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An Analysis of Selected Upbuilding Discourses in the Works of Søren Kierkegaard in the Context of Evangelical Homiletics

Summary: The article focuses on two upbuilding discourses in Søren Kierkegaard's *Late Works*, translated by Karol Toeplitz. The sermons were included in *For Self-Examination: Recommended to the Present Age* (1851). The article first discusses the material dimension of the discourses, treating the sermon as a way to speak on a specific topic, taking the form of an announcement of the truths of the faith. The second part is dedicated to the formal aspect of the upbuilding discourses and focuses on working with the text of the Scripture as well as on the process of the stylistic construction of the sermon.

Keywords: upbuilding discourse, existentialism, paradox of communication, homiletics, allegory, Kierkegaard

Streszczenie: Analiza wybranych mów budujących Sorena Kierkegarda w kontekście homiletyki ewangelickiej

W artykule analizie zostały poddane dwie mowy budujące Sorena Kierkegarda, które znajdują się w wyborze jego zapisków, *Pisma późne*, w tłumaczeniu Karola Toeplitza. Oba wspomniane kazania zostały dołączone do utworu zatytułowanego *Zalecone dla własnej oceny współczesności*. W pierwszej części artykułu zajmiemy się materialną stroną mów, bardziej ogólną i traktującą o kazaniu, jako o pewnym sposobie wypowiedzania się na ściśle określony temat, jakim jest zwiastowanie prawd wiary. Część druga zostanie poświęcona formalnej stronie mów budujących, która w sposób szczególny skupia się nad pracą z tekstem Pisma, stylem, formą i budową kazania.

Słowa kluczowe: mowa budująca, egzystencjalizm, paradoks komunikacyjny, homiletyka, alegoria, Kierkegaard

Søren Kierkegaard frequently underlined that he did not write his sermons for the public but for the Individual. For the first time this category appeared in *Two Edifying Discourses* in 1843. Since that time – says the Danish

theologian – “I have been looking for the Individual whom I would call, with joy and gratitude, *my* reader”¹

The sermon, according to the recommendations of the homiletic construction, should be elaborated in writing, and as such, it remains a speech, as far as it is delivered to a body of listeners, that is, the Protestant Community. A preacher is neither a simple orator, nor a rhetorician, but a forerunner, a messenger of God, the one who was ordained (summoned) to “announce the God’s message”, contained in the *Holy Scripture*². Kierkegaard called his sermons - of which he had written eighty in total and had preached from five to six at churches in Copenhagen – “upbuilding discourses”. It is generally agreed today that the Dane defined them in such a way, because only a clergyman ordained by the Church might preach sermons, and he himself did not occupy any such position. However, it seems to be not much convincing. Firstly, even laymen may write sermons, and whether they are allowed to preach them from the pulpit is another question. In defiance of the public opinion in Denmark, the philosopher from Copenhagen called his sermons “edifying discourses”. The thinker recommended and beseeched that every Individual read them out aloud to himself /herself or to others. In this way, they were supposed to gain the rank of discourses. However, Kierkegaard did not care about the possession of the official “authority”. He was concerned about something more, he was interested in the authority possessed by the “witnesses to the truth”. He claims nowhere that he is a “prophet”, a “witness to the truth”, or even a Christian but he describes himself by the name of a poet, and of a very good one because he can present the faith and describe what the Christianity and being a Christian is. However, as far as the practice of everyday life is concerned, he cannot fully meet these requirements³. Another ques-

¹ S. Kierkegaard, *O mojej działalności jako pisarza. Obrachunek (On My Activity As A Writer by S. Kierkegaard)*, [in:] *Pisma późne (Later Works)*, transl. K. Toeplitz, Kęty 2016, p. 36. To the category of „Individual” Kierkegaard dedicates *Aneks. „Pojedynczy”*. Dwie „noty” dotyczące mojej działalności jako pisarza (*Anex. The Single Individual: Two ‘Notes’ Concerning My Activity As A Writer*), [in:] *Later Works*, op. cit., pp. 121–145.

² See: A. Wantuła, *Zarys homiletyki ewangelickiej (Outline of the Evangelical Homiletics)*, Warsaw 1974, pp. 47–48.

³ See: S. Kierkegaard, *Zalecone dla własnej oceny współczesności: I. Jak 1, 22–27 (For Self-Examination: Recommended to the Contemporary Age by S. Kierkegaard: I. Jam 1, 22–27)* [*Co jest wymagane, aby oglądać siebie z prawdziwym błogosławieństwem w lustrze słowa*

tion concerns the reason why Kierkegaard defined his speeches as “upbuilding”, or “for edification”. Now, as it can be read in the recommendations of the Evangelical homiletics, one of the main purposes of such a public utterance is building up. The Christian language joins “edifying” with the process, the character of which is not closed: “To build means to reinforce what is already possessed, but also consolidate, that is, multiply. What matters is the consolidation of that which is still weak, the strengthening and further building upon this foundation”⁴ – this is what the Evangelical homiletics says about it. However, in the case of Kierkegaard, the point is not the expansion of what has already been elevated but the permanent and fundamental revitalization of Christianity. In order for the rebuilding to get started, it is necessary, first of all, to uncover the old foundations of the faith, solidly deep-seated in the *Gospels* and the Word of God.

All that was said above, inclines to grant Kierkegaard’s sermons the name of “upbuilding discourses”, and acknowledge that he himself deliberately and with premeditation applied this name to define his writings, which treated about the *Gospels*, Christianity and its message – despite not being fully empowered himself to do so by the authorities of the Danish Church. Let us remember, firstly, the discourses were published, which means that as a consequence they acquired the public character. This has a constitutive significance for this kind of statement (a speech, to be a speech, must be pronounced before the public). Secondly, considering the upbuilding role of Kierkegaard’s sermons, they fulfill their basic purpose: the annunciation of the Word of God. As to the remarks of the author these sermons, when referring to his not being properly ordained to preach them, his intention was no to be identified with this kind of solemnity. He was interested in the authority that the apostles and martyrs had had.

In this article, we wish, as far as its limited space lets us, to have a look at the structure of the chosen passages from two sermons of Kierkegaard as well as at the style of the language by means of which the philosopher announces

(*What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word*), [in:] *Later Works*, op. cit. p. 160. On this topic read more in K. Toeplitz, *Wiara Sorena albo dlaczego Kierkegaard nie mógł się przyznać do bycia chrześcijaninem (The Faith Of Søren, or Why Kierkegaard Couldn't Admit To Being A Christian)*, [in:] *W kręgu Kierkegarda (In The Circle Of Kierkegaard)*, science editor A. Szwed, with the cooperation of B. Sochańska, Kęty 2014, pp. 7–32.

⁴ A. Wantuła, *Outline of Evangelical Homiletics*, op. cit., p. 45

the Evangelical truths. We also want to point to the problems with communicating these truths, and examine if and in what way can the style of the language of sermons help to overcome the paradoxes and antinomies accompanying this kind of speeches, thus intensifying the communicativeness of God's World. What is essential, the Dane's speeches surpass the homiletic aspect aiming towards the literary and philosophical perspective. This is particularly visible when he speaks about the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, or while demonstrating the difference between the aesthetic attitude and the ethical-religious one. Speech is for Kierkegaard the tool for communicating phenomena that are inaccessible directly for the human cognition, like God, man, Holy Spirit, existence, faith. Moderating skillfully the language of his statements, Kierkegaard communicates the contents that in the natural language are intersubjectively incommunicable.

The material aspect of the Kierkegaard's sermons

Every sermon refers to the specific text of the *Scripture*. While getting down to writing on a particular *passus*, Kierkegaard does not take it as a motto, nor as a loose, disobliging *à propos* of the speech being composed. It constitutes for him the spring from which each sentence of the lesson flows out, it is his inspiration. Kierkegaard selects fragments of the text in such a way so that they give the possibility of the deepest stirring of the conscience of the listeners, deepening their reflection, which, in its essence, is attention and mindfulness, directed towards the activity of mind and awareness, as well as towards what happens within the individual. The problem is how to induce the receiver to stand in the truth and stop telling lies to himself/herself. Selecting fragments of the *Gospels* for his speeches, Kierkegaard proceeded purposefully and systematically. He avoided randomness and subordinated the whole content of the text to the announcement of Christ and His teaching, as well as the Christianity in its original – unadjusted to the contemporaneity – form, appealing to high requirements imposed on adepts of Christendom in the first centuries after Christ.

In the first sermon, *Apostolic Lesson*, intended for the fifth Sunday after Easter, the Dane brings up an essential fragment from the Epistle of James, called James the Younger, a relative of Jesus Christ and the superior of the Jerusalemite Church. The fragment comes from the first chapter, beginning with twenty-second verse. Among others, we read in it:

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was”⁵.

The text from the Epistle of James the Apostle served Kierkegaard as a foundation of the sermon entitled: *What Is Required In Order To Derive True Benediction From Beholding Oneself In The Mirror Of The Word*⁶. During the first phase of the work on the speech, the author must have made the analysis of the quoted fragment of the Letter. From the point of view of the future content of the sermon, it is an essential question; therefore, it was necessary to extract – from the evoked *passus* – the main issue that would have to constitute the aim of the contemplation⁷, otherwise called scopus, defined also as dominant feature or a nucleus of sermon. The purpose of speech is not a detailed analysis of the text but discovering and focusing on its main intention. It is essential to formulate the scopus plainly, subordinating lateral topics to it, and that is what Kierkegaard does. His task is to tie the past and the present together.

When the exegesis of the *Scripture* needed it, the philosopher often referred to an allegorical lecture, which is one of the most difficult forms of lecturing. It consists in attributing a double sense to a given fragment. The assumption is made that particular fragments of the *Scripture* have double meaning: the external one – literal, and the deeper one – hidden, which would be only necessary to reveal as the proper content and meaning of the text. An allegorical lecture usually omits the historical sense, which naturally exhibits it

⁵ Jam. 1,22–24: *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and the New Testaments*. Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared & Revised. Set Forth in 1611 and Commonly Known as the King James Version. Polish transl. of the Bible, Jak 1,22–24: *Biblia to jest Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu*, nowy przekład z jęz. hebrajskiego i greckiego oprac. przez Komisję Przekładu Pisma Świętego, Towarzystwo Biblijne w Polsce, Warszawa 1975.

⁶ *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word*, op. cit., p. 160.

⁷ See: A. Jougan, *Słownik kościelny łacińsko-polski*, edition III changed and supplemented, Poznan – Warsaw – Lublin 1958, p. 610.

to understatements and dangerous – from the point of view of a determined profession – overinterpretations⁸.

In the above-mentioned sermon for the fifth Sunday after Easter, Kierkegaard makes use of a story from the *Old Testament* – while building an allegorical lecture – about King David, who falls in love with the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba. Uriah stands in the way to the desired woman. The great king decides to send him to death. Kierkegaard does not hesitate to modernize the parable, used in his sermon, adjusting it by the same token to the contemporaneity aiming at both enriching the plot, and optimization of the comprehensibility of the *biblical* contents, for example, by weaving into it appropriate dialogues. According to the vision of the Danish thinker, the both heroes, the Prophet and King David, are writers, educated people, and intellectualists. The Prophet wishes to submit his short story to the King, who is a famous poet, a recognized and admired judge. The story describes a short history of two men. The Prophet reads it out loud in front of the King. One of the heroes of the story is a wealthy man, an owner of numerous herds of cattle. The second of them is a man living modestly. He has only one lamb at his disposal, brought up in his house and treated almost like a member of the family. One day the rich man wants to entertain the exquisite guest who arrived at his palace and decides to make a feast. And there he ordered to kill this only lamb belonging to the poor man, so as to serve it properly prepared on the table. Through the medium of this allegory, the Dane wants to point to and discuss the differences between what is objective and what is subjective. The latter exerts an inestimable influence on the proper assimilation of the Word of God, with the personal commitment. The commitment urges one to make the communicated content of the *Scripture* come true immediately and feel oneself its addressee, “the one to whom it is spoken”. Something else happens, when it is read in the objective way, which after all – in the opinion of the sermon’s author – was done by King David; then an individual looks at the Word with indifference. The Word’s content does not resonate in the human being, then. This content is not read as personally directed to the Individual⁹.

⁸ See: A. Wantuła, *Outline of Evangelical Homiletics*, op. cit., p. 82. In the *New Testament* the example of an allegorical lecture is told by Jesus in the parable on darnel (Mat. 13,36–43); other places are: Gal. 4,21–31; I Cor. 10,4; II Cor. 3,13–16.

⁹ See: *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word*, op. cit., p. 181–182.

In turn, keeping in mind the formal aspects of a sermon, Kierkegaard starts writing it by drawing again from the content of the text of the *Scripture's*, intended for a given Sunday or a holiday. The content-related plan of the speech requires, besides the explicating part (*explicatio*), taking into account the part concerning the application (*applicatio*), in other words, the connection between the past and the present, conferring a new dimension on the words, which the text of the *Scripture* sends to us. It is a question of contemporizing the message.

He gave the discussed speeches the shape of thematic homilies, which were the most popular forms of a sermon in 19th century and until today they have been recommended as the best form of the Evangelical sermon. The thematic homily is the juxtaposition of a homily and a thematic sermon. The lecture of the Word tends to catch up as upbuilding with the former, and it follows the latter as regards the theme¹⁰. Both of the discussed speeches concern the topics that Kierkegaard developed and composed all by himself: “*What is required in order to derive true benediction from beholding oneself in the mirror of the Word*” and “*It is The Spirit Who Giveth Life*”.¹¹ At the same time, both texts are deeply embedded in the *Scripture*, successively Jam 1,22–27; Acts 1,1–12.

The speech *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word* concerns restoring the significance of the role actions play in the life of the Individual, who, if he wants to see himself in the mirror of the Word, that is, read it, and not study, should fulfill what it says to him, forthwith. In turn, in the speech *It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*, the main idea of the sermon touches on the question of the Spirit, enlivening, and giving the power and the strength to meet fully the high demands that are imposed by Christianity on every existing Individual.

Each of them is preceded by a preface constituting an introduction into the subject of the sermon. In the speech, Kierkegaard wants to encourage listening to the whole of the text, to arouse interest and to intrigue with its content. At the same time, he does not speak about anything that will be spoken about in the principal part of the meeting. In the introduction to *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself...*, Kierkegaard pauses, among others, on the question regarding a well-written speech. This one cannot be preached, if one does not live out the Christian contents or if one does not harness the Christian

¹⁰ See: A. Wantuła, *Outline of Evangelical Homiletics*, op. cit., p. 102.

¹¹ See: S. Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination: Recommended to the Contemporary Age*. III. Dz. Ap. 1, 1–12. [*It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*] [in:] *Late Works*, op. cit., p. 211–227.

contents into the practice of life. The strength and the edifying power of the Word, as the author of the sermons claims, is not hidden in the studied phrases and sentences arranged according to the best rhetorical or theoretical art, nor in the highly learned knowledge of the subject of statement. Then, the speech is reduced, first of all, to the “exaggerated eloquence”. “The authentic Christian speaker” lives on what he preaches. He knows what he says because his every word grows out of the everyday practice. In the end, Kierkegaard does not impose anything on the listeners¹² – if only they approve of the words of introduction, they may read on towards upbuilding.

The formal and stylistic aspects of the Kierkegaard’s sermons

The Evangelical homiletics states that “a sermon is the announcement of the Word of God, the announcement of Christ”¹³. The only source from which it should flow is the *Holy Scripture*. The anchoring of a sermon in the *Bible* is what differentiates a preacher from a speaker, and a preached sermon from a speech. The latter derives its content and inspiration from the head and the heart, is the creation of the human spirit, *logos*¹⁴, the thinking of which proceeds in agreement with the human construction of reasoning, conceptualising, “thinking like people think”. God’s Word is the Word of Life, is Christ Himself. The Word – Christ, as Jean-Luc Marion writes, does not preach the Word but speaks about Himself as about the Word. Speaking, He creates and in this way acts “He doesn’t say a word but speaks about Himself. (...). It suffices that He speaks [about Himself] and He already creates something. (...). And so He acts, letting speak, and speaks, letting act”¹⁵. According to Marion, we cannot understand the Word as the language of God, neither following the logic of words of the human speech, nor their meaning. The more people understand that the Word should speak to them in the terms that describe the human world, the more the reason suspends understanding of the plainly and clearly uttered words, or the ones confronted with the Word. It

¹² See: *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word*, op.cit., p. 154.

¹³ A. Wantuła, *Outline of the Evangelical Homiletics*, op. cit. p. 14.

¹⁴ See: M. Grzegorzewska, *Teologie Szekspira (Theologies of Shakespeare)*, Kraków 2018, s. 65.

¹⁵ J.-L. Marion, *God Without Being*, transl. by Thomas A. Carson, Chicago and London, 1995, p. 142.

happens not so much because it is ineffable but because it refers to the Word, “whose incarnation at the same time occupies and transgresses at once the order of speech and of meaning. No human tongue can say the Said of God”¹⁶. Kierkegaard was perfectly aware of the deficiency of the sense of the human speech as confronted with the *Scripture*. Hence, his philosophical, theological and religious-ethical writing is saturated – to use the suitable expression by Edward Kasperski – with the “liberating negativity”¹⁷, which, according to the words of Frater Tacituirnus, rises itself above positiveness¹⁸. The latter refers to the laws of nature, objectively established facts, knowledge that something is such and such, that it was expressed in a positively indicating sentence. Positiveness, when transferred and applied as a method of grasping the reality that was oriented to the sphere of subjectivity, singularity and faith, remained in contradiction and conflict with the latter. That is why the Dane makes use of the tool of negation, which finds its prevalent employment on the ground of apophatics. This incommensurability was born from the fact that the things described by the Dane did not come within the science *sensu stricto*, did not subject themselves to objectivisation, conceptualisation and abstract thinking, proceeding according to the binary logic but transcended that sphere, locating themselves in the space of life, existence, faith, of that which is particular, contingent and multi-faceted. And, although life itself is something that is to some extent accessible to reason, tangible and, in part, comprehensible, susceptible to be tamed and grasped into a certain directly communicable whole, then with reference to the issues related to metaphysics, without which one cannot talk about existence, and therefore about self-awareness, about spirit and freedom, about death and dying, about finitude and eternity, about sinfulness and guilt, about meaninglessness and emptiness of being – from all of that, the reason, in this case, withdraws, as well as from the hitherto prevailing strategy of thinking in the categories of what is represented plainly and clearly, giving voice to its second nature. Let us call this nature supraintellect, which, in the studies of

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 142.

¹⁷ See: E. Kasperski, *Kierkegaard jako apofatyk i dekonstrukcjonista. Konteksty, rozwiązania, konsekwencje* [in:] *Aktualność Sørensa Kierkegaarda w filozofii, teologii, literaturze – w 200. rocznicę urodzin*, edited by M. Hintz, M. Urbańska-Bożek, Gdańsk – Sopot 2013, p. 104.

¹⁸ See: ibidem, p. 104.

this kind of phenomena, chooses the way that is opposite to the natural orientation of the movement of the reason ascending upwards, towards the idea. This intellect descends towards the subjective, the particular, the indefinable, beyond the universality, beyond what is absolute.

The Dane noted down in his *Diary*: “The most important characteristic of a sermon is not to restore peacefulness, not to achieve any metaphysical position but to prepare the ground for action”¹⁹. In his sermons, he contains the description of matters and truths connected with Christianity and its announcement. Christianity postulated by Kierkegaard was, in its essence, not to constitute a doctrine but a task which could not be communicated in a direct way but it was possible to point at it indirectly, as at an “existential event”, a “way”, which cannot be expressed otherwise than through paradox, negation, denial, and the so-called deconstruction, with this assumption, however, that one deconstructs in order to build the spirit, to invigorate it, to place Christianity on an already new foundation that was supposed to be the Individual, in the way that was unmediated and subjectively related to faith, God, and the Word of God.

Let us look attentively at the discourse, where the philosopher undertakes the risky task – the deconstruction of the external layer of signification of the language of *Gospels*, in order to extract its deep sense. Kierkegaard in the speech *It Is The Spirit Who Giveth Life* begins with the analysis of the meanings of the term “spirit”. He makes subtle distinctions among “the spirit of time”, “the spirit of the world”, “the evil spirit”, and “The Holy Spirit”. This endeavour eliminates the possible misunderstandings relating to the hermeneutics of these expressions and prepares the “groundwork” for the contents belonging to the principal core of speech. The title of the sermon: “*It Is The Spirit Who Giveth Life*”, refers to the Gospel of John 6,63: “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life”. Kierkegaard intends to preach about the life the giver of which is the Holy Spirit. The listener can feel calm, the title does not predict anything disquieting, and the topic is interesting and “timely”. Nothing interests a human being more than the questions of prolonging and intensifying the manifestations of one’s own life. How to secure the eternal life for oneself, how to enter the circle of the saved, how much one has to “pay” in order to be given the

¹⁹ S. Kierkegaard, *The Diary* IV. A. 234, comp. W. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, transl. by J.A. Prokopski, Kęty 2011, p. 309.

promise of the continuity of life, to receive this kind of the “gentle consolation”²⁰? Kierkegaard, however, in the first sentences already deprives the listener of any illusions about the “price” that should be “paid” to receive the life the Spirit brings in return. He methodically discusses the successive stages of dispossessing a singular human being from oneself and from life because the Spirit “giveth life through death”²¹. However, the Individual does not die because life lasts further, and “this is worse than death, which puts an end to life, whereas I am as dead, and in spite of that, and yet not dead”²².

The crucial words, like death and life, get a new meaning, which must be reread from the level of eternity. Their new sense reveals itself to us only when we acquire the Christian perspective from the level of the so-called “ultimate concern”²³, which focuses itself on eternity and on God. A reader of the sermon stands before the paradox of communication. According to the new nomenclature, life is death, and even something worse than death – it is dying away. It does not mean that everything has passed, that life of a human being has come to an end but that with the thing of “dying away”, it is by no means all over with, for he does not die, there lies perhaps a long life before him the deceased²⁴. Now, life is a state of death. After the Individual died from oneself and from the world, renouncing one’s essence, after all of that, the Spirit comes and brings a new life. But the Individual remains still dead (dead to the World). This death is a paradoxical life (life for God). “The Spirit who gives life visited them, however, they are still similar to the dead”²⁵. Here it clearly comes to the exchange of meanings of the two opposites, life and death, which leads to arising the above-mentioned paradox of communication. Death, “seeing itself” in the eternity, is life (for God), although in the everydayness, in the worldliness, still denotes itself, the end of everything that life carries with itself. In turn, life, which sees itself in the eternity, is death (with regard to the world), although it also, here, in the everydayness, preserves its original sense.

²⁰ *It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*, op. cit., p. 219.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 219.

²³ The term is borrowed from Paul Tillich. See: *Idem, Dynamics of Faith*, Harper, New York 1957.

²⁴ *It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*, op. cit., p. 219.

²⁵ See: *Ibidem*, p. 216.

The Dane subjects other categories, like faith, hope, and love to similar experiments. The author of the sermon made use of the category of “being deceased”²⁶, understood as the intermediate state or the state of suspension between life and death. All the terms gain new meanings, which enable Kierkegaard to proceed to and get the listeners acquainted with the basic core of speech. The thinker develops upon it and adds a way of changing meanings of the three mentioned virtues, as well as demonstrates that the Christian categories do not adhere to the language people employ on the daily basis. This results in people’s entanglement in the paradoxes making it impossible to intercommunicate.

Constructing the main body of a sermon, the Protestant theologian grounds it in the *Holy Scripture*, however, draws upon his own Christian practice, too. It makes itself visible especially at these moments, when he speaks about love and the great pain of giving it up, which is the manifestation of self-denial as the necessary condition of being a Christian as well as the fundamental expression of the Christian way. In the speech *It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*, Kierkegaard uses his own example to show the way in which, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the transformation of the affection he felt for Regina took place. He had to reject her, the one whom he loved more than life: “Let go of this object!”. He was to resign of his own accord, though against himself. A similar situation happens to Abraham, here Kierkegaard again makes reference to the *Scripture*, in order to support in this way his own testimony with the authority coming from the *Bible*. Now God willed to demand a sacrifice from Abraham, and the one of his own beloved son, Isaac. “In this case death could not make the similar pain – the Dane writes – father or mother, having to sacrifice voluntarily their love – the child – at the sacrificial altar?”²⁷. It is worthwhile to reflect on this fragment for a while longer. What, in its essence, did the qualitative transformation of the affection that Søren felt for Regina, and Abraham for Isaac, consist in? According to Kierkegaard, love is the highest expression of the human essence²⁸, our supreme awareness speaks through it. In the speech *It Is The Spirit One Giveth Life*, containing the story about a love of a young boy for a girl, Kierkegaard reifies the figure of Regina, treating her like an object of love, which suggests that allegedly earlier in this relationship the

²⁶ It means, more or less: „as if I were dead”.

²⁷ See: *Ibidem*, p. 218.

²⁸ See: *Ibidem*, p. 216.

woman constituted a subject. Well, not so; for Søren, Regina was an object of love in the period when they were engaged. It was a love through and through aesthetic, sensual, passionate, it touched the lovers deeply, it was perhaps connected also with the abandonment to the other person but it was a reifying and self-loving love because it was not mediated by the love of God. During that, let us call it, the aesthetic period, both parties of this amorous relationship treated each other objectifyingly. The state of reification is the reference point as well as the point of departure for this concrete love story. As it was said, it is the esthetic, sensual, reifying love that constitutes the counterpoint for the love as the relationship having the ethical and subjective character.

That is why Kierkegaard, describing his initial attitude for Regina, uses the expression: “object of love”. What happened after he, having been influenced by the Spirit, revalued again his feeling for Regina, was the second birth – the revival. Søren’s love for Regina never passed away but it entered another stadium – the stadium of the subjectifying love. Referring to examples of love – whether to that of two lovers, or to the fatherly love – Kierkegaard wishes to show, what the qualitative transformation of the feeling of love under the influence of the Holy Spirit should consist in²⁹. Naturally, this implies the signification transformation of the word “love”, which one may define, before the Holy Spirit stepping-in, as the love understood in the categories of possessing and of the merchant economy. After the signification metamorphosis, the accent is put on entering into the state of self-denial, dying away, renunciation accompanying love; persisting in it, in the complete renouncement of the object of love and entering, by virtue of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the state of the love, subjectifying and mediated by God.

In the speech *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself*, the scopus was composed by Kierkegaard on the basis of the Epistle of James, the Apostle. It is a question immediately followed by an answer:

“What is required in order to watch yourself with the true blessing in the mirror of the Word?

First of all, what is required is, that thy must not focus on the mirror, not look at the mirror, but see thyself in the mirror”³⁰.

²⁹ See: *Ibidem*, p. 219.

³⁰ See: *What Is Required In Order To Watch Oneself With The True Blessing In The Mirror Of The Word*, op. cit., p. 168.

A stylistic device of this kind (an immediate answer to a question asked earlier by a preacher) has as its purpose to give a certain expression to the statement, to point at his commitment to faith.

In order to present a proper method of reading the *Holy Scripture*, the author of the sermon refers to an analogy. A beloved man receives a letter from his beloved woman. However, the letter was written in the language that is unknown to him. What does he do, then? Does he read the letter in the original language? Does he ask anyone to translate it? Or does he provide himself with dictionaries and other necessary recourses, sit down at the desk and read word by word, join them in sentences, and single-handedly translate the contents, so precious to him? Naturally, he chooses the third option. However, can reading a letter in this way, through the intermediation of dictionaries, be called reading a letter from one's beloved? Well, not so. The beloved reads the letter after finishing the translatory work. It is just then that he will close himself in his room and read it with excitement in its entirety. For there is a difference between reading a letter from one's beloved with the help of a dictionary in one's hand and reading the letter alone, as the Danish theologian ascertains. It is that which the analogy is based on, the one that Kierkegaard noticed between reading the letter from one's beloved and reading the *Holy Scripture*, as well as between reading the letter with the help of a dictionary in one's hand and reading or rather studying the *Scripture* with the help of innumerable learned commentaries. The Copenhagen thinker does not confine himself to this one analogy but he outlines the next one, though he does not abandon that either; on the contrary, he develops it in the subsequent threads of his thought. He emphasizes that there was a certain request contained in the letter from the girl to her beloved. This motif will serve the Dane to demonstrate in what a perverse way the concrete indications contained in the *Scripture* are approached. For this purpose, Kierkegaard asks a question, how far shall we proceed in our eagerness to fulfil indications contained in the *Holy Scripture*? At this place, the preacher makes the listener conscious of their lack of commitment to good deeds and their realization. He does it by making yet another analogy, invoked *à propos*, which outlines a figure of a diligent and capable pupil and of a lazy one, being the type of a procrastinator. The former, excited about the request of the teacher, sits down to do work immediately and performs it twice as diligently. The latter reflects on how far he should go in developing on a given topic and, in order to establish it, he wastes the whole afternoon on consulting this issue with his school friends, and ultimately he does not manage to do his homework

on time. Will the teacher reprimand the former – the preacher asks – who has performed more than he should have done, and will he praise that one who did nothing because of his doubts? The teaching that results from these stories is such that a simple man has this comfort and luck that he can read the *Scripture* itself, and can without delay take to execute its commandments, despite the fact that a part of its contents remains unintelligible for the reader. One should, first of all, comply with that which is comprehensible. Such a proceeding guarantees that a human being will not watch the mirror but oneself in the mirror of the Word³¹.

Kierkegaard made use in his speeches of a symbolic language but also of a metaphoric discourse with numerous criptocitations, for example the ones of Luther, of Martensen, or of Mynster: “the quiet hour”, “faith is something disquieting”. He referred to etymologies of words, made the appropriate differentiations among their meanings, like in case of the category of “spirit”. He reached for expanded analogies and comparisons, which he constructed based on parables taken from the *New and Old Testament*.

The text of the Danish philosopher’s sermons serves the function that is not only prophetic, impressive, but also expressive. His “discourses” carry with them a huge emotional charge, pointing at the affective commitment of their creator, which may be testified by a very great number of sentences and exclamatory particles: “no, no, no!”, “I think this man is crazy!”, “Oh! Phooey!”, “The solitary man!”, “oh witness to the truth!”, “alone with the God’s Word!”. We notice also numerous ellipses and semicolons that may attest to the intention of suspending voice. Kierkegaard is an “orator” having consciousness of his emotions, feelings, their intensity, as well as the importance of that which he speaks/writes about. The emotional characterization of the contents of sermons had as its goal to influence the affective sphere of their reader. This was to be served by the methodical subjectivism in presenting the contents of sermons, as well as his own views on the state of Christianity of that time. For this reason, Kierkegaard does not shun the expression of indignation, disagreement, sometimes anger. He often resorts to irony and negatively imbued vocabulary in order to arouse psychological discomfort in the recipient to make them feel “uneasy”. The strong saturation of the text with nouns like: “lust”, “death”, “deceased”, “self-denial”, “loneliness”, “fear and trembling”, etc., is the cause of the fact that even when the reward in the form of consolation,

³¹ See: *Ibidem*, p. 169 and next.

hope, grace and the new life that the Holy Spirit brings with Himself are discussed, the feeling of disquietude, associated with the impossibility of fulfilling such severe and highly prohibitive demands of the *Gospels*, does not leave the reader but all the more fills them with anxiety.

The preacher addresses directly a reader, always only a reader, never readers: “My dear Reader”, “My dear Friend”. The philosopher is anxious for the language not to constitute a barrier in communication, and that is why he avoids any theoretical jargon, stylistic pathos and truisms. He adjusts it to the contemporaneity, takes also into account concrete situations of everyday life. Thanks to the contemporization and fabularization of some biblical parables, they make such an impression as if they were taking place just before the eyes of a listener/a reader. Being a keen observer, knowledgeable of the human psyche, he can perfectly empathize with an emotional state of another human being. He is intriguing and skillfully incites interest in the contents with which the recipients are perfectly familiar.

The great number of interrogative sentences may testify to the fact that speeches of the Danish philosopher are oriented to dialogue, triggering reflection and unaided answer to an earlier posed question. While it is true that he often addresses a reader in the second person singular form, which could perhaps make an obstacle in building dialogue with him/her, nevertheless he more frequently expresses himself in the first person, points at himself as the main recipient of the message: “This priest is me. Alas, how could I be so uncompassionate”, “This refers to me”. Kierkegaard also does not evade the expression of his own indignation, disagreement, sometimes anger, as far as the present condition of Christianity is concerned.

Conclusions

The function that Kierkegaard attributed to his discourses, did not diverge from the one that should be fulfilled by every exemplary Evangelical sermon, that is, to announce the Gospel and Christ, as well as to play an edifying role with reference to the Christian spirit – everyone who calls oneself a Christian.

While writing his discourses, Kierkegaard made use of a language functioning on two semantic levels. On the first of the levels, it had the natural meaning, such as that which we employ on the daily basis in our contacts with other people. The expressions belonging to the second level were given sense by the Christian aspect of perception of the reality, which diametrically

changed the optics of looking at it. The change of this optics caused the generation of communication paradoxes, which the Dane constructed masterfully. On the one hand, Kierkegaard applies a language that is natural and unconstrained, also literary, often dialogic, rich in comparisons and metaphors. Besides, texts of sermons contain numerous dialogues, allegories and stories composed “off the top of his head” or based on parables from the *Old* and *New Testament*. On the second hand, Kierkegaard says not what he says but refers to something else, to the world hidden for the human eye, the world that cannot be described by means of the natural language. Hence, the style of his sermons has as its end the to reinforce the power of the nonverbal transition of the Evangelical contents and breaking, in part, the impossibility of communicating the paradox that is Christianity, as well as the incommensurability between the *Gospel* and the reality/the worldliness. It is a murky road, depriving and denuding of the hitherto prevailing concepts and images. That language carries with itself the “inverted message”, which not so much undergoes a conceptual analysis as enters the sphere of the nonverbal cognition on the level of feelings and intuitive vision. The paradox might be defined as the reason of the heart; as the thought that is internalised, experienced and united with the ability of profound sensing. It is not irrational but suprarational, it is not intellection but an ecstasy, delight and the exaltation of the thought that is exceeding the limits of the pure reason and transgressing the limits of the “clairvoyant” reason. Therefore, even if Kierkegaard did not have at his disposal any other kind of communication except for the indicated natural language, he had to modify it, provide it with greater expressiveness so as to set aside the curtain a little, and allow more light to enter the cave for the shadows to be able to dance again.

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