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From Thinking to Religion: The Opening of Ideality in 19th Century Protestant Thought

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1. In this paper, I will argue for a philosophical continuity and progression to Protestant religious thought in the Nineteenth Century. More specifically, I will center on the work of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Søren Kierkegaard, all of whom are Protestant Christians concerned with maintaining the worth of religion in a culture grown skeptical. The argument will be that it is the great value of Kierkegaard as a religious thinker that he provides a way beyond the conditions and strictures placed on thought by those 'defenders of faith' who came before him. Kierkegaard does this by enfranchising a kind of thinking that might be called religious, and thus, makes the object of religious reflection not theology as a cognitive science, but a prayerfulness that makes possible a religious becoming.

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2. To begin, it is safe to say that the Nineteenth Century is known for extending and exacerbating the Enlightenment critique of religion.⁽¹⁾ Figures such as Ludwig Feuerbach, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx render questionable traditional religious truth claims, and even more, the value of religion as a cultural institution that serves the good of society. Perhaps, however, more threatening than the philosophical and ideological opponents of religion, were the defenders of faith, those who sought to secure religion according to norms of rationality which had been radically reconfigured ever since the onset of modernity with Descartes' attempt to discern self-secure knowledge. It is within this milieu that the riskiness of religious reflection was most exposed, because with each attempt to make religion intelligible, the more religion came to be relegated to the gaps of knowledge and the exclusively subjective realm of experience.⁽²⁾

3. Our present account begins, therefore, with the philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant's transcendental critique raised the question of the conditions of possibility for objective knowledge. Regarding religion, this leads into the question of the difficulty of discerning *what* is given to thought. That thought is mediated is an idea with which most would agree. This is Kant's notion of *a priori* knowledge.⁽³⁾ The given comes as experience and is the beginning of knowledge, but this beginning does not give a full account of our capability for knowledge. Intuition becomes understanding only by the activity of the mind. In other words, what is given to thought is empty without thinking. Thought thinks the given and lends it understanding. But this thinking complicates the given. Immediacy becomes just a thought, mediated like all other thoughts. The givenness of experience is filtered, as though through a lens, before it can ever be understood, and even then as only an afterthought. Thus the riskiness of wedding thinking to religion. For according to this logic, when thinking about religion, the experience we might call 'religious' has already been compromised?⁽⁴⁾ No longer pure and unscathed, the sacred, when thought, enters the world of the mundane.

4. This problematic is hardly new. Kant himself gave voice to it in his preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer" (1965: 7). In thought, we are burdened with questions that we cannot answer. This *impossibility* of the completion of thought, arrived at by Kant through his transcendental critique, established the trajectory of future thinking regarding religion. By transcendental, Kant means to interrogate not the objects of knowledge, but the mode or process by which knowledge of objects is possible. Its function is apophatic in that it is a stripping away, a purification and correction: "Its purpose is not to extend knowledge, but only to correct it, and to supply a touchstone of the value, or lack of value, of all *a priori* knowledge. Such a critique is therefore a preparation, so far as may be possible, for an organon. . ." (59). Through this first critique, Kant limits himself to only that which can be thought. Thought limits itself to that of negation for the purpose of preparation. But in doing so, when coming to the immediacy or ultimacy of religion, thought separates itself from its content. Fully consistent with this thought, Kant arrives at the following, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*" (29). Knowledge, then, is not to complicate faith, nor should faith complicate knowledge. As a result, faith-or religion-is left without knowledge. Thinking religion, therefore, becomes an impossibility because thought has limited itself only to that which can be objectively thought according to the order of knowledge.

5. If nothing else, Kant brought to consciousness the riskiness of the venture. But if nothing is ventured, nothing is gained. Kant restricts the venture and eliminates the risk, and with it, the possibility for thinking religion. Surely, this impossibility of thinking is a problem for religion. A religion within the limits of reason, as with religion within any limits at all, is no longer religious, because the limits themselves are the religious, because that which limits is set up in the place of religion. A reasonable religion, therefore, is an idolatrous one. In other words, when religion finds its room only within the limits of reason, reason becomes religion and thought is restricted.

6. Yet thinking with Kant, at least we can know our limitations-that is, because built within the transcendental critique, is the possibility, even the demand, to critique the critique. Friedrich Schleiermacher recognized as much. Like Kant, Schleiermacher knew the difficulties of thinking religion. Like Kant, he knew that to locate the religious within the sphere of consciousness is already to reduce religion to an idol. But unlike Kant, Schleiermacher realizes that just as thinking has the danger of eclipsing the religious, so too does acting. Thus, for Schleiermacher, Kant's categorical imperative merely reinscribes the problem. Schleiermacher mediates his way between these extremes of consciousness (knowing and doing) by positing "a necessary and an indispensable third" (1958: 37-38). Religion, then, is neither merely thought nor action, but feeling. The religious is the *feeling* of absolute dependence; to feel is to be immediately conscious (1989: 5). Thinking and doing are second-order processes of consciousness, always mediated and modified by feeling (1989: 5). By positing this necessary third, Schleiermacher complicates and expands the sphere of the religious. Simply to *know* religion is not enough in that it is a subordination of religion to thought, a limiting of the possible, and ultimately, a betrayal of piety. Similarly, and in distinction from Kant, to *act* religiously is also a subordination and limitation, because action is confined by finitude, while religion is the feeling of infinity.

7. By positing the third of feeling always in relation to knowing and doing, Schleiermacher demonstrates the *inescapability* of religion. To any one who is hungry for thought or restless in deed, Schleiermacher points to the feeling of dependency. To those who are the "cultured despisers"⁽⁵⁾ of religion for what the religions are not, he reminds them of their felt sense of something more. To those too settled with doctrine and too secure in action, he demands a beyond that traces to infinity. The moment the religious spirit rests is when thought and deed are stripped of feeling. This is a premature closure, a false attachment, and a denial of God. Religion, on the other hand, is an opening, an immediacy seeking articulation, and a feeling of desire forever unfulfilled. With the feeling of religion, there is excess and lack as the intensity of absolute dependency bleeds out until the different modes of consciousness become one, until difference is united in identity. This identity is desired but never finally and completely lived. For Schleiermacher, religion, as our immediate and ultimate end, remains the mediator forever making sense of the extremes of our consciousness. It is the necessary third that is denied or despised at the expense of our full humanity.

8. By positing the religious feeling of immediate consciousness, Schleiermacher seemingly rescues the possibility of thinking religion, by showing the impossibility of not thinking religion. The feeling of religion is that preconscious state that informs and shapes all modes of consciousness. Upon closer inspection, however, it is not readily apparent that Schleiermacher has brought us any closer to religious thinking than Kant's apophaticism. Kant indeed separates the noumenal from the phenomenal and confines religion within the limits of reason alone. What reason can know, religion is not. Or put otherwise, reason can only know what religion is not-faith begins where thought ends. Schleiermacher similarly distinguishes between the noumenal and phenomenal, not by driving an inscrutable wedge between them as does Kant. Rather, Schleiermacher inscribes the noumenal by virtue of the religious preconscious feeling as it marks moments of consciousness. It is only through consciousness as an afterthought that the feeling is known and named as religious. The *Whence* of piety, as he puts it, is vaguely sensed in feeling and only later known and designated as 'God' (1989: 16). Schleiermacher's 'Whence', like Kant's thing-in-itself, remains unknown and unknowable except as a trace in consciousness. Thinking religion, therefore, remains a problem.⁽⁶⁾ Only now, it is a problem that we cannot avoid because, if Schleiermacher is right, the religious is who we are in our most immediate selves.

9. We have seen how Kant shows us the impossibility of thinking religion. And with Schleiermacher, we have seen the inevitability or inescapability of the religious. The question remains: how do we think religion? On the one hand, we are confined by ideality, conditioned by consciousness, and subject to our subjectivity-meaning that the Kantian transcendental critique of the conditions of knowledge reinscribes the gap between the noumenal and the phenomenal, and thus separates the thinker from religion as

an object of thought. On the other, we are called into thinking by the other of thought—meaning that consciousness is not exhaustive of the trace of transcendence which conditions thought by the feeling of absolute dependence. Is there another way to stay true to thought's other besides Kant's apophaticism or Schleiermacher's romanticism? Is there a thinking that takes us beyond, outside, or otherwise than thought? Is there a thinking religion that evokes the inbreaking of the religious? And if so, how would this inbreaking change thinking itself?

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10. The writings of Soren Kierkegaard exhibit a decided shift in the style and tone of philosophical writing. Not persuaded of the virtue intrinsic to the philosophical tradition, Kierkegaard, rather than setting out to secure objective knowledge, saw his task of thinking and writing in a different light. While his philosophical predecessors sought to prove, demonstrate, or ground truth, Kierkegaard, like Socrates before him,⁽⁷⁾ sought to prick and disrupt in order to evoke an awareness of the persistence of doubt and incomprehensibility.⁽⁸⁾ Kierkegaard made use of irony, pseudonymous authorship, and literary artistry all as means to a larger end. As his larger end, "Kierkegaard's decentering texts," writes David Gouwens, "drive the reader to a self-irony that may lead to a decisiveness that affirms 'an undeconstructible bedrock of authenticated truth' in the choice of a way of life, be it aesthetic or ethical or religious existence" (1996: 7). While his predecessors concerned themselves with the 'What' of content, Kierkegaard thought it most important to show the 'How' of arriving at the truth as subjectivity:⁽⁹⁾ "*The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said*" (1973: 213). Furthermore, he asked, of what value is it to explain the truth of the universe, when one still does not know what it means to be an existing individual (1988: 444). Put into the framework of our present inquiry: what value is there to *thinking religion* if, in turn, one does not also become *religious*?⁽¹⁰⁾

11. But of course, this begs the question: why speak and write at all if thinking does not effect becoming? The becoming religious is what is at stake. The thinking is impossible, this much we know from Kant. Yet still, it is the becoming itself that calls us forth into thought. Through thinking religion, therefore, one becomes aware of who one is. If this is the case, then the task for thought is to think becomingly. The task is to think otherwise than the 'What' is said to the 'How' of the appropriation of a religious identity.

12. In what follows, this paper will trace a narrative of religious becoming that Kierkegaard articulates in his vast and varied work, *Stages on Life's Way*. This work is broken up into four sections, each depicting a sphere of existence. Most significant for our present purpose of demonstrating the 'How' of religious becoming will be the third section, which Kierkegaard entitles, "Guilty? Not Guilty?" Of this section, the first part of which is designated as 'Quidam's Diary', Kierkegaard himself writes that it is "the richest of all I have written, but it is difficult to understand" (1988: xvii). Others have assessed its worth differently. For example, Robert Brudl writes that he finds the book "(especially the interminable 'Quidam's Diary') on the whole rather dull" (1973: viii). While it might be difficult, interminable, and even dull, what Kierkegaard brings to life in this section is a fully textured character who is "in the direction of the religious—that is, tending toward it" (1988: 398). This "tending toward" is a hint provided by Kierkegaard of what might be discerned through an entering into the laborious introspection of this troubled character's thoughts. What this suggests is that what at first glance appears as ceaseless monotony, might in fact be a record of the process of becoming. What the diary shows is the difficulty (as well as the interminability and dullness) of this task of becoming. If the religious becoming were simply a matter of the will, then surely no one would torture oneself as does Quidam. But if the religious becoming is not achieved through willing alone, then the ideality of Quidam's reflections seems not simply the likely, but perhaps the only candidate for any becoming, because as we have already seen, ideality is the condition of our thoughtful existence—meaning, that we cannot get behind, or around, or above appearances to the thing itself; and further, that we are concrete, historical subjects. Insofar as we think, reflect, and recollect, we are housed by language. Therefore, we should make clear what careful attention to Quidam's diary shows us—namely, *ideality is not the problem that prevents the inbreaking of the religious, but it is the impasse through which the inbreaking is conditioned*.

13. Whatever becoming thought thinks, it will only be thought through ideality. What matters then is that the ideality makes space within itself for an opening, for an inbreaking, or for the Other. Kierkegaard, then, evokes the religious becoming through a presentation of a character trapped in the interminability of his own ideality. In other words, Quidam cannot get outside himself; he is trapped in his own thoughts, tormented by his history. Kierkegaard's is an evocation that awaits an inbreaking, one which breaks through the impossibility of religious thought to the qualitatively different kind of thinking known only as a passionate embrace of the infinite paradox. Put otherwise, it is the difference that breaks through the 'What' to the 'How' of consciousness. It is that which allows Quidam not only to think, but even more, to be, differently.

14. This inbreaking, or this opening of ideality that leads to an existential awakening, is not unlike the psychotherapeutic experience in that it is a task that is also never-ending (see Freud 1964). As humans conditioned by ideality we are always subject to illusion. Kierkegaard, like the psychotherapist, aims gently, patiently, yet persistently to bring to consciousness the truth of our existence. It is a truth that resists, disguises, and distorts its own awareness. As such, Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication is an artful means of shocking readers into their sensibilities, deceiving them into the truth. On this strategy, Kierkegaard writes:

First and foremost, no impatience. If he [the reader] becomes impatient, he will rush headlong against it and accomplish nothing. A direct attack only strengthens a person in his illusion, and at the same time embitters him. There is nothing that requires such gentle handling as an illusion, if one wishes to dispel it. If anything prompts the prospective captive to set his will in opposition, all is lost. And this is what a direct attack achieves, and it implies moreover the presumption of requiring a man to make to another person, or in his presence, an admission which he can make most profitably to himself privately. This is what is achieved by the indirect method, which, loving and serving the truth, arranges everything dialectically for the prospective captive, and then shyly withdraws. . . so as not to witness the admission he makes to himself alone before God—that he has lived hitherto in an illusion (1939: 89).⁽¹¹⁾

In the following, therefore, we will examine Kierkegaard as a diagnostician and Quidam's diary as a kind of therapy through which both Quidam and the reader are led into greater self-awareness. It is this self-awareness—thought through and by consciousness—that, for Kierkegaard, is the awakening of the religious becoming.

15. In the section immediately preceding Quidam's diary in Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*, we are privy to the pseudonymous Judge William's extended reflection on marriage. Most significant is the conviction of his happiness which he arrives at through the *wedding of the immediacy* of love with the resolution of commitment. By attaching himself to a single other, the Judge is distinguished from the banquet guests from the preceding section of *Stages*, all of whom are enslaved by the passions of immediacy. He is also distinguished from them by his apparent happiness compared with their pervasive though masked despair. The Judge ventures not only love but, more important to the ethical sphere, commitment. The venturing is the riskiness of resolution, the conditioning of oneself by commitment. What the Judge shows is that only in the venturing can one's happiness be made complete through knowledge. What he realizes is that such conviction is arrived at through a choice that one can only know after the fact of having chosen. In the light of a happiness doubled over through resolution, the merely aesthetic existence seems vacuous in the face of a conviction of a life well lived. Yet still, this secure, comfortable, and committed love of the Judge and his wife at times appears trite and superficial. But even so, how does one argue with happiness? And even more, why?

16. In moving into Quidam's diary the question regarding happiness persists. Unlike the Judge, Quidam forsook his love for the sake of a higher passion (406). The implication of such a juxtaposition is that whatever happiness Judge William had was a lesser or lower or even qualitatively different kind of happiness. Thus, the question shifts from not whether or not he was truly happy, to whether his happiness was a compromise of a higher calling. In light of Kierkegaard's other writings, the question could be asked in another way—that is, whether the ethical must be suspended, transgressed, or transcended in order to achieve the religious (see Kierkegaard 1985)? In other words, happiness is not the criterion by which we judge a life well lived. But if not happiness, then what? And again, if not for happiness, then why?

17. Clearly, Quidam is not a happy man. He likens himself to a soldier stationed at the frontier always ready for battle (195). He is bound by a wishing that has no ground and no end. He is like a "poor child" who longs to hear the voice of his dead father in order finally to understand the meaning of his father's words that still speak to him from the past (200). He has only one wish: for him, to marry would be his greatest joy and his bliss (197). But as anyone who has ever wished understands, it is the fullness and freedom of wishing that is the thing, and this often times has little to do with the wish's fulfillment. So from the start of our reading of Quidam's diary, we know what he cannot, even as he reflects back a year after the fact—namely, what drives him is his wishing, his wanting and longing. That he attaches such importance to the single wish to marry merely shows the desperation of his desire. The problem is not the desperation, but that it is a desperation unaware of itself. Therefore, when he goes through the tortuous process of wishing, obtaining, relinquishing, and then finally losing, it is no surprise that he ends exactly where he began. Still wishing. Desire knows no end. No actuality can fill it; no single person can contain it. Thus the desire for more until the more becomes the infinite.

18. Once the infinite becomes one's desire, as Quidam's reflections demonstrate, one has everything or nothing to lose. If the infinite is everything, then the wishing becomes a fearing. Then, obtaining one's desire is met with disappointment, because the obtaining does not end the wishing. Thus the longing for the fulfillment and its end, like Quidam's wish to be wed and to die on the same day (215, 227). And yet, the loss of desire is even a greater disappointment; one fears seeing the passion grow weary and fade

away (227). One also fears to love, and by the restless craving, begins to wonder if one is "too reflective to be able to love" (231). One fears that one's wishing will show itself to be foolish, that God is in fact an empty illusion, and that one's wishing for what can never be, only exposes the magnitude of one's emptiness; in that case, one would be a "comic character" duped by a naive illusion (239). But, then, if God is not an illusion, if God is real, then his reality is the only reality, and his majesty turns one's fears and desires to insignificance. What misery to have God "pull rank" and to vanish in God's shadow (260). Thus, by the infinity of Quidam's desire, the finite is finally held in contempt. The desire for the other becomes a longing for the infinite stillness of solitude, to love one's ideas more than the object of the ideas' desire (333). This is the solitude of ideality when all is forsaken for the sake of an idea.

19. Religion, then, is the last remaining resort, the hope to be intelligible to oneself, even if only before God (351). All else is appalling meaninglessness. The unspoken terror is the meaninglessness of the actual, the insecurity of the finite. And one awakens to find that even the idea of religion does not escape this fear, but merely hides it. One then perhaps awakens, like Quidam, to find that by one's ideality, "I have indeed acted shabbily toward a human being" (350). One follows desire through disappointment to infinity only to discover, "What a toil and trouble is my life! My life is nothing but vain efforts" (388). Yet even still, the wishing endures. It is a wishing traced through the infinity of ideality to its opening to a new becoming. Now, the wishing issues forth from the wounds of neglect, from the awareness of despair. The difference now is that infinity is concretized in the simple hope for healing: "eternity will, of course, heal all sickness, give hearing to the deaf, give sight to the blind and physical beauty to the deformed; hence it will also heal me" (391).

20. Thus, as we proceed to the end of Quidam's diary, we discern a thinking of becoming that is effected in a prayer for healing. Like the physician does not come to heal the healthy but the sick, so too is it that only those who know their sickness seek out a healer. One comes to such awareness only by taking thought to its end, by seeking an opening to ideality through ideality, by coming to know the despair, meaninglessness, and impossibility of a thinking that is a willing, that thinks it can think itself out of itself. By the end of such thought, one grows weary with oneself and open to the Other. One comes to know that one wishes for healing, and by such knowledge, comes to know that one is well.

21. Now that we have come to the end of Kierkegaard's *Stages*, if we ask yet again the question with which we began, then presumably we will have an answer. The question has been, what prompts us to question happiness? And together with that, why do we heed such a prompting? That this question persists testifies to the aptness of Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the problem of coming to the religious. That we end with the same question with which we began could mean one of two things: either Kierkegaard could not lead us directly into the religious itself but instead, his writing functioned maieutically from the outside through prompting and description, or, by the nature of the religious itself, it is simply impossible to set forth a strategy by which one attains what one seeks. Put this way, this either/or seems more like to be a both/and, and from this perspective, Kierkegaard's failure is precisely his genius.

22. In the section following Quidam's diary, Kierkegaard adopts the voice of Frater Taciturnus to reflect on the "imaginary psychological construction" (185) of Quidam. Taciturnus writes of himself:

So do not be concerned about him at all, do not let yourselves be disturbed by him. He has not been able to legitimize himself as authorized in the age, he is not the man to come up with the least little thing the age could demand. . . . he is a mocker and an enthusiast . . . [in one], a bourgeois-philistine . . . [throughout], a deceiver, pure negation. (493-94)

This is an extreme position, especially in regard to something which is presumably useless. If indeed this portrait of Quidam is useless, then why is there such a sense of threat? That is to say, what is there to fear in an interminable reflection from a man who relinquished his love for the sake of the religious, yet still could never get past his relinquishment? Why, when Quidam "wants nothing at all" from us, when we "can ignore him without any risk," and when it "is absolutely indeterminable whether anyone who paid attention to him gained something thereby or was harmed by it" (446), is it still disturbing? That is, unless his observations and promptings make a claim, unless the hard road he describes is the path of us all as existing individuals, unless finally the danger he sees and we see in him is the same as the one we fear and suspect in ourselves--namely, that "the greatest danger is that one does not discover, that one is not always discovering, that one is in danger" (468).

23. Kierkegaard's rhetoric makes a demand of the reader as an existing individual. He calls one into a world inhabited by multiple voices, each haunted by a desire that knows no end. That we enter into this world of Kierkegaard's creation, that it excites our passions and sparks our thoughts, testifies to its importance. It suggests that though we have all tasted happiness, and even with Judge William, have been convicted of our happiness, we still long for more of the promise of religion. This then is the religious: that it is "not a fulfillment such as when one fills an alms box or a sack with gold, for repentance has created a boundless space, and as a consequence the religious contradiction: "simultaneously to be out on 70,000 fathoms of water and yet be joyful" (477). To be joyful in who we are, to find rest in a boundless longing perpetually deferred, this is the What that sparks our question and the Why we heed its call. And by thinking through this What and Why we find the How that thinks the impossible and that becomes aware of the inescapable. Thinking religion, then, is the higher passion that comes as a simple prayer for healing. It is the opening of ideality to the other of religious becoming.

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24. Kierkegaard confirms what both Kant and Schleiermacher earlier demonstrated--namely, that thinking religion is both impossible and unavoidable. Like Kant, Kierkegaard, through Quidam, shows that one cannot simply will to think religion. But rather, when thinking toward the religious, one eventually comes to the limits of thinking and willing. Like Kant, Kierkegaard makes a clearing through a thinking as preparation. Only for Kierkegaard, unlike Kant, he awaits an inbreaking that would transform thought, a transformation that would make the impossible suddenly possible. In Quidam's diary, we have seen that this existential awakening may come quietly as a desire for healing, as a prayer of relinquishment which nevertheless does not let go of the hope for eternity.

25. Like Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard shows the restlessness of thought that always already seeks the religious. For both Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard, the religious is thought's most proper home, both as its origin and as its highest aspiration. Unlike Schleiermacher, however, for Kierkegaard, thinking religion is not a matter of being more or less adequate to its inexhaustible source, but instead, it is a matter of a passionate embrace that effects a qualitative difference. The thinking of religion is infinitely different from all previous thought by being thought through and by a wholly new ontological condition. This thinking of who we are as religious makes sense only as a possibility that pressures a new becoming. For Kierkegaard, then, thinking becomingly is what remains, together with the longing for the impossible and the awaiting of the other. Thinking religion, therefore, is finally becoming longing and awaiting.

NOTES

1. For instance, see Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and A.N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999). ([back](#))

2. For an excellent description of this modern notion of the ♦God of the gaps,♦ see Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 35-49. ([back](#))

3. "Time and space are, therefore, two sources of knowledge, from which bodies of *a priori* synthetic knowledge can be derived. . . . Time and space, taken together, are the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and so are what make *a priori* synthetic propositions possible. But these *a priori* sources of knowledge, being merely conditions of our sensibility, just by this very fact determine their own limits, namely, that they apply to objects in so far as objects are viewed as appearances, and do not present things as they are in themselves" (Kant 1965: 80). ([back](#))

4. Throughout this paper, I will attempt to maintain this important distinction between thought and thinking. Thought will be understood as a thinking that is accomplished by arriving at a certain knowledge. Thinking, on the other hand, goes on without certainty, without knowledge. In thinking, it is the questions which are determinative, and the possibilities they elicit. In this respect, thinking religion is risky because it complicates and calls into question the assurances of belief. It might be impossible because, like Martin Heidegger shows of the question of being in *Being and Time*, the questioning itself of such an elusive subject is necessarily obscure, inadequately formulated, and forgotten. This is also akin to Karl Barth's argument that theology is nothing but prolegomena. ([back](#))

5. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (New York: Harper and Row, 1958). ([back](#))

6. This argument against Schleiermacher has a long and storied history beginning with his contemporary and colleague, Hegel, who argued against the characterization of religion as a feeling of dependency. For Hegel, if being religious was simply a matter of feeling dependent, then a pet dog would be the model of religiosity. Religion, according to Hegel, is incomplete without proceeding from indeterminacy to determinacy. Its true nature realizes itself in its objectivity and universality. Accordingly, Schleiermacher's religious thought characterizes religion only in its most primitive and indeterminate form. Another well-known and outspoken critic of Schleiermacher is the Twentieth Century Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, who, like Hegel, felt Schleiermacher's thought was lacking by its indeterminacy. For Barth, Schleiermacher's indeterminacy was an inevitability by its starting point in experience. According to Barth, it is only through the revealed Word of God that we interpret experience, not vice versa. ([back](#))

7. M. Holmes Hartshorne writes, "Our Western history has given us two great ironists: Socrates and Plato" (1990: xv). ([back](#))

8. See Kierkegaard's admonition to those devoted exclusively to the way of mediation and objectivity, and in effect, defer choice indefinitely, in *Either/Or*: "You would satiate the hunger of doubt at the expense of existence" (1973: 100). ([back](#))

9. On truth as subjectivity, Kierkegaard writes, "When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of an individual's relationship: if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth, even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true" (1973: 211). ([back](#))

10. Kierkegaard writes, "For to be in a state of mediation is to be finished, while to exist is to become " (1973: 211). ([back](#))

11. For a related point from the psychotherapeutic tradition see Freud's admonition in his essay, "Observations on 'Wild' Analysis" (1963). ([back](#))

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