

The Aposteriori Wager: Pascal Meets Bayes

Ola Hössjer

Professor of Mathematical Statistics at Stockholm University
ola.hossjer@gmail.com

In this article we extend Blaise Pascal's Wager model, where the decision to become a Christian is viewed as playing a game against the truth. Either Christianity is true or not, and either one decides to become a Christian or not. Pascal claimed that our decision will ultimately depend on what we believe to be true, as well as on the cost and reward assigned to each alternative, either when Christianity is true or when it is not. He quantified the belief part in terms of probabilities, and we argue that Bayes' Rule should be used to interpret it as an *aposteriori probability*, so that our degree of belief in Christianity is the result of an inborn tendency to relate to God and the evidence we encounter in life. The reward assignment, on the other hand, expresses an act of will. We show that it can be divided into three main categories, depending on whether we are prepared to take action and become a Christian with little evidence supporting Christianity, if we only take such an action with fairly strong evidence, or if we are unwilling to act, regardless of evidence. Then a changed life situation may transform the way we interpret evidence and/or our willingness to become a Christian. We also show how Pascal's Canonical Wager can be illustrated graphically in a way related to, for instance, the Gray matrix in missiology.

Blaise Pascal

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) is one of the most well known figures of the 17th century. He was a scientist, writer and inventor, born in the French provincial capital city Clermont. Already at the age of three he lost his mother, and after this tragic event the father, a lawyer and amateur mathematician, decided to leave his job and move to Paris with Blaise and his two sisters. He wanted to give the children cultural stimulation and a proper education and started to home school them. The family engaged in Paris' social life, meeting many of the most influential people of the day.

It was soon discovered that Blaise was a prodigy with a very broad range of talents. He is perhaps most famous for having constructed the first mechanical calculator, and in mathematics he made profound contributions to projective geometry, combinatorics, probability theory and philosophy of mathematics. In physics his work in hydrodynamics is especially well known¹.

Although Pascal grew up in a Catholic environment, he was mostly occupied with science, and not too interested in religion. In the 1640s things gradually changed. Blaise's health started to impair and he was recommended by doctors to

decrease the intensity of his scientific work. As a substitute, he started to engage more heavily into social life. This did not seem to increase his happiness though, and at this time the whole Pascal family was influenced by the very sincere Christian faith of two brothers and bonesetters that helped the father after an accident. They were both followers of Jansenism, a 17th century movement within the Catholic Church that emphasized original sin, human depravity and divine grace. Blaise became interested in the new and theologically controversial ideas, and one of his two sisters became a nun. Blaise even wrote Provincial Letters in defense of Jansenism, printed in secret and widely spread. Still Blaise had no peace in his heart, and the death of the father in 1651 made him even more restless and increasingly weary with the world.

The Second Conversion

In 1654 things changed radically. Then Pascal had a strong vision of God in a dream, often referred to as his second conversion. He seems to have written it down instantaneously as a poem, The Memorial. After his death it was found, sown into the inner lining of his jacket. Pascal probably transferred the poem to every new jacket he wore without telling anyone. Its last verse reads:

Let me not be cut off from him for ever! \ 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent' \ Jesus Christ. \ Jesus Christ. \ I have cut myself off from him, shunned him, denied him, crucified him. \ Let me never be cut off from him! \ He can only be kept by the ways taught in the Gospel. \ Sweet and total renunciation. \ Total submission to Jesus Christ and my director. \ Everlasting joy

in return for one day's effort on earth. \ I will not forget thy word. \ Amen.²

After this event Pascal changed his priorities. Although he didn't abandon natural science, theology and philosophy became his main fields of interest, and his most influential theological work, *Pensées* (Thoughts), were published posthumously after he died. It is an apologetic defense of Christian faith, organized into notes on the basis of the scraps of paper he left behind.

The Wager

In one of the longer fragments of *Pensées* the Wager,³ Pascal portrays the decision to become a Christian in terms of a game. The adversary is not a human, but the truth⁴, and there are two alternatives to bet on; either Christianity is true (C) or Christianity is not true (N):

Let us then examine the point and say: "Either God exists, or he does not." But which of the alternatives shall we choose? Reason cannot decide anything. Infinite chaos separates us. At the far end of this infinite distance a coin is being spun which will come down heads or tails. How will you bet? Reason cannot determine how you will choose, nor can reason defend your position of choice.⁵

In the above quote, Pascal implicitly simplifies the Wager, assuming that the alternative to Christianity is non-existence of God. In modern terminology, we refer to this as naturalism, the belief that only natural laws and forces have ever operated in the universe without any supernatural or spiritual influences. To simplify the exposition, we will make the same assumption in most of this article, although later on, we show how the

Wager argument can be extended to allow for several competing philosophies of life.

Pascal argues that we are into the game whether we like it or not, and have to bet, since not making an active choice is a decision against. It is therefore only possible to decide for or against Christianity, since "I don't know" is not an option. As shown in Table 1 we get four combinations of truth and decision.

	Decision = <i>N</i>	Decision = <i>C</i>
Truth = <i>N</i>	RDN	WDC
Truth = <i>C</i>	WDN	RDC

Table 1: Combining truth with decision.

Let us look at the consequences of the four combinations of truth and decision more closely:

Rightly Deciding not to Become a Christian (RDN)

Christianity is not true, and you have realistically realized that life finishes after death. This gives you no hope for eternal life, but on the other hand you can control it yourself. You try to create meaning in life through career, family, sports, music etc., but admit it has no eternal meaning.

Wrongly Deciding to Become a Christian (WDC)

Christianity is not true, but you choose to believe in it anyway. This means that your life is based on a myth. Occasionally you will feel good to think about God, but since He does not exist and there is no Holy Spirit dwelling in you, your thoughts are only created by your own mind. The choice of Christianity is a kind of religious drug, and perhaps a desire for social context, not based on a true relationship with Jesus.

Wrongly Deciding not to Become a Christian (WDN)

Christianity is true, but you choose not to believe in it. Since there is eternal life after death, your soul and spirit will be eternally separated from God after death. On the other hand, you will be able to control your life. You try to create meaning in life through career, family, sports, music etc. but admit it has no eternal meaning.

Rightly Deciding to Become a Christian (RDC)

Christianity is true, and you choose to believe in and give your life to Jesus. You will enter a personal relationship with him and are promised eternal life with God after death. He has a plan for you also in this life, but at the cost of giving up self-control. Your decision may be questioned by others, such as relatives and friends and in some countries you may even face persecution.

Probabilities, Rewards and Decision

There are two important ingredients of the decision. The first one is our degree of belief in Christianity, and in order to quantify this, Pascal introduced a concept that is very much used in philosophy of religion today⁶; that of probability. This does not seem as a coincidence, since Pascal had earlier in 1654 (in fact the year of his dramatic spiritual experience) together with the French lawyer and amateur mathematician Pierre de Fermat derived important rules for how to calculate probabilities. Probabilities are a bit subtle, since there are several versions of them.⁷ In the wager argument Pascal used subjective probabilities. The subjective probability of *C* varies between persons and represents our degree of belief in *C* given all evidence *E*. It is a number that ranges

between 0 (being certain that C is false) and 1 (being certain that C is true). For instance, if the subjective probability of C equals 0.5, we regard it as equally likely that either of C or N is true (odds 1 to 1), whereas if the subjective probability of C equals 0.05, we believe that C is much less likely than N (odds 1 to 19). Hereafter, I will only write probability, and tacitly understand it to be subjective.

In order to make the decision, our degree of belief in Christianity is not enough. Pascal also urges us to wager the benefits and costs of C and N . Since we don't know which alternative is true before the choice has been made, a reward has to be assigned to all four combinations of truth and decision. Such a reward is positive if the benefits outweigh the costs, zero if we are neutral and negative if the costs are larger than the benefits.

	Decision = N	Decision = C
Truth = N	0	-1
Truth = C	-5	5

Table 2: A possible reward assignment.

For instance, suppose our reward assignment is the one in Table 2. If Christianity is true we assign a large positive reward of 5 to C , based on the hope of eternal life and a personal relationship with Christ, and a large negative reward of -5 to N , fearing the prospects of eternal separation from God after death, without a second chance. On the other hand, if Christianity is not true, we assign a neutral reward of 0 to N , basically carrying on with life as before and admitting there is not more to it than the natural, and since we don't want to live on a myth, no matter how much it promises, C gets a negative reward of -1. Looking at each of the two rows of Table 2, we find that a true alternative (marked

in bold) always gets a higher reward than a false one, although Christianity is favored overall.

In order to make the decision we have to combine the degree of belief with the reward assignment in some way. Pascal actually had three different versions of the Wager, and the most well known of these is the Canonical Wager. In order to illustrate it, suppose Adam has a reward assignment as in Table 2. He thinks C and N are equally likely to be true, both with the same probability 0.5. Then he picks the alternative with the largest expected reward⁸, the number in the bottom row of Table 3 marked in bold, and therefore decides to become a Christian. Although he was neutral in terms of his beliefs (equal odds 1:1 for C and N), his positive reward assignment in favor of Christianity determined the outcome.

	Dec= N	Dec= C	Prob
Truth = N	0	-1	0.5
Truth = C	-5	5	0.5
Exp reward	-2.5	2	

Table 3: Adam's expected reward calculation.

Ben, on the other hand, has the same rewards as Adam, but since his belief in Christianity is a lot smaller (a probability of 0.05), he does not decide to become a Christian, as can be seen from his expected rewards in the bottom row of Table 4.⁹

	Dec= N	Dec= C	Prob
Truth = N	0	-1	0.95
Truth = C	-5	5	0.05
Exp reward	-0.25	-0.7	

Table 4: Ben's expected reward calculation.

Belief: Prior Belief and Evidence

Let us look more closely into the first part of the decision process, our degree of belief in Christianity. It involves self-evident knowledge, and beliefs based on evidence (*E*) from perception, memory, deduction and reasoning, testimony and authority.

We will sometimes be more specific and write *rational belief* instead of belief, although the two expressions will be used synonymously. Rationality can be of several types, for instance *epistemic rationality*, a desire to believe true things,¹⁰ and *instrumental rationality*, a desire to make rational decisions, that is, to achieve certain goals. It is the former kind of rationality we have in mind in the belief forming process, whereas the other type of rationality is important in next section, when reward assignments are discussed.¹¹

Pascal was not very detailed about how to include evidence into (rational) belief. A century later Thomas Bayes (c. 1701-1761), an English mathematician and presbyterian pastor, devised a formula for modifying degrees of belief when new evidence is received. It is referred to as Bayes' Rule or Bayes' Theorem.¹² In mathematical terms, the apriori probability quantifies degree of belief based on background knowledge (*K*), and the aposteriori probability quantifies the degree of belief when the new evidence (*E*) has been taken into account. It is the latter probability that appears in the reward calculations in Tables 2-4. In philosophy of religion, Richard Swinburne pioneered the use of Bayes' Rule, for calculating the aposteriori probability that God exists.¹³ There is some ambiguity though involved in distinguishing background knowledge from new evidence. Swinburne writes:

However, ... any division between evidence and background knowledge

will be a somewhat arbitrary one. Normally it is convenient to call the latest piece of observational evidence *E* and the rest *K*; but sometimes it is convenient to let *E* be all observational evidence and letting *K* be mere 'tautological evidence'.¹⁴

We will follow the latter approach and let prior belief in Christianity be one that precedes any evidence. If our religious disposition from birth is completely neutral, we could assign equal odds 1:1 to *C* and *N* apriori. From a naturalistic perspective, *N* could be regarded as the default position of a newborn, so that the prior belief in *N* is high. A naturalist could also allow for a high prior belief in *C*, as a genetic predisposition to be religious or at least a by-product of other inherited traits.¹⁵ From a Christian perspective, however, a prior belief in *C* is rather our inborn tendency to relate to a real and existing God, who has put eternity in the heart of man,¹⁶ and this seems to include a longing for Him, a conception of a first cause, a desire for meaning and purpose and a desire to be loved unconditionally.

Our definition of prior belief has some connection to foundationalism,¹⁷ a school thought within philosophy asserting that belief systems have some foundational components (so called basic or properly basic beliefs), which don't need other beliefs in order to be justified. Within this framework, we could interpret prior beliefs as those basic beliefs that are of relevance for the decision to become a Christian, which we either have or at least have a capability to acquire, already from birth. The evidence, on the other hand, will include *all* of our life experience after birth of relevance for the decision to become a Christian. When this evidence is piled up, its tendency to favor Christianity differs widely between individuals.

This is to some extent explained by the different cultures and environments we grew up in. But we also tend to interpret similar evidence very differently, so that siblings, for instance, sometimes make radically different decisions.

Cumulative case apologetics is a discipline, which aims at presenting various types of evidence that persons take to be relevant for the truth of Christianity, grouped into different categories. Personal evidence includes the testimonies of family and friends and encounters of extraordinary (seemingly?) miraculous events. Other evidence is theological, and we encounter it for instance when reading the Bible and other literature that either favors or disfavors Christian dogma. Historical and cultural evidence includes the history of the church, which has penetrated cultural barriers and often grown during times of persecution like no other religion, recent research on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus,¹⁸ and the remarkable history of the Jewish people, a people that against all odds has survived and also been very successful in a number of different spheres of life. The political situation of the Middle East and an increasingly global and materialistic world seems to make the Book of Revelation all the more relevant. Other evidence is scientific. For instance, we may either believe that natural science has disproved God, or we may contend that modern biology and cosmology make traces of design in nature more apparent than ever. Philosophical evidence addresses questions such as the problem of evil and the hiddenness of God. These are obstacles for some, but for others, evil and our ability to distinguish right from wrong are pointers to an objective morality, which seems to require a Law Giver. Finally, our consciousness and ability to reason are scientific as well as

philosophical evidence. It is best explained, one may think, by a dualistic nature of man in terms of body and soul/spirit, and some may argue for this from a positive view of the (often very concurrent) near death experiences that believers and unbelievers have.¹⁹

Though cumulative case apologetics is an effective method of presenting and strengthening Christian faith, it may be argued that it is often a few pieces of evidence that are decisive for a person to become a Christian. For Pascal, it seems that personal evidence carried the highest weight - the bonesetters, his sister and his visionary dream. Theological evidence was no doubt important as well, in terms of reading the Bible as well as his acquaintance with Jansenism. For others it may be scientific evidence. For instance, a biologist may learn about the remarkable organization of the human cell and contend that a designer must exist, which prompts him to start reading the Bible.

Reward and Willingness to Act

The second part of the decision process, the reward assignment, is a utilitarian concept. This may at first seem odd for a spiritual decision concerning the meaning of life and a possible afterlife. One may argue that it is unethical to make a decision for or against Christianity, partly based on personal benefits.²⁰ However, this objection loses force since Christianity is not a zero-sum game where the benefits of some are compensated by the loss of others.

Most people would say that very few, if any, sit down and calculate rewards and probabilities before making a decision to become a Christian or not. This is true, but we may very well do so subconsciously, involving not only the intellect, but also various types of emotions. Before the

decision has been made, our intellect is mainly responsible for the degree of rational belief in Christianity, although emotions, to some extent, may influence the way we gather and interpret evidence. However, our emotions have a much larger impact on the reward assignment, and some of these work in favor of Christianity, such as a desire to spend eternity with God, a desire for meaning and inner peace (because we may feel we are sinners) and a longing to be loved unconditionally. Others may work in the other direction, such as fear of the opinion of others (and even more, persecution), a reluctance of giving up self control, a self righteousness or "no need of God" feeling, or we may stumble on the message that salvation is by grace and not by works, but are used to think that everything has a price and needs to be earned.

From a naturalistic point of view, these emotions are only created by our mind, but from a Christian perspective, we should look into the Bible, and find that a spiritual battle is going on, where God, through the Holy Spirit, tries to convince us to take steps in faith towards becoming a Christian, whereas the devil tries to do the opposite.²¹

Regardless of whether we have a Christian or naturalistic point of view, we should agree that reward is something much more general than measuring the amount of personal good or happiness. Ultimately, the reward assigned to each combination of truth and decision, quantifies our *willingness to act* according to it.

In order to illustrate this, imagine that David has a much stronger belief in Christianity (a probability of 0.9) than either of Adam and Ben, because a close friend has shared a very convincing testimony. David's reward assignment is the same as that of Adam and Ben, with one

important difference: His reward for Christianity, given that it is true, is much smaller, -4.9 instead of 5 (see Table 5). *In theory* he would like to assign a high reward to Christianity if it is true, because of all its promises. *In practice* however he is much afraid of the opinions of his relatives, other friends and colleagues, getting a reward assignment for C that is only marginally higher than -5, the value he assigns to N if Christianity is true. As a result, David does not become a Christian, in spite of his very high degree of rational belief in it.²²

	Dec = N	Dec = C	Prob
Truth = N	0	-1	0.1
Truth = C	-5	-4.9	0.9
Exp reward	-4.5	-4.51	

Table 5: David's expected reward calculation.

The Aposteriori Wager

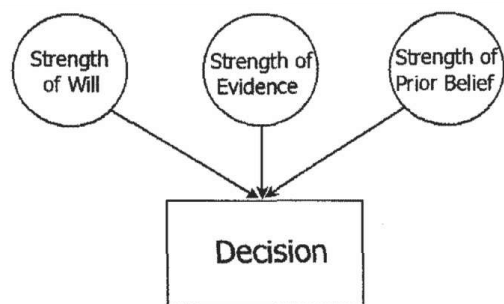


Figure 1: The three components of the Aposteriori Wager.

Stephen Unwin has noticed that the probabilities for C and N in the Wager can be given a Bayesian interpretation.²³ He considered Pascal's original reward assignment, with an infinitely positive reward for Christianity if true, and since this leads to a decision to become a Christian, as long as there is a least some degree of

belief in *C*, even though it is very small, he abandoned the Wager and proposed a so called faith math approach instead.²⁴

We will extend Unwin's idea and merge Pascal's Canonical Wager with Bayes' Rule for an arbitrary reward assignment, referred to as the Aposteriori Wager, since the belief part is based on an aposteriori probability.

When Pascal meets Bayes in this way, it can be shown that the outcome of the decision depends on how strong the prior belief, the evidence and the willingness to become a Christian are. This corresponds to the quantities within the three circles of Figure 1, and they are all positive when Christianity is favored and negative when Christianity is disfavored. Bayes' Rule implies that the strength of our rational belief in Christianity depends on the two circles to the right; how strong the prior belief and the evidence in favor of Christianity are (see Figure 2).

In the Appendix we show that the Aposteriori Wager has another, equivalent, formulation. A person becomes a Christian when Action, the sum of Strength of Rational Belief and Strength of Will, gets positive. We illustrate this by merging the two axes of Figure 2 into one coordinate system, with Strength of Rational Belief along the horizontal and Strength of Will along the vertical axis. Then Action

will appear along the diagonal, as shown in Figure 3, and a line of conversion is transferred when Action changes from negative to positive. However, Figure 3 remains valid more generally for the Canonical Wager, if we drop the assumption that Strength of Rational Belief is the sum of two terms.

Action can be thought of as a person's total willingness to act and become a Christian, when prior belief, evidence and will are merged. In order to illustrate how it differs from Strength of Rational Belief (before conversion), we consider an episode from the life of Jean Francois Gravelet, a French tightrope walker and acrobat, also known as Blondin.²⁵ He is especially well known for having crossed the gorge below the Niagara Falls, 1100 feet long and 160 feet above the water, on a tightrope. This he did a number of times, for instance blindfolded, in a sack, trundling a wheelbarrow, carrying his manager on his back or sitting down midway while cooking and eating omelet on single legged chair. At one performance in 1860 he asked the Duke of New Castle, who was in the audience, if he believed Blondin could carry a person over the gorge in his wheelbarrow. The Duke answered yes, but then declined when Blondin asked if he would like to volunteer, and so did everyone else in the audience, except for one

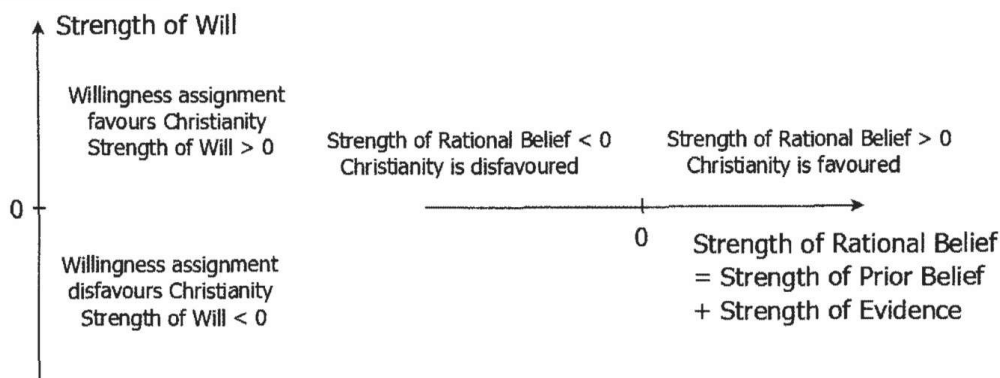


Figure 2: Possible values of Strength of Will and Strength of Rational Belief.

old woman – Blondin's own mother. Lots of people had a rational belief in Blondin's ability, but only his mother was willing to act and put her trust in him. She was the only person in the audience with a Strength of Will sufficiently large to make her act.

In the same manner, a rational belief in Jesus doesn't necessarily imply a willingness to receive Him as Lord and Savior. There will always be a leap of faith, based on a trust in God. Here we follow Lara Buchak's definition of faith in a proposition *C* as something that *leads to* action in terms of becoming a Christian.²⁶ In this way faith differs from strength of rational belief, since it also involves how much we value *C*.

Willingness Assignments

Our willingness assignment determines where in Figure 3 we end up vertically. In broad terms, it belongs to one of three categories:

Nothing to Lose

In this first category, one argues there is nothing to lose by becoming a Christian if it is not true, but a lot to win if it is. Therefore the reward of Christianity *C* is at least as large as that of Non-Chris-

tianity *N*, regardless of what is true. In the Wager Pascal writes that there is

...an infinity of an infinitely happy life to be won, one chance of winning against a finite number of chances of losing, and what you are staking is finite That leaves no choice; wherever there is infinity, and where there are not infinite chances of losing against that of winning, there is no room for hesitation, you must give everything. And thus, since you are obliged to play, you must be renouncing reason if you hoard your life rather than risk it for an infinite gain, just as likely to occur as a loss amounting to nothing.²⁷

It is not totally obvious what type of reward assignment Pascal advocated,²⁸ although for sure, he gave Christianity an infinite reward if true, and it is sometimes assumed that he gave Non-Christianity an infinitely negative reward if false. For simplicity,²⁹ we have moderated Pascal's suggestion in Table 6, using finite rewards, where both rewards are neutral (0) if *N* is true, whereas Christianity is favored if *C* is true. No matter how small the degree of rational belief in *C* is, this person still becomes a Christian, either because of all its promises, a desire for inner peace and

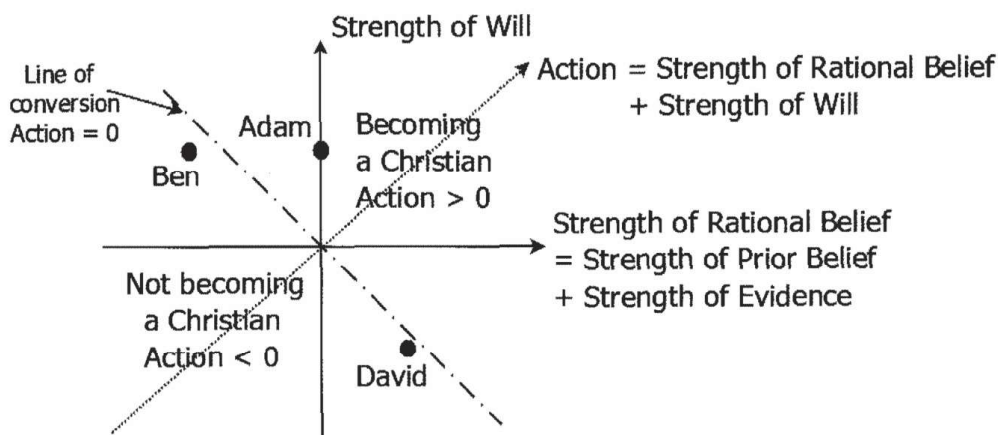


Figure 3: Graphical illustration of the Aposteriori Wager, with a line of conversion.

meaning, or simply a longing to be loved unconditionally. The Strength of Will along the vertical axis in Figure 3 becomes infinitely large and positive.

	Dec = <i>N</i>	Dec = <i>C</i>	Prob
Truth = <i>N</i>	0	0	0.999
Truth = <i>C</i>	-5	10	0.001
Exp reward	-0.005	0.01	

Table 6: A finite reward version of Pascal's assignment, and a reward calculation, showing that a small rational belief in *C* is sufficient.

Rational Belief has an Impact

It turns out that Adam and Ben belong to this category, since they always give higher reward to a supposedly true alternative than to a supposedly false one. Whenever this happens, Strength of Will has a finite positive or finite negative value, and evidence will often be very important for the decision, at least when the willingness assignment is moderately neutral (Strength of Will fairly close to 0).

Based on the information in Tables 3-4, we have calculated Strength of Rational Belief and Strength of Will of Adam and Ben, so that both are represented as points in the coordinate system of Figure 3. It is seen that Ben is below and Adam above the line of conversion since their Strength of Rational Belief differ. They both have a willingness assignment favoring Christianity (a positive Strength of Will). This signifies that Ben would in principle like to become Christian, but he simply doesn't feel there is enough evidence, making his Strength of Rational Belief very small.

Even David belongs to this category. His fear of others opinions makes his Strength of Will very small though. Evidence *could* still convince him, but it has to be very strong. Although David's ratio-

nal belief in Christianity is much higher than Ben's and David's, it is still not enough to make him a Christian.

No Evidence is Enough

David's willingness assignment is in fact close to this third category, which is the opposite of the first one. The reward of Non-Christianity is at least as high as that of Christianity, no matter which alternative is true, and Strength of Will gets infinitely negative.

	Dec = <i>N</i>	Dec = <i>C</i>	Prob
Truth = <i>N</i>	0	-1	0.001
Truth = <i>C</i>	-5	-6	0.999
Exp reward	-4.998	-5.995	

Table 7: Reward calculation for a person whose reward assignment always favors *N*.

As shown in Table 7, a person with such rewards will not convert, no matter how much rational belief in Christianity he has. No evidence is strong enough to convince him, unless he first changes his willingness assignment. There may be several reasons for this, like fear of others opinions, being too busy with life and valuing the short-term promises of this life too much. Another member of this category is a person who *knows* that God exists, but still doesn't want to get to know Him.

Related Approaches

There are other belief theories that bear a lot of resemblance with the graphical summary of the Aposteriori Wager in Figure 3. The American philosopher J.P. Moreland writes that "A belief's impact on behavior is a function of three of the belief's traits; its content, strength and centrality."³⁰

The *content* refers to what we believe, the *strength* of the belief depends on how

convinced we are that it is true, and the *centrality* of the belief quantifies how important it is for our worldview, that is, how much we value it, depending on our purposes to achieve certain goals, which typically requires some action of ours. Although the content is very important, it is the strength and centrality of the belief that make us act, whereas the influence of the content is indirect. We can put this into the context of Figure 3, with strength of belief along the horizontal axis, centrality of belief along the vertical axis and action along the diagonal.

Missionaries and evangelists are well aware of the importance of knowing the condition of a person's belief in order to present the gospel in a relevant way. Missiologist James Engel proposed a scale of spiritual decision, which bears a lot of resemblance with our Action variable, since it changes from negative to positive during conversion. Then Frank Gray complemented Engel's scale by introducing a second antagonism/enthusiasm scale, which is close to our Strength of Will. The Gray matrix is a plot with the two scales on separate axes. It bears a lot of resemblance with Figure 3, provided that Action is turned into a horizontal scale, whereas Strength of Will remains vertical.³¹

Changed Life Situation

Things in life may happen that suddenly threaten our foundations, such as strong evidence in favor of Christianity, the death of a beloved one, a divorce, impaired health, unemployment or a middle age crisis. Since we are often so occupied with life, a major change like this is sometimes required for us to start thinking about the big questions in life. The British writer and apologist C.S Lewis wrote: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."³²

Whenever this happens, our reaction is crucial. Figure 4 shows ways in which Ben could respond to a changed life situation. We recall that before this happens, his willingness to become a Christian is rather strong, but his degree of rational belief is small.

When confronted with the changed life situation or new strong evidence, Ben may either convert because (a) of a strong and very convincing testimony of a close friend, (b) he suddenly reevaluates old evidence when memories of a godly grandmother from his childhood are brought alive, (c) he loses his job, starts to question the meaning of life and begins to seek God, (d) he has a dream where Jesus talks to him, which not only gives him new evi-

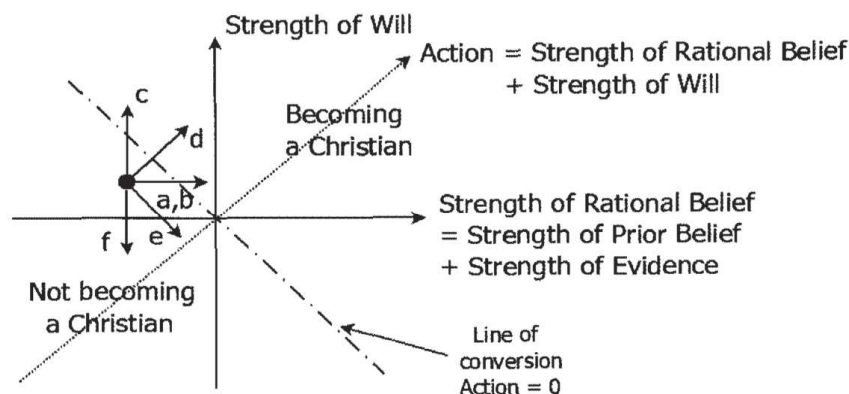


Figure 4: The effect of a changed life situation or new strong evidence.

dence, but he also starts longing for a personal relationship with God.

On the other hand, Ben may decide not to become a Christian because (e) he witnesses a miraculous event of healing during prayer, and in order to avoid taking the consequences of this very strong evidence, he compensates by becoming more negative and hostile towards Christians (f) a divorce makes him bitter and angry with God, although he doesn't believe in Him.

The Many Gods Objection

The Wager has been criticized in various ways. According to the Many gods objection, the Wager argument could just as well be used for any other theistic religion apart from Christianity that promises eternal good, such as Judaism or Islam. Already in the 18th century the French philosopher and writer Denis Diderot commented that:

Pascal has said that if your religion is false, you have risked nothing by believing it true; if it is true, you have risked all by believing it is false. An Imam could have said as much.³³

One may extend Diderot's objection, saying that infinitely many gods other than the Christian one could exist, each of which promises an infinitely high reward if true. It may be argued that none of them should be dismissed a priori.³⁴

This is very true, but the Aposteriori Wager can easily be extended, allowing the number of competing religions (including naturalism) to be larger than two, even infinite. Suppose for instance that all of them have the same a priori probability³⁵. Since theistic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) promise eternal good, we may additionally assign the same positive reward (say 10) to each one of them,

if true, and the same negative reward (say -10), if false. Naturalism and Eastern religions, on the other hand, get rewards that are much less favorable, because of their views on afterlife. Then, given these assumptions, it can be seen that essentially, the evidence of the theistic religions will determine the decision.

Another possibility is to divide the decision process into two parts, as for C.S. Lewis, who first became a theist and then a Christian.³⁶ An *Ecumenical Wager* is employed at first³⁷ in order to decide between Theism and Non-theism. If Theism is the outcome, one then chooses between the theistic religions, and if, for instance, all of them have the same a priori probability and reward assignment, their evidence alone will determine the final decision.

In the *Pensées*, Pascal did in fact compare the evidence of Christianity and Islam, and argued that unlike Jesus, Mohammed was not foretold by prophecies, he did not prophecy himself, nor did he perform miracles. Pascal also claimed that the Koran is less historically and logically credible than the Bible. We could add that Christianity is the most universal religion that has penetrated almost all cultural and ethnic groups. It has, to a large extent, been spread during periods of oppression and persecution, whereas Islam, to a larger extent, has been spread through the sword. In addition, many who witnessed the changed lives of Christians regarded their testimonies as strong evidence for their own choice. But the ultimate piece of evidence when deciding between Christianity and Islam (or any other religion) is evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.³⁸

However, it is not necessary to have a neutral reward assignment between Christianity and Islam, even though both

religions promise eternal good. One may still employ a nothing to lose argument in favor of Christianity. The message that salvation is a free gift by grace, and not by works, may cause this, or a desire for inner peace caused by awareness of sinfulness and a longing for inner peace through belief in Christ.

The Evidence Objection

The most serious and well known criticism is not against the Wager per se, but rather against using nothing to lose rewards, since *pragmatic arguments* are employed to motivate conversion to Christianity, even when there is little evidence. This is in contrast to evidentialism, which only allows *epistemic reasons* that aim at convincing others that a statement is true solely based on evidence. In the 19th century, the British mathematician and philosopher William Kingdon Clifford wrote: "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, and to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."³⁹

This famous sentence has been named Clifford's Principle. If Christian faith was blind, not based on any kind of evidence, it would be a legitimate objection towards the Wager, since anything that is claimed to be true should tolerate to be tested. However, very few Christians would claim that their belief is blind, and Pascal, as a top class scientist, knew that evidence is important. In fact, the *Pensées* is full of various kinds of evidence in favor of Christianity, although he argues that it will never be fully conclusive:

The prophecies, even the miracles and proofs of our religion, are not of such a kind that they can be said to be absolutely convincing, but they are at the same time such that it cannot be said to be unreasonable to believe in them. There is

thus evidence and obscurity, to enlighten some and obfuscate others. But the evidence is such as to exceed, or at least equal, the evidence to the contrary, so that it cannot be reason that decides us against following it, and can therefore only be concupiscence and wickedness of heart.⁴⁰

Not only is the evidence inconclusive, but Pascal claims that we lack the ability to interpret it in a good way. He analyzes the human condition and contends that even though Man is noble, as created in God's image, he is also wretched, because he is fallen and has rebelled against God. This is vividly expressed as:

What kind of freak is man! What a novelty he is, how absurd he is, how chaotic and what a mess of contradictions, and yet what a prodigy! He is judge of all things, yet a feeble worm. He is repository of truth, and yet sinks in such doubt and error. He is the glory and the scum of the universe.⁴¹

It is also important to notice that the evidence objection is partly based on confusing beliefs before and after conversion. It narrows down the interpretation of evidence, since it assumes from the start that naturalism is true. If so, the only way to find out whether a statement is true or not is to test it empirically and evaluate evidence *before* conversion, whereas from a Christian perspective, the lack of conclusive evidence before conversion is not unexpected until a leap in faith has been taken. This was well phrased by Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th century, who extended thoughts of Augustine of Hippo, the church father, and wrote: "I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe even this: that I shall not understand unless I believe."⁴²

From a Christian point of view, a believer gets filled with the Holy Spirit after conversion, and rational belief is then converted into *belief by heart*.⁴³ It is common among Evangelicals and Charismatics, for instance, to interpret assurance of salvation as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁴ which can be viewed as a very strong piece of non-natural evidence, given by God *after* conversion. Therefore, a nothing to lose reward is warranted from a Christian perspective, based on what Jeff Jordan refers to as a *truth-dependent pragmatic argument*.

In a similar manner, the American philosopher William James, in his will to believe argument, contended that it is not rational to first require full evidence in order to believe.⁴⁵

In Figure 5, it is shown how Action may evolve during life for an adult who becomes a Christian after a changed life situation. Before conversion, Action should be interpreted as our willingness to act and become a Christian, whereas after conversion, it is rather our degree of retrospective approval (which may also include our intellect) of the decision, or our degree of certainty about the decision.

Some people can tell the exact moment of their conversion. Others can't, since it extended over a period of time. In either case, the radically increased certainty after conversion is the effect of the Holy Spirit, who makes us believe by heart and change the willingness assignment and interpretation of evidence in favor of Christianity. After conversion the process of sanctification starts, which is finalized after death when our soul is made perfect in the presence of God. The dashed line indicates that after death we have full certainty and approval of our Christian faith.⁴⁶

Conclusions

The Aposteriori Wager combines Pascal's Wager with Bayes' formula for belief formation. It implies that the decision to become a Christian or not involves three ingredients; a prior belief or inborn tendency to relate to God, evidence encountered in life and an act of will, described in terms of utilitarian rewards.

The main novelty of our work is three-fold. First, we combine the Canonical Wager with Bayes' Rule for an arbitrary willingness assignment. Second, we inter-

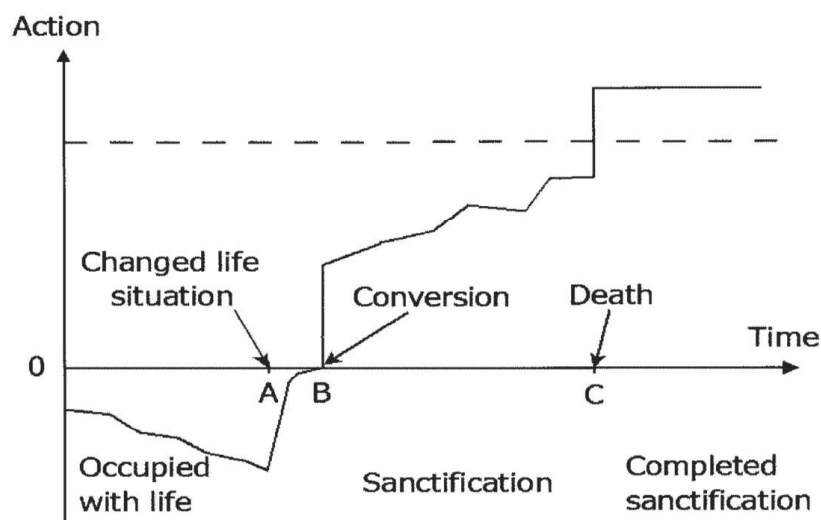


Figure 5: Illustration of how Christian faith may evolve over time for an adult, with a changed life situation (A), conversion (B) and death (C) as major events.

pret prior belief, evidence and will from a naturalistic and Christian perspective, and in particular we demonstrate that the reward assignment can be divided into three main categories. Third, we illustrate the Canonical Wager graphically, with Strength of Rational Belief and Strength of Will along the horizontal and vertical axes, A diagonal line of conversion is transferred when a decision in favor of Christianity is made, as may happen after a changed life situation.

The Aposteriori Wager portrays the decision to become a Christian as an interplay between belief and a willingness to act. This raises the question of whether belief formation itself is voluntary or not.⁴⁷ We argue that it is, at least indirectly, since the choices we make to some extent affect the new kind of evidence we encounter later on in life, and how we evaluate the evidence we already have. This is particularly clear from a Christian point of view, since our decision to become a Christian will open up for new evidence in terms of revelations, which strongly affect our beliefs.

The Wager is mainly a model for the decision to *become* a Christian, which we argue is equally valid whether one has a Christian or naturalistic perspective. Therefore, as a reader of this article, no matter what your position is, I urge you to think about your own rewards and examine your evidence. Hopefully, this will help you to understand your decision better.

Appendix Mathematical Details

In this appendix, we use concepts from Bayesian decision theory to describe the Aposteriori Wager,⁴⁸ but before that, we will comment on some related approaches. First, evidential decision theory⁴⁹ is based on maximizing expected rewards,

in a way essentially equivalent to the Canonical Wager, of which the Aposteriori Wager is a special case.

Second, choice modeling also attempts to describe the decision process of an individual, typically a consumer's choice.⁵⁰ This is achieved through maximizing a random utility, rather than an expected one, as in the Canonical Wager. If instead the Wager has a Maximal decision rule, the two approaches are more similar.⁵¹ However, there are still fundamental differences: whereas the consumer is free to choose between outcomes, the wagering person is not, since the outcome of a decision depends on the truth. In addition, choice modeling aims to figure out the probabilities by which a randomly chosen consumer (viewed as a member of a large population) will make different kinds of decisions, whereas the Wager helps a person to make a decision.

Third, the mathematical theory of games is somewhat related to decision theory.⁵² However, it deals with situations where each player's actions are dependent on choices of others. It is therefore less relevant for the decision to become a Christian, which is individual, something between each person and God, even though others to some extent may influence it.

Returning to the Aposteriori Wager, we will start by defining strength of prior belief in terms of probabilities. Since Christianity (*C*) and Non-Christianity (*N*) are two mutually exclusive hypotheses, we first assign them prior probabilities $P(C)$ and $P(N)=1-P(C)$. These are numbers between 0 and 1 reflecting our degree of prior belief in Christianity and Non-Christianity, before taking evidence into account. Let \log be the tenth logarithm. Then

$$\text{Strength of Prior Belief} = \log \frac{P(C)}{P(N)}$$

is $P(C)$ expressed on a different (so called log odds or logit) scale. We let $P(E|C)$ refer to a probability that quantifies how likely we believe evidence E is given that Christianity is true. Analogously, $P(E|N)$ tells how likely we believe evidence is given that Christianity is not true. Then

$$\text{Strength of Evidence} = \log \frac{P(E|C)}{P(E|N)}$$

specifies how strongly evidence supports Christianity (the tenth logarithm of the likelihood ratio or Bayes factor of E when testing C versus N). For instance, Strength of Evidence = 2 means that evidence is regarded as 100 times more likely if Christianity is true compared to when it is not.

The aposteriori probabilities $P(C|E)$ and $P(N|E)=1-P(C|E)$ quantify our degree of rational belief in Christianity and Non-Christianity when evidence has been incorporated⁵³, and

$$\text{Strength of Rational Belief} = \log \frac{P(C|E)}{P(N|E)}$$

expresses, on a logit scale, how much our rational belief favors Christianity (the logarithm of the posterior odds of C versus N).

Bayes' Rule provides a link between the apriori and aposteriori probabilities. More specifically, it implies that

$$P(C|E) = \frac{P(C)P(E|C)}{P(C)P(E|C) + P(N)P(E|N)}$$

and

$$P(N|E) = \frac{P(N)P(E|N)}{P(C)P(E|C) + P(N)P(E|N)}$$

Combining the five displayed equations above, it follows after some computations that Strength of Rational Belief equals the sum of Strength of Prior Belief and Strength

of Evidence (see also the right part of Figure 2).

In the Canonical Wager, we should use the Expectation Rule and calculate the expected rewards for Christianity (ERC) and Non-Christianity (ERN). They equal

$$\text{ERC} = P(N|E) \text{WDC} + P(C|E) \text{RDC}$$

and

$$\text{ERN} = P(N|E) \text{RDN} + P(C|E) \text{WDN}$$

respectively, where WDC, RDC, RDN and WDN are the four rewards of Table 1. A person becomes a Christian when ERC exceeds ERN. After some calculations, it can be seen that this is equivalent to

$$P(C|E) (\text{RDC}-\text{WDN}) > P(N|E) (\text{RDN}-\text{WDC})$$

where the left hand side quantifies how much one wins by becoming a Christian, and the right hand side how much one loses by becoming a Christian, when rational belief *and* rewards are taken into account. Here RDC-WDN is the reward gain of becoming a Christian if C holds, whereas RDN-WDC is the reward loss of becoming a Christian if N is true. If both of these are positive, we let

$$\text{Strength of Will} = \log \frac{\text{RDC}-\text{WDN}}{\text{RDN}-\text{WDC}}.$$

If only RDC-WDN is positive we let Strength of Will be infinitely positive, whereas if only RDN-WDC is positive, we let Strength of Will be infinitely negative. If neither of the two reward differences is positive, Strength of Will is not well defined.

Taking the logarithm on both sides of the second last equation, it is seen that a person becomes a Christian when Action,

the sum of Strength of Rational Belief and Strength of Will, is positive. However, this should not be interpreted as a "mathematical truth" for how people become Christians. The Aposteriori Wager is rather a model, illustrated by examples, which aims to provide a better understanding of how beliefs, will and actions are related.

It is not necessary to use the exact values of $P(E|C)$ and $P(E|N)$, only the likelihood ratio $LR=P(E|C)/P(E|N)$ of C and N needs to be known, since the aposteriori probabilities can be obtained as $P(C | E)=9LR/(1+9LR)$ and $P(N | E)=1-P(C | E)$, where $P(C)/P(N) = 9$ gives the prior odds of C and N .

In Table 8, we have illustrated how the coordinates of Adam, Ben and David in were calculated in Figure 3, based on information from Tables 3, 4 and 5. We also show how Bayes' Rule can be used to calculate their aposteriori probabilities of Christianity, assuming that all three of them have the same large inborn tendency to connect to God (an a priori probability $P(C)=0.9$).

As a final remark, let us comment on how evidence could be processed and accumulated during life. We assume that evidence $E=(E_1, \dots, E_n)$ consists of n different units that have appeared sequentially, one by one. Each of these may either be personal, theological, scientific, philosophical or a combination of them. The laws of probability may be used to deduce that Strength of Evidence is a sum of n terms

$$\log \frac{P(E_i|E_1, \dots, E_{i-1}, C)}{P(E_i|E_1, \dots, E_{i-1}, N)}$$

for $i=1, \dots, n$. Each one of them quantifies how much E_i supports Christianity in favor of Non-Christianity given that previous evidence E_1, \dots, E_{i-1} has been incorporated into the background knowledge (on top of K , the background knowledge implanted from birth). In Swinburne's⁵⁴ terminology, a good C -inductive argument is derived from evidence E_i if the term in the last displayed equation is positive, so that it makes C more probable, given E_1, \dots, E_{i-1} . Equivalently, E_i is said to confirm C , given the background knowledge.

If one uses a Naïve Bayes assumption, all pieces of evidence are regarded as independent, and then the i th unit of evidence will contribute an amount

$$\log \frac{P(E_i|C)}{P(E_i|N)}$$

to the overall Strength of Evidence. This assumption is often too simplistic, although it sometimes works well.⁵⁵

More complicated models are needed in order to capture reevaluation of existing evidence as well as the possible information bias associated with a tendency of people to collect new evidence in accordance with existing beliefs (however, what is biased or not ultimately depends on what is true). One may include antagonism/enthusiasm as a *hidden variable* that effects interpretation of existing evidence as well as gathering of new evidence. From a Christian point of

Person	$P(C)$	$P(N)$	LR	$P(C E)$	$P(N E)$	Str of RB	Str of Will	Action
Adam	0.9	0.1	1/9	0.5	0.5	0	1	1
Ben	0.9	0.1	1/171	0.05	0.95	-1.28	1	-0.28
David	0.9	0.1	1	0.9	0.1	0.95	-1	-0.05

Table 8: Calculation of Strength of Rational Belief, Strength of Will and Action for Adam, Ben and David.

view, this hidden variable has partly a spiritual interpretation, and hidden Markov models⁵⁶ provide mathematical tools suitable for such an approach.⁵⁷

Notes

1. Douglas R. Groothuis, *On Pascal*. Wadsworth Philosophy Series (Florence KY: Thompson Learning Academic Resource Center, 2003) gives a detailed account of Pascal's life
2. *Pensées*, note 309-10. All references in the article are to the original notes of *Pensées* in A.J. Krailsheimer's translation, revised edition, (London: Penguin Books, Classics Edition, 1995). A book that puts *Pensées* into a modern perspective is Thomas V. Morris, *Making Sense of It All. Pascal and the Meaning of Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).
3. For recent treatments of the Wager, see the review article of Alan Hájek, *Pascal's Wager*, (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008) and the book Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager. Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).
4. We are tacitly assuming a correspondence theory of truth, see for instance J.P. Moreland and W.L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003). More generally, we could phrase the decision as a choice between C: The correspondence theory of truth holds and Christianity is true, and N: Not C
5. *Pensées*, note 233.
6. Since the publication of the first edition of Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, third edition 2004) in 1979, probability theory has been used a lot in philosophy, see for instance the collective book *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. J. Chandler and V.S. Harrison, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
7. Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability. A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability Induction and Statistical Inference*, 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) gives an historic account of the development of the concept of probability. See also Robin Collins, "The teleological argument: An exploration of the fine-tuning of the universe," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William L. Craig and J.P. Moreland, (Chichester UK, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 202-281, for an overview of different concepts of probability, with further references.
8. The expected reward for each of the two columns of Table 3 is obtained by computing a sum of the two rewards, weighted by their probabilities; $0.5 \cdot 0 + 0.5 \cdot (-5) = -2.5$ for N and $(-1) \cdot 0.5 + 5 \cdot 0.5 = 2$ for C. In the Canonical Wager, Pascal uses the Expectation Rule, which means choosing the alternative (N or C) with highest expected reward. For this and the other two versions of Pascal's Wager, see Ian Hacking, "The Logic of Pascal's Wager," in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 9 (2), (1972), 186-191 and A. Hájek, "Blaise and Bayes", in *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. J. Chandler and V.S. Harrison, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Chapter 1 of Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager*, and Lara Buchak, "Instrumental Rationality, Epistemic Rationality and Evidence-Gathering," in *Philosophical Perspectives* 24, 85-120, (2012).
9. Ben's expected rewards are $0 \cdot 0.95 + (-5) \cdot 0.05 = -0.5$ for N and $-1 \cdot 0.95 + 5 \cdot 0.05 = -0.7$ for C
 In more detail, our degree of belief in C may not only quantify how likely we think it is that C is true. It may also include the amount of knowledge about C, which additionally requires that the belief is justified by some criteria such as: being obtained from a reliable source or by a functioning sensory of intellectual faculty, not contradicting other beliefs of ours, having spent enough time to collect evidence and then infer belief in a logical way. This does not contradict a central theme of ours; that rational belief is subjective, in the sense that it differs widely between people, since, we argue, our interpretation of these justification criteria partly depends on our beliefs. For instance, is the Bible or a dream a reliable source? Is the personal witness of a mentally handicapped person, who seems to radiate the love of Christ, more trustworthy than that of an atheistic top scientist? More generally, what is counted as legitimate evidence? For more details, see the evidence objection section of this article, Chapter 2 of Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), or Chapters 3 and 5 of J.P. Moreland and W.L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*
11. Thomas Kelly, "Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66 (3) (2003), 612-640, and Lara Buchak, "Instrumental Rationality", 85-120.
12. Bayes' work was posthumously published by his friend Richard Price, see Thomas Bayes, "An Essay towards Solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances," *Phil. Trans. Royal Soc. of London*, 53, (1763), 370-418. Reprinted in *Biometrika* 45, 1958, 296-315
13. R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*.
14. R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 67, with mathematical notation adapted to this article.
15. See for instance Chapter 5 of Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, (Boston: Mariner Books, 2008).
16. See Ecclesiastes, 3:11. We argue that prior belief, as a tendency to relate to God, is closely connected to knowledge by acquaintance or a capacity to obtain such knowledge very early in life. Propositional knowledge

(knowledge obtained from statements), on the other hand, is rather accumulated later on in life. For definitions of these terms, we refer to Chapter 3 of J.P. Moreland and W.L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*. See also R. Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, (Boston: A Peter Davison Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), whose interviews with boys and girls from various backgrounds indicate that many children have advanced thoughts and questions relating to God

18. Chapter 3 of J.P. Moreland and W.L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*.

Gary, R. Habermas, and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2004).

19. See for instance Gary R. Habermas, “Paradigm Shift: a Challenge to Naturalism”, in *Faculty Publications and Presentations*, (Virginia, School of Religion, Liberty University: DigitalCommons@LibertyUniversity, 1989), Paper 8.

20. This is the so-called cupidity objection towards the Wager, see Jordan, *Pascal's Wager*.

21. See for instance Matthew 13:1-23, John 6:44 and 1 Peter 5:8-10.

22. The two expected rewards of Table 5 are computed as $0*0.1+(-5)*0.9 = -4.5$ and $(-1)*0.1 + (-4.9)*0.9 = -4.51$.

23. Stephen D. Unwin, *The Probability of God. A Simple Calculation that Proves the Ultimate Truth*, (New York: Crown Forum, 2003).

24. Pascal's reward assignment is described in the Willingness assignment section as a nothing to lose example. Unwin's faith math formula for Christianity C is $B(C)=P(C|E)+F(C)$, where $P(C|E)$ is the aposteriori probability of C , which includes prior belief and evidence, $F(C)$ is the faith factor for C , which depends on will, and $B(C)$ is another number that quantifies the total degree of belief in C , based on prior belief, evidence and will. Although Unwin did not connect his faith factor and total degree of belief with the Aposteriori Wager, it is in fact possible to do so, at least heuristically, by transforming Action back to a probability scale between 0 and 1. More specifically, given that $P(C|E)$ and Action are available from the Aposteriori Wager, we first define $B(C)=10^{Action}/(1+10^{Action})$ as the antilogit transformation of Action, and then compute the faith factor as $F(C)=B(C)-P(C|E)$. Whereas $P(C|E)$ and $B(C)$ are both numbers between 0 and 1, $F(C)$ can be positive or negative, depending on whether the willingness assignment favors Christianity or not.

25. See for instance Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, (Kingsway Publications LTD, 2003).

26. Buchak, “Instrumental Rationality, Epistemic Rationality”.

27. *Pensées*, note 233

28. Alan Hájek, *Pascal's Wager*, gives various interpretations of what kind of reward table Pascal assumed.

29. It is technically more convenient to use finite rewards and finite expected rewards, although a framework for infinite rewards can be defined as well, see for instance Section 3.4 of Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager* and Paul Bartha, “Many gods, many wagers: Pascal's Wager meets the replicator dynamics,” in *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion*, eds. J. Chandler and V.S. Harrison V.S., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

30. J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1997) and Peter S. Williams, “Apologetics in 3-D. Persuading across spiritualities with the apostle Paul,” in *Theofilos* vol. 4 no. 1 (2011), 3-24

31. More details on Engel's scale of spiritual decision and the Gray matrix can be found at <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/gray-matrix.php>.

32. This quote is from C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

33. Denis Diderot, “Additions to philosophical thoughts,” (1762), In *Pensées Philosophiques CEuvres*, ed. J. Assezat, (Paris: 1875-77).

34. For more details on the many gods objection, see Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager*, Paul Bartha, “Many gods, many wagers,” and references therein.

35. When the number of alternative religions is (countably) infinite, it is not possible to let all of them have the same apriori probability, unless one uses an improper prior. Another possibility is to select prior based on criteria such as simplicity (Swinburne, *The Existence of God*), or, as in the appendix of this article, letting the prior reflect our inborn tendency to relate to God of the Bible.

36. George Sayer, *Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1988) contains a biography of C S Lewis.

37. See for instance Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager*, for more details on the Ecumenical Wager.

38. *Pensées*, notes 594-600.

39. William K. Clifford, “The ethics of belief,” In *Lectures and Essays*, eds. L. Stephen and F. Pollock, (London: Maximillian and company, p. 186, 1879).

40. *Pensées*, note 835.

41. *Pensées*, note 434

42. Prosligion' in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. S.N. Deane (La Salle IL: Open Court, 1968), 7.

43. In philosophical terms, one could phrase rational belief before conversion as one that mainly corresponds to propositional knowledge, whereas belief by heart also involves knowledge by acquaintance. See also Note 16, and Jesus' teaching of the necessity of having a child's belief for entering his kingdom (see for instance Luke 18:15-17).

44. It is true that Christians may go through periods of doubts, where God seems far away. However, by being totally honest to God about this, the faith may actually get even stronger and more mature after such a period. Assurance of salvation has been emphasized for instance by the pietists from the late 17th century and in various evangelical and charismatic revivals after that, see also Ephesians 1:13-14 and Romans 8:15-16.
45. William James, W, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1956). Originally published in 1896.
46. See for instance 1 Corinthians 13:12, Hebrews 12:23, the Book of Revelation 21:27 and Chapter 38 of Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Michigan: Zondervan, 2000).
47. Whether belief formation is voluntary or not is a controversial topic among philosophers, with different points of view. According to doxastic voluntarism, people have at least some voluntary control over their beliefs, whereas “doxastic involuntarists” claim the opposite. See for instance Chapter 3 of J.P. Moreland and W.L. Craig *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* and Section 3.3 of Chignell, Andrew, “The Ethics of Belief”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/ethics-belief/>.
48. One of many books dealing with this subject is James O. Berger, *Statistical Decision Theory and Bayesian Analysis*, 2nd edition, (New York: Springer Series in Statistics, 1985).
49. A. Gibbard and W.L. Harper, “Counterfactuals and two kinds of expected utility” in *Ifs: Conditionals, Beliefs, Decision, Chance, and Time* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1981), 153–190
50. See for instance K. Train, *Discrete Choice Methods with Simulation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
51. The maximal decision rule is based on maximizing the maximal reward of each alternative, see for instance Chapter 1 of Jeff Jordan, *Pascal's Wager* for a definition this and a number of other decision rules.
52. See for instance D.R Luce and H. Raiffa, *Games and Decisions: Introduction and Critical Survey*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957).
53. For simplicity, we omit background knowledge K , implanted from birth, in the notation, writing apriori probabilities as $P(C)=P(C|K)$, the likelihood of evidence as $P(E|C)=P(E|C,K)$ and aposteriori probabilities as $P(C|E)=P(C|E,K)$.
54. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*.
55. David J. Hand and K. Yu, “Idiot's Bayes - not so stupid after all?” *International Statistical Review*, 69 (3), (2009): 385-399.
56. I.L. MacDonald and W. Zucchini, *Hidden Markov and Other Models for Discrete-Valued Time Series*, (Chapman and Hall, 1997).
57. As an act of will, I want to thank a number of people for very rewarding Wager discussions. In particular, I am grateful to Per Ewert, Andreas Forslund, Kjell-Axel Johansson, Timo Koski, Per Landgren, Richard Swinburne and two anonymous reviewers, either for providing me with valuable references, or for comments on an earlier version of the manuscript.

Den rette Forkjerlighed ...

Et overset element i Kierkegaards *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*

Carsten Elmelund Petersen

Lektor, Fjellhaug International University College, Copenhagen
cep@dbi.edu

I sit hovedværk *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* tolker Søren Kierkegaard selvkærligheden og forkærligheden meget negativt, fordi disse i den umiddelbare udgave i livet er mærket af selvskhed. Kierkegaard ønsker, at der hos det enkelte menneske skal ske en transformering af kærligheden, således at kærligheden til Gud og kærligheden til næsten skal være bestemmende for alt. Når denne transformering er sket bliver der plads for ”den rette Selvkjerlighed”. Kierkegaard bruger ikke selv begrebet ”den rette Forkjerlighed”. Artiklen trækker det indhold fra *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* frem, som godtgør, at der kan tales om den rette forkærlighed. Dette vil ske under løbende drøftelse af andres fortolkning af kærligheden hos Kierkegaard.

Indledning

I sit hovedværk *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*¹ tolker Søren Kierkegaard selvkærligheden og forkærligheden meget negativt, fordi disse i den umiddelbare udgave i livet er mærket af selvskhed. Det kan lede til den opfattelse, at Kierkegaard er imod enhver form for selvkærlighed og forkærlighed. Det er der eksempler på i sekundærlitteraturen.

Werner Jeanrond skriver: ”Endnu engang ser vi, hvordan Kierkegaard afviser enhver form for forkærlighed” og videre: ”Der står et uforløst spændingsforhold mellem Åndens kærlighed og menneskelig forkærlighed, som Kierkegaard fordømmer”.² Jeanrond henviser til anden litteratur om Kierkegaard som belæg for påstandene. Men det kritiske spørgsmål til Jeanrond lyder: Er det virkelig sandt, at Kierkegaard afviser ”enhver form for forkærlighed”?

Troels Nørager har et mere nuanceret syn på forkærligheden hos Kierkegaard. Forkærligheden skal transformeres, således at mennesket elsker Gud som det første, og dernæst elsker alle mennesker som sin næste, og derefter kan mennesket hengive sig til den udvalgte elskede. Nørager trækker steder frem, som viser, at gudsforholdet er så afgørende, at det egentlig alene er det, som skal prioriteres. Gud skal være mellembestemmelse mellem mennesket og næsten og mellem mennesket og forkærlighedens genstand. Dette rummer et sammenstød, som kan betyde, at mennesket må ofre den elskede genstand, hvis gudsforholdet forstyrres. Nørager nævner, at Kierkegaard personligt måtte vælge mellem kærligheden til Gud og forkærligheden.³ Kierkegaard tager afstand fra, at det ene menneske forguder det andet.⁴ Nørager opfatter den spænding, der ligger i Kierkegaards opfat-

telse af kærligheden, men der er også kritiske spørgsmål at stille til Nørager. Er det ifølge Kierkegaards opfattelse altid sådan, at gudsforholdet forstyrres af forkærligheden? Det var et personligt valg, som Kierkegaard traf, da han afbrød forlovelsen med Regine Olsen. Men er det det brud med forkærligheden, som hans opfattelse i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* lægger op til? - eller er det snarere en generel teori om kærlighed, hvori hans eget tilfælde er en undtagelse? Meget tyder på det sidste,⁵ nemlig at undtagelsen er personlig.⁶ Kierkegaard valgte kærligheden til Gud som det primære og næstekærligheden som det sekundære, og næstekærligheden formidledes gennem forfatterskabet, som blev alment tilgængeligt. Forkærligheden til Regine Olsen havde han, men han fravalgte fuldbyrdelsen af den gennem ægteskab, han bevarede den første kærlighed til hende resten af livet.⁷ Spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt ”den rette forkærlighed” er det samme som ”den første kærlighed” hos Assessor Wilhelm i Enten-Eller skal ikke diskuteres her.

I *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* ønsker Kierkegaard at vise, at der hos det enkelte menneske skal ske en transformering af kærligheden, således at kærligheden til Gud og kærligheden til næsten skal være bestemmende for alt. Når denne transformering er sket, bliver der plads for ”den rette Selvkjerlighed”. Det begreb bruger Kierkegaard selv udtrykkeligt (SKS 9, 26). Tesen i det følgende er, at der i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* er meget, der underbygger, at der hos Kierkegaard er plads for ”den rette Forkjerlighed”, selv om han ikke bruger udtrykket eksplicit. Jeg vil hævde, at Kierkegaard i sin teori om kærlighed i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* bruger meget spaltepads på at argumentere for og begrunde den rette forkærlighed.

I det følgende vil der blive trukket ind-

hold fra *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* frem, som godt gør, at der kan tales om den rette forkærlighed. Dette vil ske under løbende drøftelse af andres fortolkning af kærligheden hos Kierkegaard i den danske sammenhæng. I mange af Kierkegaards opbyggelige og pseudonyme skrifter er der etiske aspekter.⁸ Der er skrifter, hvor Kierkegaard eksperimenterer med undtagelsen,⁹ men også skrifter med emner, der kan minde om den rette forkærlighed.¹⁰ *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* er udgivet af Søren Kierkegaard selv, og det har derfor ikke den eksperimenterende karakter, der hviler over de pseudonyme skrifter. Der er derimod tale om ”Nogle christelige Overveielser i Talers Form” (SKS 9, 7). Skriftet forudsætter synden, tilgivelsen og troen i kristelig forstand.

Selvkærlighed og forkærlighed i umiddelbarheden

I den anden tale i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* tager Kierkegaard udgangspunkt i anden halvdel af det dobbelte kærlighedsbud fra Matt 22,39. Talen er, som mange af talerne i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger*, spækket med fænomenologiske analyser af kærlighedens former.

Elskov, forelskelse og venskab er i deres naturlige form en forvrænget form for kærlighed. De er enten et udtryk for selvkærlighed, der giver én selv fordele, eller et udtryk for forkærlighed, der rummer et valg af et menneske, hvor andre udelukkes. Kierkegaard sætter fokus på den empiriske forudsætning, at mennesket elsker sig selv.

Både elskoven og venskabet kan være udtryk for selvkærlighed eller forkærlighed. I begge tilfælde viser det sig, at det er én selv, der er i centrum, og at det er det er ens egne præferencer og fordele, der er udslagsgivende. Det er et udtryk for camoufleret selvkærlighed og ønsket om

egen tilfredsstillelse, når man har en kæreste eller en ven.

Forkærligheden og selvkærligheden er egentlig blot to sider af samme sag. Strengt taget er det to former for selvkærlighed ifølge Kierkegaard (SKS 9, 59-60). Et andet ord for det er egoisme. Kierkegaard bruger begrebet "Selvsyges Forbindelser" (SKS 9, 15) og forklaringen er, at man er sygeligt optaget af sig selv i relationer til andre (SKS K9, 110).

Kierkegaard ser, at digterne tager udgangspunkt i den kærlighed, der ligger i tilbøjeligheden, og at de forguder den. De tager altså fat i den trang til at elske og til at blive elsket, som ligger i det umiddelbare. Kierkegaard modsiger denne tilbøjelighed, idet den er gjort til det højeste af digterne. Han mener ikke, at digterne har plads for, at denne elskov og venskab er en sædelig opgave.

I stedet kommer buddets "du skal", pligten til at elske, og det gør kærligheden til en kristelig opgave, en sædelig opgave (SKS 9, 57). Han modstiller den umiddelbare, naturlige trang til kærlighed med kristendommens lære, der bygger på en åbenbaring, og han giver den sidste prioritet. Kierkegaard understreger meget, at den sande kærlighed er pligt. Elskoven er bygget på tilbøjelighed og drift (SKS 9, 56).¹¹ Kierkegaard mener, at kristendommen detroniserer elskov og venskab til fordel for kærligheden til Gud og næsten (SKS 9, 51).

Det er ikke kun 1800'tallets digtere, men også de græske filosoffer Platon og Aristoteles og den romerske stoiker Cicero, der alle har skrevet værker om venskabet, der rammes med denne specifikt kristne fordring om kærlighed som pligt (SKS K9, 131).

Kristendommen har en latent mistanke til elskov og venskab, fordi disse brænder med forkærlighedens lidenskab. Det er

imidlertid ikke enkelt at fremstille kærlighedens former. Der er forkærlighed og selvkærlighed, som er negative begreber, mens næstekærligheden og den rette selvkærlighed positive begreber.

Pia Søtoft tolker *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* som et spænding mellem på den ene side kærlighedens trang i grunden, og på den anden side angsten i grunden for ikke at være elsket. Denne spænding skyldes, at synden har brudt forholdet mellem menneske og Gud. Når mennesker kaster vrage på kærligheden, så kaster de vrage på Gud og elsker sig selv i stedet. Så er der heller ikke plads for næsten som "den strukturelle andethed". Men Gud er så at sige den eneste, der kan garantere, at mennesket bliver elsket. Angsten i grunden fører til selvished og forkærlighed i elskov og venskab. I disse forhold elsker man det særegne ved den anden, og denne kærlighed skal omformes til pligt. Det sker, når der bibringes et nyt grundlag for kærligheden.¹²

Driften til elskov og venskab har mennesket ikke taget af sig selv. Den er en naturbestemmelse, skriver Kierkegaard. Men i denne naturbestemmelse er der både drift/tilbøjelighed og selvkærlighed (SKS 9, 61). Det må forstås sådan, at driften til kærlighed er god i sin substans, men den er altid behæftet med selvisheden som accidens. Driften skyldes skabelsen, mens perverteringen af driften skyldes syndefaldet. Denne pervertering skal ændres ved kærlighedens forandring.

Kierkegaard skriver, at kærligheden er "i Grunden" (SKS 9, 221-224). Hvad betyder det? At kærligheden blot skal udfoldes i livet, som den skabelsesteologiske tolkning siger? - Eller at kærligheden er en naturgiven størrelse, men er behæftet med egoisme, så en forandring er nødvendig? Kierkegaard siger sely, at det skal nedbrydes og opbygges "for Frelsens

Skyld" (SKS 9, 222). Kærligheden er "en Omvæltning fra Grunden af" (SKS 9, 265). Den, der gribes af kærligheden, forandres (SKS 9, 265).

I *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* gøres op med selvkærligheden i dens egoistiske form, så den selvkærlighed, der godt må være der, skal stå i balance med næstekærligheden. Selv på en øde ø, hvor det tilsyneladende er subjektivitet i solipsistisk betydning, dér kan selvkærligheden være brudt, således at der bliver rum for kærligheden til Gud og næsten. En vis form for intersubjektivitet er der, selv på en øde ø, omend den forekommer minimalistisk. Søtoft understreger, at subjektiviteten (selvforholdet) og intersubjektiviteten (forholdet til den anden) er samtidig. Det skyldes en dobbeltbevægelse: For at udøve kærlighedens gerninger må man være den kærlige person, og for at være den kærlige person må man udøve kærlighedens gerninger.¹³ Der er sket en fordoblelse af selvet.

Kærlighed til Gud og næsten

Kierkegaard betoner "den christelige Kjerlighed". Det er en betegnelse, han bruger adskillige gange i en tale (SKS 9, 51; 56; 62). Der er ifølge Kierkegaard en specifik kristen kærlighed, der adskiller sig fra andre former for kærlighed. Der er et polært forhold mellem på den ene side, hvad kristendommen lærer og forklarer (SKS 9, 52; 57; 61), og på den anden side, hvad digterne besynger. Kierkegaard tager digterne som repræsentanter for hedenskabet.

Kierkegaard sætter selvkærligheden og næstekærligheden på den sekundære plads, når han skriver, at det kun er Gud, der skal elskes ubetinget, adlydende og tilbedende (SKS 9, 27-28). Gud er den eneste, der skal elskes højere end én selv, og Gud er den eneste, der skal elskes højere end næsten. Dermed har Kierkegaard sat den enkelte og sig selv på samme

niveau i forhold til Gud.

Kierkegaard siger, at Gud er mellembestemmelsen i et sandt kærlighedsforhold mellem to mennesker (SKS 9, 111). Gud er selv kærligheden, og kærligheden fylder og gennemtrænger et sandt kærlighedsforhold. Derfor er det så vigtigt, at gudsforholdet ikke udelukkes.

Hvis man elsker et andet menneske i stedet for Gud, er det bedrag (SKS 9, 112). Gudsforholdet er det afgørende kriterium på, om kærligheden er "ægte". Kærligheden skal lede den anden til kærlighedens egentlige genstand; Gud. Kærligheden er et tredobbelt forhold; "Den Elskende, Den Elskede, Kjerligheden, men Kjerligheden er Gud" (SKS 9, 124). I forholdet mellem to mennesker skal Gud være mellembestemmelsen, "Ligelighedens Tredjemand" (SKS 9, 60). Det vil sige den, der kommer imellem for at sætte ligelighedens niveau i næstekærlighedens relation mellem to mennesker.

Kierkegaard understreger, at det at elske næsten er at hjælpe næsten til at elske Gud (SKS 9, 111; 118; 130; 133). Det er den primære næstekærlige gerning. Det er tydeligt, at Kierkegaard ikke er fortaler for en autonom etik.¹⁴

Et andet sted i skriftet kommer denne specifikke kristne etik frem, og måske ligger der en forklaring i det. Det sker, når Kierkegaard skriver "at Hedenskabets Dyder ere glimrende Laster" (SKS 9, 60). Forklaringen er, at nogle oldkirkelige teologer mener, at dyder må tage deres udgangspunkt hos Gud og deres målsætning må være Gud for at kan være rigtige dyder. Alle de dyder, som ikke forudsætter eller relaterer til gudsforholdet, er egentlig ikke rigtige dyder, kristeligt set (SKS K9, 136). Det er denne forudsætning hos Kierkegaard, der indebærer, at kriteriet for den kristne etik er, at man ikke kan ekskludere gudsforholdet fra

etikken. Det er ikke en humanetik, Kierkegaard vil fremme.

Klaus Wivel kobler sig på én bestemt tanke i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* og gør den til hovedsynspunkt for sin kritik af Kierkegaard, nemlig at næstekærlighed er at sprede Guds ord, eller sagt med andre ord; næstekærlighed er at missionere. Det er gudsforholdets primat, der får overstrømmende betydning på forholdet til næsten, så det ikke har værdi ud over det at gøre næsten til kristen. Wivel foretager dernæst den vurdering, at næsten "bliver brugt som et middel for elskereren til at nå Gud". Det er en fejlfortolkning. Wivel beskylder Kierkegaard for at lære gerningsretfærdighed. Hvor Wivel stiller næsteforholdet ind som en forudsætning for det rette gudsforhold, så er det hos Kierkegaard et ret gudsforhold, der kommer før et ret næsteforhold. Det forholder sig sådan hos Kierkegaard, at troen kommer før troens gerninger, og at kærligheden kommer før kærlighedens gerninger.

Kierkegaard vil ikke nægte, at menneskelig kærlighed er legitim, men kristen næstekærlighed er kvalitativt forskellig, mener L. Brøndum. Kierkegaard er ikke imod elskov og venskab, men er imod en devaluering af kærlighedsbegrebet. Pointen hos Kierkegaard er, at ingen kærlighed må unddrages Gud. Gud må ikke holdes ude fra nogen form for menneskelige kærlighed, f.eks. elskov og venskab. Gud skal ind i disse forhold og transformere og udfylde dem.¹⁶

Kierkegaard mener ikke, at kristendommen er imod, at manden elsker hustruen på en særlig måde (SKS 9,143). Dette må imidlertid ikke ophæve næstekærligheden i det konkrete liv. Manden må ikke undtage hustruen fra at være næsten, sammen med alle andre mennesker (SKS 9, 143). Det er forskellen på forkærlighed og næstekærlighed, der her viser sig. Med

Gud som mellembestemmelse kan manden elske hustruen både som næste og som hustru. Hans egen selvkærlighed er brudt, og derved er forkærligheden også brudt og transformeret gennem næstekærligheden.

Kierkegaard mener, at kærlighedens kendetegn er lidenskab.¹⁷ Digterne gradbøjer denne lidenskab. Når elskoven ikke varer ved, åbner man for, at man kan elske flere gange, altså at det ene forhold efterfølges af det andet. Det er elskovens og venskabets brist, at det ikke varer ved (SKS 9, 56). Det er præget af timelighedens flygtighed. Den kristne næstekærlighed skal derimod forklares ud fra det evige (SKS 9, 57). Den rummer en ligelighed, der er defineret af det evige (SKS 9, 51; 64). Næstekærlighed viser menneskets lighed for Gud (SKS 9, 66), næsten kan ikke forveksles med en anden, da han principielt er alle mennesker (SKS 9, 58).

Wivel tolker det sådan, at gudsforholdet er så vigtigt, at næsteforholdet er betydningsløst i sig selv. Næsten er intet, selv om næsten ikke selv er klar over det. Alligevel er der et spor af noget hos næsten. Intetheden peger på menneskeligheden, og nogetheden peger på det potentielle spor af det guddommelige. Wivel tolker næstens betydning som intet, og hvis den tolkning er rigtig, så elimineres forkærligheden helt.¹⁸ Pia Søltøft tolker derimod det etiske som noget bærende og som noget vedvarende "for selvets selvforhold og dets forhold til andre mennesker".¹⁹ Søltøft trækker et citat frem: "Thi det at elske Menneskene er dog det Eneste, der er værd at leve for, uden denne Kjerlighed lever Du egentligen ikke; og det at elske Menneskene er tillige den eneste salige Trøst, baade her og hisset; og det at elske Menneskene det eneste sande Kjende på, at du er en Christen" (SKS 9, 368). Det viser, at Wivel fejlfortolker

Kierkegaard. Når medmennesket elskes, er det troens gerninger og kærlighedens gerninger, der er på spil. Det er sådan, uanset om det er næstens værdi, der anerkendes, eller om det er forkærlighed til det udvalgte medmenneske. Kierkegaards forudsætning er dog hele tiden: ”elsk Gud højere end Alt, saa elsker Du ogsaa Næsten” (SKS 9, 64).

Hvem er næsten?

Kierkegaard finder fortolkningsnøglen til kærlighedsbuddet i ”den kongelige lov” (SKS 9, 28), som er en henvisning til Jakob 2,8-9. I *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* taler han om, at det netop er loven, der gør alle lige for loven (SKS 9, 46). Et grundlæggende forhold er at denne kongelige lov afviser personsanseelse og forskelsbehandling.

Dette er en grundlæggende bibelsk tanke, at Gud ikke viser ikke personsanseelse jf. GT: 5 Mos 10,17; 2 Krøn 19,7; Job 34,19 og ifølge NT: ApG 10,34; Rom 2,11; Gal 2,6; Ef 6,9; 1Pet 1,17 (SKS K9, 145). Ud fra denne grundtanke følger, at mennesket ikke skal vise personsanseelse i sin kærlighed. Som Guds kærlighed er, sådan skal næstekærligheden være. Andetsteds – i en note fra 1849 – argumenterer Kierkegaard for, at kristendommen lærer ”Menneske-Lighed”. Det kristeligt religiøse er det eneste, der kan frembringe ”Menneske-Lighed”. Ingen ideologier eller tankebygninger magter det (SKS 16, 83).²⁰

I *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* siger Kierkegaard, at næsten betyder ”alle Mennesker”. Er der kun to mennesker, så er det andet menneske næsten, ”er der Millioner, er Enhver af disse Næsten” (SKS 9, 29). Der behøves dog kun en enkelt næste til at vide, om man elsker denne. Næsten skal være vigtigere end den elskede og vennen. Næsten skal man forholde sig

ligeligt til i modsætning til den elskede og vennen, som man forholder sig til i forkærlighed.

Den kongelige lov taler om at elske næsten som sig selv. Hvem er så næsten? Kierkegaard svarer, at sprogligt er det afledt af den nærmeste, og det indebærer selvets fordoblelse. Han tilføjer, at det er, hvad filosoferne kalder ”det Andet”, dvs. det andet menneske (SKS 9, 29). Det indebærer, at ingen på forhånd er udelukket således, at næsten betyder alle mennesker.²¹

Den specifikt kristelige kærlighed viser ifølge Kierkegaard, hvad og hvem næsten er. Næstekærligheden handler om at elske alle, ubetinget alle. Hvis der blot gøres én undtagelse, er der ikke tale om kristelig næstekærlighed. Hvor næstekærligheden elsker alle uden forskel, er elskov det modsatte, nemlig at elske én på bekostning af alle andre (SKS 9, 56). Forholdet til næsten er en grundholdning.

Hvor elskovens og venskabetts genstand er partikulær (man elsker i betinget form én), der er næstekærlighedens genstand principielt universel (man elsker ubetinget alle). Disse to kærlighedsformer er principielle modsætninger.

Kierkegaard tolker næstekærligheden ud fra Jak 2,8-9, så det er et opgør med personsanseelse og forskelsbehandling. Det er en vigtig sag, men hvordan vil kærligheden tolkes, hvis man tolker den ud fra den gyldne regel (Matt 7,12), som der er eksempler på i teologihistorien.²²

Før subjekt filosofiens fremkomst i moderniteten blev der fokuseret på de andre som næsten. Hvis man var sammen med fire mennesker, så ville der være fire personer, der skal elskes. Den opfattelse er stringent altruistisk. Anderledes for Kierkegaard, hvis han var sammen med fire mennesker, så var der fem, der skulle elskes. Efter subjekt filosofiens gennem-

brud, at næstekærligheden inkluderer den, der skal elske.

Næstekærligheden findes ikke i hedenskabet. Hedenskabet har ikke forudsætninger for den (SKS 9, 51). Det skyldes, at forkærligheden råder i hedenskabet, og næstekærligheden råder i kristendommen. De to størrelser er defineret ud fra forudsætninger, der står i et kontradiktorsk forhold til hinanden. Kærlighedens væsen er forskelligt i hedenskabet og i kristendommen. Det er ikke kun Platon, Aristoteles og Cicero, som Kierkegaard hentyder til. For hvem andre end Jesus har sagt, at næstekærlighed i radikaliseret udgave også implicerer kærlighed til fjender (Matt 5,43-48)?

Menneskene er forskellige. Tanken om det rene menneske som en teoretisk abstraktion afvises af Kierkegaard (SKS 9, 76 og 9, 80).²³ Der er forskelligheder nok at nævne. Kierkegaard nævner kaste-væsenet (SKS 9, 76), forskellen på rige og fattige (SKS 9, 83), forskellen mellem fornemme og ringe (SKS 9, 85-86) og forskellen på mægtige og trælle/slaver. Denne sidste forskel er dog ved kristendommens hjælp ophævet (SKS 9, 80). Bag forskellighedens overtøj skjuler sig "Ligelighedens indre Herlighed" (SKS 9, 92), bag forklædningen er "det Andet, som Enhver væsentligen er" (SKS 9, 93). Er dette menneskets skabte værdi, gudbilledligheden? Meget tyder på det, for Kierkegaard taler både om menneskets lighed med Gud og menneskets slægtsskab med Gud (SKS 9, 69). Sandt er det, at mennesket er skabt i Guds billede (1 Mos 1,26-27) og er af Guds slægt (ApG 17,29).

Sanseligheden

Kierkegaard tager selv den indvending op, som går på, at kristendommen tager afstand fra elskov, fordi den bygger på en sanselig drift i menneskelivet. Indven-

dingen bygger på Paulus' skelnen mellem ånd og kød i det kristne menneske. Elskoven placeredes efter denne opfattelse i kødet, hvorfor man søger at bekæmpe elskoven, fordi den er sanselig. Man kunne som eksempel på dette pege på den katolske kirkes cølibatskrav for præster. Dér tænkes kirkens embedsbærere principielt at være løftet ud af den legemlige sanselighed for at stå i en højere åndelig sags tjeneste. Kierkegaard tager afstand fra denne opfattelse. Han kalder det for en misforståelse, en "Aandighedens Over-spændthed" (SKS 9, 59). Som modargument henviser Kierkegaard til Paulus' ord om, at det er bedre at gifte sig end at slides op af begær (1 Kor 7,9).²⁴

Kierkegaard skelner mellem to former for sanselighed. Det er opklarende. Den ene form for sanselighed er den fysiske, legemlige sanselighed. Kierkegaard ser ingen konflikt mellem ånd og legeme, mellem ånd og sten og mellem ånd og træ. Derfor er der heller ingen konflikt mellem den kristne åndsforståelse og den legemlige sanselighed. Kierkegaard tager afstand fra den kropsforagt, der har dybe rødder i klassisk teologi, men som har sin oprindelse i platonisme og gnosticisme. Augustin mente, at den seksuelle lyst stammede fra syndefaldet.²⁵ Den seksuelle lyst, der går videre end selve forplantningen, er en synd, der er tilgivelig, når den findes i ægteskabet, men er dog en synd ifølge Augustin.²⁶

Den anden form for sanselighed defineres som "det Selviske" (SKS 9, 59). Det er denne anden form for sanselighed, som kristendommen står i modsætning til. Denne brug af ordet sanselighed afviger fra den umiddelbare brug af ordet sanselighed. Kierkegaard bruger disse begreber, når han skriver, at i elskov er det elskende subjekt bestemt "sandseligt-sjeleligt-aandeligt", mens det elskende subjekt i ven-

skabet er "sjelelig-aandelig" bestemt, og i næstekærligheden er det elskende subjekt "reent aandeligt" bestemt (SKS 9, 63).

Kierkegaard trækker veksler på den bibelske definition af det kristne menneske som et syntetisk forhold af ånd, sjæl og legeme (1 Tess 5,23) og et antitetisk forhold mellem ånd og kød (Gal 5,17). Det er det kristne menneske, mens det ikke-kristne menneske mangler den åndelige dimension og i NT omtales som sjælelige mennesker (1 Kor 2,14-15; Jak 3,15; Jud 1,19 og Hebr 4,12 m.fl.). Den ureflekterede brug af begrebet sanselig tilslører den temmelig afgørende forskel, der i NT er mellem kødet som det legemlige (såma), og kødet som det syndige (sarx). Det er ikke kun samtiden og Kierkegaards sprogbrug, der har problemer her. Problemet er dybt forankret i teologisk og kirkeligt sprog, når vi i den apostolske trosbekendelsen i uklart sprogbrug fremsiger, at vi tror på kødets opstandelse. I NT tales om de dødes opstandelse, men i oldkirken måtte man sige kødets opstandelse for at afgrænse sig imod gnostikernes opfattelse, at det kun er sjælen/ånden, der opstår.²⁷ Det betyder stringent, at kristendommen tror på legemets, kroppens opstandelse, også selvom de oldkirkelige bekendelser bruger begrebet sarx ved kødets opstandelse.²⁸

Den omtalte sekvens hos Kierkegaard handler altså om det kristne menneske i elskov, venskab og næstekærlighed. I den kristnes elskovsforhold er både det åndelige, det sjælelige og det legemlige med. I den kristnes venskab er både det åndelige og det sjælelige med. I den kristnes næstekærlighed er kun det åndelige med, men det er også nødvendigt. Det er nemlig netop det åndelige, der gør, at man kan elske alle uden personsanseelse og forskelsbehandling. Næstekærligheden elsker både den elskværdige og uelskværdige.

Det er denne specifikt åndelige forudsætning, som Løgstrup tager anstød af. "Kierkegaard bestemmer altså kærligheden til næsten som ensbetydende med at hjælpe næsten til at elske Gud", skriver Løgstrup og hævder videre, at Kierkegaard dermed er i modsætning til Jesu forkyndelse.²⁹ Løgstrup spørger om kærligheden: "Hvorfor består den aldrig i at hjælpe næsten timeligt, jordisk og verdsligt, men kun i at hjælpe næsten til at elske Gud, skønt der tales anderledes i Jesu forkyndelse".³⁰ Løgstrup nævner her den barmhjertige samaritaner som eksempel.

Det er relevant at spørge: Er det virkelig sandt, at det at elske et andet menneske er at hjælpe ham til at elske Gud? Gjorde den barmhjertige samaritaner det? Pointen i beretningen om den barmhjertige samaritan er: Gå du hen og gør ligeså! Det er en opfordring til efterfølgelse for den, som går ind under pligten. Det er en kærlighedens gerning, der bærer vidnesbyrd med sig. Set i lyset af bibelstoffet, så er de gerninger, der gøres for næstens skyld, uden at det direkte bærer et forsøg på at få mennesket til at elske Gud, indirekte et vidnesbyrd jf. anliggendet i domslignelsen (Matt 25,37-40).

Et andet aspekt er, at Kierkegaard har forstået, at begge bud i Det dobbelte Kærlighedsbud rummer en universel gyldighedsprætention. De to bud med universelle gyldighedskrav lyder: "Elsk Gud frem for alt!" og "Elsk ethvert medmenneske, så det kommer til at elske Gud og ethvert medmenneske!". Dertil kommer et tredje bud med universel gyldighedskrav: "Elsk ethvert menneske ligeværdigt i forhold til ethvert andet menneske!". Det er den specifikt åndelige del af det dobbelte kærlighedsbud. Kierkegaard har forstået det, selv om han ikke taler om universelle gyldighedsprætentioner. Han skrev nemlig: "Thi Christeligt forstaaet er det at elske

Menneskene at elske Gud, og at elske Gud at elske Menneskene: hvad du gør mod Menneskene, det gør Du mod Gud, og derfor, hvad Du gør mod Menneskene, det gør Gud mod Dig” (SKS 9, 376). Kierkegaard ved godt, at Det dobbelte Kærlighedsbud er to forskellige bud, men han kender sammenhængen mellem dem. Løgstrup derimod sammenblander og identificerer de to bud i *Den etiske fordring*. Den tætte forbindelse mellem de ti bud i Det dobbelte kærlighedsbud kan ifølge Løgstrup skildres rent human, og han tolker det sådan, at ”det ifølge Jesu forkyndelse er i det enkelte menneskes forhold til det andet menneske, at Gud afgør sit forhold til den enkelte”.³¹

Hvis Løgstrup har ret i sine anklager, ville den rette forkærlighed være helt umulig hos Kierkegaard. Men Wenche Marit Quist konkluderer i sine analyser af Løgstrups angreb på Kierkegaard, at mellembestemmelsen sammenholder guds- og næsteforholdet. Gudsforholdet er ikke akosmisk men sammenholdes med en ”varetagende verdenstilgang”. Quist mener, at det er svært at finde belæg for Løgstrups påstande.³² Kirsten Schmidt gør gældende, at Løgstrup har ”en utilbøjelighed – eller manglende vilje – til at acceptere Kierkegaards grundlæggende præmisser”, og et eksempel på det er, at Løgstrup ikke tager alvorligt, at Kierkegaard skelner mellem den naturlige kærlighed og dens selviske skikkelse.³³ Hvis Løgstrup havde ret ville enhver naturlig kærlighed og forkærlighed være bandlyst hos Kierkegaard.

Subjektforholdet

Internt i en tale i *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* om næsten er der en subjektsteori i minid udgave (SKS 9, 60-64). Problemstillingen er, at den enkelte er centreret om sit eget selv. I elskov og venskab optræder ”det

andet Selv, det andet Jeg”. Det er afgørende, at det er et andet jeg, i næstekærligheden optræder nemlig et andet du. Det gør en forskel.

I elskov er der det første jeg og det andet jeg, og det forhold bliver til ét jeg (SKS 9, 62-63).³⁴ I næstekærligheden findes det første jeg og det første du, og det bliver til en relation mellem afgrænsede subjekter (SKS 9, 64). Elskov rummer en sammensmeltning, mens næstekærlighed rummer en fordoblelse.³⁵

I elskoven er der ingen grænse mellem de to. Derfor siger Kierkegaard, at forkærlighedens lidenskabelige grænseløshed mellem de to udelukker andre (SKS 9, 59). I elskov sættes grænsen det forkerte sted, mens åndskærligheden sker mellem personer, der ikke udelukker nogen. Åndskærligheden er en højere form for intersubjektivitet. Han skriver, at ”to Aander kunne aldrig blive til eet Selv i selvisk Forstand” (SKS 9, 63).

Kierkegaard har tidligere gjort rede for, at næstekærlighedens indtog sker ved en fordoblelse i det indre menneske (SKS 9, 29).³⁶ Der er tale om en spaltning af selvet, jeget, subjektet således at selvisheden bliver brudt. Når selvisheden er brudt, optræder et jeg og et du. Der er to subjekter, den enkelte og den anden. Selvfornægtelsen er den størrelse, der sætter skel mellem på den ene side selvkærlighed og forkærlighed og på den anden side den rette selvkærlighed og næstekærlighed. Selvfornægtelsen jager selvkærligheden og forkærligheden ud (SKS 9, 61). Derfor kalder Kierkegaard næsten for ”Ligelighedens Tredjemand” (SKS 9, 60), fordi næsten optræder som den, der udgør et attentat på forholdet mellem den elskende og den elskede, og mellem den enkelte og vennen, når dette er styret af den forkerte forkærlighed.

I selvkærlighed elsker jeget det andet

jeg, som er ham selv (SKS 9, 64). I både elskov og venskab sker der en beruselse, så det ene jeg beruses i det andet. I elskov og venskab er beruselsen så stærk, at de to smelter sammen til ”eet Selv, eet Jeg” (SKS 9, 63).

Kærlighedsbuddets ”du skal elske næsten som dig selv” kan sige til et menneske, at man skal elske næsten, som man elsker den elskede (SKS 9, 64). Den elskede er jo en del af ens eget selv. Det bør kunne få den enkelte til at vågne op. Selvfor nægtelsen er nødvendig som skelsættende størrelse. Kierkegaard siger, at selvfor nægtelsen er kristendommens væsentligste form (SKS 9, 62). Den får den enkelte til at opdage næsten, som bliver det første du.

Mellembestemmelserne

Forskellen på de to former for kærlighed kan beskrives ved mellembestemmelsen. I næstekærligheden er Gud mellembestemmelse. Kærligheden til Gud er afgørende for kærligheden til næsten. I elskov og venskab er forkærligheden mellembestemmelse (SKS 9, 64). Mellembestemmelsen er det som må være imellem to frie personer, for at deres forhold ikke skal lide fordi de er for tæt, så de smelter sammen eller for meget distance uden sammenhængskraft.

Begrebet ”Ligelighedens Tredjemand” er i denne forbindelse synonym med begrebet mellembestemmelse, der bliver prøven på, om der elskes med forkærlighed eller med næstekærlighed. Når denne sættes ind imellem den elskende og den elskede, så vil det vise sig, om jalousien kommer og vil kæmpe for forkærligheden, eller om der elskes ligeligt.³⁷

Et andet svar er, at den kærlighed, der har Gud som mellembestemmelse, er kendetegnet ved evighedens bestandighed, mens den kærlighed, der har forkærlighe-

den som mellembestemmelse, er kendetegnet ved timelighedens flygtighed. Både forelskelser og venskaber kommer og går, men hvis der hos en person sker en evighedens forandring, så er det en forvandling eller transformation, som indebærer, at kærligheden til den elskede eller til vennen består, også i de tilfælde, hvor evighedens forandring kun sker hos den ene i forholdet.

Hvordan er de to mellembestemmelser i forhold til hinanden? Hvis to forelskede begge har Gud som mellembestemmelse, så elsker de Gud, og de elsker næsten som sig selv, og hvad angår forkærligheden som mellembestemmelse, så er den rette forkærlighed kvalitativt ændret i forhold til den umiddelbare forkærlighed.

Havde Jesus forkærlighed?

Kierkegaard taler om forholdet mellem Jesus og disciplen Peter. Jesus stiller Peter følgende spørgsmål: Elsker du mig mere end disse? (SKS 9, 156), underforstået: Har du forkærlighed for mig! Som eksempel viser Kierkegaard, at Jesus elskede disciplen Peter med grænseløs kærlighed, uanset om Peter i forskellige situationer handlede elskværdigt eller uelskværdigt. I menneskets konstitution er kærlighedens trang til selskab. Jesus havde også denne dybt menneskelige længsel efter at elske og at blive elsket. Han kunne rent menneskeligt indgå i menneskelige venskaber (SKS 9, 156). I udgangspunktet er det en modsigelse, at den, der er Gud, dvs. usynlig kan blive menneske og elske menneskeligt. Men det skete, og Jesus gik ind ”i Kjerlighedens lige Forhold mellem Menneske og Menneske” (SKS 9, 157). Jesus gik så vidt, at han spurgte efter Peters forkærlighed: Elsker du mig ”mere end disse?” (SKS 9, 156).³⁸ Jesus og Peter havde forkærlighed for hinanden i venskabet. Jesus havde forkærlighed for sine

disciple. Han sagde: ”I er mine venner, hvis I gør, hvad jeg byder jer” (Joh 15,12-14).

Som taler udfører Kierkegaard det tankeeksperiment, at tilhørerens nærmeste ven ville svigte i en situation, hvor ens eget liv var bragt til den yderste grænsesituation (SKS 9, 168-169). Man er udstødt af det almene fællesskab, og i den situation fornægter din nærmeste ven dig (SKS 9, 170). I en sådan situation elskede Jesus sin ven Peter grænseløst, selv om han for en menneskelig betragtning var presset til det yderste. Jesus elskede det menneske, han så. Jesus elskede ikke en fuldkommen Peter. Jesus opdelte heller ikke Peter i ufuldkommenheder og fuldkommenheder, men Jesu kærlighed elskede Peter, som han var (SKS 9, 172-173). Der tales også om, at Jesus elskede Martha og hendes søster og Lazarus (Joh 11,5), dertil tales om den discipel, som Jesus elskede (Joh 13,23; 19,26; 20,2; 21,7 og Joh 21,20).

Her er det på sin plads at stille det spørgsmål, om ikke der i NT og særligt i Johannesevangeliet er tale om en særlig kristen form for venskab? I givet fald er Gud og den rette forkærlighed mellembestemmelser i det interne forhold mellem på den ene side Jesus og på den anden side Lazarus og disciplene.

Forkærlighed er en legitim mellembestemmelse. Kierkegaard taler endda senere om, at kristendommen ikke har forandret noget i det at elske de elskede og vennen (SKS 9, 148). Selv om Kierkegaard ikke selv sætter ord på den rette forkærlighed, men så er der tale om en menneskelig forkærlighed rensset for selvished (SKS 9, 49-50), som står parallelt med den rette selvkærlighed. Søren Nordentoft trækker dette frem som afgørende for den naturlige kærlighed. Han mener, at den naturlige kærlighed viser sig

i elskov og venskab. Denne kærlighed viser sig først, når der er en tilstrækkelig elskværdig genstand. Den naturlige kærlighed forandres, når dens genstand forandres. Den naturlige kærlighed skaber sammenhold i familie, ægteskab og venskab. Den forudsætter genkærlighed.³⁹ Men den ændres fra omskiftelighed til bestandighed ved kærlighedens transformation. Her er det afgørende, at Kierkegaard siger, at ”vor Herre Jesus Kristus, dog menneskeligt følte denne Trang til at elske og at blive elsket af et enkelt Menneske”, i dette tilfælde Peter, som han spurgte: ”elsker du mig ”mere end disse?”” (SKS 9, 156).

Den rette forkærlighed

Kierkegaard taler i opgørets form om selvkærlighed og forkærlighed, fordi begge er udtryk for selvished. Men vi har også set, at Kierkegaard taler meget om forandring, og at det, som sker, bl.a. udtrykkes i selvfornegtelse, som er en udrensning af det selviske, således at ”den rette Selvkærlighed” (SKS 9, 26) kan fremkomme.

Er det muligt at tale om, at forkærligheden kan gennemgå en forandring, så den renses for sin selvished, og fremstår som den rette forkærlighed?

På et tidspunkt skriver Kierkegaard næsten som en modifikation, at man ikke skal ophøre med at elske den elskede eller vennen (SKS 9, 69). Forkærligheden indebærer, at man trækker den elskede til sig, som den eneste og skubber næsten væk. Det vil imidlertid være forskruet forkærlighed kun at ville elske næsten – og droppe enhver kærlighed til den elskede. Det vil så at sige være at have forkærlighed for næsten – og det vil være forkert. Det vil være at begå forkærlighedens fejl, blot med næsten som objekt. Det er ikke rigtigt, at man med den kristne kærlighed

skal elske den elskede eller vennen mindst! (SKS 9, 68). Nej, den elskede og vennen skal elskes trofast og ømt, men kærligheden til Gud og næsten skal være det helliggjørende i elskov og venskab, skriver Kierkegaard (SKS 9, 69).

Der står en spænding. Kærligheden til næsten bestemmes ikke af næsten, men af kærligheden selv. Derfor har kærligheden en mistanke til elskov og venskab, at der i disse størrelser ligger en skjult angst, der kan slå ud i jalousi og fortvivlelse. Kierkegaard ser her mennesket spændt ud mellem to poler; forkærlighedens trang til at elske en eneste og næstekærlighedens trang til at elske alle (SKS 9, 73-74). I forkærligheden springer forskellighederne i øjnene, mens disse forskelligheder ikke eksisterer i næstekærligheden.

Det stærkeste eksempel på forskelligheder er forholdet mellem ven og fjende. Set med forkærlighedens øje er forskellighederne de størst mulige. Men set med næstekærlighedens øje er forskellen forvandlet til den evige lighed for Gud (SKS 9, 74).

Når det gælder forkærligheden er udmeldingen imidlertid klar. ”Du skulle derfor ikke ophøre at elske den Elskede, o langtfra” (SKS 9, 68). Mennesket kan og skal ikke opgive hverken at elske sig selv eller elskov og venskab. Men i det at elske sig selv skal man bevare næstekærligheden, og i elskov og venskab skal man bevare næstekærligheden (SKS 9, 68-69). Det er ikke hverken sammenblanding eller adskillelse af de to former for kærlighed, som Kierkegaard taler for. Hvis de sammenblandes, så har man ikke grebet det kristelige. Hvis de adskilles, er næsten blevet et abstrakt luftsyn.

Kierkegaard svarer oplysende på spørgsmålet, om næstekærligheden indebærer, at elskov og venskab er forkert/forbudt ifølge kristendommen: ”Nei, elsk

den Elskede trofast og ømt, men lad Kjerlighed til Næsten være det helliggjørende i Eders Forenings pagt med Gud; elsk Din Ven oprigtigt og hengivent, men lad Kjerlighed til Nesten være hvad I lære af hinanden i Venskabets Fortrolighed med Gud!” (SKS 9, 69). Der er ikke hverken tale om sammenblanding eller adskillelse, men at næstekærligheden skal være en transformerende kraft overalt, og deriblandt også i elskov og venskab. Problemstillingen løses ikke i denne tale, men problemet profileres, idet han taler om fortrin og begunstiging (SKS 9, 72), altså det, som trækker én ud af mængden, og som gør denne ene til forkærlighedens objekt. Dette er begrundet i, at hos Gud er der ingen forkærlighed, ingen forskelsbehandling.

Senere skriver Kierkegaard, at Jesus ikke gjorde forskel heller ikke, da han udvalgte 12 disciple (SKS 9, 105). Ret beset ønskede han, at alle skulle blive hans disciple. Han stiller sig ligeligt til alle og vil frelse alle. Apostlene holdt senere ikke sammen i et selvkærligt sammenhold, for så var kristendommen uddød og kristenheden forsvundet på et slægtled. Nej, apostlene holdt fast i, at kærligheden brød med overholdelse af opfyldelsen af menneskelige overenskomster og deltagelse i menneskelige sammenhold, og derfor udbredtes kristendommen (SKS 9, 124-125). De stiftede ikke en kærlighedens forening eller et kærlighedens selskab. De elskede ud over grænserne (SKS 9, 125). De holdt ikke sammen i selvkærlighed. Forskelligheden er der, men kristne skal ikke søge at fremme forskelligheden. Kierkegaard reagerer negativt, hvis 200 eller 300 mand vil etablere ”et ugudeligt Sammenhold mod det Almene-Menneskelige” (SKS 9, 79). Denne spænding står tilbage, at Kierkegaard siger nej til sammenhold i selvkærlighed (SKS 9,

122), fordi det er selvisk, og at han også kan sige ja til fædrelandskærlighed (SKS 9, 146), hvis Gud og næsten er mellembestemmelse, og hvis det er udtryk for den rette forkærlighed.

I selvkærlighed, elskov, venskab og sammenhold i selvkærlighed er det det negative, at der er selviskhed. Disse størrelser kan også transformeres til den rette selvkærlighed og den rette forkærlighed, fordi Gud har skabt ejendommelighederne, og de må elskes (SKS 9, 269-272), når blot ikke det er selvisk.

Men rummer dette nej til selvisk selvkærlighed og selvisk forkærlighed et nej til enhver form for forkærlighed? Kierkegaard siger imidlertid også, at kristendommen ikke har noget imod, ”at Manden elsker Hustruen særligen, men han maa aldrig elske hende saaledes særligen, at hun er Undtagelsen fra det at være Næsten” (SKS 9, 143). Der er altså en særlig kærlighed til hustruen, som dog ikke indebærer en undtagelse fra grundbestemmelsen af næsten. Dette er den rette forkærlighed.

Kierkegaard taler bemærkelsesværdigt om, at kærligheden er en samvittigheds-sag, hvis Gud eller næsten er mellembestemmelse (SKS 9, 144). Gud kan være mellembestemmelse i et ret forhold mellem mand og hustru. Men næsten er også mellembestemmelse, idet næsten er det, som gør forholdet mellem mand og hustru realistisk. Næsten er grundbestemmelsen på mennesket, og som sådan er det også en mellembestemmelse i elskov og venskab.

Den verdslige eller blot menneskelige kærligheds betragtning kender forskellige former for kærlighed. Denne betragtning opfatter kærligheden som enten drift, tilbøjelighed (i enten elskov eller venskab), følelse, naturforhold, hævd osv. Til det siger Kierkegaard udtrykkeligt, at kristen-

dommen lader alt dette stå ved magt som noget, der har udvortes betydning. I det ydre kan der være en slags forkærlighed, som kristendommen ikke vil rokke ved, for kristendommen vil lade uendelighedens forandring foregå i det indvortes. Ifølge Kierkegaard vil kristendommen ikke bringe forandring i det udvortes (SKS 9, 145-146).

Alligevel er der en forbindelse mellem det indvortes og det udvortes, og spørgsmålet er, om der mangler nogle mellemregninger i Kierkegaards tekst. Han siger, at hustruen først og fremmest skal være mandens næste, og først derefter hustru (SKS 9, 143). Det udvortes er imidlertid ikke ligegyldigt, for så havde det ikke været nødvendigt at slå fast, at den kristne gerne må gifte sig, elske sin hustru, have en ven, elske sit fædeland (SKS 9, 146).

Faktisk må der ydre kendetegn til for at konstatere elskov. Der skal en kvinde til for, at der kan være elskov. Der skal en ven til for, at der er venskab. Der skal et fædeland til for, at der kan være fædrelandskærlighed (SKS 9, 148).

Kristendommen har intet forandret i elskov og venskab, hvad det angår. De ydre relationer er, hvad de er, og det er en indre transformation, der skal til for, at disse forhold kan blive, som de skulle være. Men dermed er der en lakune i teorien, som kun kan udfyldes af den forkærlighed, der er rensset for selviskhed. Der er en uudsagt mellemregning, at den forkærlighed, der er rensset fra selviskhed, skal bestå. Opgaven er ifølge Kierkegaard at finde den valgte genstand elskelig, uanset om hun eller han forandres (SKS 9, 160). Opgaven er at bevare den rette forkærlighed vedvarende!

Udblik

Det dobbelte Kærlighedsbud betyder for Kierkegaard, at det har en universel

gyldighedspræntion. Det to bud med universelle gyldighedskrav lyder: ”Elsk Gud frem for alt!” og ”Elsk ethvert medmenneske, så det kommer til at elske Gud og ethvert medmenneske!”. Dertil kommer et tredje bud med universel gyldighedskrav: ”Elsk ethvert menneske ligeværdigt i forhold til ethvert andet menneske!”. Det er den specifikt åndelige del af det dobbelte kærlighedsbud.

Den rette selvkærlighed er det forhold til én selv, der gennem evighedens forand-

ring, er rensset for selvished. Den rette forkærlighed er forholdet til hustruen og vennen, hvor evighedens forandring har ført til at kærligheden til Gud og næsten virkeliggøres, men hvor forkærligheden til hustruen og vennen er rensset for selvished. Den rette forkærlighed har sin rette plads i elskov/ægteskab, hvor én elsket holdes for at være den særlige, og i venskab, hvor en ven holdes for at være den særlige.

Noter

1. Henvisninger til Søren Kierkegaard er til *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* (SKS), 4. udgaven, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al., bd. 1-55 (København: Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscentret og Gads Forlag, 1997-2012). Henvisningerne er til bind og sidetal. Første tal i parentes er til bindet, andet tal til sidetallet, så (7,186) betyder bind 7 side 186.
2. Werner G. Jeanrond: *Kærlighedens teologi*, (Frederiksberg: Aros Forlag 2012), 144, 148.
3. Troels Nørager: *Hjertets længsel - Kærlighed og Gud religionsfilosofisk belyst*, (København: Forlaget ANIS, 2003), 52-62.
4. Kierkegaard kan sige, at et forhold må splittes for at den ene kan rives ud af bedraget (SKS 9,112).
5. Efter at hans fader er død, opholder Kierkegaard sig i sine optegnelser ved ”Jordrystelsen”, der var personlig og umiddelbart derefter reflekterer han over cølibatstanken, se: Joakim Garff: *SAK Søren Aabye Kierkegaard En biografi* (København: Gads Forlag 2000), 118.
6. Carsten Elmélund Petersen, ”Fra Jordrystelsen til Evighedens forandring” i Villy Jakobsen m.fl. *Søren længe leve*, (Fredericia: LogosMedia, 2013) 83-90.
7. Joakim Garff SAK, 149-172.
8. Arne Grøn ”Anden etik”, i Joakim Garff m.fl. (red.): *Studier i Stadier*, (København: C. A. Reitzel, 1998), 73-87.
9. Carsten Elmélund Petersen ”Frygt og Bæven - Om det eksegetisk holdbare og udfordrende i Søren Kierkegaards brug af beretningen i Genesis 22” (<http://hiphil.org/index.php/hiphil/article/view/24/24> 2006 (Læst 22.04.2013)).
10. Carsten Elmélund Petersen ”Kaldet til etik - Hverdagens etik ifølge Assessor Wilhelm” i Børge Haahr Andersen m.fl. (red.): *Troen, Teksten og konteksten - Festskrift til Torben Kjær*, (Hillerød: LogosMedia, 2009), 251-276.
11. Deri ligner han Kant, der sonderer mellem drift, tilbøjelighed, trang og følelse som patologisk kærlighed, i modsætning til pligten som det eneste etisk kvalificerede (Immanuel Kant: *Grundlæggelse af sædernes metafysik*, (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag 1999 (1785)), 48.
12. Pia Søltøft ”Kierkegaard og det religiøse etik” i Christian T. Lystbæk & Lars Aagaard: *Kierkegaard og hovedtemaer i forfatterskabet*, (Århus: Philosophia, 2001), 109-130.
13. Pia Søltøft: *Svimmelhedens etik - om forholdet mellem den enkelte og den anden hos Buber, Lévinas og især Kierkegaard*, (København: Gads Forlag, 2000), 277-323.
14. Deri afviger han grundlæggende fra han Kant, der netop fremmer en autonom etik, hvor mennesket selv er lovgiver (Immanuel Kant: *Grundlæggelse af sædernes metafysik*, (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1999 (1785)), 94.
15. Klaus Wivel: *Næsten Intet - en jødisk kritik af Søren Kierkegaard*, (København: C.A. Reitzel, 1999), 48-76.
16. L. Brøndum: S. Kierkegaard om ”Kjerlighedens Gjæringer”, *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 1957, 242-251.
17. Kierkegaard har tidligere sagt, at kærligheden kan ændres fra sig selv ved at slå over i had. I så tilfælde brænder kærligheden stadig ”nede i Grunden”, men flammen er hadets (SKS 9, 41). Dette had er også lidenskabeligt.
18. Klaus Wivel: *Næsten Intet*, 59.
19. Pia Søltøft ”Det etiske hos Kierkegaard”, *Præsteforeningens Blad* 1997/8, 185.
20. Denne tanke om Menneskelighed spiller en stor rolle for Kierkegaard og udfoldes imod andre tankesystemer som kommunisme, jødedom og islam, se: Birgit Bertung: *Kierkegaard & menneskelighed*, (København: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 2002).

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21. Kierkegaard ved godt, at ordet Næste sprogligt betyder nærmeste arving, den nærmeste (SKS K9, 119).
 22. Antti Raunio: *Summe des Christlichen Lebens – Die "Goldene Regel" als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510 bis 1527*, (Helsinki: University of Helsinki XIII, 1993).
 23. Her ligger måske en indirekte afvisning af Kants transcendentale subjekt, der består af den rene fornuft. Det er et kendetegn på tysk filosofi, også for Hegel, at man bruger begrebet "rene" på om abstraktionen fra de konkrete individuelle forhold (SKS K9, 143).
 24. Før udgivelsen af *Kjerlighedens Gjerninger* i 1847 havde Kierkegaard været konfronteret med, at kønsdriften i sig selv er syndig, gennem den bornholmske præst Adler, der skrev det i en udgivelse fra 1943, se: Joakim Garff SAK, 386-388.
 25. Gunnar Heiene og Svein Olaf Thorbjørnsen: *Kristen etikk – en innføring*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 136.
 26. Werner G. Jeanrond: *Kjerlighedens teologi*, 67-91.
 27. Peder Nørgaard-Højen: *Den danske Folkekirkes Bekendelsesskrifter Kommentar*, (København: ANIS, 2006), 101-102.
 28. Peder Nørgaard-Højen: *Den danske Folkekirkes Bekendelsesskrifter*, 12-13.
 29. K. E. Løgstrup: *Den etiske Fordring*, (København: Gyldendal, 1986 (1956)), 251.
 30. Ibid. 259.
 31. Ibid. 13-14.
 32. Wenche Marit Quist *Den enkelte og det mellem menneskelige – den etiske betydning af det mellem menneskelige forhold hos Søren Kierkegaard*, (København: C.A. Reitzel, 2000), 29.
 33. Kirsten Marie Schmidt "Et bidrag til diskussionen af Løgstrups opgør med Kierkegaard – med henblik på kærlighed og tilværelsestolkning", *Kierkegaardiana* XIV 1988, 70-84.
 34. "Den i strengeste Forstand Selvkjærlige elsker i grunden også det andet Jeg, thi det andet Jeg er ham selv" (SKS 9, 64).
 35. Fordobelse er defineret som fordobelse med retning indad og udad, så selvkredsen er udelukket. Fordobelse er frembragt, når det evige er i mennesket (SKS 9, 278).
 36. "Fordobelse" betyder hos Kierkegaard også, at selvkærligheden brydes, så der både er næstekærlighed og den rette selvkærlighed, men også, at mennesket går fra ren endelighed til syntese af endelighed og uendelighed, og fra ren timelighed til en syntese af timelighed og evighed.
 37. Kierkegaards modstilling af de to kærlighedsformer er abstraktioner, og derfor diskuterer han ikke, om jalousien i det konkrete liv har en berettiget funktion, som værn om forholdet mellem to elskende og to venner. Kierkegaards abstraktion er, at to ægtefæller hver på sin side ensidigt elsker den anden ubetinget og bestandigt. I praksis vil ethvert forhold rumme gensidighed.
 38. Jesus sagde ikke: "Vig bag mig Satan" - som han tidligere havde gjort. Dette udsagn kan måske også ses som et forsøg på at få Gud ind som mellembestemmelse i forholdet mellem Jesus og Peter.
 39. Søren Nordentoft "Den kristne næstekærlighed hos Søren Kierkegaard - menneskelig eller umenneskelig?" i Søren Nordentoft: *Livets mening og meningsløshed*, (København: C. A. Reitzel, 1997), 131-142.