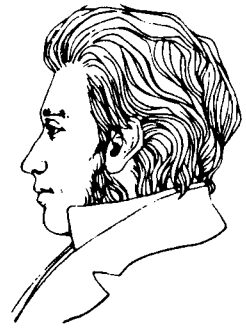


Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As a philosopher I sometimes worry that Kierkegaard does not receive the attention he deserves in departments of philosophy. Though thankfully there are notable exceptions, many of the philosophers studying Kierkegaard are at liberal arts colleges, not major research universities. That's not necessarily bad; I believe strongly in such colleges. However, my worry is that Kierkegaard will cease to be considered a major philosopher, if new doctoral students are not encouraged to work on him. Perhaps he will even be dropped from the canon of great philosophers, and regarded, as Heidegger so unfairly says, as "merely" a religious thinker. Though I am delighted with the quality of leadership of the new Kierkegaard Society, it is interesting that four of the five officers are teaching in

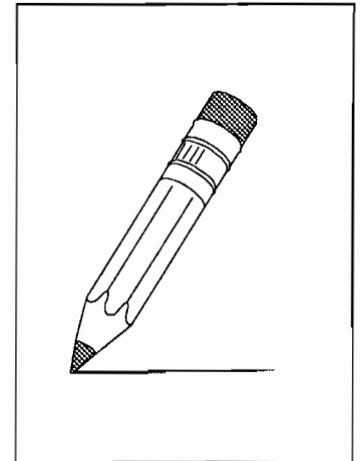
departments of religion; only one is a member of a philosophy department. Of course the study of Kierkegaard should not be owned by any individual department, or even by (perhaps especially by) the academy as a whole. Moreover, I certainly don't want to see less attention paid to Kierkegaard in departments of religious studies and in theological schools. I do think, however, that all of us should do what we can to encourage the study of Kierkegaard as a philosopher of the first rank.

It is cheering to report the appointment of George Pattison to a major position at Cambridge University (see the news section). I would like to ask people to send news of appointments of Kierkegaard scholars; those of us interested in Kierkegaard would like to know which institutions have resources for students.

NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE

KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY NEWS

The "new" Kierkegaard Society is now organized and functioning. The officers elected were as follows: President, Stephen Dunning of the University of Pennsylvania; Vice-President (to succeed as President) M. Jamie Ferreira, of the University of Virginia; Secretary-Treasurer, Mark Lloyd Taylor, of the School of Religion at Seattle Pacific University. The two at-large members of the board are Merold Westphal of Fordham University and Stephen Crites of Wesleyan University.



Latest word is that over 100 people have now officially joined the Society by paying the modest \$5 dues. If you have not done so, now is the time. The \$5 should be sent to Mark Lloyd Taylor, School of Religion, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Washington 98119.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Kierkegaard Society at APA Central Division Meeting

The 1991 Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Meeting will be held in Chicago, April 25-27, and will include a meeting of the Søren Kierkegaard Society, on Thursday, April 25, from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. The meeting will be chaired by C. Stephen Evans, and the program is as follows: George Connell, of Concordia College (Moorhead), speaking on "Kierkegaard, Trendelenburg, and Hegel on Movement in Logic;" Steven Emmanuel, of Grinnell College, speaking on "Reading Kierkegaard: Modern and Postmodern Approaches to the Pseudonymous Authorship." The restriction to two papers with no commentators should allow ample time for discussion.

Kierkegaard Society at AAR November Annual Meeting

The Kierkegaard Society will meet as an "affiliated society" (and therefore not part of the regular program) in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion national meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, on Friday evening, November 22. As this edition went to press, the program was not finally set, but it will include several papers on The Concept of Irony.

Upcoming Meeting Plans

Stephen Dunning, the new president of the Kierkegaard Society, has delegated the task of planning meetings of the Society in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association to Merold Westphal, at-large board member representing the APA. Westphal will probably in turn delegate this responsibility to different individuals for the three meetings of the APA. Those interested in these programs may write directly to Westphal, Department of Philosophy, Fordham University, 441 East Fordham Road, Bronx, NY 10458.

International Kierkegaard Commentary News

The Corsair Affair is now published. Contrary to previous information, enough good articles on *Fear and Trembling* and on *Repetition* came in to publish separate volumes on those two books. Final work on those volumes is being done. There is still time to send an article for consideration for the volume on *Philosophical Fragments*. Essays for that volume should be sent by the end of the summer. All essays and requests for information should be sent to Robert Perkins, Department of Philosophy, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, 32720.

One additional word from the editor of this newsletter about IKC: Robert Perkins has done the Kierkegaard community a great service by this undertaking. He deserves our support. Make sure your library has a standing order for these volumes. The books have not received the number of reviews they deserve. If you know a book review editor for a journal (or even if you don't), why not volunteer to do a review, and pick up a free copy for yourself?

Kierkegaard's Writings News

No new volumes have been published since Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses. We are still eagerly awaiting Practice in Christianity and Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

New Appointment for George Pattison

Word was received recently that British Kierkegaard scholar George Pattison has been appointed Dean of King's College Chapel at Cambridge University. Congratulations!

REVIEWS

Bruce Kirmmse, Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), xl and 558 pages. Reviewed by Robert L. Perkins, Stetson University.

Kirmmse's work is an outstanding contribution to Kierkegaard research and must be consulted by all who work on Kierkegaard's authorship after 1846 and all who wish to think of Kierkegaard in the context of his intellectual and social environment. Kirmmse has been through the relevant literature in English and the Scandinavian languages on the intellectual, social, and political history of Denmark and has used that immense background to suggest important new approaches to the interpretation of Kierkegaard. The book is intellectual history of the highest calibre.

The book is beautifully laid out in two parts. The first is "Kierkegaard's Denmark," and the second is "Denmark's Kierkegaard." I will comment on each in turn.

Part one is concerned with Kierkegaard's historical background and provides a synoptic review of modern Danish history beginning with the rise of peasantry. Kirmmse provides incisive reviews of the social reforms instituted under the leadership of Frederick VI and his physiocratic advisers beginning in 1787. These changes removed some of the worse abuses in Danish agriculture and a vigorous freehold peasant class began to emerge as the bearer of bourgeois values. One unfortunate result of the reforms was the split that occurred in the peasant class. The new freehold peasants found common cause, cheap labor, with the old landlords against the cottagers whose social and economic standing was made worse by the very laws that raised the freeholders to the equivalent of the new urban bourgeois classes in France, Germany, and England. This empowerment of a part of the agricultural class made the emergence of the bourgeois and the proletariat very different in Denmark from the experience in the rest of Europe.

This economic difference within the peasant class made their response to the new religious impulses significantly different. Pietism, Inner Mission, the Baptists, and the Mormons made deep inroads in the lower class of peasants, the cottagers, while the Grundtvigian movement found most of its followers among the newly rich freeholders. Kirmmse chronicles the impact of these

movements in the country and in the city. Kierkegaard's father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, was deeply influenced by the Herrnhut movement in Jutland before he came to Copenhagen, and he remained a faithful supporter of the movement throughout his life while at the same time he kept on good terms with the state church. Regular attendance at the evening services of the Herrnhut congregation was a regular activity of the Kierkegaard family.

Kirmmse also chronicles the emergence of the liberal party and the connection between the development of the new political interests and the controversies over the freedom of the press, the major medium of the day. The connection of the liberal party and the national question in Slesvig and Holstein is the basis of Kirmmse's critical remarks on the liberal party. The imperious nationalism of the liberals led the country into a series of disastrous struggles with the German population in Slesvig and Holstein. The liberals turned out not to be so liberal after all, for in the machinations about the first election with universal male suffrage many liberals favored the restriction of the franchise in order to limit the voting power of the mass of cottagers whose condition had been worsened by the agricultural reforms of Frederick VI. The liberals' efforts to restrict the franchise failed. The first elections completed the political revolution the liberals had begun, but with an irony worthy of Hegel's "cunning of reason" the liberals were routed in the country districts, and, at the same time, the elitism common to both the liberals and the Golden Age intellectuals and clerics was demonstrated for all to see.

Kirmmse's extensive and thorough analysis of the apparently pervasive elitism of the Copenhagen intelligentsia shows why Kierkegaard's critique of the romantic and Hegelian Golden Age frequently spreads out over the national liberals as well, and vice versa. This is one of the most important of Kirmmse's discoveries and distinctions. Each of the major luminaries of the Golden Age is discussed in a chapter, and Kirmmse shows a lot of interesting parallels between the relations of Oehlenschläger and Mynster, in the first

generation of the Golden Age, and Heiberg and Martensen, in the second. The romanticism of the first generation contrasts with the Hegelianism of the second, and this difference accounts for many of the disputes between them. In addition to chapters on each person in these two pairs, Kirmmse presents an illuminating chapter on Grundtvig and another on the liberals, H.N. Clausen, Orla Lehmann, and the whole liberal circle. In a book on Kierkegaard's politics, one would have thought that they were at least as deserving of chapter-length treatment as any of the literary and ecclesiastical worthies discussed. Kirmmse focuses all this historical material in a brilliant short chapter (fifteen) and shows how Kierkegaard differs from each of the key alternatives of the Golden Age.

Kirmmse lays out the contrasts and the continuities in the Golden Age by arguing that the dominant literary-ecclesiastical group in both generations agreed with Grundtvig in the significance of history, though they differed with each other on culture, the main stream being elitist while the Grundtvigians were populist. The liberals shared the elitism of the main stream literary-ecclesiastical establishment, but differed from them and the Grundtvigians on the significance of history. The liberals were agnostic in regards to the significance of history, seeing no grand schemes in history or any pattern or expressing any certainty regarding "what role history plays in determining the significance of an individual's situation" (245). Kierkegaard, according to Kirmmse, contrasts with each of the options: populist against the main stream and the liberals, and agnostic regarding any inner meaning of history against Grundtvig and the main stream. This is a remarkably simple way of expressing the lines of opposition between Kierkegaard and the major alternatives of the times.

There is, unfortunately, some fuzziness in the analysis. The first problem I find with Kirmmse's analysis is strictly beyond the scope of his research, but it is so central to the fundament of Kierkegaard's thought that I feel it must be mentioned briefly. Kirmmse does not make a necessary caveat about Kierkegaard's view of history, and there is one. Kierkegaard does agree with the liberals about any and all romantic or Hegelian views of history as bearing a "meaning" in itself, whatever that could possibly mean. However, there is one Moment where history is suffused with meaning, and that meaning is paradoxical to the very different meanings the Grundtvigian, the romantic, and Hegelian thinkers think they find in history as well as to the "agnosticism" of the liberals. Second, the liberals were not quite as agnostic

about the meaning of history as Kirmmse would leave us thinking, Kierkegaard in his 1836 essay proved that Johannes Ostermann wrote "progressive," or plain and simple ideological history for the greater glory of the liberal movement. Kierkegaard, for his efforts, earned an early reputation as a conservative. Besides having a lot of fun at Ostermann's expense, he was, apparently vainly, attempting to make honest historians of the liberals. Finally, I do not understand the claim to the effect that the liberals were unsure of the "role history plays in determining the significance of an individual's situation." After all, if the liberals were not rather certain about that they would have had no social and political program at all. Kirmmse's line may be entirely clear to others, but I do not understand it.

One of Kirmmse's most valuable conceptual distinctions is that between being apolitical and being conservative. He suggests that the main stream representatives of the Golden Age confused the two, and he quotes text after text to convict all the principal persons of the confusion. The glorification of absolutism by the main stream was not politics, but, rather, a rejection of politics and a forlorn hope that politics would just go away.

Finally for comparison purposes I looked at the articles in Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana on each of the luminaries discussed by Kirmmse in the first part of his book. In the case of Heiberg I also looked at The Heibergs by Henning Fenger and Frederick J. Marker (New York: Twayne Publisher, Inc., 1971). In spite of the great merits of each of these studies, in every instance I found Kirmmse's treatment to be more useful for a student of Kierkegaard than the others. The articles in the Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana are quite general and without a context to make the material meaningful. The result is arid writing, usually highly informative and objective writing, but arid nonetheless. The Fenger and Marker study is the best we have in English on the Heibergs, but, being the summary and historical survey that it is, it is of less immediate use than Kirmmse's study. Still, if you want to know about Luise or Thomasine, one should/must look to Fenger and Marker first. Kirmmse's book contains some interesting translations of most of the persons considered.

The second part of the book, "Denmark's Kierkegaard," begins, after a very brief (259-64) review of the authorship, with an interpretation of A Literary Review. Serious summaries or interpretations of each of Kierkegaard's major books follow, ending with a survey of what we conveniently call the Attack on Christendom.

Each summary is even-handed in the sense that Kirmmse does not attempt to subordinate the meaning of the book to political analysis. He explains the political implications of the texts by showing the unmistakably verbal references Kierkegaard makes to the positions he criticizes. Kierkegaard's works, as Kirmmse suggests, have a wider significance than the political, for he addresses his age in the name of the divine rather than in the interest of "culture," class interest, politics, or tradition.

The remarkable thing about Kirmmse's treatment is that it does not contain an examination of the issues involved in The Corsair affair. Because of Elias Bredsdorf's claim that Kierkegaard's involvement with The Corsair was another manifestation of Kierkegaard's conservative politics, one would have thought that a treatment of this series of disasters would have been required in this book. It does, of course, fall just outside the time-frame Kirmmse set for himself, but only marginally so, and it does not at all fall outside the political which is his subject.

Kirmmse first interprets Kierkegaard's politics as a religious judgment, following the injunction of Matthew 6:24-end, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you." Kirmmse dubs this "prioritarianism." "This prioritarian possibility is the role of the Christian "citizen," a role which coexists (with increasing tension) with another possibility, namely the Christian as "exceptional," as the martyr-Apostle or "saint," who is unequivocally opposed to any form of social integration" (295f). Kirmmse uses this distinction effectively to account for the differences and tensions throughout the period of the authorship he considers. However, Kirmmse's characterization of the apostle is unclear, for it seems to mean that for Kierkegaard the apostle does not have any idea of social integration. This is false, for all the apostles I ever heard of had ideas of community. I do not think that Kierkegaard's concept of apostle is "opposed to any form of social integration." Moreover, in Book on Adler Kierkegaard presents the apostle as a critic of society.

Beginning with Two Series of Discourses Kirmmse finds that Kierkegaard moves in the direction of emphasizing the martyr-Apostle model for relating to society because the Lutheran doctrine of works was being taken in vain (424). Since the state or people's church had failed to "be doers of the word," Kierkegaard calls for an immediate confession of weakness and guilt on the part of the church. He charges that the church has confused

culture and refinement for the Christian life. Rejecting Grundtvig's maxim, "First the human, then the Christian," Kierkegaard reiterates the gospel imperative of seeking first the kingdom of God in a new way, emphasizing the exclusiveness and singularity of God's commands. When no admission of weakness or guilt was forthcoming from the church Kierkegaard shifted his emphasis and audience. Instead of addressing the religious establishment via the public press, he addressed the public.

This last phase, contained primarily in the Attack on Christendom, is the toughest prose Kierkegaard ever wrote. Kirmmse finds Kierkegaard appealing less to Matthew than to human honesty. This change is important, for it is an appeal to all humans, Christian and non-Christian alike. This later appeal, like Kierkegaard's vacillation between the prioritarian citizen and the martyr, is based upon his deeply felt lack of authority. Kierkegaard asserted authority as only one schooled in Socratism could, but that counts for little in a church dominated by priests. This appeal to human honesty forced many who at the time would have discounted his writings as theological ranting to reconsider his writings. With the appeal to human honesty Kierkegaard condemns the church utterly and finally, but he also insures the human permanence of his efforts.

Kirmmse appears to be offended by Kierkegaard's style in the attack literature, calling it "rabble-rousing," "genuinely gutter level," and other less than laudatory appellations. Still, given the mendacity and silence of the church, one can easily understand Kierkegaard's frustration. Again, the Socratic hopes for dialogue and the silence of the church testified to its weakness, not its righteousness. Moreover, Kierkegaard had in mind, as always, his audience, and the common man, whom Kierkegaard addresses in these pages, would understand the frustration of Kierkegaard. They, too, had been ignored and ruled without dialogue or even a hearing by the same political-church establishment for centuries. As Kierkegaard pointed out the whole issue is a money question, a point Kirmmse makes, but of which he apparently does not see the full implications (458, 484). The issues about hidden inwardness, establishment, baptism, ordination, etc., were finally all about money. To criticize the wealth of the church of a man who had no place to lay his head is scarcely "rabble-rousing." Desperately, the strong egalitarianism that Kierkegaard had first expressed in The Concept of Irony comes to be fully asserted in its political power in the address to the common man (481). It is sad testimony to the effect of

Kierkegaard's ideas, the tenacity of hypocrisy, and the shallowness of Danish liberalism that there is still a religious establishment in Denmark today.

Kirmmse's book is must reading for all of us in the Kierkegaard community. Its excellencies are far "vaster" than I have indicated. Still, two notes for the publisher. The press should have provided a professional indexer, if such exists. The index is inadequate. Kirmmse's own "prioritarianism" and major discussions of terms and concepts are not listed. Second, why any university press uses endnotes is a profound mystery. Endnotes constantly break up the reading and hinder the enjoyment and usefulness of a book. Still, we are grateful to Indiana University Press for the new series edited by Merold Westphal and for this book.



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 (Tallahassee: The Florida State University Press, 1990). Reviewed by Theodore Kisiel, Northern Illinois University.

The exorbitant titles are only partially explained by our author, apparently to magnify the "tone of undecidability recently adopted in philosophy" by the currents of postmodernism. Even so, "The Conning of Being" entitles the Aristotelian part on the "paronymy" of being, that it "is said in many ways," and "The Cunning of Being" the Heideggerian part on the "amphiboly" of being in the ontological difference and its oblivion. The latter part is still governed by the Greek τὸ ὄν, which already names the riddle of the relationship between "being" as a substantive and "being" as an enacting activity. "Τὸ ὄν names the cunning of being found within the punning of 'being'" (p. 111). Is the duplicity intrinsic to being itself or to our grammar of "being" or perhaps some subtle scam perpetrated in unison? Are our attempts to con being into disclosing itself fully subverted by its cunning ruses and subterfuges, ever withdrawing and into ever deeper folds within itself? The cunning contained within the equivocal double genitive of genesis and generation thus sometimes suggests a womblike "cunting" of being (120ff, 193), serving to emasculate the phallogocentric ambitions of the metaphysical tradition. The ambiguities of the "of" are at least quadrupled with the overt entry of the "conning (cunning) of the philosopher" (205) who knows that philosophy is but a game not to be taken seriously, and perhaps even wonders if life itself is to be taken seriously.

The author clearly intends his labor to be a postmodernist frolic with the metaphysical implosion of sense in Aristotle and the early Heidegger. A "postmodern implosion" can be "demonstrated" and "celebrated" only because there is already a metaphysical implosion in the Aristotelian and Heideggerian texts themselves, where being in its plenitude and amplitude is allowed a maximum of freedom to decenter, diffract, disperse, diffuse, dissipate, "disseminate" itself. This speaks for the honesty and radicality of our two philosophers in not trying to disguise the ambiguities that abound in the project of probing the origins of our being. But what then is to be said about the deliberate refusal to "disambiguate" this project, indeed, to multiply the ambiguities to infinity, so that nothing whatsoever is allowed to hold together the field of being? Being is not distributive in its temporally unique universality but permanently dispersive. Thus,

the first part on Aristotle concludes with the proposal to develop a "science" (grammatology) of the paronymy of being which perpetually aborts its extremely loose unity of analogy by giving free play to differences and derivations. This in spite of the fact that Aristotle's development of a "πρὸς ἕν equivocity" concedes a great deal to the heterology of being. The scholastics accordingly regarded analogous terms to be absolutely different and only relatively the same. Do the postmodernist Joycean techniques of "funning punning" really add to this centuries-old discussion of the language of the language of being, or merely, and stubbornly, aim to detract? What is the virtue of total dissipation?

The author never really explains why this is a "Kierkegaardian" demonstration, forcing us to go back to his first book on Kierkegaard and the Problem of Writing to try to divine this. There we learn that Kierkegaard's one thought is to broach, on the extreme verge of existence, the breach between thinking and immediacy, where the antepredicative is in fact the antipredicative ("absurd"). By its nature, such a thought can neither be said nor shown - it can only be performed. This performative demonstration is now applied especially to Heidegger's phenomenological penchant to press to the very incipience of meaning in human experience, in order to access and to express our most immediate experience of already finding ourselves caught up in life and underway in existence. So completely antipredicative it was not for Heidegger, and he spent his life trying to say that which the tradition had left for unsayable - whence the strangeness of much of the Heideggerian diction. He concludes where he began, trying to name this very upsurge of sense in human experience - das Ereignis - but with an ever increasing sense of the "inhuman" side of this experience.

Here is the opening for the postmodernist play of dissemination. The move to the threshold of sense takes us to the "unsense" that becomes sense, or more entropically, to the sense "on the verge of lapsing into an unsense," and to the postmodernist conclusion, performatively demonstrated, that "the sense sense makes is ultimately to run out of sense" (p. xxiii). This breakdown (breakup, breakthrough to nonsense) of sense is reiterated in every conceivable way by way of a

recursive rhetoric that borders on the incantatory, sometimes Joycean in tone and sometimes just plain doubletalk, which simply plays Heidegger's precedent setting redundant mannerisms out with a vengeance: "The essence of truth is the truth of essence." "The principle of the ground - the ground of the principle." "Being and time - time and being." But now not to achieve the closure of unity, but instead implosion, leaving all up in the air or putting us all in the hole, the black hole resulting from the implosion of being. That at least is the intent, but one is hard put to find a truly sustained argument which demonstrates this intent. Just one example of many of the implosive power of this ponderous trope of formulaic recursivity, suggesting more the power of Heidegger to create his own monsters, whether they be proponents or opponents (the latter of course being more interested than the papagalli): This ever-shifting, ever-destabilizing mutual mutability of being and entities presses us into the presence of absence, but to this presence as absence, to absence as affirmation of itself, affirmation in which nothing is affirmed save this affirmation itself. This presence is the impossibility of realizing a presence pure and simple without confounding the present of presence with the presence of the present. This presence is an impossibility that nonetheless is present, the shade and shadow of the present, stalking the present, that is there as that which doubles every present, a reflection of the present within the abyss. Within the hollow at the heart of this abyss the meaning of presence is the presence of meaning. (p. 130f)

Profundity or parody: It is at the very least a "performance," more Hegelian in its heaviness than Kierkegaardian. Bigelow goes on to note that the identification has entities disappearing into their meaning and being becoming identified with meaning or, better, with intelligibility. But a page or two later, he does an about-face with the suggestion of an entity which is "allergic" to meaning, which turns out to be the entity in and through which being achieves coincidence with its intelligibility. The ensuing implosion has being retiring to "the anonymous muffling rustling of an unstable and intermediate 'there is'" (p. 135), withdrawn from meaning anything. Small wonder that, in the end, Bigelow himself implodes: "In being confused, in getting confused easily, I never know if I am saying anything or not. It feels like I am saying something of infinite meaning, but which for that very reason is the absolute vaporization of meaning, leaving only a simple and immediate vacuity" (p. 207). With this confessional release, Bigelow finds his true voice in the last pages - the best - of the book, in a panegyric of life against philosophy, and so against the examined life with its suspicion that life is not all that it should be. The onus of pathology is lifted from life and

placed back onto philosophy. Nietzsche's "sick animal" is freed to live simply that it may live, with no other purpose but that. Life can now be encountered as "pure gratuity to which there can be only immediate and trusting accession and of which there can only be grateful acceptance. Life is lagniappe for not being" (p. 210). Heidegger and company (even Camus missed this innocent "Tahitian" side to nihilism) have simply approached life from the wrong end: "getting born is the issue, not death" (p. 146).

David J. Gouwens, Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Imagination. American University Studies: Series 5, Philosophy; Vol. 71 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989). 304 pages. Reviewed by George Connell, Concordia College, Moorhead, Mn.

Given the frequency with which "dialectic" appears in titles of books and articles on Kierkegaard, it would be easy for a prospective reader of David Gouwens' study to miss the polemical significance of conjoining that word with "imagination." The polemic is two-fold.

Gouwens uses it, first, to distinguish Kierkegaard's understanding of imagination from faculty psychologies that assign a single fixed function to the imagination. Gouwens writes that, according to Kierkegaard, "The 'imagination' is finally not adequately understood if it is seen merely as the means for a discrete internal activity or process, or for a form of consciousness...[T]he imagination cannot be understood apart from attending to the different contexts of the imagination's uses..."[278] When he attends to the various contexts investigated in Kierkegaard's works, Gouwens finds an enormous variety of such uses. Not only does the imagination differ qualitatively between the various existence-forms, but in each of those forms it manifests itself variously as a "medium, state, activity, capacity, disposition and passion." [177] If Gouwens had, at book's end, listed all the distinctive uses of "imagination" discussed in the preceding pages, the list would have been very long indeed.

Given the protean character of Kierkegaard's uses of "imagination," it would be easy to despair of finding a unifying schema. That brings us to the second significance of Gouwens' use of "dialectic" in his title. In speaking of Kierkegaard's "dialectic of imagination," Gouwens asserts the interconnectedness and coherence of those uses. "...Kierkegaard's philosophical and literary analyses of the imagination reveal that capability's conceptual shape; the imagination is not inchoate, but describable in a 'dialectical' way." [1] Doing justice to both the rich variation and the ultimate coherence of Kierkegaard's uses of "imagination" is the guiding agenda of the book.

But before turning specifically to this task in Part Two, Gouwens devotes Part One, titled "Dialectic Against the Age," to setting Kierkegaard's thoughts on imagination in context. Kierkegaard finds his way to his own views of imagination through a critical dialogue with Romanticism on the one hand and Idealism on the other. While

Kierkegaard learned from and drew on both tendencies of thought, Gouwens shows in Chapter One that finally Kierkegaard cannot accept either Romanticism's absolutization of imagination or Idealism's (i.e. Hegel's) relegation of imagination to supersession by reason. Chapter Two offers a reading of The Concept of Irony as a critique of Romantic imagination. In clear anticipation of Either/Or, Kierkegaard shows in his dissertation how the Romantic hypertrophy of the imagination volatilizes the self. In making this criticism, Kierkegaard follows Hegel. But, as Gouwens shows in his third chapter on the Climacus texts, especially the Postscript, "Kierkegaard is equally critical of the Hegelians' marked dismissal of the imagination." [95] The dismissal Gouwens refers to here is Hegel's claim that representation [Vorstellung] can and must be transcended by concept [Begriff] as mind develops toward maturity. Kierkegaard's criticism of this claim has two major thrusts. First, and positively, Climacus documents the positive role of the imagination in the life of the subjective thinker. In this context, imagination and passion are closely associated, even to the point of appearing as a single linked concept: imaginative-passion [Phantasie-Lidenskab]. Second, and negatively, Climacus shows that Hegel's proposal to storm heaven and grasp the Absolute by reason alone is just as fantastic as was the Romantic belief that imagination alone could unite us with the divine. Kierkegaard thus transcends the debate on the imagination as he found it, labelling the two supposedly diametrically opposed positions as equally fantastic and associating them both with the aesthetic stage of existence.

Part Two, "The Dialectic of Imagination in Existence" consists of three chapters devoted to considering the place of imagination in the aesthetic, ethical and religious spheres, respectively. Chapter Four on imagination in the aesthetic sphere repeats themes already treated in Chapter Two: since the romantic ironists who came under criticism in The Concept of Irony are models for Kierkegaard's aesthetes, this is to be expected. But Gouwens also shows in this chapter how Kierkegaard assigns fundamental cognitive roles to the imagination. Memory, anticipation, the generation of the categories of thought, theoretical and historical knowledge, logical deduction, abstraction and other functions of mind are

shown to rely ultimately on imagination. Given the number of attempts to come to terms with the epistemology of the "Interlude," I was disappointed that Gouwens chose not to engage other interpreters in dialogue at this point in his study. Though his comments on historical knowledge are rather cursory as they stand, his focus on the role of imagination in such knowing or believing represents a promising new angle on familiar discussions.

While the self of the ethical sphere reins in its imagination from the wild flights of aesthetic existence, it by no means eliminates or crushes it. Gouwens shows that imagination is central to ethical existence in that it projects the ideal self the actual self labors to realize. Here, imagination's infinitizing power is directed back specifically on the concrete, actually existing self so that the possibilities for that self. Gouwens shows further that Kierkegaard depicts imagination, in its association with passion, as driving the self's actualization of the ideal.

The final and, to my mind, most important chapter of this study explores the thoroughly dialectical role of imagination in the religious sphere. The chapter's importance lies not only in the scope and sensitivity of Gouwens' treatment of its declared topic but equally in the light it shines on recent discussions of Kierkegaard's supposed endorsement of irrationality. It is widely acknowledged that the pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, is an ironic jab at Hegel's proposal to storm heaven (that is, to grasp the Absolute) by reason. Gouwens reminds us that the Romantics attributed equally grandiose powers to the imagination. Schlegel's comment on Schleiermacher's Speeches is telling: "The understanding, says the author of the Speeches on Religion knows only the universe; let imagination rule, and you have God. Quite right. The imagination is man's organ for the godhead." [Quoted on page 31] Kierkegaard limits such pretensions in the same way he limits the pretensions of reason: the god in time is no more a vision of human imagination than an insight of human reason. Gouwens writes, "the Incarnation frustrates any attempts to grasp the divine by means of feeling, reason or imagination." [237]

But this no more implies the elimination of imagination from the religious life than it implies boundless irrationality. Instead, Gouwens documents the positive and essential role imagination plays in the believer's contemporaneity with Christ. "[I]n one sense the imagination is defeated and yet in another sense the imagination at last finds its highest calling and most

healthy spiritual integration." [232-3] The parallelism of reason and imagination in Kierkegaard bears further investigation, but Gouwens is to be thanked for making it so apparent and for suggesting that both undergo a dialectic of destruction and renewal in the life of the believer.

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