The Problem of The (Ir)Rational Agent: The Question of the Discontinuity Between Ethical Reflection and Action in Kierkegaard's Philosophy

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Abstract

In this paper, I will examine the problem of the (ir)rational agent, and discuss the issue of discontinuity between ethical reflection and action in Kierkegaard's philosophy. The quality of infinity of ethical reflection generates the problem of justification of its interruption: since the reflection cannot stop itself, the question arises as to how it is possible to "deduce" action from it. This means that an individual can either be a highly rational non-agent (if he indulges in reflection) or an irrational agent (if he interrupts reflection to instigate action). I will pose the problem in an epistemological way, and thus try to answer the question of the formation of existential beliefs, that is, beliefs with ethical-religious content. I will try to prove that, although the process of formation of existential beliefs requires a sudden interruption of ethical reflection, this does not mean that the transition from reflection to action is unjustified, and ethical-religious beliefs unfounded. Furthermore, I will try to show that the moment of choice, which is an essential element of the formation of existential beliefs, does not render the process irrational. Namely, I will show that the choice, which is carried out in the process of adopting existential beliefs, does not refer to their content, but to their actualization in the domain of practice. The subjective thinker does not choose low-probability beliefs that are not supported by evidence, but decides to prove existential beliefs existentially — by living by them.

Keywords: ethical reflection, (ir)rational agent, existential belief, existential faith

It is generally known that reflection precedes (or at least should precede) action. Before we decide which model of behavior to accept or how to respond to the moral problem in a given context, we usually examine different options, consider the

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possible consequences that our actions could produce, and interpret the specificity of our moral situation in the light of generally accepted moral principles. When we finish the deliberation, we decide to act. From everything that has been said, it seems that action follows naturally and unproblematically from the previously conducted reflection. But is it really so? In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus describes the situation of the agent as follows: "The demand of abstraction upon him is that he become disinterested in order to obtain something to know; the requirement of the ethical upon him is to be infinitely interested in existing" (Kierkegaard 2009: 316). Climacus suggests that there is a disproportion between the logic of reflection and the ethical demands. What does this mean?

The problem of ethical reflection

To be able to answer this question, the analysis should recall the research of Compaijen and Vos about the peculiar nature of ethical reflection. In the paper *Ethical Reflection as Evasion*, we read: "As *ethical* reflection, it is essentially directed towards the domain of practice, dealing with action, choice, and existence. As ethical *reflection*, however, it moves in the opposite direction, away from practical life" (Compaijen, Vos 2019: 68). On the one hand, the goal of ethical reflection is to govern and initiate action; on the other hand, its very nature prevents it from doing so. Within Kierkegaard's philosophy, this phenomenon is known as the problem of the infinity of reflection. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, in the part where Climacus questions the possibility of an absolute beginning of speculative philosophy, we read the following: "Reflection has the notable property of being infinite. But its being infinite must in any case mean that it cannot stop by itself" (Kierkegaard 2009: 95). The infinity of reflection is grounded in the incompleteness of both the subject and the object of knowledge. When reflection is directed to the empirical domain, its object turns out to be unfinished because all empirical existence is in the constant process of becoming. Similarly, the reflecting subject is also caught up in the process of becoming; his continuous cognitive (but also existential) development further establishes the inexhaustible renewal of reflection. Finally, it should be noted that reflection has the qualification of infinity because it is always possible to produce a higher cognitive act whose object would be a reflection of a lower order. At the same time, it should be clearly stated that the infinity of reflection is not a bad thing in itself. When it comes to scientific reflection, the character of infinity opens up the possibility of revising and rebuilding scientific theories, thus contributing to the progress of science. However, within the field of ethics, the infinity of reflection has completely different implications. When questions of morality are raised, and propositions of existential importance are considered (which oblige the individual to act and organize their life accordingly), reasoning has the character of urgency. In this sense, Kierkegaard warns in several places that ethics differs from other sciences in its "direction" – while other sciences tend to collect data and expand the existing fund of knowledge, thus moving from actuality to ideality, the meaning of ethics is the actualization of the knowledge, translation of the ideal into the actual. In terms of

ethics, reflection has to lead to action. However, since reflection has the characteristic of infinity, the question arises as to how it is possible to "deduce" action from it. As Stokes notes, "there is always another thought to think, always another angle to consider" (Stokes 2019: 275), which means that any additional or subsequent consideration delays the action that is ethically required. Hence, the infinity of reflection means that the prolongation and avoidance of action can be continually renewed. On the other hand, ethics demands urgency of action. It states that the "good must be realized immediately, right after it has been understood" (Kierkegaard 2009: 72). How, then does ideality pass into actuality? How can action be derived from reflection? Regarding the nature of reflection and its process, Kierkegaard is clear – reflection cannot overcome itself. This paradoxical combination of the necessity of action and the infinity of reflection in Kierkegaard's philosophy generates a problem that we can now name the problem of the discontinuity of reflection and action. According to Stokes, the union of necessity *and* undesirability of ethical reflection has several dimensions. Namely, Stokes finds that the paradoxical nature of reflection generates problems that transgress the field of ethics. For Kierkegaard, reflection is both necessary and destructive – Anti-Climacus shows that reflection or self-relation is necessary for the constitution of the self, while also claiming that reflection leads to moral evasion; in *Two Ages*, reflection turns out to be a disease of the modern age, while Judge Wilhelm insists that reflection is the only way to overcome the immediacy. Ultimately, Stokes believes that Kierkegaard's complex and at times (self-)contradictory doctrine on reflection generates three fundamental problems: the ontological problem of the finality of the self, the problem of self-immersion and solipsism, and the problem of the (ir)rational agent (see: Stokes 2019: 275). This paper will only examine the third problem.

Although the problem of the discontinuity between reflection and action is already intriguing enough, Kierkegaard's response to this problem seems even more complicated to interpret. Namely, instead of bridging the gap between reflection and action, Kierkegaard only deepens it: " I am charging the individual in question with not willing to stop the infinity of reflection. Am I requiring something of him, then? (...) And what do I require of him? I require a resolution. And in that I am right, for only in that way can reflection be stopped." (Kierkegaard 2009: 109-10). The introduction of the third term, the moment of will, into the reflection-action relationship, only complicates it. If the intrusion of a voluntary act provides the transition from reflection to action, the action becomes unjustified, and the deliberation becomes redundant. In this regard, Stokes writes the following: "Reflection cannot be stopped except by act of will, so reflection cannot instigate action – instead it must be stopped for the sake of acting, which makes it seem as if action is troublingly disconnected from rational deliberation" (Stokes 2019: 276). Since the decision establishes the transition from reflection to action, it follows that the subject can be either a highly rational non-agent (if he indulges in an endless flow of reflection, fails to make a decision and thus postpones action) or an irrational agent (if he arbitrarily interrupts the process of reflection to instigate the action). The epistemological aspect of this problem brings interesting insights. Suppose the will represents the third term between reflection

and action. In that case, the transition to action would be achieved through a simple (unproblematic) choice of beliefs with ethical content. Since reflection can never arrive at final results, and rational deliberation cannot reach a final conclusion about the truth value of opposing propositions, it seems that it is allowed to choose beliefs to enable action. But this means that the action is never rationally justified because the reasoning is "violently" and suddenly interrupted by the intrusion of the will.

Therefore, to be able to solve the problem of the (ir)rational agent, and to provide the answer to the question of the transition from reflection to action, it is necessary to investigate the process of adopting beliefs with ethical content and the role that the will plays in it. To achieve this goal, the research will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will offer a definition of existential beliefs (beliefs with ethical-religious content) and explain the problem of their formation more precisely. In the second part of the analysis, I will try to show that the interruption of reflection, which the will implements in order to initiate action, is justified, and that the thesis that beliefs are a direct product of (irrational) decisions is unfounded. To succeed in this, I will rely on Stokes' research. In addition, I will try to show that choosing existential beliefs does not refer to their content, but to their actualization. At this point, I will refer to Lübcke's understanding of Kierkegaard's indirect communication, and the double reflection on which the communication is based. At the very end, I will open the problem of the uncertainty of existential beliefs and the complementary problem of existential faith, which has a task to ensure the overcoming of uncertainty and the formation of beliefs with ethical-religious content.

Definition of existential beliefs and existential faith

In *The Logic of Subjectivity*, Pojman presents the following definition of existential belief: "In ordinary believing, assent may come automatically as a function of the word's representing itself to us. But existential propositions are equiposed, with equal evidence on both sides. The evidence is essentially indecisive, insufficient to sway us to either side. In such a situation, one might be allowed to let his desires count in making a choice one way or the other" (Pojman 1984: 114). On the other hand, existential faith is "a second immediacy, an attitude of passionately holding onto its object in spite of apparent evidence" (Pojman 1984: 77). According to Pojman, existential faith is a faculty that allows an individual to hold onto a proposition despite the evidence that disputes it, while existential belief, as its product, refers to an undetermined and unresolved judgment about the truth value of the proposition. Thus, when adopting existential beliefs, the subject is aware that the existential proposition is characterized by uncertainty, but, by the power of existential faith, he manages to overcome it and adopt the proposition despite counter-evidence or the lack of evidence. Of course, the question arises as to what enables and justifies this cognitive maneuver. To answer these questions, Pojman presents another characteristic of existential belief that distinguishes it from ordinary, factual beliefs: "The difference lies in the importance of the proposition to the subject. In a faith situation, the subject regards the proposition as crucial for his life; in an opinion

situation, this is not the case" (Pojman 1984: 93). Existential beliefs are important for the existential development of the individual, which means that they refer to ethical-religious beliefs. Using an example that Pojman provided (see: Pojman 1984: 55-56), it can be noted that the beliefs related to the qualitative determinations of Ford and Buick, and which enable the individual to choose between these two car models, can hardly have any influence on its existential development. This means that they cannot be qualified as existential beliefs. On the other hand, Pojman finds that propositions such as " 'God exists', 'The soul is immortal' (...) affect one's inner being" (Pojman 1984: 56). Only such beliefs would merit the existential qualification.

The subjective importance of existential beliefs conditions their further epistemological characteristics. One of the key problems that arise at the level of the formation of existential beliefs is the problem of their uncertainty. Although epistemic uncertainty is a feature of all beliefs related to the domain of becoming, Pojman notes that existential beliefs are particularly problematic because they imply a different *experience* of uncertainty: "Whereas objectively a person may judge two propositions (p and q) equally probable, of one proposition (p) is life crucial and the other (q) is not, then the uncertainty attaching to p will be more important than the uncertainty attaching to q" (Pojman 1984: 93). In this regard, Pojman finds that the existential proposition p will arouse more passion in the subject and that the belief that p will "involve risk in a way that belief in q will not" (Pojman 1984: 93). It should be noted here that Pojman's analysis of existential beliefs is well-founded, and that it can be justified by referring to Kierkegaard's doctrine on subjective truth. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus warns us that "the investigating subject is passionately interested in his relation to this truth in respect of his eternal happiness", and that, in this case, "it is nothing but a misunderstanding to seek an objective assurance" (Kierkegaard 2009: 37).

However, what is questionable in Pojman's interpretation is his further interpretation of the formation of existential beliefs. Drawing on James' research, Pojman notes the following: "If I strongly want p to be the case, but there is no decisive evidence one way or the other, why should I not choose to believe that p? I can continue to live with a suspended judgment (...); but if I can give a good reason for wanting p, it seems that there is justification for this action. Why cannot I live with a weaker standard of rationality? This argument is similar to William James's discussion, where the proposition is lively, momentous, and forced" (Pojman 1984: 115). The cited excerpt from Pojman's work represents the so-called existential argument, which supposedly stands in the background of Kierkegaard's understanding of the process of adopting existential beliefs, and justifies the act of choosing beliefs. But is that the case? To answer this question, we need to open the problem of the transition from reflection to action, ask the question of its justification, and investigate the meaning of the choice that is being made at the level of adopting existential beliefs.

The problem of the (ir)rational agent: Reflection and action

When considering the problem of the (ir)rational agent, Stokes starts by analyzing Kierkegaard's understanding of reflection on one's own death. According to Stokes' findings, contemplation of death represents an ideal combination and balance between subjective and objective reflection, making it the most suitable candidate for analyzing the indicated problem. Although it may seem that subjective and objective reflection are two extremes on the reflective spectrum, it should be noted that objective reflection does not require the complete abandonment of interest and renunciation of subjectivity, just like subjective reflection does not imply the complete absence of an object. However, in objective reflection, the object of reflection has primacy in such a way that the subject "always stands behind his back" (Kierkegaard 2009: 111). The expansion of objective reflection constitutes self-forgetfulness and the forgetfulness of existence. Hence, it turns out that it is necessary to make a radical move for the individual to return to himself. This is where the reflection of one's own death comes to play. Although directed at the object (death), this type of reflection refers back to subjectivity (one's own death) and thereby enables two key processes:

1. the process of individuation, and
2. the constitution of a state of wakefulness.

How does the reflection about death result in individuation? Climacus first notes that we have countless information about death: "For example, *to die*. I know what people ordinarily know about this: that I shall die if I take a dose of sulphuric acid, and also if I jump into the water, sleep in an atmosphere of coal gas, etc. I know that Napoleon always had poison on hand, and that Shakespeare's Juliet took poison, that the Stoics regarded suicide as a courageous act and others consider it cowardly" (Kierkegaard 2009: 138). But does this knowledge of death mean that we also have an *understanding* of death? What is forgotten in medical, sociological, and even philosophical discussions about death is that it never happens to a person in general, but that it happens to *me*. Thoughts *en général*, which describe death as a universal phenomenon and see mortality as a characteristic of the universal man, do not result in an authentic understanding of death. This is possible only when reflection is liberated from the Heideggerian *Das Man* or "anonymous self" (see: Heidegger, 1962) and when the individual makes the transition from judgments such as "one dies" and "all people are mortal" to "I will die". This is the first prerequisite for the suspension of self-forgetfulness and the return to subjectivity. When death is understood personally and when the subject meets his own death, he finally understands that he is a concrete "existing spirit, a completely individual human being" (Kierkegaard 1996: 213).

The specific character of reflection on death, its subjective-objective nature, and the potential to initiate individuation and self-development, represent the theme of many achievements in film art. In films like *The Seventh Seal*, *The Green Knight*, and even *Swiss Army Man*, death is at the beginning always shown as the opposite, i.e., the object to be overcome. Whether it is an opponent in a game of chess, an

enemy who represents a threat to the kingdom, or an unexpected friend who cures loneliness in an unusual way, death is first something external, the object of man's questioning, his struggle or a joke, until it becomes an occasion for understanding his own situation and also for accepting his finitude.

Another characteristic of reflection on one's own death is that it enables the constitution of a state of (existential) wakefulness. According to Stokes' analysis, precisely this phenomenon justifies the interruption of reflection and the leap into the domain of action. But how to understand this state of wakefulness? How does this resolve the problem of the (ir)rational agent?

First, the analysis should consider how reflection on one's own death can result in a state of wakefulness. In this regard, it should be noted that this borderline case of objective reflection reveals (in Heideggerian terms) the always-mineness of death and thus returns to the always-mineness of existence. But aside from enabling the process of individuation, death also reveals that existence has the quality of finitude. Through reflecting on his death, the subject also realizes the finitude of his existence, which, in turn, leads to the constitution of the awareness of the necessity and urgency of action. This kind of awareness eliminates the error of a transgression to another genus (*metábasis eis állo génos*) and justifies the suspension of deliberation and the decision to act. However, Stokes notes that solving this problem only generates a different one. If reflection on one's own death justifies the individual's decision to suspend reflection for the sake of action, does this mean that every instance of ethical reflection must be conducted under the auspices of a *memento mori* to result in action? Here Stokes offers an ingenious solution. At first, Stokes notes that this demand to "remember one's own death" can lead to a banal conclusion that every time someone asks us the question 'What are you doing' or 'What are you thinking about', the answer must be 'About my death'. Constantly dealing with one's death leads to the ethically problematic phenomenon of self-immersion. In other words, instead of justifying and urgently demanding action, contemplation of one's death could produce egocentrism and self-obsession. For this reason, Stokes argues that reflection on death should end with the constitution of a state of wakefulness that resembles the phenomenon of keeping watch. Namely, just as a guard does not have to maintain awareness of the necessity of keeping watch to guard successfully, analogically, an individual does not have to constantly remind himself of his mortality to produce awareness of the necessity of action. Reflection on one's own death "retreats" from the domain of active contemplation into the precognitive domain. The awareness of death thereby becomes a non-positional consciousness (of) consciousness that accompanies every instance of ethical reflection, and enables and justifies the transition from rational reasoning to action.

Nevertheless, even though it can be argued that the choice to forgo reasoning about the ethical situation to initiate action is justified, the nature of such choice still needs to be determined. According to Pojman's interpretation, the object of choice is a propositional belief. Since reflection is infinite and an equal number of *pro et contra* reasons can be offered for each belief, the only thing left for the subject is to halt the reflection and choose the belief that aligns with his desires. But is it really so? Does ethical reflection, as a case of subjective reflection, require an arbitrary

choice of existential beliefs? The analysis will introduce Lübcke's interpretation of Kierkegaard's indirect communication to answer this question.

It is well known that indirect communication, which Kierkegaard used in his esthetic writings, represents a specific way of communicating with the reader. However, this method of communication represents a complex phenomenon and should not be reduced to communication skills or writing style. In this regard, Roger Pool finds that it is necessary to distinguish between two indirections, two (re) duplications, or two dimensions of indirect communication – esthetic and existential (see: Pool 1993: 158-159). The esthetic dimension refers to the author's style, which requires a kind of reduplication of the writer's identity and the implementation of dialectics. Hence, the esthetic dimension refers to Kierkegaard's practice of *incognito* communication, combining opposites such as earnestness and humor, using parables, etc. It is quite clear that this kind of indirection is irrelevant to the current investigation. Yet another kind of indirection proves useful. Namely, Pool finds that the existential dimension of indirect communication refers to the phenomenon of double reflection, which is realized at the level of "the relation between the communication and its author" (Pool 1993: 159). While at the level of the first indirectness, (re)duplication functions as a tool of esthetics, a clever deception that allows the author to hide his intentions, the second indirectness refers to an authentic, existential double reflection. Namely, double reflection requires the subjective thinker "to exist in a way that dictates thinking" (Kierkegaard 2009: 104). The secret of double reflection is that it is a "reflection of the inwardness, a reflection of possession" (Kierkegaard 2009: 161), which means that the thought, contemplated on the reflective level, is repeated and actualized on the level of existence. Therefore, Pool concludes that the authentic meaning of reduplication can only be recognized within the second indirectness because it refers to the reduplication "between written text and lived expression" (Pool 1993: 159). However, the true meaning of indirect communication is not to help the author find his expression but to motivate the reader to existential development. This is when Pool concludes that "what is true for the author must also be true for the reader" (Pool 1993: 160). What does this mean? At this moment of analysis, Lübcke's research should be introduced. Namely, Lübcke tries to discover why Kierkegaard insists on the inadequacy of direct communication and the necessity of the indirect method. His thesis, presented in the work *Kierkegaard and Indirect Communication*, is that "this shift is not provoked by problems within *semantics* but has to do with the *pragmatic* aspect of language" (Lübcke 1990: 32). Lübcke finds that the misunderstanding of Kierkegaard's indirect communication is mainly based on the traditional interpretation that relies on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. However, unlike Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard does not consider ethical and religious problems to be unspeakable. Therefore, the need for indirect communication is not constituted at the semantic level. The problem of ethical concepts is not related to their unspeakable or semantically problematic content, but to the way this content should be adopted. In fact, Lübcke believes that, according to Kierkegaard, moral principles, imperatives, and the difference between good and evil, are already universally known. Therefore, communication of the ethical can "abolish the object of speech" because "there is

simply nothing left to teach" (Lübcke 1990: 34). However, it is necessary to motivate the reader to practice what he has always known: "we ought to take the object and the message about it as a given and pass from the *semantic* to the *pragmatic* level of speech, so as to concentrate on the pragmatic task of motivating the listener to do what he knows to be his duty" (Lübcke 1990: 34). Combined with Pool's remark that "what is true for the author must also be true for the reader" (Pool 1993: 160), it can be concluded that the use of indirect communication is based on the need to awaken the reader's double reflection. Therefore, the choice made at the level of adoption of existential beliefs does not refer to their content, but to their existential application and actualization. This interpretation aligns with Climacus' definition of double reflection: "The reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but as existing in this thinking, as assimilating this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated" (Kierkegaard 2009: 62).

Therefore, the moment of choice that enables the transition from reflection to action does not refer to the content of existential beliefs, but to the individual's decision to bring them to actualization. Although this transition represents a kind of leap, it is grounded in a non-positional awareness of death, which accompanies ethical reflection and demands the necessity of action. However, to provide a complete answer to the problem of discontinuity between reflection and action, the problem of uncertainty of existential beliefs should be examined in more detail. Although it was shown that the choice does not refer to the beliefs themselves, but to their actualization, and that the halting of infinite reflection is grounded, the fact of their objective uncertainty remains. Therefore, there is still room for the thesis about the (ir)rational agent. The subject may be obligated to abandon reflection and proceed to act, but this does not absolve beliefs of their objective uncertainty. In what way is this uncertainty overcome? Is objective uncertainty eliminated by an unwarranted choice to ignore the evidence attesting to its degree? To answer these questions, the examination must open the problem of Socratic existential faith.

Existential faith – Socrates' model of adopting existential beliefs

According to Pojman's understanding, "existential faith (is) passionate commitment to uncertain, action-guiding propositions" (Pojman 1984: 94). Further, Pojman says that existential faith "involves wrestling with the evidence" (Pojman 1984: 94) and assumes an "intensification of subjectivity proportional to a decrease in objectivity" (Pojman 1984: 121). From there, it is possible to posit two key theses concerning existential faith. First, it seems that the phenomenon of objective uncertainty is crucial for understanding the function of existential faith. Second, it can be concluded that precisely this attachment to uncertainty constitutes the irrationality of existential faith. Pojman's definition of existential faith suggests that its function is to enable the choice of insufficiently grounded existential beliefs. But is it really so?

First, the investigation needs to discover the origin of the objective uncertainty that characterizes existential beliefs. The answer stems from Climacus' understanding

of double reflection. Jacob Howland explains: "the double-reflection of subjective thinking involves thinking of the universal, eternal truth and then bringing this truth into the thinker's particular, time-bound existence" (Howland 2006: 194). What does this mean?

The example of Socrates is the best way to explain the uncertainty of existential beliefs. Namely, in the *Postscript*, Climacus writes: "Let us consider Socrates. Today, everyone deals with evidence; some have some such evidence, others less. But Socrates! He objectively asks the question in a problematic way: If there is immortality" (Kierkegaard 1996: 219-220). Why does Socrates act this way? This calls for a brief analysis of ontological knowledge. According to Kierkegaard's understanding, ontology refers to "an *a priori* development of all the predicates that may be applied to anything that can exist" (Piety 2010: 66). Ontology deals with the very form of thinking (see: Piety 2010: 66), it questions and develops the highest categories and modalities of being. Just like mathematics, the ontological investigation is directed to the domain of immanent metaphysical reality, which means that it is exclusively directed to ideas and the relations they form. Mathematics, metaphysics, and logic explore how the relations must be ordered if certain types of beings are to exist, but do not answer the question of their actual (empirical) existence. This nature of ontological research should become clearer through the interpretation of one (ethically important) metaphysical claim – *The soul is immortal*. From the point of view of ontology, this represents an analytical proposition, because it simply explicates the idea of the soul. Namely, the soul is such a type of being that has the characteristic of immortality. The ontology does not state whether such a being exists. Therefore, a more detailed ontological explanation of the nature of the soul would be: "*If* there is an entity that has all the characteristics of a soul, then it will also have the characteristic of immortality". This makes apparent why Kierkegaard considers ontological (and mathematical) knowledge to be hypothetical in nature. The metaphysician's research on the soul and its immortality does not prove that the soul exists outside the sphere of the ideal being. But can such proof be established? Climacus gives a clear answer to that question in *Philosophical Crumbs*. Considering the possibility of evidence for the existence of God, Climacus writes the following: "What is missing in Spinoza is the distinction between the real and the ideal" (Kierkegaard 2020: 52). In other words, the error of the ontological proof rests on the confusion of the spheres of ideal and real being. When the error is eliminated, it becomes evident that it is impossible to derive the actual existence from the theoretical examination of a certain concept.

This is also the case with the concept of the soul. Namely, the statement that the soul is immortal is not problematic in itself; it becomes that when a philosopher abandons a purely metaphysical consideration to examine the soul's actual existence. Does the soul actually exist? Does an immortal, eternal soul reside in a finite body? We cannot get definitive answers to these questions. In other words, eternal truth becomes problematic when it is brought into relation with the domain of becoming. In this sense, Climacus warns that "the continuous process of becoming represents the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain" (Kierkegaard 1996:

220). This means that the origin of the objective uncertainty of existential beliefs lies in the contingency inherent to the empirical domain. Objective uncertainty is generated whenever we attempt to bring eternal truth into relation with the existing individual. This also explains the function of existential faith. Namely, faith is that faculty that has a function to overcome objective uncertainty and constitute subjective certainty. However, unlike organic faith, or faith in its ordinary sense (see: Kierkegaard 2020), which enables the formation of factual beliefs, existential faith cannot act organically. The subjective thinker is fully aware of epistemic difficulties; he is aware that "the truth will remain a paradox as long as he exists" (Kierkegaard 1996: 220). Therefore, Socrates does not try to derive a theoretical proof for the existence of the soul, but accepts uncertainty, declares his ignorance, and formulates a hypothesis. As Jacob Howland observes, Socrates tries to prove the existence of the soul practically – by bearing witness to its immortality with his life (see: Howland 2006). Consequently, it should be noted that existential, Socratic faith is not realized on a cognitive level, but on a practical one. The proposition of the existence of an immortal soul is in a state of epistemic suspension, and for Socrates, it will remain a hypothesis as long as he exists. This can also explain the moment of decision. Since the proposition that the soul is immortal remains at the level of a hypothesis, we cannot claim that Socrates directly chooses the belief that an immortal soul exists. The only thing Socrates can decide is to exist under this hypothesis.

So, for Socrates, truth is characterized by objective uncertainty and will remain so as long as he exists. The problem of its uncertainty is not resolved on a cognitive level but is overcome within practice. However, this is only one aspect of the phenomenon of existential faith. Namely, it appears that existential faith, on the cognitive level, implies a skeptical attitude. Furthermore, Climacus notes in several places that the subjective thinker is required to embrace uncertainty. Why? Does the introduction of skepticism entail irrationality of action?

First, we need to recall the meaning of choice at the level of existential faith. It was already established that the subject explicitly chooses to relate to the truth existentially, that is, to realize the truth in existence. However, this simultaneously means that the individual has lost the safety of the objective path. He can no longer count on absolute certainty of ontological and mathematical knowledge, or attain the approximate certainty of empirical knowledge. Just like the skeptic, the Socratic subjective thinker must bear in mind the fact of objective uncertainty in order not to indulge in speculation. For a subjective thinker, objective reflection and objective certainty represent an eternal temptation that he must resist at all costs. What does this mean? Climacus constantly reminds us that people want results, that they want to have something completed, to ensure a high degree of certainty of their statements and beliefs before they finally decide to realize them in existence: "They [people] marry, they acquire positions in life, in consequence of which they are honor bound to have something finished, to have results" (Kierkegaard 2009: 72). Let's recall the case of esthete A, who admits that the marriage vow would make sense if "instead of saying 'forever', they would say 'until Easter' or 'until the next first of May' (..) because then they would still say something real and something they could hold on

to" (Kierkegaard 2017: 236). An esthete would perhaps decide to get married if he could know how long the marriage would last. But the esthete does not dare to act, he does not dare to make a decision for a lifetime because he does not want to face uncertainty. One short narrative from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* best demonstrates the kind of comedy that transpires when one relies on certainty in empirical reality: "A man stood talking with one of his friends, whom he then invited to dinner, promising him a rare dish. The friend thanked him for the invitation. The man then said: But be sure now to come. Definitely, replied the invited friend. So they parted, and a roof tile fell down and killed the prospective guest – isn't that something to die laughing over?" (Kierkegaard 2009: 73). What does Climacus want to say? For the guest's answer to be true, he had to consider every possible scenario and even take into account the possibility that the tile might fall on him and kill him. But can we reach that level of certainty within the realm of empirical existence?

Conclusion

Contrary to Pojman's interpretation, the subjective thinker chooses the existential attitude toward the truth (to organize life according to it, to translate it into action) and, therefore, chooses to be aware of the objective uncertainty inherent in the domain of becoming. Neither the first nor the second choice implies an unjustified choice of existential beliefs and does not lead to the irrationality of actions. In the first instance, the epistemic subject does not choose the truth, but its actualization. In the second instance, one does not choose a belief with a low degree of probability, but (in the manner of ancient skepticism) chooses awareness of the objective uncertainty of the entire empirical reality. The subjective thinker chooses to become aware of the risk that follows from the fact that all empirical reality is characterized by objective uncertainty, and then decides to prove existential beliefs existentially – by living by them.

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Problem (i)racionalnog delatnika: pitanje diskontinuiteta između etičke refleksije i akcije u Kjerkegorovoj filozofiji

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Sažetak

U ovom radu, bavićemo se problemom iracionalnog delatnika, te otvoriti pitanje diskontinuiteta izmedju etičke refleksije i akcije u Kjerkegorovoj filozofiji. Budući da etička refleksija (kao i refleksija uopšte) ima karakter beskonačnosti, postavlja se pitanje opravdanosti prekida deliberacije i iniciranja delanja. Budući da se premeravanje evdincije i razmatranje različitih opcija moze beskonačno obnavljati, ispostavlja se da individua može biti ili visoko racionalni nedelatnik (ukoliko se prepušta refleksiji) ili iracionalni delatnik (ukoliko prekida refleksiju zarad delanja). Problem ćemo postaviti na epistemološki način, te ćemo probati da odgovorimo na pitanje formiranja egzistencijalnih verovanja, odnosno, verovanja sa etićko-religioznim sadržajem. Probaćemo da dokažemo da, iako proces formiranja egzistencijalnih verovanja počiva na iznenadnom prekidu (beskonačne) etičke refleksije, ovo ne znači da je prelaz od refleksije ka akciji neopravdan, a etičko-religiozno verovanje neutemeljno. Sa druge strane, pokušaćemo da pokažemo da momenat izbora, koji je nesumnjivo suštinski element usvajanja egzistencijalnih verovanja, ne čini proces iracionalnim. Naime, pokazaćemo da se izbor, koji se sprovodi u procesu usvajanja egzistencijalnih verovanja, ne odnosi na njihov sadržaj, već na njihovu aktualizaciju u domenu prakse. Subjektivni mislilac ne bira verovanja sa niskim stepenom verovatnoće koja nisu podržana svedočanstvom, već odlučuje da egzistencijalna verovanja dokazuje na egzistencijalni način – tako što će prema njima živeti.

Ključne reči: etička refleksija, (i)racionalni delatnik, egzistencijalno verovanje, egzistencijalna vera