

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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Danish Instruction

DANISH INSTRUCTION
TO BE OFFERED AT
THE LIBRARY
JULY 2002.

Sinead Ladegaard Knox, Kierkegaard Scholar and Danish Native Speaker, will be teaching Danish for Kierkegaard Scholars for 4 weeks at the Kierkegaard Library in July of 2002. Sessions will meet 3-4 hours each morning. Cost for participation will be \$500 for tuition and housing at St. Olaf College. Those interested in participating in this language program should contact Gordon Marino by February 15, 2002 at marino@stolaf.ed

July of 2002

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 scholars participated in the Summer Fellows Program during this summer: Jeremy Allen, Brian Barlau, Rick Furtak, Nicolae Irina, Rebecca Jiggins, Ulrich Knappe, James Kurian, Erik Lindland, James Loder, Darya Loungina, Poul Luebcke, William McDonald, Peter Mehl, Christopher Nelson, Richard Nelson, Phil Olson, David Possen, Michal Soltysiak, Tatiana Schitzova, Dessislava Stoyanova, Jamie Turnbull, Alvaro Valls, and Joseph Westfall. These scholars had citizenships in 11 countries: Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, India, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Jonathan Stenseth Memorial Fellowship was awarded this year to Desislava Stoyanova. Our thanks to Inger and Junius Stenseth for their kind hospitality to her and other scholars during the summer. This fellowship is given each year to a visiting scholar from Eastern Europe in memory of Jonathan Stenseth, a St. Olaf student who worked in the Kierkegaard Library as an undergraduate making many significant contributions.

THE KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, 2002

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. Scholarships are also available at other times of the year.

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 Fourth International Kierkegaard Conference took place June 9-13, 2001 hosted by the Library. Registered participants numbered 120 representing 16 countries: Argentina, Canada, Hungary, Italy, and Mexico in addition to the citizenships listed above for summer fellows. Scholars considered 48 papers concerning Kierkegaard's relation to hermeneutics and his views on communication. The Opening Address was presented by Alastair Hannay entitled "Something on Hermeneutics and Communication After All." Other special presentations included "Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks Rediscovered: A Presentation of the New Scholarly Edition of Søren Kierkegaard's *Skrifter*" by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and a workshop on Kierkegaard and Buddhism by Joel R. Smith. The Spanish Translation Seminar (Seminario Ibero-americano) meeting was led by Alvaro Valls.

Special thanks are offered to the Friends of the Kierkegaard Library, and particularly to Jamie Lorentzen, Chairperson, who generously hosted conference participants for a dinner and riverboat excursion on the Mississippi.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Approximately 120 new titles were acquired since February 2001, including 30 additions to our collection of publications published prior to 1856.

We would like to thank the following scholars and friends for their contributions to the Library during the past 6 months: Hans Aaen, Jamie Lorentzen, David H. Hesla, Louis Pojman, Timothy B. Wilder, Desislava Stoyanova, Leticia Valadez, Luis Guerrero, Per Lønning, Tonny Aagard Olesen, Pia Sølfthoft, Nicolae Irina, Leo Stan, Tatiana Schitzova, Darya Loungina, Umberto Regina, Karel Eisses, Alastair McKinnan, Julia Watkin, Todd Nichol, Gordon Marino, Howard Hong, Michal Soltysiak and Editura Humanitas (Bucharest).

The Hong Kierkegaard Library strongly 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

Progress was made since February in the acquisition of non-American dissertations relating to Kierkegaard studies. Contributions of materials to 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

John W. Elrod 1940-2001

Word has been received from Robert Perkins that John Elrod, "eminent Kierkegaard scholar and president of Washington and Lee University," died on July 27 from cancer. He will be sorely missed.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: IMMEDIACY AND REFLECTION IN KIERKEGAARD'S THOUGHT

Leuven-Antwerp October 10, 2001 –October 13, 2001. Sponsored by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte and Univeriteit Antwerpen: Faculteit Lettern en Wijsbegeerte.

Announced participants on the program include Andre Van de Putte, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Paul Cruysberghs, Harvey Ferguson, Heiko Schulz, André Clair, Rudi Visker, Jamie Ferreira, Johan Teils, Arne Grøn, Karl Verstrynge, Sylvia Walsh, Merold Westphal, William Desmond, George Pattison, Robert Perkins, and Ignace Verhack.

For further information, contact:

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News From The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre in Copenhagen

Volume 23 of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* containing the notebooks of 1833-1846 will come out on November 23, 2001.

The *Kierkegaard Studies: Yearbook 2001* was received by subscribers in August 2001.

Call for Papers: Kierkegaardiana Volume 23

Contributions should be sent to Pia Søltoft at *Kierkegaardiana*, Kannikestraded 15, 1169 København K, Denmark. The deadline for submissions is June 31, 2002.

News From *International Kierkegaard Commentary* Editor

Communications:

Address: Robert L. Perkins
 225 South Boundary Avenue
 DeLand, Florida 32720-5103 USA
 Phone: 386-734-6457 Fax: 386-882-7582 Email: rperkins@cfl.rr.com

Due dates for volumes contributors are working on at present have been extended. (See schedule below.) Beginning with *Practice in Christianity*, due dates will be regularly 1 September, with publication in November.

Calls for Papers with due dates:

'*For Self-Examination*' and *Judge for Yourself*: Some flexibility, but as soon as possible. The beginning of fall term or 1 September 2001 is appropriate.

'*Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*.' 1 January 2001.

'*Practice in Christianity*.' 1 September 2002.

Sequence of Forthcoming Calls for Papers

'*Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*'

'*Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*

'*Without Authority*'

'*Christian Discourses*' and '*The Crisis in the Life of an Actress*'

'*Prefaces*'

'*The Book on Adler*'

'*The Moment*' and *Late Writings*

'*The Point of View*'

Kierkegaard Cabinet in Budapest

In March 2001, the Kierkegaard Cabinet opened at Budapest University Eotvos Lorand, hosted by the Institute of Aesthetics. This resource center functions as an independent foundation, with the mandate to support Kierkegaard scholarship in Hungary and the Central Eastern European region and to assist in the translation of Kierkegaard's works into Hungarian. The "heart" of the Cabinet is a special library and an electronic database which provides contacts with other resource and research centers in the world. The Cabinet welcomes scholars, students, and researchers from Central and Eastern Europe.

The founder of the Kierkegaard Cabinet Foundation is Peter Nadas. Members of the Board include Chairperson, András Nagy; Bela Bacso, head of the Institute of Aesthetics; and Thomas Berntsen, director of the Danish Cultural Institute in Hungary. Sponsors of the Cabinet include The Royal Danish Embassy, The Danish Cultural Institute, The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre (Copenhagen) and the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

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Email: cabinet@emc.elte.hu
Website: <http://kierkegaard.elte.hu/>
Hours: Wednesday and Thursday during the academic year, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM.
(Appointments possible for other times with advance notice.)

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.mata.v.hu.

ARTICLES

Something on Hermeneutics and Communication in Kierkegaard After All

Alastair Hannay
University of Oslo

[Delivered as the Opening Address at the Fourth International Kierkegaard Conference, June 9, 2001]

Why 'after all'? Well, when told the themes of the conference for which I have the great honour of holding this opening address, I confess I shuddered slightly. These topics are hard enough to deal with separately let alone in combination, to say nothing of in relation, separately or together, to our principal topic: the thought of Søren Kierkegaard. I said to Dr. Marino and he kindly told me that so long as I mentioned them at least once I could talk about whatever I liked. Well, having done that, I could now go on to something easier, but I won't. After a little home-work, I have put together -- and not out of sense of duty or in gratitude for the great honour of standing here before you, but from plain curiosity -- a few thoughts on both of our themes, as well as on their combination, *and* their combined relevance for Kierkegaard -- thoughts which, though I'm sure none of them will be new to you, will I trust call for your comment and above all criticism.

Let me start by stating a problem I have with each of these topics in relation to Kierkegaard. It isn't the same problem in each case and has nothing to do with their complexity. As for the first, 'hermeneutics,' I have difficulty seeing what use this word has, as an addition to the others we already have, in relation to understanding Kierkegaard's thought; while with regard to 'communication' I think it important to say that this word, so familiar to us in the age of the multilane informational highway, has no significant bearing on Kierkegaard's thought at all, or if it has, then only negatively. You may think that in the one case I am being naïve -- to understand is to interpret and what else is hermeneutics but interpretation?, and in the latter deliberately obtuse -- what of the thorny matter of 'indirect' communication? I nevertheless hope to show you otherwise. Kierkegaard's thought is antithetical to hermeneutics and communication is not among his central topics.

Since I will be talking mainly about hermeneutics, let me first dispose of 'communication.' You will think I'm joking when I say this term does not designate a central topic in Kierkegaard's thought. But you will not be quite so quick to think so if you are a Danish reader, and for readers of the original text the point will be all too obvious. Although 'Communication' is a term that does occur in the Danish, it

does so very rarely and not at all in connection with the famous distinction between what we English-readers call direct and indirect communication. What we all translate 'communication' is, as most of us know, 'Meddelelse'. This term is better if less idiomatically translated as an 'imparting,' even better but still less idiomatically a 'with-parting' (as against a 'parting with'). 'Sharing' also captures it quite well, but it is a sharing of something that is given, a piece of news perhaps or something you want to 'put across' or 'let someone in on'. No doubt nowadays 'Meddelelse' does often serve as a synonym of 'communication,' yet it still bears on its face this sense of a sharing that is a giving, a sense it seems clearly to have had for Kierkegaard. For how otherwise could he make play as in such remarks as that '[i] Forhold til at meddele er det ogsaa af Vigtighed at kunde fratage'? There is no wit in the remark that in relation to *communicating* it is important also to be able to take away. Except for what is required for the sharing or imparting to become a fact (and that, in some case, might be that something must first be taken away), *Meddelelse*, unlike communication, is essentially a one-way relation -- also in the case of sharing where what is shared is something first in the possession of the sharer.

For us nowadays 'communication' brings to mind mutual and reciprocal ways and means of transport and information channels. These, unless we think of teaching as no more than a leveling up of information quanta, offer no foothold to a one-way teacher-learner relation. It was not always so, and the Latinist Kierkegaard would know that the primary sense of 'communio/communicare' was precisely that of to 'share,' or to 'make a sharer in.' The root 'munis' in 'communication,' but also in 'communal' and its cognates, has the double sense of 'charge' (in the sense of what one is charged with doing -- hence also 'immunis' for one who is excused) and, derivable from the related 'munus,' that of a 'gift' or 'present' (as in 'munificence'). But by Kierkegaard's time the new technology of transportation had already made topical what we *now* call 'communication,' a notion lacking any vestige of the connotation of a 'giving' that can be contrasted with a taking, as against, say, a withholding.

But now for our main topic. What is this thing called hermeneutics? Or: What does *that* word signify? As a brief

glimpse at our programme shows, the term in its various grammatical forms is very much in the air. Indeed the sheer variety of its forms makes one wonder whether there is anything more substantial in the wind than just the words themselves. Some evidently use the term 'hermeneutics' merely to signal a style of interpretation, or a key to a reading. Others give it greater philosophical clout, staking in the name of hermeneutics a claim to an exciting new vantage-point from which new advances in self-awareness are to be gained, new levels of cognitive maturity which apprise us at once of our freedom and of our limitation, but where above all we are armed with a better appreciation of why the things that strike us as true, and not other things, do so strike us.

In the course of its long history hermeneutics has been several things. One of the most influential ideas behind it is captured by Gadamer's proposed 'best' definition of hermeneutics as '[letting] what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of being distanced by cultural or historical research speak again.'² It is a definition that should interest all of those who like myself feel there is some problem letting Kierkegaard's words speak again.

If we look in the dictionaries we find that hermeneutics is first and foremost a method of interpretation. That word 'method' should already put us on our guard. Method is surely a typical offshoot of objective thinking, even its very manner of being. Some have claimed hermeneutics amounts to a *science* of interpretation, but even if we settled for the word 'art' instead, though still adding that it is a method, shouldn't we still be just a little suspicious?

I think so. Primarily, hermeneutics is concerned with texts, though nowadays that notion has an application much wider than the written word and texts include practices, institutions, and practically anything that can go by the name of social construction, or in Derrida's case the whole world. It is a presupposition of all hermeneutics, which, as followers of its history well know, is itself preoccupied with what is presupposed, that texts disclose truth. And that is true, we might add, whether we spell 'truth' with a capital or a lower-case 't,' one single truth or a diversity of local truths. Or rather, its concern has been with texts about which it has been believed that truth, important truth of some kind, whether single or local, the truth that does or should concern us as the beings we are, is disclosed in them, that is, in the texts, the practices or whatever. That other presuppositions too underlie hermeneutics is a point I shall come to in conclusion.

In its origins as Bible-interpretation the link with truth is obvious; it was through hermeneutics that the word of the one God was allowed to speak to us. But when truth became the possession of philosophers, who spoke with many voices, a certain confusion reigned until (or at least as a tourist's guide to philosophy might have it) Hegel put things in order by providing the notion of self-evolving spirit as self-consciousness. History was now allowed to proceed in ascending steps and those who climbed enjoyed increasingly compendious notions of the truth – though not before Schleiermacher had put in a word for the Romantics and a role for subjectivity in the project of interpretation. Heidegger, in

our own (rapidly receding) time gave hermeneutics a professedly non-philosophical twist. Instead of an aid to unearthing the truth of the philosophers, Heidegger called his hermeneutics Dasein's 'wakefulness to itself.' Its task was the quasi-Kantian one of charting the limits on human beings' ability to pose the kinds of questions answers to which had been the many philosophers' versions of the truth. Hermeneutics, said Heidegger, 'wishes only to place an object which has hitherto fallen into forgetfulness before today's philosophers for their "well-disposed consideration".'³

There is an unclarity in Heidegger as to whether, once the hermeneutic results are in, the philosopher or theologian for that matter has anything further to add. Although part of Heidegger's exercise is to stress the merely historical nature of human being, its confinement to time, in his early work it is what is true of Dasein in general that he aims to bring out from under the historically changeable dross. And only later does he poke about in the dross to look for interesting changes of perspective that might inform human being's relations to its world. Although the text, as we may well imagine, was no longer a central datum for Heideggerian Hermeneutics, his student, Gadamer, brought the text back into its own. Now, however, the text became, in what may seem an extension of Heidegger's Dasein archeology, as the locus, or rather medium, of a dialogue with the past aimed at enriching Dasein's view of itself, though always with the limitations imposed by its structure and confinement to finitude in view. What appears to be unclear with Gadamer, in his turn, is how far he is bringing philosophy in again by the back- or even the side-door – though from some of what he says you might think he is giving good old-fashioned philosophy the red-carpet treatment, re-inviting the traditional questions on the nature of the good life, and their answers too, through the front door. This unclarity, even ambiguity, is noted by John D. Caputo in his recent *More Radical Hermeneutics*. Seeing Gadamer as something of a back-slider in relation to Heidegger, Caputo exploits this characterization of him to define his own hermeneutical position, which he calls 'radical.' A radical hermeneutics is firmly opposed to any intrusion of 'the reassuring framework of a classical, Aristotelico-Hegelian metaphysics of infinity.'⁴

This is the moment in the history of hermeneutics on which I want to focus, the point at which metaphysics is officially dispensed with. I want to raise two questions. First, what relation has Kierkegaard to hermeneutics as a method of interpretation designed to bring out truth, *prior* to the alleged death of metaphysics? Second, what relation has the anti-metaphysics in Johannes Climacus's critique of objective thinking to so-called radical hermeneutics, a hermeneutics of truth with only a little 't'? The latter question has added significance, since Caputo designates as the hero of his book one Johannes Climacus.

First, then I need to get a fix on the relation of Johannes Climacus (and anything we feel we can extrapolate to Kierkegaard himself) to hermeneutics in its non- or pre-radical version. Like Caputo, I take Gadamer to be the most topical representative for our comparisons. The question of how far Gadamer regresses to a point that precedes the subversiveness of Heidegger's early writings is something I

must leave aside here; just as I shall also ignore the question of how subversive Heidegger really meant to be. The point at which I want to arrive is where Kierkegaard and Gadamer may reasonably be thought to differ fundamentally. Then if this throws light on where to place Kierkegaard, or at any rate Johannes Climacus, in relation to radical hermeneutics, so much the better.

The only possibility I have time to pursue here is this: Kierkegaard and hermeneutics crucially oppose each other over the status of *the universal*. Bearing in mind, that 'det Almene' is seldom best translated by the officious English term 'the universal,' better by 'the general' or even just 'the commonplace' (Kierkegaard frequently uses 'det Almene' and 'det Almindelige'), but suggesting at the same time that the sense in which Gadamer says of the *text*, as he does, that it is something 'universal' comes significantly close to Kierkegaard's use of 'det Almene' as what is, or *belongs to* the, commonly accessible, we may look with profit at two cases.

One is where Johannes *de silentio*, thinking respectfully but without comprehension of Abraham as he writes the third of the *problemata*, says that 'the relief of speech is that it translates me into the universal.'¹⁵ As we know, in intending to sacrifice Isaac Abraham deprives himself of the ability to explain his action. It is not a facility with speech he loses, he can still say things; it is just that, if he does say anything, his words will be unintelligible, for what they say flatly subverts a basic principle of moral discourse. In a perfectly clear sense then, Abraham, if he speaks, is emptying the words of their normal meaning, without, moreover, or so it seems, at the same time proposing an alternative. On the other hand, we find Gadamer saying things like this: 'The interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal thing, the text; i.e. to understand what this piece of tradition says, what constitutes the meaning and importance of the text.'¹⁶ I shall return to what Gadamer might mean by these two words 'meaning' and 'importance' in a moment, but for the present let us just ask ourselves why we should expect Abraham to be able to speak to the hermeneuticist any more than he can to Isaac, Sarah, Eleazar, Johannes *de silentio* or the rest of us. Is Abraham by his example not actually engaged in *alienating* us from a language we want to share and, precisely through the character of the words he would write were he to present us with his own account of the matter? If so, then where the hermeneutical enterprise seeks to make initially unintelligible or easily misunderstood expressions meaningful, the Kierkegaardian view seems to be that the nearer we approach truth, the more the words in which we express it have to be *emptied* of their meanings, the very meanings that time over distance has given them.

This puts us in mind of a Socratic move that Kierkegaard makes central in his dissertation on irony. The reference also, by the way, provides an illustration of what I said earlier about Kierkegaard's use of the term 'Communication.' Kierkegaard says that the way in which Socrates finally gets the better of his judges is by 'frustrating any more meaningful communication with the thought of death'¹⁷ – not by communication *about* the thought of death but with the very

thought itself. An alienating move if ever there was one.

To show that the point is not local to the early pseudonyms, nor present merely in the pseudonyms, we can refer to a late-ish journal entry where Kierkegaard is writing of his need to preserve his heterogeneity. To be heterogeneous, more or less so, is to be more or less out of context with the universal, or to relax the terminology a bit, we might say it is to be out of tune with the commonplace. According to Kierkegaard we are all a little heterogeneous but there can be an absolute heterogeneity, which is, however, either demonic or divine. He himself is somewhere in between, that is to say, more than a little heterogeneous. The passage conveniently gives us our cue for that difficult notion I shall have to say something about: indirect communication.

[... E]very person of depth has heterogeneity to a degree. For as long as he goes about pondering something in himself [*gaaer og grunder i sig selv over Nogen*] and only lets drop indirect utterances, he is heterogeneous. With me, it has happened on a larger scale... . Absolute heterogeneity remains in *indirect communication* to the last, since it refuses absolutely to put itself in context with the universal.⁸

But why, in order to share what you ponder, must you express yourself indirectly? Surely 'What I'm pondering is...' is a form of expression that lends itself quite easily to normal communication. All right, but what about ponderings that take a Socratic turn away from a shared language, putting certain key terms out of play, as in the case of Socrates and his judges with regard to the word 'death'? If direct communication depends on a *shared* language, what is pondered in this way will not be expressible transparently in that language, and anything in that language that does serve as its expression will express it only indirectly. That could be one way of getting a grip on the notion of indirect communication. The 'text,' if read literally, will not express directly what the utterer means. What about reading it metaphorically? Yes, but then metaphors are also part of a shared language, indeed shared languages are largely made up of metaphors; so the distinction between what can be expressed literally and what only metaphorically won't help. We might try something else, based on a direct correlation between points at which communication (*Communication*) is frustrated and what can be communicated (*meddelt*) only indirectly. How about trying to identify the range of what can only be communicated indirectly with topics of the kind Johannes Climacus deems appropriate for subjective thinking? These would include what it means to die, where ponderings on this as another existential topics give them a personal pregnancy that takes them out of the commonplace, or in Heidegger's parlance out of the *Das Man* domain.

That the parallel with Heidegger is more than merely verbal is suggested by noting further that heterogeneity is 'at the starting-point of particularity but then seeks back to the universal.'¹⁹ This puts us in mind of the early Heidegger's account of *Dasein's* emergence from the historically contingent norm-constituting background of its established practices to radical individualization in Being-towards-Death. The self, thus self-singled-out by facing the inescapable fact

of its own total demise, re-engages the world of practices but now authentically. But what actual help this notion of singling out (for a slightly differently angled notion of singling-out, see *A Literary Review*)¹⁰ gives to an understanding of indirect communication remains to be seen.

But let us now ask straight out whether Abraham's lack of the relief of speech and an idea of heterogeneity involving frustrated communication with certain key terms imply, as might seem to be the case, that Kierkegaard and the hermeneutical tradition are at loggerheads.

Let's get a possible red herring out of the way. One way of arguing such an implication is with reference to what Andrew Cross calls the 'radical verbal ironist.' A concoction of the dissertation on irony, this imaginary figure is in a situation somewhat analogous to what Kierkegaard calls absolute heterogeneity (not quite like it, since according to Kierkegaard, that can be demonic or divine). The radical verbal ironist *never* means what he actually says, or – the traditional paradigm of irony – always says the opposite of what he means, and vice versa. Kierkegaard, speaking in the dissertation on behalf of the romantics, describes this as a freedom from *the universal*: 'If what I said is not what I meant or is the opposite of what I meant, then I am free in relation to others and to myself.'¹¹ If such freedom were indeed a possibility, and we put the hermeneuticist in the position of the radical verbal ironist's interlocutor, how can the hermeneuticist ever tell what *is* meant? Arguing in the way one does for general scepticism, one might conclude from the possibility of irony, and the impossibility in principle of telling sincerity and irony apart, that the hermeneutical enterprise – what we recall Gadamer defined as 'letting what is alienated by the character of the written word of by the character of being distanced by cultural or historical distances speak again' – can never get started.

The argument is not convincing. Even the radical verbal ironist is bound by certain conventions that allow the irony to be legible, and as in the analogous case of general philosophical scepticism, what is claimed always to be possible, namely that the meaning is other than the one expressed, presupposes some established verbal practices (straightforward and sincere utterance) from which irony and insincerity are departures.

In appealing to a stronger argument, I am assuming, or guessing, perhaps even hermeneuticizing, that for Kierkegaard truth, human truth – and it is an ethico-religious notion – has its proper habitation in a life lived in a certain way, not either in contemplation of a theory of the nature of things or in a life lived according to such a theory. A life lived in a certain way is a life informed, consciously or not, by a life-view. As far as texts are concerned, then, the kind of text that aims to express human truth will not be a bit of philosophy, nor of course science, but nor yet, I suggest, a dialogue in which new versions of this truth can benefit from renewed communication with interlocutors re-invoked from the past. It will if anything be an expressive work, a novel perhaps, or even a poem. The vital thought here is that textual expression will not be essential to the truth itself. It will not be what we must first have in mind in order to acquire truth, let alone be what by

simply having it in mind affords truth. What expresses truth is the acting person. The actions expressing truth may be those of a person writing, as Kierkegaard perhaps hoped for his own case, but that will not be visible in the writer's texts themselves – whether they express human truth will be evident only from the results, the perlocutionary effects, of the presentation of the texts. In general, what anyone writes can have only an ancillary role, assisting a reader to see the point of talking about truth in this way.

In a well-worn Kierkegaardian metaphor, the life-view expressed in a novel is what gives the novel its own centre of gravity (*der giver denne at have Tyngdepunktet i sig*).¹² Without going into what this means I simply point out that Kierkegaard thinks Thomasine Gyllembourg's writings have this centre-point while at least Andersen's *Only A Fiddler* doesn't. A proposal I wish to offer you here is that one way of interpreting the pseudonymous works, at least the first batch, is in terms of this metaphor. My suggestion is that, unlike novels, these works do have centres of gravity but they are not in them. Except perhaps for *Repetition*, which does have something like a plot or action, they in any case bear little or no resemblance to novels, though that isn't to say that something rather like a novel might share the same feature of, what – de-centricity? In all of them something is missing but hinted at. I suggest it is a centre outside them towards which they incline their reader to gravitate. Whether by default, because that is where it leads, or by design because Kierkegaard had *Religiositetens Idee* in mind all along, as *The Point of View* claims, there is, even if only by implication, this religious life-view persistently in the offing, or behind or beyond. Just for that reason the pseudonymous works *cannot* have their centres of gravity in themselves.

Many will claim that the pseudonymous works do have their own centres of gravity, arguing that this is a main point behind their pseudonymity. They may add that it is their pseudonymity that makes their communication indirect. Alasdair MacIntyre's radical choice reading, which I think many of us reject, assumes something like this. One reason to reject it is extra-textual; it is that it strains the notion of choice beyond recognition – choosing as against just picking requires a principle of selection that cannot be chosen in the same choosing. But rather than argue that point further I shall, and as a preface to my conclusion, put together a line of thought offered to you as an alternative.

I begin with the concluding section of the dissertation, called 'Irony as a Controlled Element: the Truth of Irony.' Kierkegaard says that to master irony is to infuse a work with irony, and that once no non-ironical holds are left the work frees itself from the author and the author from it. He also says that for that very reason the work can tell us nothing of the author and of his or her own personal mastery of irony. For all we know she or he may be well down the path of despair. But that cannot be true of someone with something to impart or share. A teacher must be a master of irony in his or her own life and the assumption that the author of some text is such a master is an assumption about the actual life of the poet, one of those facts of a poet's personal life that Kierkegaard says we are normally not supposed to bother about.¹³ So at least two facts should

concern us, namely the vision of truth that the author's works are intended to express and that he did indeed intend his texts to express that vision of truth.

In notes for a lecture series he never gave on 'Den etiske og den Ethisk-Religiøse Meddelses Dialektik' Kierkegaard says that 'as soon as he thinks of what it is to impart something four things come to mind: the object, the imparter, the receiver, and what is imparted [*Gjenstanden, Meddeleren, Modtageren, Meddelelsen*].'¹⁴ We note, but without being too quick to deplore the fact, that no provision is made for a fifth component: the *text*. Let us translate 'object' (*Gjenstand*) as 'topic' or 'matter,' that about which something is said and may be known if what is said about it is true. Kierkegaard says, for reasons I have no time to go into, that it drops out where what is imparted is some ability (*Kunnens Meddelelse*), and at the same time claims a correlation between there being no object and the need for indirect communication. Where the 'topic' is the existing subject's way of grasping and coping with his or her own life, this being what a *Meddelelse*, an imparting, is paradigmatically concerned with, there is no common reference at which to point. Being 'existential,' such 'communication' differs from that on topics about which people can advise one another, discuss and agree on how to deal with them, or give each other general rules or prescriptions for doing that. An existential matter requires, as it were, a self-provided personal boost on the part of the recipient, something more than the recognition and acceptance of some such rule. So the imparter (*Meddeleren*) we take to be someone who has something to impart, he or she is to some degree a teacher, wants to give something of him- or herself to the learner (*Modtageren*), but realizes the lesson can only be learned by the latter catching on, not by being instructed.¹⁵ You could say that it is an application of the Aristotelian distinction between *techné* and *praxis*, the latter a form of knowledge, moral knowledge in Aristotle's sense, which unlike *techné* – which controls things in ways that eliminate disturbances – is open to whatever hazards and interruptions the world can and does bring. In the case of moral knowledge, experience keeps getting in the way more and more, not less and less. Thus moral knowledge increases with experience. But whereas Aristotle thinks of the increase of such knowledge as bringing the learner into closer harmony with the world, the world of other people as well as nature, for Kierkegaard the hazards are ones the learner has to learn to identify *within* him- or herself. Third, then, the learner is, as we see, one who begins by not seeing the hazards, or by taking them to be, as Aristotle took them, as coming from outside. Finally, the message itself, the teaching, what is conveyed, what is said about the topic, which can be of the order of grace, will be something that the learner should be in a position to grasp provided only the obstacles to doing so are removed, or at least presented to the learner in a way that can lead to the learner seeing them for what they are, namely obstacles, wrong avenues, convenient defences, or whatever else makes them get in the way of – well, in the way of what? – in the way of truth as it can be for the individual.

This shows among other things why Kierkegaard should say that when you impart something you also take something

away,¹⁶ and that imparting something to someone can even mean cheating (*at franarre*)¹⁷ them out of something else, in short why indirect *Meddelelse* involves deception.¹⁸ The deception is not in the pseudonymity but in a point of view being presented as if it were a place to stand yet leaves the reader finally with no place to stand *from that point of view*.

Are we any closer now to what is meant by indirect *Meddelelse*? We should be able to assume at least that to call a communication indirect implies that the sender is still somehow involved. Grammar tells us as much, for how can there be an indirect relation between a sender and a receiver unless the sender is still one of the *relata*? Accordingly, for the imparting or sharing to be indirect, the *Meddeler* as well as the *Modtager* must still be in place, though no longer in a *direct* relation to one another. What form does the indirectness take? Kierkegaard says in one place that the pseudonyms 'represent [*repræsenterer*] the indirect communication.'¹⁹ That might mean that it is these authors who convey indirectly the meaning and importance that the real author attaches to the texts he has penned in their names. Kierkegaard does say that the fact that he has written a foreword to Anti-Climacus's *Sygdommen til Døden* means that it is no longer indirect,²⁰ which sounds as though simply by owning up to the pseudonym that the pseudonym writes is no longer communicated indirectly.²¹ But if owning up did cancel indirectness, then everything that precedes *Postscript's* concluding 'Declaration' will cease to be indirect, and then again, everything before *The Point of View*.²² For us nothing would be indirect.

Alternatively, the remark could be saying that these authors communicate indirectly, the texts embodying *their* intentions, the indirectness being, as noted above, that the intention is not stated but present somehow in the text in a way intended to allow a qualified reader to catch on with no further reference to the teacher. The teacher is not there on call, if the reader wants points verified, but on the other hand the text is one that was written with the intention of being just such a text, where any further action on the basis of, or provoked by, what it says is entirely up to the reader. An indirect communication is not just a text. There is no reason to suppose that to make a communication indirect means letting the leaves fly loose to be gathered and read in just any way. It is not up to readers to decide what is and what is not a text; texts are bound to the communications they are intended to effect. An indirect communication is an act of communication in which one person tries to share, with another, something that requires a freely made, personal advance of some kind on the part of the one with whom that something is shared. The indirect communicator is someone who has some idea of where the truth must be looked for, and of the ways in which, when found, it should manifest itself. And it is in so far as we can say that this idea is embodied in the text that there is no stage where Kierkegaard's four components in communication would permit the emergence of a fifth component, the text itself.

Yet, if that leaves us with a concept of a text *enriched* by an intention that it embodies, then in another sense, given the relation of human truth to texts in general, the text itself even when thus enriched tends to vanish into insignificance. What

is to be conveyed is not something that *can* be conveyed or perhaps even expressed in a text at all, even indirectly, unless a text can be seen somehow as part of an actual exercise in truth – in the way that Kierkegaard seems to have wanted to conceive his own writing activity. The title of a piece by George Pattison goes ‘If Kierkegaard is Right, Why Read Kierkegaard?’²³ There are two Kierkegaardian reasons for not reading Kierkegaard. In the one case you shouldn’t even begin; what the indirect communicator is trying to do is allow other versions of the truth to grow on the ground prepared, but if the ground is fallow, giving no chance of a new version taking root there, then as Kierkegaard says in the postscript to the preface to his very first publication, the reader might just as well skip over the work as the preface. In the other case, the reason for not reading Kierkegaard is the one he tries to convey to a reader who, having read him, should then see that reading was not the right thing to do.

The teacher’s task or goal is not quite that of producing mental or memic clones, as in Schleiermacher version of hermeneutics, which attributes a state of mind, a version in the successful interpreter that mimics that of the writer wanting to convey it. The task is to put something across that then takes off on its own, and in ways that can differ widely from whatever the teacher might be able to say of his or her own case. The metaphor of vision is probably wholly inappropriate for what Kierkegaard, in his maturer thoughts, means by truth, though it was popular at the time, and we note how closely Kierkegaard’s language, when first describing a life-view, follows that of Schleiermacher’s account of the ‘got it’ or ‘Eureka’ moment of hermeneutic insight when all particulars fall into place.

Let me formulate a few suggestions in conclusion. First, to the question, Where does Kierkegaard stand with regard to the Gadamerian tradition?, I suggest that by placing truth (or if you like, truths) outside the text Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms are engaged in something antithetical to the project of Gadamerian hermeneutics, which places truth within the scope of what texts can impart in and of themselves, without (as against Schleiermacher) reference to authorial intention or any states of the author’s mind. But then what Gadamer means by the *meaning* and *importance* of a text can point to something authorial that a text really embodies after all, in so far as it is more than a ‘mere’ text, and is still linked in a way with its author’s purpose to ‘impart’ something. Moreover, that something can well be that truth has nothing to do with writing and reading. Gadamerian hermeneutics is a set of rules of thumb, very reasonable ones, for bringing the past and present together through a staged dialogue in which, once concessions have been made to the past by the present, the past is allowed to speak for itself. It is true that Kierkegaard’s writings appear designed to provide the materials of a dialogue, but the dialogue is supposed to take place in the individual, a dialogue in the form of a dialectic in which conflicting aspects of the individual are brought to light in the same individual. This is Climacus’s dialectic of finite and infinite, a dialectic the very terms of which surely disqualify him for the role of hero in a hermeneutics – radical hermeneutics – that abandons the very distinction.

Suppose now, however, that Gadamerian hermeneutics were

truly hospitable and willing to place this matter of the locus of truth or truths *in relation to texts* on its agenda. A momentous step, since it would be to risk giving up one of the major presuppositions of the new hermeneutics itself. Advocates of subjective thinking, wielding copies of *Postscript*, will meet in dialogue with the kind of thinkers and hermeneuticists Caputo also opposes, those who still keep to ‘the reassuring framework of a classical, Aristotelico-Hegelian metaphysics of infinity.’ Gadamer for instance, if Caputo is right. The optimal Gadamerian outcome would be a fusion of horizons. But how could such two radically opposed points of view fuse in anything that remained recognizably either Gadamerian or Kierkegaardian? Don’t we have there an either/or that, to be resolved, would require something like mediation, or elevation to some third position that necessarily leaves these two behind, ‘preserving’ them only in a Pickwickian sense?

Finally, even if a Gadamerian dialogue with the agenda proposed ended in deadlock rather than fusion, two projects remain untouched: that of assessing what limits Johannes Climacus and/or Kierkegaard himself would put on concessions made to our present before their work ceases to be recognizably Kierkegaardian, and the quite different project of elaborating their thought and work in the light of what interests us today. The former is an historical project, the latter an attempt to determine the extent of what might be called our Kierkegaardian inheritance. The term ‘recognizably Kierkegaardian’ might be used in both cases but not with the same sense. There is a tendency to confuse these two projects, due I suppose to a form of almost inescapable Hegelianism that infects us all, a standing belief that the past is always more transparent to some present, to which it is a past, than it was to itself. Although Gadamer’s ideal of fusion is infected with the same Hegelianism, his actual approach involves a healthy weakening of its effect. The initial step toward fusion is to be to move from an attitude of ‘It’s crazy, he can’t mean it!’ to one of conciliation, ‘Maybe there’s something in it after all.’ This requires a loosening of the hold on the interpreter of deeply laid current assumptions which, once loosened, may no longer prevent what appears alien becoming plausible. My own perception, however, is that interpreters of the past tend to make undue concessions in the name of the past, more than the past would make for itself if actually engaged in a Gadamerian dialogue. The result is that we are in danger of living in a hermeneutic illusion – an illusion not just of compatibility but of companionability. Instead of forging a bridge to the past we skim off what we recognize of ourselves in its texts and lose sight of what was there. Under the false cover of seeking to have what was alienated speak again, we alienate.

The advertisement for a conference some of you will be contributing to in about a month, in the United Kingdom, announces that ‘Kierkegaard now rivals Nietzsche in terms of the wide diversity of hermeneutical traditions which have claimed him as their own.’ What are these traditions? Are they ways of looking at the world, or are they ways of reading Kierkegaard? If the latter, they clearly need take no issue on the former; we can read Kierkegaard any way we like without arguing for or against the way or ways he would have us look at

the world. On the other hand I see no special point in describing a way of reading Kierkegaard in that way as 'hermeneutical.' However, Kierkegaard was himself very much in the business of providing ways of looking at the world. So it is only natural that, if we engage him at all, we engage him on that point too. You might like to call the business in question hermeneutical; it is, after all, a matter of interpretation. But I have suggested that the direction in which the views Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms offer on that score is towards a way of looking at the world that exceeds the reach of anything that culture historians have so far called a hermeneutical way of looking at it.

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¹ See *A Literary Review*, trans. Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 56: 'how ironic that the rapidity of the transport system and the speed of the communication [*Communicationens Hastværk*] stand in inverse relation to the dilatoriness of indecision.'

² Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Practical Philosophy as a Model of the Human Sciences,' *Research in Phenomenology* 9 (1980), p. 83.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999, pp. 12 and 16.

⁴ John D. Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 47.

⁵ *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, København: Gads Forlag, Bind 4 (SKS 4), p. 201 (*Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p. 137).

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepel, London: Sheed & Ward, 1975, p. 289. He adds: 'In order to understand [the meaning and importance of the text], he must not seek to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation, if he wants to understand it at all.'

⁷ SKS 1 (1994), p. 308, *Kierkegaard Writings*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, Volume II, p. 271.

⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, trans. Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 464 (entry X 2 A 375 from 1850).

⁹ This is one of those places where Kierkegaard uses the terms 'det Almindelige' and 'det Almene' interchangeably – heterogeneity is in relation to 'det Almindelige' while absolute heterogeneity refuses absolutely to be in context with 'det Almene' but all heterogeneity seeks back to the same 'Almene,' which is also that with which the category of 'drawing attention to' is contexted.

¹⁰ *A Literary Review*, op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹ SKS1, pp. 247-8; see Andrew Cross, 'Neither Either Nor Or: The Perils of Reflexive irony,' in Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 130.

¹² SKS 1, p. 36.

¹³ SKS 1, p. 353; KW II, p. 324.

¹⁴ *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, ed. P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torsting, 2nd ed. by N. Thulstrup and Index by N.J. Cappelørn, 1968-78, Volume VIII, 2 B 83, pp. 158-59, and B 89, p. 188.

¹⁵ In respect of *Kunnens Meddelelse* Kierkegaard distinguishes between ethical knowledge, in imparting which the imparter as it were steps aside, and religious knowledge to impart which implies authority and thus reintroduces an 'object' of 'knowledge.' See Poul Lübcke's contribution to this volume.

¹⁶ *Papirer*, op. Cit., VI B 52.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII, 2 B 81.30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, 2 B 81.22.

¹⁹ *Papirer*, op. Cit., X, 6 B 145, p. 203.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, X, 3 A 624, p. 407.

²¹ There may be other reasons for taking that particular text not to be a piece of indirect communication. The foreword itself says it is part treatise, part edifying work, and so not properly either. Maybe for some obscure reason it is these canceling each other out that makes it indirect, but each in itself is typically a signed category in Kierkegaard.

²² That the Declaration itself ends with Kierkegaard 'wanting to communicate indirectly' to Mynster his wish for Mynster's support (J. Garff, *SAK: A Biography*, Gads Forlag, København 2000, p. 352) doesn't contradict the view in so far as it seems unlikely we should regard this as a case of indirect communication in the sense we are discussing.

²³ In N.J. Cappelørn and H. Deuser (eds.), *Kierkegaard Revisited*, Kierkegaard Studies – Monograph Series 1. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1997, pp. 291-309.

REVIEWS

***Søren Kierkegaard til hverdagsbrug.* By Johan de Mylius. Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 1998.
156 p.**

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In his *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan confirms what Kierkegaard wrote about the press as a medium abdicating existential points of view for a mosaic of communal news. Unlike the confessional linearity of a book, witness Kierkegaard, the journalistic mosaic is a democratic form appealing to participating collectives. While Kierkegaard could not agree more, he dissents from McLuhan's positive valorization of the new phenomenon. Accordingly, it may seem the irony of fate that Kierkegaard, of all writers, has ended up dismembered and then reassembled in an anthology of short excerpts from his entire oeuvre (although chiefly and preferably from *Either-Or* and most notably from "Diapsalmata"). If reading someone against the grain was ever a serious intervention, this must be the case in point.

Yet, there is also a case to be made in favor of Johan de Mylius' iconoclastic idea. In a sense the object of his 'edition' is the iconoclast par excellence -- to say nothing of the advocate of the common man -- who could hardly have serious objections to being served up for everyday use; as a matter of fact, the common man is a staple of the selection (17, 26) and one often appearing in contradistinction (25, 33) to more motley crowds (14-16, 19-20), sometimes referred to as the public, the masses, and democracy (98-99, 121) or as a multitude situated over against an individual (100-01) who knows himself/herself as this particular single individual.

And further, isn't fragmentation at least as a communicative form quite consistent with Kierkegaard's own alterity of viewpoints and pseudonymous agencies? The volume at hand will doubtless be catering to insipid dinner conversations, entering quasi-existentialist chatrooms, and dropping isolated words of wisdom into floods of platitudinous commencement speeches. Yet, isn't the author of *The Point of View* the one who himself admonishes, "if you can find exactly the place where the other is and begin there, you may perhaps have the luck to lead him to the place where you are."

It may be argued that de Mylius in this anthology is twisting this particular *point of view* and taking words way out of Kierkegaard's own reach and context and deeply into the chatty discourse of our climate. Or, to put it differently, that he -- de Mylius -- is running the risk of falling between Kierkegaard's and McLuhan's two chairs. Still, isn't such risk-

taking indispensable for taking food for thought to places where such nutrition may have been in short supply? The question obviously should not be restricted to this publication alone but should be seen as pertaining to the entire industry of more or less well-intended introductions and other recent short-cuts for Kierkegaardian beginners.

And the answer is blowing in the wind. Rather than speculating further about the final impact of a book like this, suffice it to mention some pros and cons which may or may not impact the outcome. Bear in mind, though, that whether viewed as pros or cons, the basis of recourse for my assessment of the book as a container of food for thought is constituted by the thoughts it engenders, not the degree to which they may be attributable to Kierkegaard and/or the arrangement by de Mylius.

I begin with noting the obvious, namely, how many words of wisdom and pithy sentences such a Kierkegaard collation inevitably contains. If anyone had been living under the illusion that lowly entertainment, titillation of jaded appetites, or pandering to populist sentiments are chiefly contemporary vices, the anthology makes abundantly clear that the din of modern TV soaps and sitcoms are but updated versions of rampant nineteenth century bedlam (14-16). Rather more surprising is the volume's no less abundant collation of commonplace or vacuous bon mots and serpentine formulations (19-24, 26-28, 30-31, 33, 38), indeed of some entirely disappointing extracts, especially from the section dedicated to women (45-49).

Far more compelling to contemplate or to simply enjoy are the snapshots of the moment (16-17, 31-32), of silence (15, 34-35), of possibility (37), and of humor and jest (40). Sparks are flying from collisions between passion and reflection (102) and between knowledge and action as life-changing inducements (70); between history and nature with regard to temporality (78); and between the eternal and the temporal as matters of light versus darkness (78). Of nature existential descriptions abound. Its speech is unspeakable and secretive as a speaking silence, indeed as a purling stream (76-77). As such its silence is quite unlike the human voice, which like so much else is dwarfed by the divine (78-79). Sequential renditions of remembrance, recollection, and repetition (52-57) remind of the love of recollection (80) and of love as debt, youth and

unchangeableness (80-81). The existential choice, while perhaps not sequential, appears composite in its own way as it passionately transforms what has happened by transferring it from necessity to freedom (73-74). Needless to say, a central avenue of passion is poetry reverberating pain and suffering (111) -- and so much superior to the poet behind it (107).

For each and every concept or notion referenced on this laundry list, its bearing on the unprepared reader's mind may bear little resemblance to the authentic Kierkegaardian lexicon. Intangible that so scantily contextualized pronouncements are destined to be, it would appear that a number of Kierkegaard's biographical turns and truly down to earth concerns in journals and fictional guise would fare better, i.e., leave less room for interpretational conjecture and subjectivistic whim on the reader's part. But lo and behold, under an umbrella of anthological reductions such as the one before us, ambiguities tag along and leave the reader's imagination quite at liberty.

de Mylius has a predilection for money and finances and the role these play in authors' lives. It showed in his 1993 chronology of Hans Christian Andersen's life and work, and it resurfaces in *Søren Kierkegaard til hverdagsbrug* (100 f., 138, 141, 143-45, 146 f., 152, 153, and 156). But all specificity aside, the jury is still out on this matter. On the last page of his Kierkegaard book's chronology de Mylius concludes that "Kierkegaard's rather considerable fortune and earnings of different sorts all went up in plain consumption dictated by a life style characterized by his secretary Israel Levin and other observers as extravagant" (156).

Yet if the reader of these lines should happen upon the memoirs of Troels-Lund, e.g., the excerpt in Bruce Kirmmse's (ed.), *Encounters with Kierkegaard* (181), he or she will be startled by finding that rather than caused by excessive overconsumption Kierkegaard's financial predicament may well have been occasioned by his religious animosity towards sound investments and accretion of interest on money. For clarification of the issue, there is, of course, Brandt and (Rammel) Thorkelin's seminal treatment in *Søren Kierkegaard og pengene* (new. ed. 1993), but few of de Mylius' readers can be expected to research such matters beyond the anthology at hand, and what they here get out of its food for thought may not be entirely consistent with the complete scholarly record.

Be that as it may, open-ended impressions of the same nature and with the same attendant shortcomings issue from other socio-cultural 'facts' in de Mylius' Kierkegaard. His chronology treats us to several pieces of information about Denmark's new railroad and wire services (147, 151, 155), and Kierkegaard's physical trips to Northern Zealand, to his paternal home in Sædding in Jutland, to Kullen, and the four times to Berlin, are dutifully recorded, as are his various addresses in Copenhagen. But what does the information tell us about his particular mode of mobility or *Wanderlust* (a title under which his peregrinations have recently been treated in an interesting history of walking by Rebecca Solnit)? Does he foreground any

state of (post)modernity, and if so, does he do it inadvertently or otherwise?

The questions have to do with Kierkegaard's potential relevance to common people's everyday lives in the new millennium. Those are quite likely the people profiled by Paul Hammerich in the guidelines for contributors to the new and recently completed Danish National Encyclopedia. Their prototype is Lexi -- a girl who can read, though her mother named her after a famous international television personality. In addition, she is young, finishing high school with good grades and wanting later to become a nurse, perhaps a physician, and then to get married and have at least 1 1/2 child, a small car and a big dog. Right now her interests include aerobics, watercolors, choir song, chess, the Middle East, and boys. Put yourself in Lexi's place when you write for us, was Hammerich's order in his guidelines, typically titled, *Write -- plain and simple!*

I have little doubt that readers such as Lexi will form a primary group of users of *Søren Kierkegaard til hverdagsbrug*. Somehow, at least in Denmark, he is a must on her generation's mental agenda, all providing he can be fit in between the aerobics and the boys. In his Preface, where he gives a good number of reasons for composing the anthology but also a few for hesitating to do so, de Mylius is particularly concerned with his subject's dubious popularity in fitness centers, which he calls Kierkegaard's "absolute opposite" (10). Even so, the clientele here belongs to an age group whose social values and educational priorities take for granted the paradigm exchange which Kierkegaard, as de Mylius describes him in his Afterword (130-31), contributed to ushering in more than one hundred fifty years ago. But while Kierkegaard then posited the conditions and values of the individual in opposition to the systemic thinking prevalent within the culture of his day, today's challenge lies in this very culture's own systemic bent. *The Location of Culture* has itself become problematic, as Homi Bhabha argues in a book with this title.

In this context Kierkegaard's role in everyday discourse may well be limited to reigniting sentiments of discomfort with current cultural affairs. For everyday users of his writings, such as Lexi, rigorous interrogations into our cultural epistemes are probably out of the question. Phrases and catchwords culled from de Mylius' book are quite likely sufficient to satisfy many audiences' need of a sense of direction. And presumably such colloquial and pedagogical formats are in high demand because contemporary culture is so saturated with simulacra and because many of its traditional domains have surrendered to biotechnological resolutions.

Kierkegaard's existential approach remains for many a viable alternative to this scientific boom. Like much poetry and fiction, he asks, according to de Mylius, for possible attitudes to life (132), and for ways to get through the possible and into a reality that can give life meaning. This innermost reality is what de Mylius hears as Kierkegaard's voice behind the polyphony of possible voices. Unlike de Mylius, we may have our doubts

about the existence of any unifying voice behind the voices, but there is hardly any doubt that such an existential voice is indeed what Lexi wishes to hear in the midst of her busy

mosaics of everyday communal and private activities. The question to her is twofold, though: will her time and spirit after all allow her to hear it, and even if they will, is it really Kierkegaard she is hearing and not simply his McLuhanian replacement echoing her own mosaic existence?

***Is Hamlet a Religious Drama?:
An Essay on a Question in Kierkegaard* by Gene Fendt**

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This is a thoughtful, solidly researched, and generally well-written work. Those seeking a definitive assessment of Kierkegaard's appreciation of Shakespearean tragedy, or even just *Hamlet*, will likely be frustrated by Fendt's study, just as those expecting only a focused examination of Frater Taciturnus's criticism will be richly surprised. Indeed, Fendt aims high, asserting that his work is not just "about" *Hamlet*, stating—in words resonant with Harold Bloom's contention in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*—that no book can be just about *Hamlet* for "*Hamlet* is 'about' us, and the great artist's work has always already troped the critic and taught him everything he knows" (13). (In chapter 4 Fendt extends this notion by claiming that "*Hamlet* is the greatest play in the history of the world because it is the history of the world, and of everyone in it" (175)). Fendt assures us his study is also "about" Kierkegaard and his authorship. He believes that the problem of seeing *Hamlet* as a Christian tragedy, or even as a religious drama, is "the figure of a problem for reading Kierkegaard," himself. From this central focus on *Hamlet* and Kierkegaard's authorship, and drawing frequently from such disparate thinkers as Aristotle, Aquinas, Freud, and Bataille, Fendt extends his intellectual inquiry outward to "philosophical questions about language, art, history, consciousness and power," and that, he declares, is "the thumbnail itinerary for this book" (14).

Chapter One ("A Philosophical Puzzle") of the six-chapter, 243-page text discusses Frater Taciturnus's "Appendix on *Hamlet*" in *Stages on Life's Way*. In noting Taciturnus's contention that religious drama is not possible because religious passion is, by his definition, undramatizable, Fendt turns the conundrum back on to Kierkegaard himself, asking how it is possible for the Dane—in light of what the frater has to say—to "introduce Christianity to Christendom." This relatively short chapter helps establish the philosophical playing field on which Fendt engages Kierkegaard and *Hamlet*, but it also provides a thorough critique of Frater Taciturnus's argument. Fendt notes the

dual nature of Taciturnus's objection to Börne's contention that *Hamlet* is a religious drama:..one, that religious passion is incommunicable and therefore defies mimesis, and two, that were such a dramatic enterprise possible Shakespeare would have failed because he does not clearly delineate the Prince's religious presuppositions.

Fendt then identifies Taciturnus's objection about the "impossibility of religious drama" as two-fold, citing the frater's classification of esthetic and religious heroes and the distinction he draws among dramatic interpersonal misunderstandings. Fendt refers to both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antigone* in evaluating Taciturnus's views on esthetic heroes and heroines like Juliet, who are confronted by immediate external obstacles, and religious heroes and heroines like Ismene, who are capable of that infinitely higher quality of infinite reflection. Having accomplished this, the critic then relegates conditions for misunderstandings into two camps: "1) the heterogeneous, and 2) the possibility of understanding or relation between the heterogeneous" (27); he then, with deference to Aristotle, explicates these two camps, drawing upon other Shakespeare plays as illustration.

The latter part of the first chapter consists of Fendt's critiquing Taciturnus's outline of four possible interpretations of *Hamlet*. After citing such thinkers as Boethius and T.S.Eliot, Fendt argues that in order for *Hamlet* to be considered a religious drama Shakespeare would have to be capable of creating a "mimetic correlative" of a completely dialectical passion through which the audience could suffer by relating itself to the aforesaid suffering. In answering this question about *Hamlet*, Fendt argues, one answers the question about the religious nature of Kierkegaard's authorship. If this is true, he continues, then the reverse must also apply: "If Kierkegaard can be read as a religious hero, then *Hamlet* must also be capable of so large a discourse, and that reading of the Prince and the play is the question of the rest of this book [. . .] (41).

Chapters two and three hold the issue of Kierkegaard's authorship in abeyance and focus exclusively on what Fendt perceives to be the "scholarly cruxes" of *Hamlet*.

These topics include Hamlet's madness (feigned or otherwise), his melancholy, his extended deliberation, and his complex relationships with family, friends, and enemies.

Chapter two is constructed for "clearing off the ground" (16), while chapter three works from "the questions asked in the play to build up better (and more playable) answers than previous critics have developed" (16). Be this as it may, Fendt's philosophical guides here have little to do with Kierkegaard *per se*: "Using Aristotle and Aquinas, these chapters aim towards what a religious understanding of *Hamlet* might be" (16)

Chapter two, "Some Scholarly Questions," begins with a discussion of Hamlet's melancholy. It also evinces the breadth and depth of Fendt's literary research, which is appropriate and extensive. On the subject of melancholy, Fendt cites Taciturnus's claim that a melancholic Hamlet can only be given a comic interpretation. This single reference to Kierkegaard is used more as a means of launching discussion than as a critical fulcrum. Fendt positions Taciturnus's view against Coleridge's Romantic interpretation of Hamlet, and he then notes A.C. Bradley's classic rebuttal of such a view. Here and throughout, Fendt proffers his own viewpoints in consideration of such other stalwart literary critics as Frye, Eliot, Knight, Bevington, and Bloom. Fendt concludes this relatively short chapter with a discussion of "The Mousetrap" and offers how he believes it would best be staged, in opposition to H.R. Coursen's suggested direction.

Chapter three addresses seven separate questions raised by the play, with "Ecstasy?" earning most of Fendt's attention and "Whither Wilt Thou Lead Me?" being the one that, momentarily, explicitly returns to Frater Taciturnus. In "Ecstasy?", Fendt cites Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1975) as support for his critical methodology in this section which endeavors to transcend the "prejudice of a time-bound mind" (92). As Fendt defines it: "This section is an attempt to allow access to [. . .] a kind of apophradic epiphany between Shakespeare and Thomas Aquinas" (93). In other words, Fendt uses a medieval metaphysics to frame a critical reading of a Renaissance playwright's use of the word and concept of "ecstasy."

In assessing the ecstasies exhibited by Hamlet and Ophelia, Fendt notes that in Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* "ecstasy" is defined as a state of being, not as just a word or a concept. He continues by citing Thomas's conviction that the cause of ecstasy is love, and he reasons that if one wants to understand this relation then one must understand the three types of appetite that give rise to love. From this Fendt identifies four types of ecstasy in *Hamlet*: simple and higher, simple and lower, restricted and higher, and restricted and lower. Having analyzed Hamlet and these four versions of ecstasy, Fendt boldly generalizes: "Shakespearean tragedy is always structured in relation to just such a character [Hamlet]—one who embodies the

simple and higher ecstasy appropriate to humanity" (97). Fendt, conversant with Freud, continues painting with sweeping strokes: "In an age [ours] which disbelieves even in the possibility of the supernatural, the higher simple ecstasy must be considered a serious neurosis, and the higher restricted type a person whose superego function has been regularized in accord with social convention" (97). One's comfort level with the above will depend upon how one views the legitimacy of "apophradic epiphany," whether one believes all Shakespearean tragedies share a quintessential nature, and how one categorizes contemporary society.

In taking up the metaphysical implications of Hamlet's query of the Ghost "Whither wilt thou lead me?," Fendt briefly returns to Kierkegaard. The Ghost and its various possible binary representations (heavenly or demonic, Catholic or Protestant, malevolent or benevolent, real or imaginary) have been, of course, the subjects of critical debate since long before Samuel Johnson first set about explicating Shakespeare's plays. Fendt sees the Ghost occupying a somewhat middle ground, calling it a "soul in torment" who "is still in part himself" (116). His presence for Fendt, however, is germane to understanding the character of the Prince. Fendt acknowledges Taciturnus's contention that if Hamlet is to be perceived as a religious hero then he must relinquish the charge of the Ghost for revenge in favor of embracing the religious scruple of allotting vengeance unto the Lord. Fully realized, such an action would, as Taciturnus points out, bring the play to an abrupt end. Fendt, however, sees Hamlet as "a spirit with capabilities exceeding those drawn for him by our more positive sciences" (118) and as one who "seeks and grants forgiveness more quickly than ever he acts for justice, to say nothing of revenge" (117). In Hamlet's wrestling with these desires, emotions, and beliefs, Fendt sees the Prince confronting and colliding with that most religious of all issues: "man's relation to God" (116). This stated, Fendt offers the following: "We might, after Kierkegaard, retitile the play *Hamlet, or The Concept of Dread* [. . .] (116). (It should be noted that Fendt does not always use gender specific language and that his bibliography attests to his use of the Hong translations of Kierkegaard).

One of the more daring positions offered in chapter three is in the reading of Gertrude. The Queen has generated a broad range of interpretation, including fool, wanton, victim, alcoholic, intelligent ruler, and perspicacious mother. To these Fendt adds another: "fully fledged tragic heroine" (131). Fendt arrives at this highly contestable, though not impossible, conclusion by seeing a type of confession for Gertrude in the bedroom scene with Hamlet. He also attributes to Gertrude a subsequent insight that allows her to discern the murderous malice in Claudius and the poison in the cup of revelry offered to the Prince. Fendt sees the ultimate act of self-sacrifice in Gertrude's drinking: in killing herself she saves her son from that death and exposes Claudius to all of Denmark. Fendt would block the scene so that Gertrude stares directly and spiritually victoriously into

Claudius's eyes even as she refuses his command not to drink: "He [Claudius] turns away. There have been many silences in this play; this is the silence of eternal death—and soaring over it the incredible descant of salvation . . .] Gertrude opens the door to grace and salvation right at Claudius' side, where no one in the audience would have dared expect it, and where no one in the play—not even Hamlet—can see it" (130). Those seeking textual support here for this action might convincingly argue that they cannot "see it" either. Fendt extends his inferences, suggesting: "The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet. Perhaps, in that word, she drinks to the memory of her first husband . . . Perhaps he is even present, and she, believing, sees him" (131). Perhaps—but if so one must be more comfortable with airy speculations than close readings. Fendt concludes by declaring that in his heroine's suicide we see that the "cup of disease and sin which has infected Denmark is transformed into a providential communion" (131). He concludes this critique in an uncharacteristic overtone of didacticism approaching pedantry: "Of course a materialist will not be able to see this . . . but it may be played that Gertrude's is a happy death, and we must die as willingly as she, that a better state may rise" (131).

At eighteen pages, "Is *Hamlet* a Christian Tragedy?" is the briefest chapter in the book; it is also likely to be the most engaging for those interested in a direct response to Taciturnus's rebuttal to Börne. Fendt begins the discussion by citing the widely divergent Christian interpretations of *Hamlet*. He contends that many of these debates could be shelved if we accept Kierkegaard's belief that many phrases and ceremonies in Christendom are merely a masking of paganism. Taciturnus himself, says Fendt, commits a similar error for he "makes the kind of category mistake that is commonly made in misjudging the cloak for the man: for just as Christendom and Christianity, so aesthetics and religion are as different as cloak and man, as seeming and reality" (161). Fendt makes this statement in disavowing Taciturnus's claim that there is a paradox in Christian faith for Shakespearean tragedy for tragedy cannot occur without a belief in an objective moral order yet it is this order which must be violated in order for tragedy to occur. He does this by noting the difference between aesthetic and ethical categorizations of tragedy, stating that in aesthetics a moral order is "utilized" while in ethics "a violation of the order is not tragic; it is sin—harmartia . . ." (162) and is rectified only through a leap to the religious. This, says Fendt, is why "Kierkegaardian voices call the ethical a passageway: only those who are without harmartia can remain there comfortably. . . . The leap to the religious avoided, immediate punishment is merely justice; delayed punishment is continuing injustice, for it is temporizing with the ethical demand. Tragedy temporizes: *Hamlet* is infamous for it" (162).

Fendt then acknowledges the critical position that Hamlet seems to reject both religion and reason as redemptive solutions and that Hamlet's "personal uses of reason are

chiefly in skepticism and in irony" (163). He then states that skepticism and irony can only exist in worlds grounded in faith or reason. This logical argumentation continues when Fendt asserts tragedy can only exist on a plane between skepticism and reason and that in such an equation "the lowest common denominator is a fraction of a man" (163). Fendt then argues that the lowest common denominator is "not necessarily the only denomination mankind comes in" (164) and that there is more to be discovered in Hamlet than such a reduction. Here Fendt returns to his Thomist touchstone and, in effect, provides his answer to Taciturnus's question: "Aquinas' idea of ecstasy exhibits a higher common denominator, and it is possible to read and perform *Hamlet* as a play which acknowledges this fact [. . .] *Hamlet* would be, then, Christian, though perhaps something other than tragedy" (164). He concludes this line of reasoning with a reference to Bloom: "*Hamlet* is more mystery play than tragedy, and more deeply mystery. Hamlet's contention is not specifically sexual, emotional, or intellectual, but 'with the spirit of evil in heavenly places' (Bloom 1990: 2)" (170).

In chapter five, "The Idea of Religious Drama," Fendt most directly addresses the nature of Kierkegaard's authorship. He begins with a recapitulation of F.D.H. Kitto's study Greek drama and *Hamlet* and quickly declares that views of religious drama may generally be grouped into one of two camps: the literally religious or the figuratively religious. He then raises the question of whether a third kind of religious drama is possible, and here he discusses Kierkegaard's understanding of faith as a passion. Here Fendt qualifies in what way Kierkegaard may be considered an existentialist, and he states that Kierkegaard's authorship is something other than philosophical in the traditional sense: "his aim is not even to give a *science* of the hows, but to make something *happen*. It is a dramatic authorship; one which makes the reader a player" (187). Further consideration of Kierkegaard is given when Fendt likens the difference between mimesis and representation to indirect and direct communication. Final consideration occurs when Fendt compares Kitto's views with Taciturnus's.

Chapter six, "Ecstasy, Economy, and *Hamlet*: the Drama of Religion," is a bit more eclectic in subject matter than the previous chapters. It opens with a quote from Bataille in which he cites Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. After a brief referral back to Aquinas and ecstasy, he subdivides his discussion of Economy as a tool for analyzing *Hamlet* into "Sacrifice," "The Military Order," and "Conspicuous Consumption." The chapter fairly well concludes on a Bloom-like note: "*Hamlet* is the drama of religion; Western culture since Wittenberg is the mimesis of this play" (222). The book concludes with three brief appendices: one discussing Kierkegaard's relation to Börne, one mentioning a possible effect of theology on art, and one being a dramatic creation, which draws freely from Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and employs archaic diction, of an alternative ending to the play. In the final analysis, Fendt's is an articulate study that

should prove interesting to those curious about Kierkegaard's appreciation of Shakespeare and engaging to those seeking an Aristotelian/Thomistic based analysis of *Hamlet*. Those with some grounding in philosophy should find this a comfortable read. Fendt does, however, display a proclivity for appropriating Shakespearean phraseology, to the degree that some might find it unruly or even

distracting. (At one point, he borrows consecutively from the Ghost, Claudius, and Hamlet: "and we go unhouse'd, disappointed, unanel'd to our fitful rest. Defend me, friends, I am but hurt: our last and most hopeful lie. In such a time the readiness is all" (172)). Still, the book will likely be helpful to students of both Shakespeare and Kierkegaard.

***Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition.* By Niels Nymann Eriksen.
Kierkegaard Studies Monograph 5; New York: de Gruyter, 2000. 182 p. \$89.00**

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I. Repetition and the crisis of modernity

In his short and elegantly concise study, *Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition*, Niels Eriksen treats much more than the little book *Repetition* (which appeared simultaneously with *Fear and Trembling* in 1843). He sees Kierkegaard's (or Constantine Constantius') "new" and "modern" category of repetition as a response to the threat of nihilism detected by Kierkegaard and subsequently elaborated and even celebrated in the works of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Repetition becomes a way to take in temporality that highlights responsibility, responsiveness to the gift of "the other," and so can be developed in counterpoint to the attempts of Hegel and Levinas to achieve a reconciliation between deep human needs for meaning and freedom and the acute miseries and injustices of history.

Human temporality can hardly be explored apart from the way individuals, one by one, take their pasts experientially, and thereby gather a sense of present self and possibility. The great work of Proust, dedicated to the "retrieval" or "recovery" of lost time, is brought in by Eriksen as a concrete and familiar embodiment of the practice of "recollection," the technique that Constantine Constantius and Johannes Climacus identify as the specifically Greek way to resist nihilism. Bultmann offers an alternative which rests neither on repetition nor on recollection but on the (perhaps illusory) pillars of a "fundamental ontology."

Despite taking us through such a diverse array of responses to nihilism – many of them directly inspired by Kierkegaard's category – Eriksen's discussions are always precise and in the service of his broad and complex argument. We see the company repetition keeps in the wider European world of theology, philosophy, and letters, which builds our respect for this understudied theme and alerts us to Kierkegaard's lively

presence among voices combating the spiritual deflation of the times.

In a brief but fascinating excursus, Eriksen takes up the prospects for a "social theory" latent in Kierkegaard's account of repetition. As an encounter with otherness that calls on our deepest capacities for responsibility, and that transfigures both a person and her surround, repetition might presuppose, or lay down a basis for, interpersonal relations of mutual recognition sufficiently rich to ground a human nexus of trust, care, and cooperation. Here Eriksen relies in part on Arne Grøn's work.¹ But hopes are not easily buoyed.

In his final chapter, Eriksen articulates "the crisis of modernity" as it emerges in Hegel, Levinas, Heidegger, and most importantly Nietzsche, whose "doctrine" of eternal recurrence (along with Heidegger's reading of it) provides the major alternative to repetition as an overarching framework for coming to terms with time. The "crisis" achieves definition as Eriksen traces the fugal interrelatedness of a forward looking repetition always open to an unexpected, anxious future, and a backward looking eternal recurrence always edging toward the limit of an all-encompassing divine consciousness (the state of being an "overman"). How do we construe the burdens of time – the weight of death and rebirth, aging and eternity, responsibility and repentance, compassion for future, past, and present others? In Eriksen's view, repetition and recurrence exhaust our ways of encountering, overcoming, or at least enduring, the *malaise* we call "the present age." The question is how time can deliver meaning such that the flux of human becoming escapes both the drudgery of mere routine and the relentless impact, equally meaningless, of "one damn thing after another."

II. Repetition through the authorship

Eriksen "explodes" the category of repetition outward to

engage Heidegger, Nietzsche, “the Greeks,” Levinas, and Hegel and extends the category laterally to engage works in the Kierkegaardian authorship other than *Repetition*. The category obviously belongs to the inquiry in *The Concept of Anxiety* into time and eternity, fall and redemption, anxiety of loss and hope for reconciliation. The moment of redemption can also be called the moment of repetition. Following Vigilius Haufniensis’ lead, Eriksen identifies this “moment” figuratively with the glance of Ingeborg toward the sea’s horizon where her love has disappeared, a glance foretelling her desperate need of repetition, her need to have her love requited. Several of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* have repetition and the themes of temporality as subtexts, as in the 1844 discourse on “The Thorn in the Flesh” and its companion piece on Anna’s patience. The category is unmistakably visible in the 1843 discourse on Job, whose resistance to his wife’s advice to “curse God and die” and whose acceptance of the goods bestowed through the whirlwind mark his need and final welcome of repetition. *Fear and Trembling* features Abraham’s faith that Isaac will be returned – a clear instance of facing up to the need for repetition, and welcoming it, should it be delivered. The book *Repetition* contains two parodies of repetition, first in its portrait of the young man who suffers unrequited love and in despair pleads with Job to stand by him in awaiting his restorative thunder clap; and secondly, in the narrator’s foolish attempt to construct a repetition by retaking a vacation to Berlin.

The repetitive seductions of Don Giovanni or Johannes the seducer can be seen as perversions of authentic repetition. The self-satisfied and patronizing Judge Wilhelm defends “the aesthetic validity of marriage” in which joy and delight for the world can be retained within an “eternal commitment,” thus upgrading the aesthete’s poor understanding of repetition’s restorative immediacy. Finally, Eriksen calls our attention to a little noticed episode from *Stages on Life’s Way*, recording the discovery by a night walker along the banks of the Seine of his friend being pulled dead from the river, a hapless suicide. That man strolling the banks is struck with a desperate and authentic need of repetition.

Eriksen is exhilarating partly because we get so much within such short compass that we are returned to the texts and to our capacities for imaginative reconstruction: he’s struck a deep vein of significance. The category he brings into view has in fact been underestimated and begins, through his pen, to overshadow the more familiar and somewhat threadbare categories of “subjectivity,” say, or “the paradox.”

III. Repetition among the categories

Eriksen matches a sharp eye for literary detail with impressive analytical finesse. Behind the category of repetition are a number of “metaphysical” contrasts, for example between fullness of time and temporal fulfillment, and between becoming and being. Eriksen renders “Øieblikket” as “the glance,” and develops it as the embodiment of the abstract “moment” when eternity intersects time. And he provides an

acute analysis of the contrast between the way *explanation* settles puzzlement and unease through producing a chain of persuasive and “true reasons,” and the way *conviction* is achieved through repetition and transfiguration, giving us a non-reason-based ground to dispell our unease. This ground or Fact relieves perplexity and serves as a background from which life (including the practice of reasoning) can flow.

To attempt to secure reason by reason puts us in a dizzying circle of infinite regress. Thus Kant is forced to invoke the Fact (we might say “brute fact”) of Reason. This amounts to the acknowledgment (not the demonstration) that Reason is not self-grounding. Coming to that acknowledgment would be similar (in the intellectual sphere) to encountering repetition. One’s world is returned (including one’s trust in the everyday exchange of reasons) freed from the dizziness, skeptical uncertainty, and despair of its recent loss. Finding rest in such conviction would mark a transfiguration of one’s (intellectual) being, similar to Job’s transfiguration in the moment he receives the gift of all things from a source “beyond all reason.” Job was on the brink of nihilism not just because reason could find no rest, but because all the things of worth to him had been stripped away without cause. Accordingly, what he “receives back” as transfiguring is not the brute fact of reason but the brute fact of the things of creation – starry nights and hawks. If one’s need for repetition is answered, as Job’s is, that will be a Fact in which one’s consciousness can rest, a conviction, not a datum that requires explanation in terms of something presumed to be more basic.

IV. Repetition: choice and freedom

Let me take up another dialectical contrast, the contrast between a person’s moving from possibility to actuality, on the one hand, and on the other, from non-being to being. how does Eriksen bring these daunting metaphysical abstractions down to earth? They become tangible because they have everything to do with choice, freedom, and necessity in our moral-spiritual lives. Before I proceed in this section and the next to reconstruct aspects of Eriksen’s reconstruction of Kierkegaard’s “position,” however, I should enter a caveat. At several points I find myself forced to improvise to the best interpretation, especially where the texts themselves are unclear or apparently contradictory, and where an interpretation that more closely tracked the zigzag of Kierkegaard’s tortured expositions would be too lengthy. Thus the sketches I provide at times may be neater (for good or ill) than the originals whose spirit I attempt to follow. First, then, we must distinguish fundamental freedom from a shallower freedom of choice.

The choices I make embody my freedom and can be pictured as enacting a transition from a possibility I envisage to my making it an actuality through my decision and endeavor. Which route is best for getting to Yosemite? I lay out the possibilities, and if I am so disposed, make one path the actual path I take. But Kierkegaard is out to corral a deeper sense of freedom, a sense he characterizes as the movement from non-

being to being. What if I have no desire to go to Yosemite, or anywhere else? What if there are no real possibilities before me – nothing that has allure or attraction? In that case, possibilities are uniformly dead, none of them calling for actualization, and I suffer a nihilism, despair, or non-being. I need repetition whether I am acutely conscious of this need or not. To acquire a new life is a transition far deeper than to choose the best route to Yosemite. To find who I am, or who I must become – to discover *live* possibilities – is to secure a freedom deeper than freedom of choice.

If I cannot reason to secure belief *in* reason, neither can I choose to secure belief *in* choice (the Judge's claim to the contrary notwithstanding). The brute fact of freedom received as my ground (like the brute fact of Reason acknowledged) gives me a life-conviction from which I can proceed, a "living out" that will include a fair share of choice-making but is not constituted by those choices alone. Freedom in the fundamental sense, we might say, is both a gift and a life-necessity.² To acquire it is not a move of someone who actualizes some set of options before him. To acquire freedom is to *be* moved – from a state of non-being where one is nothing (and hence is nothing for whom possibilities can appear) – to a state of freedom-and-value-saturated being where one is no longer nothing. To be filled with the freedom and aspirations and constraints that allow me to become the specific individual I am and will be – being "someone-who-can-become" – is a transcendental bestowal, a repetition and transfiguration.

V. Becoming Christian

From the standpoint of faith, there is an absolute break between the utter absence of Christianity and its decisive presence. The "pathos-filled" transition of Christianity's coming into being is not the actualization of one historical possibility among others – that happens to happen at a certain date. So in my personal life there may be a "pathos-filled transition" that marks my "becoming a Christian," but that move is not the realization of one option among others. Thus the movement from not being a Christian to being a Christian is the achievement of freedom but not an exercise of free choice. Paradoxically, we discover our freedom as the multiplicity of possibilities, and hence choice, shrinks to nil. One discovers *that one* is the very person one *must* be (freely, on the basis of freedom as gift); and in that state of being, what one does is what one must. "Here I stand: I can do no other!"

The anxiety of choice retreats in the movement from non-being to being, and the soul "finds rest" in the assurance that it is anchored to a necessity – that it "can do no other." A *person* must precede the appearance of her or his possibilities. That person cannot be utterly self-starting, the actualization of her own prior possibilities, as if she, in turn, were the actualization of possibilities by ...*indeed*, actualized by *whom* or *what* – other than God, who is "that all things are possible"? We are fundamentally grounded in another, and as Anti-Climacus might put it, we do not, as titans might, freely choose to actualize the possible other who will ground us. More humbly,

more humanely, we *find* ourselves (freely) grounded in Another. This is the moment of transfiguration and repetition, discovered ever anew.

In conclusion, and against the whimsy of Constantine in *Repetition*, it is absurd to try to effect repetition by trying to *make* it happen. It happens *to* one, with all the force of Luther's conviction or all the power of the storm subduing Job's rebellion. Repetition is not a goal, a possibility one sets out to realize – say, by traveling to Berlin to recapture previous experiences, thus bringing one's past into the present and by such tactics achieving a kind of self-wrought unity-of-self. That is a delusion. Repetition is a gift or deliverance. Abraham does not choose to get Isaac back, or try to effect his return. We can await repetition in faith, but that is another matter. In the meantime, whatever freedom or worth we have are gifts to be thankfully received, shared generously, and exercised on loan as our own – not goods to be chosen, grasped, tracked down, or captured. If Judge Wilhelm at times admonishes us to choose ourselves, or choose to choose, he is appropriately answered by the Jutland Pastor who avers that once again, the Judge has got it all wrong. If we are more chosen than choosers, and are free in the discovery of what our necessary calling is, so we are less the clever constructors of repetition than its patient recipients.

* * * *

When I first encountered Niels Eriksen's study, I anticipated covering familiar ground, for I had recently prepared what I then considered a comprehensive essay on *Repetition* for the *Cambridge Companion*. To my happy surprise, however, I found myself trekking unfamiliar ground, or, as likely, crossing somewhat familiar landscapes now illuminated from ever fresh and revealing angles. I have gladly sketched out the scenes before me, doing as little damage to the original as possible. The repetition has been entirely welcome and renewing.

¹ Arne Grøn, *Subjektivitet og negativitet: Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen, 1998, and "The Human Synthesis," in *Anthropology and Authority: Essays on Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Houe, Marino, and Rossel, (Rodopi: Atlanta, 2000).

² See *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Vol. I, trans. Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong, Princeton, 1992, p. 200.

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Phone and Fax: 507.645.9757***

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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*

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