

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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NUMBER 41
FEBRUARY 2001

The Fourth International Kierkegaard Conference 2001

June 9-13, 2001
St. Olaf College
Northfield, MN
USA

Hosted by the Hong Kierekgaard Library

Conference Highlights:

Alastair Hannay, distinguished Kierkegaard scholar, will offer the keynote address.

Presentation of Papers on the themes of:

- Kierkegaard's views on and/or practice of communication
- Kierkegaard and hermeneutics broadly defined (including his own hermeneutics and exploration of his connection with the hermeneutical tradition)

Dissertation Panel with summary presentations by scholars who are writing or have just completed their dissertations.

Seminario Iberoamericano: *Escritos de Søren Kierkegaard* (Spanish Translation Seminar) will convene concurrently with the conference. Discussions will relate to the content or translation of the 2nd and 3rd volumes of *Escritos, O bein I* and *II*.

A Call for Papers, Commentators and Dissertation Panelists:

Contact Gordon Marino, Curator of the Kierkegaard Library, marino@stolaf.edu if you would like to submit a paper, present your dissertation or be a commentator.

To participate in the Seminario:

Contact Begonya Saez Tajafuerce
bsaez@seneca.uab.es

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, JUNE 9

10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Registration in Ytterboe Hall

6 p.m.

Opening Dinner

Welcoming Remarks by Curator Gordon Marino and others

7:30 p.m.

Keynote Speaker: Alastair Hannay

SUNDAY, JUNE 10

7 a.m. – Noon

Continental Breakfast

10 a.m. – Noon

Spanish Translation Seminar

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Sunday Brunch

2 – 4:30 p.m.

Dissertation research presentations and comments

5 p.m.

Mississippi riverboat excursion and dinner (optional)

MONDAY, JUNE 11

7:45 – 9 a.m.

Breakfast

9 a.m. – Noon

Presentation of Papers on Communication and/or Hermeneutics

10:15 a.m. Coffee Break

12:30 p.m. Lunch

2 – 5 p.m.

Presentation of Papers

5:30-6:30 p.m. Dinner

7 p.m.
Spanish translation Seminar

TUESDAY, JUNE 12

Same schedule as Monday until 7 p.m.

7-10 p.m.
Presentation of Papers

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13

7:45 – 9 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.
Presentation of papers

10:30 a.m. Coffee Break

Noon
Closing Luncheon

LIBRARY HOURS

The Kierkegaard Library will be open 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. except during conference sessions.

Registration and Payment Information

St. Olaf offers a number of options for registration and housing, including flexible arrival and departure dates and spouse/guest rates. The conference schedule also includes an optional Mississippi riverboat excursion and dinner on Sunday, available at an additional \$25 per person.

To pay, please enclose a check made payable to St. Olaf College for the full amount or charge to your credit card, using the form below.

Online Registration and Information

For updated information or to register online, visit: www.stolaf.edu/services/conferences/kierkegaard

Transportation

St Olaf provides a shuttle to and from the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport for an additional fee. Persons selecting this option will receive a flight information form with their confirmation materials.

Refund Policy:

Cancellations prior to May 15, 2001, will receive a full refund less a \$50.00 administration fee. No refunds will be issued after June 1. Refund requests must be in writing via fax, email, or post.

Mail to:

Conference Office
St. Olaf College
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057-1098
USA

Fax to:

507-646-3690

For More Information

For more information about the conference itself, please contact Cynthia Lund, Assistant Curator, Kierkegaard Library, at lundc@stolaf.edu or call (507) 646-3043.

Registration Form

Please use a separate registration form for each participant.

Name (as you would prefer it to be printed on your nametag)

Position/Title

Institutional Affiliation

Mailing Address

City/State/Province/Country/Zip/Postal Code

The Fourth International Kierkegaard Conference June 9-13, 2001

Mail or fax to:

Conference Office
St. Olaf College
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057-1098 USA
Fax to 507-646-3690

Please enclose a check, made
payable to St. Olaf College,
for the full amount

Or charge to your credit card:
Visa Mastercard Discover

_____-_____-_____
card number

_____/_____
expiration date

name as printed on card

signature

Email

Phone

Fax

Conference Registration Options

	Cost	Total
Participant registration (includes all meals)	\$125	_____
Participant registration (lunches and dinners only)	\$115	_____
* Presenter/commentator registration (all meals)	\$100	_____

Conference Participant Housing Options

College residence hall, single room, June 9-12	\$125	_____
College residence hall, shared room, June 9-12	\$ 95	_____

Roommate name, if another participant: _____

Please assign a roommate, I am a: male / female (circle one)

Mississippi Riverboat Excursion & Dinner

Supported in part by the Friends of the Kierkegaard Library

Excursion ticket(s). (Guests welcome).

Indicate # of tickets _____ \$ 25 _____

Pre- and Post- Conference Housing Options

Early arrival: June 8 \$ 25 _____

Extended stay: (@\$25/night) # of nights _____ @ \$ 25 _____

Shuttle Transportation to/from the Twin Cities International Airport

You will receive a flight information form with your confirmation.

you must send all flight information by email or fax **by May 25, 2001.**

One way \$ 25 _____

Round trip \$ 40 _____

Spouse/Guest Housing and Event Registration

Spouse or guest housing registration, shared room \$ 95 _____

Full meal plan (includes all the meals listed below) \$ 85 _____

Open banquet: Saturday 6 p.m. \$ 17 _____

Sunday brunch: Sunday noon \$ 12 _____

Closing luncheon: Wednesday noon \$ 12 _____

Spouse/guest name: _____

Total USD (U.S. dollars) \$ _____

* Select this option ONLY if you have already been confirmed as a presenter/commentator.

NEWS FROM THE HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY

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

SCHOLARS PROGRAM 2000

Twenty-three visiting scholars used the library in the past year. The final scholar of the year was Cleide Scarletelli Rohden (Escola Superior di Teologia, Instituto Ecumenico do Pos-Fracuuaca-IEPG, Sao Leopoldo, Rio Grande So Sul, Brazil) who joined us in October during her semester of study at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

THE KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, 2001

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, 2001. 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 Friends of the Kierkegaard Library met in the Library on November 4, 2000 following a luncheon and business meeting. Howard Hong led the group in a reading and discussion of "Love Builds Up" from *Works of Love*.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Approximately 155 new titles were acquired since August 2000.

We would like to thank the following scholars and friends for their contributions to the Library: Hans Aaen, Leo Stan, Rafael Larreneta, Karel Eisses, Begonya Saez Tajafuerce, Jolita Adomenience, Pam and Jack Schwandt, Hugh Pyper, Gretchen Hardrove, Zdenek Zacpal, Alessandro Cortese, John Lippitt, Ettore Rocca, Andrew Burgess, the family of William H.K. Narum, Adrian Arsinevice, Howard Hong, Gordon Marino. The Hong Kierekgaard Library stongly encourages the donation of books and articles on Kierkegaard and related thinkers to add to its collections and to share with other libraries and scholars. Gift books are so indicated with a special donor bookplate.

PROGRESS IN THE ARCHIVES, THE CATALOG, AND COLLECTION PRESERVATION

Contributions of materials for the newspaper collection, periodical article collection, and archival collection are welcome. The Library seeks documentary materials related to the Kierkegaard Library or Kierkegaard studies worldwide including manuscripts, pictorial materials, proceedings of societies, biographical materials about Kierkegaard scholars, etc.

PUBLICATIONS

The Library sponsors the publication of an undergraduate journal of existential thought, *The Reed*. This journal, which is now in its fourth 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

Publications of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen

Kierkegaard's early journals, AA-DD, were published as volume 17, accompanied by 2778 commentaries in volume K17, of Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter on November 16, 2000. The volumes of journals will be published in the special format, which very mirrors the original format of Kierkegaard's own text in two columns.

On the occasion of the publishing of the first volumes of the journals the Royal Library in Copenhagen had a small exhibition of Kierkegaard manuscripts and of SKS, as well as of previous editions of the journals, which illustrated how SKS differed from other editions in the typesetting of the journals.

Volume 18 with K18, containing the journals EE-KK, will be published in May 2001.

New brochure on Søren Kierkegaard Skrifter in English will be available in February 2001.

Other publications in November, 2000:

Joakim Garff's biography of Søren Kierkegaard, SAK, was published from Gads Forlag. For this book Joakim Garff has been awarded the Georg Brandes Prize for best biography, 2000.

Pia Søltøft's dissertation, *The Ethics of Dizziness* was also published from Gads Forlag.

Jon Stewart was awarded the Inger Sjöberg Translation Prize from the American Scandinavian Foundation for his translation of Johan Ludvig Heiberg's Primary Texts.

From *International Kierkegaard Commentary* Editor

The efforts of the writers and the advisory board led to the publication of two volumes of International Kierkegaard Commentary in the year 2000. They were volumes on Works of Love and Stages on Life's Way. The editor thanks all for their labors.

The manuscript for International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'The Concept of Irony' was mailed to the publisher on 5 January 2001. There is every expectation that the volume will be available at the American Academy of Religion in November this fall.

A remarkable collection of articles on For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself! has arrived at the editor's home address. There promises to be several new authors. The hope is that evaluation, rewrites (if any), galleys, page proofs, and index can be completed in time for the American Academy of Religion in November. Speedy responses from all will insure this happy eventuality.

Articles for consideration for International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses' are due 15 June 2001 with the hope that we can have a midwinter or spring 2002 publication. A large number of articles are expected, so there should be no monographs.

First call: Papers for the volume of International Kierkegaard Commentary dedicated to Practice in Christianity should arrive at the editor's home by the beginning of the second semester of 2001-2002 academic year. Persons planning to contribute should communicate with the editor as soon as possible.

Change in area prefix: On 15 February 2001 the area code for the editor's phone number will change to 386 (fun-how very Disney): 386-734-6457.

Kierkegaard Cabinet in Budapest

The Kierkegaard Cabinet in Budapest will open on 2 March 2001 with an inauguration ceremony and panel discussion. The directors thank Mr. and Mrs. Hong, Hong/Kierkegaard Library, and the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre for the donation of books central to the Cabinets' collection of Kierkegaard materials. To request information about the Kierkegaard Cabinet or to offer books, articles, databases, etc. for scholars, students and translators in the region please contact Andras Nagy at andrasnagy@mail.metavnet.hu.

Lecture Series Named in Honor of Kierkegaardian Scholar Paul Holmer

In view of Paul Holmer's remarkable achievements as a Christian philosopher in the higher educational context, an annual series entitled "The Holmer Lectures" has been established by the MacLaurin Institute, a Christian study center at the University of Minnesota.

The Holmer Lectures, intended to show that the demands of sound scholarship are compatible with a lively faith, have featured since their inauguration in 1997 speakers from several Christian traditions. Notre Dame historian George Marsden, University of Massachusetts political scientist Glen Tinder, Yale philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff (in the same endowed chair once held by Paul), and Paul himself have lectured. This year's lecture, free and open to the public, is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21, 4pm at the Cowles Auditorium in the Hubert H. Humphrey Center at the University of Minnesota, and features philosopher Bruce Reichenbach of Augsburg College on the topic: "Divine Sway: The Concept of Play in Religious Thought."

The MacLaurin Institute's mission is to communicate to academia and the broader society the transforming potential of the Christian worldview. The Institute sponsors for-credit Christian studies courses for university students, as well as occasional campus lectures, seminars, and conferences, including the recent African Nation-Builders Workshop.

The Institute has re-issued Dr. Holmer's 1984 book "Making Christian Sense" under the new title "Making Sense of Our Lives." This attractive \$9.95 paperback is on sale for readers of this publication with your order. E-mail maclaurin@maclaurin.org, or phone 612-378-1935 to order MENTION THIS PUBLICATION with your order. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

For further information, contact The MacLaurin Institute, 331 17th Ave. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, USA (Fax 612-378-0244).

KIERKEGAARDIANA NEWS

KIERKEGAARDIANA 22; CALL FOR PAPERS

Kierkegaardiana continues to 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 22. Please submit materials for volume #22 by 1 April, 2001.

Please, send your contributions to:

Pia Søltøft
The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
Store Kannikestræde 15
DK-1169 København K.
DENMARK
e-mail: ps@sk.ku.dk

either – or... Continental (or deconstructive) readings of Kierkegaard

AN INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD FORUM
Celebrating (untimely) Jacques Derrida's 70th birthday

sponsored by Augusta State University
co-sponsored by the Georgia Continental Philosophy Circle

March 1-3, 2001

Guest Speakers:

Thursday, March 1

Calvin O. Schrag, George Ade Distinguished
Professor of Philosophy, Purdue University
"Either-Or and Kierkegaard's Ethic of
the Gift."

Friday, March 2

Roger Poole, University of Nottingham
"Reading *Either-Or* for the very first
time"

David Wood, Vanderbilt University
"Tales of innocence and experience:
Kierkegaard's spiritual accounting."

Pat Bigelow, Austin, Texas
"b"

Elsebet Jegstrup, Augusta State University
"A Rose by any other name...
Kierkegaardian Ironies."

John Caputo, David R. Cook, Professor of
Philosophy Villanova University
"Either/Or, Neither/Nor, and Undecidability."

Saturday, March 3

Mark Dooley, University College – Dublin
"Begging for the Impossible: The
Passions and Loves of Søren
Kierkegaard and
Jacques Derrida."

Vanessa Rumble, Boston College
"Love and difference: the either-or of
Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*."

Joakim Garff, Søren Kierkegaard Research
Centre, Copenhagen
"*The aesthetic is altogether my
element*."

Richard Kearney, Boston College
"Imagination and Desire in *Either/Or*."

Registration Fee: \$35

Coordinator:
Elsebet Jegstrup
Associate Professor of Philosophy
E-mail: jegstrup@aug.edu

<http://www.aug.edu/~hishpv/Kierkegaard.html>

For more information contact:
Ms Linda Grijalva, Political Science & Philosophy
Augusta State University, Augusta, GA 30904
Phone: (706) 737-1710 E-mail: lgrijalva@aug.edu

SØREN KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM: CONFERENCE

The second international conference, Kierkegaard: Between Ethics and Religion, of the Søren Kierkegaard Society of the United Kingdom will be held at the University of Leeds on Thursday, July 5 through Sunday, July 8, 2001.

Speakers scheduled include: John D. Caputo (Villanova), C. Stephen Evans (Calvin College), M. Jamie Ferreira (Virginia), Joakim Garff (Copenhagen), Daphne Hampson (St. Andrews), András Nagy (Budapest), George Pattison (Cambridge), Roger Poole (Nottingham), Merold Westphal (Fordham).

Kierkegaard now rivals Nietzsche in terms of the wide diversity of hermeneutical traditions which have claimed him as their own. This conference aims to bring together representatives of some of these different traditions to explore dimensions of the ethical and religious significance, and contemporary relevance, of Kierkegaard's thought. As well as plenary sessions, it is planned to hold several symposia on connections between Kierkegaard and other thinkers, and possibly on aspects of particular texts within the Kierkegaardian corpus. In particular, submissions for symposia on the following topics are welcome: the 'leap'; the sublime; humour; Kierkegaard and Bakhtin; Kierkegaard and Levinas; Kierkegaard and Nietzsche; Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein; Kierkegaard and atheology; Kierkegaard after postmodernism; Kierkegaard in Eastern Europe and Russia.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: IMMEDIACY AND REFLECTION IN KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

Catholic University of Leuven, Institute of Philosophy, Centre for Culture and Philosophy and University of Antwerp (UFSIA), Centre for Ethics.

The Conference will take place October 10-13, 2001 with meetings in Leuven, October 10, 11, 13 and meetings in

Antwerp on October 12. Languages of the conference are English, German and French.

Call for Papers:

Deadline for Abstracts: 2001, March 1

Deadline for Papers: 2001, May 1

In his review of Fru Gyllembourg's novel *Two Ages* Kierkegaard described his time as an age of reflection contrasting it with the age of passion. Reflection thus seems to be the sickness of the modern age – and almost all of the Kierkegaardian pseudonym authors appear to engage in a polemic against the different symptoms of this sickness. Infinite reflection on the other hand, appears to be one of the main conditions of an authentic life. Immediacy, in so far as it is one of the typical characteristics of an aesthetic life style, as well as finite reflection seem to be rejected by Kierkegaard. However, there are some suggestions that immediacy is to be preserved (e.g. the immediacy of first love in marriage) or regained (e.g. the new immediacy character of religion).

The ambition of the conference is to investigate the different positions of both key concepts of Kierkegaard's authorship.

Possible headings: the age of reflection and the age of passion; immediacy and reflection as existential categories; finite and infinite reflection; the perspective of a new immediacy; immediacy and reflection in German Idealism as compared to Kierkegaard; immediacy and reflection as post-modern keywords as compared to Kierkegaard, etc...

Abstracts of the papers are to be sent to: joan.taels@ufsia.ac.be or karl.verstrynge@kulak.ac.be

For all practical information: ingrid.puncher@hiw.kuleuven.ac.be

REVIEWS

***Both/And: Reading Kierkegaard from Irony to Edification.* By Michael Strawser. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997. xl + 261 p. with index. \$17.00
ISBN 0823217019**

**Mark Lloyd Taylor
Seattle University – Seattle, Washington**

Michael Strawser's *Both/And* joins an impressive list of excellent books on Søren Kierkegaard published in English during the 1990s, contributing after its own fashion as rich resources to a fuller understanding of Kierkegaard as Bruce Kirmmse's historical-cultural study *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, Sylvia Walsh's thematic-analytic *Living Poetically*, or Roger Poole's deconstructive-literary *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication*. This contribution is all the more remarkable given the comparative brevity of Strawser's book. Put most simply, *Both/And* insists that Kierkegaard's writings *must be read* (that is, with careful attention to their textual features), that they *can be read as a whole*, and that such a holistic reading *need not impose an alien system* upon them. As he attends to the Kierkegaardian texts, Strawser manages admirably to avoid dead-ends to which certain interpretive

disjunctions, certain either/ors, have led in past Kierkegaard scholarship.

Despite Kierkegaard's rejection of much of the modern philosophy of his day and despite the problematic status of philosophy in our postmodern age, Strawser attempts what he calls a *philosophical* reading of Kierkegaard. This means, first of all, a sustained and comprehensive interpretation of the whole of Kierkegaard's writings. Strawser refuses to work exclusively with, or to grant priority to, either the pseudonymous books or the veronymous writings (his term for the signed religious works). Moreover, instead of untying various dialectical knots, Strawser seeks to tighten them thereby maintaining "the tension pervasive throughout Kierkegaard's writings" and "preserv[ing] the differences and inconsistencies" they present (pp. xxi-xxii). In

particular, this involves attending to both the aesthetic and the religious features within each and every work, pseudonymous as well as veronymous. Ultimately, because “texts alone are available for interpretation, evaluation, and criticism,” to read philosophically means: “beginning at the beginning of Kierkegaard’s writings, beginning from the ground up, proceeding (reading) slowly without prejudgments and without a pre-(con)text” (pp. xviii-xix); it means reading Kierkegaard “*openly* (allowing for all possibilities, even that of being uplifted) and *closely* (and, if possible, in his native language)” (p. xxv); and it means reading him “seriously and playfully” (p. xxv). I especially appreciate the playfulness of *Both/And*, for it taps into the immense playfulness of Kierkegaard’s texts even as it leads Strawser to behave with delicious irreverence toward the orthodox (but textually suspect) dogmas of many “Kierkegaardologists” (his term).

Strawser contrasts his philosophical reading, which highlights the role of Socrates within Kierkegaard’s writings, to an *aesthetic* one (verging on “the ridiculous”), that locates their meaning in a biographical retrieval of Søren’s relationship to Regine Olsen (p. xviii). More importantly, he takes issue with *religious* readings (linked to the heritage of Kierkegaard’s father), which Strawser considers “unwarranted” or all-too-familiar or “overbearing” in the way they cut Kierkegaard up into “nourishing” pieces while ignoring “his warnings about the dangers of direct communication” (pp. xvii-xviii). And yet Strawser also distinguishes his approach from a *deconstructive* reading that denies there is any stable, identifiable point at all to Kierkegaard’s writings, especially those by pseudonyms. Unfortunately, as I will suggest later, the most serious weakness of *Both/And* lies in Strawser’s handling of the specifically Christian texture of Kierkegaard’s texts. His contribution needs to be balanced and complemented by such recent books as David Gouwens’ *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*, Timothy Polk’s *The Biblical Kierkegaard*, Harvey Ferguson’s *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity*, and George Pattison’s *Kierkegaard: The Aesthetic and the Religious*.

The both/and of Strawser’s title refers first and foremost to the two key terms of his subtitle: irony and edification. His point is that throughout all Kierkegaard’s writings the reader encounters *both* irony *and* edification. One cannot identify the pseudonymous works alone as practicing indirect communication, for the veronymous texts are full of literary devices and need to be read and interpreted. On the other hand, the point of the pseudonymous works, like the veronymous ones, lies extra-textually in the life of the reader. So, the name S. Kierkegaard on the title page of a book does not signify the lack of ironic indirection, while a pseudonym does not exclude the goal of building up the reader personally

and existentially.

Strawser begins his sustained reading of the whole of Kierkegaard’s writings with a series of three chapters on books written before *Either/Or* and the inception of the pseudonymous authorship: *From the Papers of One Still Living*, *Concept of Irony*, and *Johannes Climacus*. He argues that already in the first, a signed work, one has indirect communication and that in the dissertation on Socrates and irony one finds nothing less than a “buried treasure map” for Kierkegaard’s subsequent authorial practice (pp. 94-95). These chapters are quite original and helpful, giving prominence to works under-represented in the scholarly literature. Next, in the second of the book’s three parts, Strawser moves to a consideration of irony and edification in the pseudonymous writings. Passing over the early pseudonyms, he takes up Kierkegaard’s “First and Last Declaration” at the end of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, then focuses on the themes of truth, subjectivity, and maieutics in the books by Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus. This strikes me as the least helpful and original portion of *Both/And*. While I appreciate his debunking of the aura of seriousness surrounding the theory of stages in the Climacus texts, much of the material here reiterates insights gained many years ago by Louis Mackey (*Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*, 1971) and Josiah Thompson (*Kierkegaard*, 1973). But then in the brilliant third part of the book Strawser reveals the indirect character of Kierkegaard’s veronymous writings (here treading common ground with the books by Pattison and Ferguson mentioned earlier). He shows that the truth in such signed religious writings is as extra-textual as that in the pseudonymous books, and as little didactic, resting in the personal appropriation of the reader; and offers an account of the intertwining of edification and love from the sermon at the end of *Either/Or*, through the edifying discourses of 1843-44 and *Works of Love* (1847), to *Christian Discourses* (1848). Finally, in a concluding chapter, he addresses (the posthumous) *Point of View* in connection with postmodernist thought and postmodernist interpretations of Kierkegaard, urging that Kierkegaard’s texts hardly need a deconstructive reading insofar as they already practice in advance their own postmodern gambit.

Beyond the primary contribution of the book, which is the careful and sustained reading of Kierkegaard just outlined, Strawser offers his reader a wealth of specific insights. Some are narrow in scope; for example, that the phrase “one still living” in the title of Kierkegaard’s first book, far from having to do with losses in his own personal life (as Walter Lowrie claimed over fifty years ago), actually represents one more satiric dig at Hans Christian Andersen. Others apply more broadly, such as Strawser’s well-constructed argument that the term *hiin*

Enkelte, that single individual, so prominent in Kierkegaard, is an inclusive, not an exclusive, term, signaling the equal intimacy of any and every reader to the text and to edification, not some secret code meant for Regine alone, or his insistence that *Point of View* is a text that must be read and interpreted like all the rest, not a privileged direct utterance “somehow mysteriously lying outside the Kierkegaardian corpus” (pp. xxviii). In a most salutary way, Strawser avoids granting *Point of View* a (falsely) comprehensive finality in the understanding of Kierkegaard. As current a book as Hibib Malik’s *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard* (1997), regrettably, testifies to the relevance of Strawser’s work in this regard.

Because I find Strawser’s call for an open and close reading of Kierkegaard’s books so compelling, I want to suggest that his own reading could be both *closer* and *more open* at several crucial points touching on *gender* and the presence of *Jesus Christ* in Kierkegaard’s texts.¹

While I endorse Strawser’s strong claim that *Concept of Irony* embodies Kierkegaard’s “original point of view,” I find it telling that his treatment of the dissertation “begin[s] near the end” of the text (pp. 27, 28). By beginning *near the end*, he overlooks or underestimates both the first and last paragraphs of *Concept of Irony*. The first paragraph, it seems to me, figuratively frames the issues of the entire essay in terms of the possible demeanors or deportments with which the masculine philosopher might approach the feminine phenomenon. Eventually, four such demeanors get articulated and analyzed: the way in which Hegel rapes the phenomenon, imposing his own positive principles on the negativity, the irony, of Socrates; that of Socrates himself, the voyeuristic (male) midwife whose love of younger men confounds the usual sexual schema, insofar as he refuses to give himself (femininely) to others and yet cannot engender (or father) new life, but only watches/assists the labors of others; the self-absorbed autoeroticism of the romanticists which drains the (feminine) world of body, actuality, and history of any significance whatsoever; and the demeanor of the eroticist (S. Kierkegaard himself?), who accomplishes a fruitful intercourse of male and female principles, even while respecting the integrity of the latter – a demeanor consistently fleshed out in Christian theological language. Strawser’s one brief mention of gender comes in a footnote concerning pronouns, Rorty, and Derrida (n. 8 to p. 30).

The dissertation’s last paragraph turns on allusions to Christian notions of the incarnation, allusions that finally help piece together a series of marginal and parenthetical references throughout the text to Jesus Christ, including the first of fifteen Latin theses S. Kierkegaard was required to append to his Danish dissertation, which asserts that the similarity between

Socrates and Jesus Christ consists in their dissimilarity.² Kierkegaard himself provides, in *Concept of Irony*, a figure for portraying this relationship of similarity/dissimilarity: an engraving of Napoleon’s grave in which there is nothing to see except two tall trees shading the burial site, nothing, that is, until one realizes that the empty space between the trees outlines Napoleon’s own features. Once seen, one cannot make Napoleon disappear. Just as Kierkegaard uses this picture to illustrate Socratic irony, so I would argue that once Jesus Christ has appeared in the marginalia of the dissertation, he moves to fill the empty spaces between and within the discussions of Hegel, Socrates, and the romanticists, as well as the demeanors of the rapist, the voyeur, and the autoeroticists. In contrast to the *world historical* validity of Socrates, Jesus Christ represents irony’s *external* validity; in the further realm of humor, beyond Shakespeare and Goethe’s poetic/existential mastery of irony, Jesus Christ bodies forth true love. And so the final irony in the dissertation on Socrates and irony is that by indirection everything about Socrates (especially his impotence and negativity) points toward Jesus Christ (who functions both as midwife and mother). Strawser’s discussion of the end of *Concept of Irony* turns instead to the question of whether Kierkegaard was a Hegelian when he wrote the dissertation.

Now Strawser is not unaware of the tendency of Kierkegaard’s treatments of Socrates to move in a Christian direction. Throughout *Both/And* he draws on a remark in *Point of View* to ask “how did Socrates become a Christian?” (see pp. 54, 131, 242-245). But although Strawser develops wonderfully the *formal* similarity between Socrates and Jesus Christ in Kierkegaard, he understates the importance of their *material* dissimilarity within the texts. For example, he understands Climacus to envision a “leap into divine madness,” a “passionate inwardness or faith in the objectively uncertain” where “the object of faith is the infinite, the unknown” (p. 132). It seems to me that already in Climacus (and not just later in Anti-Climacus) the ultimate breach with immanence takes place, ironically, within and not beyond finitude, for it is the fullness, corporeality, and presence of God-in-time, Jesus Christ, that constitutes the divine madness, the paradoxical, offensive unknown with which human reason collides. Similarly, Strawser asserts that Socrates the ironist falls short of the hidden inwardness characteristic of religious existence (at least its humoristic border territory). In fact, the Climacus of *Postscript* distinguishes both the hidden inwardness of a (male) figure like Quidam in *Stages on Life’s Way* and the (male) subjectivity of Socrates from an inwardness (a subjectivity) that is directed *outward toward another*, Jesus Christ; the latter re-calls a mode of subjectivity identified as *female* earlier in the text and most closely approximates Christianity (at least as far as the non-

Christian humorist Climacus can make out). I am not contesting Strawser's point that Climacus refuses to didacticize or proselytize in his books; the reader must indeed become personally active in living out this "non-philosophy." Nor am I interested in ferreting out what Kierkegaard himself believed/lived (à la M. Holmes Harsthorne). But I would insist that the texts show Kierkegaard leading the reader by edifying indirection/ironic edification to face the possibility of becoming *Christian*, not just becoming subjective or human in an abstract or generic sense.

Strawser is correct to point out that Kierkegaard's edifying discourses ironically and maieutically treat "the disclosure of the divine love of Jesus Christ, who is, *nota bene*, not always nominally present" (p. 201). But he goes on to claim that "Jesus" is employed more frequently than "Christ" and that the former reflects a more immanent and less distinctively Christian outlook than the latter. Now Kierkegaard writes about Jesus Christ in seven of the eighteen discourses of 1843-44.³ In these passages, I count seven occurrences of "Jesus," seven of "Christ," as well as a number of other christological titles and phrases: "the Lord," "the Savior," "the child," "the expected one," "the one who was to come after," "the Son of Man," even "he/him." What is most striking, and missed by Strawser, is the textual context of Kierkegaard's usage. All seven occurrences of the *name* "Jesus" can be found in just two contiguous discourses. Both carry the same title, "Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins," and both foreground women from the gospels: the woman, seized in the act of adultery by the Pharisees, who receives forgiveness and not judgment from Jesus (John 8) and "the female sinner" (*Synderinden*), who anoints Jesus' feet as he eats dinner in the home of a Pharisee and likewise is affirmed not condemned by Jesus (Luke 7). By contrast, the *title* "Christ" appears in connection with a blind man, John the Baptizer, the Apostle Paul, and the (male) disciples; references to "the child" occur in a discourse devoted to Anna (Luke 2), the aged widow who recognizes and praises the infant Jesus in the Jerusalem temple. There is a privileged link between women and *Jesus Christ* in these texts. Hence, I would amplify Strawser's reflections on Kierkegaard's postmodern gambit by remarking on its sexually, socially, economically, and culturally marked character. When Kierkegaard strives to deconstruct the values of a culturally elite (*for nem*) group of males, he does not do so through the negativity of pure aesthetic play, but with resources available to the simple and unsophisticated (*eenfoldig*) classes. Kierkegaard communicates indirectly, he says the unsayable and unsays the said, through something, not nothing: gospel stories even (especially?) 19th century Danish women, peasants, and children would recognize.

light of such attentiveness to gender and Jesus Christ in Kierkegaard's texts. To read Kierkegaard from irony to edification finally means for Strawser to read him from *Concept of Irony to Point of View*. What is lacking here, what leaves his book something less than a truly comprehensive or holistic reading of Kierkegaard, is consideration of the veronymous texts coincident with, and subsequent to, *Point of View* (completed in 1848) and Anti-Climacus' *Practice in Christianity* (1850): 1) a series of discourses for Friday communion in which the female sinner (*Synderinden*) of Luke 7 provides the privileged picture (*Billede*) and pattern (*Forbillede*) of approach to the life-giving body and blood of The Pattern, Jesus Christ; and 2) the short pieces published in *Fæderlandet* and *Øieblikket* from 1854-55 in which Kierkegaard takes the Danish state church and its leadership to task. Figuring out the relationships between these ultimately up-building and down-tearing writings, as well as their connections to the preceding authorship(s), seems to me to pose the severest test of any both/and reading of Kierkegaard. Strawser manages to avoid facing this interpretive crux altogether.

But to conclude, I trust the foregoing critical comments concerning the need to explore additional texture and architecture in Kierkegaard's texts finally serve to commend Strawser's book and the fruitful conclusions that result from reading Kierkegaard seriously and playfully, openly and closely.

¹ The remarks that follow are filled out in several recent articles of mine: see Mark Lloyd Taylor, "Almost Earnestness? Autobiographical Reading, Feminist Re-Reading, and Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*," in Céline Léon and Sylvia Walsh (eds.), *Feminist Interpretations of Søren Kierkegaard* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 175-202; "Making Difficulties Everywhere: The Autobiography of Johannes Climacus in Kierkegaard's *Postscript*," *Soundings* 80 (1997): 105-131; "Practice in Authority: The Apostolic Women of Kierkegaard's Writings," in Poul Houe, Gordon D. Marino, and Sven Hakon Rossel (eds.), *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 2000), pp. 85-98; and "Recent English Language Scholarship on Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses," in Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser (eds.), *Kierkegaard Studies: Yearbook 2000* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 273-299.

² *Samlede Værker*, third edition, vol. 1, pp. 63, 73-74, 74 n., 83, 86, 243-244 n., 277, 331 (*Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. II, pp. 5-6, 14-15, 14-15n., 25, 29, 219-221 n., 263, 329).

³ *Samlede Værker*, third edition, vol. 4, pp. 68; 74-76; 140-141; 187; 245-257; 295-296; 302; 347-348 (cf. *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. V, pp. 67-68; 75-77; 153; 207-208; 275-289; 333-334; 341; 396).

The role *Point of View* plays in *Both/And* puzzles me in

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It is best when trying to understand a book to begin by trying to understand its title. Thus, the *Næsten Intet* or the "Next Nothing" of Wivel's title is deliberately ambiguous. It means both the *Næsten* of neighbor (the one next to you) and the *næsten* of almost (next to, as in "next to nothing"). According to Wivel, these two meanings come together in the fact that for Kierkegaard, the neighbor has no meaning, is nothing, and that in the Kierkegaardian universe, the individual human being is worth next to nothing. But what concerns Wivel the most is the former phenomenon. To clarify his criticism, he calls upon two Jewish thinkers, the German Franz Rosenzweig, author of *Der Stern der Erlösung*, (*The Star of Redemption*) and the Franco-Lithuanian Emanuel Lévinas, most famous for *Totalité et infinit* (*Totality and Infinity*) and various other works on ethics and Talmud interpretation. It is the appropriation of these two thinkers that turns Wivel's book into *En jødisk kritik af Søren Kierkegaard* – a Judaic (or Jewish) critique of Søren Kierkegaard.

The book is divided into three major sections. The first is concerned with Rosenzweig's and Lévinas' critiques of Kierkegaard, the second deals with Kierkegaard's views of religion and ethics, and the third part is a concluding section that draws the first two sections together. For the Kierkegaard scholar interested in learning more about either Rosenzweig's or Lévinas' views in themselves or about the opinions these particular Jewish thinkers held on Kierkegaard, the first and third sections are very helpful. The middle section, however, consists in an attempt to extrapolate a solid view of Kierkegaard's ethics and religion from analyzing two of his most famous works – *Fear and Trembling* and *Works of Love*. On the one hand, this is probably a justifiable undertaking as most interpretations of Kierkegaard rely almost exclusively, on these two works. On the other hand, something which may do justice to the philosophical tradition's palimpsestic tendencies obviously does not do justice to the philosopher in question. Thus, while non-Kierkegaard scholars may find something refreshing or informative in the second section of Wivel's book, it may prove to be a bit of a disappointment to those more acquainted with the subtleties of Kierkegaard's work.

One final observation: Wivel's book is the product of his *speciale* (M.A. thesis) work. As such, it is insightful. It is an excellent beginning, but what is needed, especially

concerning Rosenzweig who, like Agrippa in *Acts*, was almost persuaded, is a more in-depth analysis. For example, on p. 102 Wivel observes that "the telological suspension of the ethical that is the subject of *Fear and*

Trembling can thus be understood as a Christian suspension of the Judaic." Precisely. It is the basic problem in all Judaeo-Christian dialogue, namely that there is some kind of dash or *tankestreg* (stroke of thought) between those two religious cultures. And although the points he raises are good ones, it is not clear from exactly which Jewish position, if any, Wivel is launching his critique. Is he speaking in the terms of Old Testament Israelites? Egyptian Hebrews? If so, then Lévinas' critique of the violence inherent in Kierkegaard's thought and language takes on a new meaning when compared with the violence of thought and language displayed by the G-d who ordered the destruction of Egypt's firstborn or the inhabitants of the city of Ai. Or does genocide become justifiable when G-d gives the orders? If so, then perhaps these thinkers stand much closer to Kierkegaard than they care to admit.

Other topics of interest are, of course, the notion of the "other" and whether and how the "other" is also our neighbor, our "next one", and the "problems" of the body and its earthly life when seen from a Christian as opposed to a Jewish perspective. These are valid topics for discussion, but they are even more worthy of further discussion. Something that the future, and perhaps even Mr. Wivel himself, will provide.

Provocations: *Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard*. Compiled and edited by Charles E. Moore. Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999. 429 p.

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Both lovers of Kierkegaard and lovers of God will be pleased with this excellent new anthology edited by Charles Moore. Lovers of both will be absolutely delighted! All of Kierkegaard's writings are pregnant with meaning and conviction, and Moore has compiled some of his most fecund. As with any anthology, it is inevitable that readers who are intimately familiar with SK will miss one or two of their favorite parables, sayings, or exhortations. Nevertheless, Moore weaves the selected spiritual writings together into coherent sections, placing them side by side in a way that will shed new light for even the lifelong Kierkegaard scholar. Those who are not as familiar with Kierkegaard, especially those who have simply heard that he is the philosophical father of modern existentialism, are in for a shock. Here they will be introduced to one of the deepest spiritual thinkers in the history of Christianity.

Moore's format is simply to offer quotations from Kierkegaard with neither commentary nor footnote. Initially, this was frustrating to the scholar in me who wanted immediately to go and look up the section in its broader context. Eventually, I came to appreciate this omission, for the lack of notations in the text forced me to focus on the material issues, and allowed me to feel more directly the provocative force of the writing. I discovered later that Moore has included a coded list of sources in the back of the book, but I encourage the reader to ignore them the first time through the text, which serves as a marvelous devotional.

The 20 page Introduction is excellent. Moore argues that the core theme of Kierkegaard's whole work is Christian existence. This interpretation seems consonant with Kierkegaard's own claims, and has gained popularity among scholars in recent decades. Moore offers an overview of Kierkegaard's life, his relation to his father and the famous cursing of God, his engagement and break up with Regina Olsen, the "Corsair Affair," and a description of 19th century Christendom, which he attacked so vigorously. Moore also offers brief summaries of some of Kierkegaard's basic themes, including the spheres of existence (aesthetic, ethical, religious), the relation between subjectivity and truth, and the importance of passion for the single individual. This Introduction offers a good starting point for students just beginning their journey into Kierkegaard's writings.

The book is divided into six major parts – the first is "To Will One Thing." This section includes parts of Kierkegaard's "Purity of heart is to Will One Thing," as well as many other writings that bear on the theme of single-mindedness. Here too we find castigations of "the crowd" and praise of the "eternal," before which all is suspended, including the ethical. Section II, "Truth and the Passion of Inwardness" is comprised of selections that illustrate Kierkegaard's own inward passion for truth, which is not primarily about doctrine, nor about "proving" God's existence. Rather, the Christian understanding of truth is a call to be a follower in fear and trembling.

The third major part is "Works of Love," which includes primarily segments from Kierkegaard's book with that title, which many consider among his most important. Indeed, Kierkegaard's deep reflections of the biblical command "you shall love your neighbor" are unparalleled. "Anxiety and the Gospel of Suffering" follows as the fourth major part of the book, which may seem disconnected from the former section. They are connected materially, of course, for in Kierkegaard's view, love and faith are intertwined, and faith is the opposite of intensified despair (the sickness unto death). The anxiety of the individual leads to suffering, but suffering *Christianly* means suffering for the Eternal, in which case the burden is light.

Part V is "Christian collisions," wherein we are confronted by the invective against "Christendom" that escalated toward the end of his life. Here we find the famous swearing Fire Chief, who like Kierkegaard, does not have time to speak kindly and softly to the masses, who are hindering his attempts to rescue. Irony abounds in these segments – my favorite is the young man who spends years and years preparing for ministry, taking exams, attending school, negotiating a good salary and *then* preaches his inaugural sermon; "Seek *first* the kingdom of God." The sixth and final part is a collection of excerpts and aphorisms under the heading "Thoughts That Radically Cure." They cure radically because they go beneath the surface symptoms to the root of the individual's passionate existence before the Eternal. Readers comfortable with their superficial spirituality – beware, you will be provoked!

**An Evocation of Kierkegaard. By David Cain. København, Denmark: C.A. Reitzels Forlag,
1997. 131 p.
ISBN 8778760100**

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An Evocation of Kierkegaard is not an introduction to Kierkegaard but – just as the title announces – an evocation of Kierkegaard, or rather, an evocation by Kierkegaard. David Cain has taken Kierkegaard at this word: “My facsimile, my picture, etc., like the question whether I wear a hat or a cap, could become an object of my attention only for those to whom the indifferent has become important – perhaps in compensation because the important has become a matter of indifference to them.” Of course Cain is also interested in the person Kierkegaard, but instead of staring blindly at the melancholy Dane, he has turned his lens around – he does not look in at the intricate machinery of melancholy, but out at the world; not in at the cyclical universe of the authorship, but out at the concrete reality which surrounded Kierkegaard. This does not mean that Kierkegaard drops out of Cain’s sight, to the contrary, we meet a Kierkegaard in living color, bathed in the light of the merchant town he once considered his beloved residence and capital city. We meet him at Sunday services in The Church of Our Lady, on a walk through Rosenborg gardens, among shoppers at Gammel Torv, in Østerbro where Regine gives him a glance, with the bourgeois citizenry on their way out to Dyrehaven, by Esrum lake while a storm approaches over Grib Forest, on a journey back into memories in Sædding in West Jutland, on an undercover mission along Lovers Lane, and many, many other places.

Let me admit from the outset that I am strongly captivated by Cain’s book; his photos provide one with a nice sense of the world which served as the backdrop for Kierkegaard’s authorship, and the pictures are ordered biographically/chronologically. Cain creates a contemporary impression of Copenhagen and Denmark and does not desperately attempt to reconstruct an idyllic Golden Age which has now vanished. It is honest and does not deceive the potential Kierkegaard pilgrim into believing that the little country flows with milk and honey or offers a cornucopia of spectacular experiences. Yes, the sun does shine on the blue water of the Øresund but thunder clouds also threaten over Amager. And even if the Neo-classical nave of the Church of Our Lady invites devotional silence, other landmarks in Kierkegaard’s world are disappointingly small. Nonetheless, they are big enough to be captured on film and in this way Cain lets Kierkegaard serve as a guide to Denmark and Copenhagen.

Cain is in no hurry as he follows along in Kierkegaard’s footsteps. Viewed from Copenhagen, the author’s leisurely pace is itself cause for wonder. For according to the Danish understanding of the world, the modern American rushes through Europe, commenting upon the experiences with only a standard phrase directed at his travel partner (his wife age 65); “Have you taken your picture?” Cain has lingered around the buildings and landscapes which surrounded Kierkegaard and he has taken a deep breath of the air which Kierkegaard once breathed. Remembering Kierkegaard’s deep disgust for Hans Christian Andersen’s whirlwind tour through Europe by carriage, one can lean back in an easy-chair with peace of mind, light a cigar and lazily vegetate on Cain’s book. One is likewise tempted to put Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* in the CD player and take a breath of fresh air with Kierkegaard on his way out of the packed capital city, and to wake *heiterer Gefühle bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande* in Northern Zealand: Here one does not stand with one’s back to the world like Caspar David Fredrich’s wanderer, but stands in the middle of it; for Kierkegaard continually has the confusion of the world on his back and his coachman at his side.

There is a certain lightness and enjoyment – certainly a surprise for many people – in following Kierkegaard around Copenhagen and, even more so, in following him out to the countryside. It is a real achievement to call forth another side of Kierkegaard than the melancholy Copenhagen resident – and to call forth another side of Copenhagen and Denmark than the respective business center and farmland which Kierkegaard portrays in his authorship. By doing so, Cain provides the reader with a sure possibility for identifying with this world. Moreover, this means that the book’s essential contribution to Kierkegaard literature is corrective; it is directed, of course, at the person who has already read a great deal of Kierkegaard, and especially at the person who has buried himself too deeply into the terminology of the authorship and now throws around existence categories that she has only experienced through – Kierkegaard.

But from a *Heiterkeit am Bach*, Cain changes direction and crosses over the Kattogat to Jutland. The year is 1840, and Kierkegaard wants to see the ground upon which his family’s melancholy was fostered. At the arrival at the Mols Mountains – or “hills” as Cain very reasonably

categorizes them – a sadness already hovers above. For even when the days are longest and the sun is at its zenith the summer is already a memory of itself. Maybe there *is* a truth to the notion that the Danish landscape and Kierkegaard's melancholy are connected. Think of his father, who hiked up the diminutive hill – even less than a hill – on the Jutland heath in a failed attempt to reach the ear of Our Lord: "I learned from him what fatherly love is," Kierkegaard recalls during his stay in Sædding in 1840, "and through this I gained a conception of divine fatherly love, the one single unshakable thing in life, the true Archimedean point." What divine irony!

Without question, the real asset of Cain's book is the collection of photographs which, without academic over-interpretation, offers the reader a meditation on Kierkegaard's life and work. The reader never gets the unpleasant feeling that Cain wants to manipulate with his photographs; the reader can continually find in the pictures a medium for "the activity of personal appropriation." Conversely, the text is slightly uneven at times, and blemished by jumps in style and focus: In long passages Kierkegaard himself is allowed to narrate while Cain limits himself to stringing quotations together with appropriate biographical information. In other passages, the reader is suddenly burdened with arbitrary interpretations – an example is the interruption of citations with unnecessary explanations. An interruption of this sort is almost fatally disturbing to the Kierkegaard quotation cited in the Introduction. "If there is to be no disturbing, apparently great but deceptive, middle term which falsifies a man's relation to the divine [Johannes de Silentio's treatment of Abraham and the question of a teleological suspension of the ethicals' are implied here] then, according to what I have learned from my elders [above all, of course, Kierkegaard's father; but respect for tradition is also present] and sought to understand my own, then the only reasonable thing to do is earnestly and inwardly to pledge oneself in unconditioned obedience and care-freely, if possible, hilariously, to let the outcome be God's affair and no concern of one's own" (p. 9). Or what about this quotation, which Cain promptly reduces to a cliché: "But since without qualification the first prerequisite for the communication of truth is personality [not any truth but 'existential truth,' truth which pertains essentially to existing], since 'truth' cannot possibly be served by ventriloquism, personality has to come to the fore again" (p. 106)? Why does 'personality' have to be explained, and why does it not simply mean 'personality' or 'character'? Things go completely wrong when Cain will not leave Gilleleje without trivializing the "Gilleleje journal entry." (p. 35-37): Cain the exegete preaches subjectivity and personal appropriation, but does he really need to when, precisely here, Kierkegaard's pen is liberating light and free of burdening hops and jumps.

I would also prefer to omit Cain's interpretation of the *Corsar* battle, since he does not grant it full validity as an expression of Kierkegaard's character, but with a surgical incision cuts it away and feeds it to the cat: "*Corsaren* steals Kierkegaard away from himself. He loses control, and Kierkegaard is nothing if not control: contrivance and control are much a part of his personality – and of his strength (and of his weakness)" (p. 88). And jumping to another conclusion, he writes, "he is a victim of the attack which variously impresses the rest of his life, including his 'attack on Christendom' (p. 89). Nonetheless Cain does not hesitate to calm the congregation a few pages later: "The assault on the church is not a departure from it but a devotion to it." Nonsense: it is a devotion to Christianity. Cain supports his claim by noting that Kierkegaard, in *Two Discourses at Communion on Fridays* (1851) says that his authorship of "religiousness in reflection" seeks "its definite point of rest at the foot of the altar." This may well be so, but Cain's conclusion would seem to be undermined by the fact that Kierkegaard stops taking communion a year later. (cf. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, "Die ursprüngliche Unterbrechung. Søren Kierkegaard beim Abendmal im Freitagsgottesdienst der Kopenhagener Frauenkirche," in *Kierkegaard Studies, Yearbook 1996*.)

Cain is guilty of another peccadillo. He assumes too much familiarity on the part of the reader with Danish geography and landmarks. For example, Cain writes, "Gurre Slotsruin, from the 12th century, is a kilometer west of Gurre, about seventeen kilometers southeast of Frederiksborg Slot at Hillerød on the way to Ny Hammersholt" (p. 31). Very precise, but why does Cain not include a map? Once again the author observes "In this view south from Rundetårn..." (p. 19). Unfortunately however, few readers will have any knowledge of Copenhagen's Roundtower apart from its mention in the fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen.

The book has here and there rubbed me the wrong way, I warmly recommend it. Indeed, reading it I felt like Kierkegaard's alter ego Johannes Climacus when his father took him on a walk out into the swarm of people in Copenhagen and up to the shores of the Sound, without ever leaving the living room: "They walked through the city gate to the country palace nearby or to the seashore or about the streets – according to Johannes's wish for his father was capable of everything. While they walked up and down the floor, his father's voice; the pastry woman's fruits were more tempting than ever. Whatever was familiar to Johannes his father delineated so exactly, so vividly, so directly and on the spot, down to the most trifling detail, and so minutely and graphically whatever was unfamiliar to him, that after a half-hour's walk with his father he was overwhelmed a weary as if he had been out the whole day" (JC, 120).

ARTICLES

Kierkegaard on Hating One's Father, etc.

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In his Journals Kierkegaard refers to Jesus' saying about hating one's father and mother 25 times or so. To the best of my knowledge, Kierkegaard refers to this saying more frequently than to any other in the Bible. But why?¹

This brief study explores these references in order to discover why this saying was so important to him. I will argue that it was because he saw it as requiring him publicly to oppose Mynster's proclamation of Christianity, something he simply could not bring himself to do. I am not yet entirely certain why this was so but believe that this was the central struggle of his life and note that this is supported by the fact that his journals mention Mynster more frequently than any other figure except himself, God and Christ.² First, however, some historical background.

Kierkegaard and Mynster had a long, close and complex personal relation but privately at least differed sharply about the nature of Christianity and, especially, its proclamation. Mynster, Bishop of Zealand, was a shrewd administrator and celebrated preacher. For many years, Mynster was the powerful and enormously respected head of the Danish cultural establishment. He strove to make Christianity intellectually acceptable and even fashionable. It could be argued that Mynster was more concerned with Christianity's expansion than its truth, and given this interest consciously suppressed its "hard sayings," abolished the concept of "imitation," justified his own proclamation as a necessary accommodation and dismissed Kierkegaard's insistence upon "ideals" as an exaggeration. Kierkegaard in turn charged that Mynster pursued pleasure and power, that he had equated Christianity with culture and education, had turned it into "an almost effeminate mildness," that he lacked any conception of "the Redeemer who must suffer in the world and requires the crucifixion of the flesh" and, for his own part, emphasized the idea of the highest, the unconditioned, the in-and-for-itself, that one is not permitted to be ignorant of the highest aspect of God's requirement and that becoming a Christian is a life and death struggle involving much pain and suffering. Kierkegaard therefore interpreted this saying as requiring him publicly to attack Mynster because of his use and conception of Christianity but equally because he was deeply attached to him through his late father and was the one person he loved, admired, and venerated.³

Instead Kierkegaard openly supported him, reinterpreted his own authorship to Mynster's advantage, suggested that his "irregularities" were something between himself and God. Kierkegaard held that Mynster could be judged only by his own standards. Abandoned his proposed eulogy and only after Mynster had publicly insulted him, insisting that he was only a "corrective" to the Establishment. Kierkegaard resolved that Mynster need only make "a little admission," that this could be concealed from the public and contented himself with the belated publication of Practice in Christianity which he himself described as the only possible defense of the Establishment. Indeed, it was only after Mynster had died that he was finally able publicly to criticize him and to confess that he himself was at least partly responsible for his great influence.

There are a number of reasons why Kierkegaard should have been and perhaps was suspicious of his own literal and limited interpretation of this saying. Contemporary scholars had already reached the more radical view that this was Jesus' dramatic way of insisting that Christians must put the kingdom of God first in their lives. By the time he became concerned with this saying most of his immediate family were dead and relations with Peter so strained that he could hardly be counted. Most people at least have a natural aversion to pain and suffering and few willingly undertake tasks they know they can never complete. It is then not surprising that many of his references to this saying seem primarily designed to assure himself that this saying was essential to Christianity, frequently but not always by contrasting it with Judaism.⁴ In chronological order and summarized as briefly as possible, these are as follows. Christianity "involves a much greater cleavage with the world" than Judaism. (II A 376 / 445) The clergy should be informed that these words apply to and should be preached to all. (VIII, 1 A 202 / 1078) They are "the expression of the pure spirit qualification of being a Christian." (IX A 5 / 475) This injunction shows that the collision of Christianity with the human spirit "is much closer than one thinks." (X, 2 A 508 / n.t.) The heterogeneity of Judaism and Christianity is shown by the fact that the former "...establishes family life as a form of godliness." While the latter "explodes all this by the absoluteness of the God-relationship, which can lead to hating father and mother," which is

something Jews must regard as impiety and as far as possible from expressing godliness. (X,3 A 293 / 2221) What it means to be a Christian has been “completely forgotten,” the age “has reverted to paganism’s or Judaism’s qualities of intimacy in family love, and this about hating father and mother and so on has become a fable...” (X, 3 A 506 / 1174) This saying is consistent with Jesus’ life and other reported teachings: “Essentially, his [Jesus’] teaching is his life. What he says, therefore, is this: Imitate me; hate yourself; forsake all things; crucify the flesh; take up the cross; hate father and mother, etc.” (XI, 1 A 199 / 3620) Another entitled “To Hate Father and Mother etc.” attempts to defend this saying by insisting that if a man’s life is intended for the eternal he must become alienated from that which binds him in the relationships of finitude and, in the next paragraph, by claiming that finite relations completely absorb one’s life and that not to belong to them unconditionally is like hating them.⁵ (XI, 1 A 577 / 1955) Thus he convinces himself that as a Christian he must “hate” or oppose someone to whom he was deeply attached.

Other references to this saying stress the pain and suffering involved in following it. One who is sufficiently heroic “to hate father and mother, etc.” will discover that he cannot endure having only fellowship with God. (X, 3 A 694 / 1416) The New Testament presents becoming a Christian “as the most terrible collision with every most intimate relationship: to hate father and mother, to slay one’s child, etc. ...” (X, 4 A 607 / 2893) Finally, “God wants to be loved. ... God, of course, knows best how agonizing this is, humanly speaking, for a man. He says this as clearly as possible. To love God is possible only by clashing with all human existence (hating father and mother, hating oneself, suffering because one is a Christian etc.)” (XI, 2 A 390 / 2453)

By contrast the next three references come as close as possible to identifying Bishop Mynster as the person he must oppose. “...everyone is under obligation to do his utmost to acknowledge, confess, depict what Christianity is according to the N. T. And then the collisions will appear --- ... / Is a possible collision with Bishop Mynster related to this? He dare not deny that what I have depicted is N. T. Christianity. But he says: If we two are to be friends, you must not go so far out; you must suppress this last emphasis and stick with what I have proclaimed --- this is true Christianity. / Just think of the emotional conflict. There is a man I love with all my heart -- - but I know that if I present what Christianity is essentially he will be furious, will become my enemy. And Christianity commits me to it.” (X, 5 A 33 / 6831)

The pain and suffering of this relation will persist even in the afterlife. “The New Testament, especially the gospels, clearly promises a more exalted blessedness to both the apostles and the disciples, and above all to

those who suffer for the teaching ... and suppose now that I humanly loved men as they ordinarily are and that there was one among them I loved in particular, loved as much as I loved myself, then I could not wish to become blessed differently than he is throughout eternity!” (X, 5 A 85 / 4701)⁶

This same point is repeated in a slightly later reference to this saying. “...how dreadful if eternal salvation is bound up with this condition, how dreadful if there is a person you love as much as you love yourself and there is no discernible way to get him to accept it. ...I can become deathly anxious thinking about whether I will be saved -- ah, but I can become almost as anxious, yes, just as anxious, thinking whether another person may not be eternally saved, another person whom one loves as much as one loves himself, a person for whom one would do everything. / --- for it is not hating father and mother to live in a faith according to which one believes himself to be saved, and then not get the others to enter into it, and consequently according to the same faith must believe that they are eternally lost --- ...” (X, 5 A 142 / 3097) Clearly he is here confessing his fear that they will not be together in eternity because Mynster will not accept his rigorous view of Christianity.

Another of these references points in this same direction. Hating “one’s father and mother etc.” is a “frightful, truly Christian” collision between generations within “Christendom” over the nature of Christianity in the N. T. (XI, 1 A 22 / 1925) In fact Kierkegaard repeatedly describes his conflict with Mynster as a collision between generations about the nature of Christianity in the N. T. and even writes of Mynster and himself as “the collision between the old and the new.” (XI, 2 A 251 / 6937) I conclude therefore that for him Mynster is the real object and focus of this saying, the source of its pain and the reason he returns to it so frequently.

Finally, a purely personal note. My only aim in undertaking this study was to understand why Kierkegaard referred so frequently to this saying of Jesus and no one can be more surprised than I that it has shown so clearly the importance and perhaps complexity of his relations with Bishop Mynster.

¹ For the record, and to facilitate comparison, I note that the next most frequently mentioned saying is “My God, my god, why have you forsaken me...” which his Journals refer to 21 times.

² His Journals refer to himself 17,378 times, God 6,176 times, Christ 1,938 times and Mynster 645 times. The next most frequently mentioned figures are Luther (477), Socrates (299) and Martensen (228). Significantly, Regine is mentioned by name only 10 times.

³ He also says that he was attached to him with “a hypochondriacal passion” (X4 A 511 / 6795) and that he had always been infatuated with him. (XI, 2 A 312 / 6848) Throughout this study references are cited in this format where all material before the slash refers to Søren Kierkegaards Papirer, udg. af P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr og E. Torsting, 2. udg ved Niels Thulstrup, I-XIII, København, 1968-70 and the single number after it to an entry in Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, ed. and trs. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Vols. 1-7, Indiana University Press, 1967-78.

⁴ There is one notable exception: he cites Deuteronomy 33:9 as showing a religiousness similar to this saying. (X, 1 A 303 / 2486).

⁵ In fact, Kierkegaard had already learned that this was not true. He saw too late that there were no religious grounds for rejecting Regine's love (IV A 107 / 5664), learned from David's Psalms that only the psychologically disturbed avoid human relationships in order to remain more intimate with God (VI A 47 / 5810) and had already demonstrated in The Works of Love that one loves God most truly by loving one's neighbour. Presumably then it was the nature of his relation to Bishop Mynster which prompted him to conclude that he must choose between loving man and loving God.

⁶ Note that the following entry repeats this concern in a yet more explicit form: “...the conflicts of sympathy, such as not wanting to be saved if his father, mother and beloved are not also saved.” (X, 5 A 86 / 2562)

Kierkegaard and deconstruction Is Kierkegaard inter alia anywhere in Derrida's The Gift of Death

by

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Let's face it, many of us supposedly serious students of Kierkegaard are down right suspicious of deconstruction and more than a little so (if not hateful¹) of the name Jacques Derrida. For a long time now it has been customary in literary criticism and elsewhere to speak ill of Derrida and deconstructionism even though it was literary criticism itself that first brought his name and his (inherited) method to these shores. Literary critics commonly denigrate this French imposteur who has the audacity to dabble 'de(con)structively' within their realm. My guess is that many academics, including philosophers, simply adopt this disgruntled attitude toward Derrida from the loud (il)literate without ever bothering to read him. They accept the cliché that Derrida's work is nothing more than an unrestrained, relativized aestheticism that undermines everything academia holds sacred.²

Yet here he is, this Frenchman, dabbling effortlessly in

the works of Plato, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas. But what about Kierkegaard? Indeed, some of us have waited patiently, wondering what was keeping Derrida from directly engaging the obvious object of his philosophical inquiries.³

It was, of course, Kierkegaard who was holding this Kierkegaardian back. It is the question of the unsayable that held Derrida back, something he needed to work out for himself before he could begin to write on his mentor. And then, finally, came Donner la mort in 1992 with an excellent English translation by David Wills in 1995. Here it was, The Gift of Death, Kierkegaard and Derrida in dialogue full of fear and trembling — about the unsayable. Derrida had made the decision, had seen in Kierkegaard what he perhaps was always aware of, and now he was ready to tackle this most elusive of philosophers, an elusiveness he does not ignore.

What interests Derrida, however, is not the strange authorship of the Danish philosopher, not his mix of pseudonymous and "putatively veronymous writings."⁴ No, Derrida is fascinated by the unsayable, the secret, that is the focus of Johannes di silentio's Fear and Trembling. What is this secret? In Fear and Trembling the secret requires that Abraham abandon the ethical, abandon what sets the norms for existence, abandon law and the social rules in which freedom is grounded. That is, the secret obliges the knight of faith to sacrifice everything with which he is familiar and which provides him with a degree of certainty. Kierkegaard, or more correctly, Johannes di silentio sets out to understand this leap into the utterly unknowable and utterly uncertain based on nothing more than a whisper in Abraham's ear, a whisper that cannot be explained, but that nevertheless commands the unfathomable (and the unforgivable?). Only the one who hears this whisper will understand the command, not cognitively but through the experience. That Johannes never understands only underscores the secret's unfathomable nature.

Wait a minute, is this Kierkegaard or is it Derrida? It is deconstruction! It is a deconstruction that in some sense unfolds text, not to change the meaning, but in a constant pursuit of the deeper meaning that remains obscure to a "blunt reading."⁵ As Simon Critchley has recently argued, deconstructive reading is called to be responsible.⁶ Sounding like Kierkegaard (Climacus) Derrida himself insisted long ago that "deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must . . . practice an overturning of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system."⁷ Deconstruction had its beginning with Kierkegaard, and hence is something Derrida inherited. But he gives this approach renewed life and renewed language in a time when the dogmatics of theory, the dogmatics of fundamentalism, just like in Kierkegaard's time, seem to breed everywhere.

How scandalous! The contemporary sceptics protest fearing such an outrageous onslaught on their rational(ized) space. But did Kierkegaard not threaten the belief of his contemporaries in the Hegelian circular omnipotence? Was he not equally hated (feared?) by his contemporaries⁸ as is Derrida today? Is it possible that in Derrida we have another Kierkegaard? Scandalous!

The first thing to understand about The Gift of Death is that it is not a book about Kierkegaard or even about Fear and Trembling. It is a meditation on secrets, on the unsayable that makes one tremble; on a responsibility that has no rational basis, and on the nature of sacrifice. It is this sacrifice and the idealized form it takes, that concerns Derrida, whose deconstructive reading of Fear and Trembling, renders this an everyman's and everywoman's story, as Caputo interprets it, in order to

show a "way of freeing something religious from the religions."⁹

Johannes di silentio's rendering of the Old Testament story shows Derrida a problematic in Abraham's suspension of what is generally true, a suspension initiated by his absolute obligation to a secret, to absolute responsibility which requires him to be absolutely irresponsible toward both law and community, but a responsibility that nevertheless cannot be called into question, that has no language, that refuses explanation.¹⁰ Derrida asks how we might justify such a secret, and thus how we might also understand this relationship between the secret and responsibility. This is a Kierkegaardian theme.

Fear and Trembling represents merely a singular perspective, a poetic perspective that has no other dimension than the poetic and cannot be attributed to Kierkegaard himself. Derrida is aware of this as his notation from Kierkegaard's journals shows: Johannes di silentio is "a poetic person who exists only among poets" (GD, 58).¹¹ This limitation enables Derrida to understand absolute responsibility more generally without thereby moving away from Kierkegaard's writings.

What relates secrets and responsibility in Fear and Trembling is that obedience to God's command requires the gift of death. It is a pure gift. There is no expectation of reward, no expectation of reciprocity, no attachments; it has only hope — that his world will be returned (FT, 22). It is a gift without a motive, a gift wholly incommensurable with what is humanly comprehensible — something unsayable. It is also a gift of infinite love, something that makes us tremble in fear because we lack knowledge — it is this paradox that confronts Abraham (GD, 55-6).

Abraham does not know and cannot speak. No one speaks except God: not Abraham, not Isaac, not Sarah, not Johannes and not Derrida, not yet. They all keep the secret secret. For Abraham this is the double bind, it is a sacrifice that relates secrets to responsibility but without a justification. Abraham must not only sacrifice what is unique to him, he must also surrender what is most dear to him and transgress commonly held ethical beliefs (det Almene). He must also make the sacrifice of silence, to Isaac, to the community, and thereby he transgresses what is generally true (det Almene), and he must make the sacrifice of singularity, of standing outside of community in the space of undecidability¹² and so again transgresses what is generally true. Aware that the whisper is only addressed to him, Abraham is confronted with his irreducible singularity — there can be no substitution (GD, 91).

This irreducible singularity forces Abraham to abandon the other others, abandon the ethical and the political —

and again without justification. The wholly other demand, obedience and offers no explanation — that is what makes God wholly other (GD, 57). What Derrida's deconstructive reading of Fear and Trembling recognizes is that responsibility, when disturbingly generalized, always presupposes a confrontation between the other and the other others, yet absolute responsibility requires that what is sacrificed, the ethical, remains intact (GD, 66). If that is true, if the ethical must remain intact to demonstrate the sacrifice to the infinite, then we must ask if existence in general, the other others, is sacrificed to a particular existence on behalf of the wholly other? But, Derrida asks, are these other others who make up existence in general not themselves singularities to whom I owe total responsibility? Is this an irreconcilable confrontation, the very stuff of undecidability? Is this a political dilemma that betrays responsibility, and results in an unjustifiable situation (GD, 68)? It is indeed the aporia of responsibility (GD, 69).

Did Kierkegaard fail to see this, or did he merely allow the religious to take ethical precedence over what is generally true? Is Derrida walking away from Kierkegaard's thinking after all? With Abraham, that certainly seems to be the case. Yet Derrida recognizes that what Johannes refers to as the "religious" structurally characterizes responsibility and constitutes a general structure of experience that always makes me responsible to the Other (GD, 71).

Here is where Derrida problematizes the Kierkegaardian text. The account of responsibility that he has been developing throughout much of his authorship, from a number of perspectives, through trial and error, never giving up, seems finally, to have reached its zenith — the Other/other is always already within me — and yet, alas, the problem persists.

Johannes/Derrida has taken the reader outside philosophy, outside of the ethical in order to reveal singularity as absolute responsibility always requiring the betrayal of the other others. As Derrida interprets it, whether the other is God, my family, my work, my friend or my beloved (GD, 69), the other others are always already sacrificed, and singularity stands as unaccountable. That is the limitation of responsibility, that is the sacrifice. It can never be justified to the other others, for it is precisely they who have already been sacrificed. As Derrida continues, "I am responsible to any one (that is to say to any other) only by failing in my responsibility to all the others, to the ethical or political generality" (GD, 70). That failure seems unavoidable — that is the burden of the secret.

Because Derrida wants to say something to the effect that "we cannot think God (and consequently worship,

prayer, etc.) outside of the economies and topologies of the subject,"¹³ his generalization of Johannes' understanding of responsibility lifts the daily economies of responsibility to a height at which they gain religious import, and become the religious without religion. This is so because my responsibility to the Other always already involves singularity in an act of irresponsibility, of sacrificing ethics. Thus Derrida posits a responsibility that has the heaviness of the religious, a general responsibility "without ethics, or beyond ethics" (GD, 71, 84).¹⁴ This is what Johannes di silentio's Fear and Trembling enabled Derrida to see precisely by imploring his text and asking what it means "to see in secret" (GD, 88).¹⁵ Did Kierkegaard see this?

I should like to suggest that he did, but not in Fear and Trembling where his concern was to present the unfathomable of absolute and infinite responsibility to God's command unencumbered by other responsibilities, to understand the problematic of existence when called to this highest of all responsibilities. Abraham is unique, and Johannes does not let us forget it. In his usual ironic (deconstructive) mode, he tells us that Abraham "was the greatest of all, great by that power whose strength is powerlessness, great by that wisdom whose secret is foolishness, great by that hope whose form is madness, great by the love that is hatred to oneself." And again, ". . . He was God's chosen one . . . the father of faith," the founder, "the Second father of the race!" "He too had faith for this life," and he confidently answers God: "Here am I" (FT, 16-23), and as Derrida disturbingly adds, "the first and only possible response to the call by the other" (GD, 71). Is Johannes suggesting that sacrifice of the other others is acceptable when it comes to Abraham?

Two points come to mind here. First, were we to think all this biographically, it could be said the sacrifices Derrida talks about were Kierkegaard's own sacrifices, but that is far from certain inasmuch as we can never be sure that anything a pseudonym utters points to Kierkegaard. Their words are not mine, he cries out in the Postscript; although I gave the pseudonyms an existence, such as it is, their words are their own.¹⁶ He simply provided the space, and this the reader must take seriously. Hence the question is not, 'Is Kierkegaard present in Jacques Derrida's The Gift of Death.' The question is, do we recognize Kierkegaard's thinking in this contemporary work by someone who considers himself a Kierkegaardian? Put another way, and this is the second consideration, why is a poetic perspective assigned the task of telling this most sacred of stories of the ultimate sacrifice demanded by a voice coming from a space we cannot even describe, much less explain? Why is a poet assigned this most sacred of tasks to portray what is utterly incommensurable with human existence and yet utterly essential? Why is a poet selected to contemplate

that which language itself betrays, that about which silence is required?

In the Postscript Johannes Climacus argues that the historian pursues that which was possible while the poet always seeks the possibility of the impossible (CUP, 318). There we get the first clue as to why the poetic perspective is chosen to present that which must remain a secret. The poet is not tied to all the constraints of the philosopher and the ethicist, he is not offended by the absurd, and although not able to make the leap of faith (FT, 34), at least able to entertain the possibility of the paradox of God's infinite love.

We might well ask, is Derrida Kierkegaard's poet when he attempts to understand what theory (philosophy) refuses, attempts to understand the relation of secrecy and responsibility and hence understand the significance of sacrifice? A footnote in the Postscript suggests that at least Johannes Climacus is aware of the problem when he claims the portrayal of the knight of faith in Fear and Trembling "was only a rash anticipation, and the illusion [Skuffelsen - also means disappointment] was gained by depicting him in a state of completeness, and hence in a false medium instead of the existence-medium". The note continues suggesting that the knight of faith may be Johannes di silentio's "own poetic production . . . a character in the medium of imagination (for this is the medium of the poet)" (CUP 500n). If this is true, then not only is Derrida taking the right approach to reading Fear and Trembling, as his deconstructive mode urged; but, perhaps, one could politely suggest to him that he also look to Chapter I of Works of Love where, Kierkegaard, adopting the assumptions of Fear and Trembling, begins to posit the existence-medium. He still challenges the reader, for there he suggests this existence medium can be read in at least two different ways: the poet's way which once again would lack understanding,¹⁷ and the way of the Christian who will understand it in terms of the performative act of loving the neighbor as the self, the neighbor who is every other (WL, 21). However, one should not jump to conclusions here. Derrida has not made the leap, but he is more of a poet than Kierkegaard's pagan poet in Works of Love, he is more like Johannes di silentio, but he goes further; that is, he does not attempt to explain the command from on high but remains clear about the incommensurability of God's infinite love and its relation to the performative act, he nevertheless seems to solve Derrida's problem even though he must acknowledge the impossibility of explaining the connectedness of God's pure gift with all existence (WL, 9). But the aim in Works of Love is existence, the aim is the Other and the other others (WL, 58).

Obedying God's command to love the other as myself turns my attention toward the community, not away from it, and now I can love both God and my fellow human beings. No longer does my responsibility to God cause me to be utterly irresponsible toward the other others. How did this change come about? Because we are no longer talking about Abraham's God, but about a more merciful God who does not make impossible demands. This God commands me to love the other as my self, meaning love the other by letting the other be (WL, 21) — to discover her own responsibility.¹⁸ If this is correct, then I can be responsible without sacrifice and still keep the secret secret.

Why does this not work for Derrida? Because Derrida is pre-occupied, if not with Abraham's God, at least with a Levinasian wholly other who commands me to absolute responsibility and with how to (think) speak about this wholly other without betraying what is unsayable.¹⁹ Does this mean Derrida has moved beyond Kierkegaard's thinking? Perhaps, but it is by virtue of Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling that he comes to understand the problematic of absolute responsibility, and thus Kierkegaard is indeed lurking somewhere in Jacques Derrida's The Gift of Death.

NOTES

¹ I use such strong language because the attacks that have been launched against Jacques Derrida from so many sides have, most unfortunately, had the character of hate.

² As Derrida himself paraphrases these attacks on those people adepts of deconstruction: "These obscurantists are terrorists . . . for them there is only writing and language, nothing beyond, even if they claim to 'deconstruct logocentrism' and even start there." Jacques Derrida, "How to avoid Speaking: Denials," Languages of the Unsayable, eds. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 19.

³ See, for example, John D. Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), #13.

⁴ I am grateful to Pat Bigelow for his identification of these other writings signed by one S. Kierkegaard and for his overall editorial assistance to this essay.

⁵ The phrase is Roger Poole's in "The Unkown Kierkegaard: Twentieth-Century receptions," The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard, eds. Alatair Hannay and Gordon Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 60.

⁶ Simon Critchley, The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 1.

⁷ Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 329. Also Rodolphe Gasché, The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Religion (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 136-42.

⁸ Is he not equally hated by Danes today? My question is not

impertinent. When I was growing up in Copenhagen, I learned a nasty little children's song about Kierkegaard without knowing who this song was about.

⁹ Caputo, 190.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, The Gift of Death, tr. David Wills (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 60-1. Hereafter known as GD.

¹¹ The quotation is from Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, tr. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 243. Hereafter known as FT.

¹² In his recent article, "The Moment of Responsibility (Derrida and Kierkegaard)" Philosophy Today (Fall 1999), David Goicoechea repeatedly retranslates Derrida's difficult 'undecidability' and calls it 'indecidability.' This is a serious mistranslation (misreading), for the two words mean rather different things. Undecidability relates a situation, the im/possibility of decision that nevertheless urges decision, while I take indecidability to refer to existential indecision.

¹³ David Wood, "Much obliged," Philosophy Today (Spring 1997), 139.

¹⁴ Also Caputo, 206.

¹⁵ In the beautiful Memoirs of the Blind (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 122, Derrida writes of the hypothesis of sight confessing that "by blinding oneself to vision, by veiling one's own sight – through imploring, for example – one does something with one's eyes, makes something of them. One does something to one's own eyes." It is the performative act that overcomes vision's limitation and unveils in terms of ruin. And again in Jacques Derrida, On the Name (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), confessing about the riches of nonknowledge:

It is a matter of a single movement of the soul or, if you prefer, of a conversion of existence that accords itself to, in order to reveal in its very night, the most secret secret. This conversion turns (itself) toward the other in order to turn (it) toward God, without there being an order to these two movements that are in truth the same, without one or the other being circumvented or diverted.

¹⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, tr. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), [26]. Hereafter known as CUP.

¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, Works of Love, tr. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 47ff. Hereafter known as WL.

¹⁸ See Elsebet Jegstrup, "Text and the Performative Act: Kierkegaard's (im/possible) direct communication," Philosophy Today, Summer 2001, and "A Questioning of Justice: Kierkegaard, the Postmodern Critique and Political Theory," Political Theory, vol. 23, No. 3 (August 1995): 425-451. David Wood, 136-37, worries about this idea of 'infinite' responsibility that we find in both Kierkegaard and Derrida claiming that the latter is "deactualizing obligation" by giving no privilege to those obligations that "we have not willed, but that we find ourselves in, to those we have voluntarily acquired, to those expectations we have allowed others to have of us. And the thought that there are no fixed boundaries here does not mean there are none. Hospitality would self-destruct if it were 'infinite.' "There is no real problem here inasmuch as for

Kierkegaard, at least, 'infinite responsibility' means nothing other than I must love the person I see which could be anyone, never everyone. Love as obligation accepts, it does not select (WL, 164). It is an argument for the authentic comportment of being in the world, where God's gift enables us to see in a different way (WL, 77).

¹⁹ To be more specific about this concept of the wholly other that Derrida is working with, I recommend his essay "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" in Languages of the Unsayable, 3-70. There he tries to understand how one might (not) speak about the unsayable without betraying it calling upon the tradition of Plato's khora or place, on the God of Dionysius and Meister Eckhart, and finally, on Heidegger's concept of being written under erasure. He rejects the claim that these have anything to do with negative theology. At the very end of the essay he asks: "If there were a purely pure experience of prayer, would one need religion and affirmative or negative theologies?" (64).

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The primary aim of the Foundation is to augment the Visiting Scholars Program of the Kierkegaard Library by offering long-term residencies for periods of four to twelve months. Each of the three apartments (2 two-bedroom, 1 one-bedroom) provides a living room, kitchen, bath, and single private quarters. The House is situated on the bank of Heath Creek and is within easy walking distance from the Kierkegaard Library. Supplementary scholarship grants for travel assistance and subsistence may also be made according to individual needs, as well as supplementary grants for the preparation of dissertations and manuscripts for publication.

Applications for residencies in the House may be sent to:

**Dr. Gordon Marino, Curator
Kierkegaard Library St. Olaf College
1510 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, Minnesota USA 55057**

Membership in the Foundation is open to all who are interested in making the exceptional resources of the Library available to visiting scholars from countries throughout the world. Membership dues and eventual gifts for support of the House program and to the Endowment are tax-deductible as charitable contributions.

*Kierkegaard House Foundation
5174 E. 90 Old Dutch Road
Northfield, Minnesota USA 55057*

Gift: \$ _____ to be used for Program Endowment

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