

Faith and Reason: An Inquiry into the Concept of Faith in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*

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Abstract: Faith is often accused of being irrational and considered lower than reason because it is not objective and universal. In other words, at a practical level, believers cannot always obey God's commands communicated in their inwardness. However, they must always be subject to the demands of a universal and objective reason. This elaboration attempts to counter this assumption departing from the description that Kierkegaard presented in his work, *Fear and Trembling*. There, Kierkegaard states that a single individual believer is higher than the ethical-rational demands that bind him. In other words, the purpose of this text is to show that faith has its own rationality and is not subject to reason. Therefore, through textual analysis method of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, this paper would like to analyze the constitutive elements of faith, how they work, and why faith is not subject to ratio. The point of view used in this elaboration is Kierkegaardian subjectivity. The analysis finds that the constitutive elements of faith are anxiety, courage, passion, the strength of the absurd, and hope (as components of faith), which need to be carried out with a double movement of faith.

Keywords: Faith, Reason, Subjectivity, Components of Faith, Double Movement of Faith

Abstrak: Iman seringkali dituduh sebagai sesuatu yang irasional dan dipandang lebih rendah dari akal budi karena tidak bersifat objektif dan universal. Dengan kata lain, pada tataran praktis, orang beriman tidak bisa selalu taat pada perintah Tuhan yang dikomunikasikan di dalam kebatiniahannya mereka, melainkan mereka harus selalu tunduk pada tuntutan rasio yang universal dan objektif. Elaborasi ini berusaha untuk menangkis anggapan tersebut dengan bertolak dari deskripsi yang Kierkegaard uraikan dalam karyanya, *Fear and Trembling*. Di sana, Kierkegaard menyatakan bahwa individu tunggal yang beriman lebih tinggi dari tuntutan etis-rasional yang mengikatnya. Dengan kata lain, tujuan dari teks ini ialah untuk menunjukkan bahwa iman memiliki rasionalitasnya sendiri, tidak tunduk pada akal budi. Oleh karena itu, dengan menggunakan metode analisis teks terhadap karya Kierkegaard *Fear and Trembling*, teks ini hendak menganalisis elemen-elemen konstitutif dari iman, bagaimana cara kerjanya, dan mengapa iman tidak tunduk pada rasio. Sudut pandang yang digunakan ialah subjektivitas Kierkegaardian. Dari analisis tersebut ditemukan bahwa elemen konstitutif dari iman ialah kecemasan, keberanian, gairah, kekuatan yang absurd, dan harapan (sebagai komponen dari iman), yang perlu dijalankan dengan gerakan ganda iman.

Kata Kunci: Iman, Akal budi, Subjektivitas, Komponen Iman, Gerakan Ganda Iman

Introduction

The tension between faith and reason is a perennial problem from time to time. Faith is often placed as a counter position to reason and considered something completely irrational. The binary opposition is raised from a presupposition that reason represents the universal (the objective), while faith is on the subjective side. In other words, the "mystery" dimension of the object of faith, subjective aspects that cannot be communicated, and the appropriation of the doctrinal truth of faith for the subject (which is considered essential) are some examples that make the domain of faith considered to have less rational weight.

The problem is more complicated when the focus is directed at this tension of faith and reason that occurs in the realm of one's personal struggle in building a relationship with God. The tension is that *either* one believes in and obeys God's private commands in one's inwardness *or* carries out the demands of reason. The reason can manifest in various forms. It can take the form of an absolute and universal ethical claim, but it can also manifest concretely in various forms of binding rules in ordinary life.

As Immanuel Kant proposed, the rational and absolute ethical demands state that one must obey the moral law (cf. Kant, 1998, p. 31; cf. Jankowiak, 2021). These demands bind everyone wherever they are. Regardless of ethnicity, religion, or generation, everyone must accomplish moral law because this law is universal. It does not mean that people lose their freedom. They still have the freedom: either to obey and fulfill or not the moral law in every action. Kant emphasized that freedom is necessary to carry out one's moral actions, and without freedom, there is no moral action. Moreover, an action is moral when its sole motive is to obey the moral law. Kant calls this "the categorical imperative".

Hegel proposed that rational-ethical demands embodied in various rules, customs, and cultures also have the same binding power (cf. Lippit, 2016, p. 94; cf. Carlisle, 2010, p. 116). Hegel concretized Immanuel Kant's moral ideas. Hegel stated that ethical demands are not only in categorical imperatives but are manifested in various rules codified in law, customs, or institutions in society or religion. Even though this ethical manifests itself in a particular form, it still has universal value because it comes from universal law.

The ethical concept (universal), as a requirement that everyone must carry out, also enters into the struggle of the human faith process. One considers that to have faith is a matter of carrying out the laws as the religious institutions codified. In other words, one thinks that one has good faith by living up to ethical demands. Therefore, one identifies having faith with accomplishing ethical demands.

In fact, faith is not just a matter of obeying various laws that the religious institutions codified. Faith is also one's personal struggle with one's relationship with God. If the tension is between faith and reason (*either* one believes in and obeys God's private commands in one's inwardness *or* carries out the demands of reason), then what criteria can justify that one's trust and obedience are directed to God? What if someone commits an action that is contrary to reason, but one holds that the action is God's command?

This text seeks to investigate the concept of faith concerning the tension between faith and reason. In this text, the domain of "faith" refers to the struggle of a personal relationship with God. Meanwhile, "the reason" refers to the manifested one in various rules that people live in social and religious institutions. Therefore, the concept of faith that will be elaborated here is related to: firstly, what constitutive elements a believer must have to build a personal relationship with God (especially to face the ethical-rational demands); and secondly, what a person should do to be a true believer.

Based on the above objectives, I argue that Kierkegaardian philosophy is the right tool to analyze this problem. It centers on how one can become an authentic person. However, this original idea is closely related to how one becomes an authentic believer. The tension between faith and reason (in this case, reason is embodied in ethics) is elaborated in his pseudonym work, *Fear and Trembling*. Indeed, this work, *Fear and Trembling*, does not provide a systematic explanation of the investigation into this issue. However, in the book, Kierkegaard provides an in-depth description. Kierkegaard employs Abraham as a central figure who struggles with faith against rational-ethical demands that he must also fulfill.

Method

The method used in this investigation is a textual analysis. I limit the concept of faith, which will be elaborated on in this text, to Kierkegaard's description in *Fear and Trembling*. It means that this elaboration will specifically analyze Kierkegaard's description in *Fear and Trembling*. This elaboration will be divided into three parts. First, the issue of rationality manifested in ethics, as referred to in *Fear and Trembling*, will be described. This section is crucial to clarify at what point the tension between faith and reason occurs. Subsequently, it will explain how Kierkegaard's point of view dissects this issue. It is this point of view that is unique to Kierkegaard. The previous two analyzes lead us to understand the Kierkegaardian notion of faith concerning the demands of reason. There are two main things that I will present here, i.e., 1) what are the constitutive elements of faith and 2) what a person should do to be a true believer.

Fear and Trembling does not systematically describe the movement of each stage. It also does not systematically describe faith. However, *Fear and Trembling* provides an in-depth description of how one can move from the ethics sphere to the religious sphere. Thus, Kierkegaard's elaboration in *Fear and Trembling* corresponds to the objective of this investigation, which is to seek the concept of faith (what "to believe in God" means), especially concerning rational-ethical demands.

Result and Discussion

Framing the Problem of Rationality

Two important things need to be clarified regarding the problem of rationality in *Fear and Trembling*. The first is the rationality problem manifested in the Hegelian ethical life. The elaboration of this discourse will reach the dictum "the ethical is universal". Thus, the second point will explain the basic meaning of the dictum.

Ethical life as a manifestation of rationality

The problem of rationality in *Fear and Trembling* is manifested in ethics because ethics is defined as rational and universal in the text. This idea stems from the Hegelian conception of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (2001, § 33) distinguished two important terms: morality (*Moralität*) and ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). This distinction flows from his criticism of Kantian morality which centers on the categorical imperative. Such a notion of morality focuses on individual motives that must be in harmony with the moral law (as form). The next question is, what is the basis of this moral law? Kant was to answer that this moral law is based on rationality, which is objective (universal) (cf. Kant, 1998, p. 41). The import of this is that what is morally good must be accepted with common sense as being something that is good by anyone whatsoever, anywhere and at any time. The problem is that Kant places too much stress on the balance between motives of action and moral law. This, therefore, leaves no space for the content of the action. In other words, Kantian morality is primarily a matter of the inner will and intentions of the individual agent, which either does or does not conform to the universal moral law (cf. Lippitt, 2016, p. 93). Consequently, morality is abstract and mediated (cf. Stewart, 2003, p. 311).

Meanwhile, Hegelian ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) is associated with customs (*Sitte*). Ethics or ethical life, therefore, "refers to the concrete realm of customs, duties, institutions, and mores that are generally accepted in any given society" (*Ibid*). It exists as something established in concrete historical

communities and, as such, precedes reflexivity. However, Hegel's emphasis is not on an unreflective acceptance of society's customs and institutions but on people's acceptance of habits that have been rooted in the institution – because they have pondered how these habits can be rationally justified (cf. Lippitt, 2016, 93).

This idea is actually related to Hegel's notion “that “mind” or “spirit” [*Geist*] becomes “naturalized” as it is embedded in concrete forms of communal life” (cf. Carlisle, 2010, 116). In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel also points out “that communal ethical life, understood in the broadest sense, is “the realm of freedom made actual”: when “mind” or “spirit” becomes a “second nature”, its freedom is actualized, expressed concretely out in the world” (cf. Carlisle, 2010, 116). Thus, the content of custom (*Sitte*), or the habit of the ethical, appearing as second nature is nothing but mind or spirit embedded in concrete forms of communal life. So, it would be coherent if later Hegel, as Lee cited, also said that “The ethical life [*die Sittlichkeit*] is the divine spirit indwelling in the self-consciousness of this actual present age” (Lee, 1993, 106).

Based on this explanation, in Hegel's perspective, Kantian's theory of “categorical imperative” (morality) must presuppose an understanding of the ethical life. In other words, one must first understand the concepts of the various relationships, that make up social life, before abstracting them into abstract moral laws (cf. Stewart, 2003, 311). It also emphasizes that abstract ethics only becomes a chimera if it does not have a concrete reference: the ethical life.

Lippitt's interpretation goes so far as to assert that Kantian moral theory must ultimately be subordinated to ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). Morality is translated as “social” or “customary morality”. In other words, by an ethical life, Hegel intends to affirm that the content of each person's moral duty is determined by the actual relationship between individuals and institutions (cf. Lippitt, 2016, p. 93).

The analysis of morality and ethical life leads us to the formation of the dictum “the ethical is universal” in *Fear and Trembling* (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 54, 68, 82). It “is ‘universal’ in so far as it comprises the laws, customs, and institutions of a particular society” (Lippitt, 2016, p. 94; cf. Carlisle, 2010, p. 106-107). Although it is manifested in a particular society, it has universal value and is absolutely binding. Thus, the problem of rationality conceptualized in *Fear and Trembling* is clear. Rationality is manifested in ethics, particularly in ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). It is the crucial point as the target of Kierkegaard's criticism.

Meanings of “the ethical is the universal”

There are three main meanings of the dictum “the ethical is the universal”. The first meaning is that *the universal is higher than the individual*. Kierkegaard stated explicitly that the ethical duty of every individual is “to express himself in this, *to annul* his singularity in order to become the universal” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 54, emphasis added). Thus, the universal, the ethical, is higher than the singular individual. However, what does “to annul” mean here?

Another consequence is that, if, as in Lippitt's interpretation, the Hegelian ethical life is manifested in the laws, customs, and institutions of a particular society, and if “to cancel” the particularity means an attempt to overcome the particular and the individual, then the ethical task of an individual is to annul the particularity and to surpass his self-interest for the sake of the whole community through the fulfillment of social duties (cf. Lippitt, 2016, p. 94; cf. Carlisle, 2010, p. 108). It is the Hegelian idea that then places the universal above the particular.

The individual's task is "to express himself in this" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 54, emphasis added). The idea of "expressing" (communicating) something is related to the idea of mediation because elsewhere, Kierkegaard wrote, "Abraham cannot *be mediated*; in other words, he cannot *speak*" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 60, emphasis added). Furthermore, the idea of mediation is closely related to the universal, which is ethical: "This position cannot be mediated, *for all mediation takes place only by virtue of the universal*" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 56, emphasis added).

In short, the second meaning of "the ethical is universal" in *Fear and Trembling* is that the ethical task of each individual is "to express himself in this, to annul his singularity in order to become the universal" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 54, emphasis added). One must be able to communicate each of one's moral actions along with all the motives for those actions and must be able to "annul" one's particularity and overcome one's personal interests for the sake of the whole community through the fulfillment of social duties (cf. Carlisle, 2010, p. 108). By annulling the particularity and fulfilling the social tasks, the particularity is not abolished but is elevated to a higher level in the universal realm. The explanation of the demand to *express* or *communicate* each of one's moral actions along with all the motives for those actions also explains why "the outer (the externalization) is higher than *das Innere* the inner" (Kierkegaard, 1983, 69).

Another important meaning in relation to "the ethical is universal" is, following Kierkegaard's expression, that "it *rests immanent in itself*, has nothing outside itself that is its *τέλος* (*telos* = end, purpose) but is itself the *τέλος* for everything outside itself, and when the ethical has absorbed this into itself, it goes not further" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 54, emphasis added). The word *telos* comes from Greek and means end, goal, or purpose. In other words, by saying that the ethical "has nothing outside itself that is its *τέλος* but is itself the *τέλος* for everything outside itself", everything outside the ethical is absorbed into the ethical and conforms to ethics-as-universal as the *telos*. A single human being, therefore, must always direct his life to the ethical. It follows that this leads ultimately to the affirmation that "the ethical rests immanently in itself".

These are three meanings of "the ethical is the universal" Kierkegaard criticized: 1) that the universal is higher than the particular; 2) that the task of the individual is to communicate each of his moral actions along with all the motives for those actions and must be able to "annul" his particularity and surpass his personal interests for the sake of the whole community through the fulfillment of social duties; and finally, 3) that God has fused with the ethical so that we cannot communicate personally with God.

Kierkegaardian Subjectivity

A new category for understanding faith

If the three meanings adduced about "the ethical is the universal" are accurate, then Abraham's title as the father of the faithful, the prototype of faith, becomes incomprehensible. Abraham put the particular higher than the universal, neglected to communicate the motive of his unreasonable action, and committed to a personal relationship with God in inwardness. Therefore, Kierkegaard (in this case, he employed the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio) explicitly states in the *Fear and Trembling* that "Here the necessity of a new category for the understanding of Abraham becomes apparent" (1983, p. 60).

Green (1993) contends that the reading from an ethical standpoint will fail to understand the contents of *Fear and Trembling* (cf. p. 191). It is because the focus of this book is not on human

behavior, on how people should act, and under what norms their actions are regulated. Green continues, asserting that Kierkegaard often denies in the text, that one, in any way, can conform to Abraham's behavior in ethics. Abraham's actions are situated entirely outside the concept of universal ethics, which cannot be mediated through language (cf. 1993, p. 193). Reading *Fear and Trembling* as offering a vision of the moral life thus produces a jarring inconsistency. It seems to hold up as exemplary and worthy of imitation a kind of conduct that (1) cannot possibly be understood in terms of general values and (2) cannot *justifiably* be adopted by Abraham or any other human being (cf. 1993, p. 194). In other words, based on Green's suggestion, through *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's aim is not to answer ethical issues with an ethical reflection but wants to take it to a different level, to "a new category", to a sphere that he regards as higher than the ethical, namely a religious sphere, where a personal relationship with God becomes a measure of the depth of human life.

In building a relationship with God, the fundamental element is not only a series of ethical rules, nor a series of liturgical rules, nor a series of rules codified in law, but rather the personal struggle of particular individuals with God in coping with various problems that put the subject in a situation which constitutes a dilemma.

Mooney (1991) notes Kierkegaard's ingenuity in dealing with dilemmas as his way of presenting a perspective for understanding faith. Quoting John Donnelly, Mooney observes that the dilemma always consists in two difficult choices where the way out always seems so vague. The protagonist finds it hard to choose one option over the other, but either can he or she abstain (cf. pp. 63-73). In fact, if abstention were indeed possible, how, in practical terms, can we distinguish between abstention and simple refusal. Therefore, in the dilemma of faith, we cannot easily say that we are asked to always obey God, at any cost, regardless of ethics (cf. Mooney, 1991, p. 65). Was this the case, then there would be no dilemma in it, no element of difficulty? Instead, in building a personal relationship with God (having faith) this is not so. Dilemmas are always a gray area. There always exists tension when people have to make decisions. The logic of the dilemma cannot be judged from the results.

Mooney points to an essential element of the structure of the dilemma (cf. 1991, pp. 65-66). He asserts that there are cases where the considerations exist in such an intense stalemate and where the choices to be made are radically incomparable (in the sense of having the same level of value). At such a stage, even hope becomes completely meaningless. Hope seems lost. The road ahead is dark, with no instruments to help in passing beyond.

Thus, in Mooney's view, the dilemma is "a powerful refutation of complacent rationalism" (1991, p. 67) because there are parts of life that need to be seen from a different perspective. There is a spiritual side of life that can only be understood in the logic of dilemmas that reveal the depth of our vulnerability and concern, the breadth of suffering, and the resilience of the fragile yet admirable integrity of human beings (cf. Mooney, 1991, p. 67).

Subjectivity

The tension inherent in the dilemma regards both the universal and the particular. The universal includes the demands of ethical obligations that each individual must fulfill by "annulling" his various particularities. At the same time, the particulars represent the inner struggle of each individual to fulfill the universal or individual's personal relationship with God that cannot be mediated by anything. It is at this point that the dilemma manifests itself.

In a dilemma, the particular individual struggles with various difficulties, fears, indecision, and anxiety when making a decision. In dealing with various kinds of feelings that arise, one needs strength, courage, hope, and commitment to do the right thing to get out of dilemmas with good intentions. In other words, one needs passion. Carlisle states that the concept of passion refers to eros in Platonic thought, e.g., the desire for truth, not for sensual pleasures (cf. 2010, p. 117). This particular or individual realm is what Kierkegaard later calls subjectivity. It is related to personal actions, motives, and commitments (cf. Mooney, 1991, p. 71). The problem that remains is the relationship between subjectivity and truth. What does truth depend on when there is no objective value as a benchmark for truth?

To unravel the truth from the point of view of subjectivity, it can be helpful to look at the distinction made by Mooney regarding objectivity as the content of Kierkegaardian subjectivity (cf. 1991, pp. 74-77; cf. 1989, pp. 381-397). Mooney details four types of objectivity contained in Kierkegaardian subjectivity as expounded in *Fear and Trembling*. However, I choose three of four types that I consider relevant for this analysis. Objectivity is reflective, moral, and ontological (cf. Mooney, 1991, pp. 74-77).

Reflective objectivity is associated with Socrates' concern, where this objectivity considers our commitments, viewpoints, and projects. Kierkegaard encourages us to pay close attention and be dialectically alert to all commitments, points of view, and various personal projects so that people do not fall into arbitrariness and subjective frivolity (cf. Mooney, 1991, pp. 74-75). In other words, "reflective" here refers to the auto-criticism of these elements.

Moral objectivity is manifested in the requirements attached to social positions or manifested in general moral principles or rules (cf. Mooney, 1991, p. 75). Thus, morality is understood here in the framework of the Hegelian "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*). In the context of *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard employs Johannes de Silentio, an approach which is not at all opposed to the element of moral objectivity: that believers must also obey what is outlined in the ethical order. That is why Kierkegaard said that the knight of faith "belongs entirely to the world" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 39). It is precisely this moral objectivity that makes the dilemma stronger, and which makes faith even more meaningful.

Ontological objectivity is likewise related to moral objectivity but has a broader meaning. By ontological objectivity, Kierkegaard means an independent reality to which humans can gain access – both moral and non-moral, both physical and spiritual. The truth and value of that reality is not just a human projection. Mooney concluded that the task of human selfhood is to relate to the absolute, not to fabricate illusions (cf. 1991, p. 95). Thus, in the case of faith – as a personal relationship with God – this reality can only be approached with the subjectivity involved to gain access to it. This access is through struggle.

The Concept of Faith

A tension between faith and reason

In order to comprehend Kierkegaard's basic ideas about faith, it is important to analyze first the fundamental differences regarding the movements (actions) carried out by tragic heroes, knights of infinite resign, and knights of faith. The elaboration of the three movements carried out by these three different figures is essential. This analysis shows us Johannes de Silentio's criticism of Hegelian ethics

and leads us to enter into his subjective idea of existential faith. Tragic heroes' actions are in the ethical corridor (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59), while knights of faith are in the religious faith corridor (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 69). By emphasizing the demarcation line between the ethical and the religious, it does not mean that Abraham's actions were wholly unethical or immoral. Abraham suspended the ethical (universal) for a time in favor of higher demands (cf. Lippitt, 2016, pp. 99-104).

Meanwhile, the movements of the knights of infinite resignation are complex. Johannes categorizes his movements as constitutive in double movements along with movements of faith (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 67, 69). It means that without the movement of infinite resignation, the movement of faith is meaningless. However, on the other hand, when infinite resignation is not in a state of unity with the double movement, the movement is purely a human movement without involving the element of faith. Kierkegaard called it a purely philosophical movement (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 77).

Act of Tragic Heroes: Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus. There are three main characters that Johannes de Silentio refers to as tragic heroes, namely Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus. Agamemnon was a king who led the Greek army in the Trojan War. However, there was a problem on the voyage to Troy. The wind sent by the god Artemis was very weak. As a result, Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, was sacrificed to Artemis to win the war. The tragic dilemma is Agamemnon, as a king, is required to sacrifice his daughter (the particular) for the sake of his nation (the universal) (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 86).

The second figure is Jephthah. He was a leader of Israel against the Ammonites. Jephthah pleaded with God to give Israel victory over the Ammonites. He also promised that the first person he would meet when returning to his homeland would be sacrificed for God. God granted Jephthah's appeal. Unfortunately, when he returned to his motherland, the first person who greeted him was his daughter. He then had to sacrifice her. The tension is that he had to sacrifice his beloved daughter for the sake of his people.

Lucius Junius Brutus is the first consul of Rome. His life story is tragic, given that he had to draw a sword to execute his two sons, who were suspected of treason. Regarding Brutus' heroic actions, Johannes said, "When a son forgets his duty, when the State entrusts the father with the sword of judgment ... then it is with heroism that the father must forget that the guilty one is his son" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 87). Similar to the two previous heroes, this hero sacrifices his own children's lives for something "higher".

The various actions tragic heroes committed are at the ethical level (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59) because all their actions can be understood in the context of the "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*) of their nation. They place their ethical duties to protect the family (the particular, the lower one) under the demands of the higher ethical duty (the state, the universal). They are "great because of their moral virtue" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59). Agamemnon can be justified and even praised for putting his daughter's life to benefit his nation. Jephthah was praised and justified because he kept his oath to God. The Brutus case is the same. He was hailed because he put his nation's interests above the interests of himself and his family.

Their actions are personal because they have to accomplish them personally. However, even though their actions are individual, they always have universal support. They never felt alone because there were always people behind them who praised, supported, and appreciated their heroism. It happens because they act for universally acceptable reasons.

If they had to enter into Abraham's ordeal, the tragic heroes would have had a completely different struggle from what Abraham experienced. They would valiantly climb (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 35) Mount Moria and said to themselves, "It is an ordeal, a temptation" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 60). Moreover, they would try to convince themselves that there would be an ethical justification for their actions; that God's commandment is ethical (universal) because "the ethical is the universal, and as such it is also the divine" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 68). This tragic heroes' (the universal's) point of view leads Johannes de Silentio's critics that "God becomes an invisible, vanishing point ... his power is to be found only in the ethical" (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 68). Therefore, God's demands are absolute because these demands are ethical. The tragic heroes would see that this act of sacrificing a child was based on something higher. However, this higher one is still in the ethical corridor because God's absolute demands are an ethical obligation (cf. Lippitt, 2016, pp. 96-99).

Thus, the movements of the tragic heroes are limited to the finite, temporal, and exist in this world. The tragic heroes accomplish their duty through a resignation movement – because, without a resignation, they cannot make an act of sacrifice. However, this resignation brings wounds. Because even though the universe supports and exalts them, they experience an inevitable inner bitterness, which they can only endure (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 61). Johannes de Silentio does not intend the tragic heroes' actions as faith because for him, as described in Abraham, faith transcends the ethical (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 59).

The Infinite Resignation Movement of Lad "the Lover". The infinite resignation movement is different from tragic heroes' actions. As said before, the infinite resignation movement has two meanings. On the one hand, it is in one unity with the double movement of faith, but on the other hand, it can also be a single movement without any connection with faith (a philosophical movement). This section describes the last meaning: the infinite resignation movement as a philosophical movement.

The best example to explain the infinite resignation movement is the figures Johannes described, namely a young lad who loves a princess (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 41). A young lad's movement is infinite resignation because he continues to love the princess even though it is impossible. Johannes states that this love is "the substance of his life" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 42), and the young lad will devote all his strength "to concentrate the whole substance of his life and the meaning of actuality into one single desire" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 43). Johannes continues, "His love for that princess would become for him the expression of an eternal love, would assume a religious character, would be transfigured into a love of the eternal being, which true enough denied the fulfillment but nevertheless did reconcile him once more in the eternal consciousness of its validity in an eternal form that no actuality can take away from him" (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 43-44).

Double Movement of Faith. The movement of faith is a double movement (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 36). It means that the knight of faith always carries out the movement of infinite resignation and the movement of faith. The movement of infinite resignation was divided into two parts, namely a pure philosophical movement and a movement in unity with the faith movement. Therefore, before entering into the movement of faith and its double movement, it is necessary to clarify the second type of the movement of infinite resignation.

The movement of infinite resignation, which is in unity with the faith movement, is the same as that of infinite resignation as a philosophical movement. However, the most crucial difference is that infinite resignation, in unity with the faith movement, involves faith. Davenport – then Lippitt follows with some modifications – adds that there is also an element of hope in this movement: that God does

all things together for good in the movement (cf. Davenport, 2008, p. 174; Lippitt, 2016, p. 183). This elaboration will take into consideration Davenport's opinion.

We explained how the movement of infinite resignation became possible. The initial process is the same. The knight of infinite resignation must renounce the finite, the temporal. This renouncement is not accomplished by self-hardening, as Mooney proposes, but by accepting limitations and constantly canceling the despair that always sneaks in at any moment of the process.

The next stage is crucial. A pure philosophical movement will carry out transcendence, preceded by recollection to cancel despair, while an infinite resignation, carried out by the knight of faith, will cancel despair with expectancy. The knight of faith has hope that God works all things together for good (cf. Lippitt, 2016, p. 183). Therefore, the crucial element which cancels out despair is not eternal consciousness in the spiritual sphere but hope in God. The spiritual realm here is also shifted. It no longer refers to rational spirituality but transits into religious faith.

At the same time, the knight of faith makes a movement of faith by virtue of the absurd, that God will even return what he resigned. So, for the knight of faith's hope, God works for good—involves faith—that God will return what he renounced. Johannes states, "During all this time he (Abraham) had faith, he had faith that God would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith *by virtue of the absurd*, for human calculation was out of the question, and it certainly was absurd that God, who required it of him, should in the next moment rescind the requirement" (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 35-36, emphasis added).

Mooney clarifies the phrase "by virtue of the absurd" (cf. 1991, pp. 55-58). He takes it more radically by indicating that Abraham did the sacrifice "by the strength of the absurd" because the absurd encouraged him to perform this action.

It is absurd for it is impossible to believe that God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but God himself suddenly canceled the sacrifice. However, Abraham trusts in God. It is also absurd if we consider Johannes' saying that "Abraham had faith, and had faith for *this* life" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 20, emphasis added). Abraham's faith that Isaac will be returned to him, not in the sense of an afterlife, that they would reunite in another world; the world after death, but Isaac will be returned to Abraham's lap in the temporal world, here and now.

Here, Carlisle observes the contrast between Johannes' and Kant's idea of "happiness" due to a good deed (moral action in Kant and the movement of faith in Johannes) (cf. 2010, p. 84). In Kant, perfect happiness is impossible to find in the mortal world (cf. Kant, 1998a, p. 36; cf. Palmquist, 2015, p. 21). In that case, therefore, it must be assumed that there is life after death and God who guarantees this happiness. In contrast, in Johannes' idea, happiness can be found in this world.

However, a problem still remains because, on the one hand, the knight of faith is willing to resign what he loves, but on the other hand, he believes that God will return what he renounced in this world. The question is, "is a resignation not just a pretense because, in the end, one is sure that one would get back what they renounced?" So, the next question is, "What exactly was in Abraham's mind when he drew the knife and was about to stab it into Isaac's heart? Did Abraham also think that Isaac would also die before being returned to him, or did he actually believe that Isaac would return without having to die?"

To answer these questions, it is important to recall that, the double movement carried out here is the movement of infinite resignation and the movement of faith. Thus, the content of the movement of infinite resignation must really happen. As already described, in the movement of infinite resignation,

there is anxiety, the tension between the willingness to renounce and despair. The text also indicates explicitly, “Yet this man has made and at every moment is making the movement of infinity. He drains the deep sadness of life in infinite resignation, he knows the blessedness of infinity, he has felt the pain of renouncing everything” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 40). This element becomes a crucial element in the movement of infinite resignation. Without despair, bitterness, doubt, fear, and suffering in resigning and accepting limitations, the movement of infinite resignation is meaningless (cf. Krishek, 2015, pp. 114-116).

Second, it is also necessary to distinguish between knowing and trusting. What happened in Abraham’s mind when he drew the knife to sacrifice Isaac was not a predictable certainty: Something is bound to happen. So, when Abraham said, “But it will not happen, or if it does, the Lord will give me a new Isaac, that is, by virtue of the absurd” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 115), this expression needs not to be interpreted that Abraham had known that Isaac would not die, and even if he died, God would return Isaac to him. Because knowing for sure means that it will definitively happen, even if there is a chance it will not happen, the probability is small. However, Abraham here does not know but has a *firm trust* that God will do everything (cf. Evans, 2006, p. xix; cf. Davenport, 2008, pp. 228-229; cf. Lippitt, 2016, pp. 175-206). Trust cannot guarantee that in the future, what is trusted will happen. The percentage for the actualization of what is trusted is also not always significant. However, Abraham believed that it would happen. From this slight possibility, the faith he possesses is getting bigger and stronger. The tremendous power of faith comes from the intense tension in the process of accepting limitations – with all the tension with despair, fear, bitterness, and suffering. Thus, as Lippitt said, the thought of losing Isaac, that Isaac would die, was always in Abraham’s mind (cf. 2016, p. 76). It was precisely at that point that he had to conquer “suffering” by faith.

In the end, Abraham got Isaac back, just as he had trusted. He got Isaac back *in this life*. That is why Abraham greeted Isaac with joy. He rejoiced not because he attained eternal consciousness, that he could renounce the finite and then gain the infinite – as is the pure philosophical movement of the knight of infinite resignation. Abraham rejoiced not only because he found a good God (a personal relationship with God) – due to the movement of infinite resignation in his union with the movement of faith. He rejoices also because Isaac is back on his lap in the temporal world. Abraham got Isaac back: he welcomed, embraced, and loved Isaac again as before but with a new consciousness.

Mooney (1991, pp. 53-54), Hannay (2015, p. 14), and Lippitt (2016, pp. 164-171) also explore the idea of getting Isaac back. They agree that Abraham got Isaac back as God’s gift. As a gift, it means that Abraham had the consciousness that the *new* Isaac belonged to God. The striking difference is that Mooney emphasizes that by realizing that Isaac belongs to God, Abraham has no ownership claim to Isaac. Lippitt disagrees with Mooney. For Lippitt, Isaac’s return as a gift means that Isaac is not wholly his because he is wholly God’s. However, as Father, Isaac was his own. Thus, the love remains because loving is only possible with a relationship attachment, a commitment to love. Realizing Isaac as this gift also made Abraham receive Isaac back with great joy. It was what set Abraham apart from the tragic hero and the knight of infinite resignation.

Johannes illustrates how double movements of faith are carried out. He uses the analogy of a ballet dancer (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 41). According to him, a ballet dancer will dance beautifully on the ground. However, periodically, he would make the leap. Johannes states, “It is supposed to be the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it

– but this knight (of faith) does it. Most people live completely absorbed in worldly joys and sorrows; they are benchwarmers who do not take part in the dance. The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and come down again, and this, too, is not an unhappy diversion and is not unlovely to see” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 41).

The components of faith

Materials of faith: Anxiety, courage, passion, the strength of the absurd, and hope

These five elements are the constitutive elements of faith. Anxiety is essential because faith becomes meaningless without confusion, doubt, fear, trepidation, and hopelessness. All of the feelings that existentially grip the subject make the movement of faith becomes very meaningful. Would the action be meaningful without something to be annulled? Is it possible for one to do a true resignation without facing any dilemmas?

Anxiety is not easy to confront because it undermines the inner state of the human being. Therefore, courage is necessary. Without courage, one is not able to carry out the movement of faith. However, it is necessary to distinguish between ordinary courage and the courage of faith. Tragic heroes and the knight of infinite resignation also have courage. Johannes also indicated the difference when he compared himself to Abraham, “but I know very well that even though I advance toward it courageously, *my courage is still not the courage of faith and is not something to be compared with it*” (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 33-34, emphasis added). The essential difference lies in the foundation of his courage. The first is based on his own strength (in the case of the knight of infinite resignation) or universal support (in the case of tragic heroes), while the second is based on the power of faith (in the case of the knight of faith).

The third element that is no less important is passion. The passion meant in the text refers to a passion in relation to love, a passionate love. It becomes crucial considering that the subjective human condition is unstable, even in love. In fact, the text states that “Faith was then a task of a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that proficiency in believing is not acquired either in days or in weeks” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 7). That is why passion is really needed here. Carlisle employs this meaning to distinguish Abraham’s act of faith from the actions of terrorists who act in the name of God’s command in slaughtering other humans (cf. 2010, pp. 75-77).

Based on the analysis above, we can distinguish the fundamental difference between the tragic heroes-the knight of infinite resignation, and the knight of faith. The tragic heroes and the knight of infinite resignation have anxiety, courage, and passion in accomplishing their actions. Their courage and passion are significant to do heroic actions – like Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus did. They also experience tremendous anxiety in dealing with the experience of renouncing the person they love so much.

The knights of infinite resignation also have those elements. In fact, without these elements, their infinite movement would be completely meaningless. The problem is if they share the constitutive element of faith in common, what is the difference between tragic heroes-the knight of infinite resignation, and the knight of faith? Based on the analysis of their actions, the tragic heroes’ and the knight of infinite resignation’s actions are not accompanied “by the strength of the absurd”.

The knight of faith bases his actions “by the strength of the absurd”. The tragic hero and the knight of infinite resignation are still based on rational power (in ethical terms). The acts of the tragic hero are

based on universal support – which can still be understood with the common sense of the ethical life of his people. The movement of the knight of infinite resignation is based on his autonomous power. The double movement of the knight of faith is not easy to understand because it goes against the common sense of the universal. It is difficult because the act of faith by the strength of the absurd can only be understood in a specific context, namely in the corridor of “subjective rationality” (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 33; cf. Lippitt, 2016, 250).

Starting from Jonathan Lear’s analysis, Lippitt argues that faced with a challenging/tempting future, one needs a radical hope which gives one the capacity to accept the worst possible scenarios, but firmly trust that a good thing will happen because God will participate in working for good even though, at that time, one could not understand what was happening (cf. 2016, p. 190). Therefore, it is called absurd. Nevertheless, Abraham did it and made himself a knight of faith (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 115).

A question then arises; “Is Kierkegaard a fideist?” Referring to Sharon Krishek’s reading, I disagree with an opinion that states Kierkegaard is a fideist (cf. 2015, pp. 106-121). Krishek argues that when one is faced with situations of loss, in varying intensities, one is often faced with situations where one does not know what to do. It cannot then be interpreted that the person is not trying to find a rational path to choose. One grapples with one’s inner situation. However, the more one searches rationally, the less the path became more evident. It turns out that deep sadness is a nuisance and even destroys one from within. Therefore, renouncing fear, sadness, disappointment, despair, and entrusting his life to God, is the most rational path to take. Because by renouncing, one gets relief and even happiness. If then, we apply this reading to the content of “by the strength of the absurd”, we can refuse the statement: Kierkegaard is a fideist.

Form of faith: the double movement of faith

Besides the essential elements above (anxiety, courage, passion, the strength of the absurd, and hope), the double movement of faith is a constitutive element of faith. Moreover, faith is not just a static condition. Apart from that, it is a lifelong task (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 7). Faith is also a *repetition* of infinite resignation and movement of faith (cf. Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 55).

In carrying out his movements, the knight of faith requires courage, passionate love, the strength of the absurd in order to annul the anxiety that gripped and haunted him when he is about to accomplish a double movement of faith. Thus, this movement will only be an empty form without these elements. On the other hand, these elements are just content without form without any double movement of faith. Both complement and perfect each other in forming what faith is.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio emphasizes the significant role of movement. Humans are always in a repetitive motion up and down to deepen their faith, a personal relationship with God. The stages of life’s existence are not a final benchmark that once humans enter one stage of life, they will be there forever. They can move up and down. However, when they reach the religious stage, they can still continue to deepen by continuing to carry out a double movement of faith at every opportunity in their life. The depth of faith is also followed by a depth of intensity of anxiety, courage, passionate love, and the strength of the absurd.

At this point, we can reply to the unanswered question, “How does the knight of faith know when he can suspend the ethical and when he must obey the ethical completely? What are the criteria that the knight of faith uses in determining when the suspension has to be taken or not?” A knight of faith can suspend the ethical as long as he experiences anxiety, has the courage of faith, passionate love, and acts

by the strength of the absurd when performing a double movement of faith. The movement is also invalid if he is not “an ethically perfect being [...] who lives out the demands of the ethical without exception, one whose soul is permeated and informed by the ethical” as said by Mulhall (Cited in Lippitt, 2016, p. 205) because only such a person can “judge that an impulse to suspend the demands of the ethical might be the manifestation of a divine command” (Cited in Lippitt, 2016, p. 205). Thus, justification is given subjectively, namely to those with depth and inner struggle.

Paradox

From the elaboration of the two points above, I can summarize what faith is in one word: paradox. Regarding the paradox, several points make faith a paradox. First, “In order to perceive the 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” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 53).

Faith is paradoxical because it is difficult to comprehend by universal reasoning. How could a person (Abraham) who thought in his mind: that his child would have died at his hands, yet at the same time trusted that the child would also be returned to him right now, in *this* life? How could he trust in the impossibility that the God who ordered him to sacrifice the child – he loved so much; the child Abraham had been expecting for decades, the answer to his prayers – was the same God who would give his child back to him? However, it is the double movement of faith carried out by the knight of faith. It is why this movement is called “the paradoxical movement of faith” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 51).

The second paradoxical faith is “Faith is precisely the *paradox* that *the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal*” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 56, emphasis added). Johannes states that one’s personal actions are higher than the universal because legitimacy is based on a personal relationship with God, he can suspend the universal; that “the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute. This position cannot be mediated, for all mediation takes place only by virtue of the universal” (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 56).

According to Kierkegaard, paradox also alludes to God’s commandment – the Good One – to commit an act of murder. The paradox is that God is all-good and this nature does not simply refer to the degree of perfect goodness, but instead to Him as the highest order of morality – God is morality itself. Then, it is impossible for Him to do unethical actions – because it would be contrary to His nature as the Highest Good, the source of reference for every moral action. However, Johannes states that faith “make[s] a murder into a holy and God-pleasing act” (Kierkegaard, 1983, 53).

This reading is important, given that, in several of his works, Kierkegaard has repeatedly critiqued the Danish Christian way of life. The objection to this reading is that it is not faithful to the text. The fundamental reason is that the main focus in the text is Abraham’s single individual struggle against a spiritual trial that was so severe, but in the end, he survived to get through it.

Gift and joy

The objection to Christian reading is not acceptable. If we refer to Johannes de Silentio’s explanation of Abraham’s faith, the explanation does not end in a paradoxical faith. After the knight of faith made the double movement of faith – by the strength of the absurd, Abraham got Isaac back. However, Isaac’s return here is not primarily because of Abraham’s merits but because God granted Isaac to him. Isaac returned to him as a gift from God. Because of this, Abraham experienced great joy and was able to

welcome Isaac with joy. His double movement of faith resulted in a great gift from God. He gains a new consciousness of a good God that God does all things together for good, but more than that, he gets something impossible, a son who should have died but was given back to him by God. Therefore, the faith he gains has a double meaning. Faith is not only an effort from the human who always carries out a double movement of faith with all the constitutive elements in it but also a gift from God. Faith always brings joy even though it is filled with challenges and difficulties (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 52). Hence, the objection to the Christian reading, which is criticized for not being faithful to the text, is quickly answered. *Fear and Trembling* is not only a text that talks about faith as a merely human endeavor but also as a gift from God.

Conclusion

The tension between faith and reason is not easy to reconcile. The allegation that faith is something irrational is not entirely acceptable. The fact that faith is in the subjective realm does not necessarily mean that it is completely irrational and subject to reason. Kierkegaard brings this issue to a new way of understanding the rationality of faith. He offers a new category, namely the religious sphere. In this sphere, truth is not based on objectivity but on subjectivity. From this point of view, truth is not determined by *what* something is but by *how* something is carried out. It is where Kierkegaard leads us to the rationality of faith. A person can only be said to have faith when he/she experiences anxiety born from the dilemma of the inner struggle for either obeying God's commands in inwardness or carrying universal moral commands out (including those codified in social norms, culture, and customs). To get through these inner struggles well, one needs courage, passion, the strength of the absurd, and hope. The constitutive elements of faith consist not only of these elements (as the material of faith) but also of how they must be carried out. They must be performed with a double movement of faith (as its form). This material and form of faith will bring gifts and joy. A single individual whose this faith is higher than the universal.

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