because, though all relative paradoxes can be mediated by reason, this one cannot be.¹³⁴ Merold Westphal agrees, saying:

Climacus seems to think that from the human point of view the idea of human immortality is inherently unproblematic (though it may be difficult to justify any knowledge claims on the topic) while the idea of a divine incarnation is inherently problematic. This way of speaking shows how the language of the “in itself” paradoxical [sic] and the language of the relativity of the paradox to a particular point of view can be combined. It is for us that the notion of incarnation is inherently (and not just epistemically) problematic.¹³⁵

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¹³⁵ *Mediation’s* job is to alleviate tension, but Climacus says that it fails when it comes to Christianity. Westphal goes on to describe the role of mediation: “[T]he triumph of speculation over dialectic in Hegelian mediation means that all tensions, oppositions, and contradictions are overcome. Ever dissonance is resolved, and we have reached the point in the story where “they lived happily ever after.” For Climacus, mediation cannot resolve the tensions of the paradox, and so the speculative moment can never arrive. See Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 126, 154.
Westphal rightly calls the incarnation inherently problematic, and not just difficult to comprehend without the mediation of reason. Insisting on the absolute character of the paradox “would avoid the impression that there is some superior position for which the paradox is no longer a paradox,” according to Evans. We have no point of view other than the human, existing point of view, and so it is worthless to posit the paradox as apparent. Even if a God’s eye view exists somewhere, it is unattainable by humans; all humans have is a human point of view.

What makes Christianity difficult is not so much the absolute paradox in thought as much as squaring that paradox in existence. Climacus says that faith is not primarily an intellectual but an existential pursuit:

The object of faith is not a doctrine, for then the relation is intellectual, and the point is not to bungle it but to reach the maximum of the intellectual relation. The object of faith is not a doctrine, for then the relation is intellectual, and the point is not to bungle it but to reach the maximum of the intellectual relation.

136 Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 221.

137 Evans defends Climacus’ insistence on not calling this an apparent contradiction: “What he wants to say about the incarnation is that it is an incomprehensible mystery that no human being can intellectually resolve. It seems or appears to man that it is a contradiction to say that an individual man could be God. This paradox may only be an apparent one, but its paradoxicality is, if relative to anything, relative to human nature as such, as therefore is not grounded in the differences between human beings.” Westphal is not as careful to avoid such a claim about another point of view, namely the viewpoint of eternity, and he, unlike Evans (and Climacus), assumes that the contradiction is indeed apparent, to someone at least: “If we could see things *sub specie aeterni*, the paradox would vanish.” I do not think that Westphal thinks that we can ever acquire this viewpoint, putting him in agreement with Evans and Climacus, but I am much more comfortable not even positing that this viewpoint exists, because it can be misleading and tempt one to deduce that the viewpoint is God’s, and that we could at some point, perhaps, reach it. See Ibid and Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 181. To be fair, I think that both Westphal and Evans give much more weight to the weight of the paradox than Lippitt and Mooney do in the paradox of *Fear and Trembling*.

138 If a believer is not believing against his understanding, then he is no Christian, says Climacus: “If he stakes his whole life on this absurd, then his movement is by virtue of the absurd, and he is essentially deceived if the absurd he has chosen turns out not to be the absurd. If this absurd is Christianity, then he is a believing Christian. But if he understands that it is not the absurd, then he is eo ipso no longer a believing Christian […] until once again he wipes out the understanding and relates himself to the Christman absurd” (CUP, 558-559).

139 By faith, Climacus means acting in accordance with the belief that the God-man (Christ) existed in time. This is obviously different from the faith in the Silentian portrait, and will certainly be different from Unamuno’s understanding of Quixotic faith.
is not a teacher who has a doctrine, for when a teacher has a doctrine, then the doctrine is *eo ipso* more important than the teacher, and the relation is intellectual, in which the point is not to bungle it but to reach the maximum of the intellectual relation. But the object of faith is the actuality of the teacher, that the teacher actually exists. Therefore faith’s answer is absolutely either yes or no (CUP, 326).

The object of faith, for Climacus, is an actual, historical occurrence: God became a man in the world, and this is absurd because a rational person knows what it means to be a human. Evans says that “the paradoxicality of the paradox consists in the idea that a finite human being, who outwardly resembles other sinful human beings, could be the perfect realization of the eternal moral idea.” In other words, how can a rational person believe that another human is actually the perfect realization of the eternal moral idea? This is utterly incomprehensible. But, for Climacus, this is the one question that matters to faith:

> Do you accept as fact that he actually existed? Please note that the answer is with infinite passion. In other words, in connection with a human being it is thoughtless to lay so infinitely much weight upon whether he has existed or not. Therefore, if the object of faith is a human being, the whole thing is a prank by a foolish person who has not even grasped the esthetic and the intellectual. The object of faith is therefore the god’s actuality in the sense of existence. But to exist signifies first and foremost to be a particular individual, and this is why thinking must disregard existence, because the particular cannot be thought, but only the universal. The object of faith, then, is the actuality of the god in existence, that is, as a particular individual, that is, that the god has existed as an individual human being (CUP, 326).

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140 Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 229. Climacus also says that the paradox also says that “Christ entered into the world in order to suffer” (CUP, 597). This is an interesting offshoot of the paradox that Christ entered the world at all, meaning that it is even more confusing that Christ would enter the world to suffer, as opposed to to rule the world, for example.

141 Climacus distinguishes between “nonsense” and the “incomprehensible,” which Evans takes note of. Nonsense is what I cannot make myself take seriously—my reason will not let me—while the incomprehensible is the kind of thought that my reason tells me is a paradox, and so must be believed against my understanding. See Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 216.
Given that any attempt to square with the absolute paradox will be futile, the only answer is to accept it, or at least passionately plunge into it, knowing that it will not get resolved. In the following passage Climacus highlights the difficulty of taking on this kind of faith:

To abstract from existence is to remove the difficulty, but to remain in existence in such a way that one understands one thing at one moment, something else the next, is not to understand oneself. But to understand extreme opposites together and, existing, to understand oneself in them is very difficult (CUP, 354).\(^{142}\)

If one ceases to think of oneself as existing, then one can try to think through the paradox and explain it from different angles. However, to think it while living it is not possible, says Climacus.

**The Offense**

Not only is Christianity absurd and absolutely paradoxical, but Climacus also calls it an offense, and this is his most serious charge against Christianity (but probably taken least seriously).\(^{143}\) The offense is tied to the way that the God-man is an existential and not just an intellectual contradiction. In the offense, it is not the mind is not offended, but it is a person’s being as a human is offended. Make no mistake, Climacus thinks that people ought to be offended by Christ: “if becoming a Christian is the difficulty, the absolute decision, then the only possible

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142 Climacus clearly defines the paradox that cannot be annihilated by simply refusing to think: “every Christian is Christian only by being nailed to the paradox of having based his eternal happiness on the relation to something historical” (CUP, 578).

143 Climacus argues that, unfortunately, no one is offended by Christianity anymore: “If the terror in the old days was that one could be offended, the terror these days is that there is no terror, that one, two, three, before looking around, one becomes a speculative thinker who speculates about faith” (CUP, 215). Evans devotes two pages to the offense, while Westphal, one footnote, thus giving credence to Climacus’ worry. See Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 236-237 and Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 189.
introduction is a repelling one that just by the repulsion points out that it is the absolute decision” (CUP, 384). That Christianity is offensive is appropriate to Climacus, because offense is the mark of absolute decision.

Climacus says that the incarnation, on top of being paradoxical, is offensive:

Christianity has itself proclaimed itself to be the eternal, essential truth that has come into existence in time; it has proclaimed itself as the paradox and has required the inwardness of faith with regard to what is an offense to the Jews,144 foolishness to the Greeks—and an absurdity to the understanding (CUP, 213).

The offense is not located primarily, or even for the most part, in the reason, says Climacus.145

What offends a person most is not the logical impossibility of God’s becoming a man, because God did not just become man, abstract man. God became that man!—that dirty, smelly, ill-tempered, poor, whore-loving man! In other words, the creator and ruler of the earth became filth (for what are we compared to God?), and that is offensive. Climacus says we must not reduce this offense to an offense against reason, because it is primarily an offense to the sensibilities, to propriety, to the imagination, to dignity, to society, etc. It is one thing to have a God who can throw lightning bolts, and it is another thing to have a God that cannot even get himself down from a cross. God’s becoming a lowly man is so great an offense to existence, that to say that it

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144 Though Climacus calls Christianity an offense to the Jews, he explains in a footnote that “one who has no religiousness at all certainly cannot be offended by Christianity,” so we can assume that he doesn’t mean that Christianity is only an offense to the Jews, but to all religious people (CUP, 539). Climacus also refers to the “first generation” who took offense at the idea of God’s becoming man, which would extend beyond the Jews. Here, Climacus likens the incarnation to a triviality, which offends no one (CUP, 585).

145 Evans takes the offense to the reason to be the only offense, which I think is a mistake. If Christianity were only an offense to the reason, then Climacus would not attach such importance to it, since he does not attach much importance to the reason to begin with. Evans says: “Offense stems at bottom from what we might call the self-assertiveness of the man who insists that there are no limits to his understanding and that his standards of probability and reasonableness are the ultimate determinants of truth. It is therefore really a form of pride, which confirms our earlier claim that the paradoxicalness of the paradox is a function of man’s moral distance from God.” While this is also true, I do not think it is the heart of the offense. See Evans, Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript, 236.
is an offense to the reason is to miss the point (nor would that help an individual realize why he
ought to be offended). Given that there is so much to be offended about in Christianity, Climacus
considers it indicative of a secular society precisely that no one is offended anymore. If no one is
offended, Climacus says it must be because no one is a true believer.146

For Climacus, the real problem is not that Christianity is offensive, but precisely that it is
not offensive. In one of his most biting remarks on the state of Christendom, Climacus quips:
“Christ has been changed from the sign of offense into a friend of children a la uncle Frank,
Goodman, or a teacher at a charity school” (CUP, 588).147 He is concerned that no one is taken
aback anymore by the assertion that God has come to earth and has assumed a human body.
Positing an all-powerful deity in the form of a lowly servant born to a Virgin should be alarming,
because God should be powerful and mighty. Unfortunately, says Climacus, we have grown
accustomed to hearing that God took the form of a servant, so we have become immune to the
offense.148 But, at least offense would signal the possibility for real faith: the Jews were
offended, says Climacus. To be offended and to want to murder Christ for blasphemy shows that
one is taking the claim seriously, but to put God under one’s pillow at night and rest on him in
downy comfort is contemptible, and shows a complete lack of faith. Whoever is not offended by
Christianity is either 1) a Christian, who admits that it is rightfully an offense, 2) a non-religious

146 To some people, the thought that Jesus was married is more offensive than that he was a man at all, and I think
that points to the offense to the imagination. This is what Climacus is talking about. Taking the humanity of God
seriously will lead to offenses of this kind.

147 Climacus makes another vivid remark concerning the leveling that God has undergone in Christendom: “But a
king changed into a meddlesome part-time waiter who is extremely satisfied in his position—that is a more shocking
change than murdering him” (CUP, 364). That Christendom has turned God into a part-time waiter is an image, like
Uncle Frank, that is not likely to be forgotten.

148 Silentio makes the same charge about Abraham in Fear and Trembling. He complains that no one is offended by
Abraham, and instead they unthinkingly call “faith” what they should rightfully call murder. No one sees Abraham
as heinous, and yet his action, from the point of view of the ethical, is heinous (FT, 27-35).
person, for whom any talk of Christ on earth is nonsense and therefore not offensive, or 3) A Christian who does not really believe in the revelation. Climacus is suggesting that there are no Christians, and he knows this because no one is offended by Christ’s becoming a man. The only way to Christianity is through offense, so, for Climacus, he who thinks he is a Christian but has never been offended is not a true Christian.

Both that Christianity is offensive to the existing human being and that it demands that we believe in an absurd paradox to the detriment of our understanding, lead me to conclude that Climacus’s portrait of Christianity is undesirable and unlivable. One must never be asked to cut off one’s own understanding, and if something offends the understanding, it is best not to downplay or ignore that offense. In contrast, Climaucs says that Religiousness A does not ask us to sacrifice our understanding or cut off our ability to communicate with others; it poses no absurd tenets of belief, and its message is challenging but not offensive. Because Religiousness A is neither absurd nor offensive—because it does not slaughter our understanding or ask us to be offended, it is preferable to Silentian faith and Climacian Christianity.

Postscript’s Religiousness A

Climacus claims that ethics and religion, though they technically belong to different spheres of existence, overlap in the “ethico-religious,” which he calls Religiousness A. Though Climacus calls it a transitional sphere from ethics to Christianity,¹⁴⁹ I am interested in Religiousness A on

¹⁴⁹ In a note, Kierkegaard spells out the order of the spheres of existence: “The spheres are related as follows: immediacy, finite common sense; irony, ethics with irony as its incognito; humor; religiousness with humor as its incognito—and then, finally, the essentially Christian, distinguished by the paradoxical accentuation of existence, by the paradox, by the break with immanence, and by the absurd. Therefore, religiousness with humor as its incognito
its own terms. What makes me think that *Postscript*’s Religiousness A the healthiest portrait of religion in Kierkegaard is that it is never at odds with the ethics presented in *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*, nor is it absurd or offensive. Instead, Religiousness A combines the personal and communal commitments of ethics with the passion, risk, and adventure that is perhaps most appealing about Christianity: Religiousness A is at once realistic and idealistic, and it provides a balance between two spheres that are usually presented to be in conflict with one another. In Religiousness A it is possible to be passionately involved, to live for something that others might think is silly or risky, without abandoning ethics.

Climacus says that the crucial difference between Religiousness A and B is revelation. In Religiousness A there is no revelation, no God-man; Religiousness A has a god figure, but not a God figure, as I said earlier. The danger is that if God is replaced by god, then religion might collapse into ethics; for what is a religion without God? I insist that Religiousness A’s integrity as a religion is maintained even when one stops talking about a God who literally intervenes in the world. My first goal in this section is to show that Religiousness A is not reducible to Kierkegaardian ethics. Then I will discuss its positive differences from Silentian faith and Climacian Christianity. What distinguishes Religiousness A from ethics is the following list of traits that Religiousness A embodies but which are foreign to Kierkegaardian ethics: dying to oneself, risk, lunacy, and suffering.\(^{150}\) On the other end, Religiousness A stops short of turning

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\(^{150}\) Evans believes that Religiousness A consists of three main aspects: resignation, guilt, and suffering. While I too highlight resignation and suffering, I am omitting guilt because, though Climacus includes it, I do not agree that it is one of the main features of Religiousness A. Moreover, I do not understand what Climacus means by guilt as anything other than the ontological condition of always being in the debt of God, which, as Climacus says, is the description of suffering (CUP, 528-529).
into Silentian faith or Climacian Christianity by not talking about the Absolute, *a la Fear and Trembling*, or the God-man, who is the source of the absurdity and the offense in *Postscript*.

Without these, and by remaining a religion of immanence instead of transcendence, Religiousness A has no quarrel with ethics. In other words, Religiousness A avoids the negatives of Silentian faith and Climacian Christianity while maintaining its integrity as something distinguishable from ethics. Because it can do both of these things, I think Religiousness A contains a wealth of possibility that Kierkegaard scholars ought to explore in more depth.

**Religiousness A is Distinguishable from Kierkegaardian Ethics**

*Dying to Oneself*

Whereas *Postscript*’s and *Either/Or*’s ethical individual uses his strength to become what he wants, and sees God through his ethical acts, Climacus says that the follower of Religiousness A sees herself through her god-relationship. This, Climacus says, necessarily involves *dying to oneself*: “self-annihilation is the essential form for the relationship with God” (CUP, 461).\(^{151}\) The departure point from Climacus’s ethics to Religiousness A is that one must die to oneself to become religious.\(^{152}\) In ethics, one can work one’s way towards God, but in Religiousness A, one

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\(^{151}\) As Evans puts it, “The ethicist may believe in and relate to God, but he does so essentially through his relation to himself.” Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, 42.

\(^{152}\) On passing through the ethical to get to the religious, and possibly also commenting on Silentio, Climacus says: “With regard to the religious, the point is that this has passed through the ethical. A religious poet, therefore is in an awkward position. That is, such a person wants to relate himself to the religious by way of imagination, but just by doing that he ends up relating himself esthetically to something esthetic. To celebrate a hero of faith is just as fully an esthetic task as to celebrate a war hero. If the religious is truly the religious, has passed through the ethical and has it in itself, then it cannot forget that religiously the pathos is not a matter of singing praises and celebrating or composing song books but of existing oneself” (CUP, 388).
begins to realize that one can do nothing without God, and so becomes dependent on God. Stephen Evans puts it this way: “while the ethical life is essentially self-sufficient, the religious life has an essentially dependent element. No longer convinced of individual self-sufficiency, the religious exister strives to allow himself to be transformed by God.”\(^1\) In Religiousness A, one no longer relates to God through her actions, but relates to her actions through God.\(^2\)

Climacus also calls this dependence on God, *resignation*, but it is not the same the resignation described by Silentio in *Fear and Trembling*, which meant being ready to sacrifice “the best” at the drop of a hat, or a whisper from God, as the case may be (FT, 28). Merold Westphal calls Climacus’s sense of resignation an “all-inclusive form of being-in-the-world,” which, instead of taking the character of renouncing one finite thing (such as Isaac), refers to a whole existence mode: resignation is the daily attitude of being detached from one’s earthly possessions.\(^3\) For Climacus, once one realizes that one is in a relationship with God, then one must be willing to “give up any and every finite good (including the sense of the independent

\(^1\) Evans explains: “Though the religious person is committed to the same ideals as the ethical person, she believes that those ideals are incapable of fulfillment, not because of external barriers but because of her own inner condition. Her relation to God therefore consists primarily not in self-confident action but in repentance. Her task is not primarily to achieve a God-relationship herself by positively realizing her moral duty, but to achieve a state of inward obedience to God by allowing God to transform her character,” and he continues: “Originally the ethical life is seen as the self’s victory over despair: the victory of revelation and reality over aesthetic concealment. But what if the individual discovers he cannot conquer despair by willing it—that the decision to live the ethical life cannot be carried on in the individual’s own strength? At this point the need for divine assistance becomes clear.” Generally speaking, I agree with Evans’ reading of the ethical and Religiousness A in *Postscript*. See Evans, *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript*, 13, 140, 43.

\(^2\) What distinguishes the Religious person from the ethical is that he has begun to focus on himself through his relationship to God, instead finding God through his acts: According to Evans, “The religious exister relates to himself through his God relationship instead of relating to God through his relation to himself.” Ibid., 43. We will see that the Christian is able to refrain from focusing on himself at all, either through his acts or through the God-relationship. *Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript*, 43.

\(^3\) Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 152. I do not think these two senses of the term are unrelated, but they stress different aspects of that resignation. For Climacus it is an attitude, a comportment toward the world, and for Silentio it takes the character of a test.
self) for the sake of the infinite.”\footnote{Evans, \textit{Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript}, 164. Evans explains resignation as giving up the relative for the sake of the infinite, which is not wrong, but might be misleading. He says: “resignation is the state in which the individual is willing to sacrifice any finite good for the sake of the absolute. Suffering is the condition of the individual who is attempting to realize this condition but has not fully done so, thus experiencing the pain of “dying to self.”” It is true that the attitude of resignation is that I can do nothing without God’s help, but using the language of \textit{Fear and Trembling} evokes the sacrifice of Isaac, which I do not think is appropriate to Climacus’ definition. Also, in this statement Evans is implying that once the Religious exister has fully realized the condition of resignation, she will cease suffering, which is not the case for Climacus. As we will see, suffering is a result of dying to ourselves, which is never finished and never ends, though it will become a source of consolation. \textit{Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript}, 164.}

Resignation is a humbling—almost Stoic—worldview for Climacus, and it is accompanied by the idea that one is not in complete control of one’s future, and this becoming humbled leads the religious person to venture his life on what is uncertain.\footnote{As I have said, this, as well as the entire description of Religiousness A, will become easier to see through the figure of Quixote. Climacus himself does not provide an adequate description of what a religious person who is not a Christian looks like.}

\textit{Venture, Faith, and Lunacy}

When an ethical individual begins to depend on God, she begins to credit God with working through her in some way. In accepting this view of the world, Climacus says that the religious individual ventures into the uncertain. “But what is it to venture?” he asks, and he answers this way:

To venture is the correlative of uncertainty; as soon as there is certainty, venturing stops. If then, he gains certainty and definiteness, he cannot possibly venture everything, because then he ventures nothing even if he gives up everything—and if he cannot find certainty, well, then, so says the serious man in dead earnestness, well then he will not venture everything—indeed, that would be lunacy (CUP, 424-425).
Clearly, says Climacus, to venture everything on something certain is a contradiction, so any venture necessarily implies uncertainty (CUP, 424). Uncertainty is a necessary ingredient in faith, because it provides the opportunity for risk, says Climacus:

Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep my faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am “out on 70,000 fathoms of water” and still have faith (CUP, 204).

Faith is a contradiction, says Climacus, between inwardness and uncertainty. In other words, to be passionate about something certain involves no risk, but if an outcome is uncertain, then one’s infinite passion toward that thing becomes a contradiction and is called faith. These terms sound suspiciously like Climacus’s description of Christianity, but it is crucial to remember that Religiousness A comes before Christianity. In other words, that Climacus calls faith a venture into uncertainty or even a contradiction is appropriate for Religiousness A, but only turns into the absurd and the offense when the revelation is introduced. So it is not the mere fact of existing

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158 Faith is a tricky term in Climacus, because it seems to be a component of Religiousness A and Christianity, though it will mean different things for each, not to mention that it does not describe the double movement in Fear and Trembling. In Religiousness A, faith refers to risking all for something objectively uncertain. It means risking being in the wrong from the perspective of the objective, which is very different from faith as giving up the universal for the particular. As we have seen, for Religiousness B faith takes the form of belief against the understanding, or giving up the understanding. In Fear and Trembling faith entails giving up the beloved.

159 Recall that Climacus also uses the image of being over “70,000 fathoms of water” when talking about Christianity. The difference is that there, he prefaced the image with a “martyrdom of the understanding,” and here there is no such thing- he is talking about uncertainty, but that does not compare to the God-man. Climacus also attributes the image of water to the pseudonym Frater Taciturnus. In explaining how Religiousness is different from both the ethical and the aesthetic life, Climacus says: “Whereas esthetic existence is essentially enjoyment and ethical existence is essentially struggle and victory, religious existence is suffering, and not as a transient element but as a continual accompaniment. Suffering is, to recall Frater Taciturnus’ words, the 70,000 fathoms of water upon whose depths the religious person is continually. But suffering is precisely inwardness and is separated from esthetic and ethical existence-inwardness” (CUP, 288). By now it should be clear that this image is not exclusive to Christianity, and actually begins in Religiousness A, though it will come to mean something different in Christianity.
and squaring with thinking that is offensive, but when it goes to the extreme and asks the individual to martyr the understanding. Objective uncertainty is necessary for faith, and the alternative to faith is a lack of inwardness and passion. If, in the face of uncertainty an individual refuses to risk believing, then, Climacus says he turns into the “serious man” who considers faith lunacy. In other words, if one ventures everything on something uncertain (read: if one has faith) then one will be seen as a lunatic from the point of view of objectivity. Faith is lunacy to he who lacks inward passion.

Lunacy has another, more positive name for Climacus, and that is subjective truth. Since Climacus says that one cannot put faith into an objective truth (because the nature of faith is objective uncertainty), truth must mean something else. If one chooses to forego searching for certainty (after having realized its impossibility), and commits oneself subjectively to something, then, Climacus says that that person is in truth, and by this he always means subjective truth. For Climacus, the truth of something like god cannot be gained objectively; so he says that truth is

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160 Climacus says: “whereas up to now faith has had a beneficial taskmaster in uncertainty, it would have its worst enemy in this certainty” (CUP, 29). This line of thinking is also thoroughly Pascalian. Recall the wager: if I cannot have objective certainty, which it is certain that I cannot, then I must risk, but I cannot refrain from choosing. See Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensees*, trans. W.F. Trotter (New York: Modern Library, 1941), 81.

161 Micheal Olesen says that faith does not exist in Religiousness A: “the problem of faith in religiousness A has to do with the latter aspect, namely, a hope and trust in God’s love and salvation. The aspect is simply lacking in Religiousness A, and therefore one cannot speak of faith in the sphere of A.” If by “faith” Olesen means hope and trust that the God of Religiousness B, or the absolute paradox—the God-man—will intervene in the world on my behalf, then he is right that faith does not exist in Religiousness A. I think this is a short-sighted definition of faith that reveals that religion has been hijacked by religions that believe in this kind of God. Faith in Religiousness A does not mean hope in salvation outside of earth, but rather living in a particular way; in this case living as though something like god exists without having any certainty. See Michael Olesen, “The Climacean Alphabet: Reflections on Religiousness a and B from the Perspective of the Edifying,” in *Kierkegaard Studies: Yearbook* (2005), 282-293.
subjective to the extent that it depends on how one believes it.\textsuperscript{162} Seeking god objectively will not yield truth, but seeking god subjectively will:

If someone objectively inquires into immortality, and someone else stakes the passion of the infinite on the uncertainty—where, then, is there more truth, and who has more certainty? The one has once and for all entered upon an approximation that never ends, because the certainty of immortality is rooted in subjectivity; the other is immortal, and therefore struggles by contending with the uncertainty (CUP, 201).

For Climacus, lunacy and truth are the same: they are the non-serious subjective response to uncertainty. The religious individual who risks being objectively wrong understands that questions of faith have no objectively certain answer. Whether the topic is God or immortality, or any other subject for which there can be no objective certainty, faith depends on a willingness to stake one’s life upon something subjectively.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Suffering}

Being considered a lunatic is not what Climacus is referring to when he claims that Religiousness A entails suffering, although that too must result in a special kind of pain. Once an individual has committed to staking her life on what is objectively uncertain, and once she has accepted a dependence on God, then, says Climacus, she begins to suffer, because she begins to feel the effect of being separated from God. This suffering reminds her that she is continually in

\textsuperscript{162} It must be noted that, for Climacus, the existence of God may very well be objectively true, but he insists that we will never know it, and that, moreover, the Religious person is the one who believes in God in all of the uncertainty, not the one who believes in God because it is a good bet. To be certain would mean the death of faith, in all senses of faith.

\textsuperscript{163} Admittedly, it is on the topic of faith, that Religiousness A looks most similar to Religiousness B. Climacus will later say that Religiousness A is paradoxical and dialectical in nature, though it does not contain the “absolute paradox,” which will ultimately separate the two.
a subjective relationship to God, for which reason Climacus says that suffering is essential to

Religiousness A:

But suffering as the essential expression of existential pathos means that there is actual suffering or that the actuality of the suffering is the existential pathos, and by *the actuality of the suffering is understood its continuance as essential for the pathos-filled relation to an eternal happiness*, so that the suffering is not deceitfully revoked and the individual does not advance beyond it, which is a regression, accomplished by somehow shifting the setting from existence into an imaginary medium (CUP, 443).

“Existential-pathos” refers to the religious individual’s way of being in the world, which he has already described as dying to oneself, or resignation. Now Climacus adds that suffering accompanies the act of throwing oneself away from oneself and toward the objectively uncertain object. Once a religious person begins to detach herself even from herself for the sake of this larger uncertain idea or ideal, then she begins to suffer. For Climacus, suffering is evidence that a person is in a religious relationship.

Climacus implies that whoever tries to avoid suffering must not understand it, because suffering is essential to the religious life, and it does not refer to the misfortune of having lost something or the pain involved in an accident.\(^{164}\) Many non-religious people seem to suffer their whole lives, and many religious people do not ever seem to suffer, so this is clearly not what

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\(^{164}\) Climacus links the ethical and the religious in the common project of understanding suffering as fundamental and not accidental: “Inwardness (the ethical and ethical-religious individual), however, comprehends suffering as essential. Whereas the immediate person involuntarily looks away from misfortune, does not know that it exists as soon as it is not present externally, the religious person continually has suffering with him, wants suffering in the same sense as the immediate person wants good fortune, and wants and has suffering even if the misfortune is not present externally, because it is not misfortune that he wants, since then the relation would still be esthetic and he would be essentially undialectical within himself” (CUP, 434-435).
Climacus means by the term. To Climacus, such an understanding of suffering is aesthetic, because it equates suffering with accident or misfortune rather than integral to the religious life. Climacus criticizes those so-called religious people who try to alleviate their pain and who tell others that their suffering will ease up little by little (CUP, 445-446).

To be clear, Climacus is not endorsing seeking suffering. Suffering for its own sake is not the goal of Religiousness A. It it important to realize that Climacus is being descriptive and not prescriptive. He thinks that it is a natural fact of life that if one relates to any kind of god-figure, then there will be suffering involved. To put the point most modestly, Climacus is saying that we ought not to avoid suffering at all costs (and certainly we should never seek it), because suffering can be productive. Suffering results from realizing that one is not god, and that one is separated from god. The truly religious individual will understand this kind of suffering, or what Climacus calls the \textit{wound of negativity}:

\begin{quote}
He is cognizant of the negativity of the infinite in existence \textit{Tilværelse}; he always keeps open the wound of negativity, which at times is a saving factor (the others let the wound close and become positive—deceived); in his communication, he expresses the same thing (CUP, 85).
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[165] Evans explains: “Religious suffering cannot therefore be straightforwardly identified with illness, pain, poverty, and the like. Even the most outwardly fortunate individual can be a religious sufferer in the most decisive sense.” See Evans, \textit{Kierkegaard’s Fragments and Postscript}, 169.
\item[166] Climacus always displays his vitriolic disdain for phrases like “little by little” or “to a certain degree” because they reveal a cowardice and a half-heartedness that refuses to confront the matter head on, or with full passion. Interestingly, Unamuno reveals the same disdain when, in Don Quixote, Sancho Panza splits the difference in an argument about whether Quixote’s helmet is indeed a helmet or the barber’s water basin, calling it a basin-helmet. See CUP, 228, 403, and Miguel de Unamuno, \textit{Our Lord Don Quixote: The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho with Related Essays}, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 142.
\item[167] The reference to wounds appears in Unamuno as well. Both Climacus and Unamuno consider suffering a vital part of living, without which we face the risk of not existing anymore. (See Ibid., 305.)
\end{footnotes}
The religious individual keeps the wound open, because in that wound is her relationship to God. Holding the negative open instead of allowing it to heal is essential to Climacus’s project, because letting the wound heal would be Hegelian, for Climacus. He says that for Hegel the negative penetrates everything, yes, but everything ultimately ends in the speculative or positive moment. Climacus is warning us against both extremes: against wanting to heal every wound without analyzing what benefit suffering might have, and against seeking suffering which would reveal a misunderstanding of suffering. The great divide between us and God causes suffering, and Climacus adds, whoever has never felt this suffering is not properly religious:

The person who never went to bed weeping, weeping not because he could not sleep but because he dared not stay awake any longer, and the person who never suffered through the powerlessness of the beginning, and the person who never fell silent—he should at least never engage in talking about the sphere of religiousness but remain where he belongs: in the bedroom, in the shop, in street gossip (CUP, 485-486).

Climacus says that the religious individual will feel a void between herself and god, and will suffer, but, as long as the suffering is not sought for itself, she will also have the comfort of knowing that she is in a relationship to god.

**Why Religiousness A?**

In sum, to be Religious one must be prepared to die to oneself, be accused of lunacy by the serious man, and suffer a separation from god. Then, why do it? There is an inordinate amount of suffering and lunacy in Religiousness A for an ethicist like Judge William to relate to.

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168 Merold Westphal claims that Climacus resents Hegel for the speculative moment, in which tension ceases, even if only momentarily. Climacus focuses on the dialectical moment. See Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, 38.
or approve of it. Even though dying and lunacy and suffering sound unappealing, I believe that the life of the Religious individual, as Climacus described it, can be fulfilling in a way that neither ethics nor Christianity are by themselves. Religiousness A falls between ethics and Christianity, and, as I see it, this is not its weakness but its strength. Religiousness A takes the best of ethics, but is not reducible to it: Climacus says that Religiousness A is primarily about “inward deepening,” which rhymes with the soul-making project of ethics, but with the crucial difference that the Religious individual does not define herself, but is defined by her relationship to god. Both are engaged in an ongoing project and are always striving to become more; just as ethical existence is never finished, one never becomes Religious once and for all. They are both states of becoming. But, when the Kierkegaardian ethical individual looks inside to see what he can muster by himself, the Religious individual looks outside for help, which opens her up to the uncertain. At least on Climacus’s model, the ethical individual is trying to gain a self over and against others, but the Religiousness individual tries to lose that particular self to a self that is

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169 Silentio does talk about ethical suffering in Fear and Trembling. Recall that the tragic hero (Agamemnon, in this case) suffers when he has to sacrifice his daughter, but the difference is that the suffering that Agamemnon feels is shared with the community. The suffering experienced by Climacus’s religious person is more like the knight of faith, with the crucial difference being that the religious individual has not left the ethical.

170 Climacus explains that in Religiousness A, inward deepening is the goal, whereas for Christianity the goal is to hold onto the paradox: “Religiousness A is the dialectic of inward deepening; it is the relation to an eternal happiness that is not conditioned by a something but is the dialectical inward deepening of the relation, consequently conditioned only by the inward deepening, which is dialectical. On the other hand, Religiousness B, as it will be called from now on, or paradoxical religiousness, as it has been called, or the religiousness that has the dialectical in second place, makes conditions in such a way that the conditions are not the dialectical concentrations of inward deepening but a definite something that qualifies the eternal happiness more specifically (Whereas in A the more specific qualification if inward deepening is the only more specific qualification), not by qualifying more specifically the eternal happiness, yet now as a task for thinking but as paradoxically repelling and giving rise to new pathos. Religiousness A must first be present to the individual before there can be any consideration of becoming aware of the dialectical B” (CUP, 556). Climacus is highlighting the way in which Religiousness A is a necessary stage to pass through before one gets to Christianity.
related to god.\textsuperscript{171} Climacus’ Religious individual relates primarily to herself through her god-relationship,\textsuperscript{172} and not to god through her relationship to herself (CUP, 572-573). She has lost her sense of self-sufficiency, and needs god to mediate between her and herself; thereby she puts god in the privileged position.\textsuperscript{173} One’s relationship to god teaches her something about herself in Religiousness A, and not the other way around as is the case with ethics. The Religious person takes a humble stance toward herself and knows that alone she cannot be what she wants to be; she is open to adventure, to venturing her life on something objectively uncertain.\textsuperscript{174} An ethical individual like Judge William does not venture like the Religious individual does. For example, no one would call Judge William a lunatic, but one would call the Religious individual a lunatic for jumping into what is not objectively certain. Lunacy is a passion that is missing from ethics, and one that I find desirable, as long as it does not give the individual license to suspend the ethical. Unfortunately, in the jump to Christianity, this is exactly what happens. In sum, Religiousness A is not reducible to ethics though it is also ethical.

On the other side, Religiousness A is open to uncertainty without going so far as to become philosophically blind like Christianity. Adventure—risk—is one thing, but a martyrdom of the understanding is dangerous. I think that it is unnecessary to go beyond Religiousness A, because it holds in itself both adventure and understanding. Christianity requires that one believe

\textsuperscript{171} It is visible here that the stages are transitional, and that one could not, say, go from being an aesthete to being a Christian, because the aesthete has no self and the Christian also has no self, but the Christian must have had a self to lose, and so in the transition to the ethical gained a self.

\textsuperscript{172} Evans describes the Religion of immanence thus: “Such a religious consciousness is achievable by man himself, with only the help from God which is offered to all human beings in virtue of their participation in the race.” Evans, \textit{Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript}, 148.

\textsuperscript{173} Neither one of these is yet Christian because both are too heavily involved in themselves. I will address the Christian, specifically, later.

\textsuperscript{174} Westphal accuses Climacus of failing to sell the religious life. Westphal, \textit{Becoming a Self}, 188.
that a transcendent God broke through history and assumed a human form, which belief is both absolutely paradoxical and offensive, says Climacus. Religiousness A’s immanence does not require that one believe in God’s historical presence in this world.  

Because there is no absolute paradox which requires faith against the understanding, in Religiousness A there is no offense. Climacus explains:

> In Religiousness A, offense is not at all possible, because even the most decisive qualification is within immanence. But the paradox, which requires faith against the understanding, promptly makes offense manifest, whether this is, more closely defined, the offense that suffers or the offense that derides the paradox as foolishness (CUP, 585).

That there is no requirement to suspend the understanding directly relates to Religiousness A as a religion of immanence. Just as it is unwise to reach for the god’s-eye view (because it will always be out of our reach and yet will also always be a philosophical tower of Babel), we ought not to try to get to the transcendent God. Instead, the immanent is the realm of action, the realm of passion, and the focus of Religiousness A. Climacus had it all with Religiousness A: the courage to reach for something outside of oneself without offending the understanding.

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175 Climacus insists that “A person existing religiously can express his relation to an eternal happiness (immortality, eternal life) outside Christianity, and it certainly has also been done, since it must be said of Religiousness A that even if it had not been present in paganism it could have been, because it has only universal human nature as its presupposition, whereas the religiousness with the dialectical in second place cannot have been prior to itself, and after having come back it cannot be said to be able to have been where it has not been” (CUP, 559). What Climacus means is that since Christianity is built on a historical event, it could not be present before that event, but Religiousness A is not built on a historical occurrence.

176 Climacus clarifies the distinction: “If the individual is defined as dialectically turned inward in self-annihilation before God, then we have Religiousness A. If the individual is paradoxical-dialectical, every remnant of original immanence annihilated, and all connection cut away, and the individual situated at the edge of existence, then we have the paradoxical-religious” (CUP, 572).

177 The image of the tower of Babel leading to the heavens is curiously close to Climacus’ own name. *Johannes Climacus* means “John of the ladder.” He got this name from a monk who wrote the “Ladder of Divine Ascent,” which was a 30-step manual for raising one’s soul up to, or climbing one’s way up to God. Climacus’ name may itself be an ironic use of this image of the ladder up to God, since this whole work is a Critique of Hegel on the grounds that there is no such ladder.
An important advantage that Religiousness A has over Silentian Faith and Climacian Christianity is an openness to community and an implicit rejection of individualism, which even Climacian ethics does not have. Only Silentian ethics, which I loosely equate with Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, pays attention to the self as part of a larger community. In Climacian ethics we get a picture of an individual who is self-sufficient and strives to become more and more of an individual, almost like a knight of faith, who suffers most from individualism.\(^{178}\) For Climacus, too, the Christian will be alone and constituted by God. One can say that in Religiousness A the self is also constituted by god but it means something different. What they share is that one’s definition of oneself comes from being related to god, so in some sense, the individual is more private than public. But, in a crucial sense, the fact that in Religiousness A one is defined through the venture—aabove all!—and not through a physical God-man, then one leaves oneself open to the community of venturers. Remember, communication is still possible because the Religious individual has not martyred the understanding, so the community of Religiousness A can talk about the venture, about risk, about the difficulties of lunacy, etc. The easiest way to express this is that a transcendent religion takes one away from community, and an immanent religion takes one toward a community. One can have a community in Religiousness A that is impossible on Silentio’s and Climacus’s versions.

One might still be tempted to think of Religiousness A’s towing the middle ground between ethics and Christianity as a weak compromise between two robust options. Religiousness A lacks rigor, one might say, because it does not dare crucify its understanding and martyr itself in the face of community. Why go further than ethics?\(^{178}\), another might ask. The

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\(^{178}\) I would see this as the greatest point of contention between the two portraits of the ethical, though I still do not see them as incompatible.
answer is that Religiousness A presents a way to live adventurously and passionately without sacrificing the community or the understanding.

Religiousness A says that it is desirable to hurl oneself away from disinterestedness, and this may be especially difficult to accept for academics. It is quite challenging to agree to live for something outside of oneself that is not visible or certifiable. But I think what Climacus is saying is that living always entails taking this kind of risk: life calls us to venture and to value possibility over certainty, because so few things are actually certain. To live in Religiousness A means living as though a god exists without waiting for results, because there will never be any final results. To become open to something outside of oneself means to give up on control and self-sufficiency, and that is difficult but it is also exciting; it means to humbly become open to a world of possibility beyond our control, in which we are vulnerable.

An individual who lives only practically, or who lives without hope or imagination in things unseen, is not taking advantage of human life. In the following passage, (which is later enthusiastically picked up by Unamuno), Climacus stresses the value of imagination and “illusion”:

Poetry is illusion before understanding, religiousness illusion after understanding. Between poetry and religiousness, worldly wisdom about life performs its vaudeville. Every individual who does not live either poetically or religiously is obtuse (CUP, 457).

The illusion, for Climacus, refers to the imagination. It takes a significant amount of imagination to combat a pessimistic or obtuse world that only believes what it sees and does not credit itself

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179 Not only willing, in my opinion but indifferent to be wrong, because objective certainty has nothing to do with subjective certainty.
with being able to change the world of visible objects and facts.\textsuperscript{180} Imagination implies vulnerability to being laughed at, yes, but Climacus is implying and I agree that it is worth being mocked to live a life that affirms beauty, vulnerability and possibility. Life takes imagination, and today, the imagination is severely undervalued and even disparaged as childish. If we use our “imagination-passion,” then we can be open to feeling the stir of something outside of ourselves.\textsuperscript{181} For Climacus, only obtuse people refuse to engage their imaginations in life. Religion should not be something that one adopts based on objectively true facts; there is a world of movement that awaits people who reject obtusity and embrace the uncertified possibility of religion.\textsuperscript{182} Climacus is challenging people to voluntarily allow uncertainty to enter their lives in the form of religion since beauty, possibility, hope, happiness, imagination, and passion are all more effective tools for changing the world than objective truth. One does not die for objective truth, precisely because objective truth is objective and needs no imagination-passion to give it life. I consider Climacus’s appeal for us to use our imagination-passion living Religiously, and I believe that it is what he means by Religiousness A. But it is not a naïve or childish religion, which Silentio fears is rampant today and which Unamuno calls the “fe del carbonero” (faith of

\textsuperscript{180} This is a reference to Quixote, whom I will talk about in the next chapter as the person capable of actually changing the material world with faith.

\textsuperscript{181} Kierkegaard continues: “Those sagacious and experienced people who know everything, who have a remedy for everything and advice for everyone—are they obtuse? And wherein lies the obtusity? Their obtusity is that, after they have lost the poetic illusion, they do not have enough imagination and imagination-passion to penetrate the mirage of probability and the reliability of a finite theology, all of which breaks up as soon as the infinite stirs.” (CUP, 457).

\textsuperscript{182} This idea is reminiscent of Pascal’s wager, though not conceived as hedging one’s bets, but rather conceived as: when an answer cannot be gained objectively, choosing the life that will be the most fulfilling. Like Pascal, I believe that one must wager. See Pascal, \textit{Pascal's Pensees}, 79-84.
the coal-worker). Instead, Religiousness A entails choosing to stake one’s life on the imagination because people know that doing so gives them the power to move mountains.\footnote{The danger of Religiousness B is that God trumps ethics, and the result is a messy conflict if the followers believe that God to be asking them to do something unethical. Religiousness A does not pose this threat to ethics because there is no outside God who whispers something incommunicable in my ear.}

Postscript provides a beautiful portrait of subjective passion that unfortunately has not been given proper recognition for its ability to connect ethics with religion without collapsing into either one. Kierkegaard himself did not spend enough time developing Religiousness A and he failed to provide an example of it or even a portrait of what it might look like. Thus, it is no surprise that it has been neglected in Kierkegaard literature. Perhaps Kierkegaard himself did not value Religiousness A, but this is a mere speculation. What he left us is a small but potentially powerful description of a religion that is yet to be fully explored. What Religiousness A needs in order to be given proper attention is a flesh and bone incarnation of it, to show how it is gracefully distinct from both ethics and Christianity yet encompasses the elements of ethics and Religion. Unamuno’s Quixotism is this incarnation. In Religiousness A, Kierkegaard created a skeleton of a third option between ethics and Christianity, and in Quixotism, Unamuno shapes the religion into a living thing. In chapter three, I develop Quixotism from Unamuno’s sketch, and in chapter four I claim that it is an incarnation of Religiousness A, and, as such, helpful for understanding and appreciating Religiousness A.
Chapter 3: Unamuno’s Quixotism

At the end of the last chapter, I claimed that Kierkegaard provided the outline of a viable religion in Religiousness A, but that, for whatever reason, he did not provide a gripping portrait of it that could bring it to life. As a result, it is difficult to imagine, and especially to appreciate such a religion. In Quixotism, Unamuno did the opposite: he provided descriptions of Quixote and of the religion he called Quixotism, but failed to formulate it coherently. Leaving Kierkegaard in Denmark for now, in this chapter I focus on developing Unamuno’s descriptions into a coherent and compelling religion. It will not be until chapter four that I defend the thesis that Quixotism can profitably be read as an incarnation of Religiousness A, to the benefit of both thinkers.

Though he made passing references to Quixotism as a religion, Unamuno (perhaps intentionally) failed to develop a coherent and consistent account of it. Here I analyze and concretize Quixotism by using Unamuno’s two most widely recognized philosophical works: La Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho (The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho [1905]) and Del Sentimiento Trágico de La Vida en los Hombres y en los Pueblos (Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations [1913]). In these works, Unamuno describes Quixotism in such a way that it

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184 In general, when the works have been translated into English, I have left them in translation (except when reference to the original Spanish is particularly important, in which case I offer both the original and also the translation). For all other works—both unpublished and un-translated—the translations are mine. Vida was translated into English twice, first in 1927 by Homer P. Earle, and again in 1976 by Anthony Kerrigan. For the translated version of Vida that I am using accompanied by a handful of translated essays, see Our Lord Don Quijote: The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho with Related Essays, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). For the Spanish version, I am using the first (1905) edition: Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho Según Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra Explicada y Comentada Por Miguel de Unamuno (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1905).

185 Miguel de Unamuno, Del Sentimiento Trágico de La Vida (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1913) and Tragic Sense of Life (New York: Dover Publications, 1954). In chapter four I analyze one of Unamuno’s exile works—El Manual de Quijotismo [The Manual of Quixotism (1924-1931)]. In this work Quixotism becomes a practiced religion for Unamuno. See Miguel de Unamuno, Manual de Quijotismo; Cómo Se Hace Una Novela; Epistolario Miguel de
incorporates all of the traits of a typical religion: a god figure, followers, worship, an idea of faith, an eschatology, and even a sacred text—Unamuno calls Cervantes’s novel “El Evangelio de Quijote” (“The Gospel of Quixote”). In short, Unamuno thinks of and treats Quixotism as a religion, and so it is reasonable and profitable to construct it as one.

Though Unamuno calls Quixote a “Spanish Christ,” Quixotism is not Christianity. The difference between Christ and Quixote will be analyzed in depth in this chapter, as well as its consequences for Quixotism. Generally speaking, the differences between Quixotism and Christianity stem from the respective ontological statuses of Christ and Quixote: divinity and humanity. Christ’s domain is heaven, to which Unamuno effectively sets up a counter-point by describing Quixote’s domain on earth. I suggest that Unamuno’s Quixotism is best understood as a parallel religion to some kind of transcendent Christianity, but one that is based in this life and on this earth as opposed to in the next life in heaven. Quixotism as a religion of and for this world entails a fictional exemplar-god who behaves in an imitable way.

The first section of this chapter illustrates the philosophical climate that Unamuno was reacting to. The history of Spain can help shed light on why Quixotism was born when it was, in the way it was. Next, I piece together a summary of Unamuno’s unique interpretation of Quixote. Though one might fault him with taking the comedy out of Quixote, what Unamuno leaves behind is a portrait of a virtuous, passionate god. The third section of this chapter is devoted to developing Quixotism as an earth-bound religion. I end with some concluding remarks about the merits of Quixotism, which will lead into the fourth chapter in which I defend the claim that it is

logical and helpful to pair Unamuno’s Quixotism with Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A because they are both describing what Kierkegaard calls a religion of immanence.

**Unamuno and Quixote: A Brief History**

As I stated in the introduction, it is not until the end of 1902 that Unamuno begins to praise Quixote’s madness; until then he had only applauded Quixote’s ‘sane’ moments, and was seemingly ashamed to have a madman as Spain’s national hero. 1898 saw Unamuno’s most thorough attack against Quixote, spanning several published essays and letters, the most famous essay of which was entitled: “¡Muera Don Quijote!” (“Die, Don Quixote!”). What I call Unamuno’s “turn to Quixote” began in December of 1902, and by 1903 Unamuno was already softened toward Quixote’s madness. In 1904 Unamuno wrote *Vida* and in 1913 he published *Sentimiento*. To reiterate, 1895-1902 represent Unamuno’s anti-Quixote years, with the height in 1898, and 1902-1936 represent Unamuno’s pro-Quixote years, peaking once in 1904, again in 1913, and finally (and perhaps most forcefully) in Fuerteventura in 1924, which I will discuss in chapter four.

Unamuno’s essays from 1895-1902 either disparaged certain personality traits of Don Quixote, or praised his two moments of lucidity: once when he questioned his life in comparison to the saints, and the other which was his deathbed conversion to sanity. Before his own

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186 Translator Walter Starkie dates Unamuno’s turn to 1906, which makes little sense considering *Vida* is published in 1905, and is obviously a favorable account of Quixote. In my estimate 1902 is a more accurate dating, though little rests on the date itself. See OLDQ, introduction.

187 At least four times in various essays, Unamuno recounts the passage where Don Quixote and Sancho come upon men on their way to a Church with four idols, and, upon seeing them, soliloquizing about how he does not know what his efforts are gaining him, as opposed to these Saintly idols, who worked for the kingdom of Heaven. Unamuno seizes on this passage as a lucid moment in what is otherwise Quixote’s madness, and claims that this is
conversion to Quixotism, Unamuno considered Quixote to be a delusional old man who foolishly believed he was invincible despite his defeats. Unamuno argued that Quixote took the law into his own hands, and, in doing so, made each situation worse. Unamuno called Quixote anti-Christian, and accused him of cowardice, citing Quixote’s propensity to blame “enchanters” for his delusions and defeats. In addition, Unamuno impatiently dismissed Quixote’s *erostratismo*, or hunger for fame.\(^\text{188}\) Unamuno’s early estimation of Quixote was that he was no more than an old fool who acted stupidly, and his only accomplishments consisted of regaining his sanity twice.

During this early anti-Quixote (or pro-Quixano) period,\(^\text{189}\) Unamuno argued that it was time for Spain to recognize Alonso Quixano the Good, the last (and sanest) incarnation of Don Quixote. Unamuno wanted Spain to admit that Quixano and not Quixote was the true hero of the novel, not the crazy madman whose “brains dried up” from reading books of chivalry. Unamuno stressed that Quixote needed to die in order for Alonso the Good to be reborn, and, analogously,

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\(^{188}\) In Unamuno’s copy of *Quixote* from 1819, the phrase “331 erostratismo” is written on one of the last blank pages (the typical way that Unamuno records what he finds particularly important in a work) of the fourth volume. On page 331 (Part II, Chapter LXVII) of that volume, a pencil mark appears next to the line “Apollo versos, el amor conceptos, con que podremos hacernos eternos y famosos, no solo en los presentes sino en los venideros siglos.” “Apollo, our verses; love, our conceits; and with these we shall make ourselves eternal and famous, not only in the present but in times to come.” We cannot know if he noted this before or after the turn, though we do know that he used this copy in the writing of *Vida*. By comparison, no other back pages from any of the remaining three volumes are marked, and the textual markings are minimal, around 70 over four volumes. Unamuno used the following edition: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo D. Quijote de La Mancha* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1819). For the translation that I am using, see Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 900.

\(^{189}\) In his dissertation, Luis Iglesias Ortega makes the following split in Unamunos quixotic periods: Quijotismo quijanista (1897-1902), quijotismo quijotista (1902-1924), and quijotismo quijotesco o metagonico (1924-1936). These amount to a pre-Quixote, a Quixote, and a post-Quixote period. I am simply referring to two periods, and in the last chapter I will refer to the third Unamuno period. See Luis Iglesias Ortega, *El Quijotismo de Unamuno Entre La Filosofía y el Mito* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1990), 175.
that Spain should follow suit by resurrecting itself as part of Europe (or, sometimes, America). In Unamuno’s early interpretation, Quixote stifled Spain because following him meant looking to the past for answers instead of looking to the future. Quixote was a dead weight to Spain, and continuing to consider him the national hero meant holding onto outdated ideals that refused to die. Coincidentally, at this time Unamuno was impressed by the bright-eyed, self-made American hero, Robinson Crusoe (whom he called Robinson), who metaphorically liberated humans from the grip of nature (and society); Unamuno thought that this was the model of a man who knew enough to look to the future for answers. Robinson conquered nature with the strength of his own hands, and Unamuno claimed that he did so with intelligence, technology and science, which were the ideals that Unamuno wanted Spain to adopt. To the younger Unamuno, Robinson made Quixote look like a worn-out collapsed empire of a man, the same way that America made Spain look in the Spanish-American War in 1898, a war which lasted a humiliating five months but meant the end of Spain-as-conquistador.190

One can only speculate as to why Unamuno retracted everything he had written about Quixote beginning at the end of 1902, and why he turned 180 degrees in the opposite direction, embracing the mad Quixote as the pride of Spain instead of adopting Alonso the Good. A likely reason for his renovated Spanish nationalism was Spain’s loss of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Cuba in 1898. By calling on the traditional and mad Quixote, Unamuno may

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have been (quixotically) trying to turn Spain’s defeat into a victory.\textsuperscript{191} It may also have to do with Unamuno’s earlier and well-documented spiritual ‘crisis’ of 1897, which was triggered by his finding out that his newborn son, Raimundo, had contracted meningitis which had left him with a hydrocephalic condition and which would kill him in 1902.\textsuperscript{192} This incident renewed or at least brought to mind his childhood faith in God. Another reason might simply be that Unamuno is a well-known polemicist, who admitted to arguing for and against everything. That Unamuno would change his mind completely on any topic should cause no Unamuno scholar to bat an eye. A similar and final reason for his turn could be as mundane as the fact that Unamuno may have re-read the Cervantine novel and allowed his thought to evolve, as any good reader and writer should.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{191} The issue of the generation of 98’s so-called “regenerationist literature” is an interesting one. The war between the USA and Spain and the resulting Spanish literature can be metaphorically summarized as follows: Robinson-the-bully (USA) stole Quixote’s (Spain’s) toys ( Guam, the Philippians and Cuba), so in turn Quixote insists that he did not want or need them anyway (“regenerationist literature”). The turn to Quixote by not a few Spanish writers at the time supports the theory that Spain tried to literarily build itself back up from its physical loss of empire. Christopher Britt-Arredondo makes this argument well, and claims that Unamuno’s turn to Quixotism is primarily caused by Spain’s losses in the Spanish-American War. Unamuno himself lends credence to this view by regretting having contributed in 1897 to what he in 1913 calls “that horrible regenerationist literature,” and instead turning to a favorable view of Quixote Unamuno, \textit{Tragic Sense of Life}, 309-310. In response, one may question which of his approaches to Quixote might appropriately be called “regenerationist.” Britt-Arredondo does not clearly distinguish between Unamuno’s contra- and pro-Quixotism, and perhaps may be referring to all of it as regenerationist literature given that, from his point of view, it was all a direct response to the war. See Christopher Britt-Arredondo, \textit{Quixotism: The Imaginative Denial of Spain's Loss of Empire}, Suny Series in Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

\textsuperscript{192} According to Jose Rubia Barcia, on account of this news, Unamuno “broke down one night, and the following day left his home and went to spend a few days in the Dominican convent to try to recover his childhood faith and pray to God for help in his sorrow. He even went to see a priest friend of his, looking for religious consolation and advice in the faraway town of Alcala de Henares.” Jose Rubia Barcia and M.A. Zeitlin, \textit{Unamuno: Creator and Creation} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 8. Also see Martin Nozick, \textit{Miguel de Unamuno: The Agony of Belief} (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 33. In a letter to Pedro de Múgica dated December 9, 1902, Unamuno informs Múgica of Raimundo’s death which occurred some 15 days earlier. See Miguel de Unamuno, \textit{Cartas Inéditas de Miguel de Unamuno}, ed. Sergio Fernández Larraín (Santiago de Chile: Zig-Zag, 1965), 317.

\textsuperscript{193} In addition, one might argue that this ‘turn’ is not as stark as almost all Unamuno scholars assume. It is true that his thought changed, but perhaps it was more gradual than we typically assume. For example, in an essay from 1896, Unamuno is already writing favorably about the “sound philosophy” of Quixote, and his “quixotic idealism”, thus muting the contrast between his anti- and pro-quirotism years, and also, as early as 1900, in the epilogue to \textit{Amor y Pedagogia} (Love and Pedagogy), which was published in 1902, Unamuno renounces his “¡Muera, Don Quijote!”, a
Whatever the reason(s), Unamuno went so far as to apologize for his “blasphemy,” and reversed almost all of his assessments of Quixote, finding a new and more palatable explanation for Quixote’s actions and personality traits: 1) as for Quixote’s *erostratismo*, Unamuno concluded that the hunger for fame is the hunger for immortality, and that it is simply an expression for the love of life—hardly a fault;\(^{194}\) 2) as for his attributing defeats to enchanters, Unamuno now claimed that Quixote’s defeats were only defeats in the eyes of “modern” human beings who become the new target of Unamuno’s suspicions;\(^ {195}\) 3) as for being anti-Christian, in 1903 Unamuno made the first of many comparisons between Quixote and Christ.\(^ {196}\) In just a few years, Unamuno’s Quixote evolved from a foolish old man who clumsily meddled in other people’s affairs only to worsen their already dismal situations (a nuisance, we could call him), and from someone who unashamedly made his living off of others, (a beggar, perhaps), into a hero who captured and liberated the true and unshakeable soul of Spain, and who always had been a beacon of religious and ethical fortitude.

Just as Quixote turned his defeats into victories, Unamuno gave Spain its ultimate move that he repeats in 1913 (OCE II 409). Whether it was drastic or gradual, Unamuno definitely and publicly changed his mind about Quixote.

\(^{194}\) What Unamuno calls *erostratismo* is a concept that evolves throughout his life, but for the purposes of this essay it is enough to say that Unamuno changes his mind about it like he does about Quixote. Defending Quixote, he says: “This longing for name and fame, this thirst for glory that moved our Don Quixote, was it not perhaps at bottom a fear of growing dim, of disappearing, of ceasing to be? Vainglory is, in essence, a horror of nothingness, a thousand times more terrible than hell itself” (OLDQ, 229).

\(^{195}\) Britt-Arredondo seizes upon Unamuno’s creative interpretation of Quixote’s denial of defeat, and claims that denial is exactly the move employed by the “Quixotists” (Ramiro de Maetzu, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Angel Ganivet and Unamuno) of Spain in the Spanish-American war. See Britt-Arredondo, *Quixotism: The Imaginative Denial of Spain's Loss of Empire*.

\(^{196}\) About allowing his horse, Rocinante to lead him to adventures, Unamuno says (“Don Quijote no hacía mas que imitar a su maestro Cristo, quien decía que no había atención mas importante que la del momento, y se paraba a hablar con la mujer del flujo” (“Don Quixote did nothing more than imitate his teacher Christ, who said that there was nothing more important than the present moment, and who stopped to speak to the woman who was bleeding.” OCE IX 95). Recall that Kierkegaard was the first to compare Quixote to Christ, though Unamuno’s comparisons far outnumbered the Dane’s.
makeover: instead of accepting her losses, Unamuno argued that Spain could still be a victor if she would only refrain from chasing technological progress, and if she would only embrace life (read: the humanities) over science. Unamuno envisioned the Spanish people as endowed with a passionate hunger for immortality, as people who think with their hearts and not their minds, and whose intelligence is primarily emotional and not scientific. Employing the quixotic move of interpreting victory in defeat, Unamuno effectively unearthed Spain from her burial plot and elevated her to the top of the spiritual world. Unamuno’s turn to Quixotism was his way of being faithful to Spain, and of promoting a nationalism that earned him the legacy of being the father of the generación del ’98 as well as one of the greatest Spanish thinkers generally. Arguably, Unamuno gave Spain dignity in a time when dignity was hard to come by. As few authors are, Unamuno was widely (but not unanimously) loved by students and readers while he was alive, and this is undoubtedly due to his attempt to save the face of Spain before the world, but more importantly, before Spain herself.

Although Unamuno’s pro-Quixotism can be found in various essays and letters, the most powerful descriptions of Quixote are found in Vida and Sentimiento. Unamuno claims to have written the former in two months (June and July of 1904), and also says that any coincidence between the publishing of the book in the Spring of 1905 with the third centenary of Cervantes’ publication of the first part of the Quixote in May of that year was accidental, and even

unfortunate.\textsuperscript{198} Unamuno did, however, admit to what many of his critics claim, namely that he uses the\textit{Quixote} as a platform to expound his own ideas. Unamuno has in no uncertain terms banished Cervantes from the picture, and so the interpretations of Quixote’s actions are uniquely Unamunian; the passages he chooses to focus on reveal the themes that he considers important.

To get an idea of Quixotism as a religion it is necessary to grasp Unamuno’s interpretation of Quixote. In order to do this, there are three aspects of Unamuno’s interpretation that pervade his reading, three ways in which Unamuno reads the Cervantine novel that make it uniquely Unamunian. The first of these is that, for Unamuno, Quixote is a fictional character who is, nonetheless, more \textit{real} than Cervantes (OLDQ, 4). This seemingly innocuous phrase turns out to be a highly sophisticated and philosophical interpretation of the ontology of characters and authors.

While he does, at times, acknowledge that Quixote is technically a fictional character, more often than not Unamuno refers to the ways in which Quixote is ‘real’ and even made of “flesh and bone.” In the course of various articles and letters, Unamuno reinforces his claim by saying that Quixote made Cervantes, and not vice versa; Quixote gave birth to Cervantes. Also, Unamuno often says that Cervantes does not understand Quixote, and that we ought never to assume that an author knows his character best. Unamuno goes on to say that since Quixote has a history and a legacy, he is immortal. In other words, for Unamuno, Quixote is a \textit{real character}. What starts off sounding like an oxymoron unfolds as anything but one: for Unamuno,

\textsuperscript{198} Unamuno announces his timeframe and also remarks at the facility with which he wrote this book in a 1909 essay entitled “El Dinero del Libro” (“The Money of the Book,” OCE VIII 273). As for the mere “coincidence” with the third Cervantine centenary, Unamuno writes this in the prologue to the second edition of \textit{Vida} in 1913. (See OLDQ, 3). At the bottom of the last page of \textit{Vida}, Unamuno writes: “Salamanca, concluido el día 5 de agosto de 1904, empezado en junio” (“Salamanca, finished on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of August of 1904, begun in June” OCE III 254).
immortality is bound up with reality. If Quixote is immortal because he has a legacy and a
history, then he is real. In an obstinate way, Unamuno seizes on what we value as historical—the
fact that history is remembered and recorded—and he attempts to redefine what it means to have
lived and to have been real based on those same criteria. The line between fiction and reality is
not, for Unamuno, the difference between what occurred historically (who could know?) and
what did not occur, but rather between what has been remembered and what has not been
remembered. Having physically walked the earth gives no one the upper hand in Unamuno’s
world; it makes no difference to Unamuno whether Socrates or Madam Bovary or Quixote
walked the earth, because it is their remembered actions that make them real to Unamuno.
Instead of valuing historical life, (which he might reject on principle), Unamuno values and calls
real that character which has real effects in the world:

Only what acts exists and that existing is acting; if Don Quixote acts in those who know
him, and produces life works, then Don Quixote is much more historic and real than all
those men, shadows with names, who wander through those chronicles which you,
Master Curate, consider factual and true” (OLDQ, 131).199

Having acted in and having an effect on the world means that one exists or existed, says
Unamuno, not having a heartbeat or having literally walked the earth.200

199 Unamuno adds: “One day, […] I expect to write a book […] proving with the help of sound arguments and the
best and most numerous authorities -- which is what counts in this type of argument -- how Don Quixote and Sancho
really and truly existed and how everything we are told about them came to pass just as it is set down for us. And I
will prove that, apart from the pleasure, joy, and benefit we derive from this history (themselves reason enough to
guarantee its truth), if we deny its veracity we shall have to deny many another thing besides, and so doing would
sap and undermine the order upon which our society is nowadays established, an order that, as we all know, is today
the supreme criterion of the truth of all doctrine” (OLDQ, 133).

200 For Unamuno to be forgotten is worse than to have died, because while oblivion can erase one’s having existed,
death cannot.
By blurring the line between fiction and reality, and in some sense turning it upside down, Unamuno re-introduces the latent ambiguity in the term *character*. By calling Hamlet, Jesus, and Quixote all *characters*, Unamuno is implying that characters are not, by definition, unreal. Since the term can apply either to a protagonist in a novel or to me—in that I have a certain character—our understanding of existence is already primed to be somewhat fluid within boundaries. Legacy and action and effect are all crucial for Unamuno, and they fuel his entire philosophy and life. To leave a legacy behind means to be immortal, and he who is immortal has lived, even if he has never breathed.\(^{201}\) What seems at first a whimsical comment from Unamuno—Quixote was more real than Cervantes—turns out to be a new theoretical alternative to our common sense distinction between fiction and reality.\(^{202}\)

The second crucial detail that Unamuno finds incredibly important is that Cervantes tells us that Quixote’s “brains dried up” (DQ, 21). Not knowing that Unamuno took this fact to be central to Quixote’s endeavors could lead to a misreading of Unamuno. Quixote’s dried brains are never taken lightly by Cervantes scholars, but they mean something particular to Unamuno: that will replaces intellect for Quixote and for Quixotism. Where it might be tempting to blame the dried brains for Quixote’s senseless actions, Unamuno pairs Quixote’s dried brains with his heroism:

> Had he possessed his wits would he have been so heroic? He made the greatest sacrifice on the altar of his people: he sacrificed his wits. His mind bloomed in the most far-fetched and beautiful fantasies, and he believed to be fact what was merely beautiful. He believed it was such a lively faith, with the faith which engenders works, that he decided

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\(^{201}\) I return to the topic of immortality in the third section of this chapter.

\(^{202}\) This also means that Quixote himself is not the best judge of why he acts the way he does. As a real character, Unamuno would remind us that he is not always concerned with *why* Quixote performs this or that action, but that the act itself can tell us something about Quixote’s character of which even he may not be aware of.
to put into practice what his folly suggested, and by sheer belief in it he made it true (OLDQ 28-29).

Unamuno’s Quixote has lost his wits, because of which he has gained a unique and superior perspective on the world. Unamuno is saying that having one’s full sense—or not-dried-up-brains—is what keeps the rest of us from seeing the world as Quixote sees it, and that it would do us good to lose a little bit of that common sense. Unamuno is revealing his anti-intellectualism in this passage; without which one would not gain a full understanding of Unamuno’s position on Quixote or Spain generally. When Quixote (read: Spain) traded his brains for will, he became a hero. Now, this is not the equivalent of the Climacian Christian’s martyring his understanding, ultimately because Quixote is still intelligible. I will explain the difference in the next chapter when I combine the language of Kierkegaard and Unamuno. For

203 In *The Bounds of Reason*, Anthony Cascardi gets a lot of mileage out of the image that Quixote’s brains have dried up. In trying to find the “bounds of reason,” he concludes that Cervantes is proposing a new source of knowledge—the body—and argues that because Quixote’s brains have dried up all of his knowledge is derived from his character, or what Cascardi calls his “role.” Quixote’s self-chosen role as knight errant is responsible for the actions he takes instead of his “brains,” as we might traditionally think. For Cascardi, Quixote sees the world as he does, and acts in it, only secondarily to choosing his role in the world. His thoughts and actions are contingent on his role, not vice versa, says Cascardi. This is a compelling argument and resonates with Unamuno’s insistence that Quixote’s brains have dried up. See Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Bounds of Reason: Cervantes, Dostoevsky, Flaubert* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), Introduction and Part I.

204 It is helpful to think about the implications of having one’s brains dry up. Cervantes tells us that Quixote’s brains dried up from having read too much and having slept too little, and so, presumably, one might conclude that reading is the enemy. Not so for Unamuno, who in a 1922 article entitled “El Hombre del Libro” (“The Man of the Book”), interprets Quixote’s incessant reading as a measure against his insanity. He suggests that without reading, Quixote might have been even more insane, and he asks if Quixote did not read books of chivalry in order to cure himself of an inner madness, by claiming that “los libros nos depuran las locuras” (“books purge us of our madness”). Unamuno is challenging those who think that the books made Quixote mad, charging them with mistaking the effect for the cause. For Unamuno, Quixote’s books saved him from going even more mad (OCE VII 1456). Unamuno refers to books also in *Vida*: “But he still laments that not being able to read other books which would provide light for his soul. Books? Is it possible, noble Hidalgo, that you are not yet disillusioned with books? Books led you to be a knight-errant, books suggested you be a shepherd […] it is only natural at this point to remember, once again, Inigo de Loyola wounded and bedridden at Pamplona, asking for books of knight-errantry so as to pass the time. He was given a life of Our Lord and a copy of the *Flos Sanctorum*, and these incited him to become a knight-errant of God” (OLDQ, 307).
now it is important to keep in mind that for Unamuno, Quixote’s dried brains represent a challenge to common sense.

The third axis upon which Unamuno’s interpretation of Quixote pivots is seriousness. Unamuno, unlike other scholars who have written on the subject, takes Quixote completely seriously, and believes that Quixote acts intentionally and is aware of his actions.205 If this aspect of Unamuno does not come across, then his interpretation of Quixote will never get off the ground. In his introduction to the translation of *Vida*, Walter Starkie reminds us that it was extremely important to Unamuno that “Don Quixote made the whole world laugh, but he never made a joke” (OLDQ, xxvii). In the scenes of the novel where Quixote faces ridicule, Unamuno admires him most, because he credits Quixote with the strength to withstand (and even invite) mockery. Unamuno constantly turns upside down traditional interpretations of the work to show how Quixote is actually the wisest of men.

Keeping in mind these three interpretive moves of Unamuno’s—Don Quixote as a real and fictional character, Quixote’s brains having dried up, and Unamuno taking Quixote utterly seriously—will ease the painting of the Unamunian portrait of Quixote, from which his Quixotism is born.

205 Unamuno stresses the seriousness with which Quixote took his world in the following two passages: “Don Quixote, who took the comedy seriously, can only appear ridiculous to those who take serious things comically”, and “never was there a more serious madman than Don Quixote. And when madness is joined to seriousness, it rises 1000 cubits above jeering common abuse.” Finally, he adds: “the madman tends to be a profound actor who takes the play seriously, but who does not deceive himself; while he seriously plays the part of God or king or beast, he knows he is neither God, king, nor beast. Is not anyone who takes the world seriously a madman? And should we not all be madmen?” (OLDQ, 200, 214, 176).
Unamuno’s Quixote

Cervantes’ Quixote is a fictional character who takes windmills for giants and a flock of sheep for an army; he is a madman and a laughingstock. Unamuno’s “poor” Quixote is a hero and a “Spanish Christ.” “Saint” Quixote masters faith and humility. “Lord” Quixote is virtuous and immortal. He is the perfect model of love, and a beacon of self-knowledge and wisdom. At fifty, the gentleman named Quixada or Quexada or Quexana (the author, Cide Hamete (Cervantes’ creation), claims not to know) dubbed himself “Don Quixote de la Mancha” after eight days (DQ, 19, 20, 23). Quixote became a knight-errant in search of adventure in order to win name and fame, and also to win over his love, Dulcinea, whom Quixote named and whom Unamuno perceptively refers to as “Glory” (OLDQ, 31). Dressed in green silk stockings and a barber’s basin for a helmet, this beanpole of a man wears rusted armor and carries a lance at his side which is prone to breaking. Mounted crookedly on what can only charitably be called a horse, the leather-skinned, sallow-faced, drooping-mustached skin-and-bones frail wretch is Unamuno’s (and he would argue, Spain’s) metaphorical savior: a Christ-figure, a god of sorts. Unamuno’s Quixote is only a man, but, as Unamuno would say, ¡que hombre! (what a man!) In contrast to his outer appearance, this shaky semblance of a man is inwardly, for Unamuno, a force to be reckoned with. As a righter of wrongs and a defender of honor, Unamuno’s Quixote stands for justice without compromise; he is the pinnacle of moral fortitude, and his unyielding desire for immortality is matched only by his humility. Quixote’s spiritual strength—his uncompromising will—is what Unamuno sees before and above all else, and is what will later become the cornerstone of Quixotism. By the power of his will, Quixote practices the virtues,

206 The fact that Cervantes and Kierkegaard both use pseudonyms may be a coincidence, but the fact that Unamuno is drawn to both seems to be less of one.
and while others are busy laughing at his outer appearances, Unamuno is kept steady by his inner strength. Unamuno suggests that from the moment Quixote decides to become a knight-errant, his will does not cease to guide him to madness, wisdom, humility, justice, faith, courage, love, etc. Perhaps with the exceptions of prudence and a certain kind of temperance, and with the addition of madness and self-knowledge, Unamuno’s hero and Spanish Christ is an exemplar of the Christian and knightly virtues. In highlighting the scenes that are important to Unamuno, it becomes clear that what impressed Unamuno is how Quixote displays one or more of these virtues. I will now paint Unamuno’s picture of Quixote as not just a hero but also a god.

It is the episode of the basin-helmet (baciyelmo) that tells Unamuno the most about Quixote’s character. In this scene, Quixote, who has by now broken his original pasteboard helmet, takes a barber’s basin and calls it the famous “helmet of Mambrino,” and subsequently claims that since he is a knight, he is entitled to use it. The barber grows angry and insists that the object is not a helmet but is merely a basin. Now, at this point we, the typical readers, know that it is a basin, because Quixote (whose brains have dried up) is the only one who takes it for a helmet, except for Unamuno. Unamuno’s interpretation of this scene is both phenomenological and pragmatic. For him, the question is not whether this object is in fact a basin or a helmet (because apart from its use the question makes no sense), but rather how taking it for a helmet says something truthful about it. It will be a helmet if Quixote uses it as a helmet.

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207 It is interesting that Quixote shows little to no temperance or prudence, but it is more interesting that this appears to pose no problem for Unamuno.

208 Most often, Unamuno dwells on the scenes in which Quixote is displaying a typically Christian virtue, but he does not limit himself to those.

209 “The barber broached the subject of his basin, and Don Quixote had the helmet brought; whereupon Don Quixote swore it was a helmet, and he left it up to the opinion in consideration of those present.” (Part I, Chapter XLIV, OLDQ, 141).
Unamuno has another reason for agreeing with Quixote that the object is a helmet, and this is the more phenomenological: faith. Unamuno says, “sublime faith which affirms, at the top of its voice, basin in hand, and in the sight of all, that it is a helmet” (OLDQ, 141). Unamuno admires Quixote’s faith that says the basin is a helmet, and it is in this description of the scene that we begin to hear Unamuno’s religious language begin to flow. Faith for Unamuno is what Quixote does to the helmet before everyone present, and even before common sense. Quixote sees a helmet because he wants to see a helmet; faith makes Quixote see something that is not otherwise apparent. (I will discuss faith in more depth shortly.)

In this scene and others like it where Quixote sees things that others do not see, the obvious question is: does Quixote actually see a basin but call it a helmet, or does he really see a helmet? One could argue that in this scene Cervantes is throwing into question the distinction between reality and illusion. Or perhaps Quixote is employing a kind of willed ignorance in his view of the world; does he merely see what he wants to see? Is he just pretending in order to live the kind of life he wants to live? These are potentially interesting theoretical paths to go down, but, for Unamuno, the most fruitful interpretation of this scene is that Quixote sees a helmet with the help of faith. Quixote is able to see the world as he wants it to be, in accordance with his role as a knight-errant, while Sancho and the rest cannot.

210 Perhaps the most interesting part of this scene is the fact that the barber himself was wearing his basin on his head in order to keep out of the rain. Vladimir Nabokov makes this point in his work. See Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, Lectures on Don Quixote, ed. Fredson Bowers (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 100.

211 By “see” Unamuno will more appropriately say “create”, but that discussion must wait until section III. The term “see” is not technically false, but it is secondary to the fact that for Unamuno, Quixote has actually made the basin a helmet.

212 Sancho’s reaction to the situation, his attempt to see both a basin and a helmet or basin-helmet, is particularly alarming for Unamuno, who replies: “Basin-helmet? Basin-helmet, Sancho? […] You could not go beyond what your eyes revealed to you, and they showed you the object of dispute to be a basin, while your faith in your master
Similar to faith is love, which Unamuno says Quixote also embodies. Quixote’s display of love does not come from one particular episode, but is ever-present in his attitude toward Dulcinea. What makes this love perfect, says Unamuno, is Quixote’s lack of expectation for any kind of return: “Don Quixote loved Dulcinea with the perfect and consummate love [...] he yielded to her without expecting her to yield to him.”\(^{213}\) It is an ideal kind of love which expects nothing in return. Quixote’s love for Dulcinea is creative, says Unamuno. Aldonza Lorenzo is a poor country girl (the human equivalent of a wash basin), in whom Quixote sees Dulcinea, a beautiful maiden (the *helmet of Mambrino*). In cases like this, faith and love are effectively indistinguishable for Unamuno, and they are both religious terms.\(^{214}\) I will analyze the relationship of faith (and love) to creation in the next section of this chapter, because it constitutes one of the major religious aspects of Quixotism.

Justice is a familiar theme in Quixote literature, but Unamuno’s interpretation of the justice he metes out in the episode of the galley slaves is unique, and reveals something about

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\(^{213}\) And he adds: “Don Quixote loved Dulcinea with a faultless love, without requiring reciprocation: he gave himself entirely to her” (OLDQ, 78-79).

\(^{214}\) Unamuno also analyzes Quixote’s love for Sancho, claiming that through Sancho, Unamuno learned to love humanity: “Don Quixote's sin, his original sin, was this self-love, and his entire career consisted in purifying himself of it. He learned to love all his neighbors by loving them in Sancho, for it is in the person of the neighbor and not in the community that one loves all men; a love that does not settle on an individual is not truly love. And whoever loves someone else truly, how can he hate anyone?” (OLDQ, 54).
In this scene, Quixote sees a gang of inmates being led to “serve the king in the galleys,” and, as he sees that they are being forced to go against their will, he frees them. In return, the galley slaves stone him and take his coat as they run away. While it is tempting to read Quixote’s imprudence in meddling with law and order, Unamuno appreciates Quixote’s sense of justice, and though one may cite the fact that he was stoned as proof that Quixote is in the wrong for freeing criminals, Unamuno denies it, saying that this story:

Should teach us to liberate Galley slaves precisely because they will not be grateful to us for it, for if we could count beforehand on their gratitude, our feat would be lacking in worth. If we did good deeds merely for the gratitude to be gained for them, what good would these deeds to us in eternity? Good should be done not only despite the fact that it will not be rewarded in this world, but precisely because it is a thankless task. The infinite value of good works stems from they are not receiving adequate reward in life, and therefore they overflow this life. This life is a very small vehicle to contain all the good we can do (OLDQ, 107).

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215 DQ, Part I, Chapter XXII

216 It is likely that Unamuno would agree with Cascardi’s interpretation of Quixote’s role as the force behind all of his actions. Both Unamuno and Cascardi would say that Quixote most likely cannot even rationalize why he is freeing the galley slaves, and if he can, it is only afterwards. Unamuno disagrees with Angel Ganivet, while Cascardi disagrees with Alexander Welsh, both of whom imply that Quixote’s sense of justice is rational, and, in this case, for example, it was because Quixote disagreed with the penal practices of the time that he freed the galley slaves. Both Cascardi and Unamuno believe that Quixote’s sense of justice is not primarily rational, but is a by-product of his being a knight-errant. Cascardi writes: “Justice, as Don Quixote practices it, is the product of his will to accommodate his actions to the heroic virtues, not to rational principles or subjective norms […] there should be some important discrepancies between this tradition and the quixotic sense of justice. It is especially the sense of rationality underlying that [Kantian] tradition, which is wholly inimical to justice, the heroic virtue, as Don Quixote practices it.” Unamuno’s reaction is similar: “The fact is that the man who carries out a feat is not necessarily the one who knows best why he did it; and the reasons we give later to justify her acts are merely a posteriori reasons, or to speak plainly, secondhand reasons, which we search out in order to explain ourselves to others, and to explain to others the why and wherefore of our actions, while ordinarily the true reason remains hidden. I do not deny that Don Quixote might have believed, along with Ganivet and perhaps Cervantes, that he freed the Galley slaves in reaction against arbitrary law and because he thought it unjust to punish some while others escaped through the loopholes in the law, but I deny that he should have freed them because he was really moved, moved in his inner person, by any such consideration” (OLDQ, 102). Both Unamuno and Cascardi prioritize Quixote’s actions over his thinking, and that falls precisely in line with what a virtue becomes—a habit in the Aristotelian sense—over a lifetime of practicing it. Cascardi, *The Bounds of Reason*, 70-72.
Unamuno turns the outcome of the story on its head, so that instead of using Quixote’s assault as proof that he was wrong to have freed the slaves, Unamuno reads Quixote’s actions as pure precisely because he was stoned.\textsuperscript{217} For Unamuno and his Quixote, justice is not only a worthwhile pursuit in the case of happy endings.\textsuperscript{218} We must act justly now, before we know what the outcome will be.

Quixote lives justly in part by practicing the virtue of courage. Although it is generally conceded that Quixote’s battle with the lion is lunatic, it is also generally conceded that it is one of Quixote’s most courageous moments in the novel, if not the only one.\textsuperscript{219} In the scene, Quixote confronts a wagon driver who is carrying two lions in separate cages, both of whom have not been fed yet that day. Quixote challenges the lions to a fight in Dulcinea’s honor, and forces the wagon-driver to open the door to the cage containing the male lion. The enormous lion pokes his head out, but then proceeds to turn around and go to sleep. Cervantes, through the voice of Cide Hamete, narrates the story as though the lion took no notice of Quixote’s “childish bravado,” and went to sleep. Unamuno challenges this interpretation and said that, just as Quixote himself thought,

\begin{quote}
What really happened is that the lion was frightened away or rather was shamed to see the ferocity of our Knight, for God permits beasts to feel more vividly than men the presence of the invincible power of faith” (OLDQ, 187).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{217} This assessment is almost a complete turnaround from his 1898 “Muera Don Quixote!” in which Unamuno says condemingly of Quixote that he considers himself the minister of God on earth.

\textsuperscript{218} Unamuno’s entire interpretation of this episode is immensely interesting and worthwhile. See OLDQ, 99-108. In a letter to Leopoldo Gutiérrez on August 11, 1904, Unamuno notes that until this point in the book he is most satisfied with his interpretation of the galley slaves, saying that his main point is that “no se debe castigar sino para perdonar; el fin del castigo es el perdon.” (one ought not punish except in order to pardon; the end of punishment is pardon). See Javier González de Durana, ed., \textit{Cartas Íntimas: Epistolario Entre Miguel de Unamuno y Los Hermanos Gutiérrez Abascal} (Bilbao: Eguzki, 1986), 148-149.

\textsuperscript{219} DQ, Part II, Chapter XVII
Unamuno interprets this scene against Cervantes, and says that Quixote is displaying his incomparable courage instead of bravado or foolishness.\textsuperscript{220} For Unamuno, even Cervantes did not understand Quixote.

Along with the typical Christian virtues, Quixote also embodies an intellectual virtue that is very important for Unamuno: self-knowledge. Reflecting on the following scene, Unamuno praises Quixote and characteristically interjects a philosophical interpretation of what it means to know oneself. In this episode,\textsuperscript{221} Quixote meets his neighbor Pedro Alonso, who hears him referencing characters from a book of chivalry. Alonso tries to tell Quixote that Quixote himself is not one of those characters but is “an honorable gentleman, Señor Quijana.” To this, Quixote replies: “I know who I am!” which becomes a phrase that Unamuno clings to throughout his career. Unamuno’s explanation follows:

Don Quixote was thinking with his will, and when he said “I know who I am!” He was merely stating that “I know who I want to be!” And that is the pivot of all human life: to know what one wants to be. What you are should be of little concern; of cardinal importance is what you want to be. What you are is no more than a decrepit and perishable being who eats of the earth and whom the earth will one day eat; what you want to be is the idea of you in God, the Conscience of the Universe; it is the divine idea of which you are a manifestation in time and space. And your longing impulse toward the one you want to be is no more than nostalgia drawing you toward your divine home. A man is fully a man only when he wants to be more than a man (OLDQ, 50-51).

\textsuperscript{220} Unamuno’s virtues are not Aristotelian means; he has no trouble with Quixote’s extreme tendencies, and he would never call Quixote’s courage foolishness. Additionally, it is surprising that Unamuno does not mention that this is the scene in which Sancho says of Don Quixote that he is not “crazy”, only “reckless” (\textit{no es “loco, sino atrevido”}), nor that this is the scene in which Sancho gives Quixote the new title of “Knight of the Lions.” See OLDQ, 565.

\textsuperscript{221} DQ, Part I, Chapter V
In this passage, Unamuno counters a Sartrean interpretation of the self, which concludes that one is strictly a product of one’s actions, and not of one’s intentions or desires, with his own interpretation that it is precisely who one wants to be that makes one who one is.\textsuperscript{222} If Sartre’s self looks backwards to know who that self is, Unamuno’s looks forwards. Quixote’s desire makes him who he wants to be, and his will makes him who he will be and already is. Unamuno’s understanding of self-knowledge entails self-creation: I know who I am because I know who I want to be. Ultimately my will is responsible for making me who I become, according to Unamuno (and this itself shows how much weight Unamuno puts on the will), but who I say that I am is a product of who I desire to be.\textsuperscript{223}

Part of Quixote’s self-knowledge comes from yet another (particularly Christian) virtue, humility. From letting his horse, Rocinante, lead him into adventures,\textsuperscript{224} to the episode where he is praying by sifting barley,\textsuperscript{225} Unamuno praises Quixote’s humility. Two episodes catch Unamuno’s attention more than the others: the first is Quixote’s encounter with the wooden icons, and the second is Quixote’s willingness to let himself be mocked.


\textsuperscript{223} Cascardi asserts that Quixote’s self-knowledge is not the kind of knowledge that one gets from thinking, but from acting out his character. He says: “Self-knowledge and personal identity in Cervantes’ novel at least are not founded on the fruits of a mind’s project of pure enquiry but on the ethical and moral bases of character and role. See Cascardi, \textit{The Bounds of Reason}, 72.

\textsuperscript{224} DQ, Part I, Chapter II. Unamuno comments on this scene: “we would do well to notice that his letting himself be led by his horse was an act of profound humility and obedience to the designs of God,” and, he later adds: “Quixotes let themselves be led by their animals, while the Sanchos lead theirs” (OLDQ, 33, 242).

\textsuperscript{225} DQ, Part II, Chapter 25. Unamuno explains what he finds incredibly beautiful and humble about this scene: “Lord Don Quixote, how great you seem to me as you sift barley and clean out the manger, without any ostentatious humility, as if you were doing nothing special! It is in this matter of goodness, simple goodness, then no one has surpassed you. And that is why there is an altar to you in the hearts of all good people, who look to your goodness if not to your madness” (OLDQ, 197).
The humility displayed by Quixote in the episode of the carved idols, has left its mark on Unamuno, since he recounts it no less than five times in his essays and books, including the essays that were printed before what I call his “turn to Quixote.” In this scene, Quixote and Sancho are walking in the countryside when they see some peasants sitting next to four carved statues wrapped in white cloths. Quixote asks to see the carvings, which turn out to be the images of four saints, or, to Quixote, four “knights-errant of Christianity.” Quixote is so moved at the sight and idea of these saints that he says:

The difference between us is that they were saints and fought divinely, while I am a sinner and fight humanly. They conquered heaven by force of arms because heaven suffers violence, but as for me, I don’t know to this moment what it is that I conquer by force of my feats and travail. If my Dulcinea del Toboso could be freed from her own travails, and my fortune were to improve and my wits be mended, it might be that I could tread a better path than the one I’m on (OLDQ, 247).

By comparing his battles to those of the saints, Unamuno’s Quixote is humbled, and confesses that he does not know what he is accomplishing with his knight-errantry, since he is fighting ‘humanly’ and not ‘divinely.’ Whereas before the turn, Unamuno appreciated this scene because it shows Quixote in a moment of lucidity, after the turn he interprets this scene as Quixote’s willingness and ability to become like a child; in other words, to be humble:

Most profound passage! Here the temporary madness of the knight Don Quixote melts into the eternal goodness and good sense of the hidalgo Alonso the Good, and perhaps there is not, in the entire sad epic of his life, a passage to cause us deeper sadness of heart. Here Don Quixote plumbs the depths of the wisdom of Alonso Quixano the Good, digs into himself, makes himself a child once again (OLDQ, 248).

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226 DQ, Part II, Chapter LVIII.

227 The six instances include the four mentioned earlier, which Unamuno used in his essays before his turn, this one in Vida, and another one in a 1922 essay entitled: “La Bienaventuranza de Don Quijote” (“Don Quixote’s Beatitude” (OCE VII 1238-1239)), where Quixote recalls his having considered, according to Unamuno, abandoning his quests to become a knight-errant for God. See OLDQ, 426-428.
Unamuno reads a tremendous amount of humility in Quixote’s soliloquy, in his becoming small in the face of the saints.\textsuperscript{228} Whereas in the earlier years Unamuno saw in this scene a ray of lucidity in Alonso Quixano, and therefore a ray of hope, now Unamuno reads into this scene that even a madman like Quixote can be humble, and that means that madness cannot be all bad. If a mad person practices the virtues, then it is worth taking a deeper look at madness.

Nothing is as impressive to Unamuno as Quixote’s madness, the last virtue on the list. Whether Unamuno considers madness a new virtue or an aggregate of the virtues of humility and wisdom does not matter; what impresses Unamuno is Quixote’s allowing himself be constantly mocked and ridiculed by those around him. In an unveiled reference to Christ, Unamuno calls Quixote’s life a “passion by mockery,” and claims that “my poor Don Quixote” will “become forever the butt and laughingstock of barbers, curates, graduates, dukes, and idlers of every breed” (OLDQ, 122). Not only does Quixote, like Christ, put up with being mocked, but Unamuno is suggesting that Quixote knowingly invites the mockery. By and large, Unamuno attributes to Quixote a knowledge that people are laughing at him. The comparison between Christ and Quixote is never stronger than on the subject of mockery, because this mockery opens the door to Unamuno’s interpretation of Quixote’s madness and wisdom.\textsuperscript{229} Allowing oneself to be mocked is humble; inciting mockery is madness. Humble Quixote allows himself to be

\textsuperscript{228} In his dissertation on Unamuno’s Quixotism, Luis Iglesias Ortega makes the following connection to humility: “Este descenso es, en primer lugar, la revelación de un cimiento de humildad en nuestro caballero.” (“This descent is, in the first place, the revelation of the foundation of humility in our Knight.”) See Iglesias Ortega, El Quijotismo de Unamuno Entre La Filosofía y el Mito 175.

\textsuperscript{229} Unamuno says: “if they said about Christ: “Behold the Man!”’, they say of Quixote “Behold the madman!”’, and Unamuno claims that Quixote will always be “the madman, unique, the Madman” (OLDQ, 240).
mocked just as Christ did, in a self-sacrificing effort to gain a future victory. Unamuno turns the mockery of Quixote into a victory, his weakness into strength, and his madness into wisdom. This reversal is a characteristically Christian move that Unamuno employs to install Quixote as the earthly and Spanish Christ.

For Unamuno, madness is always only a cover for a deeper understanding of things, a reaching into the world past appearances. The strongest case that Unamuno makes for Quixote’s wisdom is from the episode of the windmills, in which Quixote charges thirty or forty windmills, thinking they are “enormous giants” with “long arms.” Sancho is at his side and tries to tell him that they are windmills and not giants, but, in the end, upon attacking one of the windmills Quixote is thrown from his horse and his lance is broken. Instead of assuming that Sancho is right and Quixote wrong, Unamuno analyzes Quixote’s use of the term ‘giant’ and ends by claiming that it is Quixote and not Sancho who can see clearly:

The Knight was right: fear and only fear made Sancho see -- windmills where impudent giants stand, spewing wickedness about the world. Those mills milled bread, and of that bread men confirmed in blindness ate. Today, they no longer appear to us in the form of windmills, but in the form of locomotives, dynamos, turbines, steamships, automobiles, telegraph with wires and without, machine guns, and instruments for performing ovariotomies, all conspiring to commit the same harm. Fear, and only Sanchopanzesque fear, inspires us to venerate and pay homage to steam and electricity. Fear, and only Sanchopanzesque fear, makes us fall on our knees before the impudent giants of engineering and chemistry and thank them for mercy. In the end, the human species, overwhelmed by weariness and surfeit, will give up the ghost at the foot of a colossal factory manufacturing an elixir promising long life. But the battered Don Quixote will go on living, because he sought health within himself and dared to charge the windmills (OLDQ, 58).

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230 It takes humility and courage to stand to be ridiculed, but it takes wisdom to make oneself a hero, according to a later Unamuno: “The greatest height of heroism to which an individual, like a people, can attain is to know how to face ridicule; better still, to know how to make oneself ridiculous and not to shrink from the ridicule” (TSL, 315). The difference will be that while Quixote triumphs on earth, Christ triumphs in Heaven.

231 DQ, Part I, Chapter VIII
Windmills, for Quixote, are not simply windmills, and it is not Quixote who sees wrongly, but those who look at things only with their eyes. Interestingly, Unamuno inverts the terms “appearance” and “substance” when he cautions us: “never become riled over what may befall you in this world of appearances; wait for the world of substance, or hold to it in the depths of your madness” (OLDQ, 92). For Unamuno’s Quixote, the windmills are the appearance, and the giants are the real substance, and so Unamuno interprets Quixote as being capable of cutting through appearances to see a more profound reality, such as that the windmills are giants because they effectively have complete power over entire towns. For Unamuno, “there is no question but that Don Quixote saw the windmills with the eyes in his head and saw them to be windmills, and saw the inns to be inns (OLDQ, 176). Just as Quixote saw windmills, Unamuno sees Quixote’s madness. It is only upon closer reflection that one can see wisdom in Quixote’s acts, and that one can see giants where windmills stand. Quixote’s madness is always and only apparent for Unamuno, who reads into Quixote’s actions a deeper meaning. Quixote’s wisdom stems from a depth that no other character in the book can match. While we may not understand Quixote’s actions, on Unamuno’s reading we can be assured that they are always motivated by an underlying virtue and they are always fueled by the will.232 Instead of assuming that Quixote is mad at the moment that he ceases to make sense to us, as the other characters do, Unamuno assumes that he is the one who must not understand, because Quixote’s character is charged with goodness, and so any analysis of his actions must begin with the assumption that he is wiser than

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232 Cascardi provides a helpful suggestion in the form of a question: “How can we be sure whether this discrepancy is located in Don Quixote’s vision or interpretation and not in some ambiguity of the world itself?” Cascardi is suggesting that the world might be that ambiguous and two-fold (at least) so as to merit calling windmills both windmills and giants. Cascardi, The Bounds of Reason, 10.
the rest. In other words, Quixote gives Unamuno pause, leading him to say: “Oh, Don Quixote, my Saint Quixote! Yes, we who are sound of mind canonize your madness” and “touch me to the quick with your madness, Quixote, touch me to the quick […] Madden me, my Don Quixote!” (OLDQ, 212, 280-281). Quixote’s madness means wisdom, and to look mad to others is almost always a guarantee that one sees giants where others see windmills.

**Abulia**

Before I develop the religion of Quixotism out of these descriptions of Quixote, I will briefly address the deeper reason that Unamuno had for studying Quixote when he did. As I said earlier, Unamuno thought that the fate of Spain as well as the soul of the Spanish people was on the line at this historical moment. War is not too strong of a metaphor to use when describing what Unamuno thought was necessary to right Spain’s wrongs, and to right the people’s own hearts, which he thought suffered from abulia, or “spiritual paralysis.” Unamuno’s self-imposed task, throughout his works, was to incite and disturb people out of what he perceived as their ethical and religious slumber. Unamuno thought his mission was to bring war to apparent peace, and to disquiet the soul so that it would stop performing like a drone. In what is arguably the most beautiful passage that Unamuno ever wrote, he claimed to want to deprive his readers of peace.

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233 Cascardi phrases a similar humility this way: “we know, from the clash of perspectives of Don Quixote and Sancho, that we must guard against taking reality to be any one way without pausing to question its alternative identifications or to account for the personal histories which might alter any perception of it.” Humility leads Unamuno to take Quixote seriously; what if Quixote is right? Ibid., 15.

234 This phrase begs to be left in the original language: “pégame tu locura, Don Quijote mío, pégamela por entero […] Enloquéceme mi Don Quijote!” Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho Según Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra Explicada y Comentada Por Miguel de Unamuno* (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1905), 365-366. Additionally, in the 1922 “La Bienaventuranza de Don Quijote,” Unamuno envisions a scene between Christ and Quixote in Heaven, the result of which is Christ’s deeming madness a new beatitude: “blessed are the mad, for they shall be surfeited with reason!” (OCE VII 1238-1239).
and replace it with “continual anguish and endless longing,”235 and he ended *Sentimiento* with this line: “may God deny you peace, but give you glory!” (TSL, 330).236 As long as one does not know peace and continues struggling, Unamuno would say that an individual has potential for a meaningful life. Unamuno’s fight was a (not uncommon) existentialist one against abulia, and in *Vida*, Unamuno used Quixote to rouse his readers from it.237 Antonia, Quixote’s niece, exemplified abulia for Unamuno, and despite being a blood relative of Quixote she was his opposite in every way. Though all of the characters in one sense or another suffer from abulia, Unamuno saw Antonia as the biggest threat to Quixotism. He made the harsh claim that Antonia represented the spirit of the Spanish people, which, if allowed to reign, meant that the Spanish people would never be cured of abulia (OLDQ, 163-167).

If Quixote represented madness, which for Unamuno is wisdom, then Antonia represented sanity, which for Unamuno is the corresponding vice: folly. In Unamuno’s interpretation Quixote lacks common sense, which Antonia has in spades. Quixote cannot

235 The entire passage follows: “Mira, lector, aunque no te conozco, te quiero tanto que si pudiese tenerte en mis manos, te abriría el pecho y en el cogollo del corazón te rasgaría una llaga y te pondría allí vinagre y sal para que no pudiese descansar nunca y vivieras en perpetua zozobra y en anhelo inacabable. Sin no he logrado desasosegarte con mi Quijote es, créemelo bien, por mi torpeza y porque este muerto papel en que escribo ni grita, ni chilla, ni suspira, ni llora, porque no se hizo el lenguaje para que tu y yo nos entendiéramos” [“Reader, listen: though I do not know you, I love you so much that if I could hold you in my hands, I would open up your breast and in your heart’s core I would make a wound and into it I would rub vinegar and salt, so that you might never again know peace but would live in continual anguish and endless longing. If I have not succeeded in disquieting you with this Quixote of mine it is because of my heavy-handedness, believe me, and because this dead paper on which I write neither shrieks, nor cries out, nor sighs, nor laments, and because the language was not made for you and me to understand each other”] (*Vida*, 322 and OLDQ, 305).

236 Unamuno uses the metaphor of war while simultaneously invoking Christ: “Those unfortunates who shriek "Peace! Peace!" Dare to put the name of Christ in their mouths. And they forget the Christ said that he did not come to bring peace, but war, and not because of him houses would be divided against themselves, fathers and sons, brothers against brothers” (OLDQ, 147-148).

237 In fact Unamuno’s fight against this kind of sleeping through life is a fight he fundamentally shares with Kierkegaard, regardless of the outcome of the influence debate.
entertain the idea that he is not a knight-errant, and Antonia cannot entertain the idea that he is.

As we might expect, Antonia is the harshest critic of Quixote. She says to him:

You're so blind and so obviously foolish that you'd have us think that you’re valiant when you're really an old man, that you're strong when you're really sick, and that you right wrongs when you're worn out by age, and especially that you're a knight when you're really not, for though a gentlemen can be one, a poor man can't (OLDQ, 163). 238

Antonia has common sense on her side: Quixote is, in some sense, not a knight. But, on a deeper level, he is, says Unamuno. In the world that counts, the world deeper than appearances or common sense, it is Antonia who lacks sense, for Unamuno; she is a fool because she cannot see what matters. All she sees is what is in front of her. Antonia never scratches under the surface, never steps out of her comfort zone, and she never risks her life for anything. In a word, Unamuno’s charge is that Antonia lives for nothing. Unamuno retaliates on behalf of Quixote:

But you, my Antonia Quixana, you? You do not go mad either in a human or in the divine sense; you may have a little brain but, little as it is, it fills up all your little head, so that there is no room left for the overflow from your heart (OLDQ, 165).

From Unamuno’s vantage point, “madness” like Quixote’s is desirable because it leads to a moral life, one guided by principles. Within her world-view, Antonia will never be inspired; she would never willfully create a world for herself like Quixote does. She is too cynical for Unamuno, too hopeless. She has plenty of intelligence, but no spirit. 239 She is too realistic to be idealistic. In short, she has no imagination.

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238 DQ, Part II, Chapter VI
239 Unamuno says: “it is not intelligence which is lacking, but spirit” (OLDQ, 152).
For Unamuno’s purposes, the fact that Quixote’s brains have dried up could not be any more perfect. Dried brains and all, Unamuno’s Quixote acts as the remedy for a top-heavy Spain. In the image of Quixote, Unamuno sees an extreme version of all body with no mind, all action with no thinking, all will with no reason. But, I take Unamuno’s extremism as nothing more than a metaphor, because, although Unamuno emphasizes his hatred for reason and the like (and in fact his reputation depends on it), Unamuno’s project in \textit{Vida} is to rationalize Quixote’s actions. Although Unamuno implies that Quixote may not be able to explain why he is acting in a certain way while he is doing it, he suggests that even Quixote himself might be able to rationalize it later,\footnote{Recall this passage about the freeing of the galley slaves: “I do not deny that Don Quixote might have believed, along with Ganivet and perhaps Cervantes, that he freed the Galley slaves in reaction against arbitrary law and because he thought it unjust to punish some while others escaped through the loopholes in the law, but I deny that he should have freed them because he was really moved, moved in his inner person, by any such consideration” (OLDQ, 102).} so the idea that Quixote has absolutely no brains left is clearly a metaphor. In painting Quixote, Unamuno never gives us what he calls “true madness” or the act of “raving without a reason.”\footnote{Unamuno says: “Yes, my Don Quixote, the trick is to rave without a reason, in generous rebellion against logic, that hard tyrant over the spirit. The majority of men who are considered mad in your country rave with reason or motive and do it when they are hot and never when cold, and they are no madmen, but deep-dyed imbeciles, when they are not names of the slightest type. Madness, true madness, is something we greatly need; perhaps it will cure us of this pestilential common sense in which all of us has smothered our own individual sense” (OLDQ, 112). Common sense might say that true madness is utter incomprehensibility, and Unamuno might agree. But to rave without a reason against logic is not to rave without a reason; it is precisely to rave with a reason.} What he admits to giving us is an apparent madman who pushes back against the tyranny of appearances to discover another world of interpretation: imagination. Unamuno, both by rationalizing Quixote’s moves, and by implying that Quixote knows what he is doing,\footnote{For example, Unamuno’s Quixote is aware that people are laughing at him.} belies the singularity of the world of appearances. There are two worlds, and in Unamuno’s descriptions, Quixote knows it. In his interpretation of Quixote’s actions, Unamuno exposes this second world of imagination that parallels Antonia’s common sense world.
Through Quixote, Unamuno is suggesting that there should be more to life than rational thought; he is reacting against what he perceives to be the hierarchy of thinking over acting, or even imagining. Unamuno is using Quixote in his fight against what he considers the worship of reason (in both Quixote’s world and in Spain itself), but to do this Unamuno need not claim that Quixote is fighting reason itself (nor does he, despite what he poetically thinks and says). Unamuno is not anti-intelligence, but he is responding to a perceived climate around him in which he sees an uneven advantage given to the intelligence. Here is a more accurate rendering of Unamuno’s position, one that reflects his Pascalian roots: “These reasonable men usually boast only reason; they think with their heads alone, when one must think with one's entire body, with one's whole soul” (OLDQ, 156). Unamuno envisions himself combating a world dominated by what he refers to here as the “brain”—and elsewhere logic, reason, thinking—traditionally called “mind” in philosophy, to the detriment of the “heart,”—soul, spirit, imagination—the traditional “body.” Unamuno exalts Quixote’s madness because Quixote is willing to fight and die for these traditionally non-rational ideals. Quixote fights against common sense or appearances—what everyone else sees and takes to be reality—i.e., windmills, basins, sheep, wineskins, puppets, etc. Unamuno considers these fights to be on behalf of the ‘heart,’

243 Unamuno often railed against those who would shout “contradiction!” about his work, and I am sure he would be tempted to do so here. However, Unamuno’s very stance on the authority of an author over the interpretation of his or his work would forbid him to object to this interpretation in any convincing way. “Since when is the author of a book the person to understand it best?” (OLDQ, 449).

244 In Sentimiento Unamuno says “the philosophy of Don Quixote cannot strictly be called idealism; he did not fight for ideas. It was of the spiritual order; he fought for the spirit” (TSL, 314). Unamuno often uses “ideals” and “spirit” synonymously. The more appropriate distinction that Unamuno could make is between ideas and ideals.

245 DQ, Part I: XVIII

246 DQ, Part I: XXXVI

247 DQ, Part II: XXVI
which makes the fight worthy. It is understandable that Unamuno wants to balance ‘brain’ with ‘heart’ but, thankfully, he does not in fact dry up Quixote’s brains completely. *Vida* represents a fusion of brain and heart, not an either/or between them. For Unamuno, those who suffer from *abulia* are missing this balance, and, as a result, they are paralyzed from acting.

Unamuno explains *abulia* as two-fold: fear of failure and fear of ridicule, and he paints a picture of a man (whom we may assume is afflicted with *abulia* since to Unamuno the whole of Spain is) who is considering a risky endeavor:

He would try it if he were sure beforehand of success, but faced with the possibility of the failure and, even more, the ridicule and sneers of his neighbors, the possibility that they will take him for a madman or a visionary or a fool, in the face of this possibility he draws back and attempts nothing (OLDQ, 145).248

Unamuno’s social critique applies both to the characters in the novel beside Antonia249—Sancho, who lives for money and food, the curate and the barber, who burn Quixote’s books, and Samson Carrasco, who, out of envy of the fact that he does not have the moral courage to be a knight-

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248 Unamuno adds: “Thus, in our country, the country of Don Quixote and Sancho, since moral cowardice has our souls in its grip, and men recoil from a possible failure and tremble lest they fall into ridicule, lies abound and visions are painfully scarce” (OLDQ, 222).

249 About the so-called “minor” characters in this novel, Anthony Cescardi adds: “none engages his social position ethically.” These characters are neither ethical nor virtuous. Cescardi, *The Bounds of Reason*, 71.
errant,\textsuperscript{250} defeats Quixote and forces him to give up knight-errantry for one year—and also to people in his own time.\textsuperscript{251} Unamuno claims that the people of Spain, the \textit{abulia}-stricken masses, want to have ideas given them already chewed, salivated, and made into a pill ready to swallow, so that they need give themselves no more trouble than that of swallowing, or better yet, they would like to have the ideas spooned into them (OLDQ, 275).

Unamuno blames moral cowardice for this prevalent attitude.\textsuperscript{252} Though Unamuno is not the first to talk about a sick soul, he is one of the first to recommend Quixote as the remedy. Unamuno suggests that in order to overcome \textit{abulia} we must shed the lethargy in our souls and become followers of Quixote; we must become quixotic.

Unamuno interprets a rejection of \textit{abulia} in Quixote’s actions. Instead of being afraid of ridicule (or perhaps as a result of it), Quixote intentionally makes himself ridiculous, on Unamuno’s reading. Unamuno challenges us to do the same, and this position only becomes stronger in the eight years between 1905 and in 1913. In 1905 he calls it courage to confront failure and risk being taken for a fool.\textsuperscript{253} By 1913, moral courage has turned to “heroism” for Unamuno: “the greatest height of heroism to which an individual, like a people, can attain is to

\textsuperscript{250} Unamuno blames envy for the leveling that he sees around him, saying to Sancho: “envy and envy alone, imprisoned your master, envy disguised as charity, the envy of sane men who cannot stand heroic madness, envy which has elevated common sense into a tyrannizing leveler” (OLDQ, 151). There is a very interesting overlap between Unamuno’s sense of leveling and Kierkegaard’s, specifically in \textit{Two Ages}. Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{Two Ages}, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Hatlestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

\textsuperscript{251} Cascardi explains Unamuno’s characterization of Sanson Carrasco: “In \textit{The Tragic Sense of Life}, Unamuno saw Sanson Carrasco as pragmatic European man, who relates to the world by logic and planning and who upholds the rationality of society and its cultural institutions” Cascardi, \textit{The Bounds of Reason}, 62.

\textsuperscript{252} Unamuno adds: “Yes, all our evil stems from moral cowardice, from each man's lack of the impulse to affirm his truth, his faith, and to defend it. The lie coils around and throttles the souls of this breed of stupid sheep, stupefied by a stoppage of common sense” (OLDQ, 146).

\textsuperscript{253} “The highest courage is that which confronts, not bodily injury, or loss of fortune, or the discredit of one's honor, but rather ridicule: one's being taken for a madman or a fool” (OLDQ, 144).
know how to face ridicule; better still, to know how to make oneself ridiculous and not to shrink from the ridicule” (TSL, 315). Moral courage and heroism go hand in hand in the character of Quixote and will do the same for followers of Quixote. The highest success and most Quixote-like action consists in inciting the ridicule of which those who suffer from *abulia* are afraid. Unamuno advises his readers not only to ignore the ridicule that comes from without (as we might tell children to do), but also to deliberately make oneself ridiculous:

> We must attack wisely and cautiously. Reason must be our weapon. It is the weapon even of the fool. Our sublime fool and our exemplar, Don Quixote […] with the pasteboard visor on his head he made himself immortal—that is to say, he made himself ridiculous. For it was by making himself ridiculous that Don Quixote achieved his immortality. And there are so many ways of making ourselves ridiculous! (OLDQ, 306).\(^{254}\)

Making oneself ridiculous is like building a wall to the outside, insulating oneself in order that one can better act without being affected by negativity.\(^{255}\)

**Unamuno’s Quixotism**

Taking note of the almost constant comparison that Unamuno makes between Quixote and Christ, it is reasonable to say that Quixotism resembles a standard (non-Kierkegaardian) version of Christianity. Unamuno’s Spanish Christ lives out a Passion, first in being mocked: “Poor Don Quixote, paraded around the city with your *Ecce Homo* on your back!” (OLDQ, 272).\(^{256}\) then

\(^{254}\) Here is an example of Unamuno’s contradictory stance on reason. In this passage, it is obvious that Unamuno is not anti-reason itself, but against what he perceives as the over-use or over-reliance on reason to the exclusion of everything else.

\(^{255}\) I return to the subject of immortality below.

\(^{256}\) In *Sentimiento*, Unamuno adds this: “The tragedy of Christ, the divine tragedy, is the tragedy of the Cross. Pilate, the skeptic, the man of culture, by making a mockery of it, sought to convert it into a comedy; he conceived a farcical idea of the King with the read scepter and crown of thorns, and cried "behold the man!" But the people,
being attacked, sentenced, and finally killed. Unamuno’s calling Quixote the “Spanish Christ” may tempt us to conflate the two. Admittedly, Christ and Quixote share the traits of humility, self-sacrifice, mockery, and others. But Unamuno also calls Quixotism a “daughter-madness to the madness of the Cross,” which is a useful metaphor because it admits that Christianity and Quixotism are related but are ultimately distinct (TSL, 314-315). Thus, despite Unamuno’s passionate but sometimes sloppy comparisons, it is important to understand that Christianity is different than Quixotism, and once they can be distinguished, we can understand what Quixotism is in positive terms (rather than as a lesser version of Christianity).

Aside from my general definition of religion as the prioritization of the self’s relationship to god, loosely speaking, all concrete religions are generally comprised of the following traits: a god figure, prayer or worship, a sacred text, rituals, and community. Additionally, religions typically have some notion of faith, and some kind of eschatology. Without these, religions risk collapsing into ethics. Quixotism has all of these traits, but so does Christianity. What Christianity hinges on, however, are the following two things: Christ’s humanity and Christ’s divinity. Christians believe that Christ walked the earth as a human, and that to be holy we ought to imitate him. Additionally, Christians believe that Christ was God, which means that Christ is also divine. As God and man, Christ intervened in our world, and today, Christians believe that God still intervenes in our world. The crucial difference between Christianity and Quixotism is

more human than he, the people that thirst for tragedy shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And the human, the intra-human, tragedy is the tragedy of Don Quixote, whose face was daubed with soap in order that he might make sport for the servants of the dukes and for the dukes themselves, as servile as their servants. "Behold the madman!" They would have said. And the comic, the irrational, tragedy is the tragedy of suffering caused by ridicule and contempt" (TSL, 315).

As an amateur artist, Unamuno drew an image of Quixote crucified on a tree, which now hangs in the Casa Museo de Unamuno.
in this last point: Christ is divine but Quixote is not. In other words, Christ is a God and Quixote is a god. The Christian believes that God is a literal force in the world that has the ability to drive an individual’s actions, while the Quixotist believes that Quixote is a metaphorical force in the world that can drive an individual’s actions. Quixotism is a way of living religiously in the world in imitation of Quixote, but with no belief that Quixote literally intervenes in the world. Though he is mainly focused on Quixote’s fictional humanity, Unamuno calls Quixote a god, and implies that Quixote’s metaphoric existence has powerful effects in the world.

Positing a fictional God might sound like a step down from Christianity (and potentially even a step outside of religion). Thus it might be tempting to characterize Quixotism as either a watered-down form of Christianity or as a glorified Kierkegaardian ethical sphere. But, make no mistake, Unamuno’s Quixotism is no less (and is arguably more) demanding than Christianity, and it is not a system of Kierkegaardian ethics. Unamuno has a religious relationship to his god; he worships Quixote and claims that Quixote acts through him and gives him strength. He faithfully reads the Bible of Quixote to learn how to imitate him. Unamuno can say everything that a Christian says about God, but he does so metaphorically; while Unamuno does not literally pray for Quixote’s intervention, there is a way in which Unamuno does pray to Quixote. If the results are the same, Unamuno the quasi-pragmatist would say that metaphorical intervention is no less powerful than literal intervention. Fixating on Quixote keeps Unamuno focused on how he wants to live his life, and he changes his life in accordance with his religion. But, ultimately,
it is Unamuno and not a divine God who is the author of action.\textsuperscript{258} In Quixotism one gets no help from any other world, and it is up to the individual to become who he wants to become.

De-divinizing Quixote distinguishes Quixotism from Christianity in four concrete ways: 1) it establishes a new eschatology 2) it leads to a re-conception of immortality, 3) it forces a centralization of the human will, and 4) it creates a new definition of faith. Quixotism is still wholly religious even though it is not Christian. In what remains of this chapter I delineate these four facets of Quixotism that bind it to religion but distinguish it from Christianity.

A New Eschatology

If transcendent Christianity is concerned with the world to come, Quixotism is meant to be lived in and for this world. In Unamuno’s interpretation, the kingdom of Quixote is on earth, and we may attain it by walking in Quixote’s footsteps. Unamuno emphasizes the here-and-now, outlining a poetic parallel between Quixotism and Christianity: the hero-god on earth leads his followers to heaven on earth, while the divine-God in Heaven leads followers to Heaven. By de-divinizing god, Unamuno effectively pulls all heaven-based motivation out of the picture, and forces followers to create a heaven on earth:

Aspire to heaven? No; it is better to aspire to the kingdom of God! And at all hours, day after day, our people raises its thousand-fold voice in a prayer to Our Father which art in heaven: “Thy kingdom come!” “Thy kingdom come” and not “Take us to Thy kingdom”; the kingdom of God must descend to earth: it is not the earth which must ascend to the kingdom of God, for this kingdom must be a realm of the living and not of the dead. And

\textsuperscript{258} While some people may view Christ as simply a man, as only an exemplar, the true Christian must believe that Christ transcends and intervenes in the world.
this kingdom, whose coming we pray for every day, must be created, not only with prayer, but through struggle (OLDQ, 287).259

Calling for the kingdom of god on earth is Unamuno’s call for a new eschatology. Unamuno is blatantly calling for an earth-bound religion; one which can be both practiced and enjoyed on earth instead of focused on heaven like Christianity. Unamuno scholar Galen Yorba-Gray emphasizes the connection between Quixote and this earth-bound eschatology, calling it the “kingdom of God a la quijotesca”:

Unamuno proposes that God’s kingdom be enjoyed on earth by means of a quixotic idealism that will produce a new mindset not only for Spain, but for all who dare to look where there are wrongs to right—seen of course, through the field glasses of allegorized chivalry.260

Yorba-Gray picks up on the twist in Unamuno’s eschatology, that human beings have the power to create the kingdom of god on earth, if they would follow in the footsteps of Quixote. Unamuno’s new eschatology fueled by the non-divine god Quixote has the power to make this life and this world meaningful without diminishing the religious aspect of it. Quixotism is not just another ethics because the ‘kingdom of god on earth’ is clearly religious language, and Unamuno is interested in keeping the religious language without prolonging our happiness to the next life. By following Quixote religiously, disciples can make a heaven on earth, thus eliminating the need for an otherworldly kingdom of God.261

259 I am interpreting the “kingdom of God” traditionally, as heaven, an interpretation that Unamuno will change.


261 Yorba-Gray asserts that “Unamuno is not proposing a replacement for Christianity, but rather a type of quixotic-Christian syncretism in which religious questions are considered in the light of the national soul.” I disagree with this. He does not think, as I do, that Unamuno has effectively ruled out discussion of the next life: “Don Quijote will
Immortality

As a result of envisioning the kingdom of god on earth, Unamuno revises his definition of immortality. If the kingdom of god is on earth, there is clearly no afterlife. If there is no afterlife, immortality cannot mean a soul’s physical continuance after death, so for Unamuno immortality changes. What immortality is becomes wedded to Unamuno’s term *erostratismo*, which, as I said earlier, is the longing for immortality, named after Herostratus who set fire to the temple of Artemis with the sole purpose of seeking fame or notoriety. Unamuno completely changed his attitude about Quixote’s own *erostratismo*, and it is perhaps because he realized that immortality need not be anything other than fame throughout history. If Quixote can be immortal, then flesh-and-bone humans can also be immortal, but on earth. To be immortal becomes synonymous with to-be-remembered rather than to somehow physically or psychically live after death. In Quixotism, where the kingdom of god is on earth, immortality becomes not only possible, but within our power. By pulling the kingdom of God to earth, Unamuno has

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262 As immortality is an endless theme in Unamuno’s works, I will not be able to discuss it outside of its Quixotist context.

263 Unamuno characteristically fears death less than historical annihilation, and seeks immortality of name rather than of the body. His writings are filled with passages like this one, which reveal Unamuno’s preoccupation with non-existence: “Can you conceive of yourself is not existing? Try it; concentrate your imagination upon it and imagine yourself without sight, nor hearing, nor touch, nor the remembrance of anything. Try it, and perhaps he will bring upon yourself that anguish which visits us when we least expect it, and you will feel the not that tightens around your souls gullet, through which your spirit breathes. Like the woodpecker in the oak, care pecks at our heart with its beak so as to build its nest there” (OLDQ, 255).
shifted the power from God to god; from the other world to this world. In Quixotism, humans become responsible for their own destiny.

The Will

The shift from heaven to earth implied a shift in what it means to be immortal, which in turn implied a shift in control from God to humans, and that shift naturally leads Unamuno to an emphasis on the human will instead of divine intervention. The apostle Paul can say “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,”264 which no human can literally say about Quixote, but which Unamuno does say about Quixote—metaphorically—and what he means is that he gains strength from believing that he can succeed as Quixote succeeded. Unamuno is inspired, not possessed, by Quixote, and that they are equally powerful is a difficult point to overstate. Typically, inspiration is not recognized as a potent enough force, and it is not typically seen as the driving force behind religion. But inspiration is no less powerful than divine intervention, and one might question if divine intervention is not just a metaphor for inspiration. Unamuno would say that although I cannot ask Quixote to literally help me through this or that situation like a Christian can ask Christ, there is a real sense in which I can be inspired by Quixote, along with a suspicion about the extent to which Christians are actually being physically aided by God. For Unamuno, the kind of psychological help I can get from Quixote comes to me in the form of imagination, which is underestimated (and which is, arguably from the point of view of outside Christianity, the same source of the Christian’s relation to Christ). If I am inspired to do something because of Quixote, then he is working through me, really and

264 Galatians 2:20
literarily, though not literally. By calling Quixote god—in fictional body and soul—Unamuno has given his readers a way to creatively make themselves follow in the footsteps of Quixote, and that kind of inspiration can move mountains. Moreover, because of his quality as a fiction one can “become” Quixote in a way that one can never “become” the historical Christ.

If the god is a fiction and not a divinity, and if one can receive no physical help from god but can be inspired by him, then it is the will that ultimately is responsible for action. The will is also an important component of Christianity, but one can always in the end appeal to divine help. By ripping divinity away from God, Unamuno is effectively forcing us to be responsible for how we live. Without divine intervention, Unamuno is implying that we must decide for ourselves how to act, and for that we have Quixote as a model, who is himself driven by his will.265

Unamuno is in part responding to those who would rather be “cautious” than risk recognizing the power of the will. Unamuno would say that these people may be suffering from spiritual sloth, they may be hiding instead of acting. It is arguably easier to wait for God to work through one than it is to make decisions which may turn out to be erroneous. With the left hand, Unamuno is accusing his era of being weak-willed, and with the right, he is offering a cure in the willful Quixote. For Unamuno, what is missing in the world is a symbol of commitment, so he chooses as his god the character who symbolizes an unyielding will rather than a divinity who acts in place of a weak will.

265 I disagree with Unamuno’s assertion that Quixote was a Christian: “Don Quixote was, as we have already said, a faithful disciple of Christ, and Jesus of Nazareth made of his life and eternal lesson in the fields and roads of a tiny Galilee. He went up to only one city, to Jerusalem alone, and Don Quixote went up only to Barcelona, the Jerusalem of our Knight” (OLDQ, 235). Despite this, Quixote does not speak like a Christian—he makes no mention of Christ working through him, and without believing in divine intervention, Christianity falls apart. As much as he may want Quixote to be a Christian, Unamuno does little to interpret him as one.
Once religion becomes earth-bound, it infuses human beings with power; in Quixotism we are no longer defenseless beings asking God to do our bidding. It is humans who must act, and the responsibility that comes from Quixotism is heavy and should not be underestimated; Quixotism is a robust and demanding ethical religion.

A New Faith

By changing one letter in Spanish, Unamuno redefines the term faith; in Quixotism, faith no longer means to creer (to believe) but to crear (to create, to be creative).266 In what may be his closest tie to American pragmatist thought, Unamuno effectively argues that when one takes the divinity out of God, having faith means that we can create the world in which we want to live, that we can actually make the world different.267 In choosing crear over creer, Unamuno is giving yet more power to the individual.268 In Christian terms, faith means creer, or belief, and, although for Unamuno belief has merit because it requires the risk of error, etc., it still leaves the power in God’s hands, leaving Christians helpless and having to ask God to give them this faith

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266 Doris King Arjona writes in 1928, “Unamuno finds for this longing a sublime satisfaction in the power of the will to believe in the existence of the thing it needs, identifying itself with the faith which he has defined as not creer but crear, and this creative faith, arrayed in absurd isolation against the hosts of reason, finds for him its perfect expression in the madness of Don Quijote.” See Doris King Arjona, “’La Voluntad’ and ‘Abulia’ in Contemporary Spanish Ideology,” Revue Hispanique 74 (1928): 618.

267 Jose Balseiro summarizes Unamuno’s position on the creation out of faith, and faith’s relation to the will: “things are so much truer the more they are believed; and it is it not intelligence but will that imposes them upon the world. It is courage that creates all truth. Therefore Unamuno fights against positivism and technicism, against all—periods and doctrines—essentially materialist and pessimistic. Don Quixote did not stand for ideas, but for the spirit. Unamuno’s struggle has always been a spiritual one.” See José A. Balseiro, "The Quixote of Contemporary Spain: Miguel de Unamuno " Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 49, no. 2 (1934): 646.

268 In Sentimiento, Unamuno adds: “Faith, therefore, if not a creative force, is the fruit of the will, and its function is to create. Faith, in a certain sense, creates it object. And faith in God consists in creating God” (TSL, 193).
(“Lord, I believe: help my unbelief!”269). In Quixotism, humans are in control of the world and their destinies, and so Unamuno says that “with good reason has it been said that nothing is impossible to the believer, and that there is nothing like faith to season and soften the hardest and bitterest bread” (OLDQ, 37). This does not mean that Unamuno believes that God is literally going to intervene and make the world better, but through faith we can make the hard bread softer. Quixote created Mambrino’s helmet and Dulcinea through faith, says Unamuno. He not only believed that the basin was a helmet and that Aldonza was a lady, but he turned them into what he saw; he treated them as such and so they became a helmet and a lady.270 After this, one can no longer say that that basin is just a basin or that Dulcinea is just Aldonza: Quixote changed them. About Dulcinea, Unamuno says: “[h]e had created her, true enough, he had created her in pure faith, he had created her with the fire of his passion” (OLDQ, 276). Whoever Dulcinea was before—Alzonda Lorenzo—she is not the same person now; she is now Dulcinea del Toboso—and not just to Quixote.271

It should be clear by now that it is not just that Quixote’s world looks better to him than Antonia’s world of so-called reality, but that it actually is better, for Unamuno. Quixote makes it better, unlike Antonia, who does nothing but passively perceive that which is obvious and

269 Mark 9:24

270 Unamuno again comments on this scene, highlighting the way that courage and faith are involved in making truth: “That's the way, my Lord Don Quixote. That is the way of naked courage, insisting aloud and in sight of all, defending one's claims with one's life; that is the way of creating any and all truth. The more one believes in the thing, the truer it is believed, and it is not intelligence, but will, which imposes this truth” (OLDQ, 142).

271 In the Judeo-Christian context, all significant change is recognized by a name-change: Abram became Abraham, Simon became Peter, etc. But, in that tradition it is God who has the power to change names and, thereby, to create. Unamuno is giving humans the power to create when he advises us to look to Quixote. Quixote changes his own name from Alonso Quijano to Don Quixote de la Mancha, and he changed Aldonza into Dulcinea.
requires no imagination. Faith for Unamuno is an act of the will, and it can change the world.272

In *Sentimiento*, Unamuno sharpens his description:

> Faith is not the mere adherence of the intellect to an abstract principle; it is not the recognition of a theoretical truth, a process in which the will merely sets in motion our faculty of comprehension; faith is an act of the will—it is a movement of the soul towards a practical truth, towards a person, towards something that makes us not merely comprehend life, but that makes us live (TSL, 191).

Far from belief, or a correspondence for the intellect, Unamuno’s conception of faith is tied to the will. In cancelling out divinity, Unamuno makes people responsible for shaping their own world through faith, as Quixote did.273 Faith is no longer a question of belief, but of action.

Faith for Unamuno requires persistence, which is yet another virtue of Quixotism. It is Quixote’s faith that keeps him optimistic because he is continually recreating his world.274 Even when he had been beaten by Samson Carrasco, Quixote did not consider himself defeated.275

272 Cascardi uses similar language: “Don Quixote succeeds in elevating the world of the ordinary to the plane of special valuation by seeing the ordinary as extraordinary, as surrounded by an aura of magic.” By seeing the world as magical, Quixote actually elevates his world to a different plane. Both Unamuno and Cascardi acknowledge the power that Quixote has in changing his world, and attributes it to more than just “rosy glasses.” However, that is not to say that it is necessarily wrong to say that Quixote sees the world differently than others do, because, that will also be true when he creates his world. As long as it is not simply a matter of sight, then Unamuno would agree with the statement. Cascardi, *The Bounds of Reason*, 21.

273 Eric Ziolkowski, though not coming from an Unamunian perspective, summarizes Unamuno’s point: “For Don Quixote believing is seeing. If one need not see “truth” (verdad) in order to “believe” (creer) it, then whatever objects one sees may be transformed in accordance with one’s fantasy” and he claims that this is an epistemological question, with which Unamuno might agree. Quixotic faith transforms my world, so what I know will always come second to what I want to know, and therefore what I create. See Eric Jozef Ziolkowski, *The Sanctification of Don Quixote: From Hidalgo to Priest* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 20.

274 Unamuno says: “and Don Quixote does not surrender, because he is not a pessimist, and he fights on. He is not a pessimist because pessimism is begotten by vanity, it is a matter of fashion, pure intellectual snobbism, and Don Quixote is neither vain nor modern with any sort of modernity” (TSL, 325-326).

275 Jose Balseiro explained how for Unamuno, the will creates the world, and the apparent madman is the one who is courageous enough to impose his will onto the world: “for Unamuno, the courage of the purest water is that which resists not merely a shock to the reason or decay of fortune or loss of honor, but also being taken for a madman or an idiot. This is the courage needed in Spain, and her soul remains paralysed [sic] because of the lack of it. Things are so much truer the more they are believed; and it is it not intelligence but will that imposes them upon the world. It is...
Unamuno was once ashamed of Quixote for taking his defeats as victories (and so perhaps charging Quixote with bad faith or self-deceit), but in time he came to revel in Quixote’s ability to take a defeat as a victory. Even when he is defeated in the eyes of common sense, Quixote interprets the situations with faith, \(^{276}\) which means he interprets every situation in the best possible way. Quixote is not blind for Unamuno, he is faithful, and Unamuno is suggesting that if we were to be more like Quixote, then our world would be better. We would not lose hope so easily if were not so ‘realistic,’ where realistic means being afraid of taking chances. Unamuno is suggesting that perhaps it is our realism that gets in the way. Instead of interpreting Quixote as the one who is deluded, maybe it is we who are deluded when we see stone walls where there are none. Perhaps if we had more faith in ourselves we would create a better world, implies Unamuno. Through his faith, Quixote created a world for himself in which nothing is impossible. \(^{277}\) Unamuno desires that all of his readers exert the same kind of passionate faith to create that kind of limitless world. \(^{278}\)

courage that creates all truth. Therefore Unamuno fights against positivism and technicism, against all—periods and doctrines—essentially materialist and pessimistic. Don Quixote did not stand for ideas, but for the spirit. Unamuno’s struggle has always been a spiritual one.” Balseiro, "The Quixote of Contemporary Spain," 646.

\(^{276}\) Unamuno says to Quixote: “But you, peerless Knight, cudgeled and nearly undone, feel yourself fortunate, and consider the adventure a proper misfortune for a knight-errant, and by this thought you elevate your defeat and translate it into victory. Ah, if only we, your faithful, felt ourselves fortunate to be cudgeled -- truly a feat worthy of knights-errant! It is better to be a dead lion than a live dog” (OLDQ, 47).

\(^{277}\) In a 2005 Danish film entitled Adams Æbler, the main character is a priest who strikes me as quite quixotic. To those in the film, and viewing the film, this priest’s life is a hell on Earth, replete with one tragedy after another—but he lives as though it were full of blessings. One of the characters—a neo-Nazi—makes it his mission to deprive the priest of his faith, and almost kills him in his successful attempt, the result of which is the priest’s, like Quixote’s, renunciation of God and everything good. At this point he technically sees “reality” but he is destroyed as a functioning human in society. Why he returns to his former way of thinking is not clear, but I believe that it is because the neo-Nazi repents of his sin and visits him in the hospital, after which point both are converted to this kind of quixotic faith. I take the point of the movie to be that life is made better through quixotic faith. See Anders Thomas Jensen, Adams Æbler, (Denmark: 2005).

\(^{278}\) Ziolkowski describes Quixote’s faith-dilemma this way: “the problem of his madness per se leads to and is ultimately eclipsed by a more complex issue: his trying to sustain his faith in his illusions once he starts to be confronted and thwarted by the harsh contingencies of reality. This problem is inherent in the quixotic principle.
The How of Quixotism

If Quixotism fails to provide clear rules concerning how to act, then one might be tempted to feel let off the ethical hook, especially if Unamuno is right about the pervasiveness of abulia. Though not always, objections dressed as well-intentioned inquiries are often excuses made by spirits suffering from abulia. Unamuno’s challenge to his readers is that they commit to figuring out the answer to the “how” question interpretively, coping without a set of rules. Unamuno rejects any spoon-feeding when it comes to religion, and he would say that anyone who wants to escape abulia and to live a meaningful life will not wait to be given a set of rules. His point is that we should not underestimate our power of interpretation. In a very significant way, in Quixotism, the what is more or less the how: Quixotism is the what, and Quixote is the how. In other words, imitating Quixote is how one practices Quixotism.

Be virtuous, as Quixote was virtuous, Unamuno would say. For Unamuno it is helpful to look to Quixote’s character to determine how to have faith and how to prioritize the will. Unamuno suggests that we “play the Quixote in dead earnest, not in a routine and unbelieving way” (OLDQ, 244). This will mean using Quixote as an exemplar, which does not mean that we ought to literally find a woman and fight for her honor, to roam the world trying to win her, but it does mean something close to that, metaphorically speaking. To practice Quixotism means to stand up for justice, faith, love, hope, and to do these things with courage, with the will, and at

While the real world is a given, the ideals, dreams, and illusions that conflict with it are produced by the imagination. In order to prevail they must be believed in by the individual imagining them, regardless of how mad or sane he or she may be.” Although he calls reality that which I have been calling “appearances,” the point stands: Quixote’s madness comes from the clashing of two conflicting worlds, or at least two conflicting narratives of the same world. See Ziolkowski, The Sanctification of Don Quixote: From Hidalgo to Priest, 18.
the risk of ridicule. In a 1906 essay entitled “El Sepulcro de Don Quijote” (“The Sepulcher of Don Quixote”), inserted as an introductory essay to the second edition of *Vida*, Unamuno explains what he sees as problematic around him:

> With them everything is a matter of sensuality: they are enamored sensually even of ideas, the great ideas. They are incapable of marrying a great and pure idea and raising a family with it. The most they can do with ideas is to cohabit with them. They take them as mistresses -- even for just a night (OLDQ, 17).  

One of the topics that springs up throughout Unamuno’s career is commitment: he believes that we all ought to commit to something, and metaphorically marry it. The exact object of one’s commitment interests Unamuno less than a person’s ability to make and keep the commitment. We must be willing to fight for our principles. This commitment will entail gaining what Unamuno calls an “interior life,” without which, he says, “there is no exterior life” (OLDQ, 116). Unamuno would have us choose an ideal that we can commit to, and then use all of our moral courage to marry it and fight for it as Quixote fought for Dulcinea. Unamuno tells us that ideals can be found anywhere: “there is nothing in the world that is base or gross for anyone who wants to squeeze an ideal out of it” (OLDQ, 113).

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279 Unamuno might have more appropriately used the term “ideals” instead of ideas, but in any case the metaphor of marriage is a helpful one.

280 In an essay from 1900, entitled “Pudor Dañino” (“Harmful Shyness”), Unamuno shows signs of struggle between whether an interior life must be present in order to have an exterior life, or vice versa: “nuestro héroe, Don Quijote, apenas tenía vida interior; toda su locura se exteriorizaba en actos, no era un hombre que se entretuviese en zahondar su propio espíritu. He estado creyendo esto por mucho tiempo, y, aunque todavía lo creo, se ha templado y modificado no poco esa creencia mía.” (“Our hero, Don Quixote, hardly had an interior life; all of his madness was exteriorized in acts, he was not a man who enjoyed digging into his own spirit. I have believed this for a very long time, and, although I still believe it, this belief of mine has been tempered and modified not a small amount.” See OCE VII 1271). Unamuno’s tempering of this idea is a small hint of the turn that will come in the next two years. In *Vida*, Unamuno seems to lean closer to the notion that in order to have an interior life, an exterior life is necessary, despite this statement to the contrary. It is not important to resolve this debate, only to realize that for Unamuno both an exterior and an interior life are crucial to Quixotism.
Unamuno wants to see action spring up where thinking currently reigns; less caution and analysis:

Rather than investigate whether evil entities are windmills or giants, it is better to follow the voice that speaks from the heart and charge down upon them, for every generous charge emanates from the dream of life. We derive wisdom from our acts, and not from our contemplations (OLDQ, 320).

Along with equating wisdom to Quixote’s madness, here he is claiming that wisdom is derived primarily from acting, and not thinking, reinforcing his claim that “it is not intelligence but will which makes the world” (OLDQ, 128).

In many ways, for Unamuno being Quixotic is both simplistic and also easier said than done: commit yourself to some ideal. But the obvious question that surfaces is: what is the right ideal? Who can judge whether an ideal is worth living for? Most importantly, what if I make a mistake? The form of this mistake can be minor or it can be drastic, and in the case of the drastic mistake there will be drastic consequences. First, deciphering what a wrong ideal is can be difficult, as Unamuno shows in his unique interpretation of Quixote’s freeing of the galley slaves. Many would consider Quixote’s freeing the galley slaves to be an error in his judgment (as Unamuno himself did before his turn to Quixote). As we saw, Unamuno read deeper into the story and interpreted it as Quixote’s deeper understanding of justice: that an act cannot be judged right or wrong based on the immediate positive or negative consequences. Quixote’s being stoned by the galley-slaves does not make his freeing them unjust. So, we cannot tell if an ideal

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281 This idea that wisdom derives from action and not thought feeds Cascardi’s point that Quixote’s role comes first and foremost, and all thought comes afterward, as well as his point that the body is a source of knowledge. As a virtuous man who has ingrained the virtues into himself through practice, Quixote does not always need to think every time he is to act. This idea that wisdom may come from acting also reinforces Unamuno’s point that thinking has no monopoly on wisdom, and that actions are severely underrated when it comes to wisdom or learning.
is a wrong ideal solely by the consequences that it brings; it might even bring death, but worthy ideals can lead to death.

Another response to the question: how do I know if I am yoked to a good ideal? involves looking at the intentions behind the commitment. In 1898, before Unamuno’s turn to Quixote, Unamuno faulted Quixote’s good intentions quoting the familiar lines, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” But in 1904, Unamuno espouses the opposite point of view: “the pure of heart see God in everything, and they forgive everything in his name. The intentions of other men are outside our influence, and evil lies only in the intention” (OLDQ, 250). The 1904 Unamuno promotes action at the risk of failure, perhaps as a response to the abulia that he sees in Spain. Even misguided action is an attempt to overcome abulia, and Unamuno is interested in anything that resists the sense that one cannot act until one is certain of a successful outcome.

Though Unamuno might discourage us from literally imitating Quixote’s actions, he would encourage us to dig deeper into what lies at the heart of Quixote’s actions: risk, virtue, commitment, discipline, madness, etc. The supporting characters in Quixote’s life represent, for Unamuno, the status quo of the time. “Carnal” Sancho is a man who lusts after money and power, but who, for the most part, is lazy and unvirtuous; he would spend all of his time eating and sleeping if he could. Antonia represents one who hides behind the crowd and will never stake her life on anything. In Sanson Carrasco—who is initially defeated by, but who then defeats Quixote in the final battle—Unamuno sees a man who represents sheer envy. Carrasco stop Quixote from practicing knight-errantry for no other reason than because he does not have

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282 “Mas Sobre Don Quijote” (OCE VII 1200-1202).
the will that Quixote has. For Unamuno envy is everywhere: many people would rather ruin what a good, happy, or successful person is doing than have to confront their own lack of goodness, happiness, or success. The curate and the barber are weak-willed as are the duke and duchess, for Unamuno, and the rest of the minor characters who mock Quixote suffer from a lack of imagination. These lesser characters cannot picture themselves otherwise than how they are, and they are not willing to suffer ridicule; they will never step beyond the comforts of common sense. Unamuno believes that if anyone today were to try to live Quixotically in this way, others would call it madness.

Of course Quixote does not suffer from spiritual sloth, and for this reason he is and remains good, happy and successful until he dies, for Unamuno:

He was always good, good first of all and above all, good with a native goodness, and this goodness, which was the foundation of Alonso Quixano's soundness and of his

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283 In the case of Carrasco, Unamuno believes that he is malicious for denying Quixote the life he has chosen for himself, and that he does this out of envy and pride: “Which is the worst folly, that which comes from the head or that which springs from the heart, the infirmity of imagination or that of desire? And the man who deliberately or willingly plays the madman is sick or twisted in his will, and the remedy for this condition is more severe than the one for infirmities of judgment; those who, like his worship the graduate, have minds brimming over with cunning sanity, and in addition have been stuffed with scholastic commonplaces in the classrooms of Salamanca, tend to have wills maddened by evil passion, rancor, pride, and envy. For why should Samson Carrasco want to fight Don Quixote?” (OLDQ, 184).

284 Balseiro reiterates Unamuno’s plea for the Spanish people to gain courage and wake up from their moral slumbers: “For Unamuno, the courage of the purest water is that which resists not merely a shock to the reason or decay of fortune or loss of honor, but also being taken for a madman or an idiot. This is the courage needed in Spain, and her soul remains paralysed [sic] because of the lack of it.” Balseiro, “The Quixote of Contemporary Spain,” 646.

285 Unamuno might respond to these naysayers in this way: “You want to avoid stirring up the lees of your soul or to have them stirred for you; what you shun is the sounding of the depths of your soul. You seek the sterile tranquility of those who prop themselves up by leaning against institutions, mere depositories of dogmas, and you are amused by Sancho's nonsense. And you label as paradox whatever tickles your soul. You are lost, hopelessly lost. Spiritual sloth is your perdition” (OLDQ, 119).

286 Quixote adopts the name “Alonso Quijano el Bueno” or “Alonso Quixano the Good” on his deathbed, and claims that he has earned that title by his good deeds, so, although he has supposedly repented from his madness and no longer claims to be a knight-errant, the actions that he performed—better stated, the virtues that he practiced—during his life as a knight errant are what he is referring to when he says that he has merited that name.
exemplary death, this same goodness was the basis of his madness end of his most exemplary life (OLDQ, 310).

In analyzing the passages that he does, Unamuno is revealing what he considers valuable, and choosing this passage reveals that Unamuno thinks goodness ought to be the goal of life, not just for Quixote but for all of us. Unamuno looks at Quixote with admiration and insinuates that the world would be better off with more “madmen” who are willing to be laughed at, so long as their goal is to be good:

Good without adjective or theologies, or additions of any kind: good and nothing but good. And if such a noble title comes to be confused with that of fool, it does not matter. You in your goodness went all the way to madness, among so many wise mockers; that is, among so many bad people. For in nothing as much as in mockery is human badness evident; the devil is the great mocker, he is the emperor and father of all mockers. And if laughter can become holy and liberating, in short, good, it will not be mocking laughter but the laughter of contentment (OLDQ, 198).\(^{287}\)

To imitate Quixote well means to commit oneself to an ideal, and by the exercise of one’s will, to fight for it, even if it seems crazy to the Antonias and Carrascos of the world. It means seeking and practicing the virtues; jumping into an uncertainty as though it were certain. Finding which ideal to pursue may be the biggest challenge for an individual, but that is why Unamuno gives us Quixote as a model. With Quixote, the religious individual can say “I know who I am!” (OLDQ, 49).

Clearly ethics cannot be left to one’s intentions, which even Unamuno would admit, so to find the bounds of Quixotism as a religion, we have to look at Quixote himself. Quixote was, at

\(^{287}\) Unamuno sarcastically paraphrases those who keep the status quo and who believe that Quixote is too dangerous a character to imitate: “A fine fix we would be in, no doubt about it, if everyman went off on his own, one righting wrongs, the other preaching doctrine, one spearing windmills and the other founding Societies. Into the rut, everyone into the rut! The rut is the only way to order” (OLDQ, 214).
bottom, ethical. The easy but erroneous conclusion from this statement would be that Quixote was only ethical, and therefore not religious. Quixote’s actions did not transgress the ethical realm, but that does not mean that Quixote was not a religious figure. Quixote is both ethical and religious: his religiousness consists in his passion, his willingness to stake everything on his beliefs. His ethics consists in his refusing to let that passion turn him into Abraham. Dried up brains and all, Quixote never loses touch with this world. Always and everywhere, Quixote can explain himself to Sancho and others. In short, Quixote never falls silent. There is always a reason for Quixote to act as he does, and the reason is never a test from God. To be ethical need not entail abandoning religion, and to be religious ought not to require renouncing the ethical. Followers of Quixote are likewise called to be both ethical and religious, to overcome the temptation to sacrifice one for the others, to reject the false dilemma. As long as there is always an earthly explanation for a religious action, then one remains within the ethical realm. As long as those religious actions can be questioned and debated by the community, then one remains in the realm where the reigning terms are right and wrong—the ethical.

In this chapter I have tried to philosophically develop Quixotism as a religion using Unamuno’s descriptions and his analyses. Quixotism is an alternative to transcendent Christianity, and can be seen as a parallel to it, but grounded in this earth. For Unamuno, Quixote is a hero-god who can inspire action and, through faith, can bring about a heaven on earth. In the next chapter I will defend the claim that this is what Kierkegaard is describing in Religiousness A. I think that Kierkegaard, through Climacus, is also describing an earth-bound religion that contains nothing of Christianity’s transcendence. Religiousness A is, like Quixotism, a way of living religiously on earth without looking outward toward the heaven or to a god outside of the one we can find in the imagination.
Chapter 4: Unamuno’s Quixotism as an Incarnation of Religiousness A

In the last chapter, I concluded that Quixotism is best described as a religion, and in this chapter I add that it is best described as a religion of immanence, and, as such, is an incarnation of Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A. This conclusion is helpful for both Kierkegaard and Unamuno scholars in their own right, because both thinkers contribute to a description of a religion of immanence. Additionally, interpreting Quixotism as an incarnation of Religiousness A results in new and exciting possibilities. In his exile period (1924-1930), Unamuno showed us that Quixotism could be used as a political force to “fight for justice,” as Unamuno would say. Unamuno scholars know that during this time, Unamuno stepped into the role of the political Quixote as he had until then only narrated. If Quixotism is an incarnation of Religiousness A, as I claim it is, then it means that Religiousness A can also be used politically. Theoretically, one could have assumed that Religiousness A would have political consequences, but to see it in practice in Quixotism gives Religiousness A legs to stand on. Quixotism brings Religiousness A into sharper focus as a plausible religion that could have effects in the real world. In this chapter I make the two following claims: 1) Quixotism is an incarnation of Religiousness A, and 2) as such, Religiousness A has the potential for effecting political change, as it did in Unamuno’s Quixotism. I begin this two-fold process by restating why it is helpful to connect Quixotism to Religiousness A.

That few Kierkegaard scholars use Religiousness A as anything more than a stepping stone from ethics to Christianity means that they are missing an entire way of being religious that has nothing to do with offense and absurd absolute paradoxes. Despite Judge William’s and
Climacus’s warnings that to be ethical is demanding, to be religious, arduous, and to be Christian, just short of impossible, the community of Kierkegaard scholars still by and large insists on trying to tackle ethics or Christianity without seriously considering the ethico-religious. I blame Climacus for this, because if he had stressed Religiousness A more, then certainly it would receive more attention, but as he did not, his readers and interpreters follow suit. As much as he and they claim that becoming a Christian is difficult, the lack of weight they put on Religiousness A belies this claim. Not dwelling on the demands of Religiousness A makes it look fairly easy to get from ethics to Christianity. Often this ends up looking like a quick leap from ethics to the depths of Christianity through a quick and shallow rinse in Religiousness A. This hasty move reveals a failure to believe Climacus’s claim that it is impossible to get to Christianity without dwelling in Religiousness A.

On the other side, those who do understand the cost of Christianity tend to run away from it. Unfortunately, for many people, the term “religion” in Kierkegaard has become synonymous with the absurd paradox and the offensive God-man. Instead of being blind to the danger, these people perhaps come to associate the danger with all religion, and unfortunately overlook the good for fear of the bad. What remains, it seems to me, are Christians who do not understand the danger, and ethicists (or aesthetes, even) who only see the danger. In both cases there is no room or need for Religiousness A. But, if we are more careful with the terminology, and confine the danger to its proper place in Silentian faith and Religiousness B, then it will perhaps become clear that Religiousness A is passionate but not inherently dangerous. If Religiousness A were not anemic in Kierkegaard’s corpus compared to ethics and Christianity, if it were itself a robust and full concept, then we could see its positive characteristics more clearly without doing as much defensive work to distinguish it from ethics and Christianity.
Unamuno—the philosopher of flesh and bone—is the perfect thinker to provide the proper nourishment to Religiousness A. As I said in the last chapter, what Unamuno sees in Quixote is an armor-clad ethical god, and in Quixotism, a ferrous religion capable of redefining faith, encouraging commitment, and granting an earthly immortality to humans. Quixotism shows promise of being able to nourish Religiousness A back to health, and to restore the color to its sallow cheeks. In Quixotism, Unamuno offers individuals a way to be religious without sacrificing ethics. If Quixotism can revitalize Religiousness A, as I think it can, then not only can religion and ethics align themselves conceptually, but—as more importantly—there will exist a full-blooded religion whose god is a fiction that can nevertheless move people to reinterpret themselves and recreate their worlds. The first half of this chapter suggests that Climacus and Unamuno were pointing to the same possibility of a religion of immanence. If taken seriously, this new religion could mean a world of ethico-religious individuals who are committed to their ideals and their communities, and who, in the words of a very young Kierkegaard, find their truth and the idea for which they will live and die. 288

In Postscript, Climacus’s ethical and religious spheres are not independent of one another, and in chapter two I said that this explains Climacus’s use of the term “ethico-religious” to obscure what would otherwise be a clean split between the two spheres, and to reinforce the idea that religion can also be ethical. Keeping this in mind, I functionally distinguished Religiousness A from ethics by pointing out the following terms which are not typically associated with ethics: dying to oneself, venture, lunacy, and suffering. These, along with the Christian terms uncertainty and risk gave Religiousness A an identity of its own. In chapter

288 In a very early journal entry, Kierkegaard writes: “the crucial thing is to find a truth that is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die....What is truth but to live for an idea?” (JP I A 75).
three, I pointed out that the essential elements of Unamuno’s Quixotism were the following characteristics: Quixote’s status as a fictional god, the importance of the will, faith as a creative act, achieving the kingdom of god on earth, madness, and suffering. Combining Climacus’s and Unamuno’s terms, I will now graft Quixotism onto Religiousness A to demonstrate why I consider them to be describing the same kind of religion. If I am right that Quixotism can productively be thought of as an incarnation of Religiousness A, then we can understand Religiousness A and its potential consequences better, as well as understand Unamuno’s Quixotism as a robust and powerful ethical religion.

Part I: Quixotism is an Incarnation of Religiousness A

What Quixotism is Not

My first task is threefold and negative: 1) to distinguish Quixotism from Unamuno’s Christianity, emphasizing the non-divine nature of Quixote; 2) to unlatch Quixote from Fear and Trembling’s knight of faith, freeing him of the weight of that conflation; and finally, and 3) to untie any remaining and tempting comparisons between Quixotism and Religiousness B (Climacus’s Christianity).\(^{289}\) The positive result of clearing the ground around Quixotism is that Religiousness A begins to gain an identity of its own, and it quickly it becomes clear that Religiousness A and Quixotism are describing the same thing: a religion of immanence.

In chapter three I said that Quixotism is a world away—literally—from Unamuno’s

\(^{289}\) Though there are some similarities between Unamuno’s Christianity, Silentian faith, and Climacus’s Christianity, I am treating them separately to highlight their differences.
understanding of Christianity. Granted, Christ and Quixote share certain personality traits, but
Quixote is a fiction and Christ is God and man. The result is that Quixotism is a religion steeped
in this life on earth, whereas Christianity consistently points to the next life, in heaven. I will not
rehearse my argument from chapter three but it bears repeating that Quixote’s humanity without
divinity marks the difference between him and Christ, and, therefore, between Quixotism and
Unamuno’s Christianity.

Quixote is not a Knight of Faith

Quixote is not Christ and, despite speculation to the contrary, neither is he a Silentian knight of
faith. The Unamuno-Kierkegaard scholarship is speckled with an understandable but ultimately
erroneous likeness imposed on these two. Whether Quixote should be considered a Silentian
knight of faith290 has been a long-standing debate, prompted in some cases by Unamuno
himself.291 Unamuno calls Quixote a knight of faith eight times in Vida292 most likely because

290 For differing reasons and to differing extents, the following critics accept the comparison between Quixote and
the knight of faith: Antonio Sanchez Barbudo, Albert Levi, R.E. Batchelor, Anthony Cascardi, and Dezso Csejtei.
The following do not think that Quixote is a knight of faith: Jesus Antonio-Collado, Donald Palmer, Eric
Ziolkowski, and Jan Evans. See Sánchez Barbudo, "La Formacion del Pensamiento de Unamuno. Una Experiencia
Company, 1972), 107-112 and Cascardi, The Bounds of Reason, 17 and Dezso Csejtei, "The Knight of Faith on
Collado, Kierkegaard y Unamuno: La Existencia Religiosa (Madrid: Gredos, 1962), 14 and Donald D. Palmer,
"Unamuno's Don Quijote and Kierkegaard's Abraham," Revista de Estudios Hispanicos 3, no. 69 (1969): 304 and
Ziolkowski, "Don Quijote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual." and Jan E. Evans,

291 Donald Palmer convincingly suggests that Unamuno’s use of the Kierkegaardian phrase is no accident, and that
Unamuno had indeed read Fear and Trembling by the time he was writing Vida, thereby weighing in favorably on
the influence debate. However, while Palmer gives Unamuno a full five years to read Fear and Trembling (1900-
1905), we now know that if he read Fear and Trembling, he would have had a much smaller window to do so,
because from the time he acquired the Samlede Værker to the time he finished writing Vida was only about ten
months, March-December 1904. We know for sure that Unamuno was reading Kierkegaard as early as May 9,1904
and, assuming that he read the volumes in order, he would have been able to get to Fear and Trembling in that time,
Quixote and the knight of faith seem to share the following categories: faith, the absurd, madness, and alienation. I think the problem is semantic above all. In many of these cases, Silentio and Unamuno use the same terms, but they do not mean the same thing, so it is only on a superficial level that one could call Quixote a knight of faith. Though Quixote might look like the knight of faith on the outside, the inner resemblance is weak, and a much stronger connection exists between Quixote and the tragic hero.

Besides the plain observation that Quixote and the knight of faith are both called “knights,” there are other, deeper confusing similarities here. Unamuno says that Quixote has faith, and so one might be tempted to think that he means the same thing as Silentio. But, as we have already seen, Quixote has redefined faith—faith means to create a new reality—whereas the knight of faith’s faith involves giving up the finite and getting it back, says Silentio. Put this way, these two ideas that are both called “faith” could not be any more different. When Quixote turns Aldonza Lorenzo into Dulcinea, he does not go through a double-movement like the knight of faith does. He has not sacrificed Aldonza, but he has created Dulcinea, which is why I think that “creation” is a better description of Unamuno’s faith than “double-movement.”

Another (and similar) confusion might arise over the term “absurd.” Silentio calls the knight of faith’s faith absurd, which, again, is a tempting trait to attribute to Quixote. On a common and superficial level, we might say that Quixote’s fighting windmills is absurd. However, further inspection tells us that Quixote’s acts are not absurd in the Silentian way.

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as it appears in the third volume, after Either/Or I and II. For Unamuno’s discussion of reading Kierkegaard, see his letter to Pedro Múgica from May 9, 2004: Unamuno, Cartas Inéditas de Miguel de Unamuno, 329.

When Quixote turns a basin into a helmet, he is not rejecting or sacrificing his understanding, he is gaining a new understanding. Those commentators who claimed that the knight of faith works on two levels—which I rejected in chapter two—would be right to say that Quixote works on two levels. Quixote creates a new way of seeing things that is still intelligible, whereas the knight of faith steps into the unintelligible. What is crucial to Quixotism is that I keep my understanding: Quixote has created a helmet out of a basin, which I (as representative of the community), also now see as a helmet. Quixote has not confounded my understanding, so he is not technically absurd. I realize that it is still tempting to call Quixote absurd (even for Unamuno), but he would not be absurd to Silentio because he remains within the understanding. Quixote does not go beyond what one can communicate or understand; he only asks that we change our plane of understanding to recognize that we have some control over our perceptions.

Next is the related category of madness, which for Unamuno is wisdom and for Silentio entails a teleological suspension of the ethical. I concluded earlier that Unamunian madness may be the same as Climacian lunacy, but neither one describes Silentio’s madness. The madness of the knight of faith stems from the teleological suspense of the ethical: Abraham suspends the ethical and becomes incomprehensible to it—which is technically called madness. What Quixote does is not mad, it is just sophisticated. The difference is that Quixote remains understandable from the point of view of the ethical; he is never completely alienated from it like the incommunicable Abraham, whose suspension of the ethical puts him at odds with it.

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293 This point is interesting in terms of the conversation about Mooney and Lippit from chapter two. I think it is Unamuno and not Kierkegaard who is exaggerating when he uses the term “paradox.” While I take Climacus and Silentio to be absolutely sure that a sacrifice of one’s reason is necessary for Christian faith, I find Unamuno much more flexible and literary.
In “Kierkegaard, Unamuno, and Don Quijote as the Knight of Faith,” Jan Evans persuasively argues that, of all of Kierkegaard’s characters in Fear and Trembling, Don Quixote is most aptly compared to the tragic hero, “where his mission remains within the ethical domain where he can convince others of his quest.”\(^{294}\) Though he commits an unethical act, Agamemnon stays within the realm of the ethical because his act is understandable, communicable, comprehensible, etc. Unamuno heavily insinuates that Quixote cannot be understood, which, unfortunately is an exaggeration; in reality Quixote’s alienation is utterly incomparable to Abraham’s.\(^{295}\) Quixote is more like Agamemnon, whose actions provoke serious questions and may incite a temporary anger, but who ultimately never leaves the ethical.\(^{296}\) Quixote rejects common sense, he is willful, ridiculous, etc., but he is not incommunicable. It is precisely the fact that Quixote can ultimately be understood by Unamuno and others that keeps him from being mad (in the Silentian sense) and simultaneously what prevents him from being a knight of faith.

The third and perhaps strongest association that needs to be dislocated is between Quixotism and Climacian Christianity. While Religiousness A is difficult—though not impossible—to live, Climacus’s Christianity (Religiousness B) consists of characteristics that

\(^{294}\) Evans, "Kierkegaard, Unamuno, and Don Quixote as the Knight of Faith," 14.

\(^{295}\) Both R.E. Batchelor and Anthony Cascardi unfortunately fall into the temptation: to over-emphasize Quixote’s alienation. For example, Cascardi goes as far as to say: “There is no way for Don Quixote to share his language with others.” See Cascardi, The Bounds of Reason, 17 and Batchelor, Unamuno, Novelist: A European Perspective, 107-114.

\(^{296}\) Dezső Csejtei argues that Quixote performs a kind of suspension of the ethical, but I think that the nature of the suspension is questionable. He refutes Jesus Antonio Collado’s claim that there is no teleological suspension of the ethical in Quixote, by citing the scene where Quixote frees the galley slaves, claiming that Quixote suspends ethics for what Unamuno calls “transcendental justice.” I agree that Quixote is challenging a certain form of ethics, but I would certainly not call this suspension “teleological.” See both Collado, Kierkegaard y Unamuno: La Existencia Religiosa, 14 and Csejtei, "The Knight of Faith on Spanish Land: Kierkegaard and Unamuno," 713.
make it undesirable. As I explained in chapter two, the two terms that are integral to
Religiousness B but not A are: the absurd and offense, neither of which Quixotism embodies.
What Climacus calls the absurd or the absolute paradox requires the sacrifice of the
understanding, whereas Quixotism requires a kind of openness of the understanding. It is true
that the Religious individual and the Climacian Christian are both called to stake their lives on
something objectively uncertain (which is part of what makes them religions and not systems of
ethics). The difference, according to Climacus, is that the Christian stakes her life on what is
absurd, and the individual in Religiousness A does not (CUP, 558-559). Whatever it is that she
stakes her life on, it is not absurd. Climacus never claims that a Religious person must believe
against the understanding, only that she risk her life and not wait for certainty. Recall that the
metaphor Climacus uses for both Religiousness A and B is that of being out over 70,000 fathoms
of water, which, for both, is risky, scary, adventurous, mad (in the Climacian, not Silentian
sense), etc., but the difference is that only B involves the martyrdom of the understanding.
Climacus never uses the terms absurd and offense for Religiousness A (CUP, 232). The
Climacian Christian understands that an absolute paradox can never be understood, and so is
required to remove the understanding in order to partake in Christianity (CUP, 214).
Religiousness A takes some intellectual work (seeing that the basin is a helmet on a different
plane), but the absolute paradox belongs to transcendent Christianity. We already know that the
Christian cannot use her understanding to unravel it, and, where the Christian abandons the
understanding, the Religious individual \(^{297}\) abandons the absolute paradox. We also know that
Quixotism contains no absolute paradox: when it comes to Quixote, Unamuno is uninterested in
revelation. Quixotism’s god is a fiction from first to last, and even when Unamuno says Quixote

\(^{297}\) In this chapter, when I use the term “Religious,” I am specifically referring to Religiousness A.
exists, it does not have the same consequences as believing that Christ (as God) exists.

The last distinction between Religiousness A and Christianity is the possibility of offense, which is a necessary component for the latter but not the former. Climacus spells out the difference: “In Religiousness A, offense is not at all possible […] But the paradox, which requires faith against the understanding, promptly makes offense manifest” (CUP, 585). Christianity makes the offense manifest, and whether onlookers actually get offended or not is not at issue. What is at issue is that there is no possibility of offense in Religiousness A because it does not require belief against the understanding or against my existence as a human being. Christ is primarily offensive because he is divine in the flesh of a human.298 While Quixotism might appear strange or silly to onlookers, it does not fundamentally threaten the understanding or the existing individual. Quixote carries no conceptual or existential baggage: he is a fictional god, and as such, he eliminates the hoops through which the Christian must jump.

What Quixotism Is

Now that I have rejected the possibility of Quixotism’s being an incarnation of Unamunian Christianity, Silentian faith, or Climacian Christianity, I can make the case for reading Quixotism as an incarnation of Religiousness A. These two religions meet on the following five grounds: 1) Dependence and the Will, 2) Suffering, 3) Madness, 4) Risk and 5) Faith. What will become clearer and clearer is that Climacus’s term “immanence” is ideal for describing Religiousness A and Quixotism. In other words, Quixotism illuminates the otherwise opaque Kierkegaardian

298 Climacus explains that “every Christian is Christian only by being nailed to the paradox of having based his eternal happiness on the relation to something historical” (CUP 578). Followers of Quixotism need not base their eternal happiness on something historical. Once the historical drops out, the offense drops out.
notion of *immanence*, and does so in such a way that makes immanence radiate instead of awkwardly linger in the shadow of transcendence.

**Dependence and the Will**

The will is fundamental to Quixotism, and we saw that the correlative terms in Religiousness A are “resignation,” “dying to oneself,” and “dependence.” Climacus says that, while in the ethical realm one feels self-sufficient, in Religiousness A the individual senses an “infinite requirement” and a corresponding inability to fulfill it on one’s own. When one gains a Religious worldview, he says, then one becomes detached from earthly possessions, and this is called resignation (but this is not the same as Silentian resignation, which might involve killing one’s son). In resignation, Climacus says that one becomes dependent on god; the will alone is not enough for Religiousness A as it is for ethics.

Given Unamuno’s emphasis on the unrealized power of the will, it might seem inconceivable that I would want to philosophically align Quixotism with Religiousness A because I have just said that in Religiousness A, the individual feels powerless and becomes dependent on god. It might instead be tempting to compare Quixotism to Climacian ethics, where the will is robust and appreciated. In Climacian ethics, the will is considered sufficient to confront any task. However, one look at Unamuno’s relationship to Quixote is enough to remind us that, as much as he insinuates that the will is powerful, Unamuno himself is dependent on the god—Quixote. What distinguishes a Quixotist from a confident ethicist is that, like the Religious individual, the Quixotist relies on god, and this is apparent in his relationship to himself. Climacus says that the theistic ethical individual comes to know god through his relationship to
himself, and the Religious individual comes to know himself through his god-relationship. In other words, the Religious individual’s relationship to himself is mediated by god, which is true for the Quixotist: Unamuno relates to himself through Quixote and not the other way around. This is not primarily an ethical stance, but a Religious one.

In both cases, the Quixotist and the Religious individual do not relate to the god like the Christian relates to himself through the Christ-relationship. Given that Quixote does not have supernatural powers like omniscience, omnipresence, or omnipotence, and that he does not act in the world, it is not possible to believe that Quixote acts through me in any literal sense. In that case, how can Unamuno be said to be dependent on god? It is helpful here to briefly revisit the ways in which a fictional god is different from a historical god, in order to determine how it is possible to say that a Quixotist’s relationship to herself is really (or literarily), though not literally, mediated by Quixote.

The Religious individual, the Quixotist, and the Christian all say to themselves: “I cannot do X on my own strength; I need god’s help.” But, neither the Quixotist nor the Religious individual are talking about a transcendent God for whom that would mean literal help or intervention like it does for the Christian.299 Both of these non-Christian characters have in mind some other form of help that god can provide rather than literal intervention, and that implies a different kind of dependence. If they do not mean Christ’s literal intervention, then Climacus and Unamuno are both talking about metaphoric intervention. What might sound like a stretch at

299 As I have said, it is crucial for my explanation to hold tight to the distinction between God and god. What I mean by God is a transcendent being who intervenes in the world and who can literally make a person move mountains. What I mean by god is a force whose power is yet unexplored; the extent to which one’s belief in god is able to effect change in the world is what I am exploring through Unamuno and Kierkegaard. What we know from Quixotism is that it is one’s relating to oneself through god can have tremendous consequences in the world.
first, to say that one can be dependent on god without that god being transcendent, turns into a good example of the way that Unamuno and Climacus agree that one can be metaphorically dependent on something outside of themselves, and have that metaphoric dependence produce literal results in the world.

Unamuno implies that to relate to oneself through another (even a fictional other) is to take a religious attitude toward it. We can see this in common language, where we sometimes use the term “god” loosely to mean that which one values above all else. Take the following familiar Biblical passage, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”\(^{300}\) Plainly speaking, those who serve nothing have no god, and if one does not relate to oneself through something else (whether it be god or God) then it is clear that god does not exist for that individual. In a move that reveals his pragmatist leanings, Unamuno believes that if you treat something like a god, then it effectively is a god. Quixote might be more god for Unamuno than Christ is for a faint-hearted believer. I insist that Unamuno’s dependence on god is Religious, and that when he acts in the name of Quixote, it is appropriate to say that he is acting on the strength of god. Insofar as there is no transcendent God acting in the world, the Quixotist or the Religious person is the one who is acting (and so, one can say, his will is at work), but insofar as he is dependent on Quixote or god—and feels fully dependent on them—he is, in a real sense, not acting on his own strength, and is religiously motivated. This is a largely unexplored territory, but one that both Unamuno and Climacus are suggesting is full of

\(^{300}\) Matthew 6:24
potential.\textsuperscript{301} Devotees imitate Quixote, which means that their relationships to themselves are mediated by him.\textsuperscript{302} What before might have sounded funny now perhaps does not: the Quixotic individual can earnestly say, as Unamuno does, “It is not I who live but Quixote who lives through me.”\textsuperscript{303} This vivid description of the Quixotist’s relationship to Quixote sheds light on what it is that Kierkegaard means by claiming that the Religious—but not the Christian—individual has a relationship to herself that is mediated by god. Kierkegaard most likely did not have in mind a fictitious god when formulating Religiousness A, but, nonetheless, the vivid example of Quixotism makes it easier to imagine how one might have a relationship to oneself mediated by a non-transcendent god. This is one of the ways that Quixotism makes Religiousness A come to life.

What does it mean to say that Quixote dies to himself? There are many names for Quixote’s god—glory, immortality, virtue, etc.—these are what Quixote fights for, and what mediates his relationship to himself.\textsuperscript{304} For these, especially name and fame, i.e., immortality, Quixote is willing to renounce earthly goods and desires. We see throughout the book that Quixote hardly eats (to Sancho’s dismay), rarely sleeps, and cares little for hygiene. Likewise,

\textsuperscript{301} Here I am thinking of William James’s analysis of ‘mind-cure’ in the \textit{Varieties of Religious Experience} (1902). The power that one can harness from one’s relationship to god is underestimated, and certainly dismissed when it is not considered religious. His subjects do believe in a transcendent god, but arguably the power they get does not change if there happens to be no such transcendent God. See William James, \textit{The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 78-113.

\textsuperscript{302} Imitating god without believing that God literally intervenes in the world is perhaps common among Christians, but Climacus would say that this is not real Christianity. Take away the revelation, and we are back to Religiousness A, which, for my purposes, is appropriate and effective, but it is not properly Christian.

\textsuperscript{303} “No vivo yo, sino que vive en mi mi Señor Don Quijote.” This was from a letter that Unamuno wrote to Jean Cassou on March 20, 1926. See Miguel de Unamuno, \textit{Epistolario Inédito II (1915-1936)}, ed. Laureano Robles, 2 vols., vol. II (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991), 189.

\textsuperscript{304} As I said earlier, though Unamuno calls Quixote a Christian, there is little evidence for this. Quixote does not talk about Christ as working through him, nor does he seem to relate himself to himself through Christ. Instead, one could say that Dulcinea or Glory is Quixote’s god.
Unamuno renounced earthly goods for Quixote—who for Unamuno represents immortality. In 1924, when Unamuno was exiled to Fuerteventura—what he calls the beginning of his truly “quixotic” life—he refused to take even a change of clothes. Unamuno’s desire to imitate Quixote was so strong that he was willing to, and did, renounce the finite, and he demands that followers of Quixote do the same. Climacus says that it is necessary for the Religious individual to be willing to part with relative goods, and, in so doing, participate in dying to the self. Piece by piece, the Religious individual strips herself of relative goods; little by little she denies herself, gradually she dies to herself as she gets closer to her god.

**Suffering**

Recall that in Climacus’ description, dependence on God is what causes suffering, because one is constantly aware that one is not god and there is a large gulf between oneself and god. Religious suffering is neither incidental nor trivial: it does not refer to a car accident or an illness, and even less to sadness or pain. In addition, in Climacus’s description we ought never to seek suffering, only to acknowledge that it exists as a result of positing a god. The suffering that Climacus describes is intrinsically tied to dying to oneself, or becoming less of oneself and more of the other, knowing that one can never completely become the other. The Religious individual does not try to alleviate suffering because she knows that dying to the self is a necessary part of what it means to be Religious, and not only does she endure her suffering, but the ideal sufferer will become uplifted through the actual suffering, a possibility that gives Climacus the strength to say

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305 Recall that Climacus distinguishes between Religious suffering and “misfortune,” a term that is often paired with incidental suffering (CUP 434-435).
that “in suffering the religious begins to breathe” (CUP 436). Far from being accidental, the Religious person believes that suffering is integral to becoming Religious.

Inevitably, suffering will be a part of any Quixotist’s life; once one decides to become like Quixote in this world, then one has to accept that the task will involve seeing the world in a new way. Unamuno’s deciding on his voluntary exile meant that he would reject common sense, and do what he thought would make the most difference in the world. In Fuerteventura, we will see that his suffering took the form of a constant uncertainty, which is what happens in Religiousness A when one decides to metaphorically depend on the god instead of one’s own strength.

**Risk / Uncertainty**

For Climacus, to be Religious entails risking failure. Climacus might be intentionally vague on what one is risking in Religiousness A, but like Unamuno, he is primarily concerned with action. Unamuno and Climacus are both reluctant to provide a detailed map of Quixotism and Religiousness A, but both would agree that one way to assess whether one is Religious is by looking at the reactions of others. Though it is not fool-proof, Climacus would say that if a “serious man” would refuse to perform a given act, then there is a decent chance that the act is Religious. Likewise, for Unamuno, if the world’s “curates” and “barbers” object to or call the act

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306 Climacus claims to be restricted in his description of Christianity because he is not a Christian, but he provocatively avoids denying that he is religious, as in Religiousness A.

307 As was the case with Unamuno, this may be an anti-climactic, unsatisfying and even dangerous gauge of what is religious behavior, but both Climacus and Unamuno are willing to take the risk.
lunacy, then it is most likely Quixotic.\textsuperscript{308} The outcomes of Quixote’s adventures were always uncertain, but he risked failure anyway. Quixote did not judge whether to battle an enemy based on the probability that he would win because he was committed to his ideal, and for both Unamuno and Climacus, commitment ought not to weigh the probability of success in a given situation; in fact for Climacus venture is not possible if one knows that the outcome will be successful or safe.

\textit{Madness / Lunacy}

In \textit{Postscript} Climacus applauds those who venture without objective certainty, contrasting these to people who do not risk anything without a guarantee of a favorable outcome, and who would call such ventures “lunacy,”\textsuperscript{309} which is more or less equivalent to \textit{madness} for Unamuno. Quixote’s madness is showcased in his invitation to mockery, and any Religious individual must be able to cope with—if not incite—ridicule from the serious man, according to Climacus, who even calls Quixote a laughingstock (CUP 35). Both Climacus and Unamuno value the effort to foster a life lived apart from and against the norm; Unamuno calls it wisdom, and Climacus clearly respects a non-conventional life. Both authors treat the terms \textit{madness} and \textit{lunacy} as

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\item \textsuperscript{308} In the following passage, Climacus praises the lunatics for acting and chastises anyone who would call the lunacy wisdom but not venture the act himself: “Before he has made the venture, he can understand it only as lunacy (and this is far preferable to being a thoughtless blatherpate who sits and fancies that he understands it as wisdom—and yet desists from doing it, whereby he directly denounced himself as lunatic, whereas the person who regards it as lunacy still comes off as sagacious by leaving it alone), and when he has ventured it, he is no longer the same person. This can be used as, at most, a potential attack on, or at least, a challenge to, Unamuno, who, instead of being quixotic may just be a blatherpate (CUP 423).
\item \textsuperscript{309} “But what is it to venture? To venture is the correlative of uncertainty; as soon as there is certainty, venturing stops. If then, he gains certainty and definiteness, he cannot possibly venture everything, because then he ventures nothing even if he gives up everything, because then he ventures nothing even if he gives up everything-and if he cannot find certainty, well, then, so says the serious man in dead earnestness, well then he will not venture everything-indeed, that would be lunacy” (CUP 424-425).
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positive attributes of character as long as they are not synonymous with the “absurd,” or a way of living that fundamentally cuts one off from others. Lunacy and madness in Quixotism and Religiousness A have more to do with challenging the status quo than they do with breaking with the understanding.

**Faith**

Recall that for Unamuno faith is not a matter of mere belief but is itself a creative act, and although Climacus does not define faith as a creative act, quixotic faith is also Climacian. Take the following familiar passage from Climacus on what it means to have (and employ) faith in Religiousness A:

> Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep my faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty (CUP 204).\(^{310}\)

“Objective uncertainty” is Climacus’s key phrase here, meaning that one cannot claim to have faith unless one is objectively uncertain. For faith to fit this description it must be something different from knowledge, unlike a fact or a belief that is contained in the mind. Faither is rather a stance that a Religious individual takes, a commitment that she makes toward something, a life

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\(^{310}\) Unamuno makes similar allusions to water in reference to God, perhaps inspired by Kierkegaard. In Vida, Unamuno says this: “I myself am a plank. I don't need any other because the ocean you mention and in which I float is God. Man floats in God without needing any sort of plank. All I want to do is to take away your plank, leave you alone, make you feel you have breath and are floating” (OLDQ, 295-296). Because he calls himself a plank in the middle of the God-ocean, Unamuno sounds slightly more sure of himself than does Climacus. Regardless, both authors prohibit from faith any kind of external plank, or “objective certainty,” and both suggest that faith requires objective uncertainty.
that she chooses to live.\textsuperscript{311} Compare that description to this next passage from Unamuno in *Tragic Sense of Life*:

Faith is not the mere adherence of the intellect to an abstract principle; it is not the recognition of a theoretical truth, a process in which the will merely sets in motion our faculty of comprehension; faith is an act of the will—it is a movement of the soul towards a practical truth, towards a person, towards something that makes us not merely comprehend life, but that makes us live (TSL, 191).

Unamuno also believes that faith is not about a piece of information stored in the mind, whether it be something that one knows to be true or believes to be true. For example, an individual may know (or believe, if she is indoors) that the sun is shining, but Unamuno would not consider that to be a matter for faith. As we have seen, faith for Unamuno is a movement of the will towards the truth, towards something which makes one live. In other words, when Climacus and Unamuno describe faith, they are not invoking the mind, wherein facts and beliefs are stored, but the will, from whence springs action. In Quixotism, Unamuno re-conceives faith for the material realm: Quixote inspires Unamuno to act, and Unamuno in turn tries to convince his readers that they have the power to change their surroundings (if they would only become dependent and begin to relate to themselves through Quixote—confusing and difficult, yes, but not absolutely paradoxical). Unamuno’s belief is creative, and that creativity fits the Climacian understanding of faith as a movement and not as a belief. Unamuno’s faith runs no risk of turning into a cold idea, but carries with it the objective uncertainty required by Climacus.

\textsuperscript{311} The trouble for readers of *Postscript* is the temptation to read Religiousness A back through Christianity. In Christianity, faith means sacrificing the understanding, but it means no such thing here in Religiousness A.
Quixotism is a Religion of Immanence

In his description of Religiousness A, Climacus implies that a concept of god need not imply a concept of transcendence. Even Climacus realized that to believe in god does not necessarily mean to believe in a revelation. Apart from this insight, Climacus leaves Religiousness A vague, making it very difficult to grasp what an individual’s relationship to a non-transcendent god would look like. Perhaps this less-than-thrilling depiction of the god-relationship in Climacus is the basis for Religiousness A’s anemia. The unfortunate result is that the perception has persisted that Religiousness A must be a soft stage, not very demanding and not very interesting, and is only good as a stepping-stone on the way to Christianity.

Once the requirement of transcendence is lifted from god, then Quixote can become a contender for the god-role, and suddenly the elusive non-transcendent god has teeth. Far from being boring, positing Quixote as a god promises an exciting and robust religion. Though I am certain that Climacus did not have a fictional character from a sixteenth-century Spanish text in mind when he posited the non-transcendent god of Religiousness A, the truth is that the term immanence fits Quixotism effortlessly. Unamuno’s vibrant descriptions of Quixotism illuminate an otherwise dim Religiousness A; understanding what immanence means in the context of Quixotism can help us appreciate what it means for Religiousness A. If Quixote were transcendent like Christ, then we would be no closer to understanding Religiousness A, but because he is fundamentally different from Christ, Quixotism shows us how powerful Religiousness A can be. In choosing Quixote to be the god-figure, Unamuno was also entertaining the possibility of a world without a transcendent god. I think that Climacus and Unamuno were pointing to the same possibilities when they introduced their God-less (but not
What I conclude from Quixotism is that to believe in God does not guarantee more material results in the world than to believe in god. If the goal is to transform the world, and if an individual or a group can faithfully do that by worshiping Quixote, then it seems to me that a transcendent god is not absolutely necessary. To choose Religiousness A or Quixotism is to embrace immanence: they are earthly religions, and instead of regarding them as weak because their gods do no magic, so to speak, we can learn from them that the soil of the earth is rich. The beauty of religions of immanence is that one can achieve heaven on earth; one can learn from the Quixotist that one need not look to another physical world for help. To be clear, Climacus’s and Unamuno’s message is not that one can help oneself through one’s own will, as Climacian ethics would have it, but that in believing in something outside of oneself and relating to oneself through it, one can change the world in significant ways, without requiring that one believe that God literally intervenes in human affairs. Unamuno’s example teaches us that dependence on god need not be literal to be effective; one need not seek a divine cheat through which one becomes a mere puppet. One’s dependence on god effectively means transforming oneself into becoming who one wants to become, so that, like Quixote in Unamuno’s favorite phrase, one can say: “I know who I am!” (OLDQ, 49, 236). We can see through the example of Quixotism that to adopt a system, a principle, or a manner of conduct by which one could live and die, is a valuable project. Perhaps most importantly, unlike Christianity, Quixotism and Religiousness A never ask the individual to suspend ethics. They make it feasible to combine ethics with religion, to stay grounded on earth but to live for something outside of oneself. In Quixotism these two spheres neither conflict with nor collapse into one another. Quixotism provides an alternative religion to Christianity without compromising on intensity or real effects in the world.
Part II: The Political Implications of Religiousness A

At this point I will turn to the political aspect of Quixotism, because it means that Religiousness A can be seen as a political as well as a religious force. In his exile (1924-1930), Unamuno said that his use of the religion of Quixotism evolved from “active contemplation” to “contemplative action.” I take this to mean that before the exile, and hence, what I have been describing thus far, Quixotism for Unamuno was primarily theoretical—it was a religion that could potentially inspire action—but in his exile, Quixotism became a reality which Unamuno adopted and used to change his political situation. Before I fully launch into the exiled Unamuno’s Quixotism, it is helpful to see the context in which Unamuno was describing himself as Quixote, and that was as engaged in a battle against Don Juan. During his exile, Unamuno used the metaphors of Don Juan and Quixote to represent what he saw as a fundamental choice that everyone has to make in his or her lifetime: to become a Don Juan or a Don Quixote. This language is convenient because Kierkegaard also wrote about both Don Juan and Quixote, and thought about them in a similar way. After I describe each thinker’s relation to Don Juan and Quixote, I will be able to describe the exiled Unamuno’s political Quixotism in its historical and metaphorical context.

Don Juan and Don Quixote

Unamuno and Kierkegaard both write about Don Quixote and Don Juan in terms of existential possibilities, and, though Unamuno dwells on these figures in more detail and more explicitly than Kierkegaard, the latter’s scant writings reveal that he too thought about the characters as representative of life choices. The answer to the question: *how should I live?* always comes in
the form of a choice for Kierkegaard, and the answer is either: aesthetically, ethically, or religiously, while for Unamuno, we will shortly see that his answer is that one can either live on the side of justice or on the side of injustice. The metaphoric battle between Don Juan and Don Quixote is helpful for understanding Religiousness A and Quixotism because Kierkegaard’s and Unamuno’s conclusions coincide: they both consider Quixote Religious and Don Juan essentially infantile and incapable of committing to anything; he is unable even to be ethical. The conclusion to draw from Kierkegaard and Unamuno is that Quixote’s presence in the world represents a committed ethico-religious life as opposed to a merely aesthetic, pre-ethical existence like Don Juan.

As I mentioned in the introduction, in “Don Quixote and Kierkegaard’s Understanding of the Single Individual,” Eric Ziolkowski argues that Quixote fits into all three of Kierkegaard’s categories of existence.\(^{312}\) It is clear that in the early years Quixote represented an out-and-out aesthete for Kierkegaard, but in time he began to appreciate a different side of Quixote, culminating in a comparison between Quixote and Christ, and then between Quixote and himself. In an early journal entry, Kierkegaard confessed that he considered dancing with two girls on “Lover’s Lane,” and he called it seeing the world poetically, and attributed this outlook to Quixote. Though the comparison is favorable, it is clear that in this entry Kierkegaard thought

\(^{312}\) Ziolkowski says: “The complexity of Don Quixote’s character can be seen to encompass all three existential stages. Insofar as he is preoccupied with the thought of and in quest of worldly fame and glory, which suggests attachment to the finite, he exists in the aesthetic stage. Insofar as he commits himself wholeheartedly to the chivalric code, which constitutes his ethical absolute, he exists in the ethical stage. Insofar as he maintains, against the arguments of reason and to the extent of the coming ridiculous, his faith in Dulcinea and in his illusion that he has been sent by God to restore the Golden Age, he exists in a mode analogous to Kierkegaard’s religious stage.” Ziolkowski, "Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual," 135. I see an ambivalence through Kierkegaard’s literary career, which Ed Mooney overlooks in the following passage “And Kierkegaard loved the madness of that knight Quixote, jousting to bring old faith to a forgetful and cruel world.” See Edward Mooney, "Kierkegaard at the APA (?)," *Soren Kierkegaard Newsletter* 54 (2009).
of Quixote as an aesthete. Between 1838 and 1844 Kierkegaard referred to Quixote three more times, and in these references he seemed unable to decide if Quixote was an aesthete or an ethical individual. 1845 marked the year of the delirium furibundum, which is extremely important for Unamuno, and which I will address in the next section. In 1846, Climacus took a shot at Quixote in Postscript, claiming that the price for Quixote’s desire to be world-historical came in the form of what Climacus calls a nisse, a malicious being who is responsible for Quixote’s enchantments (CUP 140 and SV VII, 113). Clearly Climacus was turned off by Quixote’s quest for fame (as the early Unamuno was). We see a bit of movement in 1847 and

313 Kierkegaard remembers: “This morning I met an odd procession in Lovers' Lane--some young girls dancing with each other along the path--at first I thought what giddyheads, but then as I came closer I saw that they were dancing to the music of two young men behind them playing flutes--I almost began to dance with them--so there is still that kind of poetry in the world.--If I encounter more such phenomena, I will certainly become a Don Quixote who sees such things in everything” (JP II A 740). Ziolkowski connects this passage to Regina, historicizing his journal entry: “the year after [Kierkegaard] met [Regina], he identifies himself with Cervantes’ love-sick knight.” Ziolkowski, “Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual,” 132.

314 In 1843, Kierkegaard’s aesthetic pseudonym “A” associates Quixote with fighting for what is already gone “In this respect, I certainly dare not expect much from you, because you are continually fighting, even though in quite another sense, yet just like that Spanish knight, for a bygone time. Since you are in fact fighting for the moment against time, you actually are always fighting for what has disappeared,” as well as claiming that there is no literary female counterpart to Quixote: “It is altogether remarkable that there is no female counterpart to Don Quixote in all European literature. Is the age not yet mature enough for that; has not the continent of sentimentality yet been discovered?” (E/O II, 141, E/O I, 256. Both allusions to Quixote were not missed by Unamuno). Concerning the “female counterpart to Quixote” Unamuno writes: “Mme Bovary?” See Unamuno’s copies of Kierkegaard’s texts. Søren Kierkegaard, Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker (Udgivne Af A.B. Drachmann, J.L. Heiberg Og H.O. Lange), ed. A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg, and H. O. Lange, XIV vols. (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1901-1906).

315 Stages, 402 and SV VI 375.

316 Kierkegaard writes: “Don Quixote is endlessly perfectible in madness, but the one thing he cannot become (for otherwise he could become everything and anything) is sensible” (JP, VIII1 A 59).
again in 1849, when Kierkegaard chastised Cervantes for having turned Quixote sane on his deathbed, and he calls Cervantes inconsistent and implies that he is cowardly.

Despite this small movement, Ziolkowski says that the real shift towards Quixote begins in 1848:

The views expressed in these entries of 1848 and 1849 mark a crucial shift in Kierkegaard's attitude toward Don Quixote. Whatever might account for the change, which could have resulted from his having recently reread and rethought the Quixote, the few allusions he made to it during his remaining years reveal that Sancho Panza replaced Don Quixote as the object of Kierkegaard's disparagement, while the latter are retained in his new concept of a mad knight as a comical analogue to the primitive, ascetic, true Christian in the secular world.

From this point forward, Quixote definitively became more and more religious for Kierkegaard, to the point of claiming that we would know that Christianity was dead when it became comic as Quixote’s becoming comic marked the end of Chivalry:

When secular sensibleness has permeated the whole world as it has now begun to do, then the only remaining conception of what it is to be Christian will be the portrayal of Christ, the disciples, and others as comic figures. They will be counterparts of Don Quixote, a man who had a firm notion that the world is evil, that what the world honors is mediocrity or even worse. But things have not yet sunk so deep. Men crucified Christ and called him an enthusiast, etc.—but to make a comic figure of him! Yet this is

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317 Kierkegaard writes: “It is a mistake that Don Quixote ends by dying and dies as a rational man. Don Quixote ought to have no ending. On the contrary, Don Quixote ought to end with the momentum of a new fixed idea, in which he would now appear, as he himself says, as a shepherd. Don Quixote is endless fantasy. Therefore it is prosaic to let the story end with his dying after he has become sensible” (JP X2 A 32).

318 Ziolkowski adds: “Indeed, a Don Quixote who exists in identity with his world is no longer a Don Quixote, just as, for Kierkegaard, a Christian who exists in conformity to moderate Christendom is not a Christian.” Ziolkowski, "Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual," 140. Likewise, Unamuno also clearly preferred Quixote’s madness to his sanity. Recall that this was the issue at the heart of the turn. Before 1902, Unamuno praised Quixote’s recovery of sanity, and after the turn praises his madness.

319 Ibid., 138.
Kierkegaard sounds downright Unamunian in this passage, in his lament over the eventual conquest of “secular sensibleness,” and in his use of the category of the comic as the indicator of that world. Recall that for Kierkegaard, Christianity is and ought to be offensive, so if Christ gets ridiculed like Quixote does, then that will signal the end of the offense, and the end of Christianity. In this comparison, Quixote has finally graduated to the Religious sphere for Kierkegaard. After this, Kierkegaard increasingly identifies with Quixote in the journals, because Christianity had definitively become a Quixotic endeavor for him, and he himself had become a Quixote.

If Quixote represented what is Religious in the world for Kierkegaard, Don Juan fits perfectly into the aesthetic sphere. Though neither Kierkegaard nor his pseudonyms ever pitted Don Juan against Don Quixote in a metaphoric battle (as Unamuno does), it is clear that even the aesthete A considered Don Juan to be an aesthete, and so the contrast with the religious Don Quixote is appropriate and interesting.

320 Ziolkowski adds: “Thus, anticipating the comparisons made by numerous later authors (e.g., Dostoyevsky, Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, and Auden), Kierkegaard entered in his journal of 1848 what I believe to be the first analogy ever drawn between Don Quixote and Christ” Ibid., 137.

321 In 1849 Kierkegaard identified himself with Quixote again, but this time as he perceived himself to be seen by the public. Instead of fighting for chivalry like Quixote, Kierkegaard thought he was viewed as fighting “quixotically” for Christianity. In Kierkegaard’s interpretation of public opinion, all Christianity was quixotic “reason and reflection have taken the ideal away from men, from Christendom, and have made it into something quixotic and visionary” (JP X A 646).

322 On a biographical note, it is possible that Kierkegaard’s having become the laughingstock of Copenhagen in 1846 contributed to his identification with Quixote in 1849.

323 In 1908 Unamuno said he would write a book about an encounter between Quixote and Don Juan (OCE III 330). Though this never happens, it is clear that Unamuno thought about this encounter throughout his corpus.
For A in *Either/Or I*, Don Juan took the form of Mozart’s Don Giovanni. In the essay entitled “The Immediate Stages of the Erotic,” A described Don Juan’s particular brand of (immediate) aestheticism, which was tied up in the medium of opera. A considered Mozart a genius because A believed that music was the most appropriate medium to use to illustrate Don Juan’s life. The notes that make up the music paralleled the moments in Don Juan’s life, which went as quickly as they came. A called Don Juan’s love “sensuous”, and therefore “totally faithless,” and compared it to a chivalric kind of love, which he called “psychical,” and therefore “essentially faithful” (E/O I, 94 and SV I, 75). Without mentioning Quixote’s name, the term “chivalric love” invokes Quixote’s love for Dulcinea, and as opposed to Don Juan’s love for his 1003 women in Spain alone: 324 “psychical love is continuance in time; sensuous love is disappearance in time, but the medium that expresses this is indeed music” (E/O I, 94-94 and SV I, 75-76). Don Giovanni’s life is a series of notes: “for him everything is merely an affair of the moment” (E/O I, 94-94 and SV I, 75-76). In a passage from *Either/Or* that Unamuno underlined, A describes Don Juan’s momentary existence:

Don Juan's seduction is a turn of the hand, a matter of a moment, more quickly done than said. It reminds me of a tableau I once saw. A handsome young man, a real ladies' man. He was playing with some young girls, all of them at that dangerous age when they are neither adults nor children. Among other things, they amused themselves by jumping over a ditch. He stood at the edge and helped them jump by taking them around the waist, lifting them lightly into the air, and setting them down on the other side. It was a charming picture; I delighted in him as much as in the young girls. Then I thought of Don Juan. They themselves run into his arms, these young girls; then he seizes them, and just as quickly, just as nimbly I set them down on the other side of the ditch of life (E/O I, 108-109 and SV I, 88-89).

324 In Zorrilla’s version, Don Juan was a very efficient seducer, unlike in Tirso de Molina’s version from 1630. See José Zorrilla, *Don Juan Tenorio* (Madrid: Delgado, 1844) and Tirso de Molina, *El Burlador de Sevilla, O, el Convidado de Piedra*, ed. Alfredo Rodríguez López-Vázquez (Madrid: Catedra, 2007).
Far from being an ethical character, Mozart’s Don Giovanni is not even a reflective aesthete. He is immediate through and through, and this is reflected in the genre of music, which has no life apart from its being played at that very moment. As such, A says, “Don Giovanni […] does not fall within ethical categories at all” (E/O I, 98-99 and SV I, 79). Whereas the ethical sphere provides an opportunity for an individual to gain a self (at least according to Judge William), no such opportunity exists in the aesthetic sphere. For Judge William, what separates the ethical individual from the aesthete is having a past, being able to reconstruct one’s life along a more or less linear grid. The aesthete has no cohesive past, unlike the ethical individual, who can tell the story of his own becoming ethical, which is always still-in-progress.

Judge William would say that since his life consists of a series of present moments, Don Juan has no past and no future, and Unamuno would agree. For both, this means that Don Juan has no self and no meaningful existence. According to Unamuno, Don Juan’s life has too many authors and too many versions; he has no single history and therefore he cannot be a genuine self. Both Unamuno and Kierkegaard (through Climacus and Judge William) advocate the task of making one’s self, which requires having a past and a future. Unamuno says that the life of Quixote is unified compared to Don Juan’s, whose past is vague, and is more legend than life.

325 It is for this reason that A hesitates to call Don Giovanni a seducer: “To be a seducer always takes a certain reflection and consciousness, and as soon as this is present, it can be appropriate to speak of craftiness and machinations and subtle wiles. Don Giovanni lacks this consciousness. Therefore, he does not seduce. He desires, and this desire acts seductively. To this extent he does seduce. He enjoys the satisfaction of desire; as soon as he has enjoyed it, he seeks a new object, and so it goes on indefinitely. He lacks the time to be a seducer, the time beforehand in which to lay his plan and the time afterward in which to become conscious of his act. A seducer, therefore, ought to possess a power that Don Giovanni does not have, however well equipped he is otherwise: the power of words. As soon as we give him the power of words, he ceases to be musical and the esthetic interest becomes a different one” (E/O I, 98-99 and SV I, 79).
Unamuno calls Don Juan’s life “dispersed,” which is a quality that clearly detracts from the worth of his character. This characterization is extremely close to Judge William’s assessment of what it means to have a self and a meaningful existence. Whether Unamuno was purposefully using quasi-Kierkegaardian language is impossible to know, but at the very least it represents a conjunction in their thinking. Unamuno and Judge William agree that one’s past is intimately tied to one’s future. Because he lives in the ever-present, Unamuno’s Don Juan no tiene porvenir, he has no future. Unamuno says that since he has no past and no future, Don Juan is natural and spacial, compared to Quixote, who for Unamuno is historical and temporal: “Don Quixote lives in the future and because of that he has a past—he wants to renovate, to make futural what already was. Don Juan [is] infinite; Don Quixote eternal.” Quixote’s past is crucial in Vida, because it gives us an idea of how we might take his steps and live in imitation of him. Quixote’s future is equally important because, as Unamuno demonstrates by writing the Manual de Quijotismo and living like Quixote in Fuerteventura, which I will discuss in the next section, Quixotism does not end in contemplation but in action. Don Juan’s life effectively

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327 Pedro Cerezo Galán laments Unamuno’s missed opportunity to introduce Kierkegaard’s spheres of existence in talking about Don Juan and Don Quixote. Unamuno fails to make an explicit connection between these two despite having read Either/Or by the time he was writing the Manual. I agree that it would have been a very rich connection if Unamuno had used Kierkegaard’s category of the aesthetic to describe Don Juan, but, nonetheless, the connection exists whether or not Unamuno noticed it. See Cerezo Galán, Las Máscaras de Lo Trágico, 753.

328 “Don juanismo. Don Juan vive en el presente, no tiene porvenir—<<si tan largo me lo fiáis…!>> y por tanto no tiene pasado ni tiempo ni eternidad, es natural y espacial” (“Don Juan-ism. Don Juan lives in the present, he has no future—“you give me that long”—and therefore has no past and no eternity, he is natural and spacial.” Unamuno, Manual, 129. *The phrase “tan largo me lo fiáis” is difficult to translate, and can also be translated: “what a long time you are giving me,” and refers to the scene in Tirso de Molina’s Quixote novel when Don Juan’s father tells him that God will judge him after his death. Don Juan replies: “tan largo me lo fiáis?” implying that he still has a long time before he will be punished, so why change his ways now? See Molina, El Burlador de Sevilla, O, el Convidado de Piedra.

329 “Don Quijote vive en el porvenir y por eso tiene pasado—quiere renovar, hacer futuro lo que fue—es histórico y temporal. Don juan infinito; Don Quijote eterno.” Unamuno, Manual, 129.
contains no action, and so will never bear any fruit, and Unamuno says that he will never find what he is looking for: “Don Juan is looking for his object, his world, he is looking, looking for God in women, in the pleasure of his conquest, and he doesn’t find it; he doesn’t find his life’s work. His search is sterile. It gives him no children—either of flesh or of spirit.” Likewise, for Judge William, the mere aesthete does not find true happiness because he has no self. If Unamuno were using Judge William’s language, he might say that Don Juan will never find what he is looking for precisely because he is looking for himself as much as he is looking for god. As long as he is not even in the categories of the ethical—right and wrong—he will never find his world, himself, or god. The final difference between Don Juan and Don Quixote, according to Unamuno scholar Pedro Cerezo Galán, is that Quixote dies at the end of the novel, and Don Juan never dies. In an ironic twist, Cerezo Galán is suggesting that for the later Unamuno, one cannot be immortal unless (metaphorically speaking) one dies. Quixote consented to his death, and so he is immortal. Don Juan never dies, and as such, never really lives. The bottom line for both

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330 Interestingly, Unamuno says that both Don Juan and Don Quixote are technically childless, but because Quixote has a future he has the equivalent of children. In the Manual Unamuno is fond of calling Quixote a “virgin father”. Quixote is a virgin who has children, and Don Juan is not a virgin, but he is sterile: “his search is sterile, it gives him no children, neither of flesh or of spirit.” See Ibid., 86, 91, 122, 124, 125.

331 “Don Juan está buscando su objeto, su mundo, se está buscando a Dios, en las mujeres, en el placer de su conquista, y no se encuentra, no encuentra su obra. Su rebusca es estéril, no le da hijos ni de carne ni de espíritu.” Ibid., 86.

332 Cerezo Galán suggests that maybe Don Juan becomes Don Juan because he has stopped believing in Don Quixote. See Cerezo Galán, Las Máscaras de Lo Trágico, 749.

333 Unamuno is telling the political story of Don Quixote as someone who faces his problems and incorporates them into his life. Don Juan on the other hand, is afraid of too much, so ultimately does not gain any strength from battling with his problems. Don Juan is afraid of people laughing at him; Don Quixote invites it. In “The Quixotic Laugh” (“La Risa Quijotesca”), Unamuno says: “The fool, the duke, the barber, the bachelor, they all know that he who laughs is Don Quixote. The heroic venture of Don Quixote was a continual laugh, it was a laugh conscious of itself. It was Don Quixote who laughed at those who laughed at him. By contrast, Don Juan Tenorio was unable to laugh, and because of that he feared laughter. Because Don Juan trembled that they were laughing at him. And it is that laughter that was for Don Quixote a heaven, a riso, and for Don Juan, for the fool of Don Juan, it was a hell (OCE VIII 588). “El botarate, el duque, el barbero, el bachiller, saben que quien se ríe de ellos es Don Quijote. Toda la hazanosa empresa de Don Quijote fue una risa continua; fue una risa consiente de sí misma. Fue Don Quijote quien se rió de los que de él se reían. En cambio, Don Juan Tenorio era incapaz de reírse, y por eso temía
Judge William and Unamuno is that the life of the mere aesthete is destined to be unhappy and barren, but the life of Quixote is full.

**The Political Implications of Quixotism**

During the exile Unamuno said that he wanted to populate the world with Quixotes in order to balance out what he saw as a world of Don Juans. This was after picking up on a Kierkegaardian reference to Quixote written by the pseudonym Frater Taciturnus in *Stages on Life’s Way* (1845), which I alluded to earlier. In 1934 Unamuno published an article, “*delirium furibundum*,” which was a phrase that Taciturnus used which Unamuno was quite enthusiastic about (OCE IV 1129-1130). In the essay, Unamuno recounts Taciturnus’s reflection on Quixote, which itself includes a reconstruction of a scene from *Quixote* in which, according to Taciturnus,

> When Don Quixote has been healed of his sickness and the licentiate is already beginning to hope he has recovered his mind, he wants to test him a little. He speaks to him about different things and then suddenly intersperses the news that the Moors have invaded Spain. Then there is only one way to save Spain, answers Don Quixote. “What is that?” asks the licentiate. Don Quixote refuses to tell; only to His Faithful Majesty, the King of Spain, will he disclose his secret. Finally he yields to the licentiate’s pleas and, sworn to secrecy, he receives that famous knight’s confession: “The only way is for His Faithful Majesty to send out a call to arms to all the knights-errant” (*Stages*, 402 and SV VI, 385).

To this scene Taciturnus responds: “To be a knight-errant oneself is, if you please, the work of a half-mad man, but to populate all Spain with knights-errant is truly a *delirium furibundum* tanto a la risa. Porque Don Juan temblaba de que se reirán de el. Y es que la risa era para Don Quijote un paraíso, un riso, y para Don Juan, para el botarate de Don Juan, era un infierno”).
[raging madness]” (Stages, 402 and SV VI, 375). Regardless of whether Taciturnus intended this phrase positively or negatively, Unamuno takes it positively, delighted by the idea that what Spain needs most is to be populated with knights-errant.

What would it mean for Spain to be populated with knights-errant? As I have claimed, Quixote represents a particular set of qualities which enable him to become Unamuno’s god, and which allow Kierkegaard to begin to take him seriously as a Religious character. The delirium furibundum that excites Unamuno is a political movement; populating the world with Quixotes would balance out the world of Don Juans, and it would give people a new way to be in the world politically and religiously without crossing the bounds of ethics. The fact that Quixotism had political consequences is fascinating, and gives us a glimpse of the potential of Religiousness A. I am not implying that if a religion has no political use it has no value, but a religion’s value is clearly visible if it can demonstrate its political use. In his exile, Unamuno realized that what results from Quixote’s metaphoric presence in the world is a literal political fight against injustice (without any accompanying violation of ethics).

In 1924, Unamuno wrote the following lines of introduction to the English translation and compilation of Essays and Soliloquies from the Canary Island of Fuerteventura:

Hitherto I have been meditating and perhaps dogmatizing upon this religion [of Quixotism]—now I am living it. For it is here, where the waves murmur tidings of my

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334 Unamuno translates Kierkegaard thus: “Ya el ser un caballero andante es, si se quiere, obra de un medio loco; pero el poblar (befolke) toda España con caballeros andantes es, en verdad, un delirium furibundum” (OCE IV 1129-1130).

335 Ziolkowski says that, although this was written in 1845 (before Kierkegaard’s favorable turn to Quixote) it is not clear whether it is meant to reflect Quixote-as-aesthete or Quixote-as-Religious. Ziolkowski, "Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual," 135.

native shores, the mountainous coast of the wild Bay of Biscay, it is here that I have felt most deeply all the melancholy grandeur of the ridiculous passion of the Knight of the impossible Chimera. While the cowardly comic-opera tyrants who have banished me here are dishonoring our Spain, her whom they call their mother, I am exalting and eternalizing her, and I call her my daughter.  

Exiled to Fuerteventura by the Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera, Unamuno arrived on March 12, 1924 and spent five months there playing the role of the living Quixote. As I have said, in his interpretation Unamuno was fighting Don Juan, or in this case, Primo de Rivera (whom he actually call Don Juan)—for justice. After being pardoned five months after his arrest, Unamuno chose voluntary exile in Paris, arriving at the end of July 1924, and making a temporary home there until August of 1925, at which point he moved to Hendaye, which is situated on the French side of his native Basque country. Intent on living out the passion of Quixote, Unamuno settled here for the remaining five years of his exile until moving back to Salamanca after the death of Primo de Rivera on March 16, 1930. For Unamuno the early exile period centered on Quixotism as an active religion. Although the content of Quixotism did not change substantially between 1905 and 1924, it was during the exile that Quixotism became manifestly political for Unamuno. In Fuerteventura, Unamuno’s perception that he was a living Quixote fighting injustice reinforced his theory that following in the footsteps of Quixote equated to fighting against injustice; here, Unamuno realized the political implications of Quixotism. One text in particular, which is believed to have been written during this time, 

337 Ibid., viii.
338 See, for example, the first sonnet in De Fuerteventura a Paris (OCE VI 675).
339 Unamuno, Manual, 238 n.a.
testifies to Unamuno's rededication to Quixotism: the Manual de Quijotismo, which was only recently published.

**History of the Manual del Quijotismo**

In his correspondence from the early period of his exile, Unamuno alluded to writing a novel entitled Don Quijote en Fuerteventura. Though he never published a book by that title, some critics speculate that those ideas turned into both a collection of poems entitled De Fuerteventura a Paris: Diario Intimo de confinamiento y destierro vertido en sonetos por Miguel de Unamuno (From Fuerteventura to Paris: Intimate Diary of confinement and exile written as sonnets by Miguel de Unamuno), published in 1925, and Como se Hace una Novela (How to write a Novel) published first in French in 1926 and then in Spanish in 1927. What remains intact at the Casa-Museo de Unamuno is a draft of the work written on scraps of paper, which Unamuno united under the title Manual de Quijotismo. In 2005, Bénédicte Vauthier transcribed and published this manuscript for the first time, combining it with both a new edition of Como se Hace una Novela and also correspondence between Unamuno and Jean Cassou, his

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340 On June 28, 1927 Unamuno wrote a letter to Warner Fite, one of his English translators, claiming that he was writing a book on quijotismo, but could only have meant the Spanish translation of Como se Hace Una Novela. See Ibid., 20.

341 As late as January 8, 1925, Unamuno continues to say that he will publish this book. See the dedication to Sonetos de Fuerteventura (OCE VI 673).

342 Miguel de Unamuno, De Fuerteventura a París (Paris: Excelsior, 1925).


344 There are 62 sheets in all, most written on both sides. For a complete description see Unamuno, Manual, 65-78.

345 The Manual still has not been translated into English.
French translator. Though the exact timing of the writing is uncertain, most critics believe that the Manual was written during the exile, sometime between 1924 and 1930.\footnote{Bénédicte Vauthier, Emilio Salcedo, and Manuel Urrutia basically agree that the Manual de Quijotismo was written in the early part of Unamuno’s exile (1924-1927), including during his short stay in Fuerteventura in 1924, and connect it to Como Se Hace una Novela (1927). On the other hand, Pedro Cerezo Galán dates the manuscript later, around 1929, and unites it with Unamuno’s El Hermano Juan o el mundo es teatro (Brother John or the World is Theatre), written in 1929. Vaulthier believes that the Manual was written between 1925-1928, and I would include 1924, but there is no way to be certain. For a complete account of the conflicting views, see Unamuno, Manual, 13-20. The original manuscript can be located at CMU 72/17.}

Unamuno considered the Manual a continuation of Vida, but, unlike the way that Sentimiento is a continuation of Vida, the Manual calls for contemplative action, or what I have been calling political action. For the exiled Unamuno, philosophy as thinking and writing gained a new purpose: action. In other words, during this time he thought that all valuable thinking should result in action. In his interpretation of his own history, the years before 1924 represent Unamuno’s active contemplation of Quixote, and 1924 marks the commencement of his life of contemplative action, or of his living identification with Quixote.\footnote{Unamuno claims that he did not bring Cervantes’s Don Quixote with him, and for him this was, in part, because he imagined himself to have become Quixote. On June 27, 1924, Unamuno wrote from Fuerteventura: “I didn’t bring with me, to my Fuerteventurous confinement, a copy of our Book, of Quixote; I counted on finding one here if I needed it. Although...the book? The word? No! And the spirit I bring with me. I bring with me the fruit of the passion of the laughter of the Ingenious Gentleman; that is to say, intellectual. (“No traje acá, a mi fuerteventuroso confinamiento, ejemplar alguno de nuestro Libro, del Quijote; contaba con encontrarlo aquí si me hiciera falta. Aunque... ¿el libro, la letra? ¡No! Y el espíritu lo traigo conmigo. Traía conmigo el fruto de la pasión de risa del Hidalgo ingenioso; es decir, intelectual” (OCE VIII 587)).} From 1924-1930, Unamuno gave us a tangible example of a modern-day Quixote,\footnote{To underscore the role of Quixote in Unamuno’s life at that time, it is important to realize that of Unamuno’s 370 references to Quixote throughout his corpus, two of the three years in which these references predominate are both during his exile: 1924 with 24 times, and 1929 with 15 times (the third being 14 times 1905). See Iglesias Ortega, El Quijotismo de Unamuno Entre La Filosofía y el Mito 19.} and one could argue that Unamuno’s political identification with Quixote lasted until his return to Spain in 1930, or until his death in 1936. Whatever the end date, I think it is clear that the political Quixotism began in 1924, twenty
years after his theoretical Quixotism in *Vida*. The *Manual* is evidence that Unamuno’s devotion to Quixote became a living, political interpretation of Quixote.  

The original manuscript of the *Manual* is more or less legible, and the first page (which is written on a recycled envelope) is marked “Manual de Quijotismo.” Behind that one can find Unamuno’s table of contents for this book that he never published:

ORDER
I  I know who I am!
II  The ideal reality essential existence madness of Don Quixote
III  Personality-history-theater-God
  Nature-rebirth
IV  Paternal Virginity of Don Quixote
V  Don Quixote and Hamlet
VI  Don Quixote and Don Juan
VII  Don Quixote and Segismundo
VIII  Quixotic ethics and politics
  The mystery of Don Quixote is that Don Quixote exists. And all of the gods of all
  religions exist.
IX  My adventure- Fuerteventura
  Don Quixote and Robinson [appears in blue ink between chapters IX and X]
X  Eschatology
  VII before V and perhaps before II”

349 As I stated earlier, in his doctoral thesis, Luis Iglesias Ortega roughly splits Unamuno’s Quixotism into three phases: Quijotismo quijanista (1897-1902), quijotismo quijotista (1902-1924), and quijotismo quijotesco o metagonico (1924-1936). I have been referring to these periods as Unamuno before the turn and after the turn. Now however, I will refer to the second and third phases respectively as active contemplation (1902-1924) and contemplative action (1924-1936). See Ibid.

Clearly, Quixote is the protagonist of this work, and some of the same themes from *Vida* resurface, such as “I know who I am!” and the scene with the galley slaves. The scraps of paper that follow consist of small, fragmentary thoughts—almost aphorisms—most often preceded by a roman numeral, as if to say: *this thought belongs in this chapter*. The *Manual* can be read as an embodied exploration of Quixote’s political life, and it is worth noting that Unamuno calls this work a Manual and not a Meditation.

Even from the very first fragment of this incomplete text, it is evident that Unamuno has begun to think about Quixote in active and contemporary terms:

Don Quixote, the man of the book—and the book of the man. The national representative man (according to Keyserling), a fiction and not a historical man […] And in every man there are two men, the one of flesh and bone, the physical, and the one of the book, the biblical. The two men in St. Paul “on behalf of a man in Christ…of this I boast, but I will not boast for myself…” II Cor. XII 1-6. Is there in France a fictional hero as popular as Don Juan Tenorio in Spain?

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351 Earlier, we saw that Unamuno appropriated Paul’s metaphor of Christ living and working through him (Gal 2:19-20), but now he replaces Christ with Quixote: “And you, my Lord Don Quixote, Ingenious Gentleman, elevate me so that I become more than myself, and give me your laughter, which you suffered and which you created (OCE VIII 589). (“Y tu, mi señor Don Quijote, ingenioso hidalgo, élévame para que sea yo mas que yo, y dame tu risa, la que padeciste y la que creaste.”). This passage about boasting on behalf of Christ and not oneself is directly applicable to Unamuno, who credits Quixote and not himself for his good deeds.

352 “Don Quijote el hombre del libro—y el libro del hombre. El hombre representativo nacional (según Keyserling) un ente de ficción y no un ente histórico […] Y en todo hombre dos, el de carne y hueso, el físico, y el del libro, el bíblico. Los dos hombres en San Pablo <<se da un hombre en Cristo…de éste me jacto, pero no me jactaré de mí mismo…>> II Cor. XII 1-6* Hay en Fr [ancia] un héroe de ficción tan popular como don Juan Tenorio en España?” *II Cor. XII 1-6: “It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me” NRSV. See Unamuno, *Manual*, 79.
Fittingly, Unamuno begins his Manual by invoking the name of Quixote, and from the first line it is clear that he is concerned with what it means to be human as opposed to what it means to be a book, a text, a written thing. By using Quixote as the example, Unamuno is at least suggesting that there may be no difference between living and writing; this idea echoes his earlier suggestion that a fictional character may be more real than a living, breathing author.\footnote{The theme of lived life vs. written life is one of Unamuno’s refrains, which we have seen before in his assessment of Quixote as mort human and more real than Cervantes, and which comes up again in Como se Hace una Novela, in which he says that all books are autobiographies, and that one can learn about the author by reading the book. See Ibid., 184.}

Immediately following this, Unamuno introduces the familiar and related notion that in each person there exist two: the physical and the biblical (or the spiritual, the literary, or even the psychical or mental),\footnote{This term is tied to libro—book, so it further implies that each of us is a character and/or an author.} thus reinforcing the idea that a person’s own history can also perhaps be considered a text. Here, Unamuno is beginning to toy with the idea that even within a so-called real person, there are two: one who is living and one who is written. Being in exile may have engendered in Unamuno a feeling of being two men, one who lives and the other who will become a legend. The rest of the Manual follows suit and repeats this theme, and always somehow includes Quixote, justice, and political action. In this very small fragment, Unamuno has cut to the heart of the Manual which is that all of us live a dichotomous existence, whether it be thinker and actor, or living being and written word, etc.\footnote{As one can see from the table of contents, Unamuno is interested in other characters as well, especially compared to Quixote. It would be a worthwhile endeavor to put Quixote, Don Juan, Hamlet, Segismundo, and Robinson together on one stage to study what connections Unamuno was making between them all. At this point I am limiting myself to Don Juan and Quixote.} Choosing who to be and living accordingly is a theme that arises throughout the Manual, especially in the way that Unamuno pits Quixote against other fictional characters like Hamlet, Segismundo, and Don Juan.
Quixotism as Political

For Unamuno, the image of Quixote freeing the galley-slaves and then being stoned by them is the most political image in the novel. We saw that as early as *Vida*, Unamuno connected this scene with justice, but in the *Manual*, this scene resonates with Unamuno more than ever, because it has turned personal and political. The second fragment of the *Manual* reinterprets this scene, through Unamuno’s new Quixotic lens:

The freeing of the galley slaves and how that emerges from the Quixotic heart. The executioner and the servant\(^\text{356}\) of the executioner. Cervantes to the knight and the galley-slave. The executive power and the executor. The power of power, said Primo. But he, at the same time, Don Quixote, was he not an executioner? (O wretched man that I am!) Have not I been one? From his contradiction of conscience, ideal, grew his practical contradiction, which, using it against the executors of justice, he becomes the executor of justice. He killed no man, but he killed sheep! All of epistemology and ontology are searchings, and what is missing is the economy of God. I Tim I 4\(^\text{357}\) from the practical to the theoretical and not the inverse; philosophy of action. Don Quixote existed, he affirmed it, by working,\(^\text{358}\) and how did he work? On what did he work? What was his work? I know who I am! Means: I know what my work is! Carlyle respected the “know thyself”. I know what I do! Contemplation is action, and action is contemplation. Contemplative action, active contemplation. Mystical and ascetic.\(^\text{359}\)

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\(^{356}\) This term *criado* can mean *child* or *servant*.

\(^{357}\) I Tim I.4: “I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith.”

\(^{358}\) This word is “oíbrar” which can also mean to act, and does not connote employment. It is appropriately used as in the Kierkegaardian phrase: *works of love*.

\(^{359}\) “La liberación de los galeotes y como sale de la cardiaca quijotesca. El verdugo y el criado del verdugo. Cervantes al caballero y galeote. El poder ejecutivo y el ejecutor. Poder de poder que dijo Primo. Pero el, a su vez, Don Quijote, ¿no era un verdugo? (¡Miserable hombre de mí!) No lo he sido yo? De su contradicción de consciencia, ideal, brota su contradicción practica, que devolviéndose contra los ejecutores de justicia se hace ejecutor de justicia. No mató a hombre alguno pero mató ovejas! Todo lo de la gnoseología u ontología son rebucas ἐξερεύνησες y lo que hace falta es economía de Dios. I Tim I 4 De lo práctico a lo teórico y no a [u1-c2/2-1CMU] la inversa; filosofía de la acción. Don Quijote existía, se afirmaba, obrando y ¿Cómo obraba? ¿Qué obraba? ¿Cuál su obra? ¡Yo se quien soy! Quiere decir: Yo se cual es mi obra! Carlyle respeto al γνώθι σαυτόν. ¡Yo se que hago! La
In this passage Unamuno suggests that in order to do philosophy one must first live, and living is part of his shift towards contemplative action. Unamuno is implying that philosophy—living, thinking, passion—is, at bottom, political. Unsurprisingly, Quixote dominates this passage, but the focus is the cost of justice. As in *Vida*, Quixote is presented here as a promoter of justice, but now he is also curiously portrayed as an executioner. Over against the 1904 Unamuno, the 1924 Unamuno is implying that in order to fight for justice, we must be willing to give up on other ideals, even if (or especially when) that process is painful and/or unpopular. In 1927, in the re-translation of *Como se Hace una Novela* (into Spanish from French), Unamuno adds a passage in which he claims that if he were Quixote in this scene, and if he had known that the galley slaves would stone him for it, that he would have freed them anyway:

> I would not give up fighting the power of the troops of the modern-day Holy Brotherhood of my Spain. I cannot tolerate, even if they call me crazy, that the executioners become the judges, and that the purpose of authority, which is justice, drowns in what they call the principle of authority, which is the principle of power, or what they call order.360

For the exiled Unamuno, one must do the right because it is right, regardless of the reward or punishment at stake. We all know that at times good behavior is punished and bad behavior rewarded, so for Unamuno mere consequences are no foundation on which to decide how to

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360 "Y aunque sepa yo que acaso un día los galeotes han de apedreame, no por eso cejo en mi empeño de combatir contra el poderío de los cuadrilleros de la actual Santa Hermandad de mi España. No puedo tolerar, y aunque se me tome a locura, el que los verdugos se erijan en jueces y el que el fin de autoridad, que es la justicia, se ahogue con lo que llaman el principio de autoridad, y es el principio del poder, o sea lo que llaman el orden.” Ibid., 193.
act.\textsuperscript{361} In other words, that the galley-slaves stoned Quixote is no measure of the rightness or wrongness of Quixote’s action. Beginning in 1924, the Religion of Quixotism demands public acts of political justice-seeking like this one.

Unamuno comes to interpret himself as a character, a role, a larger-than-life existential choice.\textsuperscript{362} His life becomes a play put on for the public; he exists now to be seen. Unamuno sees his as a religious mission, to live out what he once only wrote about. In what is still one of the earliest passages of the \textit{Manual}, Unamuno writes:

\begin{quote}
[My \textit{Life of Don Quixote and Sancho} was a contemplative work, although of active contemplation. After that I began my action, my imitation of Don Quixote, charging the puppet show of Master Peter, King Alfonso XIII. My campaign since 1914; the king called me, the coup d’état, my deportation. And in Fuerteventura I conceived this other work, this contemplative action, after having written Don Quixote. This is a contemplation of my action. In 1914 I was dismissed from the rectorate, which served as my vision on the road to Damascus. Did Primo de Rivera, or, better, Anido,\textsuperscript{363} remove me from my path, from my divine mission? On the contrary. In this mysterious Christian\textsuperscript{364} Don Quixote I base at once my \textit{Life of Don Quixote and Sancho}, my \textit{Tragic Sense of Life}, and my \textit{Agony of Christianity}. And it is resignation to death, my testament and the contemplation of my historical work.\textsuperscript{365}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{361} Unamuno alludes to the fact that we do not always know why people do things, and therefore rely on the consequences to judge the action is a mistake. In another passage of the \textit{Manual}, Unamuno says that: “The galley-slaves stoned Don Quixote because they did not want to be liberated but rather made into troops.” In this interpretation, the stoning of Quixote was not a simple matter of “criminals will always be criminals” but is much more complicated, and Unamuno wants to open the interpretive space in order to admit readings like his own. (“Los galeotes le apedrearon a Don Quijote porque no querían que les libertara sino que les hiciese cuadrilleros.” \textit{Cuadrilleros} are the troops of the \textit{la Santa Hermandad}, or the holy brotherhood.) \textit{Ibid.}, 91.

\textsuperscript{362} In \textit{Como se Hace una Novela}, Unamuno alludes to the fact that he (like all of us) makes characters out of real people. All of the political figures—King Alfonso XIII, Primo de Rivera, Martinez Anido, etc.—are all “creatures of my novels.” (“creaturas de mis novelas”) \textit{Ibid.}, 185.

\textsuperscript{363} General Severiano Martinez Anido (1862-1938).

\textsuperscript{364} Unamuno’s Quixote also takes on a decidedly more Christian role in the \textit{Manual} than in \textit{Vida}, but even here he is still not a synonym for Christ.

\textsuperscript{365} “Escribí mi <<Vida de D[on] Q[uijote y S[ancho]>> en… fue obra contemplativa, aunque de contemplación activa. Después comencé mi acción, mi imitación de Don Quijote, arremetiendo contra el retablo de Maese Pedro, el
Unamuno interprets his exile as a mission. His contemplative action, or political Quixotism, is a religious tool used to change the world, and Unamuno connects it to the term *passion*, which Biblically recalls both Christ and Quixote, whose lives consisted in a public martyrdom.

Unamuno turns to Kierkegaard in this passage to reinforce the bond between passion and action:

“Existing is equivalent to living in passion, says Kierkegaard. The passion of Christ was his action. ‘God does not exist—he adds—he is, eternally.’”

For Unamuno, to exist now means to live out a passion in the mode of Christ and Quixote, and he sees himself as doing so in Fuerteventura and afterwards. His voluntary exile is a passion-play which he explicitly compares to Quixote’s, and implicitly to Christ’s.

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366 “Existir equivale a vivir en pasión, dice Kierkegaard. La pasión de Cristo fue su acción. <<Dios no existe—añade—es eternamente>>” Ibid., 105.

367 The following is probably the Kierkegaardian (Climacian) passage that Unamuno had in mind is the following, which perhaps can provide biographical insight into Unamuno’s own acquisition of passion: “Existing, if this is not to be understood as just any sort of existing, cannot be done without passion. Therefore, every Greek thinker was essentially also a passionate thinker. I have often thought about how one might bring a person into passion. So I have considered the possibility of getting him astride a horse and then frightening the horse into the wildest gallop, or even better, in order to draw out the passion properly, the possibility of getting a man who wants to go somewhere as quickly as possible (and therefore was already in something of a passion) astride a horse that can hardly walk—and yet existing is like that if one is conscious of it. Or if a Pegasus and an old nag were hitched to a carriage for a driver not usually disposed to passion and he was told Now drive—I think it would be successful. And this is what existing is like if one is to be conscious of it” (CUP 311-312). Did Unamuno rise to the occasion of his passion only after he was forced into it? Is Kierkegaard shedding light on the human condition?

368 I am convinced that even here, Unamuno’s use of Christ is of the human Christ and not of the divine Christ. In this text it is as though Christ and Quixote are one, and Unamuno does not reach out for literal assistance from Christ as the divinity.
No matter what people thought of Unamuno before, his exile solidified his immortality as not just a thinker, but also as a political actor. Unamuno boycotted Rivera’s regime for six years, never knowing when he would be able to return. He decided that a life lived in compromise of his ideals was not a life worth living, and so Unamuno chose isolation from his family and his home over a compromised sense of justice. He did this in imitation of Quixote, who, on Unamuno’s reading, risked ridicule and isolation in the scene with the galley-slaves. One might also say that the rise of Primo de Rivera taught Unamuno that some ways of living are unacceptable and worth fighting against, even at the cost of self-alienation. Nobody would have faulted Unamuno for returning home after five months on Fuerteventura. No one would have called him a coward, and in fact he probably would have been regarded as a hero just the same. But Unamuno refused to return to Spain at that time because he disapproved of the dictatorship, and vowed not to live under it. Unamuno acted Quixotically by refusing to live in a world in which an entire country can get hijacked by a dictator. Like Quixote, Unamuno changed his world instead of accepting appearances. He created a new life for himself, and though it came at a high price—six years away from home—his reward consisted in taking the name of Quixote.

To become Quixotic is to become political. All contemplation ought to lead to action, and all action back to contemplation. Each person must live her passion, and the more Quixotes there are populating the world, the sooner justice will be won. Unamuno might say that the best chance we have for happiness is living Quixotically, and that a guarantee of an unfulfilling life faces an

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369 In hindsight one can argue that six years is not very long, but in 1924 when he was exiled Unamuno was 60 years old, and in the 1927 Spanish edition of Como se Hace una Novela, Unamuno imagined that at most, his exile would last 20 more years, which would have made him 83. Unamuno imagined that he would live to the age of 90, but he died six years after his return at 72. See Unamuno, Manual, 182.

370 For more on the justice of Quixote, see Cerezo Galán, Las Máscaras de Lo Trágico, 752.
would-be mere aesthete, who chases momentary pleasures, and has no past and no future. At the end of the introduction to *Essays and Soliloquies*, Unamuno leaves his readers with these words, encouraging them to join him in his contemplative action, or his political Quixotism:

And now I return to contemplate the sea, to feed my spirit upon it, to watch its white-crested waves which are born and die and succeed one another like the generations of men and of men’s works in the sea of history. I return to contemplate the all-consoling sea which smiles, with its superhuman smile, upon our tragic human frailties.

Greeting! My readers of the English-speaking world. And when, having read this book, you wish me farewell, may you carry with you something of the quixotesque passion which I have put into my work and which is the rest of my life.

Miguel de Unamuno

Fuerteventura
June 6, 1924.  

**Quixotism is a Political Incarnation of Religiousness A**

Unamuno’s living out his mission to become Quixote is a tangible example of how Quixotism can be understood as an incarnation of Religiousness A. Unamuno does not transgress the ethical sphere during his exile, but I would characterize his actions as religious rather than just ethical. Unamuno’s actions can be considered controversial but they are not outside of the bounds of ethics. One can understand why Unamuno would want to stay out of Spain for six years, whether or not one would have the courage to do so oneself. In other words, Unamuno, like Quixote, can ultimately be understood, unlike Abraham. Quixotism and Religiousness A do not claim that justice lies on the other side of the ethical; they have no need to, since there is no other world

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(like heaven) competing for our allegiance. Even if Quixotism sounded weak in theory (or active contemplation), Unamuno demonstrated that in action—contemplative action—Quixotism can be a vehicle of change in the world. By staying in exile until the collapse of the dictatorship, Unamuno won respect for Quixote, and demonstrated that Quixotism was a political force to be reckoned with. What we can see through Quixotism is that the power of a Religious mission is not diluted in cases of religions of immanence. What matters most is not who the god is, but how that god can motivate a person to act ethically and politically.
Conclusions

This dissertation had two goals: 1) to make a case for further study of Religiousness A in its own right, despite Climacus’s apparent lack of enthusiasm for it, and 2) to convince my readers that Unamuno’s Quixotism can fruitfully be read as an incarnation of Religiousness A. To be clear, I do not think that Quixotism is the only way to flesh out Religiousness A, but I believe that understanding the category of the religion of immanence can help both Kierkegaard and Unamuno scholars, as well as anyone else interested in the intersection of ethics and religion. I have tried to show that in Kierkegaard and Unamuno, the ethical religion of immanence is robust and full of political potential, not simply a watered down version of Christianity.

In the first chapter I set up Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous ethics as two-fold: ethics is personal in that an individual becomes a project for himself in the midst of living out his roles in the community, and ethics is also social in that it values exteriority and community over interiority and individualism. In the first version, Climacus says that an individual makes oneself and is self-sufficient, and in the second, Silentio says that the individual is constituted by his community, and any attempt to step outside of the community will naturally be considered wrong by the ethical. In both cases there need be no god figure, and if there is, it is second to or at the same level as ethics. In other words, in Kierkegaard’s texts, ethics does not change if god is inserted. In both of the ethical portraits—the individual and communal—one’s duty to god is equivalent to one’s duty to the neighbor.

In the second chapter I singled out Religiousness A as the only one of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous religions that does not tear one away from his or her community: Religiousness A
does not have to transgress ethics to be considered a religion. I found that both Silentian faith and Climacian Christianity are set up in an inverse proportion to ethics: the more one is religious, the less one is ethical. Not so for Religiousness A, in which one’s relationship to god does not transcend the world, meaning that one can never legitimately appeal to something private that others cannot possibly understand. Religiousness A is communicable, and it keeps the god-relationship transparent, which implies that one’s relationship to god only improves one’s relationship to others in the ethical sphere. It is for this reason that I think we need to devote serious scholarship to Religiousness A as a religion of immanence, even though Climacus did not.

My third chapter dealt with Quixotism as an alternative to Christianity. Unamuno found a god in Quixote, and built a religion around worshipping that god by imitating him. I claim that during a certain period at least, Unamuno was not a Christian but a devotee of Quixote, which meant that religious terms took on a new significance. For example, typical Christian terms such as the “kingdom of god” and “faith” took on a metaphoric quality for Unamuno. Quixote’s being a fictional god meant that imitation and not divine intervention was at work. Without the Godman, it is up to Unamuno and other Quixote followers to create a kingdom of god on earth through faith, which in Quixotism became creative. Quixote made himself, Dulcinea, Rocinante, and the helmet of Mambrino. Unamuno in turn created himself as the new Quixote, which practically translated into a vow to fight the Spanish dictatorship until its collapse and his victory. It took six years of exile for Unamuno to win the battle, during which time he did not publish through Spanish presses but kept his message alive by publishing in other languages and

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372 Dulcinea or Glory is Quixote’s god, though in the scene of the idols that Unamuno loved so much, he considers what it would be to actually worship Christ and to live and die in Christ’s name.
countries outside of Spain. By these and other radical actions he drew attention to himself and to his Quixotic mission. Unamuno made his political objection visible, and this affected those who knew of and respected him. Upon his arrival back in Spain, Unamuno was welcomed with open arms; he himself had become a legend like Quixote. He had finally achieved the immortality he longed for his whole life.

In the fourth chapter I claim that Quixotism is a religion of immanence. Quixotism centralizes the will, like ethics did for Judge William and Climacus, but in a new way, almost behind the back of the individual. Unamuno credited Quixote for his success, but he never lost sight of the fact that he, Unamuno, was the one making the movements of Quixote. In Fuerteventura, Unamuno died to himself to become Quixote. He started reading the world as though he were Quixote, so it is legitimate to say that Quixote worked through him, and also to acknowledge that Unamuno’s will played a large role in his practice of Quixotism. The Religious individual is committed to a god, to prioritizing the god-relationship first and foremost, and, in trying to become like Quixote Unamuno suffered the pain of having to take a stand against common sense or the status quo. This took courage, and he risked being ostracized. Because he never became unintelligible, however, it took little time for Unamuno to gain support from friends and other intellectuals in Europe. Unamuno-the-Quixotist could be understood by his community; though people could call him crazy for what he did, his madness was always ultimately intelligible. One might not decide to live in voluntary exile in the manner of Unamuno, but one can understand why he did what he did. This example shows that Unamuno is no Abraham, and Quixotism, no Christianity. Unamuno is steeped in his religion of immanence, which entails suffering, being accused of lunacy or madness, and resignation. In following in the
footsteps of Quixote, Unamuno attested to the power of religion to create change in a society or situation.

For these reasons, I think the category of the religion of immanence is helpful for thinking of a religion that does not imply an incommunicable life. I am eager to see other incarnations of Religiousness A arise over time, because thinking about religions of immanence could produce positive change in our world today. I will leave it up to other scholars to explore the implicit political and social potential of religions of immanence.

Given that I am trying to make a religious connection between Unamuno and Kierkegaard, and given the fact that Unamuno read and says he was influenced by Kierkegaard, is it possible that Unamuno was, in fact, trying to develop Kierkegaard’s Religiousness A with his Quixotism? Though my ultimate answer is no, it is helpful to trace Unamuno’s reading of Kierkegaard in order to demonstrate that Kierkegaard and Unamuno had a similar idea in mind with their religions. That they both conceived of a religion of immanence leads me to believe that the concept needs further investigation.

Unamuno’s Reading of Kierkegaard

Unamuno began reading Kierkegaard’s *Samlede Værker* (*Complete Works*) in 1904, the same year that he wrote *Vida*. Prior to this, any mention of Kierkegaard in Unamuno’s writings and letters is second-hand; his knowledge of Kierkegaard before 1904 came through Danish critics Georg Brandes or Harald Høffding.\(^{373}\) We know that Unamuno read Brandes’ *Henrik Ibsen*\(^ {374}\)

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\(^{373}\) The following is a sequential list of references to Kierkegaard by Unamuno, both in his articles and in correspondence, before 1904 when he began to read Kierkegaard firsthand: February 8, 1900 letter to Ruben Dario,
(1898) sometime around 1900 and finished Høffding’s Søren *Kierkegaard als philosof*375 (1896) by March 1901.376 Høffding’s Kierkegaard enticed him to order the *Samlede Værker* from Leipzig in February or March of 1904.377 From his letter to Pedro Múgica, we know for sure he

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376 Unamuno wrote an article in 1901 entitled “The ‘Soul’ of Manuel Machado” in which he writes:

“I have just finished reading the book of Høffding on Søren Kierkegaard, the powerful Danish thinker and feeler, the great melancholic, the philosopher of irrationalism and that of contradiction and the leap, of disjunctions and either/or, the principle model of that grand and somber Brand of Ibsen.” [“Acababa, además, de leer el libro de Høffding sobre Soren Kierkegaard, el poderoso pensador y sentidor danés, el gran melancólico, el filósofo del irracionalismo y de la contradicción y del salto, de las disyunciones y del *todo o nada*, el principal modelo de aquel grandioso y sombrío Brand, de Ibsen.”] (“El “alma” de Manuel Machado” OCE III 1078). Also see Igual Arroyo, “Pensée et Existence: Kierkegaard et Unamuno”, chapter 1.

377 This is according to the editor Manuel García Blanco in the introduction to Unamuno’s *Obras Completas*. See OCE III 22.
was reading Kierkegaard’s primary texts by May 9, 1904.\(^{378}\) In May alone, Unamuno wrote three letters to three different people, telling them that he was reading Kierkegaard.\(^{379}\)

Exactly which of Kierkegaard’s texts Unamuno was reading while he was writing *Vida* is not clear, but we do know with certainty that he was reading some part of the *Samlede Værker* in the original Danish. Though in this dissertation I have made a strong connection between *Vida* and *Postscript*, it is unlikely that Unamuno was reading *Postscript* (SV VII) in 1904 while he was writing *Vida*, though not impossible since it was published in 1902. Along these lines, it is equally unlikely but still plausible that Unamuno was reading any of the following volumes published in or before 1904: SV IV (*Four Upbuilding Discourses, Two Upbuilding Discourses, Three Upbuilding Discourses, Philosophical Fragments, The Concept of Anxiety*, published in 1902), SV VI (*Stages on Life’s Way*, also published in 1902), SV IX (*Works of Love*, published in 1903), or SV X (*Christian Discourses, The Crisis and the Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, published in 1904).\(^{380}\)

Javier Teira and others suspect that Unamuno read Kierkegaard’s works in order as they appeared in the *Samlede Værker*, and there is no evidence to the contrary. Granting this assumption, it is likely that Unamuno read or was reading SV I (*Either/Or Volume I*), SV II

\(^{378}\) This fragment is from Unamuno’s letter to Múgica: “I am reading Kierkegaard (Complete Works “Samlede Vaerker”), Ritschl “Rechfertigung und Versohnung” and the “Religionsphilisphie” of Pfleiderer. I have returned, and with more force than ever, to religious studies. (“Estoy leyendo a Kierkegaard (Obras completas “Samlede Vaerker”), a Ritschl “Rechfertigung und Versohnung” y la “Religionsphilisphie” de Pfleiderer. Vuelco, y con mas fuerza que nunca, a los estudios religiosos.”) Unamuno, *Cartas Inéeditas de Miguel de Unamuno*, 329.

\(^{379}\) See Unamuno’s letters from May 9, 1904 to Pedro Múgica, May 25, 1904 to Alberto Nin Frias, and May 29, 1904 to Luis de Zulueta. See *Epistolario Americano (1890-1936)*, 185 and *Cartas Inéeditas de Miguel de Unamuno*, 329 and Unamuno and Zulueta, *Cartas (1903-1933)*, 73.

\(^{380}\) Scholars suspect that Unamuno never read Volumes V or VIII, because there is not a single mark in either volume.
(Either/Or, Volume II), and even SV III (Two Upbuilding Discourses, Fear and Trembling, Repetition, and Three Upbuilding Discourses while he was writing Vida. I include the unlikely text of SV III because in Vida Unamuno calls Quixote a “knight of faith,” which is a clear reference to Fear and Trembling. What we do not know is if this reference is firsthand or from his reading of Høffding. In either case, the following are my speculations on the potential points of influence in Vida from Either/Or I and II and Fear and Trembling. They cannot be proven to be sources for Vida, but at the very least are interesting points of intersection between the two thinkers.

If Unamuno was reading Either/Or and Fear and Trembling when writing Vida, then he would have to be thinking about the categories of the ethical and the aesthetic while writing Vida, as well as thinking through some concept of faith (Silentian, not Climacean). From the marginal notes in both volumes of Either/Or, it is obvious that Quixote was on Unamuno’s mind, but that helps little in dating his reading of Kierkegaard, because Quixote was likely always on Unamuno’s mind.382

It is my suspicion that Unamuno was only reading SV I and II—both volumes of Either/Or—while he was writing Vida. As we have seen, Vida is full of images of marriage, which he may have gotten from Either/Or II, in which Judge William stresses the importance of marriage as a form of committed and social life. Quixotism is often described in terms similar to Judge William’s ethics, and though I have argued that Unamuno’s Quixotism is more than just

381 Teira and other believe that Unamuno did not finish SV II (Either/Or, Volume II) before continuing to SV III, and only returned to it again in 1931, which makes it plausible that Unamuno did read Fear and Trembling while writing Vida.

382 The three books in which Unamuno writes the name “Quijote” are: SV I, II, and VI (Either/Or I and II, and Stages on Life’s Way).
ethics and involves the religious sphere, Unamuno would not have had firsthand knowledge of Kierkegaard’s religious sphere, which (arguably) does not appear robustly until SV III in *Fear and Trembling*.\(^3\) Of course, one could speculate that Unamuno was influenced by the Kierkegaard of Brandes and Høffding, and that that is why his Quixotism appears to be both ethical and religious.

I am fairly certain that Unamuno was not reading *Postscript* (SV VII) at the time, and so would have no way of connecting Quixotism with Religiousness A (apart from Høffding and Brandes). In other words, I do not think that Unamuno’s project was to flesh out Religiousness A, but I do think that that is exactly what he accomplished. To find evidence of *Postscript’s* effect on Unamuno, one must look to *Sentimiento*, which was published in 1913, and in which Unamuno references Kierkegaard ten times. All of the references to Kierkegaard in *Sentimiento* are from *Postscript*, so we can conclude that while the book had a major effect on him (and even potentially on his Quixotism), most likely the religious sphere as it is presented in *Postscript* was not available to him as a category until after he published *Vida*.\(^4\) However, I think that the similarities between the two religions suggest a strong affinity between the two thinkers, which is the point at which this dissertation began: emphasizing affinity over influence.

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3. One could argue that the sermon from the Jutland pastor at the end of *Either/Or II* represents the religious sphere, making the books not really an either/or between aesthetics and ethics, but more of an either/or/or between aesthetics, ethics, and religion. I do not agree with this reading.

4. For a comprehensive interpretation of the influence of the *Postscript* on Unamuno, see Jan E. Evans, “Passion, Paradox and Indirect Communication: The Influence of Postscript on Miguel de Unamuno,” *Kierkegaard Studies: Yearbook* (2005) and Teira, “La Influencia de Kierkegaard en el Pensamiento de Unamuno.”
This dissertation’s immediate goal was to connect Kierkegaard with Unamuno on the topics of Religiousness A and Quixotism specifically, and on the religion of immanence more generally. The purpose has been primarily to demonstrate that reading Unamuno can be beneficial to Kierkegaard scholars and vice versa. Unamuno helps us make sense of what Kierkegaard called Religiousness A; without Quixotism, this concept would still be opaque. Kierkegaard did not give us enough information about Religiousness A, and he particularly did not give us an incarnation of it—he gave few metaphors, no beautiful images, no lyrical details—no flesh and bone, so to speak. Without imagining Quixotism, Religiousness A sounds like a stiff thought project on the way to Christianity.

On the other side, Kierkegaard gives Quixotism structure. Unamuno is prone to the opposite impulse of Kierkegaard: he is full of flowery imagery and interesting, almost aphoristic, nuggets or tidbits. Unamuno fills the pages of Vida with scenes and suggestions, but he sometimes does little to defend his claims or even make claims. Unamuno gives us a taste of how rich and energizing Quixotism could be if only it were developed. So my task has been, in part, to synthesize his insights and develop this religion of Quixotism.

Since I have put these two thinkers in dialogue on this particular issue, it is possible to see Unamuno as a proponent of a religion that he lived, at least for a time. There is an abundance of literature devoted to the “religion” of Unamuno, which stresses his longing for immortality and his anxiety about whether or not God exists. Without considering Quixotism as a factor in this discussion, scholars would be missing a vital factor: that he conceived of religion in his own terms, and not simply in the terms of Christianity. I am invested in seeing his Quixotic (and,
more generally, his Kierkegaardian) periods receive more attention because I think they can weigh in on the debate about whether or not Unamuno believed in God and the afterlife.

By emphasizing Religiousness A, it is easy to see Kierkegaard as something other than Silentio. One can see in Kierkegaard a version of a religion which is demanding and difficult, but not extreme or unreasonable. To defend this claim, I have had to read Kierkegaard against himself, in part, but he himself planted the seed of Religiousness A in fertile ground. This is the part of Kierkegaard that I have been interested in exploring; in comparison, both his aestheticism and his Christianity have been extensively analyzed by Kierkegaard scholars.

My broadest motivation for writing this dissertation has been to raise questions about the connection between religion and the social (which always implies the political) sphere. What is the best relationship between religion and ethics? Are there certain religions which are unhealthy for a society? Using Kierkegaard, I have claimed that there are, and these are the transcendent ones that either insist on a martyrdom of the understanding or posit some kind of absolute relation to the absolute, or both. In that case, should we just forget about religion altogether? If we did, then in my view we would be throwing away something potentially beneficial. Religions of immanence have the potential to be utilized for social movements, but this potential does not make it clear how they can or should be utilized. Unamuno wants to populate the world with Quixotes, because he sees it as a solution the overabundance of Don Juans, or the over-aesthetic world he describes. I am not certain that populating the world with Quixotes would be a good idea, but I suspect that it might, given this dissertation’s understanding of what it means to be a Quixote or to follow Quixotism. Speculatively, I would say that if more people would voluntarily exile themselves from situations in which they think an injustice is being committed, then more
dismal situations could be alleviated. As long as it does not go outside of the bounds of ethics, encouraging a society to become more quixotic would not be harmful, and it could be helpful. At the very least, we can say that it would be a waste of potential social unity and political involvement to eliminate religions of immanence on the misunderstood ground that they are dangerous, as religions of transcendence are often understood to be. Kierkegaard and Unamuno have shown us that within the religion of immanence lies a wealth of possibility and potential for political, social, and individual flourishing.
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