

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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EDITOR'S STATEMENT

I would like to give a special word of thanks to those readers who have sent contributions to the Newsletter. I would also like to reiterate our subscription policy. Institutions are charged \$10 per year. The publication is sent free of charge to individuals who request it, but voluntary donations from those able to help are much appreciated. I am especially grateful for help from foreign subscribers, since the cost of overseas postage is substantial.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND REVIEWS

I would also like to renew my appeal for brief articles and book reviews. The success of the Newsletter at providing a place for conversation about Kierkegaard depends solely on the support of readers. Please send articles of interest to lovers of Kierkegaard, whether scholarly or of more general appeal.

If there is a book you would like to review, please call or write me. I would like to see that virtually any book on Kierkegaard gets at least a brief review, but to achieve this goal several things must happen. Authors must encourage publishers to send a review copy of books; potential reviewers must volunteer their services. Several books are scheduled to be reviewed in the next issue.

I would also welcome articles that attempt to review or summarize recent literature on Kierkegaard in scholarly periodicals. For example, a recent issue of Religious Studies (Vol. 25, September 1989) contained three articles on Kierkegaard. Anyone wishing to briefly summarize and discuss this sort of material would do all of us a great service.

NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE

REORGANIZATION OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY

At the December business meeting of the Kierkegaard Society in conjunction with the Eastern Divisional Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Atlanta, several actions of note were taken. Stephen Evans and George Connell were elected to the executive committee as at-large members. By far the most significant action, however, had to do with a possible reorganization of the Society.

For a number of years there has been a Kierkegaard Seminar as part of the program at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting. When this seminar expired, members of the seminar applied for group status, but with the knowledge that this application would very likely be unsuccessful. In that case the only viable means of having Kierkegaard represented in the context of the AAR would be to form a separate group that would meet in conjunction with the AAR, much as the Kierkegaard Society has always done in connection with the APA. At the December APA meeting, this problem was discussed, and it was agreed that in the event the application for group status was denied, the Kierkegaard Seminar members would be invited to join with the existing Kierkegaard Society to form a new society, rather than to form a second Kierkegaard organization. Since the existing Kierkegaard Society has always been very loosely organized, it was clearly necessary to reorganize and adopt a formal constitution with some clear criteria for membership in order to gain the proper status with the AAR.

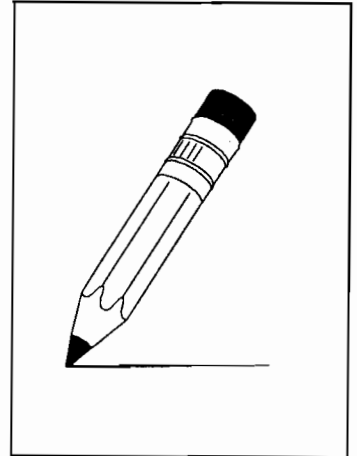
As many expected and feared, the AAR application for group status was denied. Consequently, Sylvia Walsh, who has worked tirelessly for the cause of Kierkegaard studies and who is past president of the Society, drafted a new constitution, which was sent to the executive committee of the present Kierkegaard Society as well as the steering committee of the AAR Kierkegaard Seminar. Sylvia then revised the proposed constitution in light of the suggestions she received. A copy of this constitution is printed later in this Newsletter.

There was some need for haste, since a board meeting of the executive committee of the AAR was to be held in April, and the newly reorganized society needed to have some kind of official existence by then to secure permission to meet at the next AAR annual meeting. Therefore, the revised constitution was sent to a group of Kierkegaard scholars, including particularly former members of the AAR Seminar. Those interested in becoming members of the new Society were instructed to notify Abraham Khan that they wished to become members, with the understanding that a notice of dues to be paid (\$5) would be sent to them when a Secretary-Treasurer had been elected. As you will note, the constitution declares that it will be considered adopted when at least twenty persons have paid dues. If this clause is interpreted rather liberally, and the letters to Abraham Khan certifying an intent to join and pay the requisite dues count, then the reorganized society now exists. Anyone interested in joining should send his or her name to Khan, who has graciously agreed to collect these names until a secretary-treasurer has been elected. Do not, however, send Khan any dues. The address is Abraham Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1H8, Canada.

The present members of the executive committee of the old Kierkegaard Society together with Khan will appoint a nominating committee for the new Society, and will continue to act as the executive committee pro tem until elections are held.

KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS NEWS

Princeton University Press has announced the spring publication of Søren Kierkegaard, Early Polemical Writings, translated by Julia Watkin. This volume includes Kierkegaard's From the Papers of One Still Living, a study of a work by Hans Christian Andersen, and also Kierkegaard's only use of dramatic form, "The Battle between the Old and the New Soap-Cellars," a philosophical parody. Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses (the discourses from 1843 and 1844) is in production; next on the press schedule is Concluding Unscientific Postscript.



BULGARIAN SCHOLAR WISHES CORRESPONDENCE

Radosveta Theoharava is a Bulgarian scholar who is interested in the relation between Kierkegaard and Kant and in the relation between Kierkegaard and twentieth century psychology and philosophy. She would very much like to correspond with any Kierkegaard scholars with similar interests. Address: Sophia University, Kliment Ohridski, 1000 Sophia 15, Ruski, BD, Bulgaria.

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD NEWSLETTER

Many readers of this publication will be interested in the International Kierkegaard Newsletter that is edited by Julia Watkin. This periodical has a circulation of around 1,000 and is circulated in 38 countries. It contains very extensive coverage of international Kierkegaard publications, meetings, and other activities. Anyone wishing to receive a copy should contact Julia Watkin, Stenagervej 15, 2900 Hellerup, Denmark. Financial contributions are both welcomed and needed.

KIERKEGAARD MEETINGS AT THE NEW ORLEANS APA

The Central Division meeting of the American Philosophical Association in New Orleans, April 25-27, at the Riverside New Orleans Hilton Hotel, will feature two sessions dealing with Kierkegaard. The Kierkegaard Society will meet from 8:15 to 10:15 p.m. on Thursday evening, April 26. The theme of that meeting will be "Kierkegaard and Post-Modernism," and the program features a panel chaired by Robert L. Perkins, and including Sylvia Walsh, Stephen Crites, Gene Fendt, and Ron Hall. They will discuss three books: John Vignaux Smyth, A Question of Irony: Irony in Sterne, Kierkegaard and Barthes; Sylviane Agacinski, Aparté: Conceptions and Deaths of Søren Kierkegaard; and John Caputo, Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project.

Besides this meeting of the society there will be a regular APA symposium on "Kierkegaard's The Concept of Anxiety" on Thursday, April 26, from 1:45 p.m. until 4:45 p.m. The session will focus particularly on Kierkegaard's treatment of original sin and will be chaired by William Rowe. The principal speaker is Philip Quinn, and commentators are Stephen Evans and Robert Perkins.

AAR ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER

It is expected that the new Kierkegaard Society will meet in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in the fall. Those who wish to attend this section should remember that since the meeting will not be part of the regular program, they will have to look in the section of the program entitled "Additional Meetings" for the time and place.

NEW CONSTITUTION

NOTE: This constitution is the new constitution of the Kierkegaard Society in North America. (See news article above.) Anyone wishing to join should send his or her name but no money at this time to Abraham Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1H8, Canada.

SØREN KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this Society shall be the Søren Kierkegaard Society.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Society shall be the study and discussion of the thought of Søren Kierkegaard in all its dimensions and ramifications, including its sources and influence.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Membership in the Society is open to anyone interested in the thought of Kierkegaard who pays dues. Annual dues for membership in the Society shall be Five Dollars (\$5.00), payable to the Secretary-Treasurer. Dues shall be used to defray communication expenses, costs of meeting rooms, and other expenses incurred by the Society at the discretion of the Executive Committee. A report of dues and expenditures shall be presented by the Secretary-Treasurer at the annual meeting of the society.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Section A (Officers). The officers of the Society shall consist of a President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and two Members at Large, who together shall act as an Executive Committee of the Society. Two members of this committee shall be members of the American Philosophical Association and two members shall be members of the American Academy of Religion. The Executive Committee will appoint the Program Committees for meetings of the Society at the APA, the AAR, the Kierkegaard Society of Denmark, and other learned societies.

Section B (Standing Committees). There shall be two Program Committees, one to plan programs for meetings at the American Philosophical Association and one for meetings at the American Academy of Religion. Each of these committees shall consist of a Chairperson and two Members at Large appointed by the Executive Committee of the Society. Committee members shall serve for a period of two years and may be reappointed at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE V. BUSINESS MEETINGS

Business meetings of the whole Society shall be held at least annually and should alternate between the Annual Meeting of the AAR and one of the divisional meetings of the APA. Business meetings shall be called by the Executive Committee, who may also call other general meetings of the society at appropriate occasions. Business meetings shall be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VI. PROGRAMS

Programs of the Society shall include papers selected from a general call in the Kierkegaard Newsletter and in the Newsletter of the Council of Philosophical Societies, invited papers by distinguished scholars, panel discussions of current secondary literature, and any other format conducive to the study of Kierkegaard's thought, as determined by the Program Committees. Program participation shall be limited to members of the Society except by special invitation from the Program Committees.

ARTICLE VII. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The President shall appoint a Nominating Committee which will solicity nominations from the membership in the Spring issue of the Kierkegaard Newsletter and publish a ballot in the Fall issue. Members of the Executive Committee of the Society shall serve one year beginning January 1. The Vice-President shall be considered President-Elect. The Secretary-Treasurer may serve more than one term consecutively. Past Presidents may be re-elected as Vice-President after five years.

ARTICLE VIII. ADOPTION

This Constitution shall be considered adopted when dues from twenty (20) persons have been received.

ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the members through the Executive Committee at least sixty days prior to a meeting of the Society and shall be voted on by mail ballot after discussion by members present at the next APA and AAR meetings. Amendments shall be approved by a simple majority of ballots received.

BOOK REVIEW

PREFACES: LIGHT READING FOR CERTAIN CLASSES AS THE OCCASION MAY REQUIRE, BY NICOLAUS NOTABENE by Søren Kierkegaard. Translated with an introduction by William McDonald. Florida State University Press, 1989. 115 pages. Reviewed by Patrick Gould.

My first impression of this small volume was that the initial phrase in its subtitle, "Light Reading," was appropriate. I asked myself whether anyone should read it besides confirmed Kierkegaardians trying to fill a last gap in their knowledge of the master.

It is an amusing book. The laughable pseudonym Nicolaus Notabene writes a book consisting entirely of prefaces. He does this, we discover, because his wife will not let him write a book. She fears losing a good husband to the lost cause of authorship. They come to a compromise: he is allowed to write prefaces. She does not seem to notice that these prefaces pile up into a book.

The voice within the prefaces varies, as does the sort of book being prefaced. The first preface after Notabene's preface to his prefaces is written as if the main import of the book it prefaces is that it comes out just before New Year's and that it can serve as a tasteful present. "[I]t can even be placed under the Christmas tree itself, with the help of a silk ribbon that has been placed in the gilt case" (30). It concludes with a promise to complete, as soon as possible, logical, aesthetic, ethical and dogmatic Systems and finally *the* System itself. Mr. McDonald's notes help the uninitiated understand that Heiberg is the target here, as he is in the third, which prefaces a second edition of--the same or another?--very successful New Year's production. Each of these is followed by something much more like a polemic than a preface, attacking such evils as the practice of book reviewing, "aesthetic scribbling," and pandering to the public. The fifth is written by an enthusiast promoting a book on the

Temperance Society. The sixth prefaces a book of sermons by a cultured and Hegelian religious author. Heiberg seems to be the target again, or perhaps H. L. Martensen. In Preface VII I hear the unmistakable voice of Kierkegaard himself. In VIII an (ironically) naive person, somewhat like the man imagined in Fear and Trembling who only wants to understand the Abraham story, proposes the founding of a philosophical journal.

The in-jokes from the Copenhagen literary scene and the relentless Heiberg-bashing are not all that funny anymore. Fortunately there is more. In the seventh preface the general lesson of what has preceded it appears and I found myself struck in new ways by old and familiar Kierkegaardian themes. Two leap to mind as I write this. First, the true author writes from an urge that is "an internal one, inwardly reflected," for "in default of the huge task of understanding all people, he has chosen what one will perhaps call narrow-minded and foolish, to understand himself..." (70). "If, on the other hand, it pleases a man to become serious through the thought of what he will do for others, this shows that he is a fool from the ground up, whose life is and remains a joke..." (73). Similarly, the true reader also seeks only self-knowledge. "The one who is convinced of this, that everyone has been allotted only himself and that this is the main thing, only he is my reader" (74).

Secondly, there is a deeply religious attitude toward suffering. "[W]ithout suffering there is no true knowledge...[O]nly in suffering is one in accord with God...[I]f anyone is excluded from wisdom, then it is only the happy person,

whom happiness made so light-minded that he did not suffer at all..." (71). Though familiar enough with these ideas, and even intellectually convinced of their truth, I found myself taking them in "*in sucum et sanguinem*" (as the seventh preface has it). In short, light reading became dangerous reading, for if these ideas are true, then what happens to scholarship, to ordinary notions of service and stewardship, and to that fundamental American right, the pursuit of happiness? Everything, everything is changed.

Patrick Goold is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and a Tutor in the Paracollege at St. Olaf College.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

More information about the new Kierkegaard Society; possibly a ballot for officers.

Reviews of the following:

Kierkegaard: Poet of Existence, edited by Birgit Bertung. (Papers delivered at the 1988 Kierkegaard conference in Hillerød, Denmark)

Engaging the Immediate: Applying Kierkegaard's Theory of Indirect Communication to the Practice of Psychotherapy, by Katherine M. Ramsland.

Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology, by C. Stephen Evans.

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