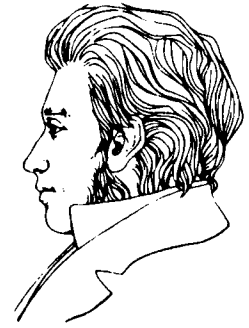


Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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NEWS YOU SHOULD NOTE

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY, ST. OLAF COLLEGE, NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA, JUNE 7-11, 1997

We invite papers which can be read in approximately 20 minutes on the following topics:

1. Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety
2. Kierkegaard's philosophical anthropology

Anyone interested in submitting a paper should telephone Gordon Marino as soon as possible at 507-646-3846 or reach him by e-mail at marino@stolaf.edu.

We are also interested in holding a session in which scholars who have recently finished their dissertations could briefly discuss their work. Anyone who fits into this category who would like to make a presentation should also contact Dr. Marino as soon as possible.

Registration information and a preliminary program regarding the conference will be available in March. This conference is open to anyone with interest in Kierkegaard.

NEWS FROM THE HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY

DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

Information was included in the November 1995 issue of the Newsletter concerning the nature and purpose of the collection. A new brochure is now available upon request.

PROGRAMS

The Summer Scholars Fellowship Program brought 14 scholars to the Library between June 1 and November 1 of this past summer and fall. Those participating were: Daniel Palmer, Brian Soderquist, David Marcinkowski, Tricia Sadd, Paul Muench, and Greg Walters from the United States; Tatyana Schitzova from Belarus; Heiko Schulz from Germany; Miriam Eytan from Israel; Merigala Gabriel from India; Danilo Guzman from Colombia; Hee-Weon Yeon from Korea; Begonya Sàez Tajafuerce from Catalunya, Spain; and John Lippitt and Patrick Sheil from England. Gordon Marino conducted seminars and discussions with scholars as a group and also offered individual mentoring and guidance.

If you are interested in applying for this Program in 1997, please contact Gordon Marino as soon as possible. The deadline for application is March 1 again this year.

SPECIAL EVENT

The Dedication of the New Quarters of the Howard V. and Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library took place on May 23, 1996. A meeting of the Friends of the Kierkegaard Library was held in the morning followed by a luncheon for invited guests attended by 130 people. Greetings were offered by The Honorable K.E. Tygesen, Ambassador from Denmark to the United States; Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Director, Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at Copenhagen University; Bruce Kirmmse; Professor of History, Connecticut College; and Sergia Nasby Hay, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Philosophy, Columbia University.

The dedication ceremony itself took place at 2:00 p.m. and was attended by 100 people. After a blessing was offered by Pastor Bruce Benson, College Pastor, a Bible selection was read by Howard Hong followed by a reading from Kierkegaard's Writings given by Andrew Burgess. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn received an honorary doctoral degree from St. Olaf College conferred by Mark Edwards, Jr., President of St. Olaf College, together with Howard Hong, Gordon Marino, and John Poling. In his remarks Rev. Cappelørn included acknowledged the contributions of Howard and Edna Hong to the study of Kierkegaard. The Dedication closed with the singing of the Doxology led by Ingela Eilert, member of the St.

Olaf Class of '97 and the St. Olaf Choir. A reception followed in the Special Collections Faculty and Visitors Lounge.

The Library actually moved to its current new location in 1992. The dedication events capped the transition period which brought the collection from the 6th floor of Holland Hall to its current permanent location in the Special Collections area of the Rolvaag Memorial Library Building at St. Olaf College.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Gifts to the Library were received from Gordon Marino, Julia Watkin, Tatyana Schitzova, Miriam Eytan, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Bruce Kirmmse, Zdenek Zaczal, Begonya Sáez Tajafuerce, Marilyn Piety, and András Nagy. Regular acquisition of new titles included both books and periodical articles as well as language tapes. Searching the World Wide Web has become another source of bibliography. Antiquarian dealers and publisher catalogs are also increasingly available on the Internet.

We welcome bibliographic recommendations and suggestions of materials we lack from anyone with information. Copies of books and articles are received gratefully.

THE CATALOG

New titles are added regularly to our catalog by Susanne Nevin. A microfiche edition of the catalog of the Hong Kierkegaard Library is available upon request for \$10 with both author/title and subject indexes provided. Access continues through our on-line catalog via PALS, available on the Internet. All titles are also included in the OCLC international data base.

INTERNET INFORMATION

The Library continues to sponsor a Kierkegaard listserv via the Internet. To subscribe, type "subscribe" to kierkegaard-request@stolaf.edu. For additional information on the list and its background, please see Charles Creegan's article in the November 1995 issue of the Newsletter. Our thanks to all those contributing to the discussion on the list.

The Library has a page on the World Wide Web found through the St. Olaf homepage. There are other Kierkegaard sites on the WWW as well which are helpful.

Cynthia Wales Lund

KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS NEWS

Scheduled for Spring 1997 publications by Princeton University Press: Kierkegaard's Writings, XVIII, Without Authority; The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air, Two Ethical-Religious Essays; Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays; An Upbuilding Discourse; and Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays. The present schedule calls for the final text volume of the edition on May 5, 1998.

Howard V. Hong

ADDITIONAL NEWS NOTES

The MacLaurin Institute at the University of Minnesota inaugurated the first annual Holmer Lecture, entitled "Making Sense of Life and Learning," given by Dr. Paul L. Holmer, formerly Noah Porter Professor of Philosophy at Yale Divinity School, for whom the series is named. The aim of the lectureship is "to present Christian perspectives in the university world." For information on the Holmer Lecture series, an audio tape of Dr. Holmer's address, or the Institute, write to the MacLaurin Institute, 331 17th Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55414, USA. (E-mail: monam001@maroon.tc.umn.edu)

The editors would like to acknowledge the publication of (and recommend) A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion (Basil Blackwell 1997), edited by Charles Taliaferro and Philip Quinn. This is a masterful collection of 78 original essays covering the central topics of the field.

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY

Even as you read, the typesetting or the reading of the galleys by the authors of International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript is progressing. Stetson University continues its support for the series, and has increased it considerably. Think only good thoughts about the University's support of scholarship, even the efforts of professors at other institutions.

Any outstanding promises for papers for International Kierkegaard Commentary: Early Polemical Writings should be sent asap. We expect to mail the papers in hand as soon as the semester is over. If you have discussed a paper with the editor but have not sent it, call or write immediately and give us an update of your plans.

Because there were, I understand, seventeen proposals submitted for the recent program on Works of Love for the recent session of the AAR, I have decided to move it up in the schedule. Those articles will be due in January, 1998.

Persons who sent proposals for that program are invited to forward it on to the editor of International Kierkegaard Commentary at this time. Decisions about inclusion in the volume are based on the recommendation of the advisory board after they review the collection of complete articles.

The sequence of publication of the next volumes of International Kierkegaard Commentary as it now stands is

Concluding Unscientific Postscript, in press
Early Polemical Writings, articles due NOW
Works of Love, articles due 1 January, 1998

Persons interested in submitting articles for these volumes should write the editor and request a current set of sigla and conventions. (Robert L. Perkins, Editor, International Kierkegaard Commentary, Stetson University, Philosophy Department, campus Box 8250, DeLand, FL 32720-3756; FAX: 904 822-8825; e-mail: Perkins@suvax1.stetson.edu)

REVIEWS

Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries; Collected, edited, and annotated by Bruce H. Kirmmse and Virginia R. Laursen; Translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse and Virginia R. Laursen (Princeton University Press, \$35, 358 pp. Copyright Commonweal, 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038. Reviewed by Gordon Marino.

Though he would have considered such a description a category mistake, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard was a spiritual Mozart of sorts. From 1841 until his death in 1855, Kierkegaard composed an almost preternaturally large *œuvre* of lyrical work on matters of life and death. Though the legacy of Kierkegaard's thought is currently being hotly contested, I would argue that many, if not all, of his writings are in one way or another addressed to the questions, What does it mean to have faith in God? What does it mean to follow Christ? For anyone blessed with nagging concerns about such matters, I heartily recommend Kierkegaard as a conversation partner.

Kierkegaard was a polemicist. In the course of his short

life, he publicly attacked both the liberal press and the Danish State Church. He was neither widely read nor widely appreciated by his countrymen, and yet toward the end of his life the Danes knew that Kierkegaard had achieved at least one form of immortality. Thus, in the years immediately following Kierkegaard's death, Steen Johansen had the good sense to collect verbal snapshots and impressions from anyone and everyone who knew Kierkegaard personally. These reminiscences were compiled and published as *Erindringer Om Søren Kierkegaard (Recollections of Søren Kierkegaard)*. Bruce Kirmmse, author of the highly acclaimed *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Indiana, 1990), has incorporated all of the material from Johansen's book into his own *Encounters with Kierkegaard*. Amazingly enough,

however, Kirmmse has also unearthed a cornucopia of previously unpublished material. The result is a compilation of all known contemporary biographical accounts of Kierkegaard.

The impressions that comprise this supremely well-organized book come from people who saw Kierkegaard from every conceivable angle. There are, for instance, recollections from Kierkegaard's elementary school classmates, his professors, people who in their childhood remembered accompanying their father on a walk with Kierkegaard. There are accounts from Kierkegaard's typesetters, diary entries from important Danish intellectuals such as George Brandes, short tracts from his brother and adversary, Bishop Peter Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's battles with the powers-that-be made him a universally recognized and frequently derided figure in the streets of Copenhagen. Kirmmse's collection contains illuminating reflections from Kierkegaard's antagonists, most of whom expressed a remarkable degree of ambivalence toward their late nemesis.

For scholars, *Encounters* will prove a rich resource for contextualizing Kierkegaard's thought. That recondite interest aside, many of the entries in this book are simply highly entertaining. Take for one instance the recollections of Kierkegaard's secretary, Israel Levin. Levin, who copied thousands of Kierkegaard's pages, remembers:

On the whole, he lived in fantasies and empty reflections in which he seized upon each thing, transformed it in every possible way, looked at it from all sides, and then reflected on it...Thus he lived for eight days with the sole purpose of thinking and feeling like a miser...Once he confessed that he had an enormous desire to carry out an actual theft, and then to live with his bad conscience and in fear of discovery....His imagination was so lively that it was as if he saw images right before his eyes. It was as though he lived in a spirit world, and with a strange impropriety and eccentricity he could evoke the most frightful things with an explicitness that was terrifying.

The most touching pages in this book come from an interview with Regine Olsen, Kierkegaard's ex-fiancée. When Kierkegaard was twenty-four, he fell in love with the fourteen-year-old Regine. About a year later, they became engaged. Almost immediately, Kierkegaard realized he had made a mistake. There are two explanations offered for Kierkegaard's decision to break off the engagement, a decision which hardly enhanced his reputation in Copenhagen society. According to one explanation, he did not want to bring Regine into a family as rife with melancholia as his own. According to the other, Kierkegaard felt that he could not obey his calling as a religious author and be a husband at the same time.

Kierkegaard's *Journals* suggest that his decision was

overdetermined by both motives and perhaps others as well. In order to make the break with Regine, he developed an elaborate plan to enable Regine to separate from him. Not fooling anyone, Kierkegaard gradually took on the *persona* of a Lothario. Fearful that his daughter would literally die of heartbreak, Regine's father, whom Kierkegaard held in high esteem, came to Kierkegaard and pleaded with him to relent. But Kierkegaard was as intent upon sacrificing Regine as Abraham was on sacrificing Isaac. In 1841 Regine returned her ring. No matter, Kierkegaard was forever wedded to her.

A few years after the break, Regine married Fritz Schlegel. Over the years Kierkegaard continued to send Regine his books, a number of which were replete with not-so-oblique references to her and their relationship. In 1849 Kierkegaard wrote to Regine's husband to inquire as to whether or not he would object to Kierkegaard pursuing a Platonic relationship with her. Though by no means hostile to Kierkegaard, Schlegel had no desire for an intellectual *ménage à trois* with Søren Kierkegaard. After Kierkegaard's death, Fru Schlegel was frequently asked what it was like to have been Søren Kierkegaard's fiancée. For some forty years, she steadfastly refused to respond to such inquiries. However, after her husband died in 1896, the now-septuagenarian Regine saw it as her responsibility to share her impressions of the man who faithfully vowed to take her into history. Kirmmse has collected Regine's thoughts on what must be reckoned one of the great loves of literary history. Regine's memoirs resonate with tenderness. Four decades after Kierkegaard's death, she fondly recalls a letter from Kierkegaard in which he wrote, "You see, Regine, in eternity there is no marriage; there, both Schlegel and I will happily be there with you."

Kierkegaard argued that the individual who does not live in his ideas does not understand them. For Kierkegaard, consistently failing to practice what you preach amounts to failing to understand what you are preaching. In this sense, Kierkegaard himself invites us to ask about Kierkegaard the person. Bruce Kirmmse's remarkable book, which he accurately describes as a "do-it-yourself biography," sheds some light on a writer who was--if anyone ever was--being spoken through. Superbly annotated and a sheer delight to read, *Encounters* is one of the most important books on Kierkegaard to come out in years.

David J. Gouwens: *Kierkegaard as a Religious Thinker*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 248 pp. Reviewed by Helko Schulz.

Gouwens' publication of *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of the Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989) was well received among Kierkegaard scholars. In his new book he sheds some fresh light on the religious implications of Kierkegaard's thought, and he does so in a comprehensive, well-informed and clearly written way. Since the book touches upon almost every aspect of his thought, it should be most welcome for Kierkegaard beginners; however, it also has much to offer to the "advanced" scholar. A study treating Kierkegaard as a religious thinker, which incorporated both contemporary issues of theology/religious philosophy and central themes of the Kierkegaard scholarship, has long been missing.

Gouwens understands Kierkegaard as a religious thinker in the sense that Kierkegaard's "thought is *about* religion and at the same time is itself religious" (p. 3). Of course, this implies that religion is seen as an (or even *the* most) important theme of his writings. As far as I understand Gouwens, the addition of "is itself religious" refers to the aim and literary form of Kierkegaard's style of writing. Gouwens notes that Kierkegaard "seeks to evoke religious dispositions in his readers," and he does so "within a literary form that offers to an interested reader a 'training' in religious ways of thinking and living" (p. 3). Kierkegaard's basic theological intention of clarifying central religious concepts (God, sin, redemption etc.) is thus connected with the pragmatic task of presenting the Christian world-view as a "living option," to which the reader can and should respond. Furthermore, both aims are reflected in the formal or methodical interest of developing appropriate stylistical or literary means in order to realize the first intention together with the second. With respect to Kierkegaard's overall project, Gouwens suggests a strong affinity with "Wittgenstein's notion of 'theology of grammar'" (p. 19). Thus, his main intention is to investigate "the works of Kierkegaard . . . as extended grammatical exercises, attempts to represent ethico-religious and Christian concepts in an imaginative and fulsome manner" (p. 24).

While Gouwens, in the introduction of his book (pp. 1-26), defends his own "Christian reading" of Kierkegaard against alternatives (among others the biographical, philosophical and the literary approach), he meticulously follows Kierkegaard's theological route throughout the rest of his study. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 27-121) form a long introduction in which Gouwens tries to reconstruct Kierkegaard's "style" of subjective thinking as an

alternative and remedy to what he diagnosed as the "reflective disease" of his age (ch. 1). Subsequently Gouwens explores the dogmatical, anthropological and psychological context of this diagnosis (with a special emphasis on the concept of the self) (ch. 2). Finally he discusses the upbuilding and curative role that Kierkegaard includes in his account of becoming religious (ch. 3). The second part (ch. 4-6: pp. 122-208) concentrates on the dialectic of "becoming Christian": Special attention is given to Kierkegaard's (dispositional) concept of faith (ch. 4), hope (ch. 5) and love (ch.6) and to their christological context in which these concepts are embedded. The final chapter (pp. 209-232) defends Kierkegaard against the common objection that his religious thought in general and his view of Christian virtues in particular, is "privatistic and asocial" (p. 26). On this score, Gouwens shows argues that the (dispositional) language of faith, hope, and love is altered in Kierkegaard's later writings as a result of an increasing awareness of the inevitable public role of Christian discipleship.

In addition to those ideas, which are more or less familiar to Kierkegaard-scholars, Gouwens offers a number of suggestions which demonstrate his own hermeneutical potential and as such shape the originality and particular profile of the book. A few of them deserve to be mentioned separately:

(1) Chapter 2 on Kierkegaard's "anthropological reflection" (pp. 55-92) contains lengthy methodological remarks about the meaning, function and presuppositions of psychology, its relation to dogmatics and the role of apologetics. Interestingly enough, Gouwens finds--with regard to the latter--a place for what he calls "tempered apologetics" (p. 70) in Kierkegaard's authorship. This is not to say that Kierkegaard wishes to provide a rational defense of Christianity in terms of an independent natural theology or a faith-neutral ontology of the human self as the conceptual entry point for Christian interests; rather, he works "from the dogmatic presuppositions to their implications for an understanding of human existence" (p. 73). Thus, he presents certain psychological concepts (e.g., anxiety) and their respective problems while at the same time "*proposing* Christianity as a solution" (p. 74, my emphasis) to those problems and/or a *possible* explanation of their deeper meaning (e.g., sin as an explanation of the origin, meaning, and function of human anxiety). Moreover, since for Kierkegaard theological doctrines have "a status similar to that of

grammatical rules implicit in discourse" (p. 73, note), he seems--despite some important differences--to be "much closer to Barth than to theologians like Schleiermacher and Tillich" (p. 71, note). And since, finally, his methodology combines "Christian self-description with appeals to pre-religious and non-religious life-attitudes" (p. 73, note; see also pp. 141f), his tempered apologetics also shares some characteristics with Wittgensteinian fideism.

(2) As to the "material" considerations of part one of the book, two aspects of Gouwens' reading deserve special attention. First, he places particular emphasis on the significance of emotions (e.g., joy, sorrow) and moods (e.g., irony, anxiety, melancholy, despair) for Kierkegaard's picture of personal unity and the human self. Both are seen as "concern-based construals" (p. 78): they reflect certain cares and interests, while at the same time possessing a cognitive dimension "related to how one 'construes' or imagines circumstances" (ibid.). What distinguishes emotions and moods is that the latter are "unanchored, episodic, and troubling" (p. 79), and thus, for Kierkegaard, indicate that life is a dynamic, tension-ridden process implying a continuous struggle for stability and identity over time. Given these presuppositions, Gouwens carefully analyzes the relation of moods and emotions to the concept of a life-stage, by means of which Kierkegaard demonstrates the possibility moving "from the misery of moods, through despair, to the consistency of emotions as long-term belief-oriented construals of one's life" (p. 85).

Gouwens' emphasis on the significance of emotions leads to the second consideration, namely that emotions are *dispositions*, and as such "*longterm ... capacities*" (p. 95; my emphasis). This is of particular interest, since Gouwens--here and later in his analysis of the specific Christian virtues: faith, hope and love--wants to elucidate Kierkegaard's concept of becoming rather than being religious (p. 95). Accordingly he subordinates the language of a momentous, isolated "leap of faith" (see p. 102) in favor of a dispositional interpretation of religiousness, which preserves its essential continuities with the aesthetical and ethical sphere. Whereas emotions play a prominent role for the understanding of the first transition (becoming ethical), virtues--such as "patience, humility, perseverance, and courage" (p. 95)--are crucial for the analysis of the second (becoming religious). According to the author "Kierkegaard stands ... in the broad tradition of ethics as virtue, the development of ongoing intentions, dispositions, judgments, and motivations that characterize a person over time" (p. 94). Gouwens also realizes that the power of virtue is dismantled with the move from Religiousness A to B; yet, Kierkegaard's "concern with such breaches

presupposes the continuities that shape ethico-religious existence, the continuities of the virtues" (p. 108); although "Religiousness A is not specifically Christian, it continues into the Christian faith" (p. 110).

(3) Gouwens' account is particularly useful for the reader seeking a rich discussion of the relation of Kierkegaard's religious thought to the teaching of other contemporary and non-contemporary theologians. Such a reader will pay special attention to the second and third part of the book (ch. 4-7) which, among other things, contain pertinent dogmatical observations and suggestions. For instance: the person of Christ "presented in Kierkegaard's thought is that of orthodox Nicene and Chalcedonian definitions" (p. 142). Accordingly Christ's soteriological significance is not--as, e.g., in Schleiermacher and Bultmann--part of a subjective or "functional Christology" (p. 144) that claims human experience to be the necessary and sufficient condition for valid assertions about his person ("Christ saves us, therefore he is divine"). On the contrary, Kierkegaard's "orthodox Christology begins with Christ's identity as Redeemer and Pattern: Christ is divine and therefore able to save us ... Christology precedes soteriology" (pp. 144f). However, Kierkegaard would not reject the theological objectivism of the later Barth which leaves no room for the experiential moment of salvation, for Kierkegaard's "understanding of Christ and salvation is concerned with how we 'use the picture' of the Christian story (p. 150, my emphasis). Finally, Gouwens discusses basic parallels and differences between Kierkegaard's social ethics in his later years and Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms (see pp. 212; 230f). For Kierkegaard, Luther's division "is put to the service not of separation of the religious and public realms, but to the service of religious critique of the social work" (p. 230). Since Gouwens exhibits an admirable knowledge of both traditional and modern theology, it is hardly surprising that the "theological" passages of his study often seem more convincingly worked out than the "philosophical" passages, which either try to provide pertinent conceptual clarifications or even to apply a "foreign" philosophical terminology or theoretical framework in order to elucidate aspects and difficulties in Kierkegaard's thought.

There are occasional tensions in Gouwens' attempt to clarify Kierkegaard's thought: (e.g., "Kierkegaard envisioned his task to be different from that of most theology" (p. 12) / Kierkegaard is best seen as "a theologian in the classical, catholic, and orthodox sense" (p. 22); Kierkegaard speaks of emotion as a mental occurrence (p. 78) / as a disposition (p. 95). Furthermore, Gouwens makes some debatable claims, for example: Religiousness A is a kind of "natural' religiosity" (p. 83);

Kierkegaard's thought on predestination seems "curiously undialectical" (p. 138); it is not until the later authorship that "the sufferings of misfortune *can* have ethicoreligious significance" (p. 176) etc.). However, it is Gouwens' *virtue-oriented or dispositional* account of Kierkegaard's theory of ethics and religion that strikes me as most problematic. The notion of virtue (and the intricacies of both its conceptual elements and its historical roots in Plato, Aristotle and the catholic thought of the middle-ages) is highly problematic in itself--let alone when being used as a hermeneutical tool for understanding Kierkegaard who (not accidentally) hardly ever draws on the concept. Moreover, the dispositional element of virtue cannot (at least traditionally) be isolated from the notion of habit; thus, it can easily give rise to additional difficulties and misunderstandings when being used to explain what it means to be (or to become) religious. This problem becomes acute when trying to grasp Kierkegaard's understanding of the relation between state (or continuity) and transition (leap.)

These few questions and critical remarks notwithstanding, Gouwens' book can be highly recommended as a whole: It is, without doubt, a fine piece of work, presenting a fresh, original and at times provocative perspective on major aspects of the religious dimension of Kierkegaard's thought.

Martin J. Matustik and Merold Westphal, eds., *Kierkegaard In Post/Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 304 pp. Reviewed by Mark Dooley.

Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity is comprised of fifteen essays, all of which endeavor to persuade the reader that Kierkegaard can help us understand and resolve many of the tenuous issues which plague late twentieth century thought. It undertakes to demonstrate how influential Kierkegaard has been in such varied philosophical trends as feminism, critical theory, deconstruction, and hermeneutics. Furthermore, we are treated to a selection of radical rereadings of Kierkegaard's relationship to his more like bedfellows, Buber, Heidegger, Levinas and Sartre.

The aim of such an enterprise, according to Westphal and Matustik, is to ensure that Kierkegaard is given the same hearing in the contemporary *milieu* as Nietzsche has received of late. Both thinkers, they maintain, have been celebrated in "a continuous flow of scholarly studies," but if one turns from "exegetical and interpretative scholarship to current philosophical debates, Nietzsche seems to be a resource drawn upon more easily and more frequently than Kierkegaard" (vii).

There are four possible reasons for this seeming neglect according to the editors: 1) Kierkegaard is generally thought of as being the progenitor of existentialism, a movement which is no longer fashionable except amongst freshmen, who soon realize the error of their ways and take up a more sophisticated creed, either by becoming devotees of our more anti-humanist luminaries, or by just simply denouncing Continental thought altogether by declaring it redundant; ii) Kierkegaard is a theologian (albeit one with a radical streak), and not a philosopher. According to this view, "a philosopher must either be secular or abstract from his or her religious identity" if 'good' philosophy is to be practiced. This is a position which has been adopted by one of Kierkegaard's most disloyal sons, Heidegger. The same could be said for people like Ricoeur and Putnam, both of whom are devout in their religious convictions, but who still hold firm to the belief that it is not the job of philosophers to contravene the laws of "reason" by turning to dogmatics for quick solutions; iii) Kierkegaard, by prioritizing faith over reason or understanding, has been considered by

some as an "irrationalist"; iv) this, I believe, is the main contention which this text strives to counter--the assumption that Kierkegaard presents as an alternative to herd-society, a form of individualism which is anti-social and apolitical. This apparently abiding misinterpretation, which both editors have in their own way successfully challenged,¹ preoccupies most of the essays contained in this volume. Indeed, to present Kierkegaard as a viable alternative to many of the in vogue political and ethical paradigms which are vying for proponents just now, has become a fundamental concern for all those, including myself,² who genuinely believe that Kierkegaard's authorship does contain a political dimension worthy of scholarly appraisal. Nietzsche, it seems, has been cleared of these four charges; the time has now come to extirpate the traditional bias which has militated against his Danish contemporary becoming a serious partner in late twentieth century philosophical dialogue.

There have of course been volumes in the past which purported to undertake similar aims; I am reminded immediately of the *Kierkegaard and Postmodernism* series, edited by Mark C. Taylor. What distinguishes *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity* from these texts, however is that it attempts to situate Kierkegaard somewhere on the margins between modernity and postmodernity (hence the '/' in 'Post/Modernity'), and not just within the broad parameters of Postmodernism (the movement which took root in the sixties in France, the exponents of which include Barthes, Lyotard and Baudrillard). Westphal, being a shrewd and careful reader of both Hegel and Kierkegaard, is someone who has judiciously sought to show how such a Kierkegaardian line can be walked while attempting to bring the disciples of modernism, and the latter day saints of postmodernism, into comprehensive negotiation. His role as moderator in the debate between John Caputo and James Marsh in *Modernity and its Discontents*³ illustrates how deftly this can be undertaken. Matustik also sees in Kierkegaard a point of intersection between the opposed political camps of communitarianism and liberalism, or as he argues in his essay in this volume, between Habermasian Critical Theory and Derridean Deconstruction. For this commentator, Kierkegaard's work provides the perfect antidote to the excesses of the knights of enlightened reason and the prophets of extremity. Kierkegaard, he believes, is more than simply a hangover of the Enlightenment, or a Parisian pyrotechnicist; he is situated somewhere between Frankfurt and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, hoping that neither institution should seek to claim for itself the honorific title of "Centre for Truth."

Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity is, therefore, a

carefully orchestrated conversation between a panoply of major contemporary movements, all of which signal to some degree their gratitude to this multi-faceted thinker.

A complete assessment of the merits of each contribution in this text is impossible given the constraints of such a review. I propose, therefore, to evaluate the essays in general terms by ordering them thematically under three headings: Traditional Debates, Feminist Theory, and Postmodern Concerns.

TRADITIONAL DEBATES

The essays which represent "traditional" themes in this work include those which discuss issues which are by no means new to those of us who have an interest in Kierkegaard. The latter's relationship to philosophers such as Sartre, Heidegger, Buber and Wittgenstein has been much debated since comparative studies of Kierkegaard and his intellectual progeny became popular in the sixties. One might expect, therefore, that the essays which plough this familiar furrow in *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity* would provide the reader with the insights of hindsight, considering that most of the voluminous writings of the aforementioned thinkers have now been published. The essayists, which include William McBride, Patricia Huntington, Robert Perkins and Robert C. Roberts more than meet these expectations.

McBride's "Sartre's Debts to Kierkegaard: A partial Reckoning," is a piece which exhibits an enviable degree of scholarship and erudition. Taking his cue from Sartre's UNESCO paper on Kierkegaard, "L'Universel singulier," the author presents the reader with a competent assessment of this most obvious intellectual symbiosis. Rich in historical detail and (thankfully!) sparse in the more usual comparisons of *Being and Nothingness* and *The Concept of Anxiety*, McBride persuasively argues that throughout Sartre's long intellectual evolution, his one guiding companion was indeed his Danish forefather. More specifically we are treated to inspiring reflections on the nature of ethics and politics in which the author demonstrates how Sartre's political activities were not so much a reaction to the individualism of his earlier "Kierkegaardian" period, but were very much in keeping with the often neglected political dimension of Kierkegaard's *oeuvre*.

For her part Patricia Huntington offers yet another thought-provoking essay on the Heidegger-Kierkegaard relationship. What differentiates this effort from other assessments of a similar hue (I am thinking here of the exemplary work undertaken by Hubert Dreyfus and Jane Rubin) is that Huntington's Kierkegaard can hold his own against Heidegger. Being steeped in the most recent plethora of cutting-edge Kierkegaardian publications, this author proves

conclusively that Kierkegaard's self is a concrete ethical agent, while Heidegger's suffers from ontological abstraction. That said, however, I am less impressed with Huntington's final section in which she criticizes Kierkegaard for not having undertaken "an explicit genealogy of the origin of our symbolic matrices and linguistic practices" (p. 60), à la Derrida. A careful reading of *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* and the whole notion of indirection, irony, and humor, should certainly dispel any doubts that Kierkegaard is any less successful than Derrida at rooting "language and the symbolic in the actual social practices of a culture" (p. 60).

Robert Perkins' deliberation on Buber and Kierkegaard displays the type of scholarly precision that we have come to expect of this perspicacious critic. As with Westphal's concluding entry on the Levinas connection, this essay challenges Buber's critique of Kierkegaard by arguing that at a political and ethical level little separates the two authors. I am grateful to both Perkins and Westphal for taking the time to prove how our readings of Buber and Levinas can be enhanced when read from a Kierkegaardian perspective.

Robert C. Robert's "Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein" is no less impressive in its scope and range. Not content solely to draw comparisons between these two figures, Roberts attempts to convince "with a little hermeneutical help from Wittgenstein," that Kierkegaard "is a source to which character ethicists should be looking" (p. 144). Any reader who still awards merit to MacIntyre's infamous critique of Kierkegaard as an exponent of "criterionless choice" in ethical matters, will, I am sure, be persuaded to reassess the value of holding such a view after reading this well-crafted contribution.

FEMINIST THEORY

Alison Leigh Brown, Tasmin Lorraine and Wanda Warren Berry invite the reader to listen to the voice of the feminine in the works of Kierkegaard. While Brown encourages us to read "Kierkegaard's focus on re-finding an inner life through something transcendent" in terms of Irigaray's notion of "reclaimed feminine divinity" (p. 66), Lorraine argues in favor of a Kristevian reading of *Sickness unto Death*. Mark Taylor has written convincingly in his text *Altarity* of how Lacan and Kristeva can further our understanding of Kierkegaard's place in the mainstream contemporary philosophical and theological spectrum. It is not surprising, therefore, that more would be made of this in other contexts. I am convinced by much of what Lorraine has to say, providing as her essay does a genuine dialogue with a thinker whose extension of structural psychoanalysis to cultural, ethical, and political situations has proved resourceful and original.

Wanda Warren Berry, in a somewhat short yet illuminating piece, subtitled "Apologetic, Repetition, and Dialogue," should, however, take the plaudits in this category. Berry enjoins her feminist colleagues to rethink their relationship to Kierkegaard by attending once more to those issues which inspired people like Catherine Keller and Mary Daly in the early days of feminist theology. Rather than merely using him as a "springboard," Berry encourages these feminists to develop an "on-going dialogue" with Kierkegaard, believing as she does that such a course would challenge them "to be much clearer about the concept of truth which they presuppose" (p. 118). This is a provocative and stimulating essay, worthy of sincere appraisal, not only by the feminist fraternity, but by all Kierkegaardian enthusiasts.

POSTMODERN CONCERNS

Each one of the final selection of essays in this text is right at the cutting edge of contemporary research on all matters relating to Kierkegaard. Marsh, Caputo, and Matustik each make thoroughly engaging appeals for Kierkegaard to be read either as a corrective to mainstream critical theory, or as a sensible deconstructionist. My sympathies naturally lie with the convincing story of deconstruction which Caputo tirelessly tells and in the favorable way he uses Kierkegaard to tell it. But I have also learned much from the Marsh school. What should stimulate all readers of these essays is the way in which they painstakingly make Kierkegaard relevant without excuse or apology. While we in Europe seem to be constantly trying to persuade our detractors that Kierkegaard should be taken seriously as a viable alternative, those in the "American" school simply accept this as given. These contributions are proof-positive that Kierkegaard has left Copenhagen, not for Berlin, but more likely for Manhattan.

Caputo and Marsh are two thinkers who have had acute philosophical differences over the years. This is clear for all to see in their *Modernity and its Discontents* exchange. That acknowledged, however, both of these men do have a common conviction that the dispossessed and the marginalized, the victims of disaster as Caputo might say, are those whose call we should be attentive to. It is quite apparent from even a cursory glance at their contributions in this collection that they both interpret Kierkegaard as a pragmatic thinker, one whose thoughts are never far from those who labor under a heavy yoke and are in need of rest. This is surely what marks Caputo and Marsh off from both their secularizing Derridean and Habermasian colleagues. This remarkable convergence of thought is emphasized quite touchingly when Marsh states that "the only kind of God worth talking about is God as liberator, as partner

and companion in the project of overcoming racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist injustice. Such a conception of God, I would argue, is necessary if critical theory is to achieve its full range and effectiveness. Critical theory can and should include a religious component. The first strand in this critique is the negative critique of religious belief undertaken both by Marxism and Kierkegaard" (210). Caputo's recent work,⁵ of which the essay in this volume, "Instants, Secrets and Singularities," is an outgrowth, resonates with many of the same sentiments. For him "deconstruction can and should include a religious component." Derrida himself is far from denying this as his most recent spate of publications reveal. The form of "radicalized Christianity" which Caputo formulates in this essay proves quite conclusively, as I have suspected for many years now, that far from posing a threat to religion in general, and Christianity in particular, Derrida, in the spirit of Kierkegaard, affirms the need for a religious dimension in the *Post/Modern* world.

If we can draw a single lesson from the Caputo and Marsh schools, it is that Kierkegaard belongs in the streets with that poor existing individual, and not in the safe havens of city halls and college libraries. This is a lesson Kierkegaard himself taught us many Danish moons ago. But, as ever, we probably took this to be just another little piece of irony.

In conclusion, *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity* is a text of immense significance and value. Westphal and Matustik have gathered together some of the most enlightening analyses of Kierkegaard yet to be published. As a research tool it will surely prove indispensable. Most especially, however, this volume shows how real and genuine communication between philosophers should be conducted. Of the many volumes of critical essays now devoted to Kierkegaard's legacy this is one whose relevance and importance will, I have no doubt, last the test of time.

1. See Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York & London: Guilford Press, 1993); Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987).
2. Mark Dooley, "Risking Responsibility: A Politics of the Emigre" in *Kierkegaard: The Self and Society*, ed. George Pattison and Simon Shakespeare (MacMillan, forthcoming 1997).
3. *Modernity and its Discontents*, eds. James L. Marsh, John D. Caputo, and Merold Westphal (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992).
4. Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
5. I am thinking here of *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington & Indiana University Press, 1993), and *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, forthcoming 1997).

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