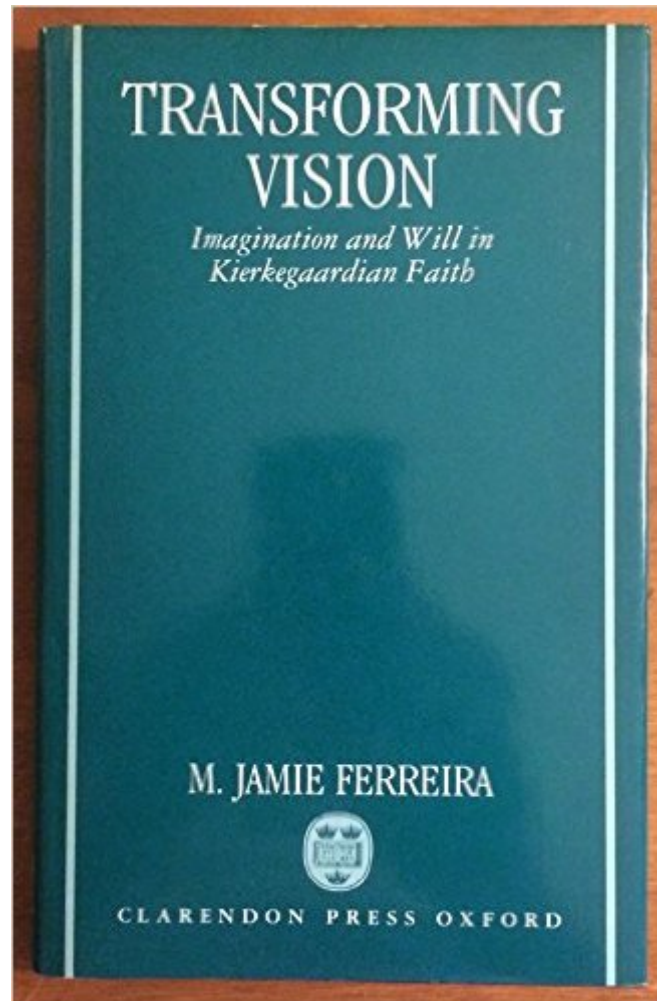


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Transforming Vision: Imagination And Will In Kierkegaardian Faith



Synopsis

The metaphor of a "leap of faith" is probably the element most widely recognized as a distinctive characteristic of a "Kierkegaardian" account of the transition to religious faith. Both in popular and scholarly circles this "leap" has usually been understood in terms of an act of will-power.

Challenging such a volitionalist view, as well as some current alternatives to it which see instead only an ineffable "miracle" of grace, Ferreira argues that Kierkegaard's striking appreciation of a variety of roles of imagination supports a reconceptualization of the "leap" or "decision" in terms of a reorienting shift in perspective, an imaginative revisioning. Exploring the relation between passion and paradox in several of Kierkegaard's accounts of selfhood, and developing an account of transitional choice in which imagination is a constitutive element, Ferreira elaborates an understanding of the faith-transition in terms of such imaginative activities as "suspension," "synthesis," and "engagement." The analysis of imaginative activity in these ethical and religious transitions has, moreover, implications which go beyond Kierkegaard scholarship, for it bears importantly not only on other "conversion" accounts, but also on the question of transitions to alternative or incommensurable conceptual frameworks in general.

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Customer Reviews

This work by M. Jamie Ferreira is one of the two main books that have been written so far on the topic of the imagination in Kierkegaard's thought (the other being "Kierkegaard's dialectic of the imagination", by David Gouwens - a dissertation has also been written by Bryan Yorton). While the

other book mostly considered the imagination in Kierkegaard by describing it's workings in each of Kierkegaard's three well-known "stages of existence" (aesthetical, ethical and religious), this work centers mostly on the notion of *transition*. It speaks of how one passes from one stage to the other by focusing on the role imagination plays in the transition. Does it succeed? Only partially so, I believe. While this book contains many useful insights for understanding imagination in Kierkegaard (such as it's emphasis on how imagination is, according to Kierkegaard, meant to hold opposites in tension and that the individual subject must be included in the imagination's working toward a higher vision of things), it ultimately fails to accomplish one of it's main goal, namely to present an alternative concept of the will to the one commonly ascribed to Kierkegaard. Basically, Ferreira in her book goes against a concept of will as a pure capacity to decide and act, opting instead for a conception she herself ascribes to Ancient philosophers such as Aristotle: a conception of will as oriented toward a good and as desire. This brings her to a conception of the will in which the "leap" of which Kierkegaard speaks is more or less made into nothing more than a shift in perspective which happens (or not) once the necessary conditions are there.

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