

# SOREN KIERKEGAARD

## NEWSLETTER NO. 14

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### NEWS

This year's Kierkegaard Seminar (affiliated with the American Academy of Religion) will meet in conjunction with the AAR on November 22-25 in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme is Kierkegaard's Repetition. Dr. Abraham Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto will be presiding.

The program reads as follows:

9:00 Stephen Crites, Wesleyan University: "The 'Blissful Security of the Moment': Repetition, Recollection, and Eternal Recurrence."

Respondent: J. Preston Cole, Coe College, Iowa

9:30 David Goicoechea, Brock University, Ontario: "Repetition as the Temporality of Personal Love."

Respondent: Vanina Sechi, Weston, Ontario.

10:00 David Cain, Mary Washington College: "'Going Further', 'Revocation', and Repetition,"

Respondent: C. Stephen Evans, St. Olaf College.

10:30 Andrew Burgess, University of New Mexico: "Repetition's 'Right Hand': The Picture of Job in Repetition and in the Edifying Discourses That Accompanied It."

Respondent: Dalton Baldwin, Loma Linda University

11:00 David Gouwens, Brite Divinity School: "Understanding, Imagination, and Irony in Kierkegaard's Repetition."

Respondent: Mark Taylor, Williams College

11:27 Information and Suggestions: IKC and papers (Robert Perkins, Stetson University). The Seminar Topic for 1987 is the Philosophical Fragments. So start thinking about submitting papers for that seminar.

The seminar is a discussion of papers circulated in advance. To obtain copies please send \$8 to Abraham Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1H8, Canada. The seminar is open to interested auditors.

Dr. Khan has provided the following abstract of the five papers to be delivered:

"The lead paper in this seminar is by Stephen Crites on "'The Blissful Security of the Moment': Repetition, Recollection, and Eternal Recurrence." This is followed by four other papers, one each by David Goicoechea, David Cain, Andrew Burgess, and David Gouwens.

Goicoechea's paper "Repetition as the Temporality of Personal Love," is primarily a clarification of repetition and personal love in which he compares the two concepts. He analyzes four terms: repetition, temporality, love and 'the personal' and concludes by contrasting repetition and personal love with Platonic recollection and eros, with Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and amor fati, and with Heidegger's Wiederholung and Sorge.

Cain's paper, "'Going Further', 'Revocation', and Repetition," focuses on the different senses of 'repetition' and on Constantine's challenge of "going further" by doing a re-reading of the text. He argues that the concept of revocation is a clue to an important sense of 'repetition' and the book as a whole.

Burgess' paper, "Repetition's 'Right Hand': The Picture of Job in Repetition and in the Edifying Discourses That Accompanied It" sketches three possible Jobs, developing one picture with the help of the accompanying discourse. In this connection, certain enigmatic outbursts by the "young man" in Repetition become explicable in the light of the discourse and, hence, in terms of basic religious concepts.

Finally, Gouwen's paper, "Understanding, Imagination, and Irony in Kierkegaard's Repetition, examines the use of imagination by both Constantine and the "young man." It depicts different uses of imagination in the text to shed light on Kierkegaard's broader concern to delineate the failure of objective understanding to come to terms with religious existence.

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There will be a KIERKEGAARD STUDIES SYMPOSIUM with the title "Acknowledged Works: Problems and Perspectives at the University of Toronto on December 6, 1986. Papers will be given by A. McKinnon, D. Goicoechea, R. Johnson, B. Polka, J. Walker, H. Nielsen, I. Nicol and N. Carigan. For further information write to Dr. Abraham Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, ONT M5S 1H8.

Robert Perkins has informed me that he has resigned his Deanship at Stetson University and will be Professor of Philosophy and Religion and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Stetson. This will enable him to give more time to the International Critical Commentary.

Kierkegaard Scholarship and Contemporary Philosophy

Where do we go from here?

By Abraham Khan

The future direction of Kierkegaard scholarship and contemporary philosophy will surely depend on the answers to the following two questions: What counts for contemporary philosophy? And, What are the recent resources in Kierkegaard studies?

To address the first question, I take a cue from Richard Rorty. In one of his essays published in Consequences of Pragmatism, he has some advice for those worrying about whether philosophy has lost its scientific status. His advice is to relax and to say with our colleagues in the humanities that we differ from natural scientists in not knowing in advance what our problems are, and in not needing to provide criteria of identity which will tell us whether our problems are the same as those of our predecessors. He then goes on to say that "we should let a hundred flowers bloom," admire them while they last, and leave botanizing to the historians of the next century. The papers at this conference on Kierkegaard and contemporary philosophy, are a sample of the bloom.

A very brief and pointed answer to the first question might best take the form of Sellers' bland definition of philosophy. He spoke of it in terms of "an attempt to see how things, in the largest sense of the term, hang together." In many of the papers we have discussed in the last seventy-two hours this view of philosophy seems quite obvious.

Not just the papers here, but even recent publications in Kierkegaard studies are an indicator of the shape or certain aspects of contemporary philosophy. One title in particular seems to stand out: Where The Passion Is. This title, a work by Harry Nielsen, is a very recent reminder of philosophy as a kind of writing, delimited not by form and matter but by a writing tradition. Philosophy seen in this tradition might be spoken of as a family romance involving primarily Father Parmenides, honest old Uncle Kant, and bad brother Derrida. Mark Taylor's more recent writings and Louis Mackey's work belong to the same literary genre as Nielsen's work. Mention of these titles are intended to suggest that an adequate map of contemporary philosophy would show not just existentialism, phenomenology, analytic philosophy, and hermeneutics. It would include both post-positivistic analytic philosophy and post-phenomenological Continental philosophy, and for that matter, any philosophy that leads its practitioner to abdicate the role of sage or final authority on the meaningfulness of assertions.

My point about contemporary philosophy is hardly a novel one. Expressed as a reminder, it is that no one kind of philosophy-

none of these: analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, the philosophy of Derrida and Foucault, or, for that matter, the pragmatism of James and Dewey- is representative of contemporary philosophy. If anything at all, they represent different varieties of bloom one finds in the contemporary philosophical garden. There are other blooms as well. The garden is hospitable to all varieties, not cultivating one at the expense of others. Kierkegaard studies provide a fairly good sample of the varieties in bloom: To give some recent titles and to leave the identification to you I mention Walker, Descent Into God; Kahn, Salighed as Happiness?; Pojman, The Logic of Subjectivity; Evans, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness; and Hannay, Kierkegaard. Let us not forget to include journal articles and essays in the sample. A close look at the sample would bear out that attempts these days to gain access to Kierkegaard's thought- to see how his writings and ideas hang together, to get at the meaning of his writings, to isolate and enlarge his compressed thesis in a title or set of titles- include annexing one or more approaches. Approaches tend to be either analytical-conceptual, statistical, post-structural, textual, or in some instances a combination of two or more of these.

I turn not to consider the second question, that of resources in Kierkegaard studies, especially resources that within the last decade have become available to scholars. In North America, we have a fine collection at this Study Center, which I first visited some years ago before going to the Kierkegaard Bibliotek in Copenhagen. In 1980, the Kierkegaard-Malantschuk Collection became a part of the library holding at McGill University, thus making the North American collection of Kierkegaard's materials as equally important as materials on Kierkegaard at Det kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen.

More to the point, St. Olaf, McGill, and Copenhagen together now provide the kind of research tools that are common items in the tool-box of the Kierkegaard scholar. I have in mind specifically the 7-volume Journals and Papers from St. Olaf, the 4-volume Kierkegaard Indicies from McGill, and the 16-volume Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana of which eleven volumes have been issued, along with Niels Jorgen Cappelorn's Index to the Papirer from Copenhagen. Another resource connected with the Center here is the 26-volume Princeton University Press edition of the English translation of Kierkegaard works. Some of the volumes are already published. Then there is the pioneering work in computer applications to the study of the Kierkegaard corpus done at McGill University. This work is just beginning to yield data and results which have to be taken into consideration when giving an adequate account of facets of Kierkegaard's thought. There is also the microform publication of the Kierkegaard-Malantschuk Collection at McGill providing a complete set of first editions of Kierkegaard's works. Series I & II are now out. In the near future both of these will also be common place items in the tool-box.

Finally, I mention avenues of publication, specifically intended for Kierkegaard materials. They too help to give a bearing of where we are and, therefore, could conceivably provide some indication as to future directions. Two important publications in Canada are the Kierkegaard Monograph Series, which has now issued three volumes through Wilfrid Laurier University Press, and Inter-Editions in Montreal. Both are edited by Alastair Mckinnon. The Monograph Series is for the moment virtually limited by present granting policies to works having some specifically Canadian content. Inter-Editions is intended for Kierkegaard research materials such as the microfiche mentioned above which might otherwise go unpublished.

In the United States, there are at least three publications specifically devoted to Kierkegaard's thought. One of them is the International Kierkegaard Commentary Series, edited by Robert Perkins. Essays in this series are intended to be interpretative and critical, based on the new English translation of each title in the 26-volume edition from Princeton University Press.

Another is a second and fairly new series. It bears the title, Kierkegaard and Postmodernism, edited by Mark Taylor, Louis Mackey and E.F. Kaelin, and published by the University of Florida Presses. This series aims to publish manuscripts on Kierkegaard's relationship to problems of aesthetics, literary criticism, and ethics, and to encourage manuscripts that take a constructive approach to Kierkegaard's thought. Harry Nielsen's book, Where the Passion Is is the first in this series and is an example of the kind of constructive approach that is being canvassed.

In a little different league, but not to be overlooked, is the Soren Kierkegaard Newsletter edited by Louis Pojman. It encourages and runs short pieces and reviews, the kind that are of interest to a student of Kierkegaard.

Our two questions now answered, we move on to suggest possible directions where Kierkegaard scholarship and contemporary philosophy might go from here. Three directions look promising. The first and most logical one is in a direction that leads to a comprehensive and deeper understanding of Kierkegaard's thought, using recently available tools. This involves the following: discerning accurately whether subtle but important shifts are occurring in the corpus, accounting for such occurrences, identifying and charting concepts that have so far received little attention, and completing or refining existing conceptual maps. These tasks are part of a larger philosophical task of giving an account of how concepts and titles in the corpus, or to use Sellars' idioms "how things" in Kierkegaard's thought, "hang together." The use of computer data and results, in my opinion, will become indispensable as we seek to make our accounts objective, comprehensive, and reliable in order to appraise and evaluate the concepts, or these in question.

A second direction recognizes that we are rapidly moving into what Rorty calls a post-Philosophical culture (that's a capital p). For Kierkegaard scholarship this would mean making connections with Kierkegaard's thought and Asian and Islamic thought in- to use Sellars' phrase- an "attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term." It would mean engaging his thought in a continuous and undistorted conversation with Ramanuja, Al-Ghazalli, Mulla Sadra, Tagore, Ramana Maharshi, Mohammed Iqbal, and other edifying philosophers. Very little work of this kind has been done. I can think of four short pieces in the area, and know of one person in the US with possible long term interest in Kierkegaard and Islamic thought. However, when such cross-cultural studies are done as a part of edifying philosophy, the studies are really a mark of what Rorty calls "the post-Philosophical culture."

But more important, such studies would provide an opportunity to stretch Kierkegaard's thought so as to accommodate a coherent dialogue. For the scholar this would mean learning the limits of its stretchability, seeing Kierkegaard's thought from a broader perspective, trying to locate his insights along side other thinkers of universal significance, and hearing him talk with the whole of humanity about all sorts of things that relates to becoming a genuinely human person.

A third possible direction is to identify and treat unresolved issues, philosophico-theological ones. There is the question, raised by Michael Levine, as to whether the Incarnation is unnecessary, or is perhaps the only candidate for Climacus' thought-project. This question, I suggest, would require attention as we begin to make connections between Kierkegaard's thought and that of some other cultural or historical period. Under this rubric, I mention as a reminder that the religious works and later writings- indeed the edifying discourses- have not received from philosophers the kind of attention accorded to the works by the pseudonym Climacus. Titles such as Gospel of Suffering, Christian Discourses, Works of Love, Training in Christianity contain a variety of arguments, different modes of reasoning, and claims of different sorts that require either describing, elucidating, defending, and/or assessing. Insights in these titles could conceivably merit the attention of those in either applied or cross-cultural philosophy.

The two examples I have cited are deliberately restricted to ones that might interest those with a philosophical penchant. Each of us presumably have our own list of important issues. So I invite you to share with us some examples, to let us hear suggestions about a direction for Kierkegaard scholarship to move with respect to contemporary philosophy.

(This address was delivered at the Kierkegaard Conference at St. Olaf College on October 2, 1985.)

## Kierkegaard and The Dance

by Jerry H. Gill

There has been a good deal written about the dance as a metaphor for understanding the Christian life. "The Dance of the Pilgrim" and "The Lord of the Dance" are familiar themes. In my Existentialism Seminar this Fall a student, one Tom Cornelison, suggested the dance as a way of focusing Kierkegaard's insights concerning the stages or spheres of existence. What follows is an initial effort to explore this possibility.

In Repetition Kierkegaard's pseudonym Constantine Constantius returns to Berlin, even to the same lodgings and theater, in order to effect a repetition of his earlier experience there. As a paradigm of the Aesthetic mode of existence Constantius seeks to keep his life a "constant on-going" so as to avoid having to face becoming a self through decision-making. Through this "experiment" he discovers that the only thing repeatable "is the impossibility of repetition". Melancholy is the result.

During his effort to repeat the humorous quality of his first visit to the theater, Constantius launches into a long-winded but perceptive discourse on the relative virtues of certain actors and dramatic styles. A certain Beckman receives highest critical acclaim for his superb talents as a presenter of the farce. The thing that astonishes Constantius so much is that Beckman not only can walk like the person he represents, but he can "come walking" like him in such a way as to conjure up the whole of the current scene as well as the person's past.

Getting more specific, Constantius praises Beckman both for his dancing and his singing abilities, though they leave much to be desired from a purist point of view. His genius consists in being able to integrate his abilities with the particular character he is playing in such a way as to create an identity between them. He combines talent and common sense so as not to overshoot the part (having too much talent for it) nor undershoot it (not being able to live up to it). And all of this in order to produce a farce and laughter rather than a tragedy and sobriety. Thus the dance, together with music, symbolizes the Aesthetic mode, the flight from responsibility.

Nevertheless, when Kierkegaard turns to a presentation of "the Knight of Faith", through the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio, in Fear and Trembling, he once again employs the dancer image. In fact, what is particularly intriguing about the paradigm of the Religious mode of existence (Religiousness B) is the way that he unites the finite and infinite. The Knight of Faith, according to de Silentio, is indistinguishable from the Ethical and the Aesthetic personages. In true Hegelian fashion, he negates, fulfills, and yet transcends both of these antithetical postures. In Constantius' language, he "comes walking" rather than simply walking--the actor and the part are thoroughly integrated and synthesized.

There are, to be sure, as de Silentio points out, religious folk (Religiousness A) who also transcend the Ethical and the Aesthetic modes; but these "Knights of Infinite Resignation" are so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good. They have piously thrown themselves into being religious and thus only make the first movement. The Knight of Faith,

by contrast, makes "the double movement"; he resigns all and gets it all back through faith at the same time. It is this simultaneity, this simultaneity, this sacramental quality of life that the Knight of Faith embodies.

It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Perhaps no dancer can do it--but that is what this knight does. Most people live dejectedly in worldly sorrow and joy; they are the ones who sit along the wall and do not join in the dance. The knights of infinity are dancers and possess elevation. They make the movements upward, and fall down again; and this too is no mean pasttime, nor ungraceful to behold. But whenever they fall down they are not able at once to assume the posture, they vacillate an instant, and this vacillation shows that after all they are stangers in the world. This is more or less strikingly evident in proportion to the art they possess, but even the most artistic knights cannot altogether conceal this vacillation. One need not look at them when they are up in the air, but only the instant they touch or have touched the ground--then one recognizes them. But to be able to fall down in such a way that the same second it looks as if one were standing and walking, to transform the leap of life into a walk, absolutely to express the sublime and the pedestrian--that only the knight of faith can do, and this is the one and only prodigy.

Here, then, the dance serves as a metaphor for the various modes of existence. Some would seem to dance in a strictly horizontal or finite fashion, whether Aesthetic or Ethical. They simply walk. Then there are those who dance in a vertical fashion as well, making the religious leap toward the Infinite. These, however, stumble or at least jolt, when they return to the stage of everyday, pedestrian life. Those persons of faith are able to make the leap and return to the various walk of life without any discontinuity. They integrate the vertical and the horizontal, the sublime and the pedestrian, and thereby concretely embody authentic faith.

It is significant that Constantius is a spectator describing the dancer Beckman. And yet Beckman does not excel merely as an actor in contrast to the spectator. His excellence resides in his ability to be both actor and the personage he creates, to "come walking" as well as "to walk". The spectator symbolizes the uninvolved Aesthetic mode, while the actor symbolizes the self-conscious, over responsible Ethical mode. Beckman, as is the case with all great actors and dancers, is more than the character he plays or the posture he strikes, and yet not more at the same time. The "more" resides in the quality not the quantity of his movements.

Kierkegaard treats this whole question from a slightly different angle in his non-pseudonymous Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing. In Chapter Twelve he discusses the listener's responsibility when hearing or reading a devotional address. As so often is the case, Kierkegaard turns the tables on us and asks us to consider that to which we have become accustomed from the inverse angle. In one place in Attack Upon Christendom he says



that the only difference between the theater and the church is that the theater has a sign which reads "Money will not be refunded". Yet, there is another difference, one which the following quotation from Purity of Heart makes forcefully clear:

It is so on the stage, as you know well enough, that someone sits and prompts by whispers; he is the inconspicuous one, then there is another, he strides out prominently, he draws every eye to himself. For that reason he has been given his name, that is: actor. He impersonates a distinct individual. In the skillful sense of this illusory art, each word becomes true when embodied in him, true through him--and yet he is told what he shall say by the hidden one that sits and whispers. No one is so foolish as to regard the prompter as more important than the actor.

Now forget this light talk about art. Alas, in regard to things spiritual, the foolishness of many is this, that they in the secular sense look upon the speaker as an actor, and the listeners as theatergoers who are to pass judgment upon the artist. But the speaker is not the actor--not in the remotest sense. No, the speaker is the prompter. There are no mere theatergoers present, for each listener will be looking into his own heart. The stage is eternity, and the listener, if he is the true listener (and if he is not, he is at fault) stands before God during the talk. The prompter whispers to the actor what he is to say, but the actor's repetition of it is the main concern--is the solemn charm of the art. The speaker whispers the word to the listeners. But the main concern is earnestness: that the listeners by themselves, with themselves, and to themselves, in the silence before God, may speak with the help of this address.

The address is not given for the speaker's sake, in order that men may praise or blame him. The listener's repetition of it is what is aimed at. If the speaker has the responsibility for what he whispers, then the listener has an equally great responsibility not to fall short in his task. In the theater, the play is staged before an audience who are called theatergoers; but at the devotional address, God himself is present. In the most earnest sense, God is the critical theatergoer, who looks on to see how the lines are spoken and how they are listened to: hence here the customary audience is wanting. The speaker is then the prompter, and the listener stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor, who in all truth acts before God.

There is, then, no escape. We all are actors, dancers on stage. There really are no spectators, unless one is blunt enough to call God the spectator. The quality and form of our particular posture--the way we leap, and the more importantly the way we come down--is the one thing needful. Commitment, authenticity, and integration are the categories of excellence. The famous leap of faith must somehow be contingent with our everyday life, must be incarnated within it. Kierkegaard does not say "The walk of life must be transformed into a spiritual leap to the infinite". Rather, he says "The leap must be transformed into, embodied

in, the walk". Nikos Kazantzakis (author of Zorba The Greek, The Last Temptation of Christ, et al) often spoke of the need to "transubstantiate flesh into spirit". Kierkegaard urges the very opposite, the enfleshment of spirit. One might call it sacramental living.

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THE KIERKEGAARD NEWSLETTER is published twice a year (in October and April). We welcome news, short articles, and reviews concerning Kierkegaard scholarship. We have a circulation of about 400 persons. We welcome gifts to help off-set the cost of printing and mailing. We will also consider printing or distributing advertisements of suitable of Kierkegaard material.

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