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Taking Job as an example. Kierkegaard: traces of religious individualization

Individualisierung [...] bedeutet auch, und vielleicht vor allem, die Verantwortung des Menschen für sich selbst, die er auf nichts abschieben kann und die ihm niemand abnehmen kann [...]

(Simmel 1999, 331)

1 Introduction

Kierkegaard does not use the term ‘individualization’ (dan. *Individualisering*) in any of his writings. Nevertheless, there are enough anchor points and evidence to extrapolate an implicit concept of individualization, foremost as a concept of becoming oneself. However, rather than giving a broad overview on possible interpretive approaches to individualization, this article wants to explore Kierkegaard’s idea of existential appropriation as the condition of religious individualization actualized in edification.

Two points have to be mentioned here. Firstly, most of Kierkegaard’s writings do not explicitly theorize the ‘self’, even though that may be an implicit result. The aim of the texts lies in their reactive effect on the reader, intending a hermeneutical process of discovering one’s own self-relation (and its actualization). That aspect is covered by Kierkegaard’s idea of existential appropriation. Secondly, to realize that existential aim, Kierkegaard uses a specific strategy to mediate the contents of existence and the self. For that purpose, he never called himself a theologian or philosopher but a religious writer who establishes a situation of existential communication that avoids objectivity and imposes subjectivity. Instead of mediating specific knowledge, Kierkegaard’s way of communication guides one to an awareness of one’s own capability to realize existential actuality.

A systematic perspective on existential communication and appropriation leads then to a productive examination of individualization in Kierkegaard when his work is not only understood as source of theoretical investigation, but above all as an example of how individualization can be actualized by any individual *through* or *based on* a literary work. Therefore, this article looks on Kierkegaard as a thinker who uses language and (philosophical) concepts to go beyond them with the aim to initiate and induce lived individualization concretely. For that

matter, this article will look more closely at one of Kierkegaard's *Upbuilding Discourses* in order to understand how individualization is mediated by Kierkegaard.

The chosen Discourse, *The Lord Gave, and the Lord Took Away; Blessed Be the Name of the Lord*, re-traditionalizes one of the most known figures in the *Old Testament*, Job, and presents him not only as a role model for how the individual reader may enter into an existential lived relation to God, but also as an example or 'prototype' [*Forbillede*] of a 'teacher and guide of humankind' (e.g. SKS 5, 115 / KW 5, 109).¹ From the very start of the Discourse, Job is presented in a systematic tension. Just as Camus portrayed Sisyphus almost 100 years later, Job is presented as an individual with concrete life-world experiences *and* is a proto- or ur-representation of the *condition humaine*. Being at the same time both concrete and general, Job represents figuratively the (concrete and general) possibility of discovering one's own personal relation to God. The Discourse on Job becomes thereby one example of Kierkegaard's strategy for giving the reader the possibility at hand to enter into the 'individual's relation to himself before God' (SKS 7, 397 / KW 12.1, 436f.).²

However, before we dive deeper into Kierkegaard's interpretation of Job, it is necessary to examine some of the above-mentioned concepts and to give a picture of what kind of texts the *Upbuilding Discourses* are (section two). How are the concept of edification and Kierkegaard's idea of existential appropriation related to the Discourses? The developed framework will help to interpret the Discourse on Job (section three). That includes two questions here. Firstly, how is the literary figure of Job characterized by Kierkegaard as an authentic believer and what does it mean to be such a believer in a concrete existential way by experiencing contingency, suffering, and thankfulness? Secondly, how does the Discourse offer the possibility of existential appropriation in regard to Kierkegaard's focus on language? The concluding section will the resulting particular understanding of 'religious individualization'.

2 Upbuilding discourses

Especially from 1843 till 1846, the years between *Either-Or* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard presents his work

¹ For the citation of Kierkegaard's writings, see the references.

² That is the core definition of the most religiously individualized life-form in Kierkegaard, the concept of inwardness. On (religious) inwardness regarding the aspects of life-form and individuation, see Engmann 2017, 310–82.

in two parallel published text corpora. On the one side, we have the famous pseudonymous writings. On the other side, there are 21 small Discourses published under Kierkegaard's own name in compounds of two, three, and four 'talks'. In 1843 and 1844 Kierkegaard published the so called *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, in 1845 the *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*. However, there are two possibilities for dealing with the Discourses, specifically with the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. On the one hand, you can read them as a separate collection of texts parallel to but quite separate from the pseudonymous works (see e.g. Greve 1990, 280 (fn. 57)). On the other hand, you can read each of the given compounds as strongly related to the pseudonymous works. In the latter regard, the connection between the different text corpora appears mostly in the inner conceptual correlations between one or more of the Discourse compounds and one (or sometimes two) of the pseudonymous works. But sometimes there are also obvious external correlations, e.g. when Kierkegaard published his famous writings *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling* together with *Three Upbuilding Discourses* 1843 on the same date, the 16th October.³

2.1 Content and aim

It is helpful to consider some differences and similarities between the *Upbuilding Discourses* and the pseudonymous works. The very first and obvious point is the fact that Kierkegaard published the *Upbuilding Discourses* autonomously. In this regard, one might claim that Kierkegaard writes not with a literary strategy of hiding himself as an author but of showing his thoughts directly to the reader. Quite the reverse! The Discourses are multilayered texts communicating their content indirectly, which brings them close to the pseudonymous writings. The name 'Kierkegaard' on the cover pages of each compound is, in effect, a pseudonym.⁴ Like the 'real' pseudonyms, e.g. 'Constantin Constantius' (*Repetition*) or 'Johannes de Silentio' (*Fear and Trembling*), the name 'Kierkegaard'⁵ represents a specific perspective on the task of existence. The focus of 'Kierkegaard' is generally different than the focus of the 'real' pseudonyms. The difference lies not

3 The Discourse on Job was published on 6th December 1843. It is the first Discourse of *Four Upbuilding Discourses* 1843, a compound that remains not only in conceptual relation to the named pseudonymous works but paves also the path for the basic religious-existential concept of 'patience' in the *Two Upbuilding Discourses* 1844.

4 I follow hereby Jan Sløk. See Hagemann 2001, 69.

5 The further mentioning of 'Kierkegaard' (in quotation marks) refers to the pseudonymous nature of the *Upbuilding Discourses*.

in the intention of how the reader has to deal with the texts but in the intended anthropological presupposition. While the 'real' pseudonyms demand a decision of the reader about how to position him/herself to the text and its offer of living a religious existence, the pseudonymous 'Kierkegaard' presupposes a religious stance on the part of the reader and wants him/her to recognize the constant repetitive practice of such specific mode of existence. 'Kierkegaard' focuses on the renovation of practice that indicates his basic claim: the individual is already religious but does not realize his/her own religiousness in existential continuity.⁶

Hopefully two aspects become clear. Firstly, Kierkegaard uses, not only in his pseudonymous writings but also in the Discourses, his 'postmodern talent' to decentre himself as a writing self (see Mooney 2003, 122). Thereby, the historical person Søren Kierkegaard is not the responsible (or direct) author of the *Upbuilding Discourses*, which is furthermore underlined in the prefaces of each compound where you can read that the person who wrote the Discourses 'does not have authority'. Therewith, the implicit spirit and intention of communication becomes obvious. Kierkegaard wants to avoid a reading of the Discourses as 'sermons'. They are not intended to educate the reader in religiousness but to prepare the reader for his/her own conditions of realizing a lived religiousness. If Kierkegaard put himself forward as an author who literally has something important to say on religiousness, the reader of the Discourses would take Kierkegaard's words as one opinion on religiousness but not as an invitation for his/her own self-practice. The important existential aspect of the Discourses is not the presentation of objective content but the subjective involvement of the reader in what is said.

That leads to the second point. The *Upbuilding Discourses* mediate religiousness in its practical dimension. If we look at the communicative situation, then we can see that the main content of all the Discourses, the individual's relation to God,⁷ is contextualized and embedded in a variety of observations and descriptions of lived experiences (see Deuser 1985, 155–60), e.g. happiness, sadness, suffering, thankfulness, patience, anxiety, expectancy, sorrow, earnestness, courage, fear of death etc. The Discourses thematize existence in its different modes and moods, its possibilities of emergence, and what kind of thinking and experiences are thereby involved. By exploring and focusing on the plurality of factual experience, the Discourses offer possibilities of thinking and living

⁶ The aspect of constant practice appears in the Discourse on Job very clearly. Regarding the relation between the reader of the Discourse and Job's proverb, 'Kierkegaard' underlines permanently the aspect of 'memory' and to practice 'not to forget'.

⁷ On the aspect that the relation to God is the central point of the Discourses, see e.g. Bjergsø 2009, 5f.; Harrits 2000, 128; Pattison 2002, 121.

without value judgement. That is important because the reader has to position himself (see Lotti 2003, 141). Therefore, the Discourses are treatises on the issue of how the individual can relate him/herself to the possibilities of existence. 'Kierkegaard' supports that by creating a very specific atmosphere of fictionality that simulates concrete life-forms. He establishes a rhetorical situation in which the reader starts to search for his/her own life-experience in the given descriptions; and the beauty of the poetic language helps to engage the reader. The aim of such a literary endeavour is to initiate a subjective dialogue⁸: not only between the reader and the text. The Discourses invite the reader 'to think': to have what has, since Socrates, been defined as a dialogue with oneself. Therefore, they are guides to finding new self-relations.

To understand this correctly we have to acknowledge the implicit and explicit existential subject of the Discourses: the practice of one's own religiousness, i.e. the lived relation to God. Insofar as the Discourses give a poetic and existential 'catalogue' of descriptions of human experience, you can call them meditations on existence. If we consider here the intended impact on the reader we can call them mediations on the practice of asceticism, not only in the etymological sense of 'exercise', but also in the sense of getting into a state of mind in which oneself is withdrawn from the world by understanding one's own self-actuality as an expression of one's relation to God. For that, an existential change of perspective is necessary. God is not supposed to be seen as an other-worldly and abstract possibility but as a concrete part of one's own life-world and by that as the ground of one's own being. The transformation of the individual's standpoint lies in a qualitative leap to find a new perspective on and position to the same life-world. Such an existential approach appears in the *Philosophical Fragments* as (religious) 'rebirth, by which he enters the world the second time' (SKS 4, 227 / KW 7, 19). Accordingly, the *Upbuilding Discourses* describe the practice of religiousness in forms of self-transcendence, i.e. as an experience of re-positioning oneself in a 'relationship of opposition to God' (SKS 4, 77 / KW 6, 210). Especially one existential concept in the Discourses expresses such self-transcendence in its core: the concept of 'nothingness' or self-annihilation. If one has to withdraw from the world to find a new relation to the same world grounded and fulfilled by God, one has to withdraw from oneself as part of this world too, to find a new relation to one's own self 'before God'. For that matter we can say with George Pattison, that the *Upbuilding Discourses* are 'giving us a larger and deeper picture of what it might actually mean to live as if "before God", counting ourselves "as nothing"' (Pattison 2002, 166).

⁸ On the dialogical aspects of the *Upbuilding Discourses*, see Deuser 1985, 155f.; Harrits 2000, 133; Lotti 2003, 139f.; Pattison 2002, 122 and 141; Shakespeare 2003, 93f.

Now we can underline an important aspect regarding the presentation of thought in the Discourses. Although the Discourses ‘talk’ about the practice of religiousness in a not-at-all-hidden literary mode of religious-affirmative language, they never avoid the philosophical aspect of what it means to have a *true* self-relation (before God).⁹ However, this philosophical component does not mean that the Discourses are theoretical treatises arguing in a philosophical (and/or speculative) manner and creating on the textual surface objective knowledge about religious self-relation. ‘Kierkegaard’ resists the temptation to speak on religiousness in an academic way,¹⁰ which differentiates the Discourses fundamentally from the works of some of the pseudonyms, especially Vigilius Haufniensis (*The Concept of Anxiety*) and Johannes Climacus (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*), who are famous for their systematic investigations of existential religiousness (although they have ‘upbuilding’ passages and use indirect communication). The difference between the literary enterprise of the Discourses and an academic style of writing lies in the following: in the former, rather than guiding the reader to more talkativeness of mind, he/she is supposed to reach a state of ‘stillness’, a concept of inward devotion mediated by ‘Kierkegaard’ (see Mooney 2003, 121). The reader is not supposed to stop thinking in such stillness, but the way he/she starts to think while reading the Discourses is different from an academic-systematic style. The priority lies not in objective categorization. Important is the subjective understanding of oneself *in* what is said, recognizing one’s own existential possibility.¹¹ The effect is an actualized existential transformation, from self-discovery (by reading the Discourses) into an engagement of existence. For the aim of such overcoming of self-distance, Kierkegaard sees in any intellectual (objective) exploration and mediation of religiousness the avoidance of enforced self-practice. In other words, Kierkegaard focuses on the difference between an authentic, lived religiousness and an imagined one.

⁹ Especially the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1844* explore the religious self in its true relation before God by describing the existential process of religious self-annihilation.

¹⁰ On Kierkegaard’s avoidance of academic writing in the Discourses, see Mooney 2003, 114–6; and Pattison 2002, 161f.

¹¹ In *The Concept of Anxiety* the pseudonymous voice gives the right expression for that: ‘To understand a speech is one thing, and to understand what it refers to, the personal, is something else; for a man to understand what he himself says is one thing, and to understand himself in what is said is something else’ (SKS 4, 442 / KW 8, 142). To understand *what* is said means to understand factuality (objective knowledge); to understand oneself *in* what is said means to understand one’s own (existential) possibility (guided by what is said) (See Lotti 2003, 136).

2.2 Edification and appropriation

Those short remarks allow us to explain the entangled ideas of edification and existential appropriation in the *Upbuilding Discourses*. Therewith, we are deepening the discussion of the content and considering the existential aim of the Discourses.

The intention of the Discourses is to *build up* the reader from his/her ground of being, God, understood as the unconditional ground of all things. More precisely, the Discourses want to guide the reader to a self-practiced process of building up an existential actuality in which God is recognized as ground (see also Theunissen 1958, 91). Coming into such an existential state of being upbuilt means to be in a state of *uplifting* edification, a lived devotional relation to one's own life by accepting God as ground (see also Ringleben 1983, 13). From the systematical side it is important to see that the existential process of upbuilding constantly refers to a lived relation to God as ground, but this ground is conceptually not set by any human being. Therefore, the process of upbuilding refers not to a relation to God *a posteriori*, it refers *a priori* to the presupposition of God in every human being. Precisely this conceptual condition of edification has to be accepted in any investigation of the Discourses, because it shows the only condition under which you can talk about the existential possibility of edification: namely the existential acceptance of the dependence of any individual on God. However, if one has no sensibility for the literary and descriptive presentation of religiousness in the Discourses, one might probably look at the given conceptual construction as an authoritative presentation of edification by Kierkegaard, but even then the existential task and intention of the Discourses cannot be denied, namely that the reader has to discover the conceptual condition of edification by him/herself and embed it into their own experience. This aspect of self-practice thwarts any 'authoritative' situation of communication in the Discourses in the direction of a non-authoritative intention of existential appropriation.

The basic and crucial point of any existential appropriation is to recognize that personal existing is not solely a matter of knowledge.¹² Knowledge entails objectivity and, insofar, a distanced relation of the individual to the object of knowledge. In contrast, existence is action, lived experience, and the continuity of self-relation. The pseudonymous Johannes Climacus unites these aspects under the umbrella term 'subjectivity', i.e. being involved in self-engagement

¹² We can find that e.g. in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* when the pseudonym Johannes Climacus notes, 'But existing is something quite different from knowing' (SKS 7, 271 / KW 12.1, 297).

while living life in its full concreteness. The reader of Kierkegaard's texts has to understand this difference between (objective) knowledge and (subjective) existence. At the same time, the mediator of existing, Kierkegaard, has to make the reader understand what existence means; thus he stays in an inter-position of mediation. He has to bring the reader to a specific knowledge, but at the same time, it is necessary to distance the reader from keeping this knowledge as something objective.

To induce a process by which the reader sees the content of the presented text not as something merely objective but as something that points to his/her own self-relation, Kierkegaard uses different strategies. For example, the 'Kierkegaard' of the Discourses presents himself not only as 'without authority' but sometimes also as a reader of the Discourses who only wants to find out what it means to be religious.¹³ By that means, hierarchy is abolished, reader and 'author' are on an equal footing, ready to transform their own lives into a religious mode of living. The presentation of 'Kierkegaard' as a non-authoritative 'author' helps furthermore to fulfil another condition of appropriation. The reader has to reject an immediate and direct relation to the 'author' as well as the textual knowledge, because appropriation is not a mimicking imitation of *what* is said. This is clearly underlined in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The 'author' should write 'without wanting to induce him [the reader] to go the same way [of presented knowledge], but just urging him to go his own way' (SKS 7, 251 / KW 12.1, 277). Accordingly, the reader's appropriation is always a process of freedom. At the same time, appropriation is mediated, guided by the one who writes.

Such systematic/existential tension is expressed by the Socratic 'midwifery' (maieutics), the guidance to one's own freedom. In other words, appropriation is based on an encouragement of the individual to discover one's own potentiality by taking a personal journey (of experience) to find, form, and recognize one's own individuality. Such a process is conditional upon *how* the reader positions himself to himself *through* the text. If the positioning is affirmative, the mechanism of Socratic maieutics brings the reader to the decisive point where he/she discovers the presented existential content as something that lies within him/herself as hidden knowledge. Therefore, appropriation can be seen as a re-discovering process of presupposed conditions which are meant to be actualized and transformed into a lived life-form. Regarding the *Upbuilding Discourses*, becoming religious means to become what one has been (religiousness is presupposed) *and* to be what one becomes (religiousness has to be actualized into

¹³ See for example the last page of *At a Graveside*, the third Discourse of the *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, SKS 5, 469 / KW 10, 102.

the future and remains only by such constant reactivation). Existential appropriation implies, by this intertwined relation of becoming and being, that the reader re-discovers his/her (potentiality of) religiousness through the presented text and transforms such re-cognition into a constant existential actuality.

The necessary condition for that is the reader's 'interest' in his/her self as grounded in religiousness.¹⁴ No appropriation can be successful if there is no 'passion' (to use the terminology of the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus) for religious existing. Only with the will and the openness to religiousness, can the reader be invited by and involved in the Discourse (to search him/herself).

Finally, when we talk about the *Upbuilding Discourses* we have to keep in mind that we deal with texts – or better, with situations of specific communication – which present literarily a sense of existential concreteness and transformation. Existential appropriation is a concrete process of self-relation while edification is the concrete realization of a self-related religiousness. Both are two sides of the same upbuilding process of existential transformation: to see one's own life in a different light that illuminates existence as the concreteness of *becoming new* in finding the ground in God, and to experience the immersion into that relation which brings the individual into a practice of self-surrender. (The discussion of 'Kierkegaard's' interpretation of Job, below, will demonstrate this thoroughly.) Beside this existential perspective, there is furthermore a structural similarity between appropriation and edification. In both processes the self depends on something exterior. While appropriation is based on a maieutic process of discovering one's own self (and religiousness) by depending on someone who offers the ideas and the help to do that, edification is characterized as a process of getting into a self-relation that is grounded in God. Such (overall) dependency of the self is important for the discussion on individualization.

3 Discourse on Job

In this section we will first examine how Job exemplifies edification and what it means to live religiousness authentically. In the next step we will slightly change the perspective in the direction of the existential aim and the performative presentation of the text.

Before we start the analysis we should mention that Job is not the only poetic figure who is symbolically taken by Kierkegaard to exemplify religiousness. The

¹⁴ Johannes Climacus calls 'interest' the *conditio sine qua non* for one's own religiousness (see SKS 7, 25 / KW 12.1, 16).

biblical characters of John or Anna are other examples.¹⁵ Furthermore, as we mentioned above (fn. 3), the Discourse on Job was published around two months after the small pseudonymous writings *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling*. Specifically the latter one is famous for using the story of Abraham and Isaac to show what it means to live faith as ‘double-movement’ (SKS 4, 131 / KW 6, 36), i.e. as an existential process of transforming one’s own perceptual and habitual involvement in the world by an unconditional relation to God. This is the content of *Repetition* too, as novel and as concept. Therein, Job becomes relevant.

The second half of *Repetition* contains letters between the pseudonymous ‘author’ Constantin Constantius and his ‘Young Friend’. Like the book of Job in the *Old Testament*, the second half of *Repetition* has a dialogical structure.¹⁶ The ‘Young Man’ talks to Constantin as a ‘Silent Confidante’ regarding the problem of having fallen in love with a young woman he does not want to marry anymore. Out of melancholy, guilt, contrition, and a religious self-understanding the ‘Young Man’ refers to Job not only as a poetic figure who insists on his right of justice against God (see esp. SKS 4, 75–8 / KW 6, 207–11) but also as a symbol of a plagued man who overcomes suffering by being a passionate believer.¹⁷

However, the secondary literature examines two presentations of Job in *Repetition*. The first one is the extrapolation of Job in the understanding of the ‘Young Man’ (see esp. Dietz 1993, 243–52¹⁸). In this regard, the main focus lies on Job as a concrete individual and ‘rebel’ who claims his own freedom against God. The second understanding of Job, as Dorothea Glöckner examines (1998, 83), sees him through the eyes of Constantin Constantius. Job there appears particularly as a devotional believer who represents an understanding of life in which the will for a just life does not guarantee a happy life without suffering. He becomes a symbol for human reality, that any control of life is humanly impossible. The difference between both presentations lies in the existential quality of Job’s relation to God. While the ‘Young Man’s’ Job insists on his own person since his religious passion is dedicated to himself as a concrete living person against

15 For John see *He must increase; I must decrease* (*Three Upbuilding Discourses* 1844); for Anna see *Patience in Expectancy* (*Two Upbuilding Discourses* 1844). On the aim of using these biblical figures, see Burgess 2000, 212–4; Grøn 2000, 200f.

16 For constructive remarks on the relation between the dialogical structure of a text and the existential meaning of it (referring the book on Job), see Deuser 2010, 75; also Colton 2003, 231 and 236f.

17 ‘Nowhere in the world has the passion of anguish found such expression’ (SKS 4, 72 / KW 6, 204). See also SKS 4, 77 / KW 6, 210.

18 For a critical discussion on Dietz, see Glöckner 1998, 80 (fn. 69).

and before God, Constantin's Job surrenders and hands over his person to God because his religious passion is dedicated to the eternal ground and condition of all being.

3.1 Edification: thankfulness and truthfulness

The interpretation of Job by 'Kierkegaard' in *The Lord Gave, and the Lord Took Away; Blessed Be the Name of the Lord* is very close to the understanding of Constantin Constantius. Job appears as a devotional believer with an unwavering relation to God, which simultaneously presupposes that as a fundamental part of Job's life *and* which becomes deeper by experiencing what it means to be oneself *before* God, i.e. to live life *grounded in* God. Job appears as both concrete individual and as 'prototype' (of edification).

By that, 'Kierkegaard' clarifies thoroughly that edification is no stable existential actuality, given and self-evident. Job repeats his faith by an experience of resolute awareness. Actualized faith means thereby to get into a state of 'still' (pure) mind based on personal experiences that shape and open up the horizon for accepting God as the eternal ground of being. The Discourse points out such kind of experience by the example of Job's thankfulness.

The aspect of thankfulness as an existential and religious experience and concept can be found in several writings of Kierkegaard (see Schulz 2014a, 176 (fn. 80)¹⁹). Specifically the first (under discussion) and the third Discourses of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843* need to be seen as ground-texts on thankfulness in Kierkegaard. However, after the introduction (SKS 5, 115–9 / KW 5, 109–14), 'Kierkegaard' starts the main section of the present Discourse with a short description of how Job came to say 'The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' (SKS 5, 119f. / KW 5, 114f.). In that short paragraph, Job is already presented as someone who did not rebel against his fate (God) but who 'surrendered to sorrow' *and* confessed his faith by 'worship' (SKS 5, 120 / KW 5, 115). Insofar as Job does not question his faith while suffering, it might not surprise how 'Kierkegaard' continues on the textual level. He starts his interpretation of Job's word not with the second part, 'and the Lord took away', which might be useful if the experience of suffering wants to be underlined; instead, he takes Job's word as it was said, chronologically, and starts with the interpretation

¹⁹ Schulz does not mention the Discourse on Job. On thankfulness in Johannes Climacus, taking on Schulz' systematic examinations, see Engmann 2017, 371f. (fn. 1190).

of 'The Lord gave': an expression that underlines the fact of thankful receiving ('from above'²⁰).

[F]irst of all he said, "The Lord gave." The statement is brief, but in its brevity it effectually points out what it is supposed to point out, that Job's soul was not squeezed into silent subjection to the sorrow, but that his heart first expanded in thankfulness, that the first thing the loss of everything did was to make him thankful to the Lord that he had given him all the blessing that he now took away from him (SKS 5, 121 / KW 5, 115f.)

Although Job goes through unimaginable suffering, losing his own children, he is presented as one who does not stop believing in God's goodness. Thereafter, 'Kierkegaard' moves into Job's mind and lists what Job remembers in his thankfulness: his wealth, the happiness about his children, his recognition by other people, his life lived in justice, etc. (SKS 5, 121f. / KW 5, 116). Therefore, 'Kierkegaard' mentions, 'his thankfulness was not forgetful' (SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 116), and adds afterwards a fundamental condition for a right understanding of Job's stance to God: 'indeed, it was as if it were not the Lord who took it away but Job who gave it back to him' (SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 116f.).

Hereby, three points are supposed to become clear. Firstly, life is seen under the condition of givenness. This points not only to the old question of ontological contingency, of how man comes into this world,²¹ but also to the question of how the being of each person is dependent on something that cannot be controlled. Secondly, any valuation of actual life is earnest and true only if life is seen under the condition and in the light of the past, an issue that is, in historical perspective, famously presented in St. Augustine's *Confessions*. It points to an understanding of existence as a process of constant becoming and self-narration. Life is not only seen as a process of unpredictable changing but of searching for one's own place in such conditioned life. Thirdly, everything in life, even life itself, is borrowed, so to say. If someone gets something good, it does not mean that he/she can claim such good as something that was necessarily earned. In the light of the questions of origin and change

20 In the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843*, the first Discourse on Job is followed by two Discourses, titled *Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift Is from Above*. Especially the third Discourse connects thankfulness with the aspect of receiving (from God): SKS 5, 152–8 / KW 5, 151–8. On the systematic relation between these Discourses, see Colton 2003; Glöckner 1998, 88f.

21 Most impressive and very influential on the philosophy of existence in the 20th century is the 'Letter from October 11th' in *Repetition* where the 'Young Man' adopts Job's perspective on the contingency of life and translates it into a personal expression: 'Where am I? [...] What is the meaning of the world? Who tricked me into this whole thing and leaves me standing here? [...]' (SKS 4, 68 / KW 6, 200).

(ontological contingency), it points to an understanding of life as a process shaped by non-self-evidence. Especially that is pointed out by Job's attitude to see his loss not as a taking-away but as a giving-back, a self-surrendered relation to life by living it freely as it happens and finding meaning by that. Therefore, thankfulness is not a sign of personal induration but of dealing with life with flexibility and adaptability. 'Kierkegaard' shows therewith, not just the pure fact of contingency as being important for any understanding and evaluation of life but also for the personal relation to life based on the intertwined parameters of the world, the particular person in this world, how the person understands himself in this world, and what grounds the world.

Now it is possible to understand Job's thankfulness systematically. *a)* Thankfulness is an expression of a conscious and confirmed dependency on a gifting power. Simultaneously, to be thankful means to react freely.²² In thankfulness a person proves his/her freedom of self-determined action. *b)* Thankfulness is a way of looking at life as an undivided unity, seeing it as a fragile process in the way it emerges and appears, but always permeated by a gravity that holds life together. In Job's case such gravity power is God. *c)* Thankfulness is a way of finding home in coming back to life itself. Although Job's suffering makes him aware of his exposure to life, it guides him to thankfulness, an embracement of life, and to a world-, self-, and ground-relation. Job is then not simply accepting his fate, he confirms it with his attitude: becoming aware of what he had and has, and what he was and is.

Job finds *himself before God* (in a life which always has been grounded in God²³). What characterizes Job's self-relation and relation to God? 'Kierkegaard' notes:

On the day of sorrow, when everything was lost, he first of all thanked God, who gave it, deceived neither God nor himself, and even though everything had been shaken and overthrown, he remained what he was from the beginning, "honest and upright [*redelig og oprigtig*] before God".
(SKS 5, 123 / KW 5, 118)

He did not conceal from himself that everything had been taken from him; therefore, the Lord, who had taken it away, remained in his upright soul. He did not evade the thought that it was lost; therefore his soul remained quiet until the Lord's explanation again came to him and found his mind, like good earth, well cultivated in patience.

(SKS 5, 123 / KW 5, 118f.)

²² On thankfulness and freedom, see Henrich 1999, e.g. 164; and Schulz 2014a, 173–5.

²³ 'Or had the Lord actually changed? Or did the Lord not remain truly the same, just as Job did?' (SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 121f.).

The very moment everything was taken away from him, he knew it was the Lord who had taken it away, and therefore in his loss he remained on good terms with the Lord, in his loss maintained intimacy with the Lord; he saw the Lord, and therefore he did not see despair.

(SKS 5, 125 / KW 5, 121)

So the Lord did not take everything away, for he did not take praise away from him, and he did not take away peace in the heart, the bold confidence in faith from which it proceeded, but intimacy with the Lord was still his as before, perhaps more inward [*inderligere*] than before, for now there was nothing at all in any way capable of drawing his thoughts away from it.

(SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 121)

According to these quotations, Job's relation to God is characterized by several existential conditions. Out of endurance, strong focus, and willingness ('patience'),²⁴ the lived relation to God leads beside thankfulness to trust ('intimacy')²⁵ and security ('peace in heart') experienced in intensity ('inward' [*inderlig*]). Given this existential perspective, God is fully recognized only if the mind is in 'stillness', pure, without doubt. On the one hand, 'Kierkegaard' hints at Job's devotion as a state of mind in which God appears as ground without attribution, as uncategorized wholeness and unity (just as life is seen in thankfulness). On the other hand, the pureness of mind shows an inner movement of emptying. A relation to God implies then actualized forms of transcendence, namely self-surrender and looking on the world as nothingness.²⁶

However, Job is a real person, suffering, thanking, trusting, being part of this world. He surrenders to God by staying in this world as a concrete individual who lives a devotional relation to God. In such concreteness are limits involved, e.g. the limit of holding fast and keeping God in mind, especially when there is suffering which can be explained out of natural reasons.²⁷ Therefore, the religious task is characterized as a constant confirmation and repetition of the relation to God: and Job 'remained' – as cited above – 'what he was from the beginning, "honest and upright before God"'.

The terms 'honest and upright' [dan. *redelig og oprigtig*] are two existential attributes we can find throughout the whole oeuvre of Kierkegaard (see Schulz 2014b, 434–9). Both characterize truthfulness, *the* existential condition for a successful

²⁴ On 'patience' and its conceptualization, see e.g. Engmann 2017, 523–51; Possen 2003.

²⁵ The aspect of trust is also underlined in Glöckner 1998, 86.

²⁶ 'Kierkegaard' underlines: 'But the one who sees God has overcome the world, and therefore Job in his devout words has overcome the world [...]' (SKS 5, 125 / KW 5, 121).

²⁷ See SKS 5, 123–5 / KW 5, 119f. 'Kierkegaard' mentions there coincidence, human violence, and natural forces as causal possibilities for Job's suffering. But he also shows that no explanation gives a full satisfying answer for Job's suffering. Every reason leads to new questions. Countering doubt by the unconditional, God, therein lies Job's rationality. See also Deuser 2010, 82.

Dasein. To be upright refers mainly to a lived practice of sincere self-transparency, while honesty refers mainly to lived integrity and probity (dan. *redelighed*). What kind of existential relations are systematically expressed by honesty and uprightness? While self-transparency and integrity imply a constant self-relation, probity involves a relation to someone else. Insofar as Job is acting ‘honest and upright’, ‘Kierkegaard’ makes clear that Job’s relation to God is an intertwined relation of his self- and God-relation. Only when he knows who he is can he live a true relation to God, and vice versa: only in a lived relation to God does Job know himself truly.

That points to the mentioned existential-religious dependency. The own self needs be understood as a gift of God, thus Job is relating himself to finiteness *and* eternity, looking in faith and devotion to God *and* himself. However, if God revokes human control, then the person also has no full power and control over what he/she is. Therefore, full self-transparency is impossible and Job’s religious self-surrender can be seen as a reaction to such understanding (of givenness and contingency). He hands himself over to God and in that light he recognizes that he cannot fully understand himself: thus he understands himself. Such wilful surrender characterizes Job’s thankful and truthful devotion as a form of authenticity, because his existential actuality appears as a wholehearted self-consistency in which he becomes a lived expression and articulation of his religious stance.

The inward (truthful) relation to himself and God has an impact on the form of Job’s life, which by itself has an impact on Job’s perception of his experiences. Therefore, it is important to mention that suffering (out of contingency) does not have to be compensated,²⁸ because it is seen as a condition of life that brings someone closer to him/herself and God. Of course, this does not imply that someone has to be thankful for his/her suffering. It is simply qualified as an implicit part of life that everybody has to deal with (adaptability). Furthermore, suffering is connoted as a (needed) measure of thankfulness. Only one who stays thankful in suffering is earnestly thankful. Here we can see a typical pattern in Kierkegaard’s thought: the coherence of personal attitude and stance is validated only in crisis. Crisis shows truthfulness. In Job’s case such uprightness opens up new perspectives on and positions to (i.e. also subjective attitudes and stances to) life and himself. That consists of: *a*) life is in every regard ambivalent and fundamentally non-self-evident; *b*) what God does is meaningful, even when it does not seem like this from a human perspective (the old question of theodicy emerges here, see Welz 2017); *c*) one cannot understand oneself thoroughly;

²⁸ Job is not overcoming suffering by thankfulness. That would imply to forgive God. But Job is presented without hubris. Some of the secondary literature claims such kind of compensation, see Colton 2003, 207 and 211; Glöckner 1998, 87; more generally: Schulz 2014a, 176.

d) one's actions show who one is. By implementing these insights into his life-view, therein lies Job's authenticity. Thankfulness as well as truthfulness are the most significant expressions for that.

By that, Job becomes an example for the human incapability of having access to a holistic, absolute, and eternal knowledge. At the same time, he also stands as an example for transforming this incapability into an existential striving and religious actuality in the form of self-surrender and an acceptance of one's own powerlessness. Therefore, he is one of *the* examples for edification in Kierkegaard's oeuvre, as long as edification means 'the annihilation in which the individual sets himself aside in order to find God [...]' (SKS 7, 510 / KW 12.1, 560). Facing the unconditional implies here, foremost, self-emptying and an acknowledged dependency and relationality of one's self. Hence, edification is not characterized by personal achievement and self-assertion but by confirmed passivity as the ground-mode of religiousness. Job fulfils and actualizes then the function of a role model of confession: not to achieve anything by one's own strength and to confirm therewith truly to be human (see also Glöckner 1998, 236).

Now we can finally draw a historical line to one pietistically influenced thinker who interprets Job in a manner close to Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant.²⁹ Although Kant contextualizes Job in the strict sense of theodicy, his focus lies on Job's inward stance to God.³⁰ That includes not only affection but above all an upright positioning to his incapability of understanding God. Kant uses in this context precisely the same terms as 'Kierkegaard' does, '*Aufrichtigkeit*' and '*Redlichkeit*' (Kant 1923, 133 and 136f.; dan. *oprigthighed* og *redelighed*), which leads for Kant also to the subjective attitude of being '*wahrhaft*' (ibid., 135; 'truthful') with oneself. Furthermore, for Kant's and 'Kierkegaard's' Job devotion lies in the human incapability of understanding the proof of God's wisdom. Both philosophers underline that devotion is based on an active mind and not on pure emphatic naivety. God has to be seen clearly as the non-understandable ground of all being. While 'Kierkegaard's' Job finally mirrors such understanding of God existentially with a 'still mind' and self-surrender (pureness), Kant's Job holds on to a straight forwardly active mind in his relation to God. Job appears thereby as a figure who follows religiousness as '*guten Lebenswandel*' (ibid., 134; 'a good way of life') concerning morality as the practical condition of social action. (Such social dimension is only implied in 'Kierkegaard'.³¹)

²⁹ See Kant 1923, 131–8. On Kant's interpretation of Job, see Brachtendorf 2002, 80–3; Deuser 2010, 78; Dieringer 2009, 120; Ricken 2003, 213–5; Schilling 2009, 78–81.

³⁰ I use the expression 'inward' because Kant underlines the connection between faith and introspection; see Kant 1923, 135f.

³¹ '[I]f you are honest [*redelig*] with yourself and love people, then you cannot wish to avoid Job [...]' (SKS 5, 128 / KW 5, 123).

Simultaneously, Kant's Job becomes by his mind-restriction also an example for authenticity. Kant mentions, '*HIJOB spricht, wie er denkt, und wie ihm zumute ist [...]*' (ibid., 132; 'Job speaks what he thinks and how he feels'). Job serves, in his uprightness, as an example for one's own religious stance. Hence we can say Job is, not only for 'Kierkegaard' (at least in terms of thankfulness), but also for Kant, an example for proving human freedom (of action). Nevertheless, the particular focus on freedom is different. For 'Kierkegaard' the existential freedom lies in saying 'yes' to the dependency on God, while Kant sees the freedom in saying 'yes' to the epistemic incapability of understanding God.³²

3.2 Appropriation and language

We can see clearly that the Discourse presents religiousness as a concrete practice and exercise of a subjective relation to God. That points to the existential aim of 'Kierkegaard's' Job-interpretation, the matter of existential appropriation.

One's personal process of appropriation is on two levels, accompanied by actualized translation and transformation. On the one hand, the reader is supposed to transport the poetic reality constructed by 'Kierkegaard' into his/her own actual life; on the other hand, he/she is supposed to change from a non-God-related life into a devotional existence (and if the reader already actualizes devotion, then the Discourse offers a measure for proving one's inward intensity of devotion). By that, existential appropriation corresponds not only with an awareness of contingency but takes Job's word as the necessary ground for one's own religious actuality because, even when there is a peacefully lived life without extraordinary situations (SKS 5, 128 / KW 5, 124), it expresses an understanding of faith as inherent happiness in all possible (and inevitable) suffering (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122). Job's word prepares one for life.

However, to appropriate Job's word includes 'above all [to] learn from Job to be upright [*oprigtig*]³³ with yourself [...]' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123). Thereby, 'Kierkegaard' intends appropriation as *the* existential process of reaching a new (religious) life-stance characterized by authenticity. Accordingly, we will now discuss the question *how* does 'Kierkegaard' guide the reader into a process of existential

³² Here we can see how the idea of enlightenment shines through Kant's presentation of Job. Job knows that he is determined by something exterior (God), which thwarts of course the idea of enlightened autonomy. However, within this framework he holds on to the courage of using his mind, the duty of an enlightened person. Therefore, Kant's Job presents more a proto-enlightened human being, on the way to and in the direction of modernity.

³³ Hong translates 'oprigtig' as 'honest'.

appropriation? Here we have to consider that language is, for Kierkegaard, a central subject of thought; and the Discourse on Job is one important example of his investigations.³⁴

The Discourse is, on the content level as well as on the performative level, an examination of *Job's word*. 'Kierkegaard' underlines several times that it is 'brief' and it became through the centuries a 'proverb', because of its particular significance. Although Job's word represents all the unimaginable situations when language cannot express suffering (see Shakespeare 2003, 102), 'Kierkegaard' does not present it simply as the first and last word of comfort (even though he mentions that: SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122). 'Kierkegaard' characterizes Job's word as a formula which has to be interpreted, decoded, and translated into present time – with the aim to act upon it. Therefore, 'Kierkegaard' underlines, on the first page, Job's 'significance by no means consists in what he said but in what he did' (SKS 5, 115 / KW 5, 109). Hence, the task is for 'Kierkegaard' to guide the reader to action (faith) by guiding him/her through Job's word. The failure of the reader would be to hold on to the textual level since it is more important to see Job's example shining through his word. 'Kierkegaard' notes therefore, 'the statement itself is not the guide, and Job's significance consists not in his having said it but in his having acted upon it' (SKS 5, 115 / KW 5, 109). Thereafter, appropriation does not simply imply knowing Job's word objectively; the reader should rather understand him/herself *in* Job's word. By that, 'Kierkegaard' intends a de-intellectualization of Job's word to lure out the religious ground in the reader's soul. How does 'Kierkegaard' deal with language here and why is it helpful for the reader's appropriation?

The first step 'Kierkegaard' takes is to demonstrate how language depends on the *context*. Job's word would change its meaning if it was said by someone else, or in a different situation, or if Job did not exemplify the word by his own action (SKS 5, 116 / KW 5, 110). In the second step he demonstrates how understanding depends on *perception*. A child understands Job's word differently than a young man or an old man, simply because the age of a person is connected to his/her life-experience which gives the used and interpreted language different layers of meaning (SKS 5, 117f. / KW 5, 111f.). In the third step he demonstrates how meaning depends on *usage*.³⁵ 'Kierkegaard' does this by interpreting Job's word. He starts with the first part, 'The Lord gave', brings up the content of thankfulness, and then contrasts the meaning of it with opposites of thankfulness, namely unthankfulness, restlessness, craving, defiance,

³⁴ For subtle observations on Kierkegaard's use of language, regarding the *Upbuilding Discourses* in general, see Shakespeare 2003.

³⁵ On language and usage, see e.g. Pattison 2002, 141.

self-deceit etc. (SKS 5, 122f. / KW 5, 117f.). Such contrasting shapes the meaning of thankfulness by describing it negatively. Taking up the second part, ‘and the Lord took away’, ‘Kierkegaard’ demonstrates the translation of the word into present language and knowledge by giving the reader of modern times (meaningful) explanations of Job’s suffering, namely coincidence, human violence, natural forces etc. (SKS 5, 124f. / KW 5, 119f.). In such deconstruction of Job’s word he sees an intellectualization that holds back from faith (SKS 5, 125f. / KW 5, 120f.). Finally by taking up the third part, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord!’, ‘Kierkegaard’ connects the meaning of Job’s word with the reader’s life-context, as a word that is valuable for religious appropriation (SKS 5, 127f. / KW 5, 123f.).

We can see, ‘Kierkegaard’ starts with general observations on language and shades gradually into the task of existential appropriation. By that means, language itself becomes part of existential actuality. Language is then nothing abstract anymore, it is usage in concrete communication. ‘Kierkegaard’ then obscures the communication with overlapping meanings³⁶ (especially while interpreting Job’s proverb) by using a strategy of deconstruction. He empties the language of its common meaning that the reader would expect (see Colton 2003, 212). While the Discourse progresses, Job’s word becomes more and more blurred and re-connoted (without dis-embedding it from its meaning as biblical proverb³⁷). Equally, the language used opens up horizons. ‘Thankfulness’, for example, is taken out of its common usage and gets shaped by a religious context. The reader is thereby not only confronted with new meaning but with new perspectives on reality (see e.g. Pattison 2003, 88).

The strategy of distancing and re-building helps to shape the language as porous and to open it up to what lies beyond.³⁸ That means in the present case to

36 We can see that also in another aspect. Language is the connecting medium between speaker and addressee. Here, Job as well as ‘Kierkegaard’, and the reader too, can be interpreted as either speaker or addressee. Who speaks to whom then? Precisely this indistinctiveness opens up a space for overlapping perspectives and possibilities of meaning.

37 Of course, ‘Kierkegaard’ intends to keep the meaning of the proverb for the reader’s (religious) appropriation. That is also shown by ‘Kierkegaard’s’ re-traditionalization of biblical quotations at the beginning of almost every Discourse. ‘Kierkegaard’ takes over the tradition but modifies the culturally established meaning by re-interpretation in order to open up new perspectives of thinking.

38 Although David Kangas comes from a different perspective, he emphasizes a similar point regarding the second and third Discourse of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses 1843*. While Kangas looks only briefly at the immanent relation between language and edification, he emphasizes that Kierkegaard’s use of ‘absolute figures’, which are neither metaphors nor concepts, ‘ruptures the immanent tendencies of language’ and opens up a space of ‘improper signification’.

see Job as a concrete human being. If the reader reaches a level of understanding that *concrete* experience is involved in Job's word – understanding 'Job's wretchedness, [...] how Job could say it' (SKS 5, 118 / KW 5, 112) – then the path is paved for existential appropriation. Such a process of transcending oneself in the concrete existential position of Job can be successful, if the reader gets strongly involved in the Discourse. 'Kierkegaard's' transformation of language is one important strategy for that. By re-connoting language, he has to deal with the fragile balance between talking meaningfully and being misunderstood; hence opening up the common meaning of the language irritates the reader, which helps simultaneously to engage the reader's attention.³⁹

However, 'Kierkegaard' can only pave the path for the reader's own engagement. Therewith, what 'Kierkegaard' notes at the end is important: 'the discourse, however, has not wanted to impose itself on anyone' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123). The reader needs to have interest and willingness to transform Job's poetic reality into self-actuality. The existential process of becoming oneself (appropriation) implies then to be open to what one is confronted with (Job's example) and to react upon it affirmatively. As long as that means starting a dialogue and vivid conversation with oneself, the reader of the Discourse shapes not only his/her self-understanding and life-view but reaches a new self-articulation.

Now we can see clearly how method and content are intertwined in the Discourse. The specific use of language mirrors and mediates appropriation as a process of re-connoting one's own life. 'Kierkegaard's' demonstration of how language *becomes new* anticipates appropriation and the immanent aim of new

Therewith, one's personal stance of edification represents a process that 'works [...] against language', i.e. the individual recognizes in his/her religiousness the existentiality of meaning that is intended by the Discourses, a meaning that has to be discovered since it lies beyond the significations of language. See Kangas 2000, 108–13, esp. 112f.

³⁹ 'Kierkegaard' uses further strategies to involve the reader, e.g. asking questions of the reader (SKS 5, 126 / KW 5, 121f.); talking directly to the reader as 'my listener' (e.g. SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 122); giving descriptive examples of concrete life-situations (SKS 5, 122f. and 127f. / KW 5, 117f. and 123f.; see e.g. Lotti 2003, 142–6); talking in suggestive phrases like 'But you agree with us that you can learn from Job [...]' (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123); using Job's story and Job himself as a parable and (fictional) possibility of devotion (on the use and aim of parable in Kierkegaard, see Purkarthofer 2000, 153); using written language like spoken language and never the 'I' as instance of talk (see Pattison 2002, 147f.); using pictorial language, e.g. biblical metaphors ('Kierkegaard' uses for example the metaphor 'worm of craving', SKS 5, 122 / KW 5, 117. On pictorial language and metaphors in the Discourses, see e.g. Pattison 2002, 122–32; Purkarthofer 2000.), etc. All these techniques and strategies help to start a dialogue with the reader. The aim is to unmask existence in the light of Job's example and to mirror it back into the reader's 'life of action' (SKS 5, 119 / KW 5, 114).

self-articulation. Consequently, learning the new language (of the Discourse) initiates existential appropriation and thereby the existential possibility of learning faith.⁴⁰

4 Conclusion: religious individualization

Before we come up with a understanding of ‘religious individualization’ given by ‘Kierkegaard’s’ Discourse on Job, we will briefly summarize three important points.

Firstly, the human self is seen as fundamentally relational, embedded into communication, dependent on the external world and language. Especially the existential aim of (religious) self-appropriation shows the immanent tension of any self-actuality: being autonomous while depending on external mediation.

Secondly, one’s self-awareness is intertwined with the aspects of freedom and transformation. Reaching new subjective perspectives on and positions to oneself and life is the aim and the condition for truthful existing.

Thirdly, one’s self-relation and self-understanding is shaped by the experience of life’s impinging givenness: the contingency of life, and the dependency on unconditional conditions of life. Existential religiousness emphasizes such a life-view (in which the self is affected by life) since the religious individual looks at *and* beyond life’s emerging surface while it emphatically accepts one’s inescapable embeddedness into life as a meaningful enterprise that grounds in God.

What picture of individualization emerges now, if we consider Job as ‘Kierkegaard’s’ model for religiousness?

- a) Looking at the content of the Discourse on Job, the personal process of individualization lies in one’s confirmation/stabilization of one’s own religiousness by an enhanced focus on oneself correlating with an intense inward relation to God. Job’s ‘thankfulness’ demonstrates that thoroughly as a process of *becoming oneself before God*.
- b) Considering the existential aim of the text, individualization lies in the subjective process of re-thinking oneself, pointing furthermore to one’s

⁴⁰ Katrin Dickow underlines that too with her thesis that learning faith resembles the learning of a new language (Dickow 2009, 140–56). However, in opposition to language, faith cannot be learned with the helping hands of vocabulary books and grammatical rules. Faith does not depend on a specific grammar which can be used to move faster into a devotional religiousness. It is an experiential discovery of God as unconditional ground. Consequently, an individual who knows *what* faith is and how it is systematically constructed does not necessarily *have* faith. Any intellectual effort opens up only the possibility of having faith concretely.

re-positioning in the world. As long as that also aims towards a religious way of existing, the Discourse on Job mediates a spiritual beginning (see also Lotti 2003, 142).

Both aspects show that individualization is systematically embedded in an existential subjectivity, that identifies the awareness, acknowledgement, and concreteness of one's lived self-relation, and by that also the existential conditions for one's lived religiousness (see *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, part two, section two, esp. chapter two).

For the purpose of this article it is important to mention now that existential appropriation is not only the condition but also a concrete articulation of religious individualization, because it expresses the actuality of one's freedom to initiate an earnest self-discovery considering the possible religious foundation of one's own being. For that, Job is literarily functionalized as a role model giving an existential image as guiding orientation for the reader's mind (see also Harrits 2000, 130); thus the process of self-appropriation lies on the shoulders of each individual,⁴¹ 'my reader', as 'Kierkegaard' pronounces in every preface of the *Upbuilding Discourses*.⁴²

Individualization and appropriation both express a subjective process of emergence and translation. Considering that correlation we can mention further characteristics.

- c) In *Repetition*, the 'Young Man' says, 'If Job is a poetic character, if there never was any man who spoke this way, then I make his words my own and take upon myself the responsibility' (SKS 4, 73 / KW 6, 205). That expresses precisely the existential aim for every (wilful) reader (of the Discourse): to take over the non-delegable responsibility for oneself (including one's religiousness).
- d) In self-appropriation/individualization the individual reaches *concrete* self-awareness. Taking Job as an example, the important point is to achieve

⁴¹ In *Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus underlines how a religious (and ethical) role model opens up the possibility of existential engagement for the reader (SKS 7, 328f. / KW 12.1, 359f.). Climacus exemplifies that by using *Job* in his function as role model for existential appropriation of religiousness that gives the reader the possibility of concrete action which can be translated into self-actuality, i.e. Job offers actual self-possibilities. Hereby, Climacus is close to Kant's understanding of the relation between a religious role model and one who follows the (lived) example of the role model in the *Critique of Judgment*. For a more specific discussion on Climacus' explanation and its correlation to Kant, see Engmann 2017, 540f. (fn. 525).

⁴² Precisely this perspective on the first person singular is a necessary condition for any existential appropriation, namely the capability of grasping a given issue and accepting it as true or valid for one's own existence (see Schulz 2012, 71).

an awareness of being consciously present – in this time, at this place – and to handle with adaptability the given circumstances of life.

- e) Job also stands for devotional self-surrender. ‘Kierkegaard’ hints at understanding that as a process of self-emptying, of one’s renunciation of time and temporality (see esp. SKS 5, 122f. / KW 5, 117f.). However, self-surrender appears in the end as a confirmation of one’s own being without illusion,⁴³ i.e. as truthful self-awareness.
- f) Truthfulness includes the awareness of one’s exposure to life; religiously turned – one is nothing before God. Human existence means to live in the awareness of honest failure (Job’s ‘thankfulness’ confirms that). Accepting human insufficiency and passivity defines religious authenticity.
- g) Such authenticity implicates a specific form of self-transgression which stands not for devotional self-annihilation but for a critical movement of mind, recognizing one’s weakness and limits.⁴⁴ The particular religious point here is that the individual can reach a sublime state of being uplifted, understood as being-entrust-with-God. For such edifying acknowledgement of God, Job’s ‘thankfulness’ shows that he overcomes the distance between the one who gives/takes (God) and the one who thanks (himself); he transcends his separation from God inwardly.
- h) Most important is the acceptance of being dependent on the unconditional ground. That colours the idea of individualization fundamentally as non-self-assertion. Translating that dependency into self-actuality: therein lies the primary step to enter into a process of religious individualization. However, only religiousness confirms dependency emphatically. Out of that reciprocity, religious individualization appears as one’s freedom to become new by embracing one’s relativity (non-absoluteness).

⁴³ ‘[A]nd above all learn from Job to become upright [*oprigtig*] with yourself so that you do not deceive yourself with imagined power [*indbildt Kraft*] [...]’ (SKS 5, 127 / KW 5, 123).

⁴⁴ In this regard, it is interesting that ‘Kierkegaard’s’ Discourse on Job re-traditionalizes narrowly the biblical book on Job. In their subtext, both point out the problem of dealing with life and its conditions and that any question on life leads to contradictory answers and non-final justifications. On the biblical book, see Deuser 2010, 76.

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