

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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NUMBER 28

NOVEMBER 1993

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Since I am at Oxford University this year my editorship is being exercised through mail and E-mail. Please pardon us if more than the usual run of mistakes has crept in. My great thanks to Dee Bolton for taking charge, and also to Cynthia Lund, Acting Curator of the Kierkegaard Library this year. Readers will note that there are no reviews in this issue. Quite a few are in the pipeline, but none arrived in time. Please continue to volunteer to review books that should receive notice here.

NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE

KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY NEWS

The papers for the meeting of the Søren Kierkegaard Society in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association currently scheduled are as follows:

Eastern Division, Atlanta, Georgia, December 28, 1993:

Céline Léon, "Exchange of Commodities and Aesthetic Indifference to the Other('s) Sex"

Shannon Sullivan, "Alternatives to the Ethical in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*"

Richard McCombs, "Putting Everything Together on One Thing: Imagination and Courage in Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death*"

Pacific Division, Los Angeles, California, March 30 - April 2, 1994

Rebecca Patten, "Kierkegaard's Hermeneutic"

W.S.K. Cameron, "[Writing] about Writing about Kierkegaard"

The papers for the meetings of the Kierkegaard Society in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion, November 20-23 are as follows:

Kierkegaard: Religion and Culture Group (2 hours) - Stephen Dunning, University of Pennsylvania, presiding. Theme: Concluding Unscientific Postscript

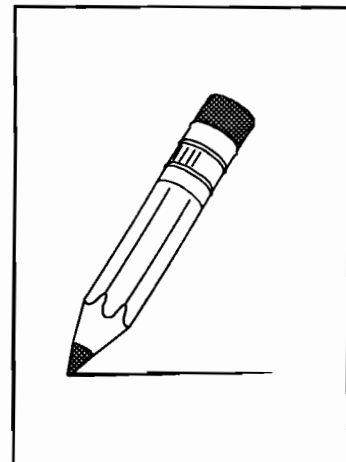
Mark Lloyd Taylor, Seattle Pacific University
Whose Life Is It Anyway? Autobiography and Gender in Kierkegaard's Postscript

Patrick Downey, Boston College
The Play of Plato and the Indirection of Kierkegaard

David Cain, Mary Washington College
Some Dangers of Deity: Johannes Climacus on Power, Pantheism, and Punishment
Respondent: Stephen N. Dunning, University of Pennsylvania

1/2 hour Business Meeting - Andrew J. Burgess, University of New Mexico, Presiding

Kierkegaard: Religion and Culture Group (2-1/2 hours) - Wanda Warren Berry, Colgate University, presiding. Theme: Kierkegaard and "the Other": Postmodernist Readings



Norman Wirzba, Loyola University Chicago
The Other as Teacher: The Difference Between Kierkegaard and Levinas
Respondent: Steven M. Emmanuel, Virginia Wesleyan College

Nancy Karlin Levene, Harvard University
A Seducer in Binary Form; Kierkegaard's Either/Or and the Problem of the Erotic

William J. Cahoy, St. John's University, Collegeville
Kierkegaard on the Sin and Redemption of Women
Respondent: Sylvia Walsh, Stetson University

Nineteenth Century Theology Group (1-1/2 hours) - Joseph W. Pickle, Jr., Colorado College, presiding. Theme: The Place of Kierkegaard in Nineteenth Century Theology

Ronald M. Green, Dartmouth College
Kierkegaard's Great Critique: Either/Or as a Kantian Transcendental Deduction

Richard Crouter, Carleton College
Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher: A not so Hidden Debt

Robert L. Perkins, Stetson University
The Religion of Love: Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Kierkegaard as Critics of Schlegel's Lucinde

M. Jaime Ferreira, University of Virginia
Leaps and Circles: Kierkegaard and Newman on Faith and Reason

Roundtable session: Mon., Nov. 22; 11:45a.m.-1:00pm

Bruce A. Heggen, McGill University
The Soul's Society and the Knight of Faith: Søren Kierkegaard, Emily Dickinson, and the Poetics of Constraint

Abraham H. Khan, Trinity College, University of Toronto
Kierkegaard and Glory

NEW JOURNAL WELCOMES SUBMISSIONS ON KIERKEGAARD

Richard Crouter of Carleton College informs me that the publishing firm of de Gruyter (Berlin & New York) has recently taken the initiative to establish a forum specifically dedicated to research in the history of theology. The Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte / Journal for the History of Modern Theology will begin appearing in early 1994. This journal will be edited by Prof. Dr. R. E. Crouter, Prof. Dr. F. W. Graf, and Prof. Dr. G. Meckenstock. Crouter wanted Newsletter readers to know that the editors are very eager to receive articles that deal with Kierkegaard. Contact Professor Crouter at Department of Religion, Carleton College, One North College Street, Northfield, Minnesota 55057 USA.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

SØREN KIERKEGAARD PHILOSOPHY, SCHRIFTSTELLER, THEOLOGE. Proceedings of the Bulgarian-Danish Seminar, March-April 1992, Sofia, Bulgaria. Papers in German and English. Cyril and Methodius Foundation. Available for \$11.00

U.S. including postage, from: Dr. Ginka Nikova-Tögel, Cyril and Methodius Foundation, 19 Oborishte Str., 1504 Sofia, Bulgarien.

Contents:

- Preface by the Danish Ambassador in Sofia
Julia Watkin: The Relevance of Kierkegaard's View of the Self for Our Time
Isaac Passy: Søren Kierkegaard and the Russian Religious Renaissance
Radosveta Theoharova: Stadien auf des Lebens Weg und Weltalter. Mensch- und Kulturkonzepte bei Schelling und Kierkegaard
Chralampi Panizidis: Kierkegaard: methodologie der Trauer. Thesen
Christo Todorov: Das Thema des Todes als Verbindungslinie zwischen Kierkegaard und Jaspers
Hermann Schmid: Die Beziehung von Zeitkritik und die Frage nach möglicher Existenz
Paul Müller: Die Ethik der Kommunikation im Denken Søren Kierkegaards
Poul Lübcke: Das Ästhetische und die Krise der Metaphysik
Vladimir Theoharov: Die symbolik des Spiegels bei Kierkegaard und Nietzsche
Birgit Bertung: Kierkegaard's View of Men and Women
Emilia Mineva: Kierkegaard und Marx. Thesen

SØREN KIERKEGAARD BIBLIOGRAPHIES. Remnants, 1944-1980 and Multi-Media, 1925-1991, compiled by Calvin D. Evans. FONTANUS MONOGRAPH SERIES II, McGill University Libraries, Montreal, 1993. (XVI + 185 pages, 14 illustr.) \$25

McGILL'S SECOND KIERKEGAARD COLLECTION by Alastair McKinnon in: FONTANUS from the collections of McGill University, vol. v, Montreal 1992, pages 173-216. \$25

Orders for the McGill books should be addressed to: Director of Libraries, McGill University, 3459 McTavish St., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1Y1

HONOR FOR KIERKEGAARD

A story in Nature (Vol. 364, 19 August 1993) informs us that a fossil has been named after Kierkegaard. Henry Gee reports that scientist Graham Budd has named *Kerygmachela kierkegaardii* because both the fossil and the philosopher are linked to Copenhagen. The fossil, an unusual anthropod from the Cambrian Explosion, may be appropriately named for another reason, however. Gee describes it as "one of those sanity-challenging early Cambrian fossils." A new concept of the absurd?

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY NEWS

I (Robert Perkins) have been assured and reassured by Mercer University Press that International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Fear and Trembling' and 'Repetition' will be in their bookstall at the American Academy of Religion in November. International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Philosophical Fragments' is being copy edited and type-set at the press and they expect to have a galley at the bookstall at the AAR.

Beginning with International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Either/Or' contributors should be using the set of sigla dated 23 August 1993.

International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Either/Or', Parts One and Two, is being reviewed by the editor prior to being sent to the advisory board. A few "promised" articles are tardy, and those contributors are asked to call or write the editor as soon as possible in order to update him on their "authorial intentions." Articles for International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Early Polemical Writings' have begun to arrive. A number of new authors will appear in this volume, and it will contain a number of surprising insights. If someone is considering an article/topic for this volume, and has not been in touch with the editor, please write or call. Robert Perkins' address is Dept. of Philosophy, Campus Box 8250, Stetson University, DeLand, FL 32720.

The sequence for the next several volumes is: Stages, Irony, For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself, Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, Practicing Christianity, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Upbuilding Discourses in various Spirits, and Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions.

KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS NEWS

Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions and Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits have now appeared. Works of Love will appear in 1994.

INTERNET BULLETIN BOARD

The Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College is now sponsoring a bulletin board on Internet in order to promote the exchange of information regarding Kierkegaard and related thinkers. If you wish to subscribe, send a message using the word "subscribe" through e-mail to: kierkegaard-request@stolaf.edu. Once subscribed, in order to converse type kierkegaard@stolaf.edu. For further information, please contact Cynthia Lund at the Library (lundc@stolaf.edu or 507-646-3846).

ARTICLES

The following essay and the two responses were originally delivered at the APA Central Division meeting in Chicago, April, 1993. After the sessions, there were several requests to print the proceedings.

A Review of Two Recent Commentaries on Philosophical Fragments

One wonders what Johannes Climacus, who opened his Concluding Unscientific Postscript by breathing a sigh of relief that Philosophical Fragments had fallen still born and unnoticed from the press, would make of the current flurry of scholarship inspired by that curious little volume. Of late, the academic presses have brought forth no less than three commentaries on Fragments itself and one treatise on the Climacean philosophy in general. And we have the further promise that a whole volume of scholarly articles on Fragments will arrive shortly. What, indeed, would Climacus say about the fact that each of these books is lengthier and printed in a larger first edition than his little thought-experiment. One wonders.

Sitting before you are two authors responsible for much of the current spate of Climacus scholarship; Robert Roberts, who published Faith Reason and History: Rethinking Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments in 1986; and Stephen Evans, who after giving us Kierkegaard's 'Fragments' and 'Postscript' in 1983, has within the last year published Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments.

The parallels between our two commentators are striking. Both did their graduate work at Yale. Both returned to teach at Wheaton. Both developed a strong interest in psychological theory and therapy. Both are unapologetically orthodox Christians who reflect their religious beliefs and concerns in their philosophical writings. The two are, furthermore, long-term friends. Given their common experiences, parallel interests and shared sympathies, we might expect their two commentaries to be rather too alike for comfort.

And the two commentaries do agree on much. If we were to choose a section of the Fragments at random and check to see what the two said about it, we would probably find similar glosses. Further, both construe their mission in similar terms: not to parrot or paraphrase Fragments, not to set it in its historical context, not to track down every implicit reference to or borrowing from the philosophical and theological traditions, but instead to

join with Climacus in dialogue, to rethink with him the substantive issues of the text. And the substantive issues that absorb their attention are largely identical: the nature of faith, its relation to reason, the role of evidence, our awareness of the past, and, most definitely, the distinctiveness of the Christian promise of salvation on the basis of something historical.

But the two commentaries are nonetheless very different books, reflecting clearly their authors' differences in temperament and intellectual allegiance. Roberts' commentary hails unmistakably and admittedly from the Wittgenstein/Holmer wing of Kierkegaard studies. Evans has made it clear in previous articles and repeats here that he sees substantial congruence between Plantinga's epistemological writings and Kierkegaard's analyses of belief. Specifically, Evans is intent to enrich Plantinga's notion of a non-evidential ground for properly basic beliefs with Kierkegaard's nuanced appreciation of the human emotions. Hence the title of his commentary: Passionate Reason. I offer these broad suggestions of affiliation not so as to encourage pigeon-holing our authors but to call attention to patterns and tendencies that evidence themselves throughout the two commentaries. In discussing three particular points of comparison, I hope to show that the associations I just suggested betoken both substantial and attitudinal differences between our two authors.

Point of Comparison 1. Relation to Scholarship/Academic Philosophy-- In the very first paragraph of his commentary, Roberts brusquely dismisses most Kierkegaard scholarship as fundamentally misguided. True to this beginning, Roberts only rarely refers throughout his book to other works of Kierkegaard interpretation. (The few exceptions to this rule seem mostly to be references to Evans' earlier book on Climacus, and they are uniformly respectful even if not always in agreement.) In contrast, Evans' commentary shows him to place more stock in academic philosophy generally and Kierkegaard scholarship specifically. His commentary is rife with

references to, arguments with, and corrections of recent interpretations of Kierkegaard. Further, in every chapter Evans strives to show the relevance of Fragments to contemporary philosophical debates. At least in these two texts, it seems that Roberts does evidence a Wittgensteinian alienation from the institutions of Academic Interpretation, Inc., while Evans, like Plantinga, chooses the role of the insider.

Point of Comparison 2. Grammar vs. Metaphysics-- Roberts' affiliation with the Wittgensteinian-Holmerian "take" on Kierkegaard is nowhere more evident than in Roberts' persistent construal of Climacus' assertions and arguments as "grammatical remarks" (Roberts 27, see ft). Applying my own low-tech quantitative research methods, I find that there are more entries under "grammar" in Roberts' index than under any other word. In this case, at least, frequency of occurrence really is a sign of the term's significance to Roberts. That significance is further underlined by Roberts' three page explanation of the term (see Roberts 26-29). In those pages we see that Roberts uses this term to accentuate several features of Climacus' writings. First, he underlines Climacus' descriptive rather than creative or normative agenda. He writes, "What most of Climacus' points in Fragments amount to . . . is something analogous to the grammarian's remarks about the grammar of a language. He is not inventing a religion or theology, or redoing Christianity, any more than a sober grammarian is inventing or redoing English; he is describing it, producing a perspicuous representation of certain basic features that are already there" (Roberts 27). Second, and relatedly, he uses the term to identify Climacus' comments as "metalinguistic." Rather than preaching or theologizing and thereby using the Christian "object-language," Climacus generally makes observations about that language in a meta-language. As alien as such terminology is to Kierkegaard studies, it does provide a way to think about Climacus' claim to be an outsider investigating a hypothesis the truth of which he neither affirms nor denies.

Evans, however, registers strong misgivings about the use of "grammar" to characterize Fragments. I will now quote him at some length on this point.

"Some commentators, such as H. A. Nielsen, have been somewhat embarrassed by the robustly metaphysical character of the discussion [in the Interlude] and have tried to interpret Climacus as giving us bits of linguistic analysis. Nielsen sees Climacus as providing us with 'grammatical reminders' about the use of our concepts,

reminders that are unfortunately usually expressed by Climacus in 'fact-like' statements that have to be 'decompressed' in order to discover their true grammatical status...

It is of course perfectly true that the points Climacus is making are deeply embedded in our language and thus may rightly be described as grammatical. However, it seems to me a mistake to think that these points simply reflect the way we talk, as if they would no longer hold if we talked some other way. There is no reason to think that Climacus regarded them that way. When Climacus gives his points a 'fact-like' expression instead of simply making remarks about 'our concepts' I do not see this as 'unfortunately obscuring' his point...

It is Nielsen, I think, who tends to obscure the point, by making it appear that Climacus only wants to make some inoffensive remarks about the way we talk. Climacus himself is clearly trying to talk about necessity and possibility, not as features of our language, but as features of the way things are. He is focusing on what logicians call *de re* necessity, the necessity of things themselves, rather than *de dicto* necessity, the necessity of propositions or statements. The nature of things is reflected in our statements, our statements do not dictate how things must be. Climacus seems closer in sensibility to a Greek or medieval philosopher here than to contemporary Wittgensteinians" (Evans 121-2).

In putting his point this way, Evans bears out my suggestion that his reading of Fragments is Plantingian in spirit. But it is curious that Evans singles out Nielsen for this attack when he refers to Roberts' book more frequently and given that all these complaints seem equally relevant to Roberts' commentary. And Evans' charge seems a serious one for Roberts' book. Reference to how we talk, rather than how things are, seems implied in the term "grammar." This is, of course, no great difficulty for the later Wittgenstein and his latter day followers like Rorty who deny that it makes sense to talk about how things are apart from the various ways linguistic communities discuss them. But Roberts isn't a relativist. In his discussion of Climacus' epistemological views, he assumes a common sense distinction between true and false beliefs. Further, the intensity with which Roberts denounces liberal theologians for Socratizing Jesus, for construing Christianity as yet another example of immanent religion, is all out of proportion if these theologians are simply making grammatical errors. Apart from the objective truth of Christianity, why is getting it right so crucial? And who determines what "right" is? Languages change. Poets innovate. Without assuming an independent reality to which words refer, Climacus' project of clarification and separation seems doomed. But if we are ready to acknowledge a semantic relation between language and the world, why shouldn't we

speak unapologetically of metaphysics as does Evans? Perhaps Roberts' preference for "grammar" over "metaphysics" is to some extent a survival of Wittgenstein's belief that philosophy is a disease and that its primary mission should be to cure itself of itself. But there is surely more to it than that. I noted above that Roberts begins his book by asserting that most Kierkegaard scholarship is based on a misunderstanding since most scholars set out to describe and critique Kierkegaard's 'doctrines.' (Roberts places scare quotes around the term "doctrines" to express his distaste for it.) Now, Roberts can look to Kierkegaard for support on this. The whole apparatus of the pseudonyms, the lengthy discussions of indirect communication, Kierkegaard's declared dread of being plowed under by the paragraph machine and last but not least the omnipresent irony of the pseudonymous works makes it dangerous to read any of the pseudonyms as a straightforward metaphysician or dogmatist. In Postscript, Climacus mercilessly lampoons the initial German reviewer of Fragments for summarizing the doctrinal content of the book while noting as an afterthought that he suspects there is some element of irony in that content's presentation. So, even if "grammar" is not the happiest way to get at what Climacus is up to in Fragments, one can surely understand why a commentator, with a vivid memory of the treatment that hapless initial reviewer received, would want to find some other term than "metaphysical" or "doctrinal."

But grammatical comments are no less positive and direct than metaphysical claims, and so the question of the text's irony remains to bedevil the commentator. How should we construe Climacus' self-confessed and all-too evident irony? Is it so total as to obviate all talk of positive claims, be they metaphysical or grammatical, or do irony and genuine positive assertion coexist in the volume? Both Roberts and Evans are adamant in their endorsement of the latter view and quite hostile (as we shall shortly discuss) to those who read Fragments as boundlessly ironic. But in identifying and developing the positive content of the Fragments, the two display very different hermeneutic approaches. Their respective hermeneutics will be my third focus.

3. The hermeneutics of charity vs. untangling the knot of jest and earnest

Our two authors approach the treacherous textual terrain of Fragments warily, devoting their respective first chapters specifically to the question of how one should

read Climacus. At the level of declared hermeneutic principle, the two are in substantial agreement. Faced with both the evident irony and the apparent cogency of much that Climacus has to say, they propose a hermeneutics of sorting. Roberts states this approach most dramatically:

"Fragments is...a 'dialectical knot,' a tangled composition of jest and earnest. To understand it -- 'to profit by this sort of communication' the reader must ...take cognizance of the dissonances in the work and resolve them. 'He must himself undo the knot for himself.'" In this work I want to do just this, to read Fragments as a knot of spoof and Christian seriousness...

...[A] chief criterion [for sorting jest from earnest] will be whether what is said stands up to critical scrutiny. If it stands up, I shall take it seriously; if not, this fact will incline me to relegate it to the jest-pile...By using this criterion I am not claiming the historical Climacus[?] would countenance all the critical devices I use in evaluating his arguments...though I think my judgments about Climacus' intentions are for the most part correct, I would be far less dismayed to find out I had misunderstood him than to find out I had misunderstood the issue he is discussing...(Roberts 6-7).

Similarly, Evans writes:

"It would...be very rash to take the humoristic character of Fragments as nullifying any serious philosophical purpose. Climacus himself says in Postscript that 'it is only assistant professors who assume that where irony is present, seriousness is excluded.' the fact that the project as a whole is ironical does not entail that particular arguments within the project are not sound or intended as sound. The conceptual distinctions Climacus draws between Christian and Socratic ways of thinking, for example, may be quite sound and important, even if we recognize that they are presented in jesting form. Thus our recognition of the ironical form of the book as a whole by no means exempts us from the philosophical task of examining and thinking through its arguments and claims, even though we recognize that at times Climacus may be pulling our leg" (Evans 18).

Now, this way of approaching Fragments is attractive in that it does fit with Kierkegaard's emphasis on indirect communication and Socratic teaching. If Fragments is such a "knot of jest and earnest," the reader can't passively accept a given claim or argument but must think it through for herself and accept or reject it on her own authority.

But there do seem to be real problems with this approach. First, the idea that we can atomize Fragments by sorting it into piles of good, serious arguments and

bad, joke arguments ignores the integrity of the text. Yet, both Roberts and Evans speak of the book's overall project, thereby postulating just the sort of unity a hermeneutics of sorting ignores.

I don't think this criticism applies so forcefully to Evans in spite of the passage I read that seems to endorse such sorting. He, too, uses the language of untangling knots, but he seems to think of this primarily in terms of one's general stance to the text and to life as a whole. For example, in discussing the purported proof of Christianity at the end of Ch.1, Evans says that the way one works out this "knot" depends on whether one is a believer or an unbeliever, whether one is faithful or offended. So, instead of breaking the text down into a "pile" of relatively discreet arguments, he makes a point about the way one's commitments generally guide one's interpretive activity.

My second concern relating to Roberts' declaration of hermeneutic principle involves the significance of authorial intention. In the passage by Roberts I just read, he says he isn't especially concerned whether his sorting coincides with Climacus' intentions. (Can a pseudonym have intentions?) But earlier, he validated his whole approach to Fragments (and brusquely dismissed the work of others) by saying that he proposed to read Kierkegaard the way that Kierkegaard intended to be read. If authorial intent matters in the one case, why not the latter? Evans largely by-passes the issue of authorial intent by proposing that his readings of Fragments be judged on the basis of their fecundity alone (Evans 5). Something akin to an author's intent theory of meaning, however, lies behind Evans' reconstruction of what Kierkegaard/Climacus means by the word, "contradiction." But even there, Evans makes his case in terms of contemporary usage and occurrences of the term in the Kierkegaardian texts.

I turn now from statements of hermeneutic principle by our two commentators to actual hermeneutic practice. There the differences between Roberts and Evans emerge quite sharply. On the one hand, Roberts goes about his sorting with a vengeance. Some arguments pass muster, but he construes many, many of Climacus' purported arguments as wretchedly bad, so bad, in fact, as to warrant taking them as grammatical remarks masquerading as arguments (Ch.1) or as provocations to get us to think the issues through more satisfactorily for ourselves (Interlude).

Evans, in contrast, consistently exercises hermeneutic charity so as to construe every argument in as plausible and cogent a manner as possible. When I speak of a hermeneutics of charity, I mean it in the literal, etymological sense of the word. In criticizing what he sees as "unduly cynical" interpretations of Kierkegaard by Josiah Thompson, Henning Fenger, and Louis Mackey, Evans looks to Works of Love as a source of interpretive principle. He says love should guide one's reading as well as one's seeing and doing. So, where Roberts is quick to judge a claim or argument to be so preposterous as to demand construal as irony, Evans makes every attempt to make the argument make sense (hence his book's subtitle). Let me illustrate my characterizations of Roberts' and Evans' hermeneutic practices with several telling examples.

Example 1: In Chapter III, Climacus argues that the god, designated both as the paradox and the unknown, is the proper object of the understanding's longing since the understanding, like every passion, wills its own downfall. Roberts presents this line of reasoning in the form of two related arguments stated in the form of numbered propositions. In the first of these arguments he spots a preposterous premise, namely that all passions seek their own downfall. Roberts parodies this premise noting that it implies that the desire for wealth is potentiated in the desire for poverty; the desire for fame in the desire for obscurity, and gourmandism in the desire to taste something really revolting. After thus dispensing with that argument, Roberts proceeds to show that the second argument, which takes us from the understanding's desire for the unknown to its desire for the god, is guilty of the fallacy of affirming the consequent.

In contrast to Roberts' construal of Climacus' claims as bad deductive arguments, Evans finds in the same passages welcomed suggestions about the nature of reason. First, he notes with appreciation Climacus' characterization of reason as passionate. In fact, this point is so central to Evans' reading of Fragments that he uses the title of his commentary to underline it. Second, Evans admits but dismisses as irrelevant the objection that not all passions seek their downfall, choosing to emphasize instead that this claim is plausible in the case in question. Evans writes:

"That human reason has an enduring fascination with the paradoxical seems right to me; an encounter with the paradoxical does engender something that rightly deserves the name 'passion.' The psychology involved in the claim that

every passion involves something like a Freudian death-instinct seems more dubious to me, but fortunately nothing hangs on this universal psychological claim. We do not need to know if every human passion at its highest point wills its own downfall; it will be enough to see if something like this desire is present in the dominant passions that appear to drive human reason (Evans 61).

Example 2: In the Interlude, Climacus makes the cryptic claim that whereas we see rather than believe that a star now exists, we believe (or have faith that) it came to be. Roberts devotes an entire section of his chapter on the Interlude to investigating this claim and uncovers implausibility after implausibility. He concludes by writing,

"It is perhaps salutary...to enforce upon the reader's mind the impression that Climacus' theory of historical judgment is maybe presented tongue in cheek...Our discussion has brought to light four implausibilities gross enough to arouse in us a modest suspicion that Climacus would have us rethink his statements for ourselves" (Roberts 117).

On this point, Evans explicitly notes his disagreement with Roberts (albeit in a footnote). Evans postulates that Climacus is really making a point about "the logical gap between my experience...and the world as I ordinarily perceive it..." between "the immediate content of my experience" and "the existence of a public object with a public history" (Evans 133). Now Roberts also investigates a sense data construal of Climacus' remarks but cites the incoherence of sense data theory as evidence that Climacus could not seriously have meant his claims. In contrast, Evans salvages what he sees as the essential insight from its unattractive packaging in sense data terminology.

"Note that even if one rejects the implied inner world of certainty, this does not damage Climacus' main thesis, which is the riskiness of judgments about matters of fact. One may well find doctrines of sense data and their like dubious while still agreeing that human judgments about stars and events are contingent and fallible" (Evans 133).

This construal of the curious claim about the star affords Evans' the means to save Climacus from further charges of gross implausibility. Though Climacus says that in the absence of certainty we will to believe or disbelieve, Evans denies that Climacus is, as several have recently asserted, an epistemic volitionalist, that is, one who says we can directly choose to accept or reject a belief. Instead, Evans construes Climacus to mean simply that subjective factors always play a role in resolving the

uncertainty that pervades human judgment (Evans 136). But what evidence is there to support Evans' claim that Climacus write will when he means subjectivity? Only that Climacus' statements are much more defensible on that construal than on a literal one.

While I could give further examples along the same lines, I think these two indicate a real difference in hermeneutic approach between Roberts and Evans. But I do need to express two caveats about my suggested comparison. First, I don't want to leave the impression that Roberts always rejects and Evans always rehabilitates. Roberts finds much in Fragments with which he agrees and Evans is prepared at times to pronounce Climacus wrong. That noted, I still maintain that the examples I chose are indicative of a real difference between the two commentaries.

Second, my description of Evans' hermeneutics as charitable is open to question. If Roberts is correct in his judgments of Climacian irony, then Evans' efforts to make the arguments in question plausible and convincing is misdirected charity if it is charity at all. Maybe the true charity in interpreting Climacus is to draw into the open the subtle, treacherous irony that pervades the book. Roberts suggests as much in describing himself as a "little helper" to Climacus. Like his inspiration, Lessing, whose dying comments to Jacobi were so enigmatic, Climacus gives us in Fragments a text so elusive that we really can't even say for sure which reaping is charitable, much less correct. To read Fragments and then to read Evans' and Roberts' commentaries is to be placed right where Climacus says he wants his readers to be placed: in a position where we have to decide for ourselves. Perhaps we each learn something about ourselves as we gravitate to one or the other reading, as we emphasize the irony or the plausibility of Climacus' arguments.

Now, if I left it at this, I'd be setting up a contrast in which Roberts represents the tendency to take Fragments ironically while Evans represents the tendency to take it seriously. Then I could, with that Aristotelian flourish so beloved by writers of undergraduate essays, suggest that the middle way between these extremes is best. But that would be a misrepresentation as well as a cliché. Up to this point, I've been working to differentiate the two commenters. But now I need to stress their common features and to show that the differences between them are only relative. As I noted above, both Roberts and Evans acknowledge the presence of irony in Fragments but both want to hold on to a core of positivity in the text. They affirm that

Fragments means exactly what it says on a number of issues, preeminently the distinctiveness of Christianity from other religions on the basis of its promise of salvation on the basis of something historical. It seems to me that both Roberts and Evans read Fragments against liberal Christian theologians who obscure that distinction. Roberts devotes much of his first chapter to showing that Schleiermacher, Bultmann, and Cobb, as representatives of the best of liberalism, commit "a simple archetypal and theologically fundamental theological mistake that invalidates whole tomes and systems of supposedly Christian thought..."(Roberts 41). Similarly, Evans pointedly turns Climacus' "thought experiment" against liberal theologians who "Socratize" Christianity, who sacrifice the unique significance of Christ on the altar of multi-faith ecumenism, who continuously evidence a desire to be fashionably modern. He calls their misappropriation of the word "Christian" "intolerable"(Evans 175), and compares them to pimps (Evans 178). But Evans' argument for denying such theologies the label "Christian" strikes me as oddly unKierkegaardian. He writes, "There are millions of Christians today who continue to use 'Christianity' to designate a faith that implies that Jesus was uniquely God's son, a faith that rests on an authoritative, historical revelation, a view of Christianity which clearly makes it logically exclude Socratic perspectives on the Truth" (Evans 175). Such an argument from what the millions take Christianity to be would carry little weight, I fear, with the scourge of Christendom. What Evans and Roberts with him have to assert is that the Christian faith has an essence, that there is an invariant, objective, fundamental core to the faith. And this in turn requires a commitment to the whole idea of essences. Here I think Evans is in better shape than Roberts. You will recall that Roberts characterizes Climacus' claims as grammatical while Evans asserts that Climacus is more like a Greek or Medieval metaphysician committed to the notion of de re necessity. In their commentaries, Evans and Roberts both affirm that Climacus has accurately and unironically articulated at least part of what is de re necessary about Christianity, even if that isn't the terminology they employ. Further, Roberts and Evans accept as unproblematic Climacus' essentialist assertions about God, the individual person, love, etc.

In light of these commitments, it is clear why Roberts and Evans are so hostile to postmodern readings of Fragments. As Roberts' notes in a footnote to his Introduction, Louis Mackey not only denies that Fragments (or for that matter any of the pseudonymous works) makes any positive assertion, he actually reads

Fragments as a send-up of essentialism generally. To quote from Mackey's A Kind of Poet, "What Climacus is getting at... is that the historicity of life screws every truth, Greek or Christian, into a paradox, since truth is timeless and the truth-seeker is temporal...Climacus forces his reader into a corner where he must admit - not that the Christian hypothesis is true, for that 'is an entirely different question, which cannot be decided in the same breath'- but that there is no honest way of understanding human existence that can avoid contradiction...The final battle is pitched between the essentialist philosopher who views life under the aspect of eternity and the existentialist philosopher who grapples daily with the paradoxes of his life and surmounts them in recollection or in faith" (Quoted by Roberts 11n). And the cold wind of irony blows even more icily in Mackey's "A Ram in the Afternoon" where the otherness that separates humans and God, signifier and signified, error and knowledge, dooms the aspiration to positive statement and the metaphysics of presence it implies.

As I see it, Roberts and Evans are hemmed in, caught in the proverbial space between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they are intent to affirm the otherness of Christianity, to combat theological liberalism that would assimilate Christianity to generic religiosity. In doing so, they need to assert the radical, surprising, offensive, disturbing irruption of the Christian gospel in the consciousness of the unconverted person. On the other hand, they strive to find in Fragments and to make themselves positive statements about this new, different, surprising mode of existence. But that requires stabilizing it, getting a handle on it, translating it into human language. While I find the total negativity of Mackey's reading of Fragments sterile and off-putting, I am haunted by its questions and challenges. To read his essays is to lose a sort of hermeneutic innocence. I'm forced to wonder whether behind Evans' attractive rehabilitations of Climacean arguments and Roberts' verdict of irony or seriousness at the level of particular arguments there lurks a more encompassing and elusive irony. How to settle this is not readily apparent. If we could determine meaning by virtue of authorial intent, and count Kierkegaard as the author, I have no doubt that he meant quite literally much of what he has his pseudonym, Climacus, say. But this is a pseudonymous work and an unusually devious one at that. So it seems that one must contest Mackey's readings on a purely textual basis. Some time ago, I read quotations from Roberts and Evans attacking Mackey's reading of Fragment as boundlessly ironic and devoid of positive assertion. Both of these quotations came from the two

commentaries' initial chapters and made the general point that irony can coexist with seriousness (except of course in the minds of assistant professors). Now, as true as this observation is, it fails to engage Mackey's specific arguments for denying any positive content in Fragments. Mackey is onto something in linking the ways Fragments undercuts itself with its particular task of talking about the utterly other, the completely different. To the extent we take Climacus seriously when he asserts the otherness of God, the whole project of philosophy of religion becomes dubious, and with it all readings of Fragments as positive contributions to the philosophy of religion. This point doesn't seem to be just an outgrowth of French postmodern literary theory; it is the point Karl Barth made in his commentary on Romans and his Dogmatics.

Though neither Roberts nor Evans takes on Mackey's "A Ram in the Afternoon" in a direct and substantial way, I think they both have resources for such a response. First, in accentuating the idea of revelation, they can restore the positive in the way Barth did. Human reason alone couldn't bridge the chasm separating us from God, but that doesn't rule out God bestowing on us a positive content of good news. Note that Evans specifically mentions the possibility of philosophical thinking that begins from God's revelatory activity. Secondly, I see Evans and Roberts implicitly responding to the infinite negativity of readings like Mackey's by showing how much more fecund and interesting it is to make sense of many if not all of Climacus's claims and arguments. In Works of Love, Kierkegaard writes at length on the Biblical passage, "By their fruits, you shall know them." That principle, I submit, applies to hermeneutic approaches as well as to people.

I've used my time today to try to place Evans' and Roberts' commentaries in relation to each other and in relation to some significant alternative approaches. In doing so, I've largely passed up the opportunity to compare and contrast their readings of specific sections of Fragments. I regret that since I find my own grasp of the fine detail of the book greatly enhanced by working through their commentaries. In terms of helping others read Fragments more insightfully, of suggesting further research, of indicating the living significance of the text, their two volumes are pronounced and complementary successes.

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ON TAKING IRONY SERIOUSLY BUT NOT ABSOLUTELY

Let me begin by thanking George Connell for his clear and stimulating paper. I will not comment much on his remarks on Bob Roberts' book, since Bob is here in person to do that. Rather, I wish to make a few comments on what I consider to be some minor points at issue, and then spend most of my time addressing what I take to be the large interpretive issue he addresses: the nature and function of irony in Kierkegaard's works in general and Philosophical Fragments in particular, and the implications of taking irony seriously for the interpretive task.

1. I will first address the question of my own attitude to Wittgenstein and Paul Holmer, and their followers. Let me begin by saying that I agree with Connell that there are significant differences between my work and Roberts', and that those differences stem largely though not completely from the fact that Bob's thinking is more deeply indebted to the work of Wittgenstein and Paul Holmer than is mine. Though I am by no means completely unsympathetic to Wittgensteinian approaches to philosophy, and indeed have been accused of being a Holmer disciple, certain aspects of the Wittgensteinian approach bother me a good deal, particularly the impression some Wittgensteinians give that one can avoid substantive philosophical and metaphysical commitments by practicing philosophy in the linguistic mode. Though I see this sort of grammatical analysis as a helpful way of doing philosophy, I view it as essentially an alternative idiom and heuristic framework, not an alternative to philosophy as it has been traditionally understood. I think, for example, that similar points about the theory-laden and fallible character of human perceptual judgements are often made by linguistic philosophers who examine the logic of perceptual judgements and phenomenological philosophers attempting to describe the structures of the experiences themselves.

Connell notes that I am much more critical of H. A. Nielsen's work than of Roberts', and I detect a hint perhaps that he thinks I have pulled my punches with regard to Roberts, perhaps because of friendship. However, I don't think this is the case. First, as he notes, I don't hesitate to disagree with Roberts on occasion. Secondly, and more importantly, I simply don't see in Roberts what I see in Nielsen, and that is an explicit commitment to what I regard as a reductionist,

anti-metaphysical program. Roberts uses grammatical analysis as a tool, while leaving open questions as to whether grammatical distinctions may mirror or correlate with metaphysical distinctions. What I find exasperating about Nielsen's work is that the professed desire to avoid controversial philosophical claims in fact seems to mask contentious and even ideological commitments.

2. The second minor point I want to address concerns the appeal to the millions, which Connell finds incongruous when one is dealing with Kierkegaard, the scourge of Christendom, who writes for that individual and views the crowd as untruth. I think this criticism is rooted in a misunderstanding. The argument Connell criticizes here is not an apologetic argument, and it has no connection with truth. The issue concerns meaning and usage. Specifically, I think that it is in general undesirable to have the same term used to connote positions that are logically exclusive of each other. If part of the message of Fragments is that the two positions designated there as the Socratic and the alternative hypothesis do indeed logically exclude each other, then the cause of clear thinking is not served well by using the same term to designate both positions. That is what I take to be the moral of Fragments: it is confusing and muddled to claim that one is not Socratic and has in fact gone beyond the Socratic view to a view that is logically exclusive of it, and then to put forward a view that is essentially Socratic. If traditional Christianity is essentially different from a Socratic view, then traditional Christians have a right to feel aggrieved when contemporary theologians present a Socratic view as Christian.

An appeal to usage is quite relevant in this context, for if it were the case that the traditional sense of "Christianity" had simply died out, then there would be no significant objection to someone else appropriating the term. Since there is no living historical tradition of Epicureanism that can be traced to Epicurus, there is no great harm done to any living persons when a contemporary society that holds views at variance with Epicurus appropriates the name of Epicureanism, though questions can still be raised about whether this is fair to the historical Epicurus. My point is simply that there are a lot of contemporary people who continue the Christian historical tradition. What such people believe may be completely false, and even absurd, but they have a right to designate their

convictions in such a way that they can be distinguished from logically incompatible views. The fact that there are a lot of such people implies nothing about the truth of the views, but it does bear on the question of whether anyone is harmed if the term is appropriated for other purposes.

3. Now let me move towards more important issues. At one point Connell says that both Roberts and myself face a dilemma. On the one hand, he says, we want to "affirm the otherness of Christianity, to combat theological liberalism that would assimilate Christianity to generic religiosity." (p. 16). To do this we need to see the Christian gospel as a radical, surprising "irruption" in the consciousness of the unconverted person. Yet, Connell says that we also want to find in Fragments and to ourselves make "positive statements" about Christianity, which "requires stabilizing it, getting a handle on it, translating it into human language." (p. 16). I take it the issue then is whether one can view Christianity as something irreducible to unaided human thought, something that comes into being through God's revelatory and redemptive work, and yet regard Christian faith as embodying or entailing truths that can be believed and affirmed.

I see no fundamental difficulty in affirming both of these claims. As I see it, Christian faith certainly has content; part of being a Christian is that one thinks differently about God, oneself, and the world one finds oneself in than one otherwise would. Though Christianity is far from merely being a collection of beliefs, it is (almost) equally far from being conceivable apart from any beliefs. Are these beliefs expressible in human language? I know no other language in which to express them. Does this imply that Christian faith is somehow subservient to unbaptized human reason? I cannot see how that follows at all. As Connell suggests, I would follow Barth, and most past Christian thinkers, by affirming that some of the most central Christian beliefs are acquired by responding in faith to god's revelation. (Though I hasten to add that I do not follow Barth's general views on the relation between reason and revelation.)

If I believed that Christian beliefs could not be properly held unless they could be independently certified by human reason, as Kant certainly thought, then it would follow that affirming such Christian truths would undermine the surprising and offensive character of the Christian message. But of course I do not agree with Kant. Instead, I follow Kierkegaard in arguing that human reason is situated and historical, and that it is

passionate, to refer to my book's title and chief thesis. From this perspective Kant's claim that faith must justify itself before the bar of a neutral, objective faculty of reason is a mask for the claim that faith must submit to imperialistic human demands to control and dominate what is genuinely other. But the claim that the Christian message is genuinely other cannot be understood as the claim that it cannot be understood by human beings at all. Otherwise Christianity could not be intelligibly preached or believed by human beings. Instead, it must be understood as the claim that human reason, and the human person as a whole, can be gripped by a new passion, a passion that transforms the way we think about ourselves and feel about ourselves and others. The passion of faith is genuinely new and must be understood as the work of God, but it also must be a passion that can inform human life and thought.

Perhaps Connell's worry is that one cannot affirm such truths and retain the appropriate kind of epistemological humility. I take that to be the point of the worries expressed by the somewhat unclear images of "stabilizing" and "getting a handle" on Christianity. I don't want to dismiss this worry. Here we have a real danger. Many Christians do think that they "have a handle on God." There is a great temptation to forget that the revelation is God's and to think that one can neatly capture it by a tidy set of demonstrable propositions. I suspect that God's revelation took the form of a story rather than a system of propositions partly to make this difficult, but the attempt nevertheless is often made. I do not wish to forget that the revelation comes from God and is partly about God and thus that the subject of that revelation is never exhausted by human thinking, even human thinking informed by divine revelation.

One way of blocking such attempts to put God in a box is to remind ourselves of the role subjectivity plays in coming to affirm these truths. Kierkegaard clearly breaks with Enlightenment foundationalist epistemologies and highlights the uncertainties involved in human knowing, uncertainties that get resolved for him through subjectivity. However, he recognizes that they do get resolved for most of us, the exception being those of us who will to become skeptics.

There are those who argue that to be truly radical and truly post-modern, if one wishes to be that, one must drop any affirmation of positive truth. We must live in a world of complete uncertainty and negativity; every positive affirmation deconstructs on close examination. However, I believe that this stance is neither truly radical

nor does it really entail a break with modernity. Rather, the person who affirms such negativity in fact still longs for the objective certainties of modernity, or at least unconsciously continues to adopt modernity's criteria for affirmation of truth. Since those criteria cannot be met, we must get along without such truth. Kierkegaard's break with modernity is more radical, I believe, because he calls into question not only whether we can achieve justified belief and knowledge according to the standards of modernity, but the appropriateness of those standards themselves. He forces us to ask whether it is possible for us to live with convictions and commitment in a world in which we have come to terms both with human finitude and human sinfulness.

Because I am a finite, historical being, I could be wrong. My affirmations of what I take to be the truth are not final or certain. When I am challenged by the gospel, I gain the ability to recognize that I am also sinful, prone to self-deception and the appropriation of truths, even the truths of the gospel itself, to my own ends. I must come to terms with my finitude and with my sinfulness, learn to live with uncertainty and live with the self-examination called for by the gospel message. However, I am not called to cease to think, or to cease to ponder who I am, who God is, and how I should live my life. On the contrary, I am called to allow God to form within me a passion that will resolve the objective uncertainty I confront and push me towards an honest look at myself. I agree with Merold Westphal, who in an unpublished paper, entitled "Positive Postmodernism as Radical Hermeneutics," has argued that Kierkegaard (and Nietzsche) are more truly radical and post-modern than are Derrida and Foucault, precisely because they offer to us what he calls "positive postmodernism," a recognition of human finitude and sinfulness that does not plunge us into despair, but offers a pathway to commitment.

4. This issue is closely related to the last substantive issue I want to treat, and that concerns the relation between irony and positive truth in Kierkegaard generally, and Philosophical Fragments in particular. Connell is worried that I have not taken Kierkegaard's irony seriously enough. Though he finds Louis Mackey's "total negativity" off-putting, he confesses to a wonder as to whether there is not a more "encompassing and elusive irony" in Kierkegaard.

I should like to help him by showing that there is indeed an encompassing and elusive irony in Philosophical Fragments, but that it is an irony that I go to some lengths to highlight. Such an irony does not imply that

positive truths are not affirmed in Kierkegaard. To show this I would like to give an example of how a paper that is suffused with irony may nonetheless provide plenty of sober truths.

If I had Kierkegaard's creative and artistic skill, I would now proceed to actually construct and offer you such an example. However, since I don't have such skills, and since time is short, I would like you to imagine with me such an example. Suppose that this were a conference on pedagogy, and I had been asked to speak about the general subject of improving college teaching. I could construct my talk straightforwardly by focusing on the relatively low value placed on teaching in American universities today. I might discuss how heavily research and publications are weighted in promotion decisions, and how little value is placed on having an impact on students' lives.

Imagine that instead of the straightforward, non-ironic talk, that I had chosen to proceed in a different manner. I promise to share with you a revolutionary, profound discovery I have made about American universities. These institutions actually contain a group of people known as students. As silly and absurd as the idea appears, I wish to propose that professors be encouraged to spend time with this group of people. Though it is hard to imagine that this might fall within the purview of the professor's life, I urge you to consider working for such a policy at your university. My discovery of students has led to some other discoveries as well. Perhaps some of the time Professors spend in committee and administrative work is unnecessary and could be reduced. As crazy as such a notion is, given the need to make the American educational system competitive, perhaps the time has come to consider such drastic and preposterous changes. Imagine my talk continues along these lines.

Such a talk would, I submit, be suffused with irony, an irony that would be encompassing, and, if I were really skillful, elusive, at least at points. I did not make an original discovery that there were students in American universities. My audience knows I have made no such discovery, and I know that they know that. The irony lies in the fact that I am reminding my listeners of very elementary truths and distinctions, but doing so in a manner that puts them forward as if they were original, hard-to-grasp notions. The irony might be justified, if it is, by the sad truth that American higher education often seems to ignore these basic truths that "we all know." However, this pervasive irony is entirely compatible with

its being the case that many of the things I affirm as true are in fact true. In fact, the irony depends partly on that being the case. Of course not every affirmation in my talk need be true. My claims that these truths are original discoveries or that they are bizarre and unheard-of are false. The discerning listener will doubtless be able to make such distinctions, which corresponds I think to the "sorting" that Connell points out in Roberts' book. So not everything must be affirmed as true in a work that is ironical as a whole, but nevertheless such a work can contain sober affirmations and arguments at many points.

I take it that Philosophical Fragments is similar in some ways to my imagined talk. The distinction it draws between Socratic and Christian modes of thought, and many of the points made about the nature of the Christian "hypothesis" are, or should be, well-known to any reader in Christendom. It is the kind of thing one would learn in Sunday School or Confirmation Class, if such classes did their proper job. I think one of the problems of reading Philosophical Fragments is that these truths and distinctions that Kierkegaard saw as so obvious seem anything but obvious to many today. This makes it hard for us to see the irony, just as a professor who had actually forgotten there were students might miss the irony of my imaginary talk. But of course to present such basic truths in the form of an original "hypothesis" is to present them in the form of a pervasive irony. I discuss the nature and function of this ironical form in numerous places in my book, particularly in my discussions of those passages where Johannes Climacus, perhaps not trusting his reader to get the point, makes the irony a bit transparent. I refer here particularly to the dialogues with the "interlocutor" that tend to occur at the end of the chapters. But I take it to be obvious that this overall irony does not entail that none of the claims and distinctions made in the book are sound, but in fact only works because many of them are sound, and are understood as such by the readers.

I should like to go on at this point and link this point to Kierkegaard's own discussion of irony in The Concept of Irony. I believe that his criticisms of the absolute negativity of romantic irony apply with some force to some of the post-modern purveyors of irony, including those that read Kierkegaard ironically and wish to enroll him in their brigade. Sylvia Walsh argues this effectively in an unpublished manuscript Living Poetically, a book that I hope will soon appear. However, because of time and my own lack of time to go back and reread The

Concept of Irony so as to do the job properly, I will merely close with one quotation from that work:

Irony as a controlled element manifests itself in its truth precisely by teaching how to actualize actuality, by placing the appropriate emphasis on actuality. In no way can this be interpreted as wanting to deify actuality . . . or as denying that there is, or at least that there ought to be, a longing in every human being for something higher and more perfect. But this longing must not hollow out actuality; on the contrary, life's content must become a genuine and meaningful element in the higher actuality whose fullness the soul craves (p. 328).

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RESPONSE TO CONNELL: EVANS AND ROBERTS ON PHILOSOPHICAL FRAGMENTS

I thank Professor Connell for a nuanced and insightful reading of Evans' and my books. I shall respond to a selection of his interesting points.

Let me begin with his comments about the concept of *grammar* as it appears in my book. He finds in the concept of grammar several contrasts. To give the grammar of a concept differs from doing Metaphysics (3), and for this reason I am in worse shape than Evans, the avowed metaphysician, because I, like him, am committed to the idea that Christian faith has an essence (15). How can I think that Christian faith has an essence, and at the same time think that to give an account of faith is only to make remarks about how some people happen to talk? Connell quotes Evans as suggesting that in the mouth of Nielsen, anyway, to give the grammar of the concepts of *necessary* and *coming to exist* is only "to make some inoffensive remarks about the way we talk" (5). "Reference to how we talk, rather than to how things are, seems implied in the term 'grammar'" (5). Giving the grammar of faith is a particularly appropriate activity for an outsider to the faith, like Climacus. To regard Johannes Climacus as writing a grammar of faith is to "underline Climacus' descriptive rather than creative or normative agenda" (3).

We must remember that Wittgenstein said that "*Essence is expressed by grammar*" (PI 371, his italics), and "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)" (PI 373). Wittgenstein did not think that how we talk about things (how we talk about understanding things, or how we talk about people being happy rather than sad, or how we talk about numbers, or necessity and coming into existence) is just a matter of sheer, cultural accident, and that however we do talk about things, we might have talked about them in radically and arbitrarily different ways. He distinguishes between surface grammar, which is the patterns in which words are related to one another in sentences (say, the fact that the sentence "I understood Kant's first Critique" has the same subject/transitive verb/object structure as "I cranked the ice cream maker"), and deep grammar, which is the patterns of use of words as they interact with our activities and attitudes--what we *do* with the words, beyond the mere uttering or writing of them, in prosecuting our larger life. When we see what we do with words in this deeper sense, we see the essences of things, we see what kinds of things they are--things like

understanding, or necessity and coming into existence, or faith. Wittgenstein did not think that the remarks he made about the concept of understanding were valid only for university people, or only German speakers, or only western Europeans. Correct grammatical remarks about understanding tell us the essence of understanding; they tell us what kind of thing understanding is. Metaphysics is to be contrasted with *this* kind of giving the essence in that metaphysics is a matter of trying to say what the essence of understanding or coming into existence is, but doing so *under the influence of the misleading analogies suggested by the surface grammar of our language*. Certainly, the essence of understanding, or of coming into existence, as displayed in depth-grammatical remarks about what we do with the respective words, is not something completely independent of human life and practices, nor must it be something that cannot be imagined to be different than it is. Indeed, since the understanding in question is *human* understanding, one might wonder what it would *be* for its essence to be independent of human life and practices.

Obviously, giving the grammar of coming into existence, or understanding, differs significantly from giving the grammar of faith. The former concepts are ones to which human communities are more or less naturally forced, just in virtue of human nature and the kind of world we live in. By contrast, the kind of faith of which Johannes Climacus gives us the depth grammar belongs to a particular historical community that differs in deep ways from other moral and religious outlooks, some of which might use the word 'faith' to describe a central virtue. That faith is not universally instantiated among human beings, and does not arise interculturally and naturally, would seem to be one of Climacus's assumptions. But this should not prevent us from thinking that there is such a thing as faith, that it is distinguishable from what is not faith, and that we can talk coherently about it and distinguish it from what is not faith--for example, from Socratic discipleship. I suspect some special freight in Connell's comment that 'a commitment to the whole idea of essences' (15) is required of me, but if this just means that faith exists in the Christian tradition and has certain properties that are reflected in the way we talk about it, then I certainly am committed to the whole idea of essences, and so is Wittgenstein. Connell says that essences have to be "objective," and I take it that the concept of faith is

objective in two ways: first, it is a stable presence in the tradition, not just made up by one believer or another, and second, it was invented by God (or so think adherents of the tradition to which the virtue of faith belongs).

To transpose the remark that Connell quotes from Evans, must we say that to give the grammar of faith is only "to make some inoffensive remarks about the way we talk" about faith? I don't think so. Wittgenstein's remark that essence is expressed by grammar suggests there is something not quite right about the distinction between object-language and meta-language. To talk about how we talk about faith may, in the mouths of some, be a powerful way to talk about *faith*. And to talk about faith in this way--in a way that carefully delineates the boundaries of the concept, so as to exclude what some people, like Schleiermacher and Bultmann and Cobb, call faith--is not at all to do something trivial or blandly inoffensive. Kierkegaard explores the grammar of faith not just in Philosophical Fragments, but also in Fear and Trembling and elsewhere. He explores the grammar of agape in Works of Love, and in that book fairly frequently even refers directly to "what we say" in connection with love. In these cases, *by* talking about the concepts of faith and love he is talking about faith and love, and doing so in a way that is very far from innocuous. For this reason, I don't think that exploring the grammar of faith is more appropriate for an outsider to faith than for an insider. I admit, of course, that there is a way of talking about how we talk about faith and love (or how the NT talks about these) that is dry and boring and trivializing, and seems *not* to be a way of talking about faith and love. And this way of discoursing does make one sound very much like an outsider--in the way that scholars of a culture sound like nonparticipants in that culture. There may also be a middle ground, where one talks about faith, somewhat as an outsider, but does so in such a way as to communicate the momentousness and urgency of faith. This is no doubt where Climacus stands. But my point is that any of these three stances may be a case of exploring the grammar of faith.

My last point about the grammar of a concept is that it is not "descriptive" in a sense that excludes a "normative agenda" any more than the grammar of English is. English grammar, as it is described by grammarians, is also normative for the formation of future English sentences. And the grammar of faith that Johannes Climacus invites us to discover through a reading of Philosophical Fragments is likewise normative. The book is an indirectly communicated warning against certain

mistakes: e.g. discoursing about (and thus relating to) Jesus Christ as though he is a Socratic teacher; or supposing that faith will emerge as a result of more careful or complete or convincing historical scholarship. The concept of a norm differs from the concept of a description, but grammatical description is often intended and used normatively.

I agree with Connell's suggestion that my reading of Fragments is no less charitable than Evans's. It may seem so on the surface, since I am harder on his arguments, and do not bend over backwards to find an interpretation according to which his arguments are sound. But if you take seriously the possibility that the arguments are not where the real work of the book is being done, and if you suppose, as I do, that you get to the real work of the book through being ruthless towards the arguments, then my reading of Fragments is perhaps even *more* charitable than Evans's, since I never disagree with Climacus, but Evans does disagree with him at certain points.

A couple of times Connell seems to exaggerate the difference between Evans's reading of Fragments and mine. Speaking of my treatment of a couple of arguments at the beginning of Chapter III, he says that I parody the first premiss of one of them to show its absurdity, and then accuse the second argument of the fallacy of Affirming the Consequent (10-11). He leaves the exposition of my account at that, and then says,

In contrast to Roberts' construal of Climacus' claims as bad deductive arguments, Evans finds in the same passages welcomed suggestions about the nature of reason.(11)

This is misleading, however, because it obscures the contrast that I stress (following Climacus's lead) between the form and the content of Fragments, and ignores the fact that I too find "welcomed suggestions about the nature of reason" hidden behind the outrageous form of Climacus's arguments:

The serious import of this sentence [namely, that the highest pitch of every passion is to will its own downfall] is that the highest pitch of passionate thinking about how to live one's life results in a skepticism about the norms of self-understanding proposed by common sense. But formally Climacus is here presenting it as a general principle from which to deduce something about the absolute paradox, and as such it is outrageous. (Faith, Reason, and History, p. 64)

A basic difference between Evans's reading of Fragments and mine is that he takes the mock-Hegelian deduction of Christianity from the simple hypothesis of a nonSocratic teacher as ending with Chapter I, whereas I take the deduction to continue right through Chapters II and III. The lousy arguments at the beginning of Chapter III are part of a rickety caricature of a Hegelian logical contraption by which the formal business of Chapter III is prosecuted: to deduce that the Teacher of the hypothesis is, as it were, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (I Cor.1.23), and yet that the human heart and mind yearn unconsciously for this Teacher, who is such as no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. It is because the arguments are part of this contraption that they need not be taken very seriously *as arguments*. Evans does not read Chapter III as part of the hilarious deduction, but please note that he too does not think the arguments are very good as arguments, and downplays them to get to the points that he quite justifiably finds in the text. I submit that the points he finds in it are not very different from the ones I find in it. Speaking in very general terms, the difference between our two books lies far less in what we take the text ultimately to mean, than in the methods by which we find those meanings in the text.

Connell notes that I am pretty hard on the sense data theory that appears to be operating at the surface level of the Interlude. I uncover "implausibility after implausibility" (11), and conclude, ever so charitably (I would point out), that we should not assume that Climacus here means to be taken seriously as an arguer. In general, my conclusion is that Climacus means to stress that we cannot get certainty in our historical judgments by grounding them either in some kind of unmediated experience or in some necessity that supposedly resides in the realm of the historical. Instead, our historical judgments are grounded in a kind of subjectivity, in the kind of life we live, in our moral and spiritual commitments, and in the web of our other beliefs, many of which are themselves historical. This does not stand "in contrast," as Connell suggests (12), to Evans's policy of salvaging "the essential insight from its unattractive packaging in sense data terminology." For Climacus's essential insight, according to Evans, is "that subjective factors always play a role in resolving the uncertainty that pervades human judgment." (12f) Again, the difference between Evans and me is not so much what we take the final force of Fragments to be, but how we derive that final force from the book. I do it by subjecting the surface arguments of the text to ruthlessly literal logic-chopping scrutiny and finding my way through

the maze of seeming confusion to the luminescent insights that Climacus thus readies us for, yet often without ever directly or precisely expressing them himself. Evans, by contrast, by-passes the logic-chopping as too petty and literal-minded, and reinterprets Climacus's arguments as not really arguments, or as not saying what he really meant. On the other hand, the insights that Evans uncovers with this gentle method are usually very similar to the ones that I achieve with all the rude violence of numbered propositions.

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