

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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Editor: Gordon D. Marino
Associate Editor: John D. Poling
Assistant Editor: Jamie Lorentzen
Assistant Editor: Cynthia Wales Lund
Managing Editor: Cleo N. Granneman

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CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Hong Kierkegaard Library will host its fourth international conference from June 9-13, 2001 at St. Olaf College. The themes of the Conference will be: Kierkegaard and Hermeneutics and Kierkegaard and Communication. Professor Alastair Hannay of the University of Oslo will offer the keynote address. Papers are to have a reading length, which will be strictly applied, of 20 minutes. We are also planning to hold a dissertation panel discussion in which scholars who are in the process of writing or who have just completed their dissertations will summarize their research. To submit a paper or dissertation discussion proposal please send two copies of either the complete paper or a detailed abstract by March 15, 2001. Complete papers must be submitted by 1 April 2001. Anyone interested in acting as a commentator should also let me know.

Information about registration will appear in the July edition of the NEWSLETTER.

Gordon Marino
Curator
Hong/Kierkegaard Library
St. Olaf College
Northfield, MN 55057
USA
email: marino@stolaf.edu

NEWS FROM THE HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY

Cynthia Wales Lund, Assistant Curator. Email: lundc@stolaf.edu. Tel. 507-646-3846, Fax 507-646-3858.

SCHOLARS PROGRAM 1999

Jyrki Kivela arrived on January 3rd to spend 3 months working in the library on research for his dissertation concerning the nature of human knowledge in the thought of Hume and Kierkegaard. He is a PhD candidate from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Helsinki in Finland. Jyrki is the last of our 30 visiting scholars invited in 1999 and our first scholar of the 21st century.

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 for anyone who does not have financial support from their home institution. Thanks to the generosity of the Kierkegaard House Foundation we also have a limited number of fellowships available during the winter and spring.

To apply for a fellowship, please send a research proposal, vita, and two letters of recommendation. Also, please make sure to specify the exact dates during which you would like to use the Library. The application deadline is April 1st. To apply, please write to:

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

e-mail: marino@stolaf.edu

Phone: 507-646-3846, Fax: 507-646-3858

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Kierkegaard Library, together with the Philosophy Department and the Boldt Chair in the Humanities, will sponsor a lecture by Paul Holmer entitled "The Grammar of Life: C.S. Lewis" which will take place on Wednesday, February 9, at 3:30 PM in 501 Holland Hall on the St. Olaf College campus.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Approximately 350 new titles were acquired during the past 6 months.

We would like to thank the following scholars for their generous donations of materials to the Library; Hak Chul Kang, Alvaro Valls, Begonya Saez Tajafuerce, Andrew Burgess, Rafael Garcia Pavon, Niels Ingwersen, Luisa Antoni, Primoz Repar, Leo Stan, William Narum, Donald Fox, Donald Nelson, Ronald Anderson, Adrian Arsiniveci, Hugh Pyper, Ettore Rocca, Udo Doedens, Jolita Adomeniene, Poul Houe, Pamela and Jack Schwandt, Howard Hong, Gordon Marino. The Hong Kierkegaard Library strongly encourages the donation of books and articles on Kierkegaard and related thinkers to add to its collection and to share with other libraries and scholars. Gift books are indicated with a special donor bookplate.

Notable new acquisitions include a collection of mainly Danish language books on Grundtvig owned by the late President-Emeritus Ernest D. Nielsen of Grand View College, Des Moines, Iowa, author of *N.F.S. Grundtvig: An American Study*, 1955. Our holdings of French, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovenian, and Hungarian materials were strengthened considerably.

PROGRESS IN THE ARCHIVES, THE CATALOG, AND COLLECTION PRESERVATION

Kristin Partlo continues to work as a Academic Intern assisting us with our book cataloging. Rachel Paarlberg has nearly completed her organization of our newspaper article file including records in our online catalog. Bookplating and book-jacketing continue throughout the collection.

The Archives of the Kierkegaard Library now includes all administrative records and correspondence dating prior to 1994. Materials relating to Kierkegaard organizations abroad both past and present have been added.

We welcome the donation of any documentary materials related to the Library or Kierkegaard studies.

PUBLICATIONS

The Library sponsors the publication of an undergraduate journal of existential thought, *The Reed*. This journal, which is now in its third year of publication, includes scholarly essays, short stories, and poetry. Those interested in either submitting to this journal or in receiving a copy should contact Gordon Marino.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS ISSUES INDEX TO *KIERKEGAARD'S WRITINGS* AND HONGS' ANTHOLOGY

Cumulative Index to Kierkegaard's Writings by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Series Editors, compiled by Nathaniel J. Hong, Kathryn Hong, and Regine Prenzel-Guthrie will be published in July of 2000. This volume is number XXVI of *Kierkegaard's Writings*.

The Essential Kierkegaard

Edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong

This is the most comprehensive anthology of Søren Kierkegaard's works ever assembled in English. Drawn from the volumes of Princeton's authoritative *Kierkegaard's Writings* series by editors Howard and Edna Hong, the selections represent every major aspect of Kierkegaard's extraordinary career. They reveal the powerful mix of philosophy, psychology, theology, and literary criticism that made Kierkegaard one of the most compelling writers of the nineteenth century and a shaping force in the twentieth. With an introduction to Kierkegaard's writings as a whole and explanatory notes for each selection, this is the essential one-volume guide to a thinker who changed the course of modern intellectual history.

The anthology begins with Kierkegaard's early journal entries and traces the development of his work chronologically to the final *The Changelessness of God*. The book presents generous selections from all of Kierkegaard's landmark works, including *Either/or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Works of Love*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, and draws new attention to a host of such lesser-known writings as *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* and *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air*. The selections are carefully chosen to reflect the unique character of Kierkegaard's work, with its shifting pseudonyms, its complex dialogues, and its potent combination of irony, satire, sermon, polemic, humor, and fiction. We see the esthetic, ethical, and ethical-religious ways of life initially presented as dialogue in two parallel series of pseudonymous and signed works and later in the "second authorship" as direct address. And we see the themes that bind the whole together, in particular Kierkegaard's overarching concern with, in his own words, "What it means to exist; ...what it means to be a human being."

Together, the selections provide the best available introduction to Kierkegaard's writings and show more completely than any other book why his work, in all its creativity, variety, and power, continues to speak so directly today to so many readers around the world.

April 2000. 544 pages.

To order contact Princeton University Press at orders@cpfs.pupress.princeton.edu

KIERKEGAARDIANA 21; CALL FOR PAPERS

Starting in the year 2000, *Kierkegaardiana* will be edited by a new set of editorial guidelines. It will still be devoted to international and scholarly 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, DEADLINE FOR VOLUME #21

Please, send your contributions to:

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

PUBLICATION OF *ESCRITOS DE SØREN KIERKEGAARD*

On the occasion of the publication of the first volume of *Escritos de Søren Kierkegaard* (Editorial Trotta, Madrid), the Universidad Complutense de Madrid will host on March 27, 2000 a one-day seminar organized by Rafael Larreñeta, Professor of Philosophy, and supported by the Danish Embassy in Madrid as well as Editorial Trotta. This volume includes *De los papeles de alguien que todavía vive* (From the Papers of One Still Living), translated by Begonya Saez Tajafuerce, and *Sobre el concepto de ironía* (On the Concept of Irony), translated by Darío González. Both translations are the first publications of these works in Spanish.

Information about the program planned for March 27 can be found at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid website: <http://fs-morente.filos.ucm.es/cursos/1999-2000/kier.htm>

FROM INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY EDITOR

After 10 May 2000 please address all correspondence regarding the *International Kierkegaard Commentary* to Robert Perkins at 225 South Boundary Avenue, DeLand, FL 32720-5013. Calls should be made to 904-734-6457.

NEWS FROM JULIA WATKIN

The Søren Kierkegaard Research Unit Australia, University of Tasmania, has moved to a new building with new facilities. The postal address has stayed the same. Julia asks that our readers note the internet address of International Kierkegaard Information is: <http://www.utas.edu.au/docs/humsoc/kierkegaard/>

REVIEWS

Receiving Søren Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought.
By Habib C. Malik. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997.
437 p. \$59.95

Bruce H. Kirmmse
Dept. of History, Connecticut College
New London, CT 06320

We are all indebted to Habib Malik for this wonderful, rich study. It provides us with a great overview of its subject and will serve as a valuable handbook for anyone interested in how Kierkegaard's thought was received in the sixty or so years after his death.

Habib Malik gives order to an immense subject, a landscape studded with a number of real gems but also, alas, strewn with much trivia, with obscure (and often boring) books and articles, with which Malik has had to contend in order to produce his map. Malik has been through an incredible amount of material—much more than that covered by Aage Henriksen in *Methods and Results of Kierkegaard Studies in Scandinavia* (Copenhagen, 1951) and Aage Kabell in *Kierkegaardstudiet i Norden* (Copenhagen, 1948)—and he has seen a great deal. He has discerned a pattern.

I have so much positive to say about the book, that I have had to cast about to find something credibly negative to say so that my positive remarks will be taken seriously. So let us get the negative—or at least the less positive—out of the way first, and then return to the main theme of the book and my reaction to it.

It seems to me that the weakest portion of the book is the first chapters, those dealing with Kierkegaard and his contemporaries, both in Denmark and beyond. This is particularly so in the first chapter, where Andersen and H. C. Ørsted are rather unlikely interlocutors for Kierkegaard. I would have preferred to see serious interactions between Kierkegaard and, say, Grundtvig and Heiberg, or Mynster and Poul Martin Møller, or Martensen and Goldschmidt, or the aesthete P. L. Møller. If Kierkegaard was to meet up with an Ørsted, it should have been A. S. Ørsted, the Kantian statesman, the representative of the ethical, rather than the

Romantic *naturphilosoph* H. C. Ørsted.

In the nature of the case, the contemporary reaction beyond Denmark was so spotty and idiosyncratic that it really doesn't merit more than passing attention. Bremer, Sturzen-Becker, Lysander, Collett, the Howitts, Hamilton, Preus—all these are historical curiosities who are really only of interest to specialists like ourselves. As Malik demonstrates, alone of the characters discussed in the second chapter, A. F. Beck (who in himself is of little significance) occupies an important if minor place in the vital line of transmission of Kierkegaard to the German-speaking world.

The chapter on the *Kierkekamp* is a useful summary of the contemporary ecclesiological debate in Denmark. This is not entirely new ground, but that is not the problem. What I object to is not Malik's scholarship, which, indeed, deftly brings together the principal contributors, but rather the generally shallow nature of the Danish debate itself. The issues Kierkegaard raised were so momentous, so much a consequence of his previous work, and so much a part of the larger Church-State debate of post-Enlightenment Europe, that it is quite amazing to see the pedestrian level on which Kierkegaard's opponents responded. Kierkegaard was right: it really was like being trampled to death by a flock of geese.

Well, so much for the "negative." After these first chapters, the book just gets better and better as Malik moves into the main portion of his subject. Malik is like a tough, seasoned baseball pitcher: if you can't knock him out of the game in the first couple of innings, you had better resign yourself, because he just gets better as the game progresses.

Perhaps the Ibsen chapter belabors a bit long the undecidability of Kierkegaard's influence, but this is due in large measure to the obscure and sometimes contradictory nature of the evidence itself. And in any event, as Malik points out, whatever Kierkegaard's actual influence on Ibsen, if one is interested, as we are here, in actual historical reception, the important thing is that a great many important thinkers certainly *believed* that Ibsen was a Kierkegaardian and that Brand was Kierkegaard!

The chapter on the *Tro og Viden* controversy is very valuable. This is where many of the fault lines (or battle lines) which will mark subsequent debates—especially the Scandinavian conflict between theological orthodoxy and modern scientism and positivism—were marked off. There will be “Right” and “Left” Kierkegaardians (of sorts) along these lines. Malik has worked his way through a mass of books and polemical rejoinders by Rasmus Nielsen, H. L. Martensen, Hans Brøchner, and others. Particularly with respect to Nielsen and Brøchner, Malik has done scholarship a real service: theirs is some of the deadliest prose in the Danish language (rivalled, it is true, by that of Sibbern and P. C. Kierkegaard). We get a good road map for much of the next thirty or forty years.

The chapter on Brandes and the biographical-psychological approach is masterful. It is the longest and by far the most valuable chapter in Malik's valuable book. In fact, Brandes is, in a way, the focal point of this Kierkegaard book. The major lines of criticism and controversy prior to 1877 are forced to converge on Brandes' *Kritisk Fremstilling*, either in agreement or in vigorous disagreement. After 1877 the lines of criticism diverge again, but virtually every participant in discussions about Kierkegaard has been marked by Brandes. Just about everyone who wanted to have an opinion about Kierkegaard was forced to take a position on Brandes' book. Malik gives Brandes the great attention he deserves, and the tone is just about right: respectful without fawning, critical without savagery. A wonderful piece of work.

The fin-de-siècle chapter is a fine follow-up to the Brandes chapter: the amazing, meteoric, and ultimately pathetic J. P. Jacobsen streaks across the sky. Christoph Schrempf – half self-promoting entrepreneur, half publicly anguished soul – gets his fifteen-minute ration of immortality. The stalwart Bärthold plugs on. Høffding remains notoriously hard to pin down: is he merely careless or does he change opinions quite often? Just what *is* going on with this Høffding, who impressed so many as the dean of Scandinavian philosophers at the turn of the century? And behind all these figures (and

others), the ever-present Svengali mask of Brandes.

While illuminating and suggestive, the final chapter on the Brenner Circle and Theodor Haecker is not as incandescent as the chapters which preceded it. Some major figures—Karl Kraus, Kafka, Wittgenstein—only get walk-on parts and we never really learn to what extent, if at all, they were “Kierkegaardians.” Even with the focus on the Brenner group, it is really only Haecker we come to know. Dallago and Ficker are at best supporting figures for Haecker. The problem is, the reader is never really convinced that Haecker is a major figure. True, Heidegger, Jaspers, and Husserl read *Der Brenner*, but how important was this publication: a) in the overall development of these thinkers?; and b) for their knowledge of Kierkegaard? Similarly, as Malik himself points out, through his influence on Karl Barth, “Kierkegaard stood at the center of a revolution in Protestant theology,” but this was “independent of *Der Brenner*.” So I wonder whether Haecker and *Der Brenner* have been overplayed.

But this is not at all to denigrate Malik's remarkable achievement. Rather, it is perhaps to utter the wish that Malik would give us volume two, that he would step back to World War I, begin with Barth and Heidegger and carry us forward through Adorno and Sartre and Camus, perhaps as far as Levinas. But I don't want to be greedy. Malik has triumphed in producing order. He has performed all of us a great service, for which he is owed both our thanks and our applause.

In closing I would like to pose a couple of questions, not only for Prof. Malik but for all those who concern themselves with Kierkegaard—questions, I hasten to add, that are posed for discussion and have no “right” answers.

1) At the very end of his conclusion, Malik points with apparent approval to various communitarian responses—Buber's interpersonal I-thou; Berdyaev's notion of religious community; and the Roman Catholic emphasis on the community of the faithful—as possible “correctives” to “the potential excesses of radical Kierkegaardian individualism.” Malik implies that Kierkegaard, a “corrective” of the Church in his own time, might not disapprove of being himself “corrected.”

I do not wish to cast any doubt on the proposition that Kierkegaard was a radical individualist, suspicious and critical of all collectivities, both social and (especially) ecclesiastical. My question is: Can we be at all confident that Kierkegaard would want to be “corrected,” particularly in his radically negative ecclesiology?

Kierkegaard started out criticizing Mynster, Martensen, and the post-1848 arrangement of the State Church, but he quickly extended his criticism backwards to the absolutist State Church of pre-revolutionary times, then to the entire post-Reformation period. Going back further and further in his search for the root of the evil besetting Christendom, Kierkegaard tore through the Middle Ages. He went back to the Constantinian settlement, but even that was not the source of the corruption. No, it was in the early Church, the Church of the apostles itself, that the trouble started. Finally, in 1854, Kierkegaard located the precise point at which perdition first took hold: It was at that first Pentecost, when Peter and the other apostles baptized 3000 at one go—that sort of mass production was simply unacceptable!

An Alarming Note.

Those 3000 who were added to the congregation en masse on Pentecost—isn't there fraud here, right at the very beginning? Ought not the apostles have been uneasy about whether it was really right to have people become Christians by the thousands, all at once?....[Didn't the Apostles forget] that if the genuine imitation [of Christ] is to be Christianity, then these enormous conquests of 3000 at once just won't do?....

With Christ, Christianity is the individual, here the single individual. With the Apostles it immediately becomes the congregation. [*added here in the margin:* And yet it is a question, as to whether the principle of having to hate oneself—which is of course the principle of Christianity—of whether that principle is not so unsocial that it cannot constitute a congregation. In any case, from this point of view one gets the proper view of what sort of nonsense State Churches and People's Churches and Christian countries are.] But here Christianity has been transposed into another conceptual sphere. And it is this concept [i.e., the concept of the congregation] that has become the ruination of Christianity.¹

2) The second question, not entirely unrelated to the first, has to do with the "Left Kierkegaardians," the disciples of his left hand, as it were. Malik gives quite an affecting picture of these figures, one after the other:

Brøchner, Brandes, Ibsen, J.P. Jacobsen, Høffding, even Schrempf. All these men were profoundly influenced by Kierkegaard; they all had some crisis, usually of a personal-religious sort, in which Kierkegaard played a key role, and they all ended up on the outside (at the very least!) of official Christianity. The common features of their stories are quite striking. And they all were deeply moved, to the point of desperation, not only by Kierkegaard's *writings*, but also by Kierkegaard's *life*.

Now here is what I see as problematic. Kierkegaard seems to want to have things both ways. He tells us that his biography, the details of his *life*, are not what matters; rather, it is what he is trying to communicate in his *works* that matters. But when we try to be good Kierkegaardians and turn to his works, we learn there that what matters is not *what* one says or writes, but *how* one *lives*—what matters is not what is *written* but what is *lived*. And so we turn back from the remarkable writings to their even more remarkable author. And we approach this author not in idle curiosity, but existentially, with great seriousness, to see what parallels we can draw to our own lives. It is the author himself who refers us, half against his own official pronouncements, to his life. So it was not only Kierkegaard the writer but willy-nilly Kierkegaard the *person* who helped all his "children" maieutically to give birth to themselves. *All* his children: that is, those who "rejected" him (or his problematical Christianity) are every bit as much "his" children as the more docile seeming offspring. And here, finally, is the question: As scholars, as intellectual historians, don't we need to account for the strange affinities which bind what I have termed the "Left Kierkegaardians" not only to one another, but also to Kierkegaard himself? Don't we need to be able to specify what it was about Kierkegaard and about the mid and late nineteenth century that created the remarkably repeated pattern characteristic of these naughtily individualistic children of Kierkegaard, the naughtily individualist? As any parent knows, children who reject one ferociously are more than ever one's children. And in any event, isn't it a mistake to be in too great a hurry to bar them from the house?

¹ *Papirer* XI 1 A 189 n.d. (1854).

To order Habib Malik's book, Contact: CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS, Customer Service, PO Box 4852, Hampden Sta., Baltimore, MD 21211 USA email: cua-press@cua.edu

***Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Soren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology.* By Harvie Ferguson. London; New York: Routledge, 1995. 286 p. hardcover: \$65.00, paperback: \$24.99.**

**John Lippitt
Dept. of Philosophy, University of Hertfordshire
Watford Campus, Wall Hall
Aldenham, Watford Herts., WD2 8AT UK**

Dave Barry once claimed that there exists a little-known law obliging all travel writers to describe Hong Kong harbour as 'teeming.' Similarly, one would be forgiven for thinking that a similar requirement obliged many writers to refer to Kierkegaard as 'the melancholy Dane.' But Harvie Ferguson's view of melancholy makes it something far more important than an accidental feature of a particular individual's demeanour. Rather, for Ferguson, melancholy—typically understood as 'sorrow without cause'—is 'the defining tone of [modern society's] every experience' (p. xvi). He promises 'a book which seeks to explain why sociologists, and anyone else interested in the character of modern life, should read Kierkegaard' (p. ix), re-reading his writings as structured around the relation between melancholy and modernity. The result is an intriguing and controversial account of the pseudonymous and veronymous authorship.

Any genuine encounter with Kierkegaard must surely take place in the first person. Recognizing this, the book starts engagingly, with a account of the author's initial, and totally accidental, undergraduate encounter with S.K. Looking for books on logic in a dark corner of Glasgow University library, he stumbled across what he thought was a slim book on 'Refutations'. Had it not been for the unreplaced light bulb, Ferguson may never have discovered Repetition, a bewildered reading of which led to a life-long, if initially difficult to explain, fascination with Kierkegaard.

Certainly, Ferguson is an enthusiastic spokesman for Kierkegaard's work. Moreover, one can give at least partial assent to the claim of the publisher's blurb that the book 'makes Kierkegaard's rich and insightful writings accessible to a new audience.' The reader new to Kierkegaard (or to certain lesser read texts within the corpus) will find much illuminating exposition. Conversely, even the most experienced reader of SK will learn something new from the intriguing historical account of pre-modern and modern views of melancholy

which comprises chapter 1. Here, noting melancholy and self-absorption as an obstacle to communication, Ferguson treats the incommunicability of melancholy as a key to Kierkegaard's concern with indirect communication. In chapter 2, he makes a good case for the importance of the often neglected The Concept of Irony, noting that both melancholy and irony are forms of 'holding back from engagement with existence' (p. 34), in that for the ironic self-consciousness which characterises the modern age, 'no action or value seems worthwhile,' everything having become polluted by 'the aura of contingency, doubt and superficiality' (p. 39). Thus, both melancholy and irony might be seen as forms of the aesthetic world-view which, according to Ferguson, characterises the whole of the pseudonymous authorship, not just that of writers such as the author of Either/Or I. (More of this later.)

Moreover, Ferguson argues that Kierkegaard came to realise that the investigation of irony is a kind of 'false start' for his overall project. On the one hand, Kierkegaard, along with romantics such as Schlegel, Solger and Tieck, saw that the possibility of irony—successfully communicating a message different from the literal meaning of one's words—raises the more general problem of 'the possibility and limitations of human communication as such' (p. 37) which remained a life-long concern. In this sense, irony is the key to the pseudonymous project (pp. 54-5). However, it is flawed in that it synthesizes views which need to be kept apart; an awareness of irony's deficiencies shows Kierkegaard the need 'to identify himself as closely as possible with actuality in all its diversity' (p. 55). With this realisation, the pseudonymous authorship begins.

Hereafter, Ferguson tackles virtually the entire Kierkegaardian corpus, offering an insightful guide to the authorship, the 'second literature' being viewed as at least as important as the pseudonymous work. Perhaps the most significant, yet controversial, aspect of Ferguson's account is his claim that, throughout the

pseudonymous authorship, no author gets beyond an 'aesthetic' view of the existence-spheres. (Others have made similar claims, but Ferguson pushes it further than many: it applies not only to the likes of Judge William and Climacus, but also to Anti-Climacus and 'S. Kierkegaard,' the pseudonym who writes upbuilding discourses.) Ferguson is interested in topics such as the instability of Judge William's account of the ethical in Either/Or II, suggesting that anything which remains 'a kind of civic arm of the religious' (p. 101) cannot be the universal, and that it is thus illusory to think of the Judge's version of the ethical to be any real advance on the aesthetic. However, the ways in which Ferguson uses the term 'aesthetic' throughout the book are not entirely clear. His central worry is that a progression view of the spheres risks turning Kierkegaard into some kind of Hegelian, each move being seen as a kind of Aufhebung of its predecessor. Instead, Ferguson argues that such a model takes insufficiently seriously the texts' pseudonymity, and thus fails to see how they demonstrate 'the modern tendency towards the progressive "aestheticization" of experience' (p. 114). The image of movement into 'higher' stages is an illusion, brought about by 'aesthetic immediacy, undergoing a series of self-generated internal transformations...all stages, in reality, remain aesthetic stages, and the aesthetic pseudonyms become trapped in a process of "experimenting" in which they are in fact drawn farther and farther away from "actuality."' (p. 115) But this raises a major problem: if any such writing is going to be accused of being mere 'aesthetic experimentation,' then the problem of communicating the religious starts to appear not just incredibly difficult, but insurmountable.

All this raises some important questions. What would Ferguson make of a technique such as Wittgensteinian grammatical clarification in relation to the religious? Much of Climacus's technique in the Postscript, for instance, can usefully be compared to a Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation. Such an approach, to be sure, falls short of religious appropriation. But does it remain mere 'aesthetic experimentation?' Has such clarification no religiously edifying purpose to serve? As one Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion puts the question, can't a purely grammatical enquiry be religiously persuasive?¹ If it can, then there might be more to be said, ethically and religiously, for certain kinds of what Ferguson wants to call 'aesthetic experimentation' than one might initially be inclined to think. (Indeed, in explaining how the 'topological' perspective—that there are three spheres: aesthetic-ethical-religious—is 'essentially aesthetic,' Ferguson does suggest that as well as containing less than is

usually suggested ('in that is contains only different versions of the aesthetic' (p. 86)), his reading also contains more, 'in according to the aesthetic a more positive and flexible role in the formation of self-identity than most commentators have cared to admit' (p. 86)). But the cogency of Ferguson's overall position depends upon its being clearer how he is using the term 'aesthetic.' For instance, all kinds of reflection 'aesthetic?' Ferguson's third chapter discusses the dangers of (passionless) reflection in the Present Age. It would surely be a mistake to see Kierkegaard as being opposed to reflection per se, yet I remain unclear on exactly how Ferguson intends us to unpack his remark that Climacus is at fault for viewing 'thought as a privileged relation within actuality' (p. 142). I was somewhat unconvinced by Ferguson's portrait of Climacus and the Postscript. He claims that the book 'defines a problem, how to exist in the modern world, and claims there is an answer, to become a Christian; then annuls the answer by demonstrating that it cannot be reached, and substitutes for it a secret religion of passionate inwardness.' (p. 167) Such a view, which immediately follows an all too brief picture of Religiousness A and B—the distinction between them being dismissively described as 'a final dialectical flourish' (p. 166)—hardly does justice to the complexity of the labyrinth that is the Postscript. The idea that the text offers Christianity as the 'answer' to a particular 'problem' could only be reached by privileging one, much debated, section of the text over others which have Climacus reminding us that any such talk—subjectivity as a matter of 'answers' to 'problems'—is confused: misplaced objectivity. Relatedly, Ferguson fails to note that Climacus asks his question about Christianity in the first person ('How may I, Johannes Climacus, share in the happiness that Christianity promises?'), not as an 'objective' 'problem.' In presenting Climacus as a philosopher, Ferguson seems to overlook the other important dimensions of this many faceted pseudonym (Climacus the humorist; Climacus the urbane layabout, etc.). It is worth noting that this kind of problem is the inevitable result of any book which attempts to survey so much of Kierkegaard's output.

Ferguson's account has important implications for Kierkegaard scholarship. Another major question that it raises is what, on his reading, becomes of ostensibly key themes such as the 'leap.' He seems prepared to bite the bullet here, claiming that the 'infatuation with the leap' demonstrated by the 'aesthetic authors' 'is the product of melancholy and provokes only a more tenacious form of despair' (p. 197). But if we ourselves are concerned with the nature of ethical and religious

transitions, and think of Kierkegaardian accounts of the leap as of importance here, is this a mere 'infatuation' on our part? Is someone like Jamie Ferreira, for instance, in her splendid book Transforming Vision, guilty of such 'infatuation?' I would like to think not.

Overall, Ferguson offers a thoughtful and thought-provoking, if contentious, reading of Kierkegaard's work.

Despite claiming—somewhat inaccurately—not to be a book 'about Kierkegaard', Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity deserves a wide readership amongst Kierkegaard scholars.

¹ John H. Whittaker, 'Can a Purely Grammatical Enquiry be Religiously Persuasive?', in Timothy Tessin and Mario von der Ruhr (eds), Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief (Basingstoke: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 348-366. Whittaker's answer is, in a word, 'yes.'

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ARTICLE

Style in the Translation of Kierkegaard

by

Alastair Hannay
Institute of Linguistics and Philosophy, University of Oslo
PO Box 1024, Blindern N-0315
Oslo, NORWAY

We sometimes think of a writer's style as a kind of signature, a mark that makes that writer's work immediately recognizable. Not all writers have a style in this sense, not even all great writers in the "canon", and even when they do, often it takes an expert to point out just what features make up a writer's special mark or signature. Given the diversity of styles often said to be represented in his writings, as well as the special sort of secrecy which he seems to preserve concerning his own personal attitudes to what he wrote, one might think that Kierkegaard's writings had no style in this sense, that is, that they lack a signature. And yet how often do we not hear people say that for all the diversity of genres in the works, the lyrical, the dialectical, the edifying, and so on, as well as the distance-creating pseudonymity, they bear unmistakably the stamp of being written by this single individual and no other?

In an age so used to hearing of the death of the author, this notion of a signature will raise some suspicions. Whatever else the notion of a signature means, it surely cannot, must not, mean that the author himself is still somehow present in his work? But it isn't always quite clear what those who proclaim the death of the author are really denying. If it is simply to insist that an author's writings can be judged independently of whatever particular designs and intentions may have inspired them, then at least the notion of a signature should not disturb them, for the signature in our sense is a character of the texts themselves, a feature bestowed by the author on the very words before our eyes, just as much as any ordinary signature. There is, on the other hand, and as I shall argue, a sense of style as form in which in judging, and interpreting, Kierkegaard's works his designs and intentions do indeed have to be taken account of, though it is another question whether and in

what sense this implies that the author is still alive in his works.

We may not unfittingly seek guidance here in the works of perhaps the most influential proclaimer of the death of the author himself, the French critic, Roland Barthes. Barthes sees the 1850's, Kierkegaard's time, as a time of literary crisis. This post-1848 period of upheaval and deracination in Europe saw the beginning of modern capitalism and the splitting of the society Barthes was most interested in, that of France, into sharply defined classes. Literature, and Barthes is thinking of French literature in particular, suddenly found itself having to justify its own existence. The focal concepts for Barthes are form and style. Hitherto form was not something writers had to take into account other than by demonstrating an ability to conform with certain self-evident norms of "conciseness," "order" and "grace." Otherwise a writer's form was little more than a "ready-made instrument...the working of which was handed down unchanged without anyone being obsessed with novelty" (Roland Barthes, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture (1953) (trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, Writing Degree Zero, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 62). But now, from about 1850, style became the focus, so that from this time on "writing [was] to be saved not by virtue of what it exists for, but thanks to the work it has cost" (p. 63). The image of the writer now becomes that of, as Barthes puts it, a "craftsman who shuts himself away in some legendary place, like a workman operating alone, and who roughs out, cuts, polishes and sets his form exactly as a jeweller extracts art from his material, devoting to his work regular hours of solitary effort" (ibid.).

Few will disagree that the description fits Kierkegaard, an extraordinarily versatile craftsman for whom style, though a "later task" to be looked after once the thoughts had acquired their own form (see Papirer XI 1 A 214), was an essential ingredient in his work. And few will disagree that, in a quite straightforward sense, the value of Kierkegaard's work lies in what it cost him as a writer. But the costs by which Kierkegaard's works are to be valued are not exactly those Barthes has in mind; they are the costs of personal self-development in which the reader too is meant to be involved. However, there is indeed that aspect of style which is due to the craftsman's labour over regular hours and solitary effort, and the relevance of this for the lonely efforts of translators is obvious enough, so I shall begin with these.

How can we hope to reproduce the craftsmanship of the original without also being a craftsman of the same calibre

in our own languages? And without having spent at least as many solitary hours on developing our styles? Even if a translator perhaps never really can reproduce the signature of the original, partly because—as I shall suggest—signatures are too deeply embedded in the craftsman's own language for that, what must none the less be possible is to "do justice" in one way or another to that style. By that I mean, at least negatively, that the translation does not impose a style that is inappropriate, so that an absence of style might be more fitting if there is no other way doing justice to the original. Naturally, no word-by-word translation will do that, for style is not carried on the backs of words, and the fatal hazard of translation lies exactly in the way or ways in which style and eloquence get lost on the way.

I have spoken here for convenience of a writer's signature, something which we can call an author's personal style. But there are further sides to this notion which complicate the translator's task further. For after all, the most natural way of describing this signature is to say that it is this or that individual's own way with his or her language—not with language as such, which is too abstract a notion to capture what we mean here, but with the language which the author is at home in, in this case Kierkegaard's Danish, a language which he said he loved. A style in this sense, where we find it—and if Barthes is right then in all major authors at least from the last one hundred and fifty years we do find it—is the individual mark of the writer. Let us call this the singular end of the scale of style. By that I mean that style in this sense can pertain to other things too, to features of writing identifiable not so much in the work of individual writers as in the linguistic practices of the language community within which they write. But by "style" we can also refer to the way of writing characteristic of one or another genre, one or another use of language—in the law court, speeches, at ceremonies, and all the way down to instruction manuals. Especially in this latter instance style, as also "genre," need not be tied to a given language community or to any one given natural language.

But the notion of a linguistic community can be extended further to embrace all in a position to understand a certain discourse, for instance the discourse of computer instruction books in whatever language. Style in this sense is a manner of writing adapted to an end. Unlike literature, in Barthes's terms, there is quite obviously something the writing is for, and even if the fulfilment of the purpose of, say, a repair manual, calls for a certain craftsmanship on the part of the writer, it is not the kind of craftsmanship out of which a writer develops a personal

style. On the contrary, the stylistic rule here is to abide by certain standards, if not of grace, at least of conciseness and order.

Since we are talking of manuals, and for the benefit of those who may be unfamiliar with his work, I would like to refer here to Barthes's Elements of Semiology. This itself is in effect a manual. In it, for our instruction, Barthes locates "style" in relation to the well-known Saussurean langue/parole distinction. Much of the history of French semiology can be read as a series of attempts to make the refinements necessary for this distinction to have some empirical application. Barthes' contribution to this enterprise is to distinguish degrees of "idiolecticity" (my term), the term "idiolect" being one that had been introduced to the discussion by Roman Jakobson ("Deux aspects du langage et deux types d'aphasies," Essais de Linguistiques générales, Éditions de Minuit, 1963, p. 54). As the etymology suggests "idio-lect" means something like language as used by the individual—not necessarily, and perhaps not possibly a language which only one individual can use, that is to say entirely private, but individual all the same. We can see that, because they have to do with use, idiolects lie on the side of language (langue) rather than parole (speech), and yet they tend in the direction of the latter. Indeed, if you allow the notion of an idiolect to stretch far enough, the idea of langue seems almost to vanish from sight and acquire the status of an abstraction.

What has this to do with style? Well, Barthes locates style somewhere between the total idiosyncrasy of aphasia on the one hand, where language-use includes no assimilation at all of the verbal patterns of a langue (therefore, as he points out, a "pure" idiolect in Jakobson's sense) and, on the other, the notion of the language of a linguistic community, a community which, just because we so describe or delimit it, exists inside a set of shared, mutually available, verbal patterns. This is of course still not language or langue as such; it is the notion of a language-group whose members "read" each other without difficulty because they are always in a position to read each other in the same way. For Barthes, then, style in his sense is the individual writer's own way with words where the words are nevertheless verbal patterns belonging to, and partly defining, a community and its tradition (see Elements of Semiology, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 21).

This sounds painfully obvious, but it contains an important point all the same. The language in which our

singular stylist writes has itself the quality of an idiolect. By the language I am not referring here, in the first instance, to Danish as such, or to any time-slice of that language; I am referring to something smaller and more local than either, namely to the community of educated Danes for whom Kierkegaard wrote. There is, I think, in any locally defined language something we might call the characteristic feel and manner of its everyday usage and use, perhaps particularly among a certain group, e.g. the group of talkative, educated coffee-bar frequenters and coterie members in mid-nineteenth century Denmark. If we can refer to this community as a linguistic one in something like Barthes's sense, that is, by virtue of a mutual understanding based on community tradition and shared patterns of words, then the problem of translation can be expressed as a challenge measured in terms of the idiolectic distance a translator must traverse in order to render what is characteristically colloquial in one language to another language—to another language which may not be characteristically colloquial at all. Some translators will be faced with greater distances than others, not because they lack synonyms in their own language for the words of the original, though that can also be true, but because their idiolect differs more rather than less from that of the community from within which the translated author, in our case Kierkegaard, wrote.

But now let us push this notion of idiolectic distance even further to reach the Danish language as such. The reason I suggest we do this is my own experience on first hearing Kierkegaard's text spoken in Danish. It seemed "infinitely" (as Kierkegaard would say) more natural than any translated version I had heard or read aloud to myself including especially—even though the languages are superficially very similar—Norwegian, which I myself have used a great deal in my teaching. And the same no doubt applies to Swedish, Icelandic, Faroese, The Danish language has a special quality at least as much among Scandinavian languages as in its relation to other languages, or at least those with which I am acquainted.

I don't quite know how to express the elusive feature that characterizes Danish as such, if indeed there is such a feature. One way of trying to get at it might be to say that Danish, at least to me, and I make this distinction partly through a comparison with Norwegian, is a talker's language, even a language that, to put it a little whimsically, likes to be talked. Of course all natural languages are to be talked, but some talker's languages are the product of people who enjoy talking, delight in talking, the result of an emphasis on talking and articulate sociality, abrasive, or harmonious, amusing or challenging as the case may be. Danish can be

compared in this way with Irish and also the English spoken by the Irish, as against the English spoken by the English themselves which, in its cultivated forms is not an enthusiastic talker's language. That at least is my own impression. And for the translator, unless he or she is fortunate enough to be an Irish English-speaker or some other equivalent, it poses a major problem and challenge, namely that of reproducing this feature in a language which lacks the essential orality of Danish.

In one way, this may set a limit to a translation. Just as an author's eloquence easily gets lost in translation, so too may the natural feel or style of the language he or she writes in. These things may, in some cases, simply have to be left behind. That would be the case if the only way of reproducing them would be to do so in a style which in the translating language would be unnatural, eccentric, or some cheapened version of what counts as characteristic of that language, so that the dignity of the original would be lost. This is simply because the characters of languages do significantly differ. I am not sure how great a problem this actually is for translators of Kierkegaard, but I am suggesting that the problem is there to consider at the outset in any case of translation where style is important. What it means in effect is that we should perhaps resign ourselves to the fact that translation, even good translation, of Kierkegaard, even the best, if some measure of optimality were at all available, will give us something we might call another Kierkegaard, a Kierkegaard substitute but not a repetition, or to avoid complications with that Kierkegaardian concept I should perhaps say, not a "repeat" of the original.

Whatever we think of this idea of Danish itself as an idiolect whose idiosyncrasy is to be a talker's language, it is clear that Kierkegaard regarded his own writings as distinctively oral in character. Kierkegaard tells us himself that he prepared much of what he wrote by reciting it over and over again as he walked the streets of Copenhagen. Writings that are prepared by internal recitation in this way should be read at least half aloud, in the way one would speak it. As we know, Kierkegaard says in his journals that the point of his special punctuation was to give the reader clear indications as to how accents should fall; and in this connection we should perhaps not forget Kierkegaard's enduring interest in and constant references to the theatre.

The challenge here, then, for the translator is to be able, over and above the task of reproducing what might be abstractly called the literal content of the text, to find a rhythm and a general style that bears and indeed invites

recitation rather than silent reading, at least where that is clearly appropriate. One should recognize and bear in mind that Kierkegaard's writings, in spite of their admired literary qualities, are not literary in the ceremonious sense that they are appealing first of all to the reader's sense of style, form, use of terms etc. Although Kierkegaard was no doubt a self-conscious stylist, there isn't a crumb of the portentous in his writings; there is movement and purpose and stimulation at every step. This might even be called part of his "signature," but if so not in the sense referred to above that defines style as what a writer makes of his own language, for these characteristics can be found in any language's literature. What it means in practice is that in translating Kierkegaard we have to try to provide our sentences with a rhythm that conveys the movement and purpose of the Danish.

Danish, as many other languages, particularly in their parole character, makes use of many small words whose place and sometimes very presence are due to the requirements of rhythm. This can become merely a bad habit of speech, but even written Danish contains a host of "vels," "jos," "dogs," "netops" and the like, which if you carry them over into the translation with "indeeds," "neverthelesses," "precisely" and so on, because of the totally different phonetic structures of these latter, altogether destroy the rhythm. In English, at least, the semantic functions, or perhaps better "forces," of these words can often be rendered in other ways which make translation redundant, though of course well placed "howevers" and "indeeds" may (indeed!) play their rhythmic role.

Kierkegaard's texts, as I read them, are therefore talking, even talkative, texts, though the style (in the sense of what is appropriate to a genre, what I think Barthes would call an écriture) can veer towards solemnity in certain cases, as is proper to certain forms of utterance, for instance in a church, and in others to plain garrulousness—though there are passages and even whole works in which the expression of thought is reduced to almost telegraphic bareness, with telling effect, as it can be in speech itself, as we all know. Think of the opening of The Sickness Unto Death, and indeed of that work as a whole, particularly Part One.

Ideally, a translation aims to sound as though it were the original version of the work. As we all know, that is a goal which can very rarely be achieved. I myself did once almost achieve it, but the example provides a timely warning. Early in my translating career I wrote a translation which was reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement, and the reviewer praised the translation by

saying there was little or no sign that the book had not been written originally in English. The work in question was an elementary introduction to semantics, used in an obligatory propaedeutic course at Norwegian universities, the so-called “examen philosophicum.” It was in fact my first translation. At the time I knew virtually no Norwegian, so of course if there were any niceties of style in the original I was unable to detect them. Apart from the drudgery of looking up words, the translation was easy, really. With enough words in my mind at a time, enough for a whole thought, say) the task was simply to make nice-sounding English sentences; nothing else stood in the way, no style, not even the Germanic syntax of Scandinavian. The words simply reassembled themselves in my mind in an English way, expressing what I took the original to be saying. This was possible because the genre, or the *écriture*, was one with which I, as a philosophy graduate, was already familiar, and for which I already had a “ready-made instrument.”

The instrument was the style appropriate to this kind of work for those whom I had been educated; so the translation looked like a reasonably fluent, English-style textbook. But of course this was my style, not the author's; or rather, it was the way I would naturally write within that genre. In Norway that genre could have quite another style, and the author might have had his own signature within that style—though as I was to learn later the original had lost any signature it may once have had by being tampered with over seven editions by the author's assistants. The translation gave it a style where it had none, but this style was that of a craft I had learned elsewhere. Since then all the difficulties a translator faces have gradually become clear to me, as I learned to appreciate the styles and rhythms of Norwegian and its character (or characters) as a language. Necessarily, as matters of syntax, style, eloquence and the rest gradually came to view and posed their challenge, things have become increasingly difficult. And then, of course, I had to overcome the convenient illusion that Norwegian and Danish are pretty much the same except for the sounds.

In a very obvious sense, this translation of mine was a bad one. However, not all translations require to be good in the sense in which this one was bad. Introductions to semantics and to logic do not need a style, any more than do manuals for operating personal computers or repairing tractors. These may and do have (though they often conspicuously fail to exemplify) their appropriate *écritures*, but the writing here is not one in which eloquence or style play a part. The translator therefore does not have to reproduce such a style, which is not to deny that there may be other problems

facing a translator of manuals, for example the expertise required of those who write in that genre.

But Kierkegaard's works are not instructional. Nor, indeed, are the majority of the texts that have generally been called philosophical. There are interesting differences, however, which also throw some light on translating Kierkegaard, who as we all appreciate is not a philosopher in any straightforward sense. This is a significant fact for the present discussion. It really means that in Kierkegaard's time—the time of transition to which Barthes refers—there was no genre to which Kierkegaard could attach himself, no ready-made instrument to employ (though he had his models, as for instance in the writings of Poul Møller). But when he died Kierkegaard could well be said to have created not only an entirely new genre—a new *écriture*, perhaps several, or a style that allowed for a proliferation of sub-styles. The question is, in contrast to the instructional text whose style is to lack style, in what way the element of style does enter these new genres.

The fact that there are big differences in the degree of dependence of style on content and vice versa is obvious, both in literature and philosophy, and in combinations of these—which is perhaps where we should be looking for Kierkegaard's special *écriture*. This can be illustrated with examples from antiquity. It is commonly held, for instance, that Aristotle is more translatable than Plato, and Euripides than Aeschylus. Why? Both Plato and Aeschylus employ poetic forms of expression, indulge in word-play, use allusions, write rhythmically, and make studied use of cadence and dramatic effect. Aristotle, on the other hand, left us only lecture notes, the style, if any, being in the manner of Aristotle's delivery. Euripides presented situations, placements of characters, with the dramatic or tragic relations clearly revealed, there is no attempt to entrance the audience with the language itself, as one might be tempted to say was the case even with Plato—though the Plato we learn is more often presented in the stylelessness of the tractor repair manual.

But how, it might be asked, could Plato's style add more to the theory of forms than we are told in a good summary from a respectable textbook? That is another question. It is the question of whether style is something the translator must convey in the translation, if the text is to do the job its author intended. It is, to put it in another way, the question of whether style, in this sense, whatever that might be once we had spelled the notion out in all its complexity, may not be, rather, an essential part of what the author is trying to convey. We can also

put this in another and perhaps more telling way by asking, Might not what we are calling style here be essential to how the author intends the reader to apprehend what his texts conveys? Might it not be essential to, let us say, the attitude we are to take to the content, or to the “message” as one says, or as Climacus calls it, the “what”? That might be true even if the attitude we were supposed to take was one of doubt, or initial distance of irony for example, even doubt as to what attitude (other than doubt) we were to take to it at all, that being left to us, the reader, the single individual.

Thus, in the word that has come naturally to the surface here, might not an “ironical” style be intended by the author to make the author treat with scepticism or at least a spirit of questioning but also receptiveness what is conveyed in the letter of the text? Even more, might not the style, in this sense, be the important thing just because it is the attitude (or doubt about attitude) that matters most, the “how” (in terms of Climacus’s distinction) being the paramount thing, not the “what” of the “message”? Might we not even go so far as to see some light cast on the matter by the McLuhanism “the medium (the style in this case) is the message”? For the translator, of course, the “what” must also be dutifully rendered and put across, but the style would be crucial and indispensable and an inability to capture it a serious and indeed fatal failure.

I don’t want to press these questions more here because they involve issues of interpretation which take us far beyond the problems we have come here to discuss. They are intended merely as a kind of frame for a discussion of style, though I’m sure the frame itself could benefit from some discussion. At least we can appreciate that on the scale that begins with operating instructions, repair manuals, and logic primers, and goes through Aristotle and on up to Plato, there is a distinct possibility that although Kierkegaard must obviously be placed closer to Plato than to Aristotle (and to Aeschylus than to Euripides), quite probably he lies even further away from the repair manual than does Plato, which, if true, means that in Kierkegaard’s case capturing the style is not just a professional duty on the part of the translator, it is essential to rendering what Kierkegaard is actually putting across, what he wants us to have in our minds, what our attitudes are to be, when we read and grasp his text.

As I noted at the beginning, Barthes identifies the period around 1850 as a critical time for literature. He describes this in terms of form and the new cultivation of literature as craftsmanship. As I said, no one will deny that the

picture fits Kierkegaard as far as the form of the craftsman is concerned. I also pointed out that the costs for Kierkegaard were not limited to the production of style. The notion of form is interesting here because it lets us see in what way Kierkegaard’s writings do not fit Barthes’s dichotomy. For Kierkegaard himself saw the value of his works in their use, not in the cost of his own labour. What is important for him is not the signature but the expression of what Kierkegaard calls the “idea” (also a problem for English translators of the philosophical terminology used by Kierkegaard, which is alien to most Anglo-“Saxophone” philosophers). For Kierkegaard the notion of the idea is in fact linked to that of form. Consider, relevantly enough in this context, his use of both notions in his Literary Review. Generally, form is opposed to rawness. The individual is contrasted with the crowd by virtue of the presence of form in the former but not the latter. The crowd is raw because no idea informs it—on the Aristotelian analogy it is mere matter, or stuffness. Form is bestowed by the idea. It can take the shape of a group as against the crowd, for a group may be formed by individuals who share an idea, as was characteristic of the revolutionary age which Kierkegaard contrasts with “the present”. But Kierkegaard uses the contrast here to indicate that the genuine or authentic appropriation of the idea is in the way it informs the single individual’s will, the Idea itself coming to its own finally and not before in a way that guarantees that it is the will of a single individual.

Generalizing, we can say that Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous writings present a variety of Ideas in their appropriately living forms. We could also say that the characteristically Kierkegaardian addition to the Aristotelian notion, in which individuation is simply being another piece of matter, is to make individuation in the personal case of matter of the way in which an idea is appropriated and put into action. If Aristotelian soul is the human form of the body, Kierkegaardian spirit is the individual manner of the human being’s appropriation of its Idea. The writings are designed to engage the reader in a process of self-reflection which leads to what in his own life Kierkegaard has come to believe is the proper way of appropriation, the individuating way. The stages of development towards that way could then be said to correspond in a certain way to different styles, different écritures, and the pseudonyms to represent different outlooks with their corresponding styles, all of which in the case of an ideal translation need to be detected and reproduced.

And yet there is a danger in going too far in this direction. As I noted at the beginning, for all the variety of écritures

in Kierkegaard these are not the works of different personalities in any literal sense. Kierkegaard was no schizophrenic; nor did his sufferings include multiple-personality disorder. It is even less true that he is anywhere in the neighbourhood of that all-purpose literary hack, the master of all styles who is himself present in none. So as translators, for all the variety of styles we have to contend with, we are not freed from the task of finding Kierkegaard's own distinctive voice. The texts are to be treated neither in isolation from each other nor in isolation from their author.

But then we return to where we began and the problem of reproducing the work of a craftsman with his unmistakable style. And on top of that we now have the complex problems arising from the fact that Kierkegaard's craftsmanship was in the service of an entirely new kind of writing, a writing that fits neither of the alternatives of Barthes's dichotomy. Certainly it is a novel way of writing, but part of its novelty is that it derives its value from its use. Therefore it is not a writing whose value is to be assessed simply by the work that has gone into it. We can say that the style of craftsmanship plays an essential part in this purpose; but then we must remember that the craftsmanship in question is that of a master of a language which possesses its own distinctive character, a language which anyone with a sense for Kierkegaard's work and not born to Danish must forever regret is not his or her own.

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