

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

NEWSLETTER NO. 12

EDITOR: Louis Pojman

APRIL 1985

Philosophy and Religions
Philosophy Department
University of Mississippi
University, MS 38677



NEWS

Papers are being accepted for the Soren Kierkegaard Society to take place in Washington D.C. next December 27 - 30 in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association. Papers should be no more than 12 double spaced pages should be sent to Dean John Elrod, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia 24450. Deadline for submissions is July 1, 1985.

CONFERENCE ON KIERKEGAARD AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

The Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library and the Philosophy Department of St Olaf College announce that a conference on Kierkegaard will be held on the St Olaf campus October 3-5, 1985. The conference will focus on points of contact between Kierkegaard and contemporary philosophy, including analytic philosophy. Speakers include Paul Holmer, Robert Perkins, John Elrod, Louis Pojman, Merold Westphal, Alastair MacKinnon, and many others. Anyone wishing further information should write to C. Stephen Evans, Curator, Hong Kierkegaard Library, St Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057. There are a few spots on the program as chairs of sessions and respondents. If you would like to be included in this capacity, please enclose a vita with your letter to Professor Evans.

Copies of The Kierkegaard-Malantschuk Collection, Nos. 1 & 2 (microfiche of all first editions of Kierkegaard's works) are now available to private researchers and scholars at \$200 [U.S.]. Copies of the hard cover companion volume The Kierkegaard-Malantschuk Collection: An Introduction and Catalogue should soon be available to all at \$10 (U.S.). Please make checks payable to 'Inter Editions' and order from Inter Editions, 3005 Barat Road, Montreal, Canada, H3Y 2H4.

From Alastair MacKinnon, McGill University

We have received news from the Kierkegaard Bibliotek in Copenhagen that Prof. Niels Thulstrup has left the post of Director of the Soren Kierkegaard Library and a temporary Director has been appointed, Associate Professor Svend Bjerg. Those interested in studying at the library should contact Dr. Julia Watkin, Stenagervej 15, 2900 Hellerup, Denmark.

KIERKEGAARD IN NEW YORK

New York: city of high anxiety, aesthetic abstraction, sin, paganism, not to mention the sensuousness of the musical erotic; what better place for Kierkegaardians to gather to discuss despair and humor? And so they did; The Soren Kierkegaard Society, that is, for their annual meeting in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association on December 29, 1984. As I mentioned, the topics of discussion were despair and humor. The program was as follows:

I. Professor John Donnelly and Professor H. E. Baber of the University of San Diego: "Self-Knowledge and the Mirror of the World"
Commentator: Professor Ronald L. Hall, Francis Marion College

II. Professor Steven Evans, St. Olaf College: "Kierkegaard's View of Humor"
Commentator: Robert C. Roberts, Wheaton College

Professor Donnelly was scheduled to read the first paper, but was unable to attend the meeting. In his absence, the co-author, Prof. Baber, presented the paper. Prof. Baber, who was trained at John Hopkins University in identity theory, wrote the first part of the paper on the subject of identity. The second part which concentrates on despair was written by Prof. Donnelly. Both sections attempt to interpret Kierkegaard's Sickness Unto Death.

In the first part of the paper, Prof. Baber attempts to show that Kierkegaard's famous claim that the self is a relation that relates itself to its own self is an egregious logical mistake, although not unmotivated. "Intuitively, the self is not a relation at all, but rather a particular which has properties and enters into relations" (p. 3). In a hard-nose, no-nonsense analytical style, Prof. Baber proceeds to show that SK's notion of the self as a relation that relates itself to its own self is a consequence of his commitment to personal identity as a hyper-reflexive or "positive" relation. A positive identity relation holds on itself as well as on its first order relata. This is different from sortal relative identity of the form "X is the same F as Y." This latter identity is not hyper-reflexive, that is, it doesn't hold on itself. For example, if Mark Twain is the same person as Samuel Clemens, it follows that Mark Twain is a person and that Samuel Clemens is a person, but not that the relation is a person. Since SK claims that the self is a relation that holds on itself, he must think that personal identity is a positive identity relation and not a sortal relative identity relation. Hence, says Prof. Baber, "given Kierkegaard's commitment to the doctrine that personal identity is a positive relation, he must hold that the person—the self—is itself a relation" (p. 5). Baber thinks this is clearly counterintuitive, for as she contends, it is obvious that the self is a particular and not a relation.

Why was Kierkegaard motivated to hold such a counterintuitive doctrine that personal identity is hyper-reflexive? SK holds that one can be in despair either unconsciously or consciously. All consciousness is, however, for him, self-consciousness. In conscious despair, one is conscious of one's state of despairing self-consciousness, thus making consciousness in its reflective mode, hyper-reflexive. If this account of

consciousness is correct (Baber and Donnelly think that it is not), and given SK's further assumption that consciousness is criterial for personal identity, it follows that the relation of personal identity inherits the hyper-reflexive character of consciousness and thus that the self is a relation that relates itself to its own self.

The authors agree that the distinction between conscious and unconscious despair is crucial for SK's analysis, but argue that SK doesn't have to make consciousness hyper-reflexive in order to make the distinction. He could have held that conscious self-consciousness, as opposed to unconscious self-consciousness is not a state of a state of consciousness, but a different mode of self-consciousness of an individual. On this move, SK would not have been led to hold that the self is a relation that relates itself to its own self.

The second part of the paper concentrates on SK's supposed anti-rational fideism. Donnelly notes that for SK, to overcome despair one must understand it; that, however, only the true Christian can do; but the true Christian has already overcome despair and hence has no more need to overcome it. A suggestion is made to try to help SK out of this bind. SK must have meant that only the true Christian can fully understand despair, that despair can only be fully grasped when it is overcome, though it could not have been overcome at all unless it was at least partially understood before it was overcome. But, how does one make the move from despair (partially understood) to overcoming despair (fully understanding it)? Donnelly suggests that for SK it is by "losing one's mind" in blind faith. This theme of SK's anti-rationalism, his fideism, is, he says, his most vulnerable weakness. The charge is familiar: SK sacrificed reason at the altar of blind faith.

Donnelly avers that SK's fideism destroys his otherwise "brilliant psychological forays in SUD into the nature of the self." The reason, he contends, is that SK conflated psychology and apologetics. His psychological insight was in his diagnosis of despair, his apologetics came by way of his proposed cure for it. Donnelly claims that SK's apologetic is fideistic. But, alas, the diagnosis and proposed cure are so intertwined for SK that the fideism of the cure destroys the coherency of the diagnosis.

Here is the argument: SK holds: (1) Self-knowledge in the proper sense is essential for overcoming despair (one must be conscious of one's state of despairing self-consciousness); (2) Self-knowledge is dependent on God-knowledge (i.e., we can only know ourselves in the mirror of the Word); however, (3) because of SK's fideism, God-knowledge is impossible, i.e., there can be no rational belief in God, believing in God is, from the standpoint of rationality, absurd; (4) therefore, there can be no self-knowledge and hence no proper diagnosis of our own despair, much less a prospect for its cure. SK's psychological analysis collapses because of his fideism.

Prof. Hall's commentary made essentially three points: (1) he objected to the "analytical" approach to SK; (2) he questioned why the authors ignored the fact that in SUD in the very next line after SK says that the self is a relation that relates itself to its own self, he says explicitly that the self is not the relation, but that in the relation that relates itself to itself; positively, he suggested, that what Baber takes to be obvious, namely, that the self is a particular, might be regarded by SK as an abstract view of the self; what Hall reads SK to be saying is that for him, the self is not a particular, and not a relation either, rather the self is somehow ontologically constituted as a particular insofar as it is in relation to the other (in particular, God); (3) the charge that SK is a fideist may betray the authors' own Enlightenment picture of rationality, according to which the "subjective" participation of the knower is thought to compromise objectivity; Hall suggested that SK may be

working against not the rational, but against the Enlightenment view of rationality; perhaps SK is working for a more profound notion of the rational, a notion wherein the truth is made manifest and becomes fully actual only in a reflexively qualified relationship to a subject who appropriates it and gives it voice in a community of persons.

The second paper, "Kierkegaard's View of Humor" by Steven Evans advanced two theses: (1) that there is an essential connection between humor and human existence, and (2) that there is an essential connection between humor and the religious life.

Before discussing these theses, Evans gives a general survey of some basic philosophical theories of humor. Following the typology of John Morreall's book Taking Laughter Seriously, he discusses three types of humor theories: (1) relief theories; (2) superiority theories and (3) incongruity theories. These theories are not mutually exclusive.

SK's theory falls mostly in the incongruity type, though he incorporates significant elements from the other two types. Humor, for SK, provides a "way out" of the trap of the incongruity or contradiction and so provides "relief" and a superior vantage point.

Evans now advances his first thesis, that humor is essentially linked to human existence. The reason, says Evans, that humor is essential to human existence for SK, is that for him, contradiction (i.e., incongruity is essential to human existence). One can bear the tension of life, its pain, only with some sense of a "way out," of humor.

The second thesis concerns the essential link between humor and religiousness. In contrast to Morreall, who holds that humor is incompatible with religion, Evans claims that the two are not only compatible for SK, but essentially related. This is true, says Evans, not only for SK's religiousness A, but also for Christianity. Basically, it is grace in Christianity that makes it possible for the earnest individual to smile at the contradictions of life and of human effort at extrication. The paper ends with the claim that Woody Allen is a good example among contemporary humorists of one who fits SK's description of the humorist.

The response to Evans' paper was by Robert Roberts, who at the outset of his presentation stated that agreed with Evans' paper. Thus he would direct his response to a critique of two theses in Morreall's book on humor: (1) "First 'the person with a sense of humor will...live with the awareness that nothing is important in an absolute way'. Since for Christians the kingdom of God and being fit for it are important in an absolute way, Christians have no sense of humor" (p. 1); (2) "Secondly, God cannot have a sense of humor because, being omniscient, he cannot be surprised by incongruities, and surprise is an essential part of 'the psychological shift that is behind laughter' (125)." Roberts' claim is that both of these theses are false. He attempts to show that humor is not incompatible with being ultimately serious about life, paralleling Evans' thesis about the compatibility of human and Christianity in SK. In the second case, Roberts agrees that God, being omniscient cannot be surprised, but argues that surprise is not essential to perceiving incongruities as humorous. Since the first paper was so long, there was little time for discussion after the presentations. Two or three questions were directed to Evans, whose paper seemed to spark the most interest among the audience.

Ronald L. Hall
Francis Marion College

Pojman, Louis P. The Logic of Subjectivity. University: University of Alabama Press, 1984. Pages ix + 174. \$17.50.

This crisp and provocative study of Kierkegaard's philosophy of Christianity takes on a number of crucial and difficult questions. Focus is placed upon the negative strategy of SK wherein reason dialectically undermines reason in order to clear a pathway to subjectivity and faith. According to the author, the essential theme running through SK's diverse writings is the concern with what it means to become a Christian. SK wanted to lead his readers to Christianity by negating other options or viable possibilities. His basic orientation in this "cause" was the traditional one of "faith seeking understanding."

In his youth SK, like Nietzsche after him, believed that Christianity rather than strengthening men, tended to emasculate them. But soon enough he began to see Christianity as a significant, puzzling and demanding possibility. A Christian existence requires a heterogeneity to the world, and it is a way of being that is chosen through the enabling power of grace. This is described as the "synergistic" nature of the man-God relation in SK's thought - a cooperative venture of human and divine activity.

Although Pojman argues that SK wanted to develop a Christian epistemology, he later contends that that epistemology actually was Platonic, accepting the idea of knowledge as "recollection." This latter emphasis backs into the problem of how this "potential knowledge" is acquired and raises the specter of "preexistence." More than that, it would lead to the paradox of SK embracing a theory of knowledge that gives priority to the universal and not the individual.

There are good discussions in this work of SK's attack on the Hegelian "logic of contradiction" and his criticism of the notion of ontological necessity in Philosophical Fragments. It is shown how SK neatly segregates the domains of logic and existence and affirms the contingency of actuality and freedom in the movement from potentiality to actuality. In regard to Hegel, it is argued that SK also accepts an Absolute that is accessible only to itself. A difference not mentioned is that, for SK, God is an Absolute Subject or "I", a being quite alien to Hegel's rational, Absolute 'God'. Insofar as SK holds to such a paradoxical Absolute, then, it cannot be said that contradiction is annulled in the absolute unity of God (p. 29).

One of Pojman's novel points is that there is in Kierkegaard an exclusive disjunction between an objective and a subjective standpoint. He calls this the "cognitive disjunctive thesis." This leads to a discussion of the distinction between the Socratic-Platonic idea that truth is implicitly present in man and the Christian view that history has decisive importance as the condition in which the "Teacher" penetrates time in "the Moment" of conversion. The absolute paradox of the Incarnation stimulates faith in one who responds to this Christian paradox. Here, and elsewhere, Pojman makes reference to other possible "nonsense" paradoxes (e.g., that God appeared in the form of an animal, an insect, etc.), but does not follow through on this point. But these paradoxes would seem to be ruled out by the fact that the absolute paradox of the incarnation must have profound human meaning. SK seems to accept the cultural context of Christianity and thinks of it as a "live option" (as James later says) that affirms an intimate relation between man and God and which induces maximal passion. Religions proclaiming that God appeared in non-human forms or in the form of a human moral monster are compatible with the popular, Hegelian religion of pantheism; but, it can be argued, that SK saw the nihilistic implications of such a loose pantheism in which paradox is obliterated along with individuality. Strictly speaking, the concept of a demonic deity (which is often brought up against

SK's emphasis of the paradox) would not be paradoxical, unless this supposed deity was believed to possess the qualities of the God of Christianity.

One of Pojman's strong theses is that faith is a matter of appropriation and assimilation and that the cognitive disjunct thesis entails that one choose either the way of subjectivity or objectivity, but not both. He argues that SK opts for subjectivity as the way to the truth, which, for him, results in faith in Christianity. On the question of uncertainty, Pojman correctly points out that we never can know whether our beliefs in religious-ethical matters are true. This "skepticism" seems central to SK's standpoint insofar as faith entails risk. This is why the heroic effort to show that SK uses reason to lead to the "knowledge" of the truth of Christianity, while original, is not convincing. SK needs uncertainty. Otherwise faith is superfluous. Again, Pojman's emphasis upon the discovery of "immanent truth", ethical or religious, goes against the grain of SK's repeated stress on uncertainty, contingency, risk, and the need to choose a telos that gives meaning and direction to our lives. "Maximal subjectivity" is said to be a necessary and sufficient condition for arriving at a metaphysical, ethical, or religious "truth." But this passionate conviction certainly does not warrant the truth of what is believed. Pojman actually questions himself when he wonders if "knowledge of the truth is not that important" for Kierkegaard. Being "in truth" or living truth, as is shown elsewhere, is surely central to what SK means by subjective truth. As is shown in Training in Christianity, it is held that, for a Christian point of view, it is the truth in life that is the highest "knowledge" of truth. But, of course, for SK only the "Prototype" (Christ) attained to full expression of truth in existence. In this regard, it is accurately pointed out that there can be, at best, a prolepsis in temporality of the highest good and, by implication, the highest truth. For this reason, incidentally, Pojman's efforts to scale the ladder to the truth of Christianity (by using SK's rungs) does not quite convince us. Direct access to the truth of God and of Christianity would seem to smack of a religious Prometheanism that SK eschews.

Pojman also treats the central problem of Fear and Trembling in a daring way, arguing that Abraham had good inductive grounds for acting on the advice of the "voice of God" that commanded him to sacrifice his son. This inventive, but questionable, resolution of the problem of Abraham's willingness to go beyond the ethical law is probably a result of the author's uneasiness about SK's view of Abraham's "divine madness" and his praise of the surpassing of ethics through religious faith. There is always the possibility that SK was testing the limits of religious faith in ET and even exposing the dangers of some forms of faith. At any rate, the resolution offered in this study is as highly debatable as it is novel.

One of the main arguments of this work has to do with volitionalism, the choosing of one's beliefs. According to the author, most, if not all, beliefs are events, things that happen to us, not things we choose. We believe a great deal that we do not willfully believe. Most of the cases that are offered actually do not touch upon the instances in which SK believes that we must will to believe something. He completely accepted the realm of empirical knowledge (adding that it only gives us approximate knowledge), and he accepted the notion of a priori truths. Will enters into believing when there is insufficient evidence available or when what is known does not decide the issue. Pojman does not introduce the cases raised by Descartes and the skeptics. Numerous false beliefs are engendered by evidence or situations. We see the bent oar under water, but we believe (willfully?) that the oar is not in fact bent. At any rate, Pojman does raise a good point: not all beliefs are a matter of an "act of will." The further discussion of the indirect voluntarism of beliefs and the moral responsibility for our beliefs tends to undercut Pojman's previous argument: if a prejudicial belief about an entire group of people is morally wrong, then presumably it has been

willfully adopted in spite of available evidence that would undermine it. When SK is talking about belief in a truth that has edifying significance for a person's life, he is clearly talking about an ultimate belief concerning an issue that cannot be resolved rationally or empirically. In the Postscript, for example, it is said that the natural world shows evidence of design and order, but it also indicates disorder, a lack of design, and negativities. Therefore, one cannot conclude on the basis of the evidence that the world is governed by a good, designing, intelligently providential God. A passing reference to James' will to believe in this context is quite appropriate since James may possibly have developed this notion under the indirect influence of the "Danish thinker" with whose ideas he was familiar. All in all, the author does show the restricted sense in which SK may consistently refer to belief as an "act of will."

The piece de resistance of The Logic of Subjectivity is a reconstructed argument that combines SK's irrationalist and suprarationalist positions in the form of a "rational justification for Christian belief" (p. 132). It is posited that the highest truth (i.e. the "eternal essential truth") can only be grasped subjectively. A subjective state of faith is the necessary and sufficient condition for attaining a "truth-relation" of this kind. This faith is intimately associated with the eternal telos of the self. Such a faith is intensified by the objective uncertainty of the centerpiece of Christian belief (the Absolute Paradox). Christian faith is constituted by being in this truth-relation. To exist in this truth-relation is to transcend time or to know the highest (eternal) truth. This is a "momentary" transcendence in which there is an existential unity of the finite and the infinite that surpasses ordinary existence. Such an ecstatic or "mystical" experience gains access, via passion-ate subjectivity, to eternal truth. Thus, the highest truth, the knowledge that Christianity is true, is grasped by means of reflective faith. The passion of faith transforms what was construed as "absurd" into a "kind of knowledge." Pojman claims that the "logic" of SK's argument (as reconstructed) leads from subjective passion to knowledge of the truth of Christianity. As heroic as this effort of reconstructing a thought-experiment is, it does not substantiate the truth of Christianity (even in SK's terms or in terms of his premises). The argument illustrates what it would be like to arrive at the subjective knowledge of eternal truth or the truth of Christianity, but it never leaves the circle of subjectivity. At best, the argument points to the truth of Christianity as a paradoxical possibility. The subjective sense of transcending time and arriving at a supralogical truth in an ecstatic "Moment" entails nothing about the actual truth or falsity of that to which this experience pertains. As sound as the logic of the argument may be with regard to the relationship of subjectivity and faith to eternal truth, it does not support the objectivity of its final truth-claim. SK himself tells us that that faith, as Pojman sometimes notices, is the center of the contradictory tension between a thought that is rationally objectively uncertain and the pathos of an intense subjective passion. This suggests that faith itself is paradoxical. The analysis of subjectivity cannot carry SK beyond the point of showing what a subjective knowledge of the eternal truth or the paradoxical truth of Christianity would be like. Even Pojman's sophisticated argument cannot perform the dialectical feat of convincing us that the subjective knowledge in faith has a truth-value outside the arcanum of existential religious experience.

There is much to quarrel with in The Logic of Subjectivity because it is a work that does not play it safe. But there is much more that is stimulating, provocative and challenging. Pojman's critical approach to SK is original in a number of respects. Although sympathetic to SK's general standpoint, Pojman is critical of many of the arguments and examines the intellectual and theoretical credentials with scrutiny.

George J. Stack
State University of New York, College at Brockport

Essays on Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein. ed. Richard Bell and Ronald Hustwit (Wooster: The College of Wooster, 1978), 126 p.

This brief but compact volume consists of eight essays and five responses to the essays. The somewhat loose theme connecting these essays is the notion of self-knowledge, as found in the inner-directed work of both SK and Wittgenstein. Due to paginal considerations, we have not commented on some interesting essays (e.g., Paul Holmer's "Wittgenstein and the Self") that do not directly deal with SK.

H. A. Nielsen's essay, "The Anatomy of the Self in Kierkegaard," is a meditation on SK's account of personhood. "The self," says SK in Sickness unto Death, "is a relation that relates itself to its own self...the self is not the relation, but consists in the fact that the relation relates itself to its own self."

What are we to say to this rather obscure dictum? As to the first clause, Nielsen interprets it as an expression of the suggestion that self-consciousness or, in his terminology, the capacity to "dialogue" with oneself, is essential for personhood. Locke, of course, said as much.

As to the second, even more obscure claim, Nielsen reads it as a gloss as to what constitutes genuine self-consciousness. Self-consciousness properly speaking, says Nielsen, is not merely a reflection of the self as perceived by others, the objective self as it were. A being who could only reflect other beings' images of himself is like a mirror turned upon another mirror, both mirrors representing an infinity of vacuousness. In order for there to be anything at all reflected "something like a third party" is needed to step in: "This capability, then, of monitoring my own self-dialogue, of 'stepping in' as we say, of taking a hand as a third party, is 'that in the relation which accounts for it that the relation relates itself to its own self'" (p. 7).

Nielsen's exposition is often obscure and needlessly tortuous. For example, his explication of the mirror metaphor wanders on for almost a page of text. Initially Nielsen envisages parabolic mirrors reflecting one another; midway through the passage the mirrors metamorphose into cameras and "a terribly intricate third piece of equipment" is introduced to develop the films and the like. If the mirror analogy was intuitively plausible at the outset, by the end of the passage it has been rendered hopelessly obscure. Nielsen anticipates this reaction: "Just at this point, someone might grumble, 'Look, who needs your schoolboy electronics and dinky Goldberg models?'" (p. 7). Indeed!

But instead of responding to this anticipated objection with some attempt to clarify his previous claims, Nielsen proceeds to make some unfortunate remarks about the possibility of artificial intelligence. Nielsen doubts "that engineers could design a mind-like unit satisfying SK's formula for the human self" (p. 8) on the grounds that, whatever its capacity to mimic human behavior or monitor its own inner states something more is needful. "What would it mean," he asks rhetorically, "to design a unit whose silences are charged with ressentiment, one that feels secretly outraged at being the one it is or—to take it in the other direction—passionately thankful?" (p. 8).

In response, we suggest, it could mean this: imagine a program which responded to some of its interrogator's questions by asking why its questioner was asking such questions and which systematically evaded questions on certain "sensitive" topics by remaining silent or changing the subject. Moreover, there is such a program, namely PARRY, which simulates the behavior of a paranoid and, in tests with trained psychotherapists, has succeeded in parrying their questions so well that the majority were fooled into thinking that they were communicating with a highly neurotic human

being. Resentment and outrage at being oneself can be simulated and, so, presumably, could passionate thankfulness. And if it be said that such programs would be mere simulations, it needs to be shown how they differ from the real thing. One cannot simply respond that they are mere simulations because they are mechanically contrived, if the point is to show that humans transcend the merely mechanical, because this would be to beg the question. Machines may indeed be inadequate, but they are not as crudely or obviously inadequate as Nielsen seems to think they are.

"Notes 1" is a meditation on what it is to be a subjective thinker in the form of an assemblage of philosophical fragments by O. K. Bouwsma, himself a subjective thinker of some note (The reader might profitably compare Richard Bell's "Understanding Fire-Festivals and Revelations." "Epigrammatic experiences like fire-festivals and revelations are, by and large, unconnected happenings. The connections for understanding them must come from within oneself and one's own world-picture" p. 97).

The message of a subjective thinker is prophetic rather than informative: it does not convey knowledge to the hearer as something from without but instead evokes recollection, bringing the auditor to himself; it does not bring intellectual satisfaction but rather inspires "concern and unrest." This is the burden of the Christian message: not peace, but what SK termed "blessed suffering;" not certainty, but Paradox.

SK thought his mission was to recall Christians to the Paradox, hence his polemic is directed against those who would domesticate Christianity into Christendom—and against Hegelians, who viewed Christianity as a competing philosophy. On Bouwsma's reading, with which we largely concur, SK has no objection to "objective" thinking or even to metaphysics as such. "The trouble lay in that those who had such a grand view regarded the scriptures...as presenting a more or less competing, but not so complete and grand, view of Reality" (p. 40). The mistake of liberal theologians, the apologists of Christendom, like that of the Hegelians, was to regard Christianity as a "philosophy."

Remarking upon the collapse of Christendom and the virtual extinction of Hegelians, Bouwsma in 1976 asks "is K's polemic obsolete?" No, says Bouwsma, because we too have "forgotten" what it means to be a person, what inwardness is. What SK found objectionable about Hegelian metaphysics and 19th century religious liberalism alike was that they drew the sting from Christianity, that they represented attempts to render innocuous the religious mechanism for bringing persons back to themselves. And the impulse to escape from oneself into objectivity and busyness, to live world historically, though manifest in different projects, is still with us.

Again, we are inclined to agree. Who would SK's contemporary adversaries be? Perhaps the Fundamentalists who rail against "secular humanism" and other "atheistic philosophies" strongly suggesting that they regard Christianity as a competing, albeit superior, "philosophy." Perhaps even some of SK's own admirers who would draw the sting from his message through exegesis and objectification, turning it into a "philosophy.!"

Bouwsma's essay is both rich and illuminating. Our brief "objective" account of its thrust doubtless cannot do it justice. His sequel, "Notes 2", contains some cryptic reflections on the difference between philosophy, most particularly philosophy of religion, and the religious enterprise.

Hustwit, in his "Two Views of the Soul," compares SK's account of the self to Wittgenstein's. What do two such diverse philosophers have in common? According to

Hustwitt it is primarily the alleged fact that to make sense of them is to misunderstand them.

Hustwitt's Wittgenstein is Wittgenstein the Zen Master. On his account Wittgenstein rejects both the Cartesian view of the self and behaviorist theories, which he ascribes to Skinner, in favor of the view that the self is a Mystery which can only be approached in religious terms: "The idea of the soul as that most deep, most real part of us is...consciously preserved in his [Wittgenstein's] remarks" (p. 66). Similarly, he suggests that SK espoused an equally obscurantist conception of the self insofar as he regarded the self primarily as an ethical concept (the assumption being, presumably, that ethics is not properly subject to rational inquiry). Both, he suggests, would have us gape admiringly at the Mystery rather than analyze it.

We agree that person is an ethical concept: Locke said as much when he defined it as a "forensic" notion. But we do not regard this as an impetus for further mystery-mongering. Rather, like Locke and contemporary philosophers like Parfit, we regard the important recognition that talk about persons and personal identity is embedded in talk about freedom, responsibility and the like as the ground for rational discussion of the self.

H. A. Nielsen in "The Grammar of Eternal Happiness" attacks the notion of eternal happiness (or immortality) as empty, such that we can have no determinate idea of it. He writes: "Let us beware, then, of assuming that the New Testament references to eternal life are descriptive or intended to stimulate imaginings of something called life after death" (p. 71). While claiming that we cannot describe eternal happiness, Nielsen does allow that we can understand the "offer" of it. And that understanding involves the notion of getting personal with an individual - which has nothing to do with any metaphysical speculations about the post-mortem lives of discarnate personalities, etc. Here, we believe Nielsen's demythologizing is philosophically disingenuous. For example, suppose a man and woman are deeply involved with each other and as a result share each other's most intimate thoughts, emotions and aspirations, etc. Would not Nielsen's account lead us to the bizarre conclusion that this couple is really conversing about or relating to eternal happiness all or most of the time, regardless of whether they are confirmed atheists or scientific materialists? Pace Nielsen, they can at best conclude "one moment in thine embrace is like a thousand days elsewhere"! In fact, this reductio is really too altruistic, for Nielsen understands the offer rather solipsistically as "do I like myself enough to be endless company to myself?" (p. 78).

Pace Nielsen, the grammar of eternal happiness is not akin to the language practice of psychoanalysis. Nor do we believe that SK shared Nielsen's perspective. Nielsen contends that SK in the Postscript held that any knowledge about eternity would inhibit a person's striving for it. Nielsen writes: "It is by no means clear what sort of helpful role the knowledge could play in his religious life" (p. 81). But, contra Nielsen, such knowledge would prepare one for future citizenship in the City of Jerusalem, and not stifle virtue in the pre-mortem world, relating as SK said "to the entire formation of character in this life" (Journals and Papers, #1954). Nielsen's theory seems to play right into the hands of the respective critiques of Marxists (who contend that the belief in eternal happiness thwarts any social/moral activism in this world by downplaying the significance of this three score and ten versus all eternity) and philosophers like Bernard Williams (who contends that even if immortality were conceivable, it would prove to be intolerable).

We agree with John Whittaker (who in a brief response to Nielsen compares Nielsen's account to Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence) that Nielsen's analysis

seems to dissolve the notion of eternal happiness as a truth claim. Whittaker (we believe appropriately) remarks: "Surely the claim that an eternal happiness awaits the faithful must have some content, however, ill-defined. Otherwise, one could never affirm it by thinking that it is true" (p. 82).

The dialectical SK's views on eternal happiness may be moot, but we cannot help thinking that he might have responded to Nielsen as follows: "It is all this milksop chatter, so hearty and animated, regular preacher nonsense, which always excels...in watering down all concepts so that they end up as nothing..." (JP #1953).

A. Dewey Jensen analyses the respective, negative views of SK and Wittgenstein, their "shared enmity," toward the press. Despite SK's caveats about placing too great an emphasis on the "momentary," he is not at his philosophical best when he generalizes from his own maltreatment by the press to a recommended universal enmity towards the "journalistic mentality." Indeed SK viewed journalists as "night-garbage carriers": "They do not carry the trash away at night, which is both a noble task and a good work; no, they carry the trash in during the day...they spread night, darkness, confusion..." (JP #2174).

SK regarded the press as the enemy of den Enkelte, arming itself with abstract anonymity, and in the process demoralizing us with their notion of truth as inherent in public opinion. Curiously, there is a cruel irony to SK's polemic, viewed from late 20th century hindsight, inasmuch as the media of today has generated the very cult of personalities that he claimed was needed as a corrective in his own time. It is difficult to find contemporary solace in SK's remark that "because all true communication is personal (for personality is truth), it will always have greater difficulty in using the press. But error is always impersonal" (JP #2152).

SK seems to suggest that we must discover for ourselves what is true and newsworthy, and then seriously reflect upon the various events in the world described by the press. But surely this is epistemically backward. The price of personal verification here would result in the loss of enormous amounts of vital information. Jensen himself does not suggest that we give up reading newspapers, but instead read them with discretion and a willingness to take responsibility for any opinion formed thereby, i. e., bringing "thought and character to the reading" (p. 122).

Surprisingly, Jensen finds something commendable in the excessive Socratic response of Wittgenstein, that to many questions on the present world condition in general the answer is an appropriate "I don't know." Granted we can't be informed about everything, but if we are to avoid further fragmentation and over-specialization in the world today, then it would seem imperative for intelligent persons to stay as informed about the world as possible. Jensen's own views on the journalistic mentality are somewhat muddled, and at times, he reminds us of those unrepentant meta-ethicists who refuse to engage in first-order moral discourse.

Moreover, Jensen, rather disingenuously, seems to suggest that we base our opinions on the journalistic mentality as formed by SK and Wittgenstein. Pace SK and Jensen, it is false to say (cf. JP #2166) that anonymity is always vile. And it is also not true to say today (as SK did in JP #2148) that "the daily press is and remains the evil principle in the modern world" - at least in the so-called free world. Nor is the press necessarily or essentially antithetical to Christianity (cf. JP #2165) or divine intention (cf JP #2150).

H. E. Baber and John Donnelly
University of San Diego

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
News	1
Kierkegaard in New York by Ron Hall	2
Review of Louis Pojman's <u>The Logic of Subjectivity</u> by George Stack	5
Review of <u>Essays on Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein</u> , eds. Richard Bell and Ronald Hustwit, by John Donnelly and H. Baber	8

The next edition of the Newsletter will appear in October. All items must be in the editor's hands by September 30, 1985. The editor welcomes book reviews on works related to Kierkegaard scholarship.



The University of Mississippi
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Philosophy and Religions
University, MS 38677

