

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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NEW EDITOR'S STATEMENT

With this issue the *Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter* acquires a new editor. This publication was founded in 1979 by Robert Perkins. The first issue contained a report on the first meeting of the Kierkegaard Society (then called the Kierkegaard Circle) in 1978, which Perkins was also instrumental in founding. In 1982 Lou Pojman took over the editorship. This summer I was pleased to accept Lou's offer to assume the editorship of the *Newsletter* and bring it under the auspices of the Kierkegaard Library of St. Olaf

College. (I would like to express a special word of thanks to St. Olaf for some financial assistance to make this possible.)

Robert Perkins, who has done so many significant things for Kierkegaard scholarship, did a great service to the Kierkegaard community when he began the *Newsletter*. Under Pojman's capable hands, the *Newsletter* continued and expanded so that articles and book reviews could be included on a regular basis. I shall try to continue their tradition, by improving and up-grading the *Newsletter* in any way possible.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Newsletter* exists to serve the Kierkegaard community by providing a means of communication among scholars from many different disciplines, as well as people who do not consider themselves scholars but who love Kierkegaard. It will continue to publish short articles and book reviews, as well as news of interest to the Kierkegaard community. I will seek to represent the views and interests of a wide range of perspectives and opinions, as well as fields of study and approaches to Kierkegaard.

Since the readership is primarily American, articles and books chosen for review should be such as have interest for American readers. (I am grateful for the *International Kierkegaard Newsletter* edited by Julia Watkin, which provides more complete international coverage.) This does not of course mean that selections will concern only English language publications or American authors, as evidenced by this issue.

A PLEA FOR HELP

The *Newsletter* can only be as good as its readers help it to be. You can help in a variety of ways. First, and most obviously, please let me know about news items of interest to the Kierkegaard community. Such items would include meetings and conferences with papers dealing with Kierkegaard, as well as significant publishing events. Second, please see that publishers send review copies of new books. Third, let me know if you are interested in reviewing books or in reviewing a specific book; I plan to establish a file of people who are willing to help out in this way.

Also, keep us in mind as an outlet for articles. Since the *Newsletter* is not a regular scholarly journal, the number and size of articles that can be published is limited. How-

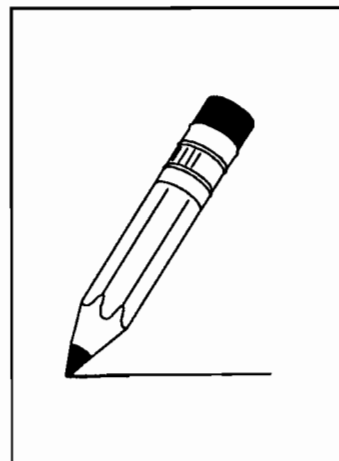
ever, I hope that I can print short pieces of interest to Kierkegaard readers, especially articles that are "different" enough in some way that they do not fit under the rubric of the traditional journal. I am specially interested in short "reviews of the literature" that call attention to articles and books that should be more widely known. If the quality and quantity of submissions is sufficiently high, it is possible that the number of issues published per year (which has normally been two, though no issue was published last spring) could be increased.

Last, but not least, financial help is always appreciated. I shall continue the current policy of sending the *Newsletter* free of charge to any individual who requests it. I shall also continue the current policy of charging \$10 per year to institutions that subscribe. From time to time, individuals have made voluntary contributions to help with costs. Gifts of this sort to help with the costs of postage and printing are more than welcome. (Modest, occasional donations of \$5, for example, from those who are able to do so would be most helpful in making the continuance and up-grading of the *Newsletter* possible.) Foreign subscribers who wish to have copies mailed by airmail rather than surface mail are asked to contribute towards this extra cost if they are able to do so.

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NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE



1989 AAR KIERKEGAARD SEMINAR

The AAR Kierkegaard Seminar will meet at the AAR national meeting in Anaheim, California on Saturday afternoon, November 18, from 3:45 - 6:15 p.m. The theme is *Either/Or* Vol. II, and Abraham Khan will be presiding. Papers include Sylvia Walsh, "The Highest in Esthetics;" Andrew Burgess, "Irony and the Ethical in *Either/Or*, II;" Robert L. Perkins, "*Either/Or/Or*: Giving the Parson His Due;" Wanda Warren Berry, "Judge William Judging Woman: Existentialism and Essentialism in *Either/Or*, II." Respondents (in order of papers) are Mark Lloyd Taylor, David Wisdo, Brayton Polka, and Ronald Hall. A short business meeting at the end of the session will include discussion of the future of the Kierkegaard Seminar at the AAR.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY MEETING AT 1989 APA EASTERN DIVISION MEETING

The Kierkegaard Society meeting at the APA Eastern Division meeting at Atlanta, Georgia, December 27-30, 1989, will feature papers by Eric Ziolkowski, "The Concept of Aesthetic: A Semantic Leap from Baumgarten to Kierkegaard;" Benjamin Daise, "The Will to Truth;" and Stephen Rowntree "Self-Love vs. Self-Hate: The Triumph of the Kierkegaardian Therapeutic." Respondents (in order) are George Connell, Louis Pojman, and C. Stephen Evans. Presiding is John Donnelly. A business meeting will follow the program to discuss the future of the Kierkegaard Society, and its possible reorganization. For exact time and place consult the APA program or *The Journal of Philosophy*.

AAR SOUTHEASTERN REGION KIERKEGAARD CONSULTATION

The Southeastern Region of the AAR has given the Kierkegaard Consultation two more years of life. The 1990 meetings will be held in Charlotte, N.C., from March 16-18, 1990. Robert L. Perkins is in charge of the program. Members of the AAR in other regions are urged to initiate consultations in their own regions.

WESTPHAL 1990 NEH SUMMER SEMINAR FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS

An NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers will be led by Professor Merold Westphal June 18-July 27, 1990, at Fordham University on the topic "Religion and Society in Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard." The deadline for applications is March 1. Inquiries should be addressed to Westphal at Dept. of Phil., Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458.

KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS NEWS

Princeton University Press has announced the publication (November) of *The Concept of Irony*. The volume also includes Kierkegaard's notes on Schelling's Berlin lectures. *Irony* is the eleventh published volume in the *Kierkegaard's Writings* edition. *Early Polemical Writings*, *Eighteen Discourses*, and *For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself* are in production. The manuscript of *Postscript* will be ready for press in 1990, and the International Advisory Board at its recent meeting approved the mss. of *Christian Discourses*, *Practice in Christianity*, *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, and *Discourses in Various Spirits*.

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY NEWS

Robert Perkins reports that *The Corsair Affair* is now at Mercer Press. Papers for *Fear and Trembling* have now been selected, and papers for *Repetition* are now being reviewed by the advisory board. Papers are still being accepted for consideration for *Philosophical Fragments* and for *Either/Or*. Please contact Robert Perkins at Stetson University if you are interested in contributing to these or to future volumes.

DURHAM CONFERENCE ON KIERKEGAARD, LITERATURE, AND THEOLOGY

On April 5-7, 1990, the Centre for the Study of Literature and Theology will sponsor a conference on the theme "Kierkegaard: 'The Christian in Love with Aesthetics'" at St. Chad's College, The University of Durham, in Great Britain. The major speakers are Sylvia Walsh, Grace Jantzen, D.Z. Phillips, and George Pattison. Other speakers include Alastair Hannay, W. Glyn Jones, Poul Lübcke, Irena Makarushka, Robert Perkins, Hartmut Rosenau, J. Heywood Thomas, Julia Watkin, Mike Weston, and Bernard Zelechow. Cost is £50, which includes full board and lodging (£20 is a non-refundable deposit). Checks should be made out to "Conference on Literature and Theology" and sent to Dr. David Jasper, St. Chad's College, 18 North Bailey, Durham DH1 3RH, Great Britain.

1990 APA CENTRAL DIVISION KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY MEETING

The Kierkegaard Society will meet in conjunction with the APA Central Division in New Orleans, April 25-28, 1990. The theme of the meeting will be "Kierkegaard and Post-Modernism," and a panel, composed of Sylvia Walsh, Stephen Crites, and Gene Fendt, will discuss the following books: John Vignaux Smythe, *A Question of Irony: Irony in Sterne, Kierkegaard, and Barthes*; Sylviane Agacinski, *Apartè: Conceptions and Deaths of Søren Kierkegaard*; and John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Robert Perkins invites papers or other program suggestions by Feb. 1, 1990, for the 1990 Kierkegaard Society meeting in conjunction with the Eastern Division APA. Address: Dept. of Philosophy, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida 32720.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S GRAVE IN ASSISTENS CEMETERY

BY GRETHE KJÆR

Assistens Cemetery is situated in one of the busiest parts of Copenhagen, but in Kierkegaard's time it was in fact far outside Nørreport, one of the gates in the ramparts that surrounded what is now the inner city. The cemetery was opened in 1760 as an extension of, or "assistance" to (hence the name) the old cemeteries belonging to the churches of Vor Frue, Nikolaj, Trinitatis and others. At the beginning, people did not want to be buried so far from their church, so it was chiefly the poor who had to be content with a grave in the new cemetery. But in about 1785 a well-known Copenhagen of good standing, Johan Samuel Augustin, decided he would be buried in Assistens Cemetery, realizing how unhygienic the overcrowded burial places in the old town were. The result was that many other well-known citizens followed his example, and today many of Denmark's famous men -- not only from the so-called "Golden Age" -- are buried there, from Hans Christian Andersen to Niels Bohr.

At the beginning of the 19th century beautiful monuments were erected, while on the graves many rare plants and seeds were planted, brought to Denmark from far away places by Danish seamen. Thus in Kierkegaard's time Assistens Cemetery already stood out as a beautiful exotic garden where one could remain hidden in the foliage -- even within earshot of other visitors -- as Johannes Climacus tells us was the case with him in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, when he overheard a strange conversation.

As early as 1796 Kierkegaard's father was allocated a burial-plot in Assistens Cemetery, and two years later he was granted permission to

erect a tombstone on the site. This was when his first wife died after only two years of marriage. He set up a small sandstone column with the same inscription that is to be found on the upper part of the present monument. I say "present monument" because the burial-plot must have seen a couple of changes already in Kierkegaard's lifetime. This in itself is interesting, but it is even more interesting to study the inscriptions on the three marble tablets placed against the large monument that was erected on the burial-plot many years later. If one looks at these inscriptions closely, it is impossible to avoid noticing a remarkable lack of consistency, especially with respect to the dates. One person has no dates at all, others have their death date and age mentioned, while Søren and Maren Kirstine have both date of birth and death.

In 1843 Kierkegaard wrote in his diary that he would like to "reproduce in a novel called 'The Mysterious Family' the tragedy of my childhood....At the outset it should be thoroughly patriarchally idyllic, so that no one would have any inkling, before that word suddenly appeared and gave a terrifying explanation of everything" (Pap. IV A 144). In the light of the epitaphs' "pocket-edition of actuality" (Pap. VII,1 A 57), letting the tablets speak as "poets of existence" (cf. Pap. V A 56), is it possible to get on the track of what secret it was that could transform the patriarchally idyllic into something terrifying?

Let us look at the inscriptions one by one. The first, on the upper tablet, concerns Kierkegaard's father's first wife who died childless in March 1796. Many years passed before

the next death in the family. It was that of Søren Michael, the next-eldest son. There are no dates by his name, but we know that he died at the age of twelve in 1819, after an accident in the school playground.

After (apparently) many happy years, during which Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard remarried and had seven healthy and intelligent children, this death must have come as a shock to the old man. Melancholy as he was, he probably saw in it God's punishment for the sins of his youth, a punishment that had finally overtaken him. It is well known that when "watching sheep on the Jutland heath," about twelve years old and suffering from cold and hunger, he "stood on a hill and cursed God" (Pap. VII, 1 A 5). Now the son who was named after him had died at the same age as he was when he had committed his big sin. Did this make such an impression on the old man that he decided that no dates should be put on the grave? This seems like superstition, but we know of other instances where the old Kierkegaard appeared to be superstitious.

At any rate this death must have disquieted him deeply and made him brood over the possibility that the divine wrath had now begun to strike at him. Then three years later his eldest child, a daughter, died at age 24, and, it seems, without having received Holy Communion. This daughter had been born five months after Michael Kierkegaard's marriage to his second wife, the mother of all his seven children. This means that they must have had a premarital relationship, which he, because of his pietistic view of Christianity, must have regarded as a sin.

Yet can this have anything to do with the inscription on the tablet? Yes, I think it can - because it is remarkable that Maren Kirstine has not only her name on the tablet, but also the day of her death and her birth date, so that it is evident to everybody who compares the date of

the first wife's death with Maren Kirstine's birthday, that Michael Kierkegaard has either married before the year of mourning was over, or he has had a premarital relationship. Since we know the date of his wedding we can see that the latter was the case. Now why proclaim this to the entire world? I think it is to be understood as a kind of official confession of sin. Not only has he seen her death as God's punishment, he has also had "the melancholy thought that he must help God make the punishment as severe as possible", as Kierkegaard later expresses it (Pap. IV A 177).

I also think that Maren Kirstine's death might be the origin of the heavy burden the father put on his youngest son's shoulders, demanding a solemn vow from him when he was about nine years old. I cannot help imagining that the appalling scene between the grandfather and grandson in the *Postscript* has in fact taken place between Søren and his father at Maren Kirstine's newly-made grave. Johannes Climacus, who, hidden behind the hedge, involuntarily witnesses this episode, writes: "The old man talked with the child about his no longer having a father, of his having no one to cling to except an old man who was too old for him, and who himself longed to leave the world; but that there was a God in heaven, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on the earth is named, and that there was one name in which alone there was salvation, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.... Then he arose and brought the child over to the grave, and said with a voice whose impressiveness I shall never forget: 'Poor boy, you are only a child, and yet you will soon be alone in the world! Do you promise me by the memory of your dead father, who, if he could speak to you now, would speak thus, and speaks to you with my voice; do you promise me by the sight of my old age and my gray hairs; do you promise me by the solemnity of this sacred ground, by the God whose name you have learned to call upon, by

the name of Jesus Christ, in whom alone there is salvation; do you promise me that you will hold fast to this faith in life and in death, that you will not permit yourself to be deceived by any illusion, however the face of the world changes - do you promise this?' Overwhelmed by the impression, the little one threw himself down upon his knees, but the old man lifted him up and pressed him to his heart.

I must in deference to the truth admit that this was the most moving scene I had ever witnessed" (Concluding Unscientific Postscript, tr. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton, 1941, p. 212f).

The inscriptions concerning the parents on the other marble tablet at the base of the monument were done by Michael Kierkegaard himself on a piece of paper that was found after his death. This means that this tablet was not set up immediately after his wife's death, but only after his own burial. However, if one examines the old cemetery register, one will find that yet another person has been buried there, whose name was never mentioned on the grave, namely the eldest son Peter Christian's first wife. This, too, has its story, but it is too long to be told here.

Even more remarkable is the fact that it took almost twenty years after Søren's death in 1855 before visitors to the grave could read that he too was buried there. A Danish poet (F.L. Høedt) later wrote the following lines:

In the garden of death
Where monuments glitter
Is also a quiet green grave.
Unseen among the many.
There he was laid
Tired after the day
To rest through the night.
But no stone or any name
Indicates where he sleeps.

For this neglect eldest brother and head of the family Peter Christian must bear the responsibility. At

least ten years after Søren's death a note (apparently from 1846) was found among Søren's papers, describing how he wanted the family grave reorganized and the way in which his own name and the lines by H.A. Brorson should be inscribed on his tablet. But not until one of the Copenhagen newspapers began to write about the situation did the family take steps to have the tomb put in proper order, and fortunately Kierkegaard's directions were followed.

Pap. = *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr & E. Torsting, Copenhagen 1909-48; 2nd improved edition, Niels Thulstrup, 1967-78. On the Kierkegaard family's grave see also: Grethe Kjær, *Den Gådefulde Familie*, C.A. Reitzels Boghandel, Copenhagen, 1981. The above paper was given in connection with the International Kierkegaard Jubilee Conference (Denmark 1988): "Kierkegaard: Poet of Existence."

About the author: Grethe Kjær lives in Hellerup, Denmark. She was a student and close associate of the late Gregor Malantschuk. Besides the above-mentioned book, she has also published *Barndommens ulykkelige Elsker: Kierkegaard om Barnet og Barndommen*.

KIERKEGAARD IN CHINA

BY LIU JI

It is obvious that Kierkegaard occupies an important position in contemporary thought, but it is difficult to state that the influence of someone is world-wide if there is no influence on China, which consists of 22% of the world's population. Thus, it is perhaps worth considering the condition of Kierkegaard research in China.

Today, at least on the surface, Kierkegaard is well-known in China. Since China opened itself to the world in 1978, there have appeared more and more articles and books on existentialism, and most of them deal with Kierkegaard to a greater or lesser extent, particularly the textbooks on contemporary western philosophy. Yet, on the other hand, the monographs and independent works on Kierkegaard are so few that they are easily listed below:

1. "Kierkegaard on Man", by Cu Shaohua, in *Contemporary Foreign Philosophy*, edited by the Chinese Academy of Contemporary Foreign Philosophy, Volume 3, 1983. (Eleven volumes of these collected papers have been published so far -- including this year -- but this is the only one on Kierkegaard).

2. "Kierkegaard," the second chapter in *Existentialist Philosophy*, edited by Xu Chongwen, published by the Social Science in China Press, 1986.

3. "Kierkegaard," the fourth chapter in *Poetry Philosophers*, edited by Zhou Guoping, Shanghai People's Press, 1987.

An even greater void is found concerning the translation of Kierkegaard's works. Not only are there no translations of his works -- (I exclude here such small selections as that translated by Liu Xiaofeng from the German: "Religious Quotations

from Kierkegaard" in *Culture: China and the World* No. 4, Beijing 1988) -- there are also few translations of secondary literature on Kierkegaard. In fact there are only two:

1. "A Kierkegaard Chronology," translated by Cu Shaohua from *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. XXV, *Letters and Documents*, ed. & tr. Henrik Rosenmeier. See *Contemporary Foreign Philosophy*, volume 3, 1983.

2. *The Pioneer of Existentialism: Kierkegaard*, translated by Cu Shaohua from the Russian, published in *Translations Series of Philosophy*, issue 3, 1983. (Forty issues of this periodical have been published, but only this translation is on Kierkegaard.)

It would seem that there are no Chinese scholars able to study Kierkegaard's thought in Danish, although there are some scholars who study Heidegger in German and Sartre in French, and some works of most of the important contemporary western philosophers have been translated into Chinese. I should also perhaps mention that some of my colleagues and I are editing a series of *Western Thinkers* in translation, and that Kierkegaard is included in our project. The original works come from the series *Past Masters* published by Oxford University Press and from *Modern Masters* published by Penguin.

To sum up, the present state of Kierkegaard research and translation in China is far from satisfactory, and it does not match the importance of Kierkegaard in contemporary thought. Yet China now finds herself facing a real Kierkegaardian "Either/Or": either traditional culture or modern culture, eastern civilization or western civilization, traditional values or modern values,

socialism or capitalism. She must thus make a serious, conscientious choice made after a complete investigation of western thought including the thought of Kierkegaard. Fortunately, we have become aware of this need and have already taken the first step.

About the author: Liu Ji was a lecturer in the department of philosophy, People's University of China, Beijing, China. He is now studying Kierkegaard at the University of Aarhus in Denmark.

**A REMINDER:
KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY
SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS**

The Howard V. and Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf offers fellowships between June 1 and Aug. 15 for scholars using the library. Free room and a stipend of \$250/month for board is offered for two scholars for up to nine weeks of study. To apply, simply send a letter describing the proposed research project, and why you would like to study at the Kierkegaard Library, along with a vita to C. Stephen Evans, Curator, Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057. Applications are welcome any time (the earlier the better), but the deadline is April 1.

THULSTRUP'S COMMENTARY ON S.K.'S
POSTSCRIPT: SOME REFLECTIONS

BY ED L. MILLER

The serious student of Søren Kierkegaard cannot but be pleased at the appearance of a full-blown commentary on the *Postscript*, authored by one whose whole life has been devoted to the advancement of SK scholarship: Niels Thulstrup, *Commentary on Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript with a New Introduction*, tr. Robert J. Widenmann (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). This work, a translation of the original Danish version,¹ but updated and with a new introduction, fills an important gap for the English-speaking student of SK and serves somewhat as a *Postscript* counterpart to Thulstrup's earlier edition (introduction and commentary) of the *Philosophical Fragments*.²

The work consists of two main parts: a nine-chapter Introduction, and a Commentary involving both general and detailed exposition. In the Preface Thulstrup makes it immediately clear that in order "to circumscribe the position" held by the *Postscript*, which he rightfully calls a "major work in the history of philosophy of religion," it is necessary to take into account (1) the origin and development of the chief currents of this history which have contributed so much to the *Postscript*, (2) nineteenth-century German philosophical Idealism, to which the *Postscript* stands fundamentally opposed, and (3) its position and function in the context of SK's entire corpus. The broader backgrounds of the *Postscript*, Thulstrup tells us, are addressed in the extended Introduction, whereas the more specific contexts and connections treated are in the Commentary.

The introductory discussions do not get off to the best start. After

four murky paragraphs at the beginning of Ch. 1, "Speculative Philosophy in the Ancient World," Thulstrup's account of the Pre-Socratics is weak (in a manner not dictated by the required brevity) and at points contentious if not downright erroneous. Examples: For a corporeal conception of the basic substance Pythagoras substituted an "abstract theory of regularity as a principle of being" (pp. 5ff.); Heraclitus regarded "perpetual motion as the profoundest secret of being and the mind of the world" (p. 6); Xenophanes developed a "pantheistic monism in which the divinity is one and everything" (p. 6); Anaxagoras posited Mind as "a single force that he saw present in all living things" (p. 8). Also, one will be surprised to learn that Philolaus was a disciple of Protagoras (p. 6), and be positively unnerved at the representation of Plato as a speculative idealist (p. 11), as Thulstrup tends to represent the whole classical tradition.

It is probably too trifling to note that in Ch. 2, "The Ancient Church and the Middle Ages," Thulstrup quotes the celebrated passage in Augustine's *Confessions*, VII, 9 (erroneously cited as Book VI) in which Augustine reflects on his discovery of the Platonic philosophy in certain points in the Prologue of the Gospel of John, but the translation, that of Pine-Coffin, involves a different text of the Prologue from Augustine's own. More seriously, Thulstrup contrasts Augustine's view of evil as "merely a deficiency" and "not just an imperfection" (p. 19) with the clear suggestion that Augustine viewed evil as some sort of positive reality, which, of course, is entirely mistaken (the problem is compounded where, on p. 30, Plotinus

himself is cited as viewing evil as quasi-substantive, "an intermediate stage on the way toward the good" or "something inferior and imperfect"). Thulstrup's statement that "Duns Scotus contended that cognition of the particular is prior to cognition of the universal" and that Ockham "taught that universal concepts are present in the knowing subject only and not in God or particular things" (pp. 29f.) is of course misleading if he means to suggest, as he seems to, that Scotus and Ockham in these respects make an advance, with a difference, on St. Thomas. And it is surely a mistake to liken Hegel's doctrine of God with that of Plotinus (p. 53): Talk of the Hegelian divinity's "efforts to return to itself," its "withdrawal from its original and proper state," the "cognition of God that is identical to self-knowledge," seems completely inappropriate to the Plotinian conception of God who surely does not withdraw, return, is not conceptualizable at all, and who transcends utterly the self.

Surely the philosophically most valuable material in the introductory part of Thulstrup's work is contained in Chs. 4 through 8: "From Kant to Hegel," "Hegelianism in Germany," "The Situation in Denmark and Kierkegaard's Reaction," "Kierkegaard versus Hegel," "The Anthropological Premises for Kierkegaard's Critique." An understanding of the Hegelian and, more generally, historical-philosophical background of the *Postscript* is indispensable for an understanding of the work, and these chapters are an immense help in this regard--if at times the discussions were not themselves so difficult. For example, unless one already grasps the Hegelian philosophy (in which case he hardly needs an explanation), the discussion of, say, Hegel's Logic (pp. 9ff.) will be virtually unintelligible--we say this without doubting for a moment the accuracy of Thulstrup's account. In this respect, it is a relief to come to Ch. 9, the last chapter of the Introduction: "The Contemporary

Reception of the *Postscript*." This contains immensely interesting and often lively material, such as the hilarious quotation (pp. 119f.) from the anonymous review of the *Postscript* which appeared under the title of "The Great Philosopher" in the March 6, 1846, issue of the *Corsair*, and which, whether by intention or not, turns a very Kierkegaardian sort of humor against Kierkegaard himself:

It is certainly strange that a man purchases a book and lays out three rix-bankdollars and sixty-four shillings is not allowed to dispose of his book as he sees fit. Suppose Mag. Kierkegaard were to invite a man home for a cup of coffee and then say to his guest: "You're going to taste the most delicious coffee you've ever had in your life. But I expect your transports of delight to make you absolutely speechless. You must not praise it. Bishop Mynster is the only one allowed to praise my coffee. And don't find fault with it either, or I'll kick you down the stairs." In this case Mag. Kierkegaard would be quite within his rights; if the man refuses to accept the conditions he gets no coffee. Likewise, not until our Magister has a book printed for private circulation and makes a present of it to a friend does he have the right to accompany it with his question: "Do you acknowledge this book to be something so perfect, so fine and delicate, that a mere whiff of human judgment would defile it?" If the friend swears to God that this is so, he should be given a copy bound in morocco leather and decorated with gilded edges. Sub poena praeclusi et perpetui silentii [under the penalty of exile and perpetual silence]. A man gets a very strange feeling, however, when he has quite honestly paid his three rix-bankdollars and then is told: "Read it as you read your Bible! If you don't understand it, you might as well blow your brains out right away." There are moments when a man's thoughts are confused and he thinks that Nicholas Copernicus was a fool to have insisted that the earth orbits around the sun. Quite the contrary. It is heaven, the sun, the planets, earth, Europe, and Copenhagen that revolve around Søren Kierkegaard, who stands silently in the middle and does not even take his hat off in token of the honor shown him.

The Commentary itself is geared to successive sections of the *Postscript*, designated by page numbers of the Swenson-Lowrie (S/L) translation.³ The treatment of each of these sections is divided into two parts. The first part, "Résumé," is usually about a page and a half of paraphrase. This is extremely helpful where, unlike Nettleship's com-

mentary on Plato's *Republic*, which only restated what Plato had already said with much more elegance, the author restates in a brief and perfectly coherent way what is often some of the most obscure and difficult writing ever penned. These Résumés provide the reader of the Postscript an opportunity to catch his or her breath, appreciate the progression of the central ideas, and acquire a sort of conceptual frame of reference for a more detailed study; The second part of each commentary, set off from the Résumé by a series of asterisks, is a commentarius perpetuus (not unlike, as the author observes, exegetical commentaries on Biblical texts) consisting of "explanatory and illustrative information given page by page and line by line" (p. 139), related to the S/L edition by page and line number. Such information consists of translations of all foreign expressions, documentation of Biblical quotations or allusions, relevant bibliographical references, excerpts from relevant Kierkegaard passages (most notably the *Papirer*), excerpts from other relevant authors (e.g. Hegel), occasional corrections of the S/L translation, indications of material omitted in the S/L translation, explanations of Danish colloquialisms and provincial allusions, historical-philosophical explanations of particular lines or passages, etc. These discussions extend usually for many pages.

The diversity and relative relevance of material contained in the commentarius perpetuus is exemplified on a single page and a half from pp. 168-169. Here we are informed that "a confusion of the categories" (31:37) has reference to the categories of faith and knowledge, which, depending on the reader, might or might not be enlightening; the "vanity of faith" (31:38) is an echo of the Third Commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Ex. 20:7), which, unless Thulstrup knows more about SK's expression than he is telling seems to be an overwrought exegesis; that

"poor unlearned Peer Ericksen" (32:-23) was a colloquialism stemming from Holberg's *Den Stundesløse*, Act III, Scene 5; in reference to the word "zealousness" ("fanaticism" in S/L) (32:23), Thulstrup is constrained to mention the zealots at the time of Jesus, whose movement was the source of the Danish Zelotismen (as well as our "zealousness", etc.) with the meaning of "fanatical devotion"; that the expressions "subject . . . subjectivity" (33:8) have two fundamental meanings: (1) the personal passion by which Christianity is grasped ("subjectivity is the truth"), and (2) an individual, sinful human being who does not possess the essential truth ("subjectivity is untruth")--a substantive observation; we are informed that "while the grass grows under his feet the inquirer dies" (33:20) reflects the Danish proverb, "Medens Græsset groer, dør Horsemor" (While the grass grows the stud starves"); on the occasion of the phrase "the significance of mediation" (33: 37) we are launched into observations involving philology (Hegel employed the term Vermittlung or Vesöhnung, and the Danish (not given) is derived from the French la méditation), the nature of Hegel's concept of the synthesis, a relevant (anti-Hegelian) quotation from the *Papirer*, a list of further relevant passages in the *Papirer*, and Thulstrup's summarizing comment.

The character and interest of such notes may otherwise be evident from a sampling from here and there. On the occasion of "water-inspector" (146:5), Thulstrup informs us that in SK's time the drinking water in Copenhagen was so polluted that it had to be purified before drinking and that "eels and other assorted marine animals could even be pumped directly into the kitchen through the faucet" (p. 42). The point of reference to the "well-trained Privatdocent" (154:3) could easily be missed were it not for the explanation (provided in this case by the translator) that "well-trained" translates the Danish dresseret,

which is usually used of animals such as a performing dog (p. 246). Of the words, "to be taught earnestness by the parish priest" (94 (note*):4), Thulstrup says that SK only "may here be hinting" at a certain widely known affair, but is not deterred from giving us the story of Thomas C. Bruun's publication (and aftermath) of his indelicate rhymes (p. 17f.), which, whether or not SK was hinting at it, is a story worth hearing. An example of rectifying a significant omission in the S/L translation (supplied, again, in this instance by the translator) occurs at 163:4. Here "solitary communion with itself" should be followed by "His presence is an eternal Contemporaneity"; we are informed that the original edition of the *Efterskrift* and the first edition of the *Samlede Værker* gave Samvittighed ("conscience") instead of Samtidig-hed ("contemporaneity"); SK corrected it in his own copy of the work, and S/L omitted the whole phrase (p. 247). If one suspects that at points the notes become an exercise in die Wissenschaft des nicht Wissen-wertens, he or she may be right. A good example of trivia overkill occurs when, on the phrase "has won through to a perfect victory" (295:-25), Thulstrup provides nearly half a page of information concerning a barker at Deer Park, from whom SK took this expression (p.315). On the occasion of a reference to the Eleatics and Heraclitus (336:11), Thulstrup gives us a three page account (pp. 331ff.) of these thinkers along with bibliographical information (which, by the way, mistakenly suggests that Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* was first published in 1961). Again, this is an inordinate amount of space on a relatively minor point, especially when throughout the volume so many critical and difficult lines, passages, concepts, etc., are left unexplained.

Despite all the Kierkegaardian understanding and scholarship represented in this volume one nevertheless must be on guard. We take, first, an example from the commen-

tarius perpetuus. Commenting on the expression "the category 'quite differently'" (53~:17), Thulstrup says (p. 386),

. . . even though the phrase in the *Postscript* is the same as that frequently employed during the interwar years in German philosophy of religion and systematic theology, the same thing is not understood by it. In the *Postscript* it is used within the sphere of immediacy, whereas in Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige* (Munich, 1917), for example, it is used to denote the divine mysterium tremendum et fascinans, which corresponds to the absolute paradox in Kierkegaard.

It would seem either that Thulstrup must be wrong in his concluding observation or he has expressed himself very poorly. We do not dwell on the question why the idea of das ganz Andere must be limited to the sphere of immediacy or inwardness to the first power or pagan faith or Religiousness A (cf. Thulstrup's use of terms in his comment on 494:37)--is not the force of das ganz Andere experienced even more strongly in the sphere of transcendence or inwardness to the second power or Christian faith or Religiousness B? The main problem here is the correspondence which Thulstrup sees between Otto's mysterium tremendum and Kierkegaard's absolute paradox. Otto conceived the numinous experience as (in principle) a universal experience mediated in Christian and non-Christian contexts alike, the "non-rational core of religion," all religion; thus it presupposes a common faculty corresponding in a way to Socratic recollection and thus to Religiousness A rather than to Religiousness B which confronts the individual wholly from without, with particularity, and with offense. Thulstrup refers to the different role of das ganz Andere in German philosophy of religion and systematic theology. If indeed he had exemplified his point from the latter rather than the former, he surely would have cited the early Barth whose ganz Andere is, as a matter of fact, theologically related to Kierkegaard's absolute paradox.

A second example: The opening paragraph of Thulstrup's Résumé of Book II, Ch. 2, is as follows (p. 251):

The author begins this section with observations concerning different ways of approaching the truth. We may define it empirically as the agreement of thought with being, or idealistically as the agreement of being with thought. Regardless of which definition we prefer, we must first ascertain what we mean by "being." If we are speaking of empirical being the truth will remain an approximation because concrete empirical being is constantly undergoing change. If we take the idealistic approach we end up with a tautology, for in this case we are dealing with a purely conceptual being in which the thought and being mean the same thing. In the first case something else besides thought must intervene; in the second we get nowhere at all.

Here Thulstrup clearly correlates the empirical definition of truth (the conformity of thought with being) with the empirical conception of being, and the idealistic definition of truth (the conformity of being with thought) with the idealistic conception of being. But is this what Climacus/Kierkegaard actually says? The relevant lines of Climacus/Kierkegaard are as follows (pp. 169f.):

Whether truth is defined more empirically, as the conformity of thought and being, or more idealistically, as the conformity of being with thought, it is in either case, important carefully to note what is meant by being. . . . If being, in the two indicated definitions, is understood as empirical being, truth is at once transformed into a desideratum, and everything must be understood in terms of becoming; for the empirical object is unfinished and the existing cognitive spirit is itself in process of becoming.

The term "being," as used in the above definitions, must therefore be understood (from the systematic standpoint) much more abstractly, presumably as the abstract reflection of, or the abstract prototype for, what being is as concrete empirical being. When so understood there is nothing to prevent us from abstractly determining the truth as abstractly finished and complete; for the correspondence between thought and being is, from the abstract point of view, always finished. Only with the concrete does becoming enter in, and it is from the concrete that abstract thought abstracts.

But if being is understood in this manner, the formula becomes a tautology. Thought and being mean one and the same thing, and the correspondence spoken of is merely an abstract of self-identity. Neither formula

says anything more than that the truth is, so understood as to accentuate the copula: the truth is, i.e. the truth is a reduplication.

Though Climacus/Kierkegaard begins with the distinction between the empirical conception of truth and the idealistic conception, he immediately shifts our attention to two different conceptions of being, whether being is understood as involved either in the empirical conception of truth or the idealistic. These two different conceptions of being are the empirical, which leads to a conception of truth as approximation, and the abstract, which leads to a conception of truth as tautology. But these do not correlate to the two conceptions of truth: The empirical conception of truth may lead to truth as approximation or tautology, depending on whether being is conceived empirically or abstractly, and the idealistic conception of truth may lead to truth as approximation or tautology, depending on whether being is conceived empirically or abstractly. This is evident not only from the fact that there is, in the relevant passage, no talk about the "idealistic" conception of being but rather the "abstract," but also from such lines such as, "If being, in the two indicated definitions, is understood as empirical being. . . ." (my emphasis), and "The term 'being,' as used in the above definitions (plural), must therefore be understood (from the systematic standpoint) much more abstractly."

Finally, there is still a more serious problem, but one which would require more space than is here available for real treatment. Thulstrup does not do justice to the critical and (I think) pivotal transition in the Postscript from Socratic faith to Christian faith. A long discussion of Socratic-type subjectivity issues finally in the oft-quoted and italicized definition: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth" (p. 182), and later on the same page, "the above definition of

truth is an equivalent expression for faith." But then, by virtue of the Christian doctrine of sin and the intrinsic paradoxicality of the Christian doctrine of the God-Man, the conception of subjectivity and inwardness is infinitely heightened, and a new definition is issued: "Instead of the objective uncertainty, there is here a certainty, namely, that objectively it is absurd; and this absurdity held fast in the passion of inwardness, is faith" (p.188). This crucial difference between faith as involving an objective uncertainty and involving the certainty of an objective absurdity is obscured in Thulstrup's treatment of these central passages of the *Postscript*. That it may not be simply a matter of obscurity but a misrepresentation is suggested by the fact that in Thulstrup's comment on the words at 177:38, "the truth becomes a paradox," he identifies this truth with "the message of Christianity" whereas, in fact, Christianity has long since dropped out of the *Postscript* discussion; Socratic subjectivity is here the exclusive topic, and Christianity is not reintroduced into the discussion until p. 191.

But back to the concrete. For a book of ordinary dimensions costing \$60.00 one is disconcerted by numerous mechanical mistakes. For exam-

ple, one searches in vain for a reference as per the index to Grundtvig on p. 24; John 14:16 is mistakenly cited for 14:6 on p. 233; telos and metron are cited as meaning "measure" and "final end" respectively on p. 308, which of course is backwards; and the accentuation of Greek words is a real mess (e.g. pp. 215, 309, 235), including the all important metabasis eis allo genos which is accented incorrectly in three different ways (pp. 215, 226, 401) and once correctly (p. 234). The ineptitude with the setting of Greek terms becomes a real Greek comedy where (p. 317) the volume corrects the rendering of a Greek word in S/L, only to introduce a still further mistake.

Of course such problems have no bearing on the substance of the work, and even when weightier criticisms are taken into account it is a book that must be owned, or at least used, by those who would understand the *Postscript*. The *Postscript* is at once one of the most important and one of the most difficult books in the history of philosophy, religion, and theology. And we all need all the help we can get.

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1. Niels Thulstrup, *Søren Kierkegaard: Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift udgivet med Indledning og Kommentar* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962), 2 vols.
 2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, tr. David F. Swenson, Introduction and Commentary Niels Thulstrup, tr. rev. and commentary tr. Howard V. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962).
 3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941).

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