

KIERKEGAARD ON THE METAPHYSICS OF HOPE

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This article deals with hope – and its importance – by analysing the little-known analysis of hope found in Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard presents hope as essential to moral agency, arguing that hope should never be given up, even if it is not supported by experience. This article gives an interpretation of the strong claims about the necessity of hope found in Kierkegaard which tries to reconstruct some of Kierkegaard's central claims, arguing that Kierkegaard can be used to sketch a distinction between justified and unjustified hope.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

While there has been renewed interest in hope in many disciplines, from medicine to theology, this interest is largely absent in contemporary philosophy.¹ I believe this fact explains why scholars have overlooked the central role of hope in Kierkegaard. This article remedies this omission by showing how Kierkegaard analysed hope. I show that, in line with some of the contemporary research on hope, Kierkegaard argues that hope plays a crucial role in moral agency. I also show how it might be possible to apply some of Kierkegaard's points to contemporary research by sketching a distinction between justified and unjustified hope and reinterpreting the widespread distinction between general and specific hopes.

Kierkegaard scholars have discussed religious faith and despair at length; however, there has been little research dedicated to Kierkegaard's analysis of hope. This is surprising, given the relevance of hope for understanding both despair and religiousness (the latter taken in a wide sense that encompasses faith, hope, and love). The fact that Kierkegaard wrote a book on despair (*Anti-Climacus's Sickness unto Death*), but did not write a book devoted to hope, should not be taken to mean that he believed the latter to be of lesser importance.² On the contrary, *Sickness unto Death* describes despair as hopelessness (SKS 11:133f, cf. 153; SUD 18, cf. 37f).³ However, Kierkegaard's reflections on hope are scattered throughout his different writings – especially the upbuilding writings that philosophers have tended to ignore. Although this paper relies mainly on the writings Kierkegaard published under his own name (as well as *Sickness unto Death*), I believe these writings to a large extent are coincident with the pseudonymous works when it comes to hope. I do not deny that there are important points of difference between the different pseudonyms and Kierkegaard, but my focus is on the important points in which the pseudonymous and self-published works present essentially the same view, or supplement one another. My argument requires only that there be some overlap or agreement between the different books in Kierkegaard's authorship, not that the pseudonyms should be taken to represent the same voice or perspective.

Kierkegaard appears to rely on a traditional Christian understanding for the generic features of hope. To hope is to *expect the good*, whereas to fear is to expect evil. Hope is based on the possibility of progress towards good in the future. Fear is based on the possibility of decline into evil in the future (SKS 9:249; WL 249).⁴ Although Kierkegaard does not say so explicitly, it

seems clear that what we hope for should be possible yet uncertain (SKS 10:117–24, cf. 11:153f; CD 106–13; cf. SUD 38f).⁵ Despite the uncertainty, a hopeful attitude is characterised by trust or confidence that the best will happen. In Kierkegaardian terms, hope implies an expectation that freedom will transcend necessity, that ideality (universal principles and ideals) can be realised in actuality.⁶ Also, what we hope for must be difficult to attain (SKS 10:117–24; CD 106–13), since there is hardly any need for hope if our goals are easily attainable.⁷

II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOPES

In *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Kierkegaard distinguishes between *heavenly* hope and *earthly* or *temporal* (*Timelighedens*) hope (SKS 8:214ff; UD 112ff). This distinction appears to coincide with the distinction between *Christian* hope and *human* or *natural* hope in *For Self-Examination* (SKS 13:103f, 99; FSE 82f, 77). If we are to use terminology from current theories of hope, Christian (heavenly) hope is a *general* hope only, whereas human (temporal) hope can refer to both general and specific hope. General hope may be seen as a general trust or confidence in the future, one that hinders despair and paralysis. Specific hopes, on the other hand, have particular events or things as its objects (e.g. submitting an article before deadline).⁸

Kierkegaard is mainly interested in general hope. Kierkegaard's principal assertion is that it is only on Christian grounds that general hope can be consistently sustained, which implies that human (temporal) hopes are unstable and limited. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard seems to presuppose that human (temporal) hope can account for specific hopes.

In the *Nachlaß*, Kierkegaard presents a dialectical progression of hope:

- (1) the fresh incentive [*Tilskyndelse*] of youthfulness;
- (2) the supportive calculation of understanding;
- (3) hopelessness; and then
- (4) Christian hope. (Pap. VI B53, 13; JP 1668)

The first type of hope appears to refer to a pre-reflexive hope, a kind of immediate trust or confidence. This pre-reflexive hope seems to correspond to the aesthete who lacks reflection (e.g. Don Juan in *Either/Or*) or the infant that is not yet capable of distinguishing between itself and its surroundings (cf. SKS 17:117; BB:25; JP 4398). Pre-reflexive hope does not involve perceiving what one hopes for as uncertain or difficult to attain, since doing so would require reflection. If pre-reflexive hope is to qualify as a genuine form of hope, then hope cannot be defined subjectively as expecting the good when the outcome is perceived as uncertain or difficult to attain. Rather, hope must be defined as expecting the good, although the outcome is *objectively* uncertain.

The next type of hope is based on calculation by our understanding. For Kierkegaard, the faculty of understanding (*Forstanden*) refers to a type of rationality that involves a capacity for calculation and manipulation. For instance, understanding is described as the 'stockbroker [*Vexel-Megler*] of finitude' (SKS 4:131, 141; FT 36, 46), suggesting that it is a *pre-moral* (or even egoistic) type of rationality.⁹ In contrast to Christian hope, this hope is pre-moral and appears to correspond to the 'finite reasonableness [*endelig Forstandighed*]' of the reflective aesthete (cf. SKS 7:483 note; CUP 531 note¹⁰). Basically, this hope takes the form of hoping for happiness or hoping for rewards. As opposed to pre-reflexive hope, this hope appears to involve the realisation, upon reflection, that what one is wishing for is uncertain and difficult to attain.

Kierkegaard holds that natural (human) hope is found in every human being. Natural hope seems to involve having confidence in yourself, others, and the world. Natural hope results in – or leads to – hopelessness (cf. SKS 5:100f; EUD 94f). Kierkegaard's grounds for saying so do not seem to be the mere assertion that natural hope depends on states of affairs in the world that to a large extent are contingent, unstable, and uncontrollable – for instance, that one's health fails and one cannot do much about it (cf. SKS 9:258; WL 258f). Rather, one's guilt (or sin) means that one is in a hopeless situation, humanly speaking. Man must despair or give up (human) hope, since he fails to realise the infinite ethical requirement (SKS 9:252, 261; WL 252, 262).¹¹

In *Christian Discourses*, Kierkegaard gives a complementary reason as to why human hope must be abandoned. Referring to the hope belonging to youthfulness, and presumably earthly (human) hope in general, he says that misfortune, hardship and distress lead to a loss of hope (SKS 10:117–24; CD 106–13). Since Kierkegaard explicitly contrasts hardship or distress (*Trængsel*) with sin in this context (SKS 10:124; CD 113), it is clear that it is not (merely) sin that leads to hopelessness. Similarly, *Sickness unto Death* indicates that hopelessness is not merely something self-inflicted, but also something that results from an experience of loss or hardship.¹² Although Kierkegaard does not say so explicitly, I take it that that the hardship he refers to includes the fact that virtue does not necessarily lead to happiness or a community of the virtuous. Rather than being alone physically, the latter involves not being loved and recognised by one's neighbours.

Although Kierkegaard hardly offers any argument as to why human hope cannot provide a basis for general hope, I believe that this central claim can be rationally reconstructed *if we take the object of general hope to be the highest good*, or, in other terminology, the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, Kierkegaard is not explicit about what the object of general hope is. Nevertheless, it is clear that it involves moral goodness or virtue, something that is made possible by divine grace. Because of this, Kierkegaard claims that what we hope for involves grace, mercy, and the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, the object of hope involves happiness or bliss (*Salighed*) as well as being part of a society based on love (see section IV). Thus, the object of hope appears to be a society whose members are virtuous and happy, something which amounts to the highest good or the Kingdom of God.¹³ If this reconstruction is sound, Kierkegaard agrees with Kant, as well as with traditional Christian theology, that the proper object of (general) hope is the Kingdom of God.¹⁴

We find ourselves confronted by three problems when we try to realise the highest good. This can be elucidated by using Kantian terminology and interpreting the highest good as a moral world where virtue leads to happiness.¹⁵ The first problem is that man is not completely virtuous, even though the ethical requirement has an unconditional nature. Given the moral rigorism advocated by Kant and Kierkegaard,¹⁶ this means man is *evil*. Seen through a philosophical perspective, or within immanent (natural) religiousness, this means that man is infinitely guilty; within the Christian perspective, within transcendent (revealed) religiousness, it means that man is infinitely sinful. The problem of guilt is often pointed to in the secondary literature as an explanation of why one can have a *pre-religious motive* for becoming a Christian.¹⁷ However, two other problems are frequently overlooked – namely, that even if I were virtuous I could still end up being unhappy, and that since the highest good takes the form of a kingdom or society, it cannot be realised by the individual on his own. This means that, as a general hope, human hope is bound to collapse for the following reasons: First, man is evil; second, virtue does not always lead to happiness in this world, and finally; the highest good is a community, kingdom or church that cannot be realised by the individual on his own even if the individual were good and virtue did always lead to happiness.

Kierkegaard goes beyond this Kantian tradition not only by seeing virtue as dependent on grace, but also by speaking from the perspective of revealed faith. From this perspective, human hope breaks down because of sin (rather than guilt). In Kierkegaard's theory, revelation – which makes sin-consciousness possible – introduces something new that cannot be reduced to merely human or philosophical categories. Since revealed faith is supposed to have its own standards, Christian hope is not merely an answer to pre-Christian or philosophical problems.

III. HOPE AGAINST HOPE

Following Paul, Kierkegaard understands Christian hope as 'hope against hope' (cf. SKS 5:247, 427; 21:99, 116; NB 7:47, 7:75; EUD 249; TD 52; JP 4855, 4370). Kierkegaard interprets this as hope in 'the night of hopelessness,' that is, hope when there is no human hope (SKS 13:102f; FSE 82f). Man must die (*af dø*) to the world and loose all trust (*Tillid*) or hope in human assistance before there is the hope of Christian faith.¹⁸ Christian hope is presented as a gift of the Holy Spirit (SKS 13:102–4, cf. 5:100f; FSE 81–3; cf. EUD 94f). That is, when there is no hope from the pre-Christian perspective, the Holy Spirit offers new hope. Rather than involving miracles or wonders, Christian hope relies on divine grace, in particular the forgiveness of sins (cf. SKS 9:261, 252; WL 262, 252). Presumably, the point is that forgiveness makes possible not only salvation but also the realisation of the Kingdom of God.

Kierkegaard stresses that hoping against hope is a task that involves hoping for divine assistance against understanding (*Forstanden*) (SKS 21:116f; NB 7:75; JP 4370). Religious hope transcends understanding and is at odds with hope that is based on calculation and probability (cf. SKS 4:113; FT 16f). Hope against hope means to perceive one's powerlessness (*fornemme Afmagten*) without giving up one's enthusiasm (*Begeistring*) (SKS 5:427; TD 52). Hope that goes against hope saves the one in despair (*den Fortvivlede*) by means of an 'open-hearted courage' (*Frimodighed*) that only comprehends (*forstaaer*) the mercy (*Barmhertighed*) of God (SKS 5:247; EUD 249).

Kierkegaard claims that the hope of eternity is planted in (*nedlagt i*) man – it is hidden in his innermost being (*i hans Inderste*) (SKS 10:121; CD 110). Yet, in order to discover the solution the weight of hardship (*Trængsel*) has to press down upon one heavily enough (SKS 10:122; CD 111) – that is, one has to despair. Eternity's hope must be extracted in the same way that a confession is extracted from a hardened criminal, that is, by means of the rack (*ved Pinebænken*) (SKS 10:123; CD 112). Hardship contributes to the loss of earthly hope, but makes it possible for man to procure (*forhverve*) the hope of eternity (SKS 10:121f; cf. 8:214ff; CD 110f; cf. UD 112ff). This implies that man cannot decide to hope by an act of will unless he has lost all hope in human assistance and is offered divine assistance. Because of this, Christian hope is described as a gift of the Holy Spirit (SKS 13:102–4, cf. 5:100f; FSE 81–3; cf. EUD 94f). It is only when everything comes to a standstill due to hopelessness that Christian hope becomes a possibility (Pap. VI B53, 13; JP 1668).

Though Christian hope is distinct from natural hope, Kierkegaard claims that Christian hope is to be found in man's nature, in his innermost being. Rather than being unnatural, Christian hope *breaks* with the hope of natural man, the so-called natural hope. Rather, Christian hope reveals man's innermost being; Christian hope reveals that man is made in the image of God.

Implicit in Kierkegaard's theory are two distinct notions of hopelessness. The first is the hopelessness that belongs to hope against hope, resulting from natural hope's inability to realise the highest good. This is not hopelessness in the strictest sense, since it still allows for Christian hope.¹⁹ However, hopelessness in the strict sense goes beyond this by denying any possibility of

hope. *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* describes this type of hopelessness as the *lack of a task*, saying that without a task it is a self-contradiction (*Selvmodsigelse*) to work, presumably because there is nothing to work for (SKS 8:373; UD 277).

Kierkegaard claims that only someone without guilt or sin can be in a truly hopeless situation, one in which there is nothing to do, where not even suffering or patience presents a task (SKS 8:372f; UD 276f). Presumably, this should be taken to mean that in such a situation there is no need to better oneself or to seek assistance. On this view, the *question of whether there is Christian hope boils down to whether one is guilty or a sinner*. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's thesis that everybody is guilty and a sinner can be seen as an attempt to justify the claim that nobody is really in a hopeless situation. Kierkegaard thinks that if somebody were without sin before God, the situation would be hopeless for all of us:

If it ever happened to a human being in relation to God that the fault lay with God, there would be no task; if this ever happened to a single human being, there would be no task for the entire human race. It would not be only in this particular case that there was no task; no, if God just one single time had demonstrated that he was not love in the smallest or greatest, had left the sufferer [*en Lidende*] without a task – then for all humankind there is no longer any task, then it is foolishness and futility and soul-deadening pernicious laboriousness to believe, a self-contradiction to work, and an agony to live [*da er det Tant og Forføngelighed og Aandsfortærelsens onde Møje at troe, og Selvmodsigelse at arbeide, og en Qval at leve*] [. . .] if God for one single moment has denied his love, then all tasks are dead and reduced to [*gjort til*] nothing, and hopelessness is the only thing there is. (SKS 8:373; UD 277)

Clearly, Kierkegaard believes this is not the case, since we are all under sin.

Although Christian hope transcends calculation and empirical evidence, specific hope need not do so. I believe Kierkegaard's theory implies that specific hope should be given up when the prospect for its fulfilment is poor. His little-known distinction between the highest good and lesser goods (SKS 10:230–5; CD 222–8) suggests that it is only the highest good that is an unconditional purpose. Other goods should be forsaken if they conflict with the highest good (notably by being immoral), or if contingent states of affairs hinder their realisation. Thus, Kierkegaard's analysis suggests that although the hope for the highest good should never to be given up, hopes about attaining other goods (e.g. publishing an article) may have to be abandoned.²⁰ Unlike general hope, specific hopes do not concern something fundamental or essential to being human.

While we may assess whether a specific hope (e.g. the hope of publishing an article) can be well-founded, based on empirical research (do I have time to finish the article, etc.), this is not the case with hope for the highest good (the object of general hope). The reason is that for Kierkegaard the highest good appears to be something transcendent, something we never attain fully in this life. The objects of specific hope, on the other hand, are typically contingent ends that it is possible to attain in this world. If the object of general hope were something we could attain in this world, however, this would mean that our situation could be hopeless – in the sense of lacking a task or lacking prospects. This seems to imply that general hope can only be maintained consistently if its object is something transcendent. This point is hinted at by Kierkegaard's ethicist, who says that someone who merely hopes for his silver wedding anniversary would be incapable of celebrating it when the day arrives (SKS 3:141; EO2 143). Also, both Climacus and Kierkegaard approve of Paul's statement that he who has hopes only for this life is the most miserable of all (UD 228; CUP 389 note; SKS 8:329, 7:355 note). The upshot is that the object of general hope must be something transcendent. This is seen clearly in Kierkegaard's (as well as Climacus's) conception of the highest good as eternal bliss

(*Salighed*).²¹ Although this does not impede this-worldly hope, it means that the highest good, our absolute telos (Climacus), cannot be fully reached in this life.

Kierkegaard takes moral agency as presupposing hope about the realisation of the highest good, a hope that is founded on the Holy Spirit. Rather than something conditioned by experience, hope is a condition of the possibility for agency,²² since it makes it possible to act without having sufficient knowledge – to pursue projects with uncertain outcomes and to pursue ends that can only be attained with difficulty. Under these conditions, the role of hope is to open the possibilities of the future.

The Sickness unto Death can be read as an attempt to show that he who despairingly wants to get rid of himself, on the grounds that everything appears hopeless, in fact presupposes hope. As with other projects, the project of getting rid of oneself, what Anti-Climacus refers to as ‘the last [*sidste*] hope’ (SKS 11:133f; SUD 18²³), presupposes hope. If there is no hope, then one cannot even get rid of oneself. If one wants to get rid of oneself, then one must *hope* that one is capable of carrying out this one last project. It is therefore inconsistent to want to get rid of oneself on the grounds that one’s situation is completely hopeless. The last hope tends to deny hope in general, yet it presupposes a specific hope, that is, that one will manage to get rid of oneself. Anti-Climacus’s position appears to be that there cannot be any specific hope without some general hope. Despair makes one passive and unfree, and thereby undermines the ability to realise projects, including the project of taking one’s life (with or without assistance).

This is of course not to claim that suicide is impossible. Rather, it is to claim that committing suicide, on the grounds that everything is hopeless, involves a conceptual inconsistency. Whereas Kant says that immoral acts involve inconsistency or contradictions, Kierkegaard says that evil involves despair or double-mindedness, that one has two wills that are inconsistent with one another. According to ‘Purity of Heart,’ willing one thing necessarily involves willing the good unconditionally (cf. SKS 8:139f; UD 24). Commentators have rightfully seen this as a somewhat Kantian element in Kierkegaard.²⁴

For Kierkegaard, being hopeful does not amount to accepting one’s present situation as it is.²⁵ Rather, it means accepting one’s circumstances and enduring them because this is seen as leading to reconciliation in the future. Thus, the hopeful person views the present situation as unacceptable (as it is actually) and acceptable (as it is potentially) at the same time. Accepting existence merely as it is would mean that one succumbs to the evil and injustice in the world. Hope, by contrast, involves a protest that makes it possible to try to overcome evil and injustice by making progress towards the highest good.

IV. HOPE AND NEIGHBOUR LOVE

In traditional Christian thought, the object of hope proper is considered to be the highest good or the Kingdom of God.²⁶ Although Kierkegaard is not explicit on this point, he also appears to identify the highest good with the Kingdom of God.²⁷ This suggests that hope proper has the Kingdom of God as its object. Nevertheless, *Works of Love* points to a hope that is opposed to this, a hope that involves hoping for myself while giving up on others by viewing them as hopeless (cf. SKS 9:253–6; WL 254–6). However, hoping only for myself involves conceiving of hope and the good as something private that does not concern one’s relationship to others, as if I might have a future on my own without others. Kierkegaard argues that by hoping in this way I fail to appreciate the extent to which I am dependent on others. If there is no hope for others, then there cannot be any hope for me either, since I am dependent on others.²⁸ If they are trapped in hopelessness, this must also hold true for me, although I may not realise it (SKS 9:253–6; WL 254–6). In this sense I can be in despair without knowing it.

So truly hoping for oneself involves hoping for others, hoping for society (SKS 9:253f, 248; cf. 5:127; WL 253f, 248; cf. EUD 122). Kierkegaard stresses that hope depends on loving our neighbour. Neighbour love takes upon itself the work of hope, the task of hoping for others:

[L]ove is [. . .] the middle term [*Mellembestemmelsen*]: without love, no hope for oneself; with love, hope for all others – and to the degree one hopes for oneself, to the same degree one hopes for others, since to the same degree one is loving. (SKS 9:259; WL 260)

A *Mellembestemmelse* is a term or determination that connects two different concepts; in this case hope for oneself is connected with hope for others. By connecting oneself with others, the object of hope is transformed into something universal, arguably the Kingdom of God.

Kierkegaard also claims that love is ‘built up’ (*opbygges*) and nourished by the hope for eternity (SKS 9:248; WL 248). Thus, not only does (general) hope depend on (neighbour) love, but also love itself is strengthened by hope.²⁹ On a Kantian reading, the first claim is that justified hope presupposes practical love (virtue), whereas the latter claim is that love is cultivated and strengthened by hope, presumably because hope prevents us from giving up on love.

Kierkegaard claims that a hope that excludes neighbour love is false or unjustified (SKS 9:248, 253f, WL 248, 253f). This indicates that, for Kierkegaard, neighbour love can be used to distinguish between a general hope that is authentic or justifiable and one that is not. Kierkegaard suggests that whereas the latter is characterised by giving up on others, by evaluating them as hopeless, the former is characterised by always hoping for others.³⁰ Although I may give up on my neighbour as a mathematician (if he is such), I ought never to give up on him as a human being, as a person.

This leaves us with the question of whether it is meaningful to give up on oneself while still hoping for others. If this means that one rejects any possibility of attaining the good for oneself, Kierkegaard would seem to deny this by claiming that without hope in the possibility of the good, one is spiritually dead or cast into the abyss (SKS 9:256; WL 257).

The analysis presented in *Works of Love* concludes that general hope must involve trusting and loving all human beings, even if this is not based on evidence.³¹ One must believe in love in order to see love (SKS 9:23f; WL 16) – it is only the person of love that can see others as loving persons.³² On this account, it is impossible to decide whether others are loving, good, and trustworthy persons from a detached or ‘objective’ perspective. Kierkegaard’s approach is that the problem of trusting others and hoping for them cannot be solved theoretically or descriptively because of the intersubjective nature of love. This is more reminiscent of Hegel’s dialectics of recognition than of Kant.

V. CLOSING REMARKS

Although it has not received much attention, hope plays an important role within the theory of Kierkegaard. In particular, Kierkegaard’s analysis of hope can help us get a better understanding of how he interprets despair as well as moral agency and religiousness. Kierkegaard takes moral agency as presupposing hope, and grounds hope in religiousness rather than empirical evidence. It is argued that, for Kierkegaard, neighbour love can be used to distinguish between a general hope that is justifiable and one that is not. Kierkegaard suggests that whereas unjustified hope is characterised by giving up on others, by evaluating them as hopeless, justified hope is characterised by always hoping for others.³³

ABBREVIATIONS

BB = Journal BB (in SKS 17)

CD = *Christian Discourses*

CUP = *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1

EE = Journal EE (in SKS 18)

EO2 = *Either/Or, Part II*

EUD = *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*

FSE = *For Self-Examination*

JP = *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vols. 1–6 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press 1967–1978; references are to numbering of passages)

NB = Journal(s) NB (in SKS 20–26)

Pap = *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer* (2nd. ed., Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1968–78).

SKS = *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* (Copenhagen: Gad 1997ff)

SUD = *Sickness Unto Death*

TD = *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*

UD = *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*

WL = *Works of Love*

With the exception of JP, the translations are from *Kierkegaard's Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1979–97)

Notes

1 See P. Pettit, 'Hope and Its Place in Mind', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* March (2004), pp. 152–65, p. 152; V. McGeer, 'The Art of Good Hope', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* March (2004), pp. 100–27, p. 101; cf. P. Tillich, 'The Right to Hope', *Christian Century* (1990), pp. 1064–67, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=62> (accessed 30/9/2008); B.V. Nunn, 'Getting Clear What Hope Is' in J. Eliott (ed.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hope* (New York: Nova 2005), pp. 63–77, p. 64. A search in PubMed, PsycINFO, and Philosopher's Index show that 'while Medicine has experienced a sharp increase in the number of hope references, with a modest rise within Psychology, within Philosophy numbers have remained relatively low, only once featuring more than 20 articles in any five-year period.' J. Eliott, 'What Have We Done With Hope? A Brief History' in Eliott, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*, pp. 1–45, p. 29 (quoted), cf. pp. 35f.

2 Rather, this says something about Kierkegaard's *via negativa* approach. Cf. Arne Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet: Kierkegaard* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1997), pp. 74–78, ch. 3.

3 Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet*, p. 151; cf. Gene Fendt, *For What May I Hope?: Thinking with Kant and Kierkegaard* (New York: Peter Lang 1990), p. 141.

4 Cf. R.C. Roberts, 'The Virtue of Hope in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*' in R.L. Perkins (ed.), *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 2003), pp. 181–203 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 5). Nevertheless, it is meaningful to say 'I hope you did well at your exam yesterday'. This suggests that (specific) hopes can refer to a past event whose outcome is uncertain. Cf. J.K. Muyskens, *The Sufficiency of Hope* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1979), pp. 15f; Spinoza, *Ethics*, IID12 (Definition 12 of Part III). However, rather than being concerned with specific hopes such the above example, Kierkegaard is concerned with general hope.

5 See also these passages dealing with religiousness in general (rather than merely religious hope): SKS 7:36; 5:263f, 267; CUP 29; EUD 268, 272.

6 For similar claims interpreted within different frameworks, see McGeer 'The Art of Good Hope', pp. 104f, 109; P. Shade, *Habits of Hope: A Pragmatic Theory* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press 2001), pp. 6f.

7 Cf. Muyskens, *The Sufficiency of Hope*, pp. 15–17.

8 This is a standard distinction in medical research and nursing studies. I would like to claim that this distinction ought to be clarified and elaborated on rather than dismissed, in particular since this distinction can help us assess whether hopes are justifiable. It is commonplace, especially in empirically oriented literature

found in medical and nursing studies, to demand that hope must be realistic. However, there is very little agreement as to which hopes are realistic and therefore justified. Cf. J. Kylmä & K. Vehviläinen-Julkunen, 'Hope in nursing research: a meta-analysis of the ontological and epistemological foundations of research on Hope' *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 25 (1997), pp. 364–71; T. Rustøen, 'Håp og smerter hos kreftpasienter – et uutforsket område' in Stein Kaasa (ed.), *Festskrift. Seksjon lindrende behandling gjennom 10 år* (NTNU/St. Olavs Hospital: Trondheim 2004), pp. 84–93. Regarding the distinction between general and specific/particular hopes: Rustøen 'Håp og smerter hos kreftpasienter'; T. Morita, J. Tsunoda, S. Inoue, et al., 'An Exploratory Factor Analysis of Existential Suffering in Japanese Terminally Ill Cancer Patients' *Psycho-Oncology* 9 (2000), pp. 164–68; H.M. Chochinov, 'Dying, Dignity, and New Horizons in Palliative End-of-Life Care' *A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* 56 (2006), pp. 84–103; J.C. Jacobsen, L.C. Vanderwerker, S.D. Block, et al., 'Depression and demoralization as distinct syndromes: Preliminary data from a cohort of advanced cancer patients' *Indian Journal of Palliative Care* 12 (2006), pp. 8–15.

9 Although it is the pseudonym Johannes de silentio who says it, this appears to be a point which is true in a general sense and which can therefore be attributed to Kierkegaard himself. Cf. Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1991), p. 89 including note 17.

10 The Hongs translate 'Forstandighet' as 'common sense'.

11 Regarding Kierkegaard's thesis about the universality of guilt and sin, see Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), esp. pp. 162f; Roe Fremstedal, 'Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant', Forthcoming in *Kantian Review*.

12 See Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet*, pp. 143–53.

13 Regarding the concept of the highest good in Kierkegaard and Climacus, see C.S. Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript* (New York: Humanity 1999), pp. 142–47; J.D. Glenn, Jr., '“A Highest Good . . . An Eternal Happiness”': The Human Telos in Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*' in R.L. Perkins (ed.), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to 'Philosophical Fragments'* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1997), pp. 247–62 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 12); Roe Fremstedal, 'The Concept of the Highest Good in Kierkegaard and Kant' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69 (2011), pp. 155–71.

14 Regarding Christian theology, see H.-G. Link, 'Hoffnung' in J. Ritter (ed.), *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1974), vol. 3, pp. 1157–66, 1160; cf. J. Moltman, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press 2002), pp. 202–09, pp. 309–16. Regarding Kant, see P.J. Rossi, 'Kant's Doctrine of Hope: Reason's Interest and the Things of Faith' *The New Scholasticism* 56 (1982), pp. 228–38; Rossi, *Together Towards Hope* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press 1983).

15 Moltmann tries to show that although the Christian tradition stresses man's sinfulness and guilt, this is not the only issue at stake. Moltmann tries to show that there must be justice for victims, and that this concern is found, at least implicitly, in the Christian tradition (J. Moltmann, *In the End – the Beginning* (London: SCM 2004), pp. 53–61). This certainly seems plausible if we include the discussion over theodicy. Elsewhere, Moltmann also stresses that we must hope for the Kingdom of God (*Theology of Hope*, pp. 206f, 309ff).

16 See Christoph Schulte, *Radikal Böse. Die Karriere des Bösen von Kant bis Nietzsche* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink 1991), pp. 279f; R.M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: the Hidden Debt* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press 1992), pp. 150ff, 221; Green, 'The Limits of the Ethical in Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* and Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*' in R.L. Perkins (ed.), *The Concept of Anxiety* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press 1985), pp. 63–87, pp. 70f (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 8); Green, 'The Leap of Faith: Kierkegaard's Debt to Kant' *Philosophy & Theology* 3 (1989), pp. 385–411, p. 395; Fremstedal, 'Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant'. Cf. Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Bare Reason*, in Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), 6:22–25; Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 27:302; NB 24:112; SKS 24:390; 7:383; JP 998; CUP 420f.

17 E.g. Poul Lübcke, 'Kierkegaard's Concept of Revelation' in G. Linde, R. Purkarthofer, H. Schulz, and P. Steinacker (eds.), *Theologie zwischen Pragmatismus und Existenzdenken* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert 2006), pp. 405–14, pp. 411f.

18 For an interpretation of the relation between faith and hope, see Roe Fremstedal, *Kierkegaard and Kant on Anthropology and Religion: Evil, Faith, and Hope* (Trondheim: NTNU 2010), ch 4.

19 Kierkegaard identifies this hopelessness not only with despair but also with the medieval concept of *acedia* (SKS 18:44; EE:117, 117a; JP 739f), a concept that is notoriously hard to translate. The ethicist takes up the old theological doctrine that sees *acedia* as a cardinal sin but goes beyond tradition by seeing it as sin *instar omnium*, as the root and quintessence of all sins (SKS 3:183; EO2 189). Thus, Kierkegaard can be said to

radicalise and universalise the medieval doctrine of *acedia*. See Michael Theunissen, *Vorentwürfe von Moderne. Antike Melancholie und die Acedia des Mittelalters* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1996), esp. 44–48. Although Kierkegaard's concept of despair comes close to what is today called depression (EO2 translates *Tungsind* 'depression'), it does not necessarily involve *anhedonia* like depression does. For this reason it actually comes closer to the demoralization syndrome, existential suffering, and existential distress than depression. See Roe Fremstedal, 'Demoraliseringsyndromet, eksistensiell lidelse og fortvilelse' *Omsorg. Nordisk tidsskrift for palliativ medisin* 23 (2006), pp. 57–63.

20 Cf. Roberts, 'The Virtue of Hope', pp. 192f, 200f.

21 See Evans, *Kierkegaard's Fragments and Postscript*, pp. 142–47; Glenn, '“A Highest Good . . . An Eternal Happiness”'; Fremstedal, 'The Concept of the Highest Good in Kierkegaard and Kant'.

22 A similar point about hope is made in Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 3f.

23 The Hongs render '*sidste Haab*' 'ultimate hope'.

24 E.g. Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge 1993), pp. 225–27; George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2005), pp. 99–102.

25 Similar points about hope (but not about Kierkegaard) are made in Gabriel Marcel, 'Sketch of a Phenomenology and a Metaphysic of Hope' in his *Homo Viator* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd 1951), pp. 29–67, pp. 38f; Moltmann, *In the End*, p. 153.

26 See Link, 'Hoffnung', p. 1160; cf. J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 202–209, pp. 309–316.

27 Glenn, '“A Highest Good . . . An Eternal Happiness”', pp. 261f; Fremstedal, 'The Concept of the Highest Good in Kierkegaard and Kant', pp. 168f.

28 Regarding this dependency, cf. Grøn, 'Kærlighedens gerninger og anerkendelsens dialektik' *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 4 (1991), pp. 261–70.

29 The type of love that hope depends on is *commanded* love. Kierkegaard writes: 'Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love [. . .] eternally and happily secured against despair.' (SKS 9:36; WL 29)

30 A similar conclusion is reached in Roberts, 'The Virtue of Hope', p. 195.

31 At this point Kierkegaard's views converge with much of the recent literature on trust and some of the recent literature on hope. Regarding recent literature on trust: V. McGeer, 'Trust, Hope and Empowerment' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86(2) (2008), pp. 237–54; regarding recent literature on hope: Pettit, 'Hope and Its Place in Mind', pp. 163–65.

32 Cf. Grøn, 'Kærlighedens gerninger og anerkendelsens dialektik'; Pia Søltoft, *Svimmelhedens etik* (Copenhagen: Gad 2000), ch. 8.

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