

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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NUMBER 22

NOVEMBER 1990

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Scholarly interest in Kierkegaard is high, at least if one can judge from the number of books reviewed and meetings announced in this issue. That is, I think, good news, though all readers of Kierkegaard have experienced ambivalent feelings about the scholarly

industry concerning S.K. Perhaps it is good for those of us who teach about, write about, and think about Kierkegaard to have some of those ambivalent feelings; perhaps they can be channeled to motivate us to continually remind ourselves that the lessons of Kierkegaard's writings should never be considered a purely scholarly matter even for scholars, least of all for

scholars. As a community, we should strive to reduplicate any insights we gain in our lives.

AN EDITORIAL GOOF: KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

I am very sorry to report that I made a serious typographical mistake in the last issue with respect to the new constitution of the Kierkegaard Society. Some words were inadvertently left out of Section A of Article IV, dealing with officers of the Society. As printed before, the offending sentence read "The Executive Committee will appoint the Program Committees for meetings of the Society at the A.P.A., the A.A.R., the Kierkegaard Society of Denmark, and other learned societies." The section should have read as follows: "The Executive Committee will appoint the Program Committees for meetings of the Society at the A.P.A. and at the A.A.R. and will serve as liaison to the A.P.A., the A.A.R., the Kierkegaard Society of Denmark, and other learned societies" (omitted words underlined). I apologize for this mistake, and hope that no one got the impression that the Kierkegaard Society in the U.S. would try to plan programs for the Kierkegaard Society of Denmark! A revised version of the complete constitution can be found on pages 2 and 3 of this issue.

KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

The new Kierkegaard Society is still in the process of being formed. A nominating committee composed of David Gouwens, Wanda Warren Berry, and Edward Mooney has been formed and has proposed the following slate of officers: for President, Stephen N. Dunning of the University of Pennsylvania; for Vice-President, M. Jamie Ferreira, of the University of Virginia; for Secretary-Treasurer, Mark Lloyd Taylor, of Seattle Pacific University. In addition, two members at large will be selected from the following group: Andrew Burgess of the University of New Mexico, Louise Carroll Keeley of Assumption College, Stephen Crites of Wesleyan University, Diana Fritz Cates of the University of Iowa, Abraham H. Khan of the University of Toronto, Merold Westphal of Fordham University, and Davis Wisdo of Susquehanna University. One of the two members at large will be chosen from the membership of the A.A.R. and one from the A.P.A. If you would like to vote you must obtain a ballot by joining the Society.

Abraham H. (Ivan) Khan is still taking names of those who would like to join. Although members will eventually

be asked to pay dues of \$5, at this time, since no secretary-treasurer is in place, there is no need to send any money. Rather, simply write to Ivan at Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1H8 CANADA, and tell him you would like to join the Society. This will ensure that you are sent a ballot for the first election.

SIXTUS SCHOLTENS DRAWINGS

Sixtus Scholtens, a Kierkegaard scholar from the Netherlands who is also an artist, has been doing a series of drawings designed to illustrate various Kierkegaardian texts, chiefly from the "Diapsalmata" in Either/Or. These are being done in both Danish and English versions, and Sixtus has kindly offered to allow some of these to be reprinted in the Newsletter. The versions printed here are (obviously) Danish, and the textual references are to the first edition of the Samlede Værker. I do not know whether or not he is interested in selling these, but I have seen them in note card form as well as in small colored editions that might be suitable for framing. If you are interested you could write to him at Karmelietenklooster, Steenstraat 39, 5831 JA Boxmeer, The Netherlands.

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 and at the AAR, and will serve as liaison to 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 solicit 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.

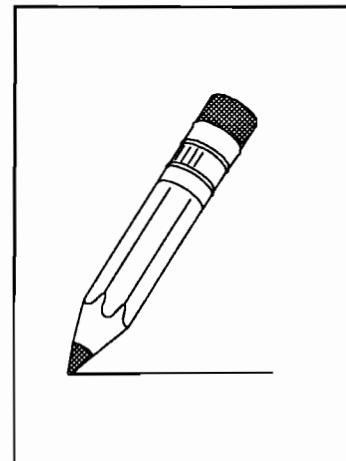
ARTICLE VIII. ADOPTION

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.

NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE



UPCOMING MEETINGS

APA Eastern Division Kierkegaard Society Meeting

The Søren Kierkegaard Society will meet in conjunction with the APA Eastern Division in Boston, December 27-30, 1990. The program will consist of two papers, with commentators for each. The session will be chaired by John Donnelly. The first paper, by Bernard Zelechow, will be "Kierkegaard, the Aesthetic, and Mozart's Don Juan," with the comment by Ron Hall. The second paper, by George Pattison, will be "Subjectivity: Point of View, Language Game, or Form of Life?" The comment will be by Charles Creegan. Please check the APA Bulletin that will contain the full program for the meeting to get the exact time and place. A brief business meeting will be held at the close of the session.

AAR National Annual Meeting

The Kierkegaard Society will be meeting with the AAR/SBL National Meeting in New Orleans, November 17-20, 1990. Since the request to make Kierkegaard an integral part of the AAR was denied, the Society's meeting is listed in the "Additional Meetings" section at the back of the Annual Meeting Program. The Society will meet Sunday, November 18 from 3:45 - 6:15 p.m. in the Chartres room at the Marriott. Abraham H. Khan will preside over the program, which will focus on Stages on Life's Way. The following papers will be presented: Robert Perkins, "Love Inverted: Kierkegaard's In Vino Veritas and Plato's Symposium;" Andrew Burgess, "Stages as a Stage on Kierkegaard's Way;" Vincent McCarthy, "Quidam's Diary." Stephen Crites will serve as respondent. A brief business meeting will be held at the close of the session.

APA Pacific Division Meeting

The Pacific Division of the APA will also host a meeting of the Kierkegaard Society in 1991. The meeting will be held March 27-30, 1991 at the Miyako and Kyoto Hotels in San Francisco. The program will be as follows: Title of Session, KIERKEGAARD: PAST, PRESENT, AND ALWAYS. Session Chair: Ed Mooney. First speaker, John Donnelly, "Mooney's Mahabra: The Teleological Suspension of the Religious?" Second speaker, Arnold B. Come, "Kierkegaard's Special Philosopher: Trendelenburg." Third speaker, Alastair McKinnon, "Kierkegaard's 'Leap of Faith'?"

AAR Southeastern Regional Meeting

A Kierkegaard Consultation will be held at the Southeastern Regional Meeting of the AAR, at the Hilton Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, March 15-17. The program will be presided over by Ron Hall. Paper #1 will be Sylvia Walsh, "Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Love: With a Glance Toward Nietzsche." C. Stephen Evans will serve as respondent. Paper #2 will be by Norman Lillegard, "The 'Eternal' and Kierkegaard's Religiosity," with a response by R. Taylor Scott. Paper #3 will be by Robert Perkins, "Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, and Schlegel's Lucinde." The respondent will be Robert Williams.

APA Central Division Meeting

A meeting of the Kierkegaard Society will be held in conjunction with the 1991 Central Division Meeting of the APA, to be held in Chicago at the Palmer House, April 24-27. The Society meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday evening from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. The program is still being planned.

New Kierkegaard Bibliography in Preparation

Aage Jørgensen, along with Stephane Hogue, is preparing a new bibliography of Kierkegaard literature, covering the 1980's. He would like researchers to provide him with any relevant information about recent articles. A "preprint" of this bibliography has just appeared: "Søren Kierkegaard-litteratur 1981-1990: Udkast til bibliografi," in Uriasposten, No. 8, 1989 (published 1990). Offprints are available from the author for U.S. \$10 at the following address: Bakkelodden 2, 8320 Maarslet, DENMARK.

Kierkegaardiana Reviewers Sought

Joakim Garff, Secretary for Kierkegaardiana, has written and asked for the names of persons who might be interested in writing reviews and also specialized articles, including those doing Ph.D. dissertations and other specialized research. Anyone interested should write to him directly, at The Institute for Systematic Theology, University of Copenhagen, Købmagergade 44-46, DK - 1150 Copenhagen, DENMARK.

Computer Readable Version of Kierkegaard Texts

Alastair McKinnon is presently preparing an "as is" IBM and compatibles version of Kierkegaard's Papirer. This text should be available for distribution by January, 1991. For further information write Inter Editions, 3005 Barat Road, Montreal, Canada H3Y 2H4.

Also, the InteLex Corporation is presently preparing a Folios View version of Alastair McKinnon's computer-readable text of the Samlede Værker as part of its Past Masters Series, which already includes Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and others. For further information and prices write the Intelex Corporation, Rt. 2, Box 383, Pittsboro, NC 27312 (telephone: 919-542-4411).

Kierkegaard's Writings Announcement

Princeton University Press has recently published two volumes in the Kierkegaard's Writings series: Early Polemical Writings, edited and translated by Julia Watkin, and For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself! edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses is scheduled for publication in November. Practice in Christianity and Concluding Unscientific Postscript are scheduled for 1991.

International Kierkegaard Commentary Update

International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Corsair Affair will be published this fall. It contains a rather contentious set of articles and is also the first sustained collaborative effort by the international Kierkegaard community to examine the events around the Corsair affair. All members of the Kierkegaard community should check to determine if their libraries subscribe to the series. There are discounts for libraries and individuals who subscribe to the series.

International Kierkegaard Commentary: Fear and Trembling and International Kierkegaard Commentary: Repetition will be published as separate volumes. This was determined by the advisory board after some excellent late articles arrived. At this point both volumes await revisions by one author in each volume. As soon as these revisions are in hand, the volumes will be submitted.

International Kierkegaard Commentary: Philosophical Fragments is next for editing. This will be done late next spring. If you have thought of submitting an article, let the editor know so he can plan for it. If you do not have a sigla list that includes Kierkegaard's Polemical Writings, recently published, write for one so your notations can be accurate. Several articles are in hand, so this volume will be published late in 1991 or early 1992. Along with the above, interested persons should be planning for International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or. We have a few essays for the first volume, but none at this point for the second. The editor will appreciate suggestions about possible authors and the directions the Commentary should take. For all IKC related issues write to Professor Robert Perkins, Department of Philosophy, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida 32720.

Kierkegaard Library Summer Fellowships

A reminder that the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College offers fellowships consisting of free room and a stipend of \$250 per month for board for up to nine weeks of study in the summer between June 1 and August 15. To apply, please send a letter explaining your proposed project to C. Stephen Evans, and enclose a copy of your vita. For those who may not know it, the Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf, besides an excellent collection of Kierkegaard's works in many editions, an extensive collection of secondary sources, and microfilm of all of Kierkegaard's papers. The library's most distinctive feature is a re-creation of Kierkegaard's personal library. Applications should be made as early as possible and no later than April 1.

REVIEWS

Katherine M. Ramsland, Engaging the Immediate: Applying Kierkegaard's Theory of Indirect Communication to the Practice of Psychotherapy. Bucknell University Press (Lewisburg, 1989) and Associated University Presses (London and Toronto: 1989), 133 pp, \$26.50. Reviewed by C. Stephen Evans, St. Olaf College.

Engaging the Immediate, whose author has both a Ph.D. in philosophy and an M.A. in clinical psychology, is an engaging attempt to show the relevance of some of Kierkegaard's ideas about subjective reflection and indirect communication to psychological therapy. Although philosophical in content, the intended audience consists of clinical psychologists, and the book is nicely illustrated with situations and problems taken from clinical practice. Although Kierkegaard's insights are mined, the author by no means relies solely on Kierkegaard. Ideas are borrowed freely from Gestalt theories of perception and Gestalt therapy, other existential psychologists such as Ludwig Binswanger and Rollo May, and such contemporary therapists as Milton Erickson.

Indirect communication, while an important theme, is by no means the whole story of Ramsland's book, as the title might imply to some. Ramsland is concerned to combat what she sees as an objectivist bias in psychology generally and in clinical psychology particularly, and to open the eyes of psychologists to the nature of subjectivity and the value of approaches that emphasize subjectivity. Objectivity and subjectivity are defined in a variety of ways; the concepts could have perhaps benefited from more precise definitions. Nevertheless, the general drift of Ramsland's usage is indicated by the following contrasts: Objectivity is concerned with the what of experience; subjectivity with the how. Objectivity is concerned with the content of experience; subjectivity with the process of experiencing itself. Objectivity is concerned with the linguistic categorization of experience; subjectivity attempts to attend to the concrete particularities that cannot be finally captured by language.

Though Ramsland wishes to argue for the value of increased attention to subjectivity in psychology, she is too wise to claim that subjectivity can replace objectivity. Subjectivity and objectivity are linked together in experience, and objectivity has a valuable place in science and in therapy. Her target is not really objectivity, but objectivism, an attitude that attempts to

exclude subjectivity from science and the therapeutic situation altogether.

Since subjectivity cannot be captured by language, one wonders whether it has any relevance to understanding human existence and therefore to therapy as well. Here is where indirect communication comes into the picture, according to Ramsland. One cannot understand subjectivity as a "result." However, subjectivity can be understood and to some degree communicated in more fluid ways. The type of understanding involved is akin to metaphorical understanding, in which the semantic links of language are loosened and the imagination is freed to see new relationships and similarities. Insofar as human beings share a common world, they can understand the subjectivity of the other in this way, relying on metaphor. Often, in fact, we can understand the subjectivity of another better than that other person. Because of our emotional involvement and closeness to our experience, we are often unaware of aspects of it. Actually, it is true to say that we are always unaware of aspects of our experience, according to Ramsland, since she rejects the Cartesian picture of a consciousness that is transparent to itself in favor of a Gestalt-inspired theory that views the focal points of consciousness as resting on a fringe that can never be made fully conscious all at once. Moreover, our emotional involvements mean that we do not merely fail to notice aspects of ourselves, but refuse to recognize certain aspects of ourselves.

Confronted with this situation of blindness to self and actual self-deception, the psychologist is invited to use indirect communication. Rather than simply telling the person that he or she is missing something, the artful therapist constructs a situation in which the person will come to see this for himself or herself. Using such techniques as irony, paradox, role-playing, and story-telling, the therapist hopes to present the client with a mirror.

Though I am obviously not a professional therapist, I found *Engaging the Immediate* to be an immensely suggestive and helpful book. As I read it, I reflected on

the counseling I do as a teacher, and a great deal of it rang true to me. Some critical questions, however, came to the fore, and some of these struck me as pointing to issues that may indicate serious disagreements with the way the author reads Kierkegaard. At several points I felt the author drew more on contemporary humanistic and existential psychology than on Kierkegaard. Some themes which I do not think can be easily assimilated to Kierkegaard, from thinkers like Carl Rogers, were very prominent.

To be specific, I do not think Kierkegaard would find the suspicion of reflection and endorsement of immediacy to be completely to his taste. It is true that Kierkegaard argues that existence can never be captured by a system, and I think he would agree that experience cannot be exhausted by concepts. Furthermore, I think he would agree that the distance between language and existence makes possible such phenomena as self-deception. However, I think that he would not agree that an emphasis on immediacy is in itself healthy. Kierkegaard describes the ideal human life as containing a "higher immediacy," but this immediacy is not a natural one; it is an "immediacy after reflection." Such an immediacy is not a subjectivity that is simply there, waiting for one to become aware of it. Rather, it must be formed, and Kierkegaard thought that conceptual clarity was not an enemy of this process, but one of its indispensable conditions. It is true that "seeing" a truth is not reducible to verbal recognition of it. That is why objectivity makes its home in what Kierkegaard called "chatter." But the truth that must be "seen," and which can only be communicated indirectly, is not a substitute for reflection and language. It is rather the key to unlocking the power of language and reflection. Objectivity in the sense of a concern for conceptual possibilities must not be equated with objectivity in the sense of indifference to personal appropriation. We easily forget that though Kierkegaard (or rather one of his pseudonyms) says that truth is subjectivity, he also says that subjectivity is untruth. Psychological health cannot be a matter of simply becoming more aware of the "how" as well as the "what" of experience, if this is so.

In conclusion, I would like to note that I find it surprising that a book on the implications of Kierkegaard's thought for therapy could completely omit the religious dimension of Kierkegaard's work. The author seems to be at pains to show that Kierkegaard's account of self-understanding and communication can be appropriated by secular thinkers for secular purposes. I remain unconvinced that the process by which existential insight is achieved and

communicated can be divorced so completely from the content of that insight.



Gene Fendt: Works of Love?: Reflections on 'Works of Love', Scripta Humanistica, (Potomac, Maryland: n.d.), 67 pp., \$37.50. Reviewed by Sylvia Walsh Perkins, Stetson University.

This slender monograph, offered as a poststructuralist or postmodernist reading of Kierkegaard's Works of Love, has as its objective the application of a hermeneutics of suspicion to the whole of Kierkegaard's authorship, which is thrown into question, the author thinks by using Works of Love as a test case for his thesis that Kierkegaard is a seducer--not merely a seducer but the greatest seducer, "a seducer without peer" (Don Juan and Johannes, step aside!). According to Fendt, Kierkegaard's object in seduction is twofold: first of all, "to possess a woman heart and soul both in time and in eternity," and second, "to have the whole story recorded and yet avoid discovery...via seduction" (p. 11). Fendt thus would have us to believe that Kierkegaard was carrying out a masterful seduction of Regine in and through his writings while with equal mastery seducing us into falsely believing that his authorship was penned for religious purposes. Apparently, however, Kierkegaard did not anticipate the rise of postmodern cynicism (in spite of the fact that he is regarded by some postmodernists as being a proto-postmodernist himself), and so the deception of the master of irony has been found out and exposed by a master detective of the new school (though Fendt modestly admits in the conclusion that he is "not detective enough to prove" that Works of Love is a deception)!

With typical deconstructionist delight, Fendt puts forward his thesis in polemical fashion as a "somewhat heretical point of view" in contrast to what he regards as the orthodox interpretation of Kierkegaard. This idea came to him, he says, accidentally and fortuitously (and thus aesthetically?) as a result of his own unhappy love affair, wherein he learned the attractions of the religious life, and by the discovery of an account of Regine Schlegel's story and some of Kierkegaard's letters to her in a book entitled Forlovelsen, published for her by Raphael Meyer in 1904. From these letters, which Fendt claims (but does not demonstrate) bear considerable similarity to the letters of "A" in "The Diary of the Seducer," he concludes that Kierkegaard was carrying on a secret correspondence to Regine in his authorship, keeping "his words and spirit alive in her heart" even as her husband read his books aloud to her in the privacy of their home--an ironical circumstance which to Fendt provides the capstone to what is possibly the greatest seduction of all time.

It is interesting and telling, I think, that Fendt does not establish his thesis on the basis of a comparison of Kierkegaard's letters with Works of Love itself, which he sees as being straightforward and, on the surface at least, not seductive. But that of course is part of Kierkegaard's strategy. Thus, his true intent is ferreted out by paying close attention to various little warnings, hints, and viewpoints in the book which are construed according to the author's desired interpretation. A closer analysis of the text, however, would have revealed that Kierkegaard employs at least one expression in Works of Love, "to love forth love," which derives from a note to Regine, and there may be others as well (see JP 5: 5526; WL, p. 206). That Kierkegaard sought in various ways and places to communicate and explain himself to Regine in his writings is already well established in Kierkegaard scholarship and openly attested to by Kierkegaard himself in his journals. But the fact that Kierkegaard occasionally drew upon his relation to Regine in his writings and hoped to communicate with her through them is a long way from establishing that these works--and by extension the whole authorship--constitute a secret correspondence, deception, and seduction and that he was insincere about the religious nature of his authorship. Indeed, that the so-called traces of deception detected in Works of Love amount to meager evidence in support of Fendt's thesis is virtually conceded by Fendt by the end of the first chapter, where he admits that the evidence he has gathered is circumstantial--so much so that he states: "I would not go to court with it" (p. 18).

In fact, I do not think Fendt believes in his own thesis, for he is unwilling to vouch for the truth of his point of view. Why, then, is he foisting it upon us? What is he up to? Is he just playing games deconstructionist style, or is there some serious tactic being served by putting forth this preposterous reading of Kierkegaard? With an ironist one can never be sure, though I am reasonably certain--or at least suspect (suspicion breeds suspicion)--that there is some attempt at seduction going on here, be it for good or ill. Perhaps he is trying to imitate Kierkegaard, the intended victim being his own lost love to whom ("to you, alone") the book is dedicated. But this solitary individual could also be that reader, whomever he or she may be, who knows how, in the author's viewpoint, to read his book as well as Works of Love

rightly, that is, not in an academic fashion but poetically like a piece of music. In fact, Fendt characterizes Works of Love as being, "with the possible exception of Either/Or--Kierkegaard's most musical book...in both sound and structure" (p. 2). Although it is uncertain whether the kind of music Kierkegaard (and Fendt?) is writing is a "siren song," love song, or psalm, Fendt contends that "like music, both works [Works of Love and Either/Or] can hold together many moods and several purposes." Thus while there may be various udgangspunkter or starting points for reading Works of Love, its (ultimate? serious? religious?) purpose, Fendt claims, is to lead each to a common point of subjective appropriation (p. 4; cf. p. 50). (This certainly sounds like a serious, nonseductive agenda on Kierkegaard's part, but dare we trust him any longer? Does Fendt trust him? Is Fendt trying to facilitate such a movement on our part? If it is all a hoax, why bother?) For his part, Fendt intimates that he is not out to write a learned commentary on Works of Love nor should Works of Love be read and interpreted in such a manner. It is, then, perhaps beside the point and contrary to the author's ultimate aim to offer a thesis about Works of Love, especially one that undermines the stated purpose of the work. But apparently Fendt thinks that calling into question the integrity of the text will help to subvert and destroy (thus the deconstructionist thrust of his work) objective philosophical and theological approaches to this and other writings of Kierkegaard. Not only that, he thinks Kierkegaard's emphasis upon subjective appropriation is precisely what makes his works amenable to postmodern interpretation and in line with the poststructural maneuver, which according to Fendt's understanding of it is comparable to a movement from law to gospel, that is from existence in obedience to the law to one characterized by an inward desire for a heart that conforms to the even more rigorous demands of the gospel (p. 50). That postmodernism celebrates subjectivity (or more accurately, subjectivism) is uncontested, but that it embraces subjectivity in any form close to Kierkegaard's and has a religious orientation is highly debateable. In my estimation, any similarities between the two modes of subjectivity are mostly superficial, as I see postmodernism fundamentally as an aesthetic movement that stands much closer to Nietzsche and German romanticism than it does to Kierkegaard. Some other Kierkegaard and postmodern interpreters, including Fendt, obviously disagree on this. I, at any rate, remain unconvinced by Fendt's attempt to align the two.

Fendt concludes his book with a chapter on Fear and Trembling, which seems out of place in a volume that is supposed to be devoted to Works of Love. Apparently the author did not have quite enough material for a book, and even with this extraneous chapter the text comes to only 67 pages. Too bad he did not settle down to a more conceptually developed and intellectually controlled encounter with the content of this most important Kierkegaard work. It certainly deserves more and better than Fendt has offered us in this small book.



C. Stephen Evans: Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology: Insight for Counseling and Pastoral Care, Zondervan Publishing House (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1990), 135 pages. Reviewed by Stephen Rowntree, S.J., Loyola University (New Orleans).

Kierkegaard's life's work asks us to believe altogether extraordinary claims. And these altogether extraordinary claims are presented in altogether foreign and opaque language. The contemporary reader, therefore, needs exceptionally clear and insightful help to understand Kierkegaard.

C. Stephen Evans is a master interpreter of Kierkegaard; he provides such essential help with clarity and cogency. This book is intended for "psychologists, pastors, counsellors, and ordinary people struggling to understand themselves and others" (10). These intended readers are well served. Although I am not a Kierkegaard specialist, I have read and taught Kierkegaard for several years, and I would judge this work useful for specialists on two counts: (1) it shows how Kierkegaard taken "straight" (i.e. as he understood himself, viz., as "Christian edifying writer") reads; and (2) it provides help for communicating Kierkegaard to non-specialists. It would be an excellent resource also for students reading The Concept of Anxiety and The Sickness Unto Death.

Kierkegaard's extraordinary claim is that faith in Christ solves the problem of human existence. This is to say that our self-fulfillment or self-realization can only be achieved by faith in Christ. For 99 out of 100 contemporaries (or more) this uncompromising claim sounds both strange and intolerant. Strange, because Christian faith is apparently about self-denial and submission. Intolerant, because it implies non-believers are cut off from self-fulfillment. Because Kierkegaard and Evans are talking to Christians, they do not address the intolerance issue. Nor do I. Evans does focus on the basic claim about the necessity for faith in chapters 3 ("Human Beings as Spiritual Creatures"), 4 ("Kierkegaard's Depth Psychology I: Sin, Self-Deception, and the Unconscious"), and 7 ("Kierkegaard as Developmental Psychologist"). These chapters comprise the bulk of the book.

Because Kierkegaard's life project was the effort to establish that belief in Christ is essential for human fulfillment, his work as a whole is "Christian psychology." In chapter 2 ("Kierkegaard as Psychologist"), Evans

defends the legitimacy of Kierkegaard calling what he does "psychology." He shows that psychology is best understood not as value-free, experimental science, but as meaning-laden interpretive inquiry.

The central claim Kierkegaard makes according to Evans is that the Christian interpretation of human life in terms of creation, sin, redemption, and sanctification (my addition), holds the key to human existence. There are several obvious puzzles about the overall claim.

For one, are the very notions human existence, and human fulfillment valid. They seem to imply there is such a thing as a human nature shared by all persons. But isn't this concept a remnant of a long ago era before final causes were expelled from nature (including human nature), and historical/cultural diversity discovered?

Kierkegaard believes "the human condition" is a valid notion in spite of cultural and individual differences. For all humans are embodied creatures each with a determinant past, future possibilities, and present self-determination. Self-determination (freedom) synthesizes past and future. A determinate past means that only certain possibilities are real possibilities, i.e. possibilities that one can actually realize in a particular present. Pasts, presents, and futures vary enormously from person to person. Each person in fact is unique because her particular past, present, and future constitute a unique nexus. Temporality in this sense is a common feature which implies at the same time human diversity and uniqueness. Self-realization is a task that individuals can botch in characteristic ways (= forms of despair). Each involves a rejection (or non-recognition) of given elements of one's self. Thus the despair of finitude/necessity/past, which is the lack of infinitude/possibility/future, rejects the "expansive, future-oriented, ideal pole in the self." (70) The despair of infinitude/possibility/future, which is the lack of finitude/necessity/past, rejects "the limited, contingent factor in the self." (70)

The human person is also self-reflective, self-concerned: she likes or dislikes what she sees herself to have become. She accepts or rejects herself.

The human person so described is thoroughly social, thoroughly relational. The terms in which he describes his determinate features are those provided by the languages of his communities. And many attributes themselves are socially constituted, e.g. gender, class, beauty or ugliness. Future possibilities are also provided by communities. The aspirations to become a starlet, a scholar, or a stockbroker are provided by particular social contexts, and without these contexts such aspirations would not be possible. Even self-assessment is initially a reflex of others' assessments. A sense that one is valuable and lovable reflects others', especially parents', positive valuations. Likewise a sense that one is bad or damaged reflects others' negative evaluations. The human self then is a self-reflective process of synthesizing, a process that is established by relationship to others.

Now all this seems fairly obvious once articulated. It is a commonly enough accepted view of humans' essentially social nature. But how does God enter in? How is God essential for the self-realization of selves so described? The answer I believe starts to become clear when we recognize that Kierkegaard believes the human problem is self-rejection and self-hatred. This sounds paradoxical at first: according to Christianity, isn't the human problem excessive self-love? Didn't Christ teach us to forget ourselves and turn outward to love our neighbors, and to worship God? Yes, he did. But we learn from Kierkegaard that these Christian challenges do not eliminate the imperative to love ourselves as God in Christ has loved us. In fact Kierkegaard implies that to meet them we must have learned to love ourselves. And most centrally Kierkegaard tries to show that we cannot love ourselves properly apart from God.

Why can't I love myself as I am, apart from God? Kierkegaard's simple answer seems to be that apart from God I cannot accept my real limitations nor appreciate my real possibilities. To discover (apart from God) that I am weak, limited, dependent, imperfect, Kierkegaard believes leads me to reject myself as I am and to seek to change myself into something more acceptable. One strategy (forms of the despair of weakness) involves altering myself to conform to social expectations and valuations. I am without worth as I am, but if I change myself to become like others then I will be valuable because valued by them. Or I may scorn myself for my

limitations (and scorn others for theirs), and seek a more creative refashioning (despair of defiance). I imagine a wholly wonderful, admirable, and independent self and try to become that. Such attempted self-creation inevitably runs up against my limitations. Self-hatred (and hatred of the world) intensifies.

When I hear the Gospel, I hear the Good News that God has created me good and in his image, that he loves me as I am with my faults and limits. I further hear the Good News of Jesus's death on the Cross out of love for me, that I have been rescued from sin and death, and made an adopted member of God's family. I hear further that I have been gifted, empowered, and called by the Spirit to serve Christ's cause in an utterly special and unique way based on my talents, skills, experiences, and even limits and failings. I realize then that I am called to forgive myself as God has forgiven me, to love myself as Christ has loved me. To grasp this Good News is to realize, at the same time as I realize my own worth, the worth of my brothers and sisters. It is to hear a call to love my neighbor as I have been loved. And of course it is to be filled with thanksgiving and praise for God who has loved me.

Evans shows that for Kierkegaard, this knowledge of God which grounds self-love is available to all humans. It is grasped in the experience of absolute moral obligations. Here (and in other places) Evans has argued for Kierkegaard's claim about natural knowledge of God. If there is such a natural knowledge of God, yet humans hate themselves, the explanation must be that they have more or less willfully obscured this knowledge. Hence the basic sin is self-deception.

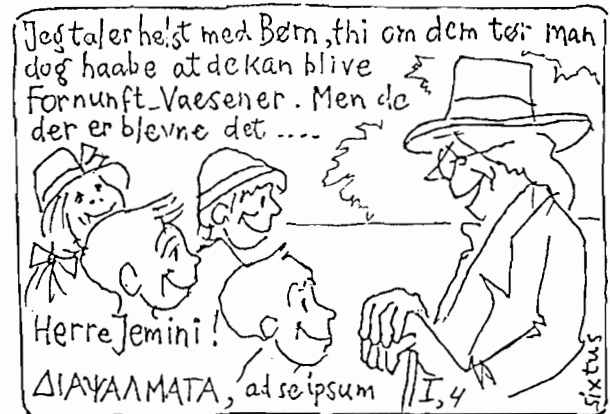
Here I must disagree with Kierkegaard (and Evans). I believe moral experience is quite ambiguous. I find it hard post-Freud to find God's voice here. Nor is a claim like that of the believing psychoanalyst Ana-Maria Rizzuto about the ubiquity of a god image in all humans much help either. Rizzuto has persuasively argued (and shown through clinical data) that all humans do have a god image. But though this image can develop and is not necessarily infantile, it is constructed initially from parental images. And based on such varied origins it frequently does not affirm a self in the way Kierkegaard claims God does.

The human tragedy I believe is not so much a self-damaging suppression of God (though this can and does happen), but rather an acute need for God that may remain unmet. The result in both cases is the same,

however, the self's diminishment. Psychotherapy can help us to become reconciled to ourselves as we are, and to free our powers for love and work. But inevitably this can only be in terms of socially current views. The measure of self-acceptability can only be various versions of social acceptability. The measure is inevitably finite. If we miss God, we miss our well-nigh infinite worth. We miss our genuine grandeur: "but what an infinite accent falls upon the self by having God as the criterion" (Sickness Unto Death 79).

There is so much talk about being offended by Christianity because it is so dark and gloomy, offended because it is so rigorous etc., but it would be best of all to explain for once that the real reason that men are offended by Christianity is that it is too high, because its goal is not man's goal, because it wants to make man into something so extraordinary that it cannot grasp the goal...(SUD, 83)

To reject this Good News is to reject the possibilities for fullest self-realization. It is to truncate and maim oneself. This is an extraordinary claim, well interpreted by Evans. Our choice, then, is to believe or be offended. The problem about Christianity, as Chesterton said, and Kierkegaard implies, is not that we find it untrue, "but too good to be true."



Birgit Bertung, editor, Kierkegaard--Poet of Existence, Kierkegaard Conferences In Denmark, Published by the Søren Kierkegaard Society, Denmark, and The Department of Søren Kierkegaard Research, University of Copenhagen (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1989), 145 pp. Reviewed by David Cain, Mary Washington College.

Someone attending the international Kierkegaard Conference in Hillerød, 26 June-1 July, 1988, must have remarked on the irony of holding a Kierkegaard Conference at Grundtvigs Højskole. Happily for those of us who were not present, now this fine conference comes to us in an attractive volume (bearing the promise of others) of eleven challenging essays. Most of the essays do have something to do with the theme of the conference, characterized by Joakim Garff as follows:

One of the fundamental conflicts in Søren Kierkegaard's authorship is that between "the medium of poetry" and "the medium of existence" . . . It was of vital importance to Kierkegaard to find how the leap could be made from the one medium to the other and it can be argued that it was a conflict he never escaped.

Was Kierkegaard's poetic production a refined escapism from the demands of existence, or was his authorship paradoxically enough precisely the actualization of possibilities and thereby action? Could his task be realized only through a poetic staging of the deep drama belonging to existence?

In other words, Kierkegaard--Poet of Existence.

The theme is excellent and so are the responses it elicits. The title of this volume recalls Samuel Terrien's Job: Poet of Existence (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957). In that work, Terrien observes of Job:

If it be true that, in the words of Bernhard Duhm, "er hat seine Dichtung mit seinem Herzblut geschrieben," "he wrote his poem with his own blood," then he succeeded in overcoming the subjectivism of his own experience by casting its expression in an artistic form which transcends his culture and makes it valid for our own. (p. 21)

Certainly it is true that Kierkegaard's authorship is written with the blood of his heart and in such a way, at such a depth, that he writes of our hearts as well. The contributors to this volume know and respect this. Their essays gain in engagement and significance because of it.

The essays are arranged alphabetically by author; but a modest reordering might help to give a sense of the contents as follows:

I. Introduction: Billeskov Jansen; II. Poetry and Existence: Grøn, Hügli, Müller, Viallaneix; III. Related issues: Bertung, Evans, Lübcke; IV. Kierkegaard And...: Norris, Scholtens, Watkin. Appropriately, there is no "Conclusion." The essays are all in English, and we who are most at home there are humbled thereby.

I. Introduction

F.J. Billeskov Jansen provides a rich look at Kierkegaard under the aspect of "narrative," titled, with deceptive simplicity, "Kierkegaard--Narrator." The essay is a selective and substantive introduction to Kierkegaard's authorship and can be read also as an effective introduction to the present volume. Billeskov Jansen comments discerningly, "[Kierkegaard] . . . often thinks in situations and concepts at the same time" (p. 19). The wealth of ideas from the second half of the 1830s and a refrain in the Journals, "I would like to write a novelle in which . . ." (p. 20), are illustrated concretely. Literary influences are noted. Confronting Either/Or, the author contends, "Between all Kierkegaard's previously mentioned tentative approaches to narrative and Either/Or, there is so immense a difference in wealth of subject matter and literary variations, that all explanations fall short" (p. 24). Yet here again he moves "back in time," identifying influences and following Kierkegaard briefly but surely through the authorship to "new parables" (p. 27) in the religious discourses of the later 1840s and to what he calls the "Parable of the King's Coachman" at the end of For Self-Examination. He declares of this parable: "It is a text like this which shows us that Kierkegaard the storyteller is the best guide to the world of his thought" (p. 28). Characterizing The Moment as "a Christian Corsair" (p. 29), he shows that Kierkegaard makes striking use of storytelling even here. Billeskov Jansen's essay is a mine of information, reaching out to consider antecedent, contemporary, and subsequent connections with Kierkegaard's thought

without reducing it to them. "A tale is not just a tale," writes Billeskov Jansen. "It has a hidden strength in itself. The good story possesses a dynamic which may produce even very strong effects in the hearer or reader" (p. 19). "Poetry" can indeed serve "existence."

II. Poetry and Existence

Arne Grøn makes the conference theme--the poetry/existence conflict--a point of departure for addressing a related conflict between "the medium of abstraction" and "the medium of existence." Immediately he is juggling distinctions: poetry-speculation-thought/existence and dialectic/existence. Hence, the essay title, "Existence and Dialectic." But Grøn shows that these distinctions are variously complicated. In dialogue with Johannes Climacus, Grøn sees clearly that reason can be instrumental in defining its own limit. Further, if existing cannot be thought, it is nonetheless the case that the existing one thinks and that the thinking one exists. So thought and existence must have to do with one another after all. Grøn arrives at the distinction between "two forms of thought: abstract and concrete" and at Climacus' characterization of "the subjective thinker." If there are different kinds of thought, Grøn wants to ask if there are also different kinds of existence. Yes: Grøn's discussion implies a distinction between what might be called "abstract" existence which is "existential poverty" and "appropriated" existence in which "the understanding comes back in existing" with the task of maintaining [not solving] the problem [the difficulty] in existing (p. 54). As Grøn effectively summarizes, ". . . there lies in existing a task that can go wrong" (p. 55).

Grøn returns to "dialectic." If thought can be brought into existence and existence into thought, dialectic, which "seemed . . . to fall with the area of thought . . ." at the beginning of the essay, is now brought into existence: "'The dialectical' concerns the self-relation (understood in both senses: to relate oneself and to relate oneself to oneself). More precisely, it is the self-relation which provides the dialectical" (p. 56). Here is an "ethical" and "normative" accentuation of human existence. But, lo not only does there lie in existing a task (of self-relation) which can go wrong. Human existence is accentuated a second time--paradoxically--when one discovers that the task has gone wrong: "The existing person is as subject-through himself--in untruth" (p. 57). Grøn leads us to sin and leaves us. Sin alters the self and "existence

itself": dialectic is within and without. Grøn does not return to the poetry/existence conflict, but he has indicated the complexity of enough apparently "simple" distinctions to alert one to the complexity of "poetry"/"existence" as well.

If Grøn moves from the conference theme to abstraction/existence, Anton Hügli takes on the theme with the help of Kierkegaard's reference to the subjunctive life (possibility and the poetic) and the indicative (actuality and existence). If Grøn takes us to sin, Hügli's essay, "Pseudonymity, Sincerity and Self-Deception," is a long and carefully reasoned way through "[t]he certainty of the ethical," nicely illuminated by contrast with the "reflective sorrow" of Marie Beaumarchais in "Silhouettes," to sin and grace. The two essays cover much of the same territory in different but complementary ways.

The certainty of the ethical is secured not by scrutinizing external circumstances but by attending to oneself, to one's own passion and will. Hügli claims that "[i]t was indeed Kierkegaard's central assumption that man was of one common nature and determination" (p. 61). What, then, becomes of the uniqueness of the individual? And how does one know what to do? A response to the first question--a call for "the unity of the individual and the universal"--is abrogated by sin as disqualification from the ethical. The second question is misguided. For Kierkegaard's "ethics is an ethics of the already decided" (p. 62), and not the "what" but the "how" is ethically decisive. Here, again, is passion. Hügli asks a question which cuts deeply into Kierkegaard's thought: "Is passion not just as much a differential determination as thinking?" (p. 68). The issue is the potential equality of all persons in the domains of the ethical and the religious. Ironically, unexpectedly, equality exists in sin.

"Self-deception" provides a link to C. Stephen Evans' discussion of "Self-Deception and the Divided Self: (pp. 39-41) and "Self-Deception and Sin" (pp. 41-42). Hügli identifies two senses of "self-deception: a self does the deceiving and the deceiving is about the self. "Self" is both subject and object of deception. Self-deception is first a refusal to own one's responsibility for realizing the ethical and then a refusal to own one's responsibility for sin, for being unable to realize the ethical:

...Kierkegaard's ethics of 'how'...assumes that I can do what I should do and that I immediately know what I should do, but precisely when I--relying upon those assumptions--try to act, I experience in the end that neither the one nor the other is true,

and that it would be an even greater self-deception if I believed that I could do the ethical through and out of myself. (p. 71)

Just here one may risk in passion the grace of God. Exposition of this difficult Kierkegaardian dialectic returns Hügli to the conference theme. Hügli boldly and I think, correctly, asserts, "Kierkegaard's writings certainly cannot be considered a refined escape from the demands of existence as he himself understands them, but are a result of his earnest attempt to fulfil the demands of existence" (p. 72). In this attempt there is "sincerity"--"the open admission how far--or better, how little--one's own life represents the publicly proclaimed ideals" (p. 60). To this sincerity pseudonymity contributes in one way and the Kierkegaard-signed edifying and religious discourses in another.

Paul Müller's deft treatment of "The God's Poem--the God's History" shows how both poetry and history may be related to possibility. For "all poetry belongs within the category of possibility" (p. 83); and history, even as "actualized possibility," must be "re-indited" or returned to the possibilities from which it issues as history. "The God's poem" refers to the suggestion in Philosophical Fragments that "the God poetized himself as equal to man. . ." (p. 84); "the God's history" is incarnation and "the God's (continued) history' in history . . ." (p. 88), which is the individual's choice of offence at the God's poem or faith in the presence of the "unbreakable incognito." Müller skillfully sketches Kierkegaard's pseudonymous investigation of "the God's possibilities of decision" (p. 84)--as Climacus' consideration of "a king's love for a serving-maid" (p. 84). Both "ascent" of the beloved and "descent" of the king entail a threat to "equality. . . the basic precondition of love" and to "candour. . . the deepest precondition of all love" (p. 85). This is theological poetry or poetic theology. "The God's poem" becomes the poem of the God: a poem about the God and the God's own poem. The God's solution is "the impenetrable incognito." The God's poem--"his historical 'visiting-card'"--is a dangerous thing both for the beloved, who is thus "placed in a situation of choice in which faith or offence are the only, opposed possibilities" (p. 87), and for the God, who out of love will not "manipulate" but bears the grief of confronting "the individual with the question of salvation or perdition" (p. 87).

Something else is going on in Müller's essay when he interprets offence as "an expression of the person's compulsive holding onto what he already is and knows . . ." and faith as "identical with surrendering oneself to the

future and possibility. . ." (p. 87). Or when Müller declares that "God is the invitation to love instead of the stubborn egoism of offence" (p. 87, emphasis added). But Müller shows that the God's poem makes history and that Kierkegaard's God is the true "poet of existence."

One of the challenges in reading Kierkegaard is to learn to recognize related discussions in diverse terminologies. In this, the authors of the present collection are adept and none more than Nelly Viallaneix. Her essay, "Kierkegaard, Poet of Existence: The Law of Gjentagelse," makes more sense of the unavoidable and difficult concept of "repetition"--though she insists, "Re-prise, or re-vival . . . not repetition which builds habits" (p. 131, n. 1)--than many have managed. Viallaneix considers Gjentagelse as possibly "the key to the riddle" of the poetry/existence tension. She begins with Constantin Constantius' Gjentagelse and finds the true Gjentagelse to be "a paradoxical category like all existential categories" concerned with uniting "the Same [Gjen, again] and the Other [at tage; Tagelse": "we must take, seize upon . . . a new reality . . ."]" (p. 121). But she does not end with Constantius and his "young man." Gjentagelse is "a Christian religious category" (p. 121), "the heart of the existential sphere and . . . the basic law of the spiritual world" (p. 123). Gjentagelse is also a cardinal characteristic of Kierkegaard's musical prose: "There is Gjentagelse of resonances, words, turns of phrase, themes. . . Kierkegaard's entire work thus vibrates with the same message that goes ringing through it, a message that is everywhere the same and everywhere different. . . Gjentagelse then is the constitutive model for it and its law." (pp. 123-124)

There are reasons to be wary of the use of "law" in relation to Gjentagelse (and in relation to Kierkegaard's work generally). Viallaneix approaches this point when she insists that Gjentagelse is "a real movement": ". . . it is not merely the law of religious existence, it is its mover" (p. 125). In the movement of Gjentagelse, oppositions are related: same-other, possible-real, poetry-existence, and, above all, eternity-time: "Gjentagelse consists in expressing the eternal within temporal bounds" (p. 125). In this way, Viallaneix sees Gjentagelse as "closely allied with incarnation" (p. 125) as well as with "reduplication," "redoubling," and "reconciliation." Utilizing a kind of musical hermeneutic, Viallaneix turns tensions into sonorities, resonances, and echoes. "[H]armonious accord" between poetry and existence and among the stages of existence becomes possible. In a crescendo of exuberance, Viallaneix declares, "Everything is an analogical Gjentagelse" (p.

128). Yet there is more: the suggestion of a "second poetry," a "paradoxical poetry," to accompany Haufniensis' "second ethic" and the "'second immediacy of faith" (p. 129). This second poetry--a Gjentagelse--is a "poetry of existence" which resolves the poetry/existence conflict through witness in one's own existence (Anti-Climacus) to "the sonority of Eternity" (p. 130).

III. Related Issues

The editor's contribution, "Yes, a Woman Can Exist," joins the conference theme by way of applying an appreciation of Kierkegaard's use of language and indirect communication sensitively to texts holding implications for women and existence, The Concept of Anxiety and The Sickness Unto Death. With insight and nuance, Birgit Bertung contends that Kierkegaard "does not wish to stand in the way of any woman's own resolution of her existential situation, so he wishes to be misunderstood, and he must be said to have succeeded overwhelmingly" (p. 8). She shows, for example, that "despair of femininity" is "culturally determined" for Kierkegaard and belongs to men as well as to women. There are special problems as well as promises for the woman who would truly exist. If Kierkegaard seems especially hard on women, this is because the situation of women tempts them to forfeit the task of existing. Kierkegaard is hard on women because women have it hard. According to Bertung, Kierkegaard provokes women to exist in spite of the fact that their "bodily functions comprise a 'something more' compared to those of . . ." men (p. 14). What women and men sew together women alone must reap. Before neither husband nor child is a woman's self-effacement appropriate; for "[s]elf-effacement or 'dying from finitude' is only a category which may be utilized over against God" (p. 15). A paragraph on the Virgin Mary in this connection is worth the entire essay. Ultimately, equality of women and men is qualitatively secured in the God-relationship ("the encounter with 'love itself'"); and "the love concept contains the equality concept: (p. 160). Bertung ventures a fascinating (not necessarily plausible--but what is plausibility for Kierkegaard?) biographical application: "[Kierkegaard]. . . was afraid that the conventions of society. . . would affect him so that he came to treat his wife as if she should be submissive to her husband . . . and that was a monstrosity, therefore he renounced it." (p. 11)

She concludes, "Kierkegaard was not a descriptive writer of history, but an indirect communicator of religious questions" (p. 16). The emphasis on questions rather than answers is apt.

C. Stephen Evans' essay on "Kierkegaard's View of the Unconscious" seems to take on more than can be managed in such a context--Freud, "object-relations theory" (Fairbairn and Guntrip), and Kierkegaard. Evans anchors himself in The Sickness Unto Death and controls the breadth of his discussion admirably, identifying differences and discovering affinities among the views under consideration. The result is a suggestive reading of certain crucial passages in The Sickness Unto Death and a helpful distinction between "ontological and ethical discourse" (p. 37), between the self as given and the self as goal to be achieved. Added weight is given to the contention that Kierkegaard develops a "relational view of the self" (p. 36). Distinguishing between "the unnoticed unconscious" and "the unconscious which I do not wish to notice, or have chosen to ignore" (p. 32), Evans concentrates on the latter and thus on human responsibility and culpability. He sees "the unconscious" in Kierkegaard as a creation of a despairing, sinful, wrongly relational self; so genuine faith would effect the exposure and eradication of this unconscious.

In "Kierkegaard--Aesthetics and the Crises of Metaphysics," Poul Lübcke tries to turn Kierkegaard into a metaphysician, who has more in common by way of affirmation of "the existence of first principles" with Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, and company than he does with aesthete "A" and "most modern philosophers." This is part of an appeal to take the writings of "A" more seriously. Kierkegaard would have enjoyed the irony of his entry into the "mainstream of modern philosophy" by way of his pseudonym "A" and would have respectfully declined the honor, allowing "A" to speak for himself. But whatever one makes of these larger contentions of Lübcke, the essay, which begins with an insightful reading of "A"'s "The Crop Rotation: A Venture in a Theory of Social Prudence," is rewarding in its reminder that from "A" one can "learn about aesthetics from within" (p. 75); in its treatment of "A"'s "boredom" as more than a psychological term and as related to discussions in the writings of Vigilius Haufniensis and Anti-Climacus; in its appropriate articulation of what Lübcke wishes to understand by "metaphysician"; and in its invitation to examine the light shed on and the question put to Kierkegaard's views by attending to "A"'s "deconstructed, non-metaphysical world" (p. 80).

IV. Kierkegaard And...

Speaking of deconstruction, Christopher Norris' essay, "De Man Unfair to Kierkegaard? an allegory of (non)-reading," offers the apparently mandatory meeting of Kierkegaard and deconstruction. However, Norris still can ask, ". . . why has Kierkegaard so seldom been read or written about by deconstructionist literary critics who must surely realize that his work prefigures their own in many crucial respects?" (p. 89). Norris wends his way toward an answer with Donald Barthelme's short story, "Kierkegaard Unfair to Schlegel," on his left and an unpublished essay by Paul de Man, "The Concept of Irony," on his right. Along the way, these travelers encounter many allies and enemies, sometimes finding it difficult to discern which is which: Schlegel, Romantic irony, and "German idealist aesthetics"; "self-reflexivity"; Wayne Booth and irony "offering a hold for interpretation and not running wild. . ." (p. 92--to which I am sympathetic); "allegory" as "the authentic predicament of a language caught up in structures of temporal difference" (p. 93); J. Hillis Miller and the "ethics of reading"; a "rhetoric of tropes"; Fichte and the impersonal, positing power of language; even, by way of Geoffrey Galt Harpham, an ethical resistance to ethics. Also along the way, Norris gives examples of deconstructivist readings of Kierkegaard. How is irony to be stopped with The Point of View For My Work As An Author or with Religiousness B? How can there be "privileged truth-claims"? In his own treatment of Kierkegaard, one might find problematic, for instance, Norris' explication of Religiousness B with the aid of Abraham in Fear and Trembling. Further, does Norris see what Kierkegaard and Johannes de Silentio are up to when he writes, "This seems to me frankly an appalling message and one that could justify any kind of barbarous behavior in the name of religious conviction" (p. 97)? But Norris does keep a firm hold on Kierkegaard's resistance to ". . . treating life as an aesthetic phenomenon, a pretext for those intricate evasions of the self that can multiply perspective beyond all ethical accounting" (p. 97). Finally, Norris' interesting answer for the "marginalization of Kierkegaard in de Man's essay" is that Kierkegaard does not fit into either--and thus presents a challenge to both--of de Man's "two possible paths of development in the wake of Kantian philosophy" (p. 101): runaway irony or the self as "a product of purely linguistic structures and tropes" (p. 101). This is a carefully, often cleverly, written essay, providing a circumspect way into a thicket of current concerns.

Kierkegaard--Poet of Existence is full of surprises--mostly happy ones. For instance, Sixtus Scholtens does not address the theme of Kierkegaard--Poet of Existence. He dramatizes it by presenting "Etty Hillesum, Kierkegaard's Poet of Existence." Indeed, Hillesum knew Kierkegaard's writings, and Scholtens' conviction is that she also knew Kierkegaard's faith and Kierkegaard's God. It is an honor to meet Hillesum, her life and witness, and her engrossing, electric words.

Before turning to Hillesum, Scholtens identifies himself on two pages in six paragraphs concerning "some five or six fields of interest which explain (at least to myself) where I stand" (p. 108). Scholtens' opening remarks are candid, compelling, and sometimes warmly humorous: ". . . I met a very sweet Danish blonde called Karen. She taught me, among other things, how to pronounce 'rød grød med fløde'. I kissed her for the first time in a dark castle, where a certain Danish king, Christian II, had been imprisoned for a long time. This explains my sympathy for Danes" (p. 108).

This international volume only could have been enriched by a similarly direct two pages from the other contributors--from Denmark, Switzerland, Wales, France, England, and America. Scholtens is from The Netherlands.

Julia Watkin shows in "Pilgrim on Life's Way--Kierkegaard in the Light of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress" that she has made time for careful study of more than Kierkegaard and that, by noting differences as well as drawing some parallels between aspects of Bunyan's literary techniques on the one hand and Either/Or and Stages On Life's Way on the other, light is indeed cast on Kierkegaard. If Bunyan is "the allegorist of immediacy," then "Kierkegaard must be seen as the allegorist of reflection" (p. 135). Kierkegaard's "doubly indirect communication" does not give the reader the guidance found in Bunyan. In Bunyan there is a clear sense of direction through space away from the threat of "a very physical hell" toward the heavenly Jerusalem. Either/Or begins with "the urgent need for salvation from the psychological hell of meaninglessness" (p. 137). Here time and not space is decisive, and Watkin's contrast helps to make vivid the centrality of temporality and of the "battle in and with time" (p. 137) in Kierkegaard. When drawing an analogy between Evangelist's relationship to Christian and Judge William's relationship to "A," Watkins raises the often-overlooked matter of how much the Judge, an "ethicist," knows about and lives a life influenced by Christianity. Her

suggestions regarding why the Judge nonetheless represents the ethical are among many intriguing insights in this essay, which shows different ways in which earnestness about existence can invest in the poetic.

* * *

These are demanding and rewarding essays. The volume is remarkable because of the earnestness of its contributions--the concern is to perform aspects of Kierkegaard's thought and to work with him, not to score points--and because of the authors' marked intensity of investment in their subject: Kierkegaard Poet of Existence.

(What happened to Karen?)

COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

Reviews of

Bruce Kirmmse, Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark, reviewed by Robert Perkins.

Patrick Bigelow, The Conning, The Cunning of Being: Being a Kierkegaardian Demonstration of the Postmodern Implosion of Metaphysical Sense in Aristotle and the Early Heidegger, reviewed by Ted Kisiel.

Authors: Remember to have publishers send review copies of books that should be discussed in the Kierkegaard Newsletter.

Potential Reviewers: Write to me if there is a specific book you would like to review.

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