

Nine Characteristics of an Unconditional Commitment

1. Defines who you are as an individual.
2. Gives you a world calling for significant actions needing to be performed.
3. Cannot be mediated, i.e. put into concepts.
4. The passion produces its object. To be adorable a person must be adored. The “how” of the relation produces the “what”. Truth is subjectivity.
5. The accidental becomes necessary.
6. The Instant restructures your experience of time.
7. You experience eternity in time. “Only in existing do I become eternal.” (Postscript, p. 509.)
8. The relation is irreversible.
9. To give your life day-to-day meaning the commitment must be to something finite and temporal, but then it is necessarily vulnerable.

Huckleberry Finn’s Suspension of the Ethical

Huckleberry Finn's internal struggle about saving Jim from slavery is a classic American literary example of a suspension of the ethical. Here is a relevant passage from the novel, midway through Chapter XVI, after Huck first starts out to turn Jim in, doesn't, then redirects some slave hunters away:

They went off and I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don't get STARTED right when he's little ain't got no show--when the pinch comes there ain't nothing to back him up and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat. Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s'pose you'd a done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad--I'd feel just the same way I do now.

Here is the climactic passage in Chapter XXXI after Huck writes a letter telling Jim's owner Mrs. Watson where her runaway is:

I took it up, and held it [the letter betraying Jim] in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll GO to hell"--and tore it up.

It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming.

Movies with Kierkegaardian themes

“**M**” – 1931, directed by Fritz Lang.

“**Ordet**” (The Word) - 1955 Danish film, directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer.

“**Bigger than Life**” – 1956, directed by Nicholas Ray.

“**A Man and a Woman**” (Un homme et une femme) - 1966 directed by Claude Lelouch.

“**The Story of Adele H.**” (L'Histoire d'Adèle H.) - 1975 directed by François Truffaut.

“**The Shining**” - 1980 directed by Stanley Kubrick, based on Stephen King's novel of the same name.