

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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St. Olaf College

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NEWS FROM THE HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY

SCHOLARS PROGRAM 1999

The Kierkegaard Library is welcoming 29 scholars between May and November as participants in our fellowship program. Fellows for 1999 are: Jolita Adomeniene (Cambridge University, England), Luisa Antoni (Trieste, Italy), Conor Barrington (University College Dublin, Ireland), Brian Barlow (Brenau University), Andrew Burgess (University of New Mexico), Andrew Cathcart (University of South Carolina), Matt Frawley (Princeton Theological Seminary), Sarah Katrine Jandrup (University of Copenhagen) Jyrki Kivela (University of Helsinki, Finland) Ulrich Knappe (Cambridge University, England), Jeanette B.L. Knox (Copenhagen), Beate Kramer (University of Bielefeld, Germany), Stephen Leach (University of New Mexico), John Lippitt (University of Hertfordshire, England), Michael Lotti (University of Swansea, Wales and Trinity School, Bloomington, Minnesota), Paul Martens (Regents College, Vancouver, Canada), Paul Muench (University of Pittsburgh),), Oscar Parceró Oubina (Santiago de Compostela a Coruna, Spain), Myron Penner (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), Amy Peters (Simmons College), Eric Pons (University of Paris I-Pantheon-Sorbonne), Alma Popodopol (University of Bucharest, Romania), Hugh Pyper (University of Leeds, England), Leonard Stan (University of Bucharest, Romania), Pia Søltoft (Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre and The Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen), Mark Lloyd Taylor (Seattle University), Adriaan van Haarden (University of Cambridge, England), Pieter Vos (Theological University of Kampen, The Netherlands), and Brad Zulick (University of New Mexico),

THE KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, 2000

Summer fellowships for research in residence are offered to scholars for use of the collection between June 1 and November 15. The awards include campus housing and a \$250.00 per month stipend.

To apply for a fellowship, send a letter outlining your proposed research project and reasons for wanting to use the collection, along with a vitae or other description of qualifications. Two academic letters of recommendation are also requested. The application deadline is March 15. To apply, send materials and letter to:

Gordon Marino, Curator
Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library
St. Olaf College
1510 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057-1097

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Library is hosting a seminar of invited Spanish-speaking scholars from Spain and Latin America in July for discussion of relevant topics concerning the first volume of *Escritos de Søren Kierkegaard* to be published soon by Eds. Trotta (Madrid). This volume includes new translations of *From the Papers of One Still Living* and *On the Concept of Irony*.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

More than 600 titles were acquired between June 1, 1998 and May 31, 1999.

The following scholars generously contributed materials to the Library since January 1999: Madalina Diakonu, Stephen Leach, András Nagy, Tatyana Schitzova, Darya Loungina, Yiyun Zhou, Begonya Sáez Tajafuerce, Daniel Gamper, Pia Søltoft for the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Ettore Rocca, Rafael Larreñeta, Ron Marshall, Gordon Marino, and Howard and Edna Hong.

Especially interesting among acquisitions received were a nearly complete set of the works of Unamuno in Spanish; Chinese publications concerning Kierkegaard from the 1990's currently sold in Beijing; and copies of nearly all materials available in Russian relating to Kierkegaard.

The Hong Kierkegaard Library welcomes the donation of books on Kierkegaard and related thinkers to add to its collection and to share with other libraries and scholars.

PROGRESS IN THE ARCHIVES, THE CATALOG, AND COLLECTION PRESERVATION

Kristin Partlo will be working as an Academic Student Intern assisting us with our cataloging backlog for the next year.

Discussions continue with the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre planning our joint project to create a Kierkegaard bibliographic database in cooperation with The Royal Library in Copenhagen.

Archival materials were contributed by Pam and Jack Schwandt and by Howard Hong.

Cynthia Wales Lund - Assistant Curator e-mail: lundc@stolaf.edu Telephone: 507-646-3846 Fax: 507-646-3858

SØREN KIERKEGAARD RESEARCH CENTRE- COPENHAGEN ANNOUNCEMENT

The goals of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen are to produce a new critical edition of Kierkegaard's writings and to promote international Kierkegaard research at the highest levels. In connection with the latter the Centre offers research grants to Ph.D. students, post-doctoral scholars and senior scholars. The Centre invites applications from qualified scholars in all fields for fellowships for 2000.

Senior fellows should be working on projects in which Kierkegaard's thought is of central importance and must show evidence of high-quality scholarly work in the relevant field. The tenure for senior fellows is normally three months. The senior fellows will also be involved in student supervision and will be expected to give some lectures on their research. They must demonstrate a commitment to the expansion of international Kierkegaard research. Senior fellows are defined as those who have received their Ph.D. before 1990.

Post-doctoral fellows should be working on projects in which Kierkegaard's thought is of central importance and must show evidence of high-quality scholarly work in the relevant field. The tenure for post-doctoral fellows is normally one academic year. The post-doctoral fellows will also be involved in student supervision and some administrative work. They must demonstrate a commitment to the expansion of international Kierkegaard research. The Centre will look favorably on candidates who have good foreign language skills, including Danish. Although the Centre invites applications featuring any topic in Kierkegaard research, projects which involve a significant degree of *Quellenforschung* into Kierkegaard's contemporary sources will be particularly positively evaluated. The Ph.D. degree must have been awarded after 1990 and before the beginning of the planned stay at the Centre.

Ph.D. students working on a dissertation in which Kierkegaard plays a central role are encouraged to apply. Students from abroad will be expected to learn Danish and to work from original sources. The Centre will provide supervision and give specialized seminars, which will function as a forum for students to present and discuss their projects. Applicants must either have an appropriate affiliation with a graduate program at their home university or enroll in a Ph.D. program at Copenhagen University. They must have fulfilled all previous requirements and thus be at the dissertation level. The award carries an appropriate stipend, covering living expenses and university fees for a period of one to three years. Applications from Ph.D. candidates in the final stages of writing their dissertation will be positively evaluated.

A complete application includes the following: (1) a letter of application which includes a full description of the proposed project (3-4 double-spaced pages), (2) a curriculum vitae, and (3) two confidential letters of recommendation from senior scholars in their field. Interested applicants should send these materials to:

Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Centre Director
Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
Store Kannikestræde 15
DK-1169 Copenhagen K
Denmark

Fax +45 3376 6910
E-mail: njc@sk.ku.dk

Be sure to indicate clearly which competition you wish to be considered for and that you are qualified to apply for it, i.e. post-doctoral and senior scholars should indicate when they received their Ph.D., and doctoral students should include a statement that certifies that they are in fact Ph.D. candidates and when they anticipate receiving their degree. Please indicate also when you could start at the Centre, should you be awarded a stipend. For further information, please contact Niels Jørgen Cappelørn at this address.

Special attention will be given to applications from qualified candidates from countries where there has been very little by way of an established tradition of Kierkegaard research.

ALL materials must be received by October 1, 1999 and may be faxed. Applications must be submitted in either English, German, French, or Danish. Applicants will be informed of the status of their application in January, 2000. Residency may begin shortly thereafter.

CALL FOR PAPERS

KIERKEGAARDIANA 21

Dear Contributor,

Kierkegaardiana will be edited according to new principles from year 2000.

Kierkegaardiana will still be devoted to international and highly qualified debate in the fields of philosophy, theology, and literature. However, the linguistic and cultural boundaries of the current discussion will be expanded, and contributions in Danish and Spanish will also be welcomed beginning with volume 21.

1 APRIL 2000, DEAD LINE FOR VOLUME #21

Please, send your contributions to:

Pia Søltøft
The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
Store Kannikestræde 15
DK-1169 København K.

REVIEWS

READING KIERKEGAARD WITH KIERKEGAARD AGAINST GARFF

By Sylvia Walsh

Department of Philosophy, Stetson University

"The Eyes of Argus: *The Point of View* and Points of View With Respect to Kierkegaard's 'Activity as an Author,'" is a highly provocative article by the Danish scholar, Joakim Garff, which first appeared in English translation (by Bruce Kirmmse) in *Kierkegaardiana* (1991) and recently was reprinted in a new translation by Jonathan Rice and Jane Chamberlain in *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader* (1998).¹ In this article Garff embraces the "hermeneutics of suspicion" of fictionalist theorists and postmodernist interpreters of Kierkegaard

to undermine and discredit Kierkegaard's own interpretation of his authorship in *The Point of View*. Although Garff's account has the merit of conducting a close analysis of *The Point of View* in relation to other explanations of the authorship offered by Kierkegaard (whereas the similar treatment of that text by Henning

Fenger in *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Sources* does not), I wish to take issue with a number of items in his reading of Kierkegaard.

Garff begins his analysis by missing the point of a long quotation from Climacus in the *Postscript* concerning the nature of ironic observation, which is directed at the "how" rather than the "what" of a person's various declarations of belief about a particular subject. According to Climacus, laughter is called forth from the ironist not because that person is a hypocrite who does not believe what he says but because he has concentrated on "bellowing out" his opinion rather than appropriating it inwardly, which indicates that the person does not really hold the belief after all.² Garff uses this passage to set the stage for his own role as an ironic observer of Kierkegaard's various accounts of the authorship and to articulate a postmodernist "strategy of reading" which he erroneously attributes to Climacus. Garff misunderstands and deflects the proper focus of ironic observation as Climacus sees it by focusing on the "what" or verbal variations in the statement of a belief. According to Garff, the problem with a person who gives various accounts of a belief is not that the person "says something which he does not believe, but that he believes something he is *not* able to say, which is why he continually says something *other* than what he believes" (p. 31/77). This contradiction, Garff contends, constitutes "a condition for all communication" which, when applied to a *text*, indicates "that there is a difference between what a text *says* it does and what it *actually* does" (p. 31/77). Then he proceeds to claim that "Climacus has set forth a strategy of reading which pays special attention to the (dys)functions in a text's attempt to express its significance and to speak its mind" (p. 31/77). But Climacus does nothing of the kind; his concern in the passage quoted by Garff is not with the interpretation of a text but rather with its appropriation in the life of the believer. Garff simply imposes on Climacus a strategy of reading which is Garff's own, or rather, one which he has adopted as his own in order ironically to "read Kierkegaard with Kierkegaard against Kierkegaard" (p. 31/77). That is, he proposes to employ the (supposed) strategy of the pseudonym to show that there is a discrepancy in *The Point of View* between what the author says in this text and what it actually performs, which is to give an *aesthetic* rather than a *religious* explanation of himself and the authorship as claimed in the text.

Toward this end, Garff first presents a comparative analysis of the various accountings of the authorship, including 1) Climacus's comments in his review of "a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature" in the *Postscript*; 2) Kierkegaard's own "A First and Final Explanation" appended to that same book; 3) the account in *On My Activity as an Author*, and 4) *The*

Point of View for My Activity as an Author. Concerning the first of these, Garff suggests that Climacus indignantly unmask a "literary fraud" by revealing the pseudonymous books to be by "a Kierkegaard (M. A.)," with whom he is not acquainted (p. 31/77). But Climacus does not attribute these books to Magister Kierkegaard, with whom he apparently *is* acquainted since he writes of the Magister telling him how some people have confused his upbuilding discourses with sermons (CUP, 1:257). The only books Climacus attributes to Kierkegaard are his edifying discourses of 1843, which are published in Kierkegaard's own name. It is not Climacus but the gossip men and women of the "learned tea circles" who identify Kierkegaard as the author of the pseudonymous books and who seek by their chastisements to ennoble and improve him (CUP, 1:261).

Garff focuses primarily on what he perceives as a difference between Kierkegaard's account in "A First and Final Explanation" in the *Postscript* and the one given in *The Point of View*, the first emphasizing Kierkegaard's role as a "third party" in relation to the pseudonymous works and the latter viewing them as "the tactical dissembling" of a religious author (p. 33/79). Garff charges Kierkegaard with "shameless inexactitude" in his accounting of the authorship in *The Point of View* because Kierkegaard's list omits *From the Papers of One Still Living* and *The Concept of Irony* (p. 34/80). But since Kierkegaard all along has regarded the authorship proper as having its point of departure with *Either/Or*, he can hardly be expected to include these early works. Garff also questions the reliability of Kierkegaard's claim in *The Point of View* that he did not put his name on any of the merely aesthetic publications, pointing out that *A Literary Review* appeared in 1846 under his own name but is assigned by Kierkegaard to his aesthetic productivity (pp. 33-34/79-80). But where does Kierkegaard do so? This work does not appear in the list of what Kierkegaard regards as his aesthetic works in *The Point of View*, and in a note a few pages later on he claims that it is not "esthetic in the sense of being a poet-production but is critical" and that it has "a totally religious background in its understanding of the 'present age.'"³ Thus this work properly belongs, like *The Crisis and A Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, a piece of aesthetic criticism published pseudonymously in 1848, with the religious productivity.⁴ From Kierkegaard's point of view at least, it should not to be regarded as aesthetic in the same sense as the earlier aesthetic writings. Garff attributes the omission of *A Literary Review* from the initial list to a desire for maintaining aesthetic symmetry or balance between the aesthetic and religious productivity so as

not to overburden the religious group with too much "aesthetic juvenilia" (pp. 34-35/80-81). But one can hardly regard either of these works as "juvenilia" since neither of them was written in his youth and both are mature works of aesthetic criticism.

Garff appears to catch Kierkegaard in an inconsistency when he points out that in *The Point of View* Kierkegaard lists the eighteen edifying discourses under the first group as aesthetic works, while in *On My Activity as a Writer* they are referred to as religious productions which prove that the religious was present at the beginning of the authorship (p. 35/81). But the fact that Kierkegaard places a dash between the pseudonymous writings and the eighteen edifying discourses in the list of works comprising the first group and distinguishes them with the word *samt* ("plus" or "along with") indicates that, like *A Literary Review*, he does not regard them as aesthetic works like the others. He could and probably does include them along with the others because they were written in the same period, as a religious counterpoint to the aesthetic works. Thus this seeming discrepancy is not necessarily inconsistent with *On My Activity as a Writer* and certainly is not an example of "shameless inexactitude" as Garff claims.

Garff next turns to a scrutiny of *The Point of View* itself, which demands to be read, he says, as a "meta-text," not merely as one variation among others; thus it seeks to "overwrite" the other explanations of the authorship by imposing its point of view as the normative one (p. 35/81). In Garff's opinion, Kierkegaard is placed in an awkward position in this text because he must resort to aesthetic discourse while knowing that "it is precisely the person who most energetically condemns 'the bewitchment of the aesthetic'...who 'ends up mired in the aesthetic himself'" (p. 36/82; cf. PV, 46, 44). Here Garff conflates two quotations from different pages and contexts of the book in order to make it appear that Kierkegaard is indicting himself. But if one reads the second quotation in context, it is apparent that Kierkegaard is suggesting that the religious writer who proposes to use the aesthetic to get in touch with people must be sure of himself and relate himself to God in fear and trembling—or else he risks getting mired in the aesthetic. It is unlikely, therefore, that Kierkegaard is any more disturbed about becoming mired in the aesthetic in this book than he was in his earlier aesthetic writings, as his own clarity of aim and relation to God were secure.

Intent upon separating the author from his text, Garff claims that even if we grant that Kierkegaard is a religious author, that does not mean his "activity-as-an-author,"

that is, the texts themselves, are religious (p. 37/83). To effect this cleavage, Garff chastizes Kierkegaard for giving assurances even though he (Kierkegaard) himself does not believe in them "in connection with literary productions" (p. 37/83; PV, 33). Kierkegaard seeks to establish the truth of his point of view on the basis of the writings themselves, taking an objective stance toward them as a third party or reader. Here Garff throws Climacus in Kierkegaard's face as claiming to be disqualified to discern the intentions of the pseudonymous works because he is a third party (CUP, 1:252), the implication being that if the reader as a third party cannot discern the intentions of a work, then Kierkegaard is unjustified in appealing to an objective, third party test upon which to establish his interpretation on the basis of the works themselves. But Kierkegaard appeals to the reader (or to his own role as a third party reader) and the works themselves not in order to *prove* that a third party can discern—contra what he has claimed about Climacus—the intentionality of a work, but merely to *substantiate* the author's claim, that is, to show that his claims have some basis in the text as far as the reader can see. Kierkegaard maintains the possibility of ambiguity of interpretation by readers while at the same time setting forth three criteria of substantiation: 1) the phenomenon cannot be explained in any other way; 2) in this particular way it can be explained in every detail; and 3) the explanation fits at every point (PV, 33). Kierkegaard applies these criteria to the thesis that he is an aesthetic author and finds that explanation incongruous because it cannot explain the edifying discourses. Therefore, it makes more sense to assume he is a religious author who employs the aesthetic to serious purpose. The only inexplicable thing is why he would do so, and there one encounters the ambiguity.

Although there is an apparent contradiction in Kierkegaard's position here, which Kierkegaard himself recognizes, he attributes it to a "sophistical" (*spidsfindig*)⁵ reasoning that lacks earnestness or seriousness and thus cannot discern the dialectical reduplication being used to ward off "misunderstandings and preliminary understandings" (PV, 34). He maintains that the true explanation is at hand for those who honestly seek it. To make his point he appeals to the incognito of Christ, which is apprehended in the same way as the incognito of the aesthetic (PV, 34). Here Garff accuses Kierkegaard of abandoning his previous hermeneutical conditions in exchange for moral ones, making the reader accountable on the basis of whether he or she possesses seriousness or not (p. 39/85). To Garff this suggests that *The Point of View* is guilty of presupposing what it wants to summon up: seriousness on the part of the reader. But just as love must be

presupposed in others in order for it to be "loved forth" in them, so too seriousness must be presupposed if it is to be elicited in the reader.⁶ If one lacks seriousness, or at least the capacity for it, no amount of evidence will convince the sophisticated reader of the truth of any explanation.

Scoffing at, yet demanding assurances, Garff asks what guarantee we have that Kierkegaard himself is serious or "writing in good faith" and not once again engaging in "reverse deception," such as the tactics used to make people think he was an idler while the pseudonymous works were being written; or worse, that Kierkegaard has not fallen prey to self-deception in *The Point of View* (p. 41/87-88). Garff admits that "[i]t is impossible to determine definitively how much conscious intent there was in the poet's head, but we can ascertain that there was at least a certain amount of *post facto* construction" on his part (p. 41/88). Garff regards the incorporation of factual data in *The Point of View* as a ploy to "deflect the reader's attention from the fictiveness in the construction of the correspondence between the authorship and his personal, existential acting" and to give it "documentary validity" (p. 41/88). Kierkegaard's belief that there should be a correspondence between an author's personal existence and his writings is thus interpreted as something he has fictionalized in the form of an aesthetic/textual stage production, suggested by the many "metaphors of disguise," such as "costume," that he uses (p. 42/89). But correspondence between a writer's life and works is an essential element of Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication and aesthetics, not just a matter of play-acting.⁷ Garff concedes that it is impossible to give a final answer to the questions of where and when Kierkegaard is a deceiver in the text and where and when he is deceived by the text, but Garff is convinced that Kierkegaard is a deceiver (p. 43/90). His conviction is based on the following rather flimsy pieces of *post facto* evidence: 1) the inclusion of historical data on when the manuscript of the *Postscript* was delivered to the publisher; 2) reference to the Corsair drama as something he is omnipotently directing; 3) reference to Regine, which is brief and thus kept concealed so as to avoid any ethical evaluation of the situation and to regain the moral self-justification that was lost in that situation; and 4) documentary statements about Kierkegaard as a penitent. Garff sees a dialectic of revelation/concealment as applicable to *The Point of View* in that Kierkegaard tries to regain aesthetic interestedness in suggesting that "the most personal of personal things remains concealed" even as he reveals himself as a religious author (p. 44/91). Kierkegaard's confessional writing thus becomes, for Garff, an aesthetic writing about the religious in which Kierkegaard

aestheticizes his relationship to God as a "love-story," interpreted by Garff in a Freudian fashion as a sublimation of his relation to Regine (pp. 46-47/93).

Continuing to employ psychoanalytic reductionism in his exposé of Kierkegaard, Garff diagnoses Kierkegaard's contention that Governance played a part in the authorship as evidence of a "rampant megalomania" (p. 47/94). More significantly to Garff, however, it indicates the presence of not just one but two points of view in *The Point of View*, the first regarding the authorship as the product of Kierkegaard's own imaginative construction, realized by the complex device of deception, and the second taking the view that Governance is the highest authority in the production (p. 48/95). As Garff sees them, these are incompatible and conflicting claims, and they reveal that Kierkegaard has not grasped the (postmodern) truth that "a writer always writes *in* a language and *in* a logic, whose entire system of signs and references is not completely mastered by his own discourses" (p. 48/95). Kierkegaard attributes the inexplicable element in his discourses to God, that is, to a transcendent source, not to one inherent in the system of signs itself. From Garff's point of view, however, it is not Governance but the text itself that controls Kierkegaard, transforming the penitent Kierkegaard into an aesthetically interesting Kierkegaard who conceals himself in the process of supposedly revealing himself. But the substitution of an immanent explanation for a transcendent one does not resolve the issue of incompatibility and conflict, which is only asserted, not demonstrated, by Garff; it merely replaces one determinative force with another, and the question of authorial freedom and autonomy is left open. Employing hermeneutical as well as psychoanalytic reductionism in the deconstruction of Kierkegaard's text, Garff concludes that if Kierkegaard takes the position of a third party with respect to his authorship, he must not only give up the right to define its significance as an author but also surrender his claim about Governance. Then *The Point of View* becomes only one among many debatable points of view (including Garff's we may presume).

To top off his fictive interpretation of *The Point of View*, Garff refers to passages in the journals where Kierkegaard contemplates publishing the work under a pseudonym, either Johannes de Silentio or "A-O" (p. 51/97-98). Kierkegaard has the latter write a preface in which the author of *The Point of View* is portrayed as a poetic creation that is poetically true even if factually untrue in that the author has not measured up to or realized the poetic truth. Although Kierkegaard rejects this possibility, Garff treats the text as if this is what he has

in fact done. The fictive figure of Kierkegaard in *The Point of View* "has completely emancipated himself from Kierkegaard," Garff claims, while Kierkegaard is forced to resort to a third party, his poet, in the end (p. 52/98).

Thus Garff allows the ironist to laugh at Kierkegaard because he has never been honest with or clear about himself (*paa det Rene med sig selv*). But the ironic observer in the *Postscript*, it should be noted, is confident that "the god [*Guden*] rescues from delusion the person who in quiet inwardness and honest before God is concerned for himself," leading him "in the suffering of inwardness to the truth" (CUP, 1:615). Who is to judge that Kierkegaard lacked that inwardness and truth? Even the ironist presumes to laugh not on the basis of sure knowledge but only on circumstantial evidence, which in Kierkegaard's case is certainly not sufficient to convict him of the gross deception of himself and others with which he is charged by Garff. Perhaps it is Garff, then, not Kierkegaard, who wants to keep Kierkegaard "interesting" by deconstructing and distorting his explanation into fiction. If so, then the loudest and last laugh belongs to Kierkegaard's poet, who bursts out laughing at the "priceless market-town chorus...that wanted to ironize—the ironist" now departed (PV, 96). Apparently that chorus still sings, in harmony with what the present (postmodern) age demands. But thankfully, like the master of irony himself, the age and its muse presumably lack seriousness, and so need not be taken seriously.

NOTES

¹ Garff's article was *originally published in Danish in Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 4 (1989): 161-189, and is reprinted in essentially identical form as a chapter in his book, *"Den Søvnløse": Kierkegaard læst æstetisk/biografisk* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1995). In English translation it may be found in *Kierkegardiana* 15 (1991): 29-54, and in *Kierkegaard: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jonathan Rée and Jane Chamberlain (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 75-102. Quotations from and references to Garff's article in this essay will be keyed to Kirmmse's translation in *Kierkegardiana*, with page references being given in the text in parentheses along with the corresponding page number in the Rée-Chamberlain translation.

² Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 2 vols. ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 1: 615.

Hereafter references to this work will be given in the text in parentheses with the siglum CUP followed by volume and page number.

³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View: On My Work As An Author, The Point of View for My Work as an Author, Armed Neutrality*, ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) pp. 29, 31. Future references to this work will be given in the text in parentheses with the siglum PV followed by page number.

⁴ According to *The Point of View, The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* was intended to show that Kierkegaard did not begin as an aesthetic author who later changed and became a religious author but rather that he was a religious author from the beginning who remained aesthetically productive at the end (PV, 30-31).

⁵ I prefer the English rendition of this term in the older translation of *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* by Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), p. 16. The Hongs translate it as "subtle," but "sophistical" is the more common meaning of the term and seems to me to be more precise or less vague in connotation.

⁶ On the presupposition and "loving forth" of love in others, see *Works of Love*, ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 217ff.

⁷ On the integral relation between a poetic writer's life and works, see my discussion in *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), pp. 23-41.

REREADING ONESELF

by Joakim Garff

Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre

Late in October of 1851, Kierkegaard remarks: "Only now does my star arise in Denmark. A little folio book has just come out, a kind of review." This remark sounds positive, but the magister is unfortunately being ironic, and he has good reasons for being so. The occasion for such feigned adulation is the recent arrival of a piece of work entitled *On Magister Kierkegaard's Activity as an Author: Observations of a Country Priest*, by a certain Ludvig Gude, a close friend of royal court chaplain H.L. Martensen, something which is not a good sign. In his comments to Gude's review (which were so detailed that they quickly grew into a fifty page manuscript!), Kierkegaard remonstrates Gude for not having attempted to differentiate between the pseudonymous and the signed production, and thus not only does Gude run afoul of the authorship's sophisticated dialectic, but he also comes to employ a somewhat backwards method, whose comic character Kierkegaard is only too well aware of: "It is easy to see that anyone who has a desire for, shall we say, a little commerce in literature, he only needs to take a hodgepodge of citations, here from 'the Seducer', there from Johannes Climacus, and then from me, etc., stick them all together as if they were all my words, shows the contradictions therein, and then present such a confused mishmash of an impression as if the author were some kind of mad man. Bravo!"¹

Yes, well, bravo and all that. Kierkegaard's characterization of this "hodgepodge" can, with just a tad of malicious good will, be read as a grimacing prophecy of that manoeuvre which is today practiced under the designation "deconstruction" and which in its lesser chaotic version has brought about a paradigm shift within various specialized studies, including Kierkegaard research. For this reason during the last decade, a whole new set of approaches to Kierkegaard, who has been set free of the "jargon of authenticity" and re-installed in his textual labyrinth with its vast repertoire of images, metaphors, allegories, and other visual material, have been observed. Viewed historically, the deconstruction of Kierkegaard was a reaction against a more traditional synthesizing interpretation, in which the "Kierkegaardian system" (the theory of stages, indirect communication, etc., etc.) was repeated so uncritically that everything was on the verge of coagulating into vicious cliché. Ostensibly, the thought that before Kierkegaard

everybody was *always* wrong was somehow found to be edifying. And thereby *seriously* making him so right as to be seriously wrong. In other words, deconstruction was *also* an endeavor in freeing Kierkegaard from that apologetic reductionism which insisted on creating an artificial product, the *real* Søren Kierkegaard, who would vibrantly arise from the page in all his glory.

Furthermore, deconstruction is not a univocal discipline. From time to time there is some sleight of hand in the manoeuvre such that the reading can devolve into a non-committal text metaphysics which, almost in self-parody, runs the risk of becoming mere "jargon of inauthenticity". Nevertheless, deconstruction has resulted in a formidable sharpening of the gaze upon the text as text and even upon the textuality of the text, whose inner contradictions, blind spots, rhetorical plays, and exchanges between concepts and images are inspected by the deconstructive reader with a kind of hermeneutics of suspicion which believes just as little in the text's innocence as in the author's reliability. At the same time, the premises for academic *Auseinandersetzung* have almost imperceptibly undergone a change which has resulted in a devaluation of the validity of hard core arguments, thus forcing significantly into the background the ideological interest in maintaining an "intact" Kierkegaard. Just as Kierkegaard interpretation has metamorphosed out of the discursive or epistemological realm and into the *demonstratio ad oculus* of interpretation through an interactive and exacting *textual examination*, so has the polemical attack against thinkers of other persuasions, who had previously been made game of in the secondary literature or forced to live a life of disrepute down in the pedestrian byways of the footnotes, correspondingly abated.

Deconstructing Kierkegaard (reading Kierkegaard with Kierkegaard against Kierkegaard) does not imply setting him up for one ambush after another. Rather, it means to take him seriously, at his word, because his own texts as they stand are already potentially deconstructive. Kierkegaard's work is polyphonic and full of textual actors and figures, all of whom are subordinate to a narrating fictional figure, who is capable of anything; for example, distancing him from a work in a postscript which at the same time reveals him as its actual author and as the character who prosaically comments upon the very crisis

which the textual actors must suffer before the eyes of the reader; to this is added a publisher who, despite his most energetic efforts, can only relate the most arbitrary information pertaining to the work's provenance. The texts themselves have the character of a picture puzzle or a cunning labyrinth, found as they are in secret, whether in the innermost parts of a chest-of-drawers under sudden attack or at the bottom of the Søborg Lake, where they have rested for a century before being dragged to the surface by the help of a sophisticated, underwater instrument. This confusing multiplicity of voices, pens, positions, and literary teases is not only found in the aesthetic writings but is also encountered in the more philosophical sections of the collected works (such as *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*), and thus requires an enormous vigilance on the part of the reader, a bifocal vision, which not only should take a hold of *what* Kierkegaard writes but also envelop the text and contemplate *how* he writes what he writes. This last point is no less important than the first; in fact, perhaps it is even more important, for it is precisely because the texts express their awareness of themselves *as constructions* so demonstratively that they invite their reader to undertake a deconstruction of them. Thus we see that interpreting Kierkegaard always means deconstructing him; and to deconstruct him is also to admit that one knows that it is precisely this that one is doing.

The Point of View for My Activity as an Author has become a veritable proving ground in the genre, wherein one and all can test their deconstructive mettle. The attractiveness of this text can be explained by the fact that, in terms of genre, *The Point of View* lies somewhere between biography and confession and thus extends out into the very terrain preferred by the deconstructionist. I myself have ventured into this territory in my article "The Eyes of Argus", a venture which Sylvia Walsh, in her article "Reading Kierkegaard with Kierkegaard against Garff", has deemed "highly provocative", which is not meant as a compliment, since I have, in her eyes, actually revealed myself to be a bad reader who is not only a morally defective Freudian reductionist, but also someone who is seriously lacking that earnestness which is so necessary for understanding the Kierkegaardian enterprise correctly. For an amoral charlatan, it goes without saying that it would be tempting to declare myself in complete agreement, if only to defuse the situation, but the situation results from a difference that is fundamentally hermeneutical in nature, so I will instead attempt to reply.

The hermeneutical difference between us immediately makes itself apparent in Walsh's first objection to my interpretation, which consists in my use of a rather

longish citation from Johannes Climacus which I have ostensibly misunderstood because I have superimposed upon Climacus a postmodern reading strategy which in reality is merely my own. Climacus' actual intention, I am told, is something quite different: his concern "is not with the interpretation of a text but rather with its appropriation in the life of the believer" (p. 2). There is nothing, absolutely nothing, I can object to here. Although the text in question is not an "edifying" or "Christian" discourse, Walsh is basically correct, which is fortunate, for were she not correct, then I would not have a point, either. Which is to say that if Climacus had actually put forth a postmodern reading strategy, not much would be gained by applying it to Kierkegaard. Indeed, it would be just as ridiculous as the man about whom we are told in *Philosophical Fragments*, who "in the afternoon displays a ram for a fee which can be seen for free in the morning, grazing in the open field"² And this is precisely my point. Climacus, with his seismographically sensitive consciousness of the discrepancy between the "what" and the "how", here articulates a hermeneutical suspiciousness which comes strikingly close to being a deconstructive consciousness. Concerning the ironic observer, it is stated that he does not keep an eye on "what is written in large capital letters or what would show itself as being formulaic given the speaker's diction (the polite "what" of honorable people); instead, he is careful of the little phrase in between, which evades the high-minded attention of honorable people, a little flag-flying predicate, and that sort of thing." Even taking into consideration the difference in epochs, it is difficult for me to come up with a better description of the deconstructive reader's tacking between epistemological and rhetorical discourse, between the concept and the image, and, not to mention, between the author's declaration of his intentions for his text and what, at times, is the text's own stubborn sidestepping of these very intentions. In my article, I do not attempt to hide the fact that I have transposed Climacus' peculiarly situated observations into a particular hermeneutical key; rather, the hypothetical nature of my "caprice" is so obviously undisguised that the text, even if it were in Martian, would fairly bristle with subjunctivity.

From my perspective, a colossal hermeneutical challenge lies in the fact that Kierkegaard, as seen with Climacus, has at hand a presciently deconstructive consciousness *and* that he, with this very consciousness, sits down and writes *The Point of View*, in which Kierkegaard, with almost all the weapons at his disposal, attempts to guard against a deconstructive reading, because he, at the very least, has a premonition that his reading is the most likely. This realization on

Kierkegaard's part creates the need for evenhandedness, connectedness, and systematization to be made possible throughout the entire authorship, which in itself is enough of a reason for writing **The Point of View**, which I call a meta-text, because it does not desire to be read along the same lines as his other texts, but rather as a text of texts. In my article, I claimed that the existence of earlier efforts at establishing points of view for the production, respectively signed by Climacus and Kierkegaard himself, not only undermined each other's normative status but also compromised that very point of view which Kierkegaard puts forth in and with **The Point of View**. Walsh corrects me in regard to a few details (that Climacus does *not* remain unacknowledged by Kierkegaard and that it is *exclusively* Climacus who attributes the edifying discourses from 1843 to Kierkegaard). But this I merely acknowledge *ad notam*, since I see no reason to use time to clarify points that do not have decisive value for my own arguments.

When I undertake what Walsh in her article has much too generously called "a comparative analysis of the various accounts of the authorship" (p.3), it is only in order to identify a problem which is rather more seriously brought to the fore in and by **The Point of View** and which could perhaps be called the *mobility* of the hermeneutical focus. In order to emphasize this mobility, I have, in my article, pointed out the *changeability* of Kierkegaard's various presentations of the authorship's intentionality, which actually has not, with **The Point of View**, achieved its definitive form. Indeed, as we all know, this declared intentionality undergoes a host of further changes throughout the **Journals**, in which Kierkegaard himself defines the intentionality of his complete literary enterprise so reductively that not even a naive reader would dream of accepting the proffered definition – even though it be signed by the Master himself! And even if one allows oneself the thought experiment that a Kierkegaard of sound mind wrote the very last word of the manuscript to **The Point of View** on the night of November 10-11, 1855, in his sickbed at Frederiks Hospital, one should not accept as given that this account of the authorship's intentionality converges with the other 43 varying texts which also make up the authorship. Nor does it imply that the reader *eo ipso* is duty-bound to adopt Kierkegaard's own communicative priorities, since it is precisely Kierkegaard the author, who (dressed as Climacus, certainly) takes the part of the reader against the author, who is not necessarily "his own words best interpreter", by observing that it cannot "help a reader that the author 'meant this and that' when it has not been realized."³

What is interesting about the delineating of the production as it takes place in **The Point of View** is

Kierkegaard's desire for *numerical* symmetry between the aesthetic and religious texts presented therein and how this desire has compelled him to undertake a variety of not exactly transparent transactions. I draw attention to this fact in order to show how Kierkegaard's textual delineation creates a somewhat untethered existence for a text such as **A Literary Review** which was delegated by Kierkegaard first to one and then to the other part of the production and finally booted out of his accounting of the totality of the authorship entirely. My point was and still is that it is only through such a reductive definition of the authorship that Kierkegaard himself can bring about a wholeness in which all of his collected writings can partake of a balanced symmetry such that a maieutic synchronicity between the aesthetic and the religious is set in place. Thus, when I write in this context that Kierkegaard, in the name of his survey's evenhandedness, must leave out his "aesthetic juvenilia" from **The Point of View**, I am not *not* considering **A Literary Review** or **The Crisis or The Crisis in the Life of an Actress**, as Walsh seems to think, but rather such texts as **From the Papers of One Still Living** and **The Concept of Irony** as well as those articles for periodicals which Kierkegaard had owned to in "A First and Last Explanation" but had chosen to leave out of his scorekeeping survey.

That the overly aesthetic writing of **The Crisis or The Crisis in the Life of an Actress** causes Kierkegaard problems is a fact that becomes excessively evident from his reflections in the **Journals** where this particular text has given occasion to what might be called a religious crisis in the life of its author. "Nothing exhausts me so terribly as negative decisions", he laments in the early summer of 1848, when he is just about to publish **The Crisis**, but, please note, *just about to*. Once again he has experienced that sudden "flying together of a host of reflections amidst which [he] almost succumbs". To publish or not to publish – that is the real question. First, the many "pros" are laid out: He would like to please Fru Heiberg while at the same time "poking a little fun" at her husband, J.L. Heiberg, to whom he would also like to address a couple of home truths; thereafter came the consideration that Editor Giødwad had entreated so pleasantly for just such an article for his newspaper; and finally, Kierkegaard can, by making **The Crisis** public, counteract the notion that he, whose production for the longest time had been exclusively religious, had become "holy"⁴ and "serious".⁵ And it is precisely this latter attribute, this "seriousness" which takes the shape of a mere *external gesture*, that Kierkegaard views as being an utter misunderstanding of the nature of true seriousness. "This is a very important reason pro. But

the contra speaks. I have now become so decisively involved in the Christian, have presented so much of that so strongly and seriously, that there will certainly be those who will now be affected. For such as these, it could now almost become an offense to hear that I have written about an actress in a feuilleton. And, truly, one does have a responsibility toward such people. (...) Besides, I do not have at this precise moment any religious writing ready for the printer which could come out on the same day. Therefore, it will not be published.”⁶ Yet a few entries later, Kierkegaard has apparently reversed his decision: “No, no, the little article will be published.” And so it was. Thus, Kierkegaard could breathe a wee bit easier, resting now in the assurance that had he, in fact, died without having published “that particular little article”, then there would certainly have been “slander, given the dreadfully thoughtless confusion of concepts indicative of our age, especially about my being an apostle. Great God! Instead of being a help in honoring the Christian, I would have merely succeeded in ruining it.”⁷ But, as is often the case, Kierkegaard’s greatly overestimates his contemporaries’ interest in his literary economy. So, shortly thereafter when Rasmus Nielsen takes one on the chin because he did not grasp that *The Crisis* was intended as an indirect and inverted communication, it is simply another case of needless violence directed against the innocent.

The reason I present this example is, in part, to show the fluctuation in Kierkegaard’s own motivations for publishing (and, concomitantly, for not publishing) and, in part, in order to draw attention to the problematical nature of his own genre categorizations when they become polarized between the so-called aesthetic and religious productivity. As justified as Walsh is, however, in touting “the fact that Kierkegaard places a dash between the pseudonymous writings and the eighteen edifying discourses in the list of works comprising the first group and distinguishes them with the word *samt* (‘plus’ or ‘along with’)” (p. 5), this fact does not alter my argument and, actually, substantiates my view that Kierkegaard’s schematization of his production is and remains a rather doubtful construction which is, at bottom, based upon something so unkierkegaardian as pure *quantitative* size. Yet I find much more important than this apologetic concern for balance in Kierkegaard’s production the aforementioned “genre problem”, around which Walsh moves, unaffected and untroubled. What does it mean, and to what extent can one accept, that Kierkegaard, for example, relegates *The Concept of Anxiety* to his aesthetic production; and what consequences result for the interpretation of the second half of *Either/Or*, given the startling fact that the author

in propria persona also sets this work under the rubric of the aesthetic? When considered rhetorically, Kierkegaard’s writings are complex in the extreme, and thus even an appropriation of his own genre definitions will necessarily also lead to a reductive reading.

Kierkegaard’s contemporaries did not understand him, of this he was convinced, but perhaps posterity would. Such a fear of being misunderstood might seem exaggerated in an author who at almost every opportunity, whether personal or pseudonymous, had attempted to disavow the greater part of his authorship and with a gesture of giddy generosity foist it upon his reader. *The Point of View* is particularly peculiar, given the fact that in a certain sense it defies some of the more basic communicative mechanisms found in Kierkegaard’s authorship, since it addresses its reader via a kind of demythologization in order to orient him or her about a series of relationships which do not lend themselves to direct communication or which can only flourish in silence; for example, the fact that an author deceives his reader, even deceives his reader into truth, does not change the fact that it is still deception.

But there is also another way in which *The Point of View* seems strikingly subversive, for on a starkly simplified plane, one could claim that if what *The Point of View* is trying to communicate to its reader were actually as evident as Kierkegaard would like us to think it is, then he really did not need to have written *The Point of View* at all. That Kierkegaard nonetheless proceeded to write *The Point of View* points, as suggested, to his fear of being misunderstood, perhaps even deconstructed. And when he thus explicitly and emphatically opposes an aesthetic reading, it is precisely because, logically viewed, he himself had already undertaken such a reading and therefore knew that it was not only a possible reading; he knew it was perhaps the most likely. Thus, for long stretches in *The Point of View* Kierkegaard seems to be parodying the very difficulty he finds himself in; he anticipates the possible objections of the critical or distrusting reader, he pretends value neutrality in his judgements, he frequently assures us of his impartiality, he stresses his distance from his material, but he is nonetheless or, perhaps, especially forced by this performance into the very *apologia* which he had earlier promised his reader that *The Point of View* in point of fact would never become. And thus as the text goes on, Kierkegaard must be forever grasping at even more sophisticated smoke and subterfuge and mirrors in order to outdo himself in procuring that necessary trustworthiness for which his creation has relentlessly generated a greater

and greater need. It is through this process that the originally somewhat soberly reporting Kierkegaard receives the assistance of that experienced author of the same name whose familiarity with a host of fictional forms turns **The Point of View** into that particular *mixtum compositum* which I, with an unbeautiful but effective neologism, have called documenta(fic)tion.

Walsh concludes her critique convinced that I am “convinced that Kierkegaard is a deceiver”, a conviction which I allegedly base on four “rather flimsy pieces of *post facto* evidence” (p. 9). This claim astonishes me somewhat, especially given that I do not need to go to any great lengths in my article to reveal Kierkegaard as a deceiver, since it is Kierkegaard himself who refers *expressis verbis* in **The Point of View** to the cunning deceptions by which he has deceived his readers into the truth. Thus, one can hardly blame me for Kierkegaard’s admitting to this manipulative praxis directly. My own point presupposes that Kierkegaard admits to his own deception, since it is my goal to expose the performatively problematical figure that Kierkegaard presupposes his reader will accept, namely the figure that says: “I deceive, believe me!” And the problem which I would concomitantly like to highlight is that deception and self-deception have an unhappy tendency to go hand in hand.

Here my concern is closely connected to the criteria necessary for establishing a text’s reliability which conceivably cannot be separated completely from the concrete reader. But neither can it just be reduced to a question of the presence of the requisite seriousness or the absence thereof in a particular concrete reader. “If one lacks seriousness,” claims Walsh, “or at least the capacity for it, no amount of evidence will convince the sophisticated reader of the truth of any explanation” (p. 8). And, yes, I *did* catch the mild moral reprimand, but I regard it a dubious operation to substitute hermeneutical terms for moral ones, not only because such an substitution smacks of incipient interpretive hegemony but because it also implies that the reader’s “seriousness” may evolve into being nothing more than a tacit sanctioning of fiction. Kierkegaard’s “lover,” his implicit reader who first comes and then sees how everything in Kierkegaard’s life and production “comes together, right down to the last jot and tittle,”⁸ is precisely that reader who lets himself be seduced by Kierkegaard into reading fiction as non-fiction (and vice-versa); indeed – I have plainly claimed – that unreflective innocence, such as that which the Seducer presupposed in Cordelia, closely resembles that uncritical seriousness which Kierkegaard occasionally presupposes for his reader. By the same token, the reader should especially keep a watchful eye on

Kierkegaard’s rhetoric which is not harmless but seductive. Because, as Rainer Nägele so succinctly observed in **Echoes of Translation**, it is “the task of rhetorical analysis to direct the attention to that which produces certain effects instead of being seduced by the effects.”⁹

Speaking of seduction, it rather puzzled me that Walsh called my way of reading Kierkegaard “psychoanalytic reductionism” of the Freudian variety (p. 10), because I am not a Freudian of any stripe. Instead, I, for my part, have written several small parodies of what might be called the vulgar Freudian treatments of Kierkegaard which have become as common as they are unendurable, always ending as they do in complete kitsch. Although it seems to me that my ironic distance is embarrassingly evident (“gefundenes Fressen for enhver freudianisk Feinschmecker”—“lad nu Freud få fred”),¹⁰ it nevertheless seems apparent that the parody should have been made even more apparent, so that in this way it becomes an indirect reminder of how difficult it is to account for such textual devices and how easily they, in reality, can backfire. A kierkegaardian *notabene*. And a *notabene* to Kierkegaard (and Kierkegaardians).

Walsh devotes the last part of her critique to a rather truncated analysis of that section of my own article in which I attempt to follow Kierkegaard in a complicated dialectic between the autonomy of the producer of a text and the heteronomy of the text so produced. What occasions this discussion is the notion of “the part of Governance” in Kierkegaard’s activity as an author. At this point, Walsh objects that “Kierkegaard attributes the inexplicable element in his discourses to God, that is, to a transcendent source, not to one inherent in the system of signs itself” (p. 10). This objection, however, is not a real objection, for I am completely aware of the fact that Kierkegaard is not a semiotician, but if Climacus can amuse himself with a little “metaphysical caprice”, then—*mutatis mutandis*—I, too, can engage in a little anti-metaphysical capriciousness. When I substitute the concept “Divine Guidance” with an a-religious concept such as “how the text has guided its writer”,¹¹ I do so in complete awareness of the fact that this is just an attempt to grasp the nature of the *experiences* which Kierkegaard the writer has had with his text. In this way, I take his assertions concerning the non-autonomous activity within text production quite literally, but as I would also like to understand them, I refuse to wrap them up in *metaphysical window dressing* —although this would be the easiest thing to do. Walsh quotes me as having described Kierkegaard’s description of “the part of Divine Guidance” in his activity as an author as evidence of his “rampant megalomania” (p. 10), but this is only half the truth or, rather, even less, since I wrote the exact

opposite. Namely, that the concept *could* (note: the subjunctive once again!) at first glance seem to be such a megalomania but that in reality it was actually closer to an admission of his limited autonomy.

It is this dialectical interchange between the writer and his writing which intrigues me, because it also intrigued Kierkegaard, who turns and returns to the topic in journal entry after journal entry, and who is thrown into an unmistakable amazement over the fact that he “has been used, without [himself] even rightly knowing it” and therefore he cannot say, in the solid sense of autonomy, “I”.¹² In my article, I attempt to follow Kierkegaard and let my reflections take shape as a kind of critical co-amazement. Something which Walsh, who calls my efforts “fictive interpretation” (p. 11), obviously does not find attractive, deeming unworthy of a dime Kierkegaard’s journal entries on his experience of reduced autonomy. As she wishes. Yet I wish she would invest a little time in these journal entries, as it would interest me to see what position *she* takes on the journal entries in question.

When one takes into consideration Kierkegaard’s reduced autonomy, I see only a blithe paradox in the fact that Kierkegaard contemplated publishing *The Point of View*—which was the closest he had come to an autobiography—in the name of pseudonym Johannes de silentio! Ever since I discovered this extraordinary fact, whose extraordinary nature is not at all diminished by the reality that Kierkegaard—as Walsh rightly points out—“rejects this possibility” (p. 11), this mere circumstance, that such a possibility was even entertained as a possibility, has been for me symptomatic of the crisis in Kierkegaard’s understanding of himself and his authority as a writer which the writing of *The Point of View* was intended to overcome and which it only succeeded in intensifying.

That Walsh and I cannot be expected to come to an immediate agreement about such matters is obvious. And despite the fact that it is her urgent desire to divest me of all seriousness in her critique by confronting me with the same ironizing Climacus with whom I confronted Kierkegaard in my own article, I actually view such an interpretive manoeuvre as a promising sign of Walsh’s having appropriated some of those aspects of deconstruction which have always been considered slightly impertinent.

Yes, well, that was almost a joke. And were I just a little more serious, I would take advantage of this opportunity to cease speaking.

NOTES

¹ *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, col. I-XI.3, by P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torsting. Gyldendalske Boghandel, Norsk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1909-1948; Augmented second edition, vol. I-XI.3, by N. Thulstrup, vol. XII-XIII; Supplementary volumes by N. Thulstrup, vol. XIV-XVI; Index by N.J. Cappelørn, Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1968-1978, hereafter cited by *Pap.* volume, section, and page numbers, *Pap.* X 6 B 154, pp. 235 & 145, pp. 202f.

² *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. by N.J. Cappelørn, J. Garff, J. Kondrup, A. McKinnon, and F. Hauberg Mortensen, vol. 1-, Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret and GEC Gads Forlag, Copenhagen, 1997 - , vol. 4, p.229.

³ *Samlede Værker*, pub. by A.B. Drachmann, J.L. Heiberg, and H.O. Lange, vol. I-XIV, Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, Copenhagen 1901-1906, hereafter abbreviated *SV1* with volume and page number, vol. VII, p. 212.

⁴ *Pap.* IX 1 A 175.

⁵ *Pap.* IX A 180.

⁶ *Pap.* IX A 180.

⁷ *Pap.* IX 1 A 189.

⁸ *SV1*, vol. XIII, p. 556.

⁹ *Echoes of Translation: Reading between Texts* (Baltimore & London, 1997) p. 35.

¹⁰ *Translator’s note*: Garff is calling attention not only to the ironic content of his observations (“may fodder be found for every Freudian Fuddpucker” – “let Freud lie *phallow*”) but also to their humoristic alliteration, a literary device which, of course, does not come across in translation.

¹¹ See Rée and Chamberlain, p. 93. *Translator’s note*: The Danish words *Styrelse* and *Styring*, here translated respectively as “Guidance” and “has guided”, refer literally to “management” on the one hand and “being steered” on the other.

¹² *Pap.* X 2 A 89.

Unfolding Kierkegaard's Writings

by

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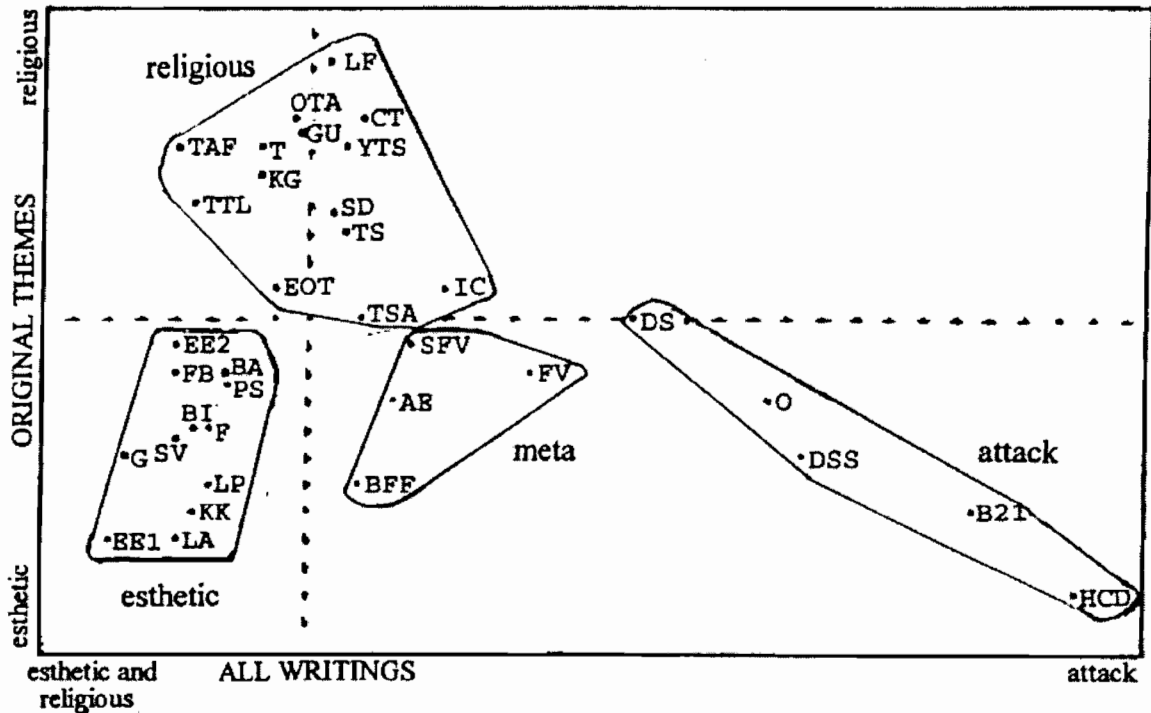


Figure 1. The first two dimensions of Kierkegaard's *Samlede Værker*.
(See Appendix at end of article for referenced abbreviations.)

Kierkegaard's four main accounts of his "authorship" are increasingly simple, direct and focussed upon the relation of the works to one another and to its overall strategy. The last of these accounts, "On My Work as an Author," was written in March, 1849 more than six and a half years before his death and naturally makes no mention of the ten pieces he wrote after that date. Near the end of that work he writes: "This is scarcely the place for a lengthy account. Here it is just a matter of being able very briefly to fold together in simplicity what is unfolded in the many books or what unfolded is the many books, ..."¹ This short study aims to observe the spirit of this striking remark and to update his account by including these ten later writings.

Briefly, this study presents some of the results of a correspondence analysis of the frequencies of the 50 most common nouns and names in the 35 writings contained in the third edition of his *Samlede Værker*. This was done by creating a matrix showing the frequency of each of these words in each of these writings and doing a correspondence analysis of this matrix to determine the precise co-ordinates of each word and book on each of the first two dimensions² of this space. For the sake of simplicity I omit all these words from both the plot and my discussion but stress that the location of each work in this space is a strict mathematical function of the "profile" of these words in these works, that this function reflects the nature of these works and is so complex that even a literary genius such as Kierkegaard could not contrive it. By contrast, I have named the poles, dimensions and clusters of this

array using some of the information provided by the program and my own knowledge of these works.

Figure 1 is the core of this study and shows the relation of these 35 works to one another in their first two and most important dimensions.³ This figure will speak for itself to those familiar with his works and I have simply indicated the obvious by naming the positive pole of the first dimension “esthetic and religious,” the negative pole “attack,” and this dimension “ALL WRITINGS.” Similarly, I have named the positive pole of the second dimension “religious,” the negative pole “esthetic,” and this dimension “ORIGINAL THEMES,” i.e. the themes of the original “authorship” prior to the attack. Partly following Kierkegaard’s own lead, I have also named the works in the lower left quadrant “esthetic,” those above the first dimension “religious,” those in the upper corner of the lower right quadrant “meta” works and those on the outer edge of the lower right quadrant “attack” works. I will say more about these names shortly but for the moment stress instead that this plot gives the precise location of each of these works on each of these dimensions and so shows both their location within this self-defined space and their relation to one another within it. Of course even this plot is no substitute for reading the works but it places each work in its context and should help the reader to read them with greater insight and understanding. In fact, it is the simplest possible visual representation of “what is unfolded in the many books” and represents the logical development of Kierkegaard’s successive attempts to indicate the role of the various works in his overall strategy.

The central point of this study has been made and I pause to comment briefly upon these clusters and the location of certain works within them. The esthetic cluster is dense and compact and occupies most of the bottom left quadrant with EE1 naturally lying much closer to the “esthetic” pole of the second dimension and EE2 much closer to the “religious.” The religious cluster is almost equally compact but its works fall on both sides of the second dimension and IC clearly lying in the direction of the attack, a fact consistent with Kierkegaard’s own account of this work.⁴ The meta works form a triangle and lie relatively close to the point of origin which is quite natural since three of them deal almost exclusively with the nature and strategy of the “authorship” and even AE implicitly discusses this question at length. But there are perhaps also other reasons why this work lies in this particular position. Kierkegaard himself said that it marks out another way to become a Christian,⁵ that it was “the turning point”⁶ in the authorship and he clearly intended it as an attack upon Christendom.⁷ It is then both fitting

and plausible that it should lie within this group and at the same time be more or less equi-distant from the other major clusters. By contrast, and as the reader can see, the attack works form a very elongated ellipse which means that these five works differ greatly from each other along both these dimensions. Finally, note that most of the works in the upper right quadrant are relatively close to the point of origin, that the remainder of this quadrant is quite empty and that there are no works other than IC showing high frequencies of the nouns and names characteristic of both the religious and attack groups.

Some may object that Kierkegaard’s works differ from one another in many different respects and that these cannot be adequately represented in merely spatial terms and certainly not in only two dimensions. In fact, any difference can be represented as a dimension and the various works plotted precisely thereon. For example, an earlier study of FB using the 128 words most characteristic of that work showed that its fifth dimension is Abraham as unbeliever vs. Abraham as believer⁸ and another of all the writings using their 250 most common nouns and names that their fourth dimension was love of neighbor vs. worship of God, their fifth the pathology of society vs. the pathology of the self,⁹ etc. Indeed, the present study suggests a name for their third dimension but we deliberately omit this because our data is very sparse and, particularly, because our goal here is to simplify. It is however clear that, given a sufficiently large number of words, such studies can preserve the detail and nuances of traditional ones and perhaps much else as well. Indeed, they both enable and force us to make differences which most of us have never noticed but which, like the above, are crucial nevertheless.

Others may object that the first two dimensions in such studies are perfectly obvious but that the rest are at best conjectural. In fact this objection contains the seeds of its own destruction. We may know the names of these two dimensions but the program certainly does not. Instead, it identifies or, more accurately, enables the investigator to identify or confirm these dimensions and it uses exactly the same routines and produces exactly the same kind of information for all lower dimensions. In short, one cannot dismiss the names of the first two as obvious and reject those of the remainder simply because, left to our own devices, we would never suspect their presence nor, certainly, succeed in naming them.

Kierkegaard knew that one day the “machinery” of his life and writings would be studied and studied¹⁰ and he was human enough to take some small pleasure in this

thought. He also saw and perhaps regretted that in the future graphic results such as those in this study would increasingly replace detailed textual accounts as models of explanation. Indeed, perhaps the only aspect of this study which would have surprised him is that it is possible to construct such an accurate and perceptive plot of his writings simply on the basis of the profiles of the 50 nouns and names most common in them. But this is neither accident nor mere serendipity. Rather, it is because there is a vast amount of information stored in these profiles, information which so far perhaps only few of us have imagined. Of course it requires new tools and skills to achieve this understanding but I hope that this small study may persuade at least some that it is well worth the effort.

New Tool for Literary Research," *Computers and the Humanities*, vol. 27, (1993) pp. 165-183.

⁹ Alastair McKinnon, "Mapping the Dimension of a Literary Corpus." *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1989) pp. 73-84.

¹⁰ Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, ed. and trs. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 6078.

NOTES

¹ "On My Work as an Author," in *The Point of View*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) p. 12. The original reads as follows: "Til vidtløftig Fremstilling var da her mindst Stedet; her gjaldt det netop om ganske korteligen at kunne folde Det sammen i Eenfold, Det, som er udfoldet i de mange Bøger eller som udfoldet er de mange Bøger; ..." FV, p. 68.

² These dimensions are the graphic counterpart of the polarities or dialectical oppositions within Kierkegaard's works.

³ I had originally intended to use the titles of these works in this plot but these obscured even its most obvious patterns and I have therefore used my own title codes and explained them in the Appendix. I do not apologize for this: Kierkegaard scholarship is now a truly international affair and we need designations which everyone who knows even a smattering of Danish can immediately recognize. Equally important, we must learn to think of Kierkegaard as present to our discussions and I have always valued these markers because they would have told him immediately which of his many works we were actually discussing.

⁴ Cf., e.g. *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵ SFV, pp. 31 and 55 f.

⁶ SFV, pp. 31 55 and 63.

⁷ Alastair McKinnon, "Kierkegaard's Attack on Christendom: Its Lexical History," *Toronto Journal of Theology*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1993) pp. 95-106.

⁸ Alastair McKinnon, *The Multi-Dimensional Concordance: A*

Appendix

LP	Af en endnu Levendes Papirer	From the Papers of One...
BI	Om Begrebet Ironi	The Concept of Irony
EE1	Enten - Eller. Første halvbind	Either/Or, vol. 1
EE2	Enten - Eller. Andet halvbind	Either/Or, vol. 2
G	Gjentagelsen	Repetition
FB	Frygt og Bæven	Fear and Trembling
T	Atten opbyggelige Taler	Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses
BA	Begrebet Angest	The Concept of Anxiety
PS	Philosophiske Smuler	Philosophical Fragments
F	Forord	Prefaces
SV	Stadier paa Livets Vei	Stages on Life's Way
TTL	Tre Taler ved tænkte Leiligheder	Three Discourses...Spirits
AE	Afsluttende...Efterskrift	Concluding Unscientific Postscripts
BFF	Bladartikler, ..."Forfatterskabet"	Articles Related to the Writings
LA	En literair Anmeldelse	Two Ages
OTA	Opbyggelige Taler...Aand	Upbuilding Discourses...Spirits
KK	Krisen og en Krise...Liv	The Crisis...Life of an Actress
KG	Kjerlighedens Gjerninger	Works of Love
TSA	Tvende...Smaa-Afhandlinger	Two Ethical-Religious Essays
CT	Christelige Taler	Christian Discourses
SD	Sygdommen til Døden	The Sickness Unto Death
IC	Indøvelse i Christendom	Practice in Christianity
SFV	Synspunktet...Forfatter-Virksomhed	The Point of View...an Author
LF	Lillien paa Marken og Fuglen...	The Lily of the Field and ...
FV	Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed	On My Work as an Author
YTS	"Ypperstepræsten"... "Synderinden"	Three Discourses...Communion
TAF	To Taler ved Altergangen...	Two Discourses at the Communion
EOT	En opbyggelig Taler	An Upbuilding Discourse
GU	Guds Uforanderlighed	The Changelessness of God
TS	Til Selvprøvelse, Samtiden anbefalet	For Self-Examination...
DS	Dømmer selv!	Judge for Yourselves!
B21	Bladartikler 1854-55 I-XXI	Newspaper Articles, 1854-5
DSS	Dette skal siges; ...	This must be said...
O	Øieblikket, nr. 1-10	The Instant, nos. 1-10
HCD	Hvad Christus dømmer...	Christ's Judgment...Christianity

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