

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



A Publication of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library

St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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EDNA HATLESTAD HONG

1913-2007

Edna Hong died of congestive heart failure on April 3, 2007, at her home on Heath Creek, west of Northfield, Minnesota. She was 94. Pastor Mark Ditmanson preached and conducted the funeral service for her, with Pastor Kristen Garey assisting, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Hovland, Minnesota, on April 5, 2007, Maundy Thursday. She was buried in the Old Cemetery of Trinity, a church and cemetery near both Lake Superior and the place in the woods where she and her family lived in the summer since 1945. Pastor Ditmanson also conducted the graveside service. There was a memorial service for her at St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield on April 7, 2007, Easter Saturday, conducted by Pastor Joseph Crippen, with Pastor Todd Nichol preaching.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Otto and Ida Hatlestad; by her siblings Agnes, Carl, Margaret, Alfred, and Bernard; by a granddaughter, Blitz O'Sullivan; and by a great-grandson, John O'Sullivan.

She is survived by two of her siblings, Joseph Hatlestad and Eleanore DeWitt; by her husband, Howard, and their children (Irena, Erik, Peder, Rolf, Mary, Judith, Theodore, and Nathaniel) and spouses; and by twenty grandchildren and nineteen great-grandchildren.

Edna Hatlestad was born on January 28, 1913, on a farm near Mead, in Mead Township, south of Thorp, Clark County, Wisconsin. She was the sixth of eight children. Her family later moved to a farm in Holway Township in Taylor County, near Medford. She grew up in Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, three and a half miles from the Hatlestad farm. Our Saviour's formed her: she later wrote that here is where she "learned by heart" Luther's *Small Catechism* and Pontoppidan's *Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism*. She attended country school near the farm for eight years before renting a room in Medford and attending its high school. She graduated in 1930. She then took a teachers-training course through the Extension Division of the University of Wisconsin to qualify herself for teaching country school, which she did for three years. Her purpose was to save money so that she could attend St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Edna Hatlestad entered St. Olaf in 1934 and studied chiefly history and literature during her four years there. She also wrote a humor column for the student newspaper, the *Manitou Messenger*; served as the editor of the *St. Olaf Quarterly*, a literary journal; and wrote an honors thesis titled "The Nature Tradition in American Literature." According to the college yearbook in her senior year, the 1938 Viking, she wrote "very extensive and original papers in literature," was "keen and intense," had "convictions," and aimed to "live genuinely."

She met Howard Hong in the spring of her junior year. He had graduated from St. Olaf in 1934, had already discovered the nineteenth-century Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard, and was studying at the University of Minnesota. They were married on June 6, 1938, at St. Olaf, in the lounge of Mellby Hall, one day after she graduated. Two months later, after she had typed her husband's dissertation, they hitchhiked to New York and then sailed to Copenhagen, where they lived for a year and began their study of the Danish language and of Kierkegaard.

When they returned to Northfield in 1939, Howard Hong began more than forty years of teaching at St. Olaf College. They raised a family of eight children, two of them Latvian refugees they adopted during the years when the Hong family lived in Germany and worked to resettle displaced persons after World War II.

Edna Hong will be remembered as a Kierkegaard translator. She and her husband worked as a team, first translating *For Self-Examination* (1940), then *Works of Love* (1962). Two major translation projects followed: the six volumes of *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, and an index volume (1967-78), and the twenty-six volumes of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, also with an index volume (1978-

2000). The first two volumes of this last series were published in 1978, when she and her husband were sixty-five, the year that he formally retired. For twenty-two years, they continued to work at top speed, translating all but four of these volumes themselves. Commenting on this last major project, the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) said, "All honour to the Hong: *Kierkegaard's Writings* is one of the outstanding achievements in the history of philosophical translation."

She will also be remembered as a writer of stories, essays, and books. Some of her twelve books grew out of her early years as a farm girl. One of these is her memoir, *From This Good Ground* (1974), dedicated to her parents and siblings, and another is *Muskego Boy* (1943), the latter a work of fiction written with her husband. It portrays the first Norwegian-Lutheran congregation in Wisconsin, Muskego, founded in 1843, only sixty years before the founding of her home congregation. Other books grew out of disturbing experience. One of the best-loved of these is *Turn Over Any Stone* (1970), in which she struggles with the doubt that gripped her after she saw the "paindom" of a beautiful granddaughter who was profoundly retarded. Another is *Bright Valley of Love* (1976), which has been published in twelve countries. It tells the story of Bethel, an institution she discovered in Germany after World War II. Bethel was home to epileptics and other damaged human beings, whom the Nazis had planned to exterminate. Pastor Fritz von Bodelschwingh, the courageous director of Bethel, successfully fought the plan and spared the residents a grim fate. The central character in the story is Gunther, a "pilgrim soul" with a "flipping walk" and "crazy crooked hands," who prospered there under von Bodelschwingh's ministry. The book's epigraph comes from Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*: "To love forth love is to build up. But to love forth love means precisely to presuppose that it is present at the base."

In addition to her work as a translator and writer, Edna Hong will be remembered for the zest and variety of her Northfield life. She tended her large family, befriended the many souls in need who came to her door, and was an active member of St. John's Lutheran Church. A legendary Sunday-school teacher there for thirty years, she also taught midweek religion classes at the church and wrote the history of the congregation for its centennial: *The Book of a Century* (1969). She reached beyond St. John's, when invited, and gave original and highly energetic talks at other churches and larger church convocations.

Edna Hatlestad Hong's merry spirit flourished at home. She baked whole-wheat bread that she gave away freely, tramped along Heath Creek with friends, fed the birds and squirrels, carried on an extensive correspondence, gardened, and read widely.

Honors came her way, sometimes given jointly to her and her husband. Among these were a National Book Award for volume one of *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* in 1968, knighthoods conferred by the Queen of Denmark in 1978, and the *Christus Lux Mundi* Award from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1998. She was awarded the Doctor of Humane Letters degree by St. Olaf College in 1977 and the Wittenberg Award by the Luther Institute, Washington, D. C., in 1993. The citations that accompanied the most local of these awards, the ones from St. Olaf College and Luther Seminary, touched on the amplitude of her life, for they recognized not only her achievements as a translator and writer but also her everyday discipline and the works of love that were integral to it.

She ran at full stretch for the whole of her life, until her final illness. In *For Self-Examination*, Kierkegaard offers a parable that points to what was essential in her. He first depicts a pair of horses who had grown slack, with "dull and drowsy eyes," who had been driven only according to "the horses' understanding" of their work; but then he shows these horses after they had submitted to the discipline of "the royal coachman," when they were in top form and could go long distances "in a stretch without stopping." Edna Hatlestad first learned the discipline of the royal coachman, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the home of her parents and at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Taylor County, Wisconsin, and submitted to it for the rest of her long life.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

30th Anniversary of the Hong Kierkegaard Library – November 9, 2007

St. Olaf College celebrated the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Hong Kierkegaard Library on November 9, 2006 with a number of special events. The Ambassador from Denmark to the United States was invited to join the College for these events. The Honorable Friis Arne Petersen spoke in chapel as well as attending a reception in his honor and a luncheon hosted by President David Anderson. The Ambassador also attended the dedication of Finholt House: Residence for Kierkegaard Scholars on the campus in the afternoon. Lars Kindem, President of the Kierkegaard House Foundation, and Gabriel Merigala, speaking for House Foundation fellows, also spoke at the dedication. The Friends of the Kierkegaard Library held their fall meeting on the same day. Professor Robert Perkins gave the first Julia Watkin Memorial Kierkegaard Lecture in the afternoon. (see text on page 11) Howard Hong joined the group for lunch and the house dedication. Gordon Marino returned from his sabbatical leave to join the celebration.

Friends of the Kierkegaard Library – Fall 2006 and Spring 2007 Meetings

At the fall meeting of the Friends held on November 9, support was given for travel funds to 4 scholars from India who are and will be using the Kierkegaard Library during this year. We are grateful to the Friends for making possible the visits of Gabriel Merigala (House Foundation Fellow) as well as John Varughese, Samuel Chandran, and Theophilus Sunday Meabe (Summer Fellows). All of these scholars are associated with the Philosophy PhD programme at Madras Christian College. A Kierkegaard study center and library is developing around this group of scholars.

The spring meeting of the Friends will take place on May 4, 2007. A business meeting is planned for the Kierkegaard Library, 11:00-11:45 followed by luncheon in the Kings Room in Buntrock Commons from 12 noon to 1 PM. A conversation among Friends members will take place from 1:15-2:30 about the last chapter of Edna Hong's book, *The Downward Ascent*, "The Eastering Ascent".

Donors to the Hong Kierkegaard Library since August 2007

Books, articles, and financial gifts were given to the Library by the following individuals: Søren Landkildehus, Robert Oh, Berit Griffith, David Docter, Roman Kralik, Jacob Howland, Andrew Burgess, Joseph Brown, Myron Penner and the Friends of the Kierkegaard Library. The Library is grateful to all who have contributed. We welcome materials in all languages including scholars' own publications.

Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellows 2007-2008

Recipients of Kierkegaard House Foundation fellowships for 2007 and 2008 include the following to date: Søren Landkildehus, Myron Penner, Gabriel Merigala, Patrick Stokes, and Tamara Marks.

Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellowships 2008-9, 2009-2010

The Foundation is pleased to offer housing and financial assistance to long-term resident scholars. Advanced graduate students, professors, and other serious students of Kierkegaard are invited to apply. Kierkegaard House Foundation Residency Fellowships provide living quarters on campus and \$1500 per month stipends for periods of 4-12 months. Applications are on a rolling admissions basis. Please send a CV, a plan for research at the Kierkegaard Library, and 2 letters of recommendation as far in advance of your proposed stay as possible to: Cynthia Lund, Acting Curator, Hong Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, 1510 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN. 55057.

Summer Fellowship Program, 2007

The following scholars have been accepted as fellows in the Summer Program for 2007:

Jeremy Allen, Anthony Aumann, Adam Buben, Mike Cantrell, Paul Carron, Samuel Chandran, Timothy Dalrymple, Aaron Fehir, Marcio Gimenes de Paola, Ian Harris, Eleanor Helms, Jong-Hwan Hwang, Peder Jothen, Leonardo Lisi, Steven Martz, Luke McPhee, Theophilus Sunday Meabe, Shannon Nason, John

Varughese, Alejandro Vazquez del Mercado Hernandez, Petre Vasili (Father Pimen), Mark Wells, Jonathan Wood.

Summer Fellowship Program 2008

Summer fellowships for research-in-residence are offered to scholars for use of the collection between June 1 and August 20, 2008. The awards include campus housing and a \$300 per month stipend for scholars in residence longer than 30 days who are not supported by their home institutions or other outside fellowships. Please contact Cynthia Lund if you are interested in applying for 2008. Decisions are made on these applications by March 1.

Danish Course, Summer 2007

Sinead Knox will again teach the Danish course this year from July 2-27. Scholars enrolled for this year are the following: Jeremy Allen, Adam Buben, David Coe, Mike Cantrell, Paul Carron, Timothy Dalrymple, Aaron Fehir, Nathan Hedman, Eleanor Helms, Andrew Henscheid, and Tom Millay.

Danish Course, Summer 2008

The Kierkegaard Library will offer the Danish course in July of 2008 if we can enroll 10 students minimum. Sinead Knox will hopefully again teach the course. Cost of the course is \$1200 including housing on campus. If you are interested in taking this course which helps Kierkegaard scholars begin reading texts in the original Danish, please contact Cynthia Lund as soon as possible at lundc@stolaf.edu.

Visiting Scholars Program 2007-8, 2008-9

Kierkegaard scholars are invited to visit the Library to do their own research at any time when the Library is open during the year. Possible support and housing vary depending on the circumstances of individual scholars and the dates involved. Scholars with support from their own institutions or grant-funded projects are also encouraged and welcome. Please send inquiries to Cynthia Lund, Acting Curator, Hong Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, 1510 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057.

Gordon Marino on Leave

After 11 years of leadership by Gordon Marino, the Library has been working this year without his presence and direction. Dr. Marino was on sabbatical leave for the fall semester. He is currently on a leave-of-absence living in Florida. Cynthia Lund is serving as Acting Curator. Communications to the Library should be sent to Cynthia Lund at lundc@stolaf.edu.

IKN future plans

Julia Watkin's publication, *The International Kierkegaard Newsletter*, was transferred to the Kierkegaard Library some months ago. Past issues of this publication appear on our website- part of Julia's website which was transferred to us before her death. We hope to continue her efforts to provide a very complete bibliographic reporting resource for world-wide Kierkegaard work, conferences, discussions, etc. Sylvia and Robert Perkins as well as David Possen are personally involved in continuing Julia's work for Kierkegaard study worldwide. Further information will be forthcoming regarding efforts to continue the IKN.

April 17, 2007 Workshop

The Kierkegaard Library hosted " 'Love's Reason': A Workshop on H.G. Frankfurt's *The Reasons of Love* " in Room 144, Buntrock Commons, St. Olaf College. Confirmed speakers were: Charles Taliaferro, Anthony Rudd, Myron B. Penner, Søren Landkildehus. John Lippitt was an invited commentator. The workshop will be moderated by Peder Jothen and will last from 10:30-3 PM with lunch provided.

OTHER NEWS

***Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, Volume I* Celebration in New York**

Princeton University Press hosted a book launch party in honor of the publication of volume I of the KJN on February 1 held at the American Scandinavian headquarters in New York City. Bruce Kirmmse gave remarks on behalf of the translation team of scholars who made the volume possible. (See text, p. 20). Present at the event were 40-50 people representing supporting institutions including Princeton University Press, (including Director Peter Dougherty). Connecticut College (represented by Karen Houghman, Dean of the Faculty), and the Danish government (including General Consul Torben Getterman), as well as the American Scandinavian Foundation (represented by its president, Edward Gallagher). Karen Jones, the Princeton Press editor of the KJN, and copy editor Molan Chun Goldstein were also in attendance. Others present were various Kierkegaard scholars; Brian Soderquist from the Søren Kierkegaard Research Center in Copenhagen and one of the editors of Volume I; Cynthia and Eric Lund from the Hong Kierkegaard Library and St. Olaf College; and members of Bruce Kirmmse's family.

Søren Kierkegaard Society (U.S.A)

The purpose of the SKS is to encourage study and discussion of the thought of Søren Kierkegaard in all its dimensions and ramifications, including its sources and influences. Affiliated with both the AAR and the APA, the Society alternates its annual business meeting between AAR and APA conventions. The Society encourages scholarship on Kierkegaard at the national and regional meetings of the AAR and APA through an Executive Committee which includes members of both organizations. For more information see http://libnt.4.lib.tcu.edu.staff.bellinger.SK_Society.htm.

Søren Kierkegaard Society (U.S.A.) and the APA

The Society currently plans to hold sessions at 2 out of 3 APA meetings each academic year. During the 07-08 academic year, the Society will run sessions at the Eastern APA in Washington, D.C. and the Pacific APA in San Francisco. During the '07 and '08 academic year, sessions will run concurrently with the Eastern APA and the Central APA. This rotation should continue every other year in alteration. For further information on deadlines for paper submissions etc. please see the following website posted by John Davenport. www.fordham.edu/philosophy/davenport/skconferences.htm.

Søren Kierkegaard Society Dinner and Presentation

November 16, 2007 – San Diego, California

Søren Kierkegaard Society Meeting at the Eastern APA,

December 27-30, 2007. Baltimore, MD. Marriott Inner Harbor.

Theme: Kierkegaard and World Religions.

Keynote address to be given by Steven Emmanuel.

AAR Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Group

1. **Main session AAR 2007.** Wanda Warren Berry, Colgate University, presiding

Theme: *Sources of Religious Pluralism in Kierkegaard's Writings*

David J. Gouwens, Texas Christian University. "Kierkegaard on the Universally Religious and the Specifically Christian as Resources for Interreligious Conversation"

Avron Kulak, York University. "Between Singularity and Plurality: Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Absolute Difference"

Lee Barrett, Lancaster Theological Seminary. "Kierkegaard on Conversing with 'Mystical' Religions"

Timothy Dalrymple, Harvard University. "Kierkegaard on Suffering: A Basis for Interreligious Dialogue"

Carl Hughes, Emory University. "The Constructive Significance of 'The Book of Adler' in an Age of Pluralism"

Responding: Christopher Nelson, South Texas College

Members of either the Søren Kierkegaard Society or of the AAR Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Group may obtain by mid-October a bound copy of the papers for the sessions of both units by contacting Andrew Burgess (aburgess@unm.edu) or David Possen (dp@uchicago.edu). The cost for the papers will be \$20 (\$15 for members of the Søren Kierkegaard Society).

2. Joint Session: AAR, Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Group and AAR Schleiermacher Group.

Andrew Burgess, University of New Mexico, presiding Richard Crouter, Carleton College

Revisiting Kierkegaard's Relationship to Schleiermacher

Responding: Sylvia Walsh, Stetson University

David Possen, University of Chicago

Matthew Frawley, Princeton University

The papers underlying Professor Crouter's presentation will be posted at both the Schleiermacher Group's and the Kierkegaard Group's websites. Access to these sites can be obtained by contacting Brent Sockness (sockness@stanford.edu) and David Possen (dp@uchicago.edu) respectively. Attendees of this session are encouraged to read them advance.

Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen

The Kierkegaard Centre is delighted to announce the recent publication of the following volumes which have been produced in cooperation with the Centre:

1. Joseph Westfall, *The Kierkegaardian Author: Authorship and Performance in Kierkegaard's Literary and Dramatic Criticism*. In *Kierkegaard Studies*, ed. on behalf of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser. *Monograph Series, 15*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007) ISBN 978-3-11-019302-2; ISSN 1434-2952
2. *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, vol. 11*, Søren Kierkegaard, *Lilien paa Marken og Fuglen under Himlen; Tvende ethisk-religieuse Smaa-Afhandlinger; Sygdommen til Døden; "Ypperstepræsten"—"Tolderen"—"Synderinden"*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Anne Mette Hansen, and Johnny Kondrup (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2006) ISBN 10: 87-12-04255-2
3. *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, vol. K11*, *Kommentarerbind til: Lilien paa Marken og Fuglen under Himlen; Tvende ethisk-religieuse Smaa-Afhandlinger; Sygdommen til Døden; "Ypperstepræsten"—"Tolderen"—"Synderinden"*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Anne Mette Hansen, and Johnny Kondrup (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2006) ISBN 10: 87-12-04256-0
4. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, vol. 1*, *Journals AA—DD*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) ISBN- 13: 978-0-691-09222-5

The Centre expects the publication of several more volumes during the current year, including:

1. *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, vol. 23 and K23*, Søren Kierkegaard Journals NB15-NB20.
2. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, vol. 2*, *Journals EE—KK*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007)

Translation of the Works of Søren Kierkegaard into Portuguese

Elisabete Sousa sends word from Lisbon that a major project has been approved which will translate the works of Kierkegaard published until 1845 into Portuguese. The sponsoring bodies are the Fundacao da Universidade de Lisboa and the Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa. The SKS will serve as the source text. The

project invites scholars to head or take part in seminars on Kierkegaard in order to increase interest in Kierkegaard and involve other scholars on the project. It also aims to organize translation workshops with the presence of translators of Kierkegaard from Danish into Romance languages. A conference is planned for 2013 with published papers.

The Head Researcher for the project is Professor Doctor Jose M. Miranda Justo. The Research and Translation team will be Dr. Miranda Justo, PhD and Associate Professor in the German Department, FLUL, and Dr. Elisabete Marques Jesus de Sousa, PhD in Literary Theory. Other researchers who will work with the project are Daniela Ramos Boncalves, MA in Philosophy, and Susana Riberio Lopes Janic, BA. The project will start in 2007 and continue until 2013. For further information, contact the institutional address for the project at c.filosofia@fl.ul.pt.

International Kierkegaard Commentary (IKC) Publication Information

(submitted by Robert L. Perkins)

The Book on Adler: Due date: September 1, 2007. Prospective authors should write the editor to discuss their intention to contribute to this volume. This is likely to be the 4th from the last call for papers.

Volumes in Process:

Without Authority was mailed to the binder on 15 December 2006.

'*Christian Discourses*' and '*The Crisis and A Crisis in the Life of an Actress*': Essays for this volume are currently under review by the readers.

Most Recently Published Volumes:

IX: Prefaces and Writing Sampler and *X: Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* were mailed to subscribers and authors in July 2006. These volumes IKC 9 and 10 were published in one tome, making it the largest book in the IKC, 454 pages.

For further information, contact Robert L. Perkins, *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, 225 Boundary Avenue, DeLand, Florida 32720-5103, USA. Tel. 386-734-6457.

Australasian Association of Philosophy (AAP 2007)

William McDonald offers his invitation to Kierkegaardians who might have interest in submitting papers on Kierkegaard's philosophical psychology especially as well as other topics to this conference meeting July 1-6, 2007 at his institution, The University of New England in Armidale, Australia. Other streams are also planned in addition to Kierkegaard. Expressions of interest, offers of papers, and preliminary enquiries may be sent to Dr. McDonald at wmcDonald@une.edu.au. For further information on logistics and conference details, please see the website at www.une.edu.au/philosophy/AAP07 or contact the conference coordinator, Annette Kilarr, at aapconference@une.edu.au.

Kierkegaard Conference in Slovakia, February 23, 2007

Roman Kralik, summer fellow in the Kierkegaard Library, reports that he organized an international Kierkegaard conference together with Professor Cyril Diatka at the Department of General and Applied Ethics, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia. Dr. Kralik now speaks for the Kierkegaard Society in Slovakia. The conference was sponsored by the Rector of the University, Professor Libor Vozar, as well as Professor Zdenka Gadusova, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and by the Danish Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Jorgen Munk Rasmussen.

The conference was titled "Søren Kierkegaard: Theologian, Philosopher, Thinker" and was held in the Kierkegaard Collection in Slovakia library. The papers from the conference will be published in 2 book volumes: *Purity of Heart: Acta Kierkegaardiana*, volume I. Edited by C. Diatka and R. Kralik and *Lonely Raven: Inspirations by Søren Kierkegaard*, also edited by Diatka and Kralik.. Among the papers to be published is the new Czech translation of *The Unchangeableness of God* by Maria Mikulova Thulstrup.

Participants in the conference included the following: Abraham H. Khan, Marie Mikulova Thulstrup, Roman Kralik, Jan Ligus, Jaroslav Irvohlavy, Dusan Ondrejovic, Karol Nadransky, Ludovit Fazekas, Lukac Jan Veverka, and Dalimir Hajko. For further information about this event, please contact Roman Kralik at kierkegaard@centrum.sk.

Biblioteca Kierkegaard Argentina

The Argentinian Kierkegaard Library is an independent organization founded in 2003 by a group of people interested in studying and reading Kierkegaard in his original language. The Library sponsors seminars and lectures as well as an annual conference. It is located in the Danish Lutheran Church of Buenos Aires. This year the group is considering especially the political sources of Kierkegaard's thought. For further information contact Maria Jose Binetti at mjbinetti@yahoo.com.ar.

SOBRESKI (Brazilian Kierkegaard Society)

(submitted by Donald Nelson)

The Society met for the first time in Northeast Brazil October 30-November 1, 2006 in Fortaleza, C.E. for the 7th meeting of the group. Alvaro Valls led a mini-course for students of the state university during the meeting with a class on "Irony and Love in the Works of Søren Kierkegaard".

The following talks were also given:

Jorge Miranda de Almeida, "The Dialectic of Love in *Works of Love*"

Daniel Arruda, "Weak Love: A Sketch of Søren Kierkegaard"

Deyve Redson Santos, "The Philosophy of the Eternal: The Metaphysics of the Will in Schopenhauer to the Metaphysics of Truth in Søren Kierkegaard"

A public meeting was held at which the philosophy of Kierkegaard in Brazil was discussed led by Deyve Redson Santos, Donald Nelson, and Alvaro Valls. Papers on the subject of "Kierkegaard and Contemporary Philosophy" were offered by the following:

Jorge Miranda and Fransmar Lima, "The Anguish of Nothing" The Paradox in the Thought of Heidegger with Constant Reference to Søren Kierkegaard"

Ilana Amaral: "Some Approximations of Walter Benjamin in Kierkegaard around the Time of Modern Linguistic Analysis"

Franklin Roosevelt M.de Castro, "A construction of the Literary-Philosophical Discourse of Søren Kierkegaard with emphasis on *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*."

There is interest in translating the *Postscript* into Portuguese. Discussion of this project is planned for the next SOBRESKI conference which will be held in Aracaju, Sergipe, November 15-17, 2007.

Kierkegaard Conference, Mexico City, February 8, 2007

(Information submitted by Alejandro Cavallazzi and Catalina Elena Dobre)

On February 8, 2007, the Department of Philosophy at Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City hosted a Kierkegaard conference called *Søren Kierkegaard and the Existential Stages: Aesthetic, Ethical and Religious*. The three stages were represented by three panels of participants. For the aesthetic sphere, presenters were Rafael García Pavón ("Don Giovanni, a Breath of Eternity"), Azucena Palavicini ("Repetition and Immediacy in the Aesthetic Stage"), and Nassim Bravo ("Kierkegaard and Aesthetic Recreation of the World"). The ethical stage was presented by Luis Guerrero ("Existential Duty: Ethics as a Way of Life"), Alejandro Vásquez ("The Third Part of *Fear and Trembling* and the Universal Paradigm"), and Eduardo Charpenel ("Subjective Possibility and Ethics: An Anthropological Reflection on the Postscript and Sickness unto Death"). The religious stage was debated by Catalina Elena Dobre ("Implications of Silence in the Communication of Interiority in Kierkegaard"), Maria Tereza Lopez Fernandez ("Resignation as a Request for the Spirit") and Alejandro Cavallazzi ("Introduction to the Subject of 'Love' in the Religious Sphere"). The conference concluded with the presentation of the book: *Soren Kierkegaard y los abitos de la existencia* by Catalina Elena

Dobre and Rafael García Pavón (Centro de Filosofía Aplicada, Mexico, 2006). The 1994 film *Soren Kierkegaard* directed by Anne Reitze Wivel was also shown.

Article Translation

Marilyn Piety has requested that we report the availability of her translation of Peter Tudvad's article on Joakim Garff's biography of Kierkegaard at the following address:

http://www.faklen.dk/en.the_torch/sak.shtml.

Death of D.Z. Philips

(information submitted by Søren Landkildehus)

News was received in August of 2006 of the death of D.Z. Philips, a member of the Philosophy Department at the University of Wales Swansea in the UK, on July 25, 2006 of a heart attack at the age of 72. Of his many publications, *The Concept of Prayer* is noteworthy for its Kierkegaardian inspiration. Catherine Osborne, Head of the School of Philosophy, University of East Anglia posted an announcement about the life of Professor Philips on the Philosophy in Europe mailing list on July 27. Messages to the list are archived at <http://listserv.liv.ac.uk/archives/philos-1/html>.

First Julia Watkin Memorial Kierkegaard Lecture

By Robert L. Perkins

Editor, *International Kierkegaard Commentary*

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30th Anniversary of the Hong Kierkegaard Library

Fellow students and Kierkegaard lovers, it is impossible for me to express the honor and delight I feel in being asked to deliver the First Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College.

Dr. Watkin's gift will be a perpetual blessing to the Library, to the College, and to future Kierkegaard scholars. The Library occupies an absolutely unique place in American higher education. It is properly placed in a liberal arts college and especially at this one, possessing as it does a strong, conscious, and vibrant Lutheran tradition. Most of the teaching of Kierkegaard occurs in liberal arts colleges and most of the research is done by those teachers. The founder of the library, Howard V. Hong, and its curators, C. Stephen Evans and Gordon Marino, have taught in the Philosophy Department and introduced St. Olaf undergraduates to Kierkegaard, as have other teachers. Many ambitious graduate students have received their first instruction in the Danish language in the Library's summer program. Doctoral candidates come from leading graduate schools each year to write their dissertations in the prime Kierkegaard research library in the Western hemisphere. Books and articles by more mature scholars are researched and written in its archives and stacks. Recent gifts of housing and endowment in addition to the generous contribution of the College have made this one of the two world centers for Kierkegaard research.

The core of the Library is the large collection of books that Howard and Edna began to assemble on their first trip to Denmark at the beginning of their lives together and as the shadows of war fell over Europe in 1938-39. The Hong's personal and spiritual journey has been recorded in the lives they touched, their numerous family, the broad friendship circle, their students, and in their books and writings. This event marks both the thirtieth anniversary of the transfer of their library to the college and the inauguration of a series of lectures to honor the memory of Julia Watkin. But Julia is, doubtless, not so well-known hereabouts. Instead of attempting to relate even the barebones of a biography, let me briefly characterize her.

There is one event, or one series of events that is characteristic and very revealing. In addition to translating one volume of *Kierkegaard's Writings*, she and her dearest friend, Grethe Kjær, read and discussed every page of nineteen of the twenty-five volumes of *Kierkegaard's Writings*. For many years Julia and Grethe made an after-dinner ritual of close-reading, comparing the Danish original to the translations. Howard discussed it all with them when he was in Copenhagen. Julia considered this reading and critique to be one her most important learning experiences and contributions to Kierkegaard studies.

What kind of person was Julia? Briefly, she was the most cheerful, humorous, and generous person I have ever known. She frequently sacrificed her own interests to the needs of others even when she was in a crunch-time. She was totally accepting of others and never saw a stranger until some proved they were and would always be strangers. This was the source of whatever unhappiness she experienced. Her smile and eyes would remind one of finely detailed cut crystal under a very bright light; she sparkled. And so also her whole person. Of her laughter and joy, one can only say that they cascaded into any heart open to receive them. The closest most came to seeing her deep Christian piety was its manifestations in her works of love for those who needed the aid she freely offered.

So we memorialize and celebrate our friend, Julia Watkin.

Either/Or, the first title in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, became a cliché that endeared him to the existentialists and others, but it also brought a storm of criticism for his supposed "decisionism," the view that he was an irrationalist in ethics, that life-shaping decisions could be criterionless and arbitrary.¹ Rather, for Kierkegaard, "Either/Or is the symbol that gives admittance to the unconditional—God be praised" (TM, 94). The purpose of his authorship is to show the way to "the unconditional." In this essay I attempt to lay out some of the logic in that effort with special attention to the distinction he makes throughout his life between Christianity and Christendom.

The three nouns in the title, ideality, illusions, and eternity (TM, 486), encompass the generative concerns of Kierkegaard's authorship. Although we do not meet these terms on every page, or even very often in whole texts, their import permeates the authorship and creates its tensions. I will use these categories to delineate the major divisions of this essay, the subject of which is Kierkegaard's very public struggle against the People's Church, the social, political, and cultural presence of which constitutes Christendom. I shall briefly contrast the ideal with what Kierkegaard understood by Christendom. This contrast I take to be the fundamental either/or of his authorship.

Kierkegaard's search for difference and alterity, indicated by his use of "Either/Or," is more than a methodological shibboleth. His capacity to make distinctions accounts for the phenomenological richness of his authorship, its dramatic literary presentation, and the cleanness of his concepts.

With penetrating foresight, Kierkegaard's first work, Either/Or, presents us with not just one "or," but also a "second or," another alternative.² The "second or," presented at the end of Part II, disorients and unbalances the work, a more accurate title of which would have been Either/Or/Or. The "second or" silently assumes the account and the criticism of the aesthetic but also calls into question the balance between the aesthetic and the ethical as a sufficient description of human existence. This "second or" is presented and argued in the probing religious subjectivity and ideality in the parson's sermon, "Ultimatum: The Upbuilding that Lies in the Thought That in Relation to God We Are Always in the Wrong" (EO, 2:335-54). At a first careless glance the title looks confused, but paradoxically it advertises "admittance," the only way in. The sermon creates an anticlimax that moves Either/Or and the authorship far beyond the aesthetic and the ethical into the realm of an ethical and religious subjectivity that retains a vital place for both, but subordinate to Christianity.³ Finally, Kierkegaard discloses that "the unconditional is precisely what Christianity is" (TM, 462).

In my view it is impossible to deny the ethical, religious, and finally Christian orientation of the authorship without trivializing Kierkegaard and his thought. I will simply act on this proposition and offer no defense of it. Kierkegaard's capacity to make distinctions analytically (TM, 461-62), that is philosophically, and to elaborate them through an attractive literature are powerful sources of his philosophy. Those who wish to suggest another comprehensive hermeneutical key to explain the authorship must argue against the "second or" presented in Either/Or at the beginning of the authorship, the emphasis throughout the authorship on ethical and religious issues, and the final emergence of the open conflict between Christianity and Christendom that occurred at the end of his short life.

However, to appreciate the issues in his last fight requires a bit of contemporary history. Kierkegaard's final public conflict began with the funeral sermon for Jakob Peter Mynster, Primate of Denmark and the family pastor.⁴

In every sense Mynster was a worthy person. Sensible, hard-working, focused on both details and the big picture, quite able to make the best of a bad situation by adroit compromise, he was a respected administrator of the Danish state church. Sensing "what the times required," his sermons changed the orthodox understanding of Jesus of Nazareth as the savior and redeemer from our sins into a "proper" object of admiration for the cultured, bourgeois public of Copenhagen (JP, 4:4209).⁵ In 1848, without public flinching he was able to switch his personal loyalty from the absolute monarchy, which he had respected and served well, to

the constitutionalism of the National Liberals, which he despised, in order to save the financial standing of the established church. He was a political realist.

All this is well and good for a social icon, a defender of a religious establishment, and a class-conscious moral cheer leader for respected, cultured, and religious folk. Such is sufficient for a spiritual leader in Christendom, but Kierkegaard raises the question whether this kind of life amounts to Christian leadership, specifically apostleship. One might well ask why “apostleship” became an issue in nineteenth century Denmark.

In the funeral sermon for Mynster, Hans Lassen Martensen, Professor of Dogmatic Theology and a rising power in the People’s Church, declared that the deceased had been the last link in “the whole succession of truth-witnesses (Sandhedsvidner) that like a holy chain stretches through the ages from the days of the Apostles to our own day,” one of the “true guides,” and an “authentic truth-witness” (TM, 359). Those remarks, and similar ones, provoked Kierkegaard’s final public application of his signature principle, “Either/Or.” There is a difference, and a distinction must be made: Either Christendom or Christianity. Or said negatively and personally, Mynster was no apostle.

Kierkegaard’s “attack upon Christendom” began with what we call an opinion piece, “Was Bishop Mynster a ‘Truth-witness,’ One of ‘the Authentic Truth-witnesses?,” published in Fædrelandet on 18 December 1854 and continued through 21 newspaper articles and nine numbers of The Moment, a series of pamphlets critical of the religious aspects of the contemporary political and social arrangements and the “theological” reflection that supported them. His last discourse, The Changelessness of God, (TM, 263-81) was published on 3 September just before his death on 11 November 1855.⁶ With these contextual details in mind, I turn now to examine the major concepts in the title of this essay, the first of which lies at the basis of many of our deepest human problems.

ILLUSION

“Illusion” is a bi-frontal concept, pointing to both an epistemological error, such as the reduction of the height of telephone poles as we look down the highway, and an internal psychological or moral/spiritual dislocation or confusion. Improved instruments, additional data, the critique of the community of researchers, or a revision of a theory can be helpful with regard to objective matters, i.e., the appearance of telephone poles in certain circumstances.

The second condition, spiritual malaise or ethical-religious obfuscation, is more complex. The greatest difficulty with this kind of illusion is that a person does not realize that anything is problematic until one becomes aware that he or she is deluded. However, one cannot objectively or straightforwardly discover this sort of illusion, because the illusion itself filters all data and interpretation. This suggests that self-deception is a related concept and also why illusion is so difficult to discover.

Typically self-deception attempts to diminish the importance of a necessary feature of human life, for instance love, to recall an old Sartrean example. Between the seducer and the willing-to-be seduced, a certain surreal shadow play occurs. Just that moment is important; no commitments are made, and at this point nothing deeply human happens between them. Some physical act occurs, but the complete giving of oneself and the receiving of another human’s commitment, devotion, and promise are carefully avoided. Such deliberate dissociation of sexual experience from love is an example of self-deception and self-depreciation. The spiritual/moral/religious understanding of life is knowingly suppressed or, to return to the sexual metaphor, one first seduces oneself before one seduces the other, who, self-deceived, submits.⁷ In Kierkegaard’s “The Diary of the Seducer” violence is just below the line of vision. Unfortunately, the suppression of the deeper forms of subjectivity and human relation can and do appear in the higher reaches of life and culture in so far as self-deception is practiced and not called to account. The more radical the disease of self-deception the more radical the treatment that is required: Socratic examination, moral awakening, and religious conversion.⁸

Martensen’s claim that Mynster was “an authentic truth-witness” provoked Kierkegaard, who had discussed the concept of a truth-witness in For Self-Examination (1851)⁹ where the distinction between the truth-witness and the Danish clergy, including Mynster, was made clear. Mynster did not pass muster as a truth-witness. Inexplicably in the funeral sermon Martensen took over Kierkegaard’s well-honed term and used it to inflate the reputation of Mynster.

Kierkegaard's affirmation of Mynster in was limited: his preaching expresses "just what I want, only with a stronger emphasis" (FSE, 21). The qualified approval ends there, and this remark is followed by a series of hypothetical comments and questions by which the reputation and success of a respectable clergyman could be measured: "whether his "home life" was happy, whether he had "ample income" (FSE, 22), enjoyed "a quiet daily pleasure," and in general, whether people were "well-disposed" toward him (FSE, 23). Although these questions were calculated to "arouse restlessness" (FSE, 20) about the easy piety of Golden Age Denmark, they were pointed directly at the clergy and especially Mynster, who had a very successful and comfortable life by bourgeois standards.

By contrast, the person to whom Kierkegaard thinks the title, "truth-witness," is properly attributed was "eaten and consumed" by "human gossip" which is "always hungry and avid for something to chatter about;" he met "ill will, antagonism, indignation, scorn, etc.; he worked for the welfare of the whole generation and was rewarded with the curses of the whole generation; in the torments of spiritual trial he had to gain an understanding of his own life, and then day after day had to work laboriously through all the misunderstandings of his contemporaries" (FSE, 23).

Interestingly, Martensen called Mynster a "prototype (forbillede)." Here Martensen simply and outrageously inflates his claims to the point that Mynster himself would, no doubt, have been embarrassed if not scandalized. Mynster is not the "original," "the first of that kind," etc. Primarily, Jesus Christ is the prototype.¹⁰ By contrast, Kierkegaard claims "the woman who was a sinner," to be a "prototype of piety" (WA, 143, 149), and there are others, the sinner and the publican, (JP, 2:1856). These people, are not, so far as we can tell, cut from the same cloth as our ecclesiastical bureaucrats and professors.

To further obfuscate matters, at least five times in the funeral address Martensen urges his audience to "imitate" the faith of Mynster. He does not bother to explain how one "imitates" another's faith; one suspects he is conceptually confused. Because of his studies of Eckhart, Martensen probably knew more of the imitatio Christi tradition and medieval mysticism than anyone in Denmark, certainly more than Kierkegaard. But not to worry, Martensen did not recommend medieval Catholic spiritual discipline to the good bourgeois Protestants of Copenhagen. Although he appropriated "imitation" from Kierkegaard's For Self-Examination, he failed to mention that those who imitated Christ were likely to suffer and be persecuted as Christ was (FSE, 67-70). To appropriate the figures of imitation and prototype for Mynster is, at best, absentmindedness, worse, puffery, and at worst, blasphemy. The issue is that a Christian cannot presume on faith and neglect the works of self-denial and love (FSE, 15-25; WL, 5-16). all the while being a comfortable upper-class success. Martensen did not pick up on any of this.

Most important of all, according to Kierkegaard, Christianity "is not the heightening of the natural life of the person in immediate continuation and connection with it—what blasphemy! how horrible to take Christianity in vain in this way! it is a new life" (FSE, 76, his punctuation). It is precisely this discontinuity between the "new life" as understood by Kierkegaard and the continuity between Mynster's approach and "the secular mentality" (JP, 6:6802) that set them apart. But there is more.

Rather than "the heightening of the natural life," Christianity is a "dying to" to the world and to worldliness. Kierkegaard does not recommend an unworldly or other-worldly asceticism, a structured, legalistic routine of prescribed "religious" behaviors, or a spiritual absenteeism in a monastery from the worldliness of the world. These kinds of behaviors can be expressions of worldliness, just as when we pray for success on the ball field, in a business deal, or for victory in a war. Faith can occur only within the conditions of this world, but "dying to the world" brackets every form and expression of self-centeredness and acknowledges our inability to justify ourselves before the ethical and even less so before God. According to Kierkegaard, Martensen's claim that Mynster was in the holy chain of apostles was outrageous, for,

...the apostles were indeed dead, dead to every merely earthly hope, to every human confidence in their own powers or in human assistance.

Therefore death first; you must first die to every merely earthly hope, to every merely human confidence; you must die to your selfishness...but naturally there is nothing a human being hangs on to so firmly—indeed, with his whole self—as to his selfishness! (FSE, 77)

At every point Mynster had played his cards deftly and coolly; by every bourgeois standard he was a success. He had climbed to the highest rung of the ladder that his society provided for conventional religiousness.

Martensen's claim that Mynster was in the holy chain of truth-witnesses was a mere self-serving illusion. According to Kierkegaard, the witnesses to the truth were "initiated into everything called suffering...into interior struggles, into fear and trembling, into shuddering, into spiritual trials, into anxieties of soul, into torments of spirit, and then in addition was tried in all the sufferings that are commonly talked about in the world" (TM, 5). The truth-witnesses do not fit into worldly patterns of authority, respectability, or success; they are neither "team players" nor "movers."

Either Kierkegaard or Martensen experienced conceptual, moral, and religious illusion on a grand scale. Whatever response Martensen expected from his comparison of Mynster with the apostles, no doubt what he received exceeded his expectation.

Kierkegaard's response was not immediate. He waited until Martensen was safely installed as bishop and the money raised for Mynster's memorial (TM, 7). Then, Kierkegaard published a newspaper article that challenged Martensen's claim that Mynster was a truth-witness and an "authentic" one at that (TM, 359-60).

Kierkegaard criticized Mynster's preaching which "tones down, suppresses, veils, omits some of what is most decisively Christian, what is too inconvenient to us human beings, what would make our lives strenuous, prevent us from enjoying life" (TM, 3-4). The deep meaning of Mynster's preaching was hedonism and self-indulgence.

Further, Mynster's life was not comparable with that of a truth-witness. Kierkegaard reminds his readers that being a truth-witness requires suffering for the doctrine, at least according to the New Testament. Like the Master, the truth-witness lives in poverty, is unappreciated, hated, detested, mocked, and insulted. None of this applies to Mynster's preaching in the "quiet hours" on Sunday or on Monday when he created the appearance of a "man of character, a man of principles, a man who stands firm when everything is tottering," etc., but the truth is that he was "to a high degree worldly-sagacious, but weak, self-indulgent and great only as a declaimer" (TM, 7-8). Martensen's claim that Mynster was a truth-witness was, when compared to the lives, times, difficulties, and deaths of the apostles, an illusion and exaggeration, a misleading analogy between the apostles and an upper class, comfortable, well-paid political appointee whose salary was collected by the state from the people as a church tax. As a state tax it was, at that time, subject to the state's several means of collection.¹¹ That is not quite like the situation of the apostles.

Just to make sure that everyone realized that they were getting their money's worth, the church maintained that "we are all Christians," which Kierkegaard understood to include even an atheist (TM, 117). Although there were exceptions for the few Jews and Catholics, Danish citizenship was equivalent with being a Christian, a baptized Lutheran.

The political and social implications are not difficult to spot. Kierkegaard writes:

It is the prolixities that must go...the enormously prolix delusion involved in the millions of Christians, Christian kingdoms and countries, a world of Christians (something that no doubt suits the princes of the Church, both for pecuniary advantage and for sake of material power,...something that becomes scoffing at God and the New Testament: official Christianity is not the Christianity of the New Testament!) (TM, 51).

"The princes of the church" derive their advantages from the illusion of Christendom through the material power based on more than the one-thousand "livings" of the pastors throughout the country (TM, 52) in addition to the several bishops, deans, its rental properties, etc. The secular princes support the religious arrangements because the state-paid clergy offer up prayers for the king, that is, for the power structure, in every religious service. Submission to God's will subtly becomes identified with political submission and economic control. Whether the king's rule is just, whether his wars are based on lies or naked greed for the riches of other peoples, whether he disregards the lives of his own citizens, whether he is a rake, whatever, he is a Christian king of a Christian land. All this is bureaucratized, legalized, and paid for in the name of a "kingdom (that is) not of this world" and would not be at any price; "the whole world of official Christendom is an abyss of untruth and optical illusion" (TM, 55, 57, 233-36).

Unfortunately, the controversy between Martensen and Kierkegaard about the significance of Mynster was only the tip of the iceberg. Mynster and Martensen were both symptoms and causes. They responded to the religious expectations as commonly perceived in the dominant echelons of Danish urban society to protect

their church, positions, and incomes. Mynster was their pastor and Martensen their “intellectual.”¹² One wonders who was leading who.

I close this brief presentation of some facets of the religious illusion of the age with one example of the disassociation that the good burghers experienced as they listened to the preaching of Mynster and others in Golden Age Copenhagen:

In the splendid cathedral the Honorable Right Reverend Geheime-General-Ober-Hof-Prædikant [Private Chief Royal Chaplain] comes forward, the chosen favorite of the elite world; he comes forward before a chosen circle of the chosen ones and deeply moved, preaches on the text he has himself selected, “God has chosen the lowly and the despised of the world”—and no one laughs.

(TM, 203; translation slightly amended)

That is religious illusion.¹³ We laugh because we have some sense of personal consistency, the necessity for some existential coherence between concepts and life, between our moral and religious pretensions and how we actually live. The source of such a demand for coherence resides in our idealism, our sense of ideality.

IDEALITY

“Idealism” and “ideality” are philosophical “loose cannons” that we cannot completely secure here. We tend to think of ideals and ideality Platonically, in terms of aspiration, a long ascent from matter to form, lower to higher, from image to idea, etc.¹⁴ Plato’s philosophy is the major paradigm of ethical-religious idealism in western philosophy, and its contrasts and similarities with the ideal or “ideality” focused by Kierkegaard speaks volumes. Like Plato, Kierkegaard understands that an ideal is a standard or norm by which personal life and social reality can and must be measured. Also, for Kierkegaard and Plato, persons are not liberated by the loss or rejection of standards; rather, they lose themselves when “anything goes.” Finally, for both one must think hard and critically in order to live an ethical life. But they differ entirely about the final authorities: for Kierkegaard it is the Christ of the New Testament and for Plato it is the exercise of and obedience to critical reason.

However, as just indicated, the “Christianity of the New Testament” is Kierkegaard’s ethical-religious ideal, one to which he thought neither religious institutions, nor persons, and *most of all himself*, measure up. But vastly more important, in Christianity the ideal is not focused outside this world, but has been incarnate within it and its limits. Thus, the admonition, “Go and do likewise,” (Luke 10:37) does not mean just to think more clearly or to escape history into a realm of ideas; more imperatively it means to immerse oneself in the tragedy and mess of history and community, not as an ego enhancement but as another Samaritan. And that is exactly what most of us do not want to do.

We need ideals and ideality because without them some think that “being a Christian is something everyone can do very easily...[However] the pressure must be applied by the ideals” (JP, 2:1798) so that individuals can see what is involved in the commitment to become a Christian and decide whether they want to commit themselves. Living under the pressure of the ideals is not like being born a Dane or an Arab, a fact over which no one has any control (TM, xviii-xix). Becoming a Christian is rather a matter of choice, personal responsibility, understanding, and much striving. Still the ideals must be proclaimed; otherwise Christianity is transformed into Christendom (TM, 314-15).

But how are ideals found in the New Testament? Simply put, the ideals are expressed in what Christ tells us to do, what he shows us how to do, like giving a glass of water to some “lowly one” who asks for a glass of water “because he (the giver) is a disciple” This is what Kierkegaard calls “contemporaneity” (TM, 287-92; Mt. 10:41-42), and it is a demanding ethical-religious discipline that crosses the borders into the social and political. This reading does not please persons who want to keep their religion private, a matter of hidden inwardness, or eschew works as ostentatious.

Giving a glass of wine will not do it; wine is a diuretic and cannot finally sustain life, and the act may also be grandstanding. Nor can one give a glass of water in any way one pleases, for it can be given for purposes of self-approval, pride, display, or to make a point. Discipleship removes all possibility of egotism, self-aggrandizement, and the grand gesture.¹⁵ The same act, if properly done by someone who is not a disciple, is an admirable act, and who would deny credit to the doer? What could be simpler—or more difficult? But whether and how we give that glass of water determines eternity, and here we must turn to that last concept.

Kierkegaard's concept of "eternity" is an existential expression of ideality, inwardness, and contemporaneity. As Ludwig Wittgenstein tersely expressed the mystery of it all: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."¹⁶ Eternity is another of those subjects of which we cannot speak knowingly, and Kierkegaard did not develop a theory of last things, an eschatology. However, he firmly believed in what the Apostle's Creed called "life everlasting." But about all of that he was silent in his published works.

The clearest view of Kierkegaard's personal faith in immortality is shown on his tombstone. What is chiseled there in stone he experienced in his deepest subjectivity. He selected a verse of a Moravian hymn for his tombstone. The translation reads:

In yet a little while
I shall have won;
Then the whole fight
Will at once be done.
Then I may rest
In bowers of roses
And perpetually
And perpetually
Speak with my Jesus. (LD, 27)

The epitaph exhibits a rather fulsome eschatology, enough to direct a life and enable one to face death Christianly. Here Kierkegaard recalls

-his "fight" to maintain the Christian faith against social, political, existential, and intellectual betrayal;
-the communion of the saints that must include many against whom he struggled intellectually (JP, 6:: 6947, p. 557);

-his simple, serene, and almost sentimental confidence in personal immortality;

-and the matter of absolute importance, the perpetual availability of Jesus of Nazareth to all who called upon his name and spoke with him and were spoken to by him during their personal, historically embedded existence.

So the epitaph selected from the hymns of Hans Adolf Brorson¹⁷ for his memorial leads us back to Kierkegaard's philosophical, theological, and personal struggles, but it does so in a way that confirms the historic importance of theological and philosophical disputes and their eschatological triviality. The concept of eternity is continuous with the heart of his thought and the thought of his heart, an expression of his deepest inwardness: eternity is a disciplinary concept, ordering the way we live; it is not a theoretical issue to be debated philosophically or theologically.

Yet the distractions from this spiritual discipline are as easy as their consequences are severe, because "eternity" clearly bespeaks finality, ultimacy, and God's authority—now unchallenged by either human whimsy or defiance. Aesthetic distractions tempt us still because they are driven by the background thought of mortality, that "one lives only once."

Thus we "wish to see Paris" before we die, before it is all over (TM, 293). Some cram a lot of enjoyment and variety into life. Others avoid the tough decisions, the risks of the suffering, and the task of existing as a truth-witness, or loving their neighbor. Their goal is "to slip happily and well through this world" (TM, 294).

But existence, according to Christianity, actually moves in the opposite direction. When "it is all over," whether the life of those who cram in what enjoyment they can or the life of a truth-witness, then there is eternity. "One lives only once" to be sure, but if one does not suffer for the truth, or does not give a glass of water to someone who asks for it, that is, if the tasks of eternity are neglected, everything "is eternally irreparable" (TM, 293-95) because one lives only once. Kierkegaard's model of the truth-witness is the one who was the truth himself and who suffered death for that very reason; his followers are those who suffer for his truth, most in lesser ways. Human life is indeed serious and sometimes even risky, but the life of the truth-witness is a chosen life; it is earnest and can be dangerous (UDVS, 123, 148).

That Kierkegaard wove the respect for ideals and the thought of eternity¹⁸ into the very texture of his thought, and his concept of subjectivity is "interesting;" but the existential and decisive issue he raises is this: What ideals are you now weaving into your life? What is your second or, your either/or/or?

¹ This charge is standard leftist balderdash, but it was also made by Alastair McIntire, who can scarcely be called a leftist; see his After Virtue 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). For critical appraisals of McIntire see John J. Davenport and Anthony Rudd, eds. Kierkegaard after MacIntyre: Essays of Freedom, Narrative, and Virtue (La Salle: Open Court 2001).

² See my "Either/Or/Or: Giving the Parson his Due" in International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Either/Or' Part II (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995) 207-31. David R. Law likewise concludes that "The goal of human existence is to be found elsewhere" than in the aesthetic and the ethical. See his essay "The Place, Role, and Function of the 'Ultimatum' in Kierkegaard's Either/Or, Part Two, in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship" in IKC: EO II, 233-57.

³ This subordination is not a Hegelian mediation, a "both/and," because it is subordinate to "the unconditional." Neither is this unconditional the Hegelian absolute, for the latter is a conditioned totality, qualified at every turn by the development of the dialectic. Here the unconditional is the αρχή. Due respect for the achievement of Hegel and Kierkegaard requires that the differences between them and the integrity of both be respected.

⁴ For selections from Martensen's funeral sermon for Mynster, see TM, 359-60, and for his reply to Kierkegaard's initial newspaper article, "Was Bishop Mynster a 'Truth-witness,' One of the 'Authentic truth-witnesses'—Is This the Truth?," see TM, 360-66. The classical general history of Kierkegaard's relation to the period and these events is Bruce Kirmmse's Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). Curtis L. Thompson's essay, "H.L. Martensen's Theological Anthropology" in Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries, edited by Jon Stewart (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2003) contains a largely sympathetic summary of Martensen's theological position.

⁵ Kierkegaard's views of Mynster are complex, to say the least; in Prefaces Kierkegaard ironically supports him against the trivialization of the religious and the divine expected, if not demanded, by the cultured elite and the Grundtvigian enthusiasts (P, 31-34). International Kierkegaard Commentary: Prefaces is the first collection of essays to focus this underestimated volume in Kierkegaard's Writings.

⁶ A tenth issue of The Moment was found in "fair copy" on his desk upon his death and printed in 1881 in Efterladte Papirer. For a short but precise summary of the sequence of this literature see Hong's introduction (TM, ix-xxxi).

⁷ For a more protracted discussion see, John Douglas Mullen, Kierkegaard's Philosophy: Self-Deception and Cowardice in the Present Age (New York: Meridian, 1988) 66 ff. For a more extensive discussion of the Sartrean parable see Clancy Martin, "Distraction and Self-Deception" in International Kierkegaard Commentary: Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University, 2005), 53-84. The notes in Martin's essay also contain a rich bibliography on self-deception.

⁸ A moral illusion can also become a political and social ideology, one that misconstrues social relations in a self-justificatory manner, supportive or both the power structure and those worthies who prosper within it. Such self-deception, whether based on exploiting a hoary myth or some "scientific" manipulation, can provoke destructive forces: it is a soft move from a self-justificatory illusion to a social ideology that places blame squarely upon the victim. At this point the personal illusion has become a pathological ideology.

⁹ Martensen's claim that he could not keep up with Kierkegaard's works seems disingenuous. One would think the Professor of Dogmatic Theology would be acutely aware of the major religious authorship by one of his former students. Martensen certainly had time to read For Self-Examination (10 September 1851) before Mynster's death (30 January 1854). See Thompson's introduction to Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion, tr. Curtis L. Thompson and David Kangas (Scholar's Press, Atlanta, 1997), 48. Also by Thompson, "H.L. Martensen's Theological Anthropology" in Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark, ed. by Jon Stewart (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2003) 164-180.

¹⁰ Again, Martensen's claim that he did not keep up with Kierkegaard's works seems more than suspicious: he is the "Professor of Dogmatic Theology," and Kierkegaard is the major lay "thinker" of the era. Surely he would have read Practice in Christianity soon after it appeared. Kierkegaard's more extensive treatment of Christ as prototype in Judge for Yourself! (JFY, 147, 160-209) was not available to Martensen since it was published posthumously in 1876 by Kierkegaard's brother, Peter. See also PC, 184, 202, 238-41, 243; JFY, 147, 160-209, JP, 2:1833-1940. "Prototype" and "imitation" mutually imply each other.

¹¹ Today taxpayers in Denmark can simply check off the church tax and avoid paying it. At least some who pay the tax today do so in order to feel superior to the church they despise.

¹² Martensen and Mynster took opposite sides regarding the principle of contradiction in Martensen's more Hegelian youth. Martensen's reprinting of his Outline of the System of Moral Philosophy (1841) in 1864 leaves intact that rather Hegelian text although it omits the even more Hegelian introduction, suggesting that the rapprochement between him and Mynster that opened the door to his appointment as Court Preacher in 1845 and to the Bishop's Chair after Mynster's death 1855 may have been more political than philosophical. See Kirmmse, Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark, 124-26, 169-75. For a less politically suspicious review of the same episode see Jon Stewart, Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 188-92.

¹³ Kierkegaard's critique of "classism" in this text is not at all Marxist, but there is an interesting comparison for all who are willing to see.

¹⁴ Plato, Symposium, 203b-212c; Republic, 509d-511b.

¹⁵ Like so many other words in this essay, "discipleship" is a tightly ruled concept.

¹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, intro. Bertrand Russell (London: Routledge and Kegan Pau, Ltd., 1955), 189.

¹⁷ See Andrew J. Burgess, "Kierkegaard, Brorson, and Moravian Music" International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Practice in Christianity' edit. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004) 211-43.

¹⁸ If one wished to sound very learned and au courant, one could say that "eternity" and "ideality" are "strategic criteria."

- EO, 1 Either/Or, two vols., ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton:
EO, 2 Princeton University Press, 1987.
- FSE For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong.
JFY Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- JP Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by
Gregor Malantschuk. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1, 1967; 2, 1970; 3 and 4,
1975; 5-7, 1978.
- LD Letters and Documents, ed. and trans. Hendrik Rosenmeier. Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1978.
- P Prefaces and "Writing Sampler," ed. and trans. Todd W. Nichol. Princeton:
WS Princeton University Press, 1998.
- TM 'The Moment' and Late Writings, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1998.
- UDVS Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- WA Without Authority, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1997.
- WL Works of Love, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1995.

**“On Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks: Remarks at the Celebration
at Scandinavia House, New York City, February 1, 2007”**

**[*Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 1
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)]**

Bruce H. Kirmmse

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The most important thing today is to thank everyone who has made this event—and the publishing of the first volume of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*—possible, and since it is the most important thing, having mentioned it here, in the beginning, I will save it for last.

First, however, I would like to say a few—and, I promise, a *very* few—words about these journals and notebooks, that is, Kierkegaard’s *unpublished* writings. For the first time, these writings are being made accessible (in English) in a manner that permits them to be read in their full context, and this sheds a great deal of light on Kierkegaard’s work as a whole.

Kierkegaard lived from 1813 to 1855, during the latter part of the cultural movement generally known as Romanticism. The Romantic era marks the beginning of modernity, when, on the one hand, traditional, inherited social roles were subjected to increasing scrutiny, and on the other hand, increasing attention was being paid to the question of the *self*, the self-conscious, responsible entity that is the *individual*, who is in turn responsible for all social, historical, cultural constellations. Kierkegaard’s age was the age of the discovery—some say the “invention”—of the self, and not unsurprisingly, it was also the great age of journals and diaries, and Kierkegaard, like his American contemporary Henry David Thoreau, was one of history’s great journal keepers.

In a manner typical of other Northern European diarists of the time, Kierkegaard’s practice was to purchase a large, blank notebook and to fold the pages vertically so that a crease divided the pages into two columns, a wider inner column, and a somewhat narrower outer, marginal column. In the inner column, he would write all sorts of things: the germ of a future book or article, perhaps one he would never complete (or, if completed, never publish), as well his thoughts on just about anything: literature, love, God, politics, and—inevitably—*himself*. Subsequently—perhaps after he read or heard or thought of something that reminded him of something he had written earlier in one of his journals—he could return to his journal, often on numerous occasions, and write additional comments in the outer, marginal column of the notebook. (And sometimes comments on those comments, and so forth.) To make matters even better (or worse!) he could often keep two or three or four journals “open” at the same time. (There are in all sixty-one such journals and notebooks, which vary greatly in length.) The present edition of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, like the Danish edition of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* [Søren Kierkegaard’s Writings] on which it is based, reproduces *in print* the complex, two-column physical layout that characterizes the *manuscripts themselves*, giving the reader, quite literally, a look into Kierkegaard’s workshop.

I will provide a few samples from the present volume, volume 1, which contains Kierkegaard’s first four journals from the years 1835 to 1839, when Kierkegaard was a university student. Each of these journals, labelled AA to DD, consists of a series of numbered entries. Entry AA:12 is the last of a group of twelve entries that constitute the opening portion of Journal AA and is quite well known among Kierkegaard scholars and biographers. The entry dates from the summer of 1835 and is cast in the form of a letter to P. W. Lund, whose two brothers had married two of Kierkegaard’s sisters. Lund was a well-known naturalist and

paleontologist who spent most of his adult life exploring Brazil. This so-called “letter” is the source of Kierkegaard’s famous line about searching for “*the idea for which I am willing to live and die.*” But when it is read in the context of the entries which precede it in Journal AA, the character of this entry seems far more problematic than a straightforward confessional letter from its author to a member of his extended family. In fact, it is scarcely likely that it was ever sent as an actual letter to Lund or anyone else, and when entry AA:12 is read together with the preceding eleven entries, and with the support of the explanatory notes that accompany these entries, it seems clear that entry AA:12 is compounded both of autobiographical reflection and experimental fiction.

This is a quite early instance of the practice that Kierkegaard—like other Romantic authors, particularly the German Romantics—employed throughout his literary career: His writing moved seamlessly from an apparently straightforward *presentation* of the self to the literary *construction* of that self. The reader of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks* quickly sees what this pioneer of modern self-understanding *understood*—both for himself and for all of us in the modern world—namely that the self is a “fiction.” But Kierkegaard (and with him, the rest of us) *also* understood that the fact that the self is a “fiction” does not mean that the self is a “lie,” but simply that it is something *made*. We make ourselves comprehensible to ourselves by making ourselves. And for Kierkegaard making the self meant *writing* the self.

But the treasure trove of Kierkegaard’s unpublished writings contains much more than material of this sort. The wealth and variety of materials is remarkable. Entries BB:24-25 show that as early as 1837 Kierkegaard had formulated the idea (which he realized six years later in his breakthrough work, *Either/Or*) of presenting characters from Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni* as representative of the three stages of human development. This was quite in keeping with the Hegelian triadic thinking so popular at the time—but from BB:25 it *also* emerges that Kierkegaard had not quite made up his mind, and was still toying with the idea of “life’s four stages!” Turn the kaleidoscope of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks* yet again, and we come to entry BB:37, which consists of a long meditation on “*telling children stories*” and seems clearly intended as a theoretical alternative to the approach adopted by Kierkegaard’s Copenhagen contemporary (and rival) Hans Christian Andersen. Here Andersen appears to be the unmistakable target of Kierkegaard’s negative characterization of “long-legged, puerile marionettes jumping about on the floor and riding hobbyhorses with the sweet young things,” telling tales of “innocent and happy childhood.”

Here are a few more passages that will provide an idea of the varied contents of this first volume of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*.

1) An entry from July 1837, in which Kierkegaard provides a justification for his journal-keeping: “I’ve often wondered why I am so reluctant to commit . . . observations to paper. But the more I come to know individual [writers who have kept such notebooks], the greater the urge to find out just why I should find something so unpleasant, almost repellent, in a practice that is in itself innocent enough. The reason has obviously been that in each case I have imagined some possible publication, which might have called for a fuller treatment that I didn’t want to bother with. And, enervated by such an abstract possibility, . . . the aroma of the idea and mood evaporated. I think it would be better instead, by frequent notetaking, to let the thoughts emerge with the umbilical cord of the original mood intact and, as far as possible, forgetting any concern for their possible use, . . . as though unburdening myself in a letter to an intimate friend, [thus gaining] on the one hand, the possibility of self-knowledge at a later moment, and on the other, fluency in writing. . . ” [entry DD:28, *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 1, p. 221].

2) A poetic little entry from the autumn of 1837: “Why I so much prefer autumn to spring is that in the autumn one looks at heaven—in the spring at the earth” [entry DD:74, *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 1, p. 236].

3) An intriguing entry from January 1838:

“The states of a man’s soul ought to be as the letters are in dictionaries—some are very strongly and copiously developed, others have but a few words listed under them—but the soul ought to have a full and complete alphabet” [entry DD:205, *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 1 p. 269].

4) And one last entry, this one from October 1837:

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in wolves’ clothing but inwardly are sheep” [entry DD: 66, *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*, vol. 1, p. 234].

Now for thanks. There are so many people and institutions who should be thanked that I hardly know where to begin, so let’s begin with the institutions that have provided material support: the Danish Ministry of Culture and the United States National Endowment for the Humanities have provided and continue to provide the bulk of the financial support for *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*. Quite simply, without support by the Danish and the United States governments, there would be no edition. From the NEH I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of our project and especially my “case worker,” Joel Schwartz, whose advice has greatly improved our grant applications, the most recent of which went through 17 versions prior to submission. Since the funds from the Danish Ministry of Culture have been channeled through the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen (which I will mention in a moment), I don’t know which individual to thank at the ministry, so I will direct specific thanks to Minister of Culture Brian Mikkelsen, for the continuing support the Danish government has provided for the Kierkegaard project. My own institution, Connecticut College, has also provided substantial material support, both by agreeing to do without me while I have been on leave after leave during the past eight or nine years—though perhaps this was not *such* a great sacrifice!—and by agreeing to give up its claim on most or all of its overhead costs, thus providing the cost-sharing required for NEH grants. In the case of Connecticut College I know exactly whom to thank individually, Prof. Frances Hoffmann, Dean of Faculty, who is here today, and Mimi Hutson, Grants Officer, have been one-hundred-percent supportive, well above and beyond the call of duty. And last but not least among those providing material support, I wish to thank Princeton University Press, which has been enthusiastic about the project right from the very beginning, when I approached Senior Editor Ian Malcolm, who continues to work with us from Princeton’s offices in Oxford, England, but who cannot be with us today. We have worked very closely with Editor Karen Jones, who is here today and who, after Associate Editor Brian Söderquist and myself, is the single person most responsible for turning many confusing piles of paper into a beautiful, well-edited book. Karen once told me that publishing Kierkegaard’s papers was a very big deal, since Princeton does not take on many projects of this magnitude, and if my memory serves me, she pointed out that at present Princeton is involved in only three such projects, the papers of Jefferson, of Einstein, and of Kierkegaard. My immediate reaction, was, What great company for Kierkegaard to be in! My next reaction was, Aren’t Jefferson and Einstein lucky to be in such company! But my continuing reaction is, Aren’t I and my colleagues lucky to be in the company of Karen and Ian and the other people at Princeton University Press!

This project has been very much a collective endeavor, and I am therefore both obligated and privileged to thank the entire group of colleagues who did the translating and initial editing on the *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks* project, and who cannot be here today: Prof. Alastair Hannay of Oslo University, who was the primary translator of most of the journals contained in volume 1; Prof. David Kangas, of Florida State University; Prof. George Pattison of Oxford University; Prof. Vanessa Rumble of Boston College; and Prof. Jon Stewart of the Kierkegaard Research Centre, who found it necessary to leave the project in its early stages, but who did much of the initial translation of many of the Explanatory Notes. All these colleagues deserve our gratitude.

I am also especially privileged to thank my colleagues at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre in Copenhagen, who have provided the intellectual, technical, and moral support that is making this project possible. In particular I want to thank Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Director of the Kierkegaard Centre and a member of the Editorial Board of *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks*. Niels Jørgen, who is also Chairman of the Editorial Board of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, had planned to be here today but had to cancel his

appearance because of pressing deadlines in connection with the next volume (already overdue) of the Danish edition. (Brian Söderquist and I understand such deadline pressure all too well, and send Niels Jørgen our personal thanks and good wishes.) In addition to being the real initiator of both the Danish edition and our own, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn has served as our indispensable resource person in questions of language and context, and he has also taken care of editing the complex layout. So I want to say, again, how much we owe Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and how much we regret his absence today.

And I want to direct special thanks to our Associate General Editor, Brian Söderquist, who is with us today. Along with Niels Jørgen and Karen Jones, Brian has been indispensable in producing *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*. I don't know how to thank Brian enough. In brief, he is the perfect man for the job: as good an editor as I know, and better than any translator I know, myself included. I am honored to work with Brian.

I also want to thank the Danish Consulate here in New York and specifically to direct thanks to General Consul Torben Getterman, to Cultural Officer Maiken Derno, and to Vice Consul Irene Krarup, for making today's celebration a reality. And finally, I would also like to direct special thanks to the American-Scandinavian Foundation and its President, Edward Gallagher, who offered to co-host this event here at Scandinavia House, which is the foundation's beautiful headquarters.

IN MEMORIAM



Edna Hatlestad Hong

1913–2007

Distinguished Scholar and Co-editor and Translator of Kierkegaard's Writings



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Expiring in the Mirror of the Word: Reflections on Kierkegaard's *For Self-Examination*

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Introduction

"[T]his thing of becoming a Christian," writes Johannes Climacus, "begins with the miracle of creation," a miracle, he adds, that "occurs to one who is already created." But Christianity, Climacus continues, is "preached to all men." The invitation to her own creation is addressed in an essential way to *each* human being. It follows, then, that from the point of view of Christianity there is a sense in which human beings are "non-existent" (Kierkegaard 1941, 510).¹ The dialectical tension between the attributions, "already created" and "non-existent" finds a parallel in Anti-Climacus' characterization of the individual "human being" as "still not a self" (Kierkegaard 1980, 13). What is this thing, then, that is in the world, which lays claim to existence, but only *appears* to exist and only *seems* to be a self? Climacus calls this dissembling non-entity a "satire upon the human"—a creature, certainly (and therefore "already created"), but one that lacks "inwardness" or subjectivity, a mere surface, reflecting its environment. Climacus describes this disordered, shallow passivity in the strongest terms: this "self," he insists, is nothing but "a sort of marionette, very deceptively imitating everything human" (1941, 219).

For Søren Kierkegaard, the "miracle of creation" that commences at and unfolds from the origin of a properly *Christian* inwardness is conditional on the death of this satirical, deceptive and, finally, *non-existent* self. In the third part of his *For Self-Examination* (hereafter *FSE*), Kierkegaard characterizes the death of this false self as the consummation of what he calls "dying to" (1990, 76).² In this essay I will explore the role that Kierkegaard gives to "self-examination" in the self's initiation into this "narrow way." I will argue that while the death of the false "self" is the *goal* and "dying to" the *way* that leads to this end, self-examination is, for Kierkegaard, a preparation of the *point of entry* into this way.

My argument, however, will attend to the fact that Kierkegaard describes this point of entry in two related, but distinct ways. While self-examination might open onto immediate, vigorous determination (and success) with respect to the *imitatio Christi*, it is more likely that relentlessly honest self-scrutiny will lead no further (that is, in the immediate short-term) than *contrition*. I will argue that, for Kierkegaard, this latter mode of suffering, by awakening inwardness, is as intimately connected to the origins of faith as the "outward" martyrdom (suffering and witness) that belongs to those who pursue Christ as *imitators*.

In fact, I will conclude that the distinction between imitation and contrition corresponds in an implicit manner to Kierkegaard's (and Jesus' own) distinction between the "narrow way" as pursued *by* Jesus and the "narrow way" in its identification *with* him (i.e., "the way is narrow," but equally "Jesus *is* the way"). By embodying the reconciling will and action of God, Jesus himself, for Kierkegaard, answers to the hopeless situation of one's being, in merely "human terms," beyond the pale, unlovable and unforgivable.

Autoptical scrutiny of the "dead"
The goal: "death"

It is the Holy Spirit, writes Kierkegaard, “who gives life” (1990, 75)³ the Spirit, that is, who (in Climacus’ terminology) is the source of the “miracle of creation.” However, for Kierkegaard, this “essentially Christian” declaration must be qualified by the insertion of a “middle term”—“death” or “dying to.” This is necessary, he adds, to “protect the essentially Christian from being taken in vain” (ibid., 76).

“Dying to” and not “new life” is the goal of the current task of self-scrutiny. At the same time, however, “dying to” is a matter of heading in the direction of death. In one sense this death cannot be a goal for the *self* since, in Kierkegaard’s view, it is not the self, but the Spirit that achieves it. It is “[t]he life-giving Spirit,” he writes, “who slays” (ibid.) the individual by removing “whatever is corrupting” to her and taking her “power away” (ibid., 87). Even so, it is this death and not merely “dying to” that is the self’s *end*. It is in this sense that death is the goal of that “way” that is entered upon, according to Kierkegaard, through self-examination.

Death, here, is death to “selfishness”—a death more difficult, Kierkegaard insists, than “the separation of soul and body in the hour of [bodily] death” (ibid., 77). This is because, in contrast to the latter, “dying to” is “separation from one’s soul when one is alive” (ibid., 77-78). If the self is passive with respect to its consummation (i.e., death itself), in its onset this “separation” is a task in which the self plays an integral part. Indeed, the one who would “die to” must “personally . . . shatter [his] fulfilled desire” and “wound selfishness at the root” (ibid. 79).⁴ The Spirit’s work as “slayer” commences, then, on the basis of this self-wounding and ends in the lifelessness and impotence that is exemplified, for Kierkegaard, in the predicament of those apostles who, in the aftermath of Jesus’ shameful death, “were indeed dead,” that is, “dead to every merely earthly hope, to every human confidence in their own powers or in human assistance” (ibid., 77).

This same reduction to death is the requirement for each of us, thinks Kierkegaard. “First death,” he writes, and only *then* “life.” The “Comforter” will not come until all of the “appalling things” that mark the way to death have come to pass. At the same time, however, it is possible, writes Kierkegaard, that “a long life lies before . . . the one who has died” (ibid., 79)—and although the Spirit “does not deceive by failing to come” (ibid., 81) the “one who has died” cannot know when the advent of the Spirit (as Comforter and life-giver) will occur.

The narrow way: squeezing the life out of the “old self”

The second part of *FSE* begins with the account, at Acts 1:1-12, of Jesus’ ascension. However, the immediate and explicit focus here is on the related claims that “Christ is the way” and that “this way is *narrow*” (ibid., 57; author’s italics). In the first instance, as exemplar and prototype, the way to death is traversed by Jesus himself. The fact that the trajectory of his life “ends on the cross and in the grave” (ibid., 65) is of the essence here. The “narrow way” *ends* in death. The miracle (the Ascension), the “new life” that comes afterwards, is not, Kierkegaard insists, “a direct heightening of . . . natural life . . . in immediate continuation from and connection with it.” The life that the Spirit brings—when death has intervened—is “*literally* a new life.” By “go[ing] in between,” death effects a true rupture and a true end so that the old order is eliminated altogether (ibid., 76; my emphasis).

The narrowness of the way, writes Kierkegaard, was the “continual and penetrating proclamation” of Jesus’ whole life—of his actions and suffering as much as of his teachings (ibid., 57). Thus it was “narrow in its beginning” (ibid, 58) through Jesus’ native “poverty and wretchedness.” It was narrow by virtue of Jesus’ constant subjection to temptation (ibid.)—the temptation to give up, to accept political power, to enjoy “relief” and “success” beyond all “that a mortal heart could desire” (ibid., 59). More than this (and in contrast to “the common human narrow way”) Jesus’ way was “voluntary.” He “*chose* poverty” and “abasement” (ibid., 67; my emphasis),⁵ aware of “his fate in advance” (ibid., 59), he had “to work against himself”—to bring himself, ineluctably, “toward certain downfall” (ibid., 61).

Even if this downfall was, finally, Jesus’ actual bodily death at the hands of his enemies, it is not, for Kierkegaard, this death or this *kind* of death as such (the violent death of the martyr) towards which the narrow

way (or “dying to”) is directed. In fact, Kierkegaard writes, to walk in the “narrow way” is “immediately” and from the *very beginning* always already “akin to dying”—“akin to dying” and then “narrower and narrower to the end, to death” (ibid.). This “death,” however, is expressed in *advance* of (bodily) death as the predicament, again, of those apostles that were, according to Kierkegaard, “indeed dead” (ibid., 77).

The point of entry: autoptical scrutiny in the sword of the spirit

In the second part of *FSE*, as we have seen, Kierkegaard says a great deal concerning the nature of the way that Jesus *pursued* towards his own death. However, while he reiterates Jesus’ claim that he, himself, *is* this “way,” Kierkegaard does not explain its significance.⁶ In what sense, then, for Kierkegaard, is Jesus *himself* the “way” that leads to death, the way that is “narrower and narrower to the end, to death,” but also “akin to dying from the beginning” (ibid., 61; author’s italics)?

In my view, between the treatment of self-scrutiny in the first part of *FSE* and the notions of death and “dying to” in the third, we have a key to interpreting this identification in Kierkegaardian terms. The narrow way of contrition is identical with Christ himself by expressing the human predicament whose only remedy is that forgiveness which is embodied, not merely in the effects of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, but, somehow, in Jesus *himself* (the true and narrow “gate”). This is, perhaps, the sense in which, following Kierkegaard, we ought to engage St. Paul’s assertion that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”⁷

In order to see how contrition (no less than imitation) opens onto the narrow way we must take note of the three “requirements” that, as Kierkegaard writes, bear on the “true blessing” that ought to derive from observing oneself “in the mirror of the Word.” Contrition, as we shall see, is a result that Kierkegaard sees as accruing from the fulfillment of these requirements.

First, he writes, I must gaze *into* this mirror and *at* my own reflection therein. It is useless, here, merely to “look at” or to “observe” the mirror itself as, for example, scholars do when, far from reading the Word with the inwardness appropriate, say, to the reading of a love-letter, they approach the text in an impersonal and objective manner, armed with dictionaries and commentaries (ibid., 25-26).⁸ Nor will the engaged reader be distracted by what is obscure in scripture; this, thinks Kierkegaard, is a strategy for avoiding any perilous confrontation with what is *not* obscure (ibid., 29).

Then, too, I must be “alone with God’s Word.” For Kierkegaard, the Word is not addressed to the crowd, after all, but to the solitary individual (ibid., 30). This solitude amounts to the “incessant” affirmation that the scriptures are speaking *to* and *about* me (ibid., 35; my italics). To “think about oneself” in this way is not, as Kierkegaard insists, “morbid vanity.” To the contrary, the false humility that “abhor[s] being vain” is a clever defense against the effects of seeing oneself in the mirror of the Word. It “cannot take hold of me,” after all, if “I do not place myself in any personal (subjective) relation to [it]” (ibid., 36).

This supposed abhorrence of vanity is a masquerade that hides an abysmal “lack of conscience” (ibid., 40). In contrast Kierkegaard recommends “earnestness,” which is, “precisely,” to understand myself as personally addressed by God’s Word, addressed unequivocally, so that a *personal* response is demanded. Once I concede that “[i]t is I to whom this is addressed” there is no excuse for failure to attend to the injunction, “away at once!” (ibid., 44). When I ask myself whether I have “done what [I] read there” then there are only two ways out of this “trap” (ibid., 31 and 36): “either straightway into action—or immediately a humbling admission” (ibid., 31).

A relentless *suspicion*, an “honest distrust of oneself,” informs the self-scrutiny that opens onto this bifurcation—“action,” on the one hand, “humbling admission,” on the other. As Kierkegaard urges, I am never to waver in “treat[ing] [my]self as a suspicious character” (ibid., 44). And what will I admit, humbly? On the

one hand, I will identify with the adulterers, thieves, killers and other selfish people whose stories are recounted in the scriptures. On the other hand, I will disavow any identification with the good, the loving, the faithful characters that I observe there (*ibid.*, 43).⁹

In short, if the self-knowledge that I attain by looking into the mirror of the Word arises from (1) attention to my reflection and not to the mirror itself, (2) an essentially solitary encounter and (3) an incessantly self-suspicious self-scrutiny then, claims Kierkegaard, I “will read a fear and trembling into [my] soul.” Then, Kierkegaard thinks, “with God’s help, [I] will succeed in becoming a human being, a personality, rescued from being this dreadful nonentity into which we humans, created in the image of God, have been bewitched” (*ibid.*)

If this “fear and trembling” represents a kind of provisional disorder—a “dreadful,” but also indefeasible “condition of salvation” (*ibid.*)—it is preferable to the *stability* of the social “order” into which I might escape, but whose surface hides another “disorder”—“the stillness of death, a dying out” (*ibid.*, 20) that is also (and first) the absence of even that *preliminary* restlessness for which Kierkegaard claims to have been working all along (if not as a “witness” then as a “poet,” “without authority” (*ibid.*, 21)) : a “restlessness oriented toward inner deepening” (*ibid.*, 20).

This restlessness or “fear and trembling” is, precisely, the suffering by means of which the religious address in general and *FSE* in particular seeks to “upbuild” the Christian who is coming into existence *in place of* (or in the no-place of) the “dreadful nonentity” that I am when I lack any consciousness of myself in relation to God. This latter situation is only resolved, Kierkegaard insists, through “the transition to the subjective,” a transition that commences when I hear and submit to the Word of God—which had, until now perhaps, appeared to be a merely “charming little work”—as addressed to *me* with the full force of an individuating and inescapable accusation: “Thou art the man” (*ibid.*, 38).¹⁰

If Kierkegaard is prompting his reader to “read . . . fear and trembling into [his] soul” this is not so that the one who gazes into the mirror of the Word can, in this way, achieve his own salvation. To the contrary, as we have seen above, it is only “*with God’s help*” that I “will succeed in becoming a human being.” It seems to me that for Kierkegaard my relation to the Word (and to the image of myself reflected therein) is, in the first instance, in the moment of looking into this mirror, a matter of passive docility and receptivity. Thus I am to allow the Word to “take *hold* of me, precisely me.” In this way it will “gain power over me so that I [can] not defend myself against it” (*ibid.*, 36).

At the same time, however, by looking into the mirror—undistracted, without excuses, reflexively suspicious, solitary and without “human comfort”—I am already lowering those defenses that are raised against the one who, according to Kierkegaard, achieves the ultimate end, the demise of my “false” self: the slayer, the Holy Spirit. I lower my defenses with respect to the Word so that my defenses may be more profoundly breached by the Spirit himself. This initial lowering of defenses means that the Word will “go on pursuing me until I either [act] according to it, renouncing the world, or at least [admit] that I [do] not do it” (*ibid.*).

Here, again, we witness the bifurcation that we encountered above. There, “trapped” by the Word, I was faced with a choice: “either straightway into action—or immediately a humbling admission” (*ibid.*, 31). Now again, “pursued” by the Word, I am forced to choose: will I act “according to it” or will I confess my failure? Doesn’t my self-suspicion demand that I concede—even in *advance* of any outcome—that I will have to make an “admission” of failure? But where moral failure is qualified inwardly as *disobedience*—so that I am individuated precisely as this *one* who is guilty before *God*—we encounter the possibility of contriteness of heart; and it is, as Climacus, points out, the *contrite* heart in which God dwells (1941, 399).

In this way we come back to the “blessing” that, for Kierkegaard, is derived from an undefended self-examination in the mirror of the Word. This blessing, it would seem, is not yet an unequivocal, divine “indwelling,” not yet the “new life” and the “miracle of creation”; but it is a matter of achieving the *point of*

entry into the “narrow way”—into that long “dying to” whose end is the death of the “non-entity” that I am (not).

But again, this death is achieved, not by me, but by the Spirit who slays me. By reading *FSE* backwards from its end (and from the perspective of the end towards which the whole work points) we begin to see that, for Kierkegaard, the mirror of the Word is none other than the polished, broad and two-edged “sword of the spirit,” the weapon that spells the doom (and not merely the temporary “wounding”) of selfishness, the weapon that the Holy Spirit uses against my “self.” The cessation of “self”-defense—the step into the “trap,” the end of flight from the “pursuer”—is identical with looking into the mirror whose reflective surface is *already* swinging dangerously in my direction.

Blessedness in “doing” and blessedness in “hearing”

In James 1:22-27 doing-upon-hearing is a condition of being “blessed in [one’s] *doing*” (v 25). In fact, James has *nothing* to say concerning the central topic of the first part of *FSE*—how to be blessed in the *hearing* or, more exactly, the solitary *reading* of the Word.¹¹ Kierkegaard deploys James’ call to be “doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” in a way that, first, heightens the effect that the call to works has in the constitution of the *hearer*—whether he obeys or not—as a properly religious *self*.

Secondly, without referring to it explicitly Kierkegaard emphasizes James’ injunction against *self-deception*; but he does so in such a way that he is able to point to a possibility of “blessing” that James does not note (or not as such); namely, that *hearers* who fail to *do* might derive blessing (withheld from them with respect to their unrealized “doing”) from *subsequent* “hearings” if *only* they are able to hear in the renewed call to obey what David heard from Nathan: the accusation, “Thou art the man!” In order to hear this, however, they must be—if not, after all, “doers of the word”—nevertheless “hearers” who are, at least, not deceived.

The “suspicious” self-examination to which Kierkegaard prompts his reader is precisely an antidote to self-deception. Hearing the call to works *in the right way*, as an indictment with respect to past disobedience, is, here, the ordinary threshold of faith. Inward consciousness of the absence of works gives rise to a felt “need for grace.” Kierkegaard puts works into the foreground in order to cause this “need” to become as apparent as possible—“to be felt deeply in genuine humble inwardness”—in order to prevent “*grace*...from being taken totally in vain” (1990, 24).

In the end it is clear that “true blessing” is related to works, here, not as their effect (as *subsequent* reward) or essence (as a blessing that inheres *in* “doing,” so that works are their *own* reward), but as the deepening of the initial conditions of that *restlessness* that alone can originate true works—that is, “imitation” and, ultimately, the trajectory that leads to martyrdom—a *preliminary* inwardness on the path to faith itself that is, implicitly, faith already.

Uplifting through suffering: the centrality of contrition

This preliminary inwardness is, for Kierkegaard, *contrition*, a mode of inwardness that presupposes a former absence of “outward” works and even actual disobedience. Contrition, arising through contact with the Word, arising where the Spirit is already in the wings, as it were—where selfishness has been wounded by the self’s own voluntary renunciation of every defense *against* this Spirit, that is, of every “human comfort” and the comforts and security, especially, of one’s family and church and culture—this restlessness is the very aim of the religious address, that mode of communication whose purpose, as Climacus puts it in his *Postscript*, is “*uplifting through suffering*” (1941, 390).

By presupposing disobedience, however, Kierkegaard’s notion of the onset of the “restlessness of faith” is bound up with a mercy that forgives even the most *conscious* and *reiterated* transgressions. If this were not so,

then Kierkegaard's version of self-examination would end in the impasse that derives (as it did for Luther) from James' claim that "faith without works is dead." Here the dictum would be instead, *contrition without consistent, future obedience is dead*. If contrition could be thus *dead*, however, then this would mean that God was no longer willing (or able) to forgive transgressors. By pointing the way to contrition, Kierkegaard's *FSE* would be an exercise in futility.

For the moral failure, opting for "humbling admission" is not futile. Our assent to the truth of the Word that we hear (or read) does not imply "that we are capable" of putting it into practice (1990, 11). *Ought* does not, apparently, imply *can*—or not always. Even though Kierkegaard insists that there are clear and uncontested commandments set forth in scripture (love your enemies, do not judge, etc.) it seems to me that here, in an implicit way, conviction of one's calling to an absolute and maybe perilous responsibility to God is more significant than the specific *content* of the Word's commands and proscriptions with respect to one's "neighbour."

The possibility of incapacity with respect to this ultimate responsibility is of the essence and is sharpened, here, to an excruciating point. As Kierkegaard says, "the higher the religious is taken, the more rigorous it becomes." But then, he adds, "it does not necessarily follow that you are able to bear it—perhaps it would even be an offence to you" and a cause of personal "ruin" (*ibid.*). *FSE* does not go so far as to spell this out, but it seems clear to me that *mercy* (and so *forgiveness*) is the (here) unthematized solution that, for Kierkegaard, answers to what appears to be an impossible, unnavigable moral order.

Hope with respect to God's mercy depends upon the substantive reality of the difference that marks the two modes of expression of the "narrow way" that, following Kierkegaard, we observed above. This distinction, far from establishing the possibility of two *diverse* ways, makes it clear that the *one*, unique way is possible for *all* people, the strongest as well as the weakest; the most righteous as well as the most wicked. This universality is an expression, here, of God's mercy and both distinguishes and identifies, for Kierkegaard, the "narrow way" that Jesus *trod*, on the one hand, and the "way" that Jesus *is*. Defenseless consciousness of one's moral failings, the lucid consciousness of the self as *disobedient*, by becoming an occasion for contrition, is here, like martyrdom, religious suffering properly so-called.

The suffering that marks the narrow way of *imitation* "torture[s] forth in the imitator the need" for "another kind of comfort"—comfort that, like the Ascension, "disrupts or contravenes natural laws . . . [and] disrupts the merely human grounds of comfort" (*ibid.*, 69; author's emphasis). The gifts of the Spirit—faith which is "against the understanding" (*ibid.*, 82), hope when "there [is] no more hope" (*ibid.*), love that works on behalf of those who "do not deserve to be loved" (*ibid.*, 84-85)—are not bestowed until death, "the middle term," has "com[e] between." Short of their bestowal, Kierkegaard insists, there is no other signal that one's life is a life that is *on the other side of death*.

But if supernatural hope, faith and love were addressed, merely, to impossible, desperate relations to situations and enemies in what Climacus calls one's "greater or lesser environment" (1941, 391), then (having "coddled myself" with respect to the "imitation") I would have to affirm that I have not yet and may *never* reach the extremity of need that the Spirit addresses with these gifts. If imitation invites suffering that "torture[s] forth" the need to which the gifts of the Spirit alone can answer—is there a corresponding suffering and need in the case of contrition? Is it possible, finally, to achieve a degree of suffering in *inwardness*, a degree of *contrite* restlessness so profound that I will be laid low in exactly the same sense as those "dead" apostles—"dead to every merely earthly hope, to every human confidence in their own powers or in human assistance" (1990, 77)—to whom the Spirit gave life on Pentecost Sunday?

It seems to me that this suffering *does* arise where, in spite of and in the midst of a profound contrition, the *understanding* comes up against the conviction of the self's being *unforgivable*. This horrible verdict is pronounced by the understanding, which confirms that there is no more hope—confirms, that is, that there is no

more “merely earthly hope” so that “every human confidence in [one’s] own powers or in human assistance” becomes as hollow as possible. It is here that the individual’s experience corresponds in essence to Jesus’ own when he utters what Kierkegaard identifies as his “deepest” and “most terrifying” cry: “[m]y God, my God, why have you forsaken me!” (ibid., 64).¹²

In the experience of the one who, by *imitating* Jesus, also “dies to,” this last “sigh” expresses, perhaps, the realization that the promise of comfort and “literally new” life is not necessarily fulfilled in the mortal life of the dying subject—that he might have to undergo his physical death with no more than the *promise* of the Spirit’s coming (as Comforter) and of “new life.” The sense of having been abandoned, however, is equally pronounced in the hopeless realization that one is an *unlovable* and *unforgivable* non-entity. This suffering too must “torture forth . . . the need” for “another kind of comfort”—comfort that, like the Ascension, “disrupts or contravenes natural [here, moral] laws . . . [and] disrupts the merely human grounds of comfort” (ibid., 69; author’s italics).

As much as Kierkegaard seeks to heighten the sense of danger and urgency that arises in relation to the mirror (or, as we have observed, the *sword*) that is God’s Word, he does not, then, promote an irremediable despair for those of us who are endlessly abject failures. In the absence of a “venture . . . in the direction of *imitation*,” Kierkegaard proposes that the self turn to God in humility and contrition (ibid., 70). However, if one were to stop at the limits of understanding—*I cannot be forgiven*, period—offended by the Spirit’s declaration that I, the unforgivable one, am forgiven *nonetheless*, then I would have succumbed to one of the forms of sinful and infernal despair that concerns Anti-Climacus in his *Sickness Unto Death* (1980, 113ff).

To refuse to be forgiven is to *be*, henceforth, the mere *thing* that I have become. The self that privileges his own estimation of himself as unforgivable, refusing to hear the declaration that, against every human norm and limit, he is forgiven, declares that it is better to be a monster than a self. In this way the monstrous non-entity’s fear of death is allowed to infect the true creature’s intrinsic love of life. On the other hand, if my conviction that I am unforgivable exists in *tandem* with the merest *intimation* that I am forgiven after all—isn’t this already hope-against-hope, faith-against-the-understanding and an affirmation that authentic love attends first of all to what is unlovable?

Jesus is the way

Kierkegaard describes the emergence of the authentic “personality” in terms that appear to belie the apparent coexistence and interpenetration of what is *dying* (the self whose *de facto* non-existence is disclosed *as dying*) and what is coming to *life*. It seems to me that *FSE* deploys an idealization of “*dying to*” and of the “*new life*” in the Spirit, an idealization, too, of *witnesses*, *imitators* and *apostles*, of the *coddled*, perpetual *penitents* and of human-satirical *nonentities*. There is here, too, an artificial separation of roles of the Spirit as *slayer*, on the one hand, and as *comforter*, on the other.

Above all, as we have seen, Kierkegaard separates the end (death) and the life that comes after the end. In fact, it seems to me that “dying to” and the beginnings of this new, authentic life are co-extensive and dialectically interpenetrating. Kierkegaard is simply observing the grammar of his obviously Pauline inspiration as closely as possible: the new life, that is, the new self, does not exist, save for the ultimate death and absence of the old. By adopting this perspective (which is really *sub specie aeterni*) Kierkegaard is able to maintain a profound distinction between the ersatz life that ends through “dying to” and the true life that emerges only afterwards. He is able to establish that authentically human existence is simply *impossible* without the death of what St. Paul calls “our old self”¹³ and that Climacus’ “miracle of creation” is truly *ex nihilo* insofar as the power that establishes the self, draws it forward and preserves it, is God alone.

This strategy has a rhetorical effect that contributes to the task at hand—which is Kierkegaard’s own calling—to work “for . . . restlessness oriented toward inward deepening” (1990, 21). At the same time, however,

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Kierkegaard achieves an implicit Christological result: by drawing these interpenetrating realities apart and so idealizing them he enables us to see how the “narrow way” is identical with Jesus himself.

Once again, this identity is expressed scripturally in St. Paul’s assertion that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”¹⁴ Here, Jesus himself (and not simply his deeds or teachings or death) is positively identified as the one *in* whom the reconciliatory desire of God is embodied, enacted and, finally, achieved. This reconciliation, as St. Paul points out, is a matter of God’s “not counting their trespasses against” the human race. In other words, Jesus *embodies* the event of our forgiveness. It is in this sense, I suggest, that for Kierkegaard Jesus *is* the way.

Conclusion

Like Kierkegaard’s *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*, *FSE* might be read in preparation for “the office of Confession” (1948, 177). In a sense, then, these discourses are delivered on the threshold of a renewed effort to *imitate* Jesus. At the same time, however, their author is not blind to the *probability* of failure: his own failures, in any case, burden him in such a way that he cannot identify himself as a “witness” and insists that he is “without authority” in the very matters of which he so incessantly speaks (1990, 21).

In the end, one may have to confess, with Kierkegaard, not merely that one has failed *thus far*, but that one is not, after all, a “rigorously religious individual,” not one whose “life is essentially action.” One may have to say, as Kierkegaard does, “I confess my weakness” (*ibid.*, 11). But this confession is significant only if it “wounds selfishness” and propels the self into the abyss of true contrition where forgiveness appears to be (humanly speaking) impossible. This, I believe, is paradigmatic for Kierkegaard’s “restlessness oriented toward inner deepening” (*ibid.* 20).

Finally, as we have seen, although Jesus *is* the way for those who fail with respect to imitation, insofar as the point of entry into this way is contrition the self plays an integral role from the very beginning. The self that, in contrition, is related to itself before God, voluntarily enters upon that “narrow way” (“dying to”) that leads to the death of the “old self.” At the same time, by playing this role the self experiences the interpenetration of its dying and its coming to new life. By *conceding* to exist as a subject against the experientially concurrent pull of mere objectivity and nonexistence, this is already, from the outset, a voluntary acquiescence in that “miracle of creation” (the miracle of one’s *own* creation) with which we began.

¹ All references to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works will respect the nominal distinction that is maintained in the author's "indirect" approach. I must note, however, that I will be drawing on material that is expressive (in my view) of Kierkegaard's acknowledged position on the themes under examination here.

² Cf. Romans 6: 1-10.

³ See John 6:63.

⁴ Here, by way of example, Kierkegaard points to "Abraham when God demanded that Abraham himself...should sacrifice [his son] Isaac" (1990, 79).

⁵ Kierkegaard argues that, while "human sufferings" such as "sickness and poverty and lack of appreciation" mark many ways as narrow, these are not (as such) ways of which it is "true...that Christ is that way or that it leads to heaven" (1990, 66).

⁶ i.e., not in this context.

⁷ 2 Cor. 5:19

⁸ Kierkegaard does not say that this latter work is illegitimate, but only that this is not the reading (the looking) that opens on the blessing that he has in mind.

⁹ Thus, for example, if I find myself faced with the parable of the good Samaritan I will identify with the self-serving priest and the cold-hearted Levite—but also, by way of elaboration, I will see that I am, in general, a calculating and finally unmoved "practical man," culpably indifferent to the world around me (*ibid.*).

¹⁰ Kierkegaard has in mind David's encounter with the prophet Nathan following the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah.

¹¹ The experience of hearing, then, becomes a special case of the latter: it is only in the case of reading that the encounter with God's Word can be, literally, a solitary one; and this is clearly Kierkegaard's ideal.

¹² See Matt 27:46 and Md 15:34.

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Repetition qua 'double contemporaneity': God-man and the single individual

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The aim of this article is to re-examine two of the most important Kierkegaardian notions, namely, repetition and contemporaneity. Although Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors¹ use the term "contemporaneity: strictly in relation to the single individual's task to become 'contemporaneous' with Christ, we attempt here to extend the application of this notion to include other exemplary biblical figures such as Job, Abraham and ultimately Adam. This strategy is grounded in the view that this extension will contribute significantly to our understanding of the interrelationship between the single individual and these archetypal figures. In the first part of this article, we will focus on the biblical but pre-Christian manifestations of repetition and contemporaneity, while on the second part we will deal with Christian manifestations.

Repetition as a transcendent movement towards faith

Constantius, the pseudonymous author, applies the concept of repetition mainly to the sphere of individual spirit, leaving aside any discussion of repetition in nature or in the sphere of world- or universal- spirit. What is of crucial importance for Constantius is neither the contemplation of the repetitive movement of nature nor the meaning of repetition in the sphere of world-spirit, nor even the contemplative study of the existence of repetition in the world of the individual spirit. In his response to Professor Heiberg's comments on his book on repetition, Constantius emphasizes that his main interest is the life and existence of the single individual. Movement in life and movement in thought are for Constantius two completely different things and their conflation introduces illusory elements into theorizing. Repetition is for him a task for freedom and not an issue for the contemplating spirit as it was for Heiberg (Repetition: 312).

On the surface, the story of the book on repetition appears to be mainly an erotic narrative where a young man in love decides not to marry the object of his affection, but rather to become a poet. Even before the beginning of his erotic relationship, the young man found a silent confidant, Constantin Constantius, the 'author' of the book. Both men ask the same question, namely if repetition is possible. The first² part of the book is a parody of examples and incidents in search of an answer to this question. Constantin Constantius arranges a trip to Berlin in order to ascertain whether or not the trip he had made a few years ago could be repeated.

As we all know, the simple repetition of the same trip did not bring any transformation to the inner existence of the author. On the contrary, although the young man did not experience the highest form of repetition where the collision of eternity and time would have come from higher levels acquiring thus eternal consciousness, he still nevertheless attained a level of repetition, when he learned that his former fiancée married another man. Prior to this event, Constantin was tortured by guilt feelings for feeling for have let her down and broken off their engagement. His guilt was amplified by his inability to explain the reasons behind his actions. Constantin then begins to think of her wedding as an act of generosity; he now feels free to follow his call as a poet and exclaims: "Here I have repetition; I understand everything and life seems more beautiful to me than ever" (Repetition: 220).

The archetypal religious hero that functioned as the young man's compass was Job. Repetition is not seen as a movement towards immanence but on the contrary it is a "transcendent, religious movement, by virtue of the absurd when the borderline of the wondrous is reached" (Repetition: 305). Following Rose in identifying the "fall or the beginning" with "initiation into prohibition" (Rose 1992: 92), one can argue that the reversal of this state of affairs takes the form of an initiation into *αφηνειν* (*abandoning completely*) oneself in God's hand. As

an exemplary form of repetition, this act of complete abandonment of oneself is only possible by virtue of the absurd. For both Constantius and Silentio, exemplary figures of this kind of repetition are Abraham and Job, since if Adam, and every subsequent Adam, did/does not listen to God's command, then Abraham and Job listened, by virtue of the absurd, to whatever God commanded them. Moreover, as Mooney suggests neither Abraham nor Job asked back what they have lost. On the contrary, by giving up all their attempts to restore the previous order, that is "by not ...[making] the attainment of repetition ...[their] explicit project", both of them gained repetition on a higher level (Mooney 1998: 300).

Indeed, they followed the path of repetition that is for Constantius a *recollection forwards* and not that of recollection, that being of a *repetition backwards* (ibid: 131). They did not attempt to restore the past by a conversion back to *eternity*, but instead followed God's order as *sinner before him*, and this comprised their movement towards the future. Here one has to be careful not to assign to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors an eschatological conception of time where almost deterministically, the future is presented as the time where the *deliverance from time* will occur for humanity. Kierkegaard's main concern remains the individual, and his or her encounter with the future, where the future is viewed as transcendence and not as a linear succession between the reunified moments of past, present and future.

On Kierkegaard's reckoning, both Abraham and Job were *tested* by God and showed their faith by 'virtue of the absurd', although not in the same manner. According to the biblical narrative God let Satan *tempt* Job's righteousness and faith, resulting in Job's being deprived of family, belongings, etc., only for Job to reply "The Lord gave, and the lord took away; blessed the name of the God" (Job:1,2). Those words made a significant impression on both Constantius and on the young man. Job, endured the trial and he thereby "received everything *double*", since as the biblical text reads "...the Lord gave to Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10), and it is exactly this process that according to Constantius "is called a *repetition*" (Repetition: 197 & 212). In Job's case, repetition is not exhausted by the fact of the redoubling of his material possessions³, as we are told that he originally owed seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, while at the end of his ordeal he possessed fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels. Rather the most important form repetition acquires amounts to nothing less than Job's courage to stand before God without betraying his faith.

Constantius seems to be particularly impressed by Job's ability to enter into a purely personal relationship with God, namely one "of opposition with God, in a relationship such that he cannot allow himself to be satisfied with any explanation at second hand"(ibid:210). Job directly questioned God's testing of him and defended his position, believing that God would eventually do him justice. Job's confrontation with God overcomes the boundaries of time since it denotes a meeting of the finite with the eternal in time (loc. Cit).

His stance towards God made Job a prototype for the whole humanity (Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses: 123). Job acts as an archetype of action for the whole humanity, and although his words also have a captivating power, it is his actions that can make everyone that has also been *tested* in her life able to *understand* him.

Only the person who has been tried and who tested the saying in being tested himself, only he rightly interprets the saying; Job desires only that kind of pupil, only that kind of interpreter...we quite properly call Job a teacher of humankind and not of individuals, because he presents himself to everyone as his prototype, beckons to everyone with his glorious example... (Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses: 112-3).

Indeed, Job's action incites everyone to the terror and anxiety of life (ibid: 110), but also to the possibility of a personal relationship with God. Job got everything back in double, that is both in material and spiritual terms. The close relationship between inwardness and sacrifice is for Kierkegaard indicated in the biblical stories of Job and especially Abraham. Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* narrates the story of Abraham⁴, who was also *tempted* by God, and who ascended to the mount Moriah to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. The book is written under the pseudonym of Johannes de Silentio, an almost direct reference to the 'silence' accompanying Abraham in his journey. The name Johannes de Silentio is also a strong allusion to one of the most recurrent

Kierkegaardian pseudonyms, and it is the only pseudonym corresponding to an historical individual, Johannes Climacus. St. John Climacus was a monk who lived in the desert of Sinai, born around 579 and died around 649 (Ware 1982: 1-2). His major work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, is a description of the steps that a person has to take in her ascent towards God. Most significantly, the chapter that corresponds to the eleventh step of this ladder, entitled “On Talkativeness and Silence” is a praise of silence and a condemnation of talkativeness, which is characterised as a sign of ignorance (Ladder: 158). According to St. John Climacus, “the lover of silence draws close to God. He talks to Him in secret and God enlightens him” (ibid: 159). Thus, the choice of this specific pseudonym could be seen as a Kierkegaard’s attempt to point to the mystical inward ascent of Abraham. Abraham is described by Silentio as the *father of the faith*, for he followed God’s order to sacrifice Isaac without questioning⁵ his ordeal. Abraham’s mystical journey unfolds through the following stages: God ordered Abraham to take his son to the land Moriah and then to ascend to a mountain there and to offer his son as a burnt offering. Without any questioning,

Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him...Then on the third day Abraham...saw the place afar off... (Genesis 22. 2-4).

Then, he left behind his two young companions and ascended to the mountain with his son. The expression “Abraham rose up”⁶ has been often interpreted as prefiguring the day of the resurrection of Christ and this perhaps accounts for the widespread conviction that he rose up in the morning in a festive mood, like having a premonition that this day was a day of resurrection (Gaitanis 1994: 321). Furthermore, the fact that Abraham rose up ‘early in the morning’ has been interpreted by Boehme as signifying the *kairological* aspect of the call of God. In it, Boehme finds the inward voice that “breaks forth as the dawning of the day” and calls the human being to “return, amend and truly repent; *then* it is time” (Mysterium Magnum: 520). Silentio is also astonished by Abraham’s cheerfulness and confidence in his encounter with God. If someone else were in his place, Silentio postulates, then, when God called him by his name, he would have hidden like Adam in Eden or replied in a whisper

Not so with Abraham. Cheerfully, freely, confidently, loudly he answered: Here I am. We read on: “And Abraham arose early in the morning”. He hurried as if to a celebration, and early in the morning he was at the appointed place on Mount Moriah. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eliezer- who after all, could understand him, for did not the nature of temptation extract from him the pliege of silence? (Fear & Trembling: 21).

Abraham’s personal relationship with God could not be communicated in words. Once again, silence permeates the whole story. Abraham is silent and as Derrida points out, so is God (Derrida 1998: 154). Mystical silence accompanies the three days of Abraham’s journey, reminding us of the three-day descent of Christ into Hades before his resurrection⁷. For St. John Climacus, in contradistinction to talkativeness that is a sign of “a dissipation of recollection”, “intelligent silence is ...a sure recollection of death...hidden progress, the secret journey upwards...” (Ladder: 158). For St. John Climacus the recollection of death could have two meanings: first it could be interpreted as *μελετη θανατου* (study of death) in the Platonic sense, or secondly as a continuous recollection of the death and resurrection of Christ. In the case of Abraham, who lived before the coming of Christ, this recollection takes the form of recollection forwards, i.e. of repetition. More precisely, for Boehme, God testing of Abraham sets forth “the Figure of Christ’s Offering in his Suffering and Death” (Mysterium Magnum: 517). Thus, this passage can be said to have also a futural⁸ or prophetic character since “Abraham in the spirit saw the offering of Christ afar off, viz. above two thousand years to come” (Mysterium Magnum: 521).

Abraham, in Silentio’s account, made the leap of faith by virtue of the absurd. For Silentio, the category of the absurd is not to be taken as synonymous with “the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen”, because the latter notions belong to the sphere of understanding whereas the absurd does not belong, “to the differences that lie within the proper domain of the understanding” (ibid: 46). Thus, the knight of faith “acknowledges the impossibility, and in the very same moment he believes in the absurd” (ibid: 47). In the case of Abraham, even

“in the moment when the knife gleamed *he had faith- that God would not require Isaac*” or even if He would, then He would certainly give him a new Isaac ‘by virtue of the absurd’ (Fear & Trembling: 18-9 & 36 & 115-emphasis added). The actual sacrifice never occurred, but Abraham’s ascent and ordeal is still a sacrifice since the crucial category is that of the possibility of *being able to*. In this respect, it is important to note that Abraham *was able* to sacrifice Isaac. Additionally, he was not trying to find external justification for his faith that God would not require Isaac. He simply had faith *by virtue of the absurd* (ibid: 34)..

More importantly, Abraham’s faith is not a projection to a future life.

Abraham had faith. He did not have faith that he would be blessed in a future life but that he would be blessed here in the world. God could give him a new Isaac, could restore to life the one sacrificed. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for all human calculation ceased long ago (ibid: 36).

Thus, Abraham got both *himself* and “a son a second time” (ibid: 9).

In the first pages of *Fear and Trembling*, Silentio speaks of a man who was so absorbed by Abraham’s story that his sole craving and longing was to follow Abraham in his three-day journey to mount Moriah. This man, being neither a scholar nor a thinker, was free from any need to go ‘beyond faith’ (loc. Cit: 9). He wanted to repeat Abraham’s movement and thus to be able to make the spiritual movement of repetition. Being *contemporaneous* with Abraham is a task that could make someone a single individual. Silentio himself declares that he lacks the courage to follow Abraham, and by being *contemporaneous* with him, to make the leap of faith. Silentio emphasizes that each and every generation has “no task other than what each previous generation had, nor does it advance further...” (ibid: 121). By being contemporaneous with Adam, everyone makes the ‘first leap’ amounting to a ‘fall’, whilst in becoming contemporaneous with figures like Job or Abraham, the individual prepares for the ‘leap of faith’. Let us not forget, that this second task, even in case of Abraham is a tentative task, and thus, “is always adequate for a person’s lifetime” (ibid: 122).

Contemporaneity with the biblical figures of Abraham and Job presupposes contemporaneity with Adam, who – according to Haufniensis- also symbolises the possibility that every single individual becomes an Adam. Thus Adam and every consequent Adam, has the logic-defying task to make the free movement of repetition and to become contemporaneous with Abraham, ‘the father of faith’.

Repetition and Double-Contemporaneity

Let us now turn our gaze to what are for Kierkegaard the exemplary forms of repetition and contemporaneity, namely their Christian manifestations. As we have already seen, Abraham and Job function as predecessors of Christ in a prophetic way, they nevertheless belong to the pre-Christian era. Although Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous authors ask us to follow inwardly Abraham and Job and thus to be contemporaneous with them, he nevertheless refrains from calling them teachers⁹ of the single individual.

In his book *Philosophical Fragments*, Johannes Climacus argues that one human being cannot transform another, cannot function as a teacher to another. Climacus reserves the characterisation of teacher only for God for only God can effect the necessary transformation to the single individual so as to make her able to receive the condition and the truth. Of course this Teacher is also a ‘*saviour*’ since he “does indeed save the learner from unfreedom”, a ‘*deliverer*’ since he “does indeed deliver the person who had imprisoned himself” and a ‘*reconciler*’ because he “takes away the wrath that lay over the incurred guilt” (ibid: 17). Only God, according to Climacus, can lift up the individual from her unfreedom.

This does not mean though that the single individual after the Fall is devoid of power, totally subject to the help and grace of God. In our reading of Kierkegaard’s *oeuvre*, God allows for ‘repetition’ to happen, without imposing it. To be more specific, God, first prompts the individual to acquire the consciousness of sin, that is to become ‘con-sciously’ *contemporaneous* with Adam and then God gives her the condition and the truth, through her being *contemporaneous* with Christ, the historically existent God. Only then can the single individual become a person of a different quality or in other words “a new person”. This change is called by Climacus, a ‘conversion, and the sorrow that accompanies it, is called ‘repentance’ (ibid: 19). By this ‘rebirth’, i.e. the highest form of repetition, the single individual “enters the world a second time just as at birth” (loc.

Cit). Contemporaneity with Abraham and Job also make the individual able to make the leap of faith, by virtue of the absurd. The difference between the notions of the absurd as depicted in *Fear & Trembling* and of the paradox or absurd in the *Philosophical Fragments*, rests in the fact that the first “is the purely personal definition of existential faith” and the second “is faith in relationship to a doctrine” (Concluding Unscientific Postscript II: 163). More specifically, Abraham and Job were human beings that function as archetypes of faith and as such they urge everyone to follow them and to be contemporaneous with their ordeal, by virtue of the absurd. However, the absurd in *Philosophical Fragments* becomes tangible, obtains a face and the task becomes to believe the *absurd* or the *paradox* and to become *contemporaneous* with it (ibid: 164). Indeed, the paradox is the event of the Incarnation of God and the ‘moment’ of the latter’s historical existence. Accordingly, the task ascribed to every single individual is to become contemporaneous with the existence of God *in time*, and thus to believe in the paradoxical collision of time and eternity.

Accordingly, the ‘moment’, becomes for Climacus, the instance of the collision of time and eternity not only in the sense that God, as eternity, invades time by acquiring a historical existence, but also since ‘*in the moment*’ the single individual “becomes aware of the rebirth, for his previous state was indeed one of ‘not to be’” (Philosophical Fragments: 21).

In our reading of Kierkegaard, contemporaneity with the God-man and repetition in the eminent sense are identical in that both terms express the highest form of freedom and ‘earnestness’. Contemporaneity, as we are going to see shortly, is not to be understood literally, namely as a reference to the actual historical contemporaries of Christ, but as a task for every single individual.

The peculiar quality of higher repetition might be described by the term *double contemporaneity*. Neither Kierkegaard nor any of his pseudonyms deploy this nomenclature but it is faithful to the spirit of his writings. This term captures the state of affairs in which God resolves to be contemporaneous with every human being and to give her, in Climacus expression, ‘the truth and the condition’. God wills repetition, and that is why He freely chose to acquire a historical existence and to appear as a God-man. On the other hand, the single individual also has the ability, by virtue of her freedom and in ‘earnestness’ to make the movement of repetition.

Contemporaneity with ‘the paradox’ is a very special category for Climacus since it allows for a transgression of the boundaries of time, which nevertheless happens ‘in’ time. The paradox of God’s coming into existence unifies the contradictories: “...the paradox specifically unites the contradictories¹⁰, is the eternalizing of the historical and the historicizing of the eternal” (Philosophical Fragments: 61). In this passage, Climacus is not simply referring to the eternal, God-man’s intention to come into historical existence and so eternalizing the ‘moment’ of his appearance; the author is also describing the ‘moment’ of the human being’s transformation-by virtue of the appearance of the paradox - in which eternity enters in her life, eternalizing the ‘moment’ of her decision to become *contemporaneous* with the God-man. The importance does not reside in the immediate contemporaneity with the paradox, but in the contemporaneity beyond any temporal restrictions and which is in principle attainable by every human being.

It becomes evident then why immediate contemporaneity is not synonymous with genuine contemporaneity in Kierkegaard’s works. In his *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus distinguishes between those two kinds of contemporaneity arguing that immediate contemporaneity, if lacking the earnest relation with God-man, could be synonymous with non-contemporaneity:

But what does it mean to say that one can be contemporary without, however, being contemporary, consequently that one can be contemporary and yet, although using this advantage (in the sense of immediacy), be a non-contemporary- what else does this mean except that one simply cannot be immediately contemporary with a teacher and event of that sort, so that the real contemporary is not that by virtue of immediate contemporaneity but by virtue of something else (Philosophical Fragments: 67).

By virtue of something else, indeed: What differentiates the genuine contemporary then is this ‘something else’ that Climacus calls *faith*. Faith is what overcomes not only the limits of understanding but also those of knowledge, since knowledge, for Climacus is either a knowledge of the eternal (thus excluding temporality and the historical) or a knowledge of the historical (excluding the eternal). As a consequence, no knowledge of the absurdity “that the eternal is the historical” is possible (ibid: 62). God-man, being the sign of contradiction, becomes then the object of faith, and his appearance as a teacher is far more important than his teaching.

It is well-known that Kierkegaard in his Journals dismisses the idea of using together ‘Climacus and Anti-Climacus’ for this would require the coining of a new pseudonym for which he could not be the author (Pap.X B 48 cited in *Practice in Christianity*:285-6). With this gesture, he seems to invite his readers to attempt this synthesis themselves. Here we can partly accept the challenge by bringing together this extreme pseudonymous figures, namely Climacus who appears as placing himself “so low that he even says that he himself is not a Christian” and anti-Climacus who “considers himself to be a Christian on an extraordinary level” (JP VI 6433 cited in *Practice in Christianity*:281)

Thus, if we attempt a combining reading of the concepts of the ‘admirer’ and ‘imitator’ developed in *Practice in Christianity* and that of ‘follower at second hand’ and ‘genuine contemporaneous’ proposed in the *Philosophical Fragments*, we can observe the following. First, ‘admirers’ and/ or ‘followers at second hand’ do not relate themselves to the real suffering of the historical existence of the God-man but they retain an external relation with Him and consequently with the ‘moment’. This in a sense cancels the very idea of being a mere admirer or/and a follower at second hand of the God-man, since in both cases what is missing is the ‘autopsy’ of faith:

...there is not and cannot be any question of a follower at second hand, for the believer (and only he, after all, is a follower) continually has the *autopsy* of faith; he does not see with the eyes of the others and sees only the same as every believer sees- with the eyes of the faith (*Philosophical Fragments*: 102).

Therefore a ‘genuine contemporary’ or/and an ‘imitator’ can continuously experience an autopsy of faith. Anti-Climacus further argues that faith is a choice in the sense that it is not “direct reception- and the recipient is the one who is disclosed, whether he will believe or be offended” (*Practice in Christianity*: 140). It has to be noted that this choice is fundamentally alien to rational decision stemming from the understanding. It is rather identified with primordial resolution¹¹ excluding all doubt: “The conclusion of the belief is no conclusion but a resolution, and thus doubt is excluded” (*Philosophical Fragments*: 84). In the presence of the sign of contradiction, i.e. of God-man, the single individual can only relate herself to Him by virtue of indirect-communication, namely with inwardness. In that sense, the contradiction serves as the mirror in which the single individual reflects herself and makes the decisive choice. Anti- Climacus likens the mirror to a koan like riddle that liberates the inner potencies of the individual

A contradiction placed squarely in front of a person- if one can get him to look at it- is a mirror; as he is forming a judgment, what dwells within him must be disclosed. It is a riddle, but as he is guessing the riddle, what dwells within him is disclosed by the way he guesses. The contradiction confronts him with a choice, and as he is choosing, together with what he chooses, he himself is disclosed (*Practice in Christianity*: 127).

It is clear that although the genuine contemporary has as her point of departure the occasion of the historical existence of God-man, that gives her the eternal consciousness, she nevertheless makes a further step as he –or she- freely and inwardly considers this historical event to be “the condition of his eternal happiness” (*Philosophical Fragments*: 58). In sum, whether or not a person is historically contemporary with the God-she can always be genuine contemporary with God-man by receiving by Him the condition (ibid:100). What is this ‘condition’ then that repulses mere admirers and attracts the genuine believers? According to anti-Climacus, what the God-man offers to every believer is the same condition, that is “to become just as poor, despised,

insulted, mocked, and if possible even a little more..." (Practice in Christianity: 241). Indeed, for the author, genuine contemporaneity is synonymous with inward repetition or imitation of the sufferings of the God-man which "no admirer has ever wanted to join" (loc. Cit). A mere admirer- in contradistinction to the imitator who "is or strives to be¹² what he admires"- is detached from the object of its admiration, giving thus no attention to the claim that the God-man has laid upon him (loc. Cit). Only the individual who "personally receives the condition [and the truth] from the god" truly *believes* and between this person and the god-man a special relationship develops (Philosophical Fragments: 69).

The person who received the condition received it from the teacher himself, and consequently that teacher must know everyone who knows him, and the individual can know the teacher only by being himself known by the teacher (ibid: 68-9).

This reciprocal knowledge between the single individual and the God-man is not communicable to those outside this relation, since for the human eyes that are uninitiated to the mystery of inwardness "untruth has exactly the same range as truth", making thus direct communication between individuals impossible.

The God-man functions as the true *prototype*, leaving behind him footprints so as to become possible for the imitator to join Him in the various stages of His earthly existence. According to anti-Climacus, Christ's intention to leave those traces and become the prototype has a clear soteriological dimension (Practice in Christianity: 238). Consequently, the God-man resolves to be born and live as "poor, abandoned, abased..." so as to indirectly show to everyone the contradiction of being simultaneously so high and so low

...he who is truly to be the prototype and be related only to imitators must in one sense be *behind* people, propelling forward, while in another sense he stands *ahead*, beckoning. This is the relation of loftiness and lowliness in the prototype... Thus in one sense the prototype is *behind*, more deeply pressed down into abasement and lowliness than any human being has ever been, and in another sense, *ahead*, infinitely lifted up (ibid: 238-9).

Having discussed so far how the single individual resolves to be contemporaneous with the God-man and thus to make repetition- in freedom and in earnestness-possible, we now shift our attention to the God-man's resolution to become contemporaneous with the human beings, allowing thus repetition to acquire its full meaning.

The question is more precisely this: Why does God resolve to come into existence and suffer? In other words, why does He decide to continually become contemporaneous with every human person by allowing her at the same time to become contemporaneous with the God-man? According to Climacus, God needs "no pupil in order to understand himself, and no occasion can act upon him in such a way that there is just as much in the occasion as in the resolution" (Philosophical Fragments: 24). Only love, Kierkegaard argues, could move God to make his appearance and to acquire historical existence.

What then, moves him to make his appearance? He must move himself and continue to be what Aristotle says of him, ακινητος παντα κινει [unmoved he moves all]. But if he moves himself, then there of course is no need that moves him... But if he moves himself and is not moved by need, what moves him then but love, for love does not have the satisfaction of need outside itself but within (Philosophical Fragments: 24).

God is not an unmovable being that only 'is' but does not 'exist'; He rather *is* life. His love, Climacus argues, is procreative, because it is God's distinctive quality to be able to beget. God's resolution to appear freely out of love has eternal validity, making thus contemporaneity and repetition possible.

Out of love, therefore, the god must be eternally resolved in this way, but just as his love is the basis, so also love must be the goal, for it would indeed be a contradiction for the god to have a basis of movement and a goal that do not correspond to this. The love, then, must be for the learner, and the goal must be to win him, for only in love is the different made equal... (Philosophical Fragments: 25).

Thus, God, resolves freely out of love, to leave concealment and come-into-existence, becoming a personal God that loves, suffers and is self-sacrificed. The God-man suffered not only because he was mocked, crucified, etc but also because he underwent the secret suffering of inwardness, when all he wanted was to make himself understood by humankind, knowing at the same time that this task is "not so easy if he is not to destroy that which is different" (Philosophical Fragments: 25; Practice in Christianity: 136-7).

Suffering and love then are two inseparable notions throughout Kierkegaard's works examining the problem of repetition and contemporaneity. A humanly suffering God is then shown to render history comprehensible, while inaugurating an era when the moment of his historical appearance becomes synonymous with the 'fullness of time' (Philosophical Fragments: 58).

We should have established beyond doubt that in Kierkegaard's works God resolves out of love to appear in history as a humanly suffering God, leaving behind him the traces a person should repeat in a unique and singular manner. Moreover, this movement of repetition grounds the very possibility of becoming truly and freely contemporaneous with the paradox of God's coming into existence. It is *double contemporaneity*.

¹ The issue of pseudonymity is extremely important for Kierkegaard's philosophy but due to the vastness of its scope it is impossible to offer here a comprehensive discussion of the issue. I have dealt elsewhere (Tsakiri, 2003) with the connection of pseudonymity with the aesthetic writings and the importance of the concept of 'taking notice'. For the purposes of this paper I will mainly follow Marino's strategy to respect "Kierkegaard's wishes and refer the views expressed in his pseudonymous works to the corresponding pseudonyms" while ascribing a position to Kierkegaard when there is convergence between the views expressed by a pseudonymus author and that expressed in the journals (Marino, 1998: 310). Only on rare occasions do I slightly stretch Marino's strategy and ascribe to Kierkegaard a view that is shared by two or more pseudonymous authors.

² That means up to the page 179 in Hong's translation. Kierkegaard himself makes this distinction between the two parts of the book. In a supplement – that according to Rose is a decoding of the story "philosophically in the 'sphere of individual freedom'" (Rose 1992: 24) – to his book, Kierkegaard harshly attacks Professor Heiberg's misinterpretation of him. Kierkegaard accuses him of taking seriously only the first part of the book (that is the one not to be taken seriously), implying at the same time that Heiberg completely ignored the second part, where one can find at least an "authentic statement about repetition" (Repetition: 295).

³ For Constantius, the fact that Job did receive everything in double except his children shows once more that "a human life cannot be redoubled that way" (Repetition: 221).

⁴ Abraham's name is also an instance of repetition. In the beginning his name was Abram, but when God renewed his covenant with Abram, He also changed Abram's name into Abraham (in Greek Αβραμ into Αβρααμ) by doubling the letter a, so as to show a greater blessing of Abraham and his nation (Genesis 17, 5).

⁵ As for example Job did.

⁶ Or in Greek Αβρααμ αναστας where αναστασις also means resurrection.

⁷ For Boehme, this passage also signifies the resurrection of Christ after three days in Hades, and the consequent lifting up of our human eyes "out of the grave, from the dead unto God" (Mysterium Magnum: 521).

⁸ Or, it can also be argued that Abraham has an intimation of the event that precedes time and the creation of cosmos, namely that "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (as cited in Berdyaev 1935: 174).

⁹ Job was named the 'teacher of humanity' and Abraham 'the father of faith'. Moreover, Silentio emphasizes that "the true knight of faith is a witness, never the teacher" (Fear & Trembling: 80).

¹⁰ Anti-Climacus, in his *Practice in Christianity*, calls the God-man a "sign of contradiction". By sign he means the "denied immediacy" or in other words, "the sign is not immediately something but that it is a sign, and it is not immediately that which it is a sign or as a sign is not the immediate that it is" (Practice in Christianity: 124). Moreover, a sign of contradiction contains for him an intrinsic contradiction. In the case of God-man the contradiction lies in the fact that although God-man in immediacy seems to be a human being, he is also and mainly God (ibid: 125-6).

¹¹ It has also to be noticed though, that Climacus argues that faith is "not an act of will, for it is always the case that all human willing is efficacious only within the condition", showing thus the crucial importance of the presence of the 'condition', without which all willing "is of no avail" (Philosophical Fragments: 62-3). Although using the terminology of the Augustinian tradition (i.e. efficacious and inefficacious grace), Climacus does not argue in favour of a pre-Adamic state where only inefficacious grace was in effect.

¹² On this account, Abraham and Job could arguably be conceived as imitators of the God-man.

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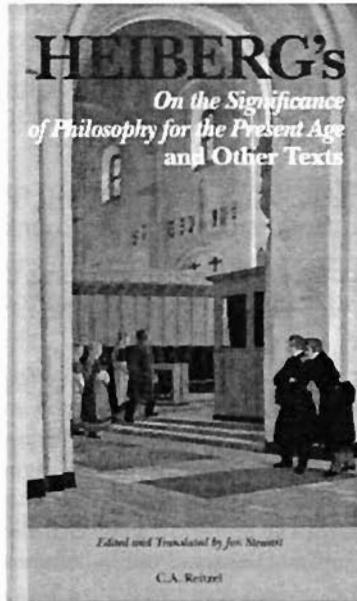
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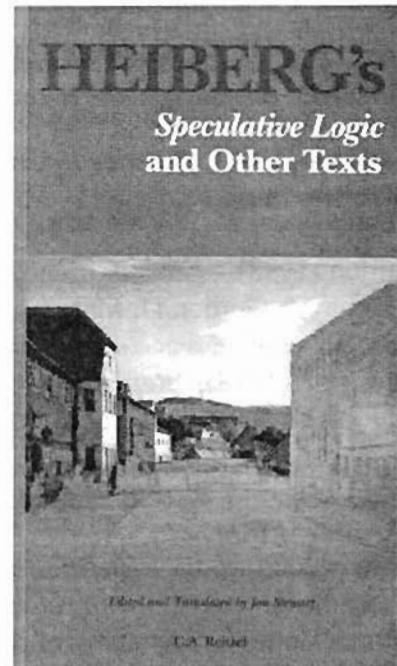
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Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts

Edited and Translated by Jon Stewart.

C.A. Reitzel, Ltd. Copenhagen and Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre 2005.

xxii + 467pp.

(*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, volume 1)

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(*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, volume 2)

By Inger Christiansen

Mag. art.

For those who in these religiously overheated times are missing a cool-headed philosophy, there is help on the way. There has recently been published the first two volumes of a new translation series entitled, "Texts from Golden Age Denmark," edited, translated and with commentaries by Jon Stewart and published by C.A. Reitzel in cooperation with the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre. As the title indicates, the series is dedicated to publishing English translations of classic texts from Golden Age authors. This series represents a welcome expansion of the excellent work done at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, which here once again cements its competence in the theological and philosophical literature of the Danish Golden Age.

The first volume of the series is a—new—book with the tempting title, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. To be sure the *present* in fact refers to the past, and, to be sure, the book is not entirely new (since the original was published in 1833). The exact title is in fact *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and other Texts*. The volume presents for the first time to the English reader a translation of Johan Ludvig Heiberg's philosophical masterpiece, but that is not all. The editor has provided us with an extensive general introduction to one of the Golden Age's most important philosophical and theological discussions about the relation of faith and knowledge. The theme is already hinted at with the book's carefully chosen cover picture, where one sees two representatives of the intelligentsia, at a distance in the shadow of the church's pillars, observing the common people's still living religiosity as they go to take communion. The painting is Constantin Hansen's beautiful *Interior of St. Bendt's Church at Ringsted* from 1829.

For the first time it is possible for the English reader to look beyond Kierkegaard out into the wider landscape of outstanding texts from Danish philosophy. Here we are provided not only with Heiberg's text but also with important tools for understanding it: the volume contains an introduction to Heiberg with a detailed account of his inspiration from German speculative idealism. In addition to the featured text, the volume also contains translations of other relevant primary texts, for example, Heiberg's so-called "Autobiographical Fragments," and his letter to the master of idealism, the German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, whose thought Heiberg introduced in Denmark. Following this, there is Heiberg's letter to H. C. Ørsted and a series of texts from "the debate surrounding" Heiberg's treatise. Of these the most important and best written is doubtless the essay from J. P. Mynster, bishop of Zealand, who with his text from 1833, "On Religious Conviction," finally has the occasion to show that he in no way deserves the negative reputation that Søren Kierkegaard's posthumous papers put into circulation. In addition, there is a detailed apparatus of explanatory notes that follows more or less the same principles and format as the commentary volumes of the new Danish edition *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*. Finally, there is a series of extensive bibliographies (with among other things an overview of the relevant journals) and indexes.

While the first volume of the new series represents an outstanding general introduction to Heiberg and his world, the second volume is somewhat more specialized. Heiberg's main work on logic, entitled *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic* (1832), is the featured text in this second volume. This work was a textbook for Heiberg's students at the College. It represents an introduction and indeed at times a paraphrase of Hegel's difficult *Wissenschaft der Logik*. This second volume of translations follows the same principles as the first one, featuring a detailed introduction, an extensive section of explanatory notes, generous bibliographies and indexes. Kierkegaard readers will find in every other line here echoes of his ceaseless polemics against mediation, the presuppositionless beginning, movement in logic, etc.

The wonderfully chosen cover painting of this second volume also deserves a word of praise. Here one sees, oddly enough, an unfinished painting by Martinus Rørbye, *Søndergade in Kolding* from 1848. On the left side of the picture one sees the colorful houses that line the street. Their clearly defined shapes and colors represent the fullness and richness of actuality, which it is the task of philosophy and logic to explain. On the right, unfinished side, however, one sees only Rørbye's preliminary sketch of the houses with geometrical figures and perspective lines. These represent the categories of logic, the bricks of actuality, which, so to speak, form the net which constitutes the richness of the world of sense.

Heiberg's great importance for Danish intellectual life is well known, not least of all through his decisive influence on the Danish theatre and his marriage with Johanne Louise. However, his versatile academic education and early philosophical merits are less familiar. From his "Autobiographical Fragments" we learn the following: with the almost obligatory *Bildungsreise* behind him, and with a series of studies in various academic disciplines under his belt (natural science, mathematics, humanities—including not least of all the Romance languages and a dissertation on the Spanish poet Calderon), and after the beginnings of a literary and dramaturgic career, Heiberg received an appointment as lecturer at the University of Kiel (1822-25), which at the time was a Danish province. In the first years Heiberg worked industriously but, by his own account, without achieving any great insight into Hegel's philosophy. In the "Fragments" he gives a little dramatic account of how his efforts were rewarded—an account which was later made famous by Kierkegaard: One fine day—while staying alone at a hotel in Hamburg, with Hegel's *Encyklopädie* on the table and chimes from the nearby St. Peter's Church in his ears—a light dawned on Heiberg, and he saw the entire Hegelian system as if "in a flash of lightning" (p. 65). The flash came to have a significance in the later discussion of "the system," for, in the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard confirms his limited understanding of the whole matter with his humorous story of Dr. Hjortespring, alias Heiberg, who springs or leaps into the philosophy, which denies the possibility of a leap.

After this experience, Heiberg then regarded himself as adequately prepared to help Hegelian philosophy on its way back home in Denmark. He did this first by entering into a current discussion on the problem of the free will with a contribution informed by Hegel's philosophy, which attempted to mediate the conflicting positions.

Back in Copenhagen, Heiberg's aesthetic theory entered into practice with his vaudevilles—what is great is materialized in what is small, the Idea in the performance. His title as official theater poet (1828) was later supplemented with "titular professor" and with an appointment as instructor at the Royal Military College (1830), and now it was the logic itself rather than its manifestation in vaudeville or the aesthetic works, which caught Heiberg's attention. However, this did not happen by his own—free—will, since as an instructor at the College he was obliged to write up texts for his courses. This was the occasion for a series of works on logic from Heiberg and his contemporary philosophical colleagues—which would be fortunate for posterity (if these texts would ever be reprinted in modern editions), since they represent collectively an outstanding introduction to a difficult theme, and a no less outstanding local, i.e., Danish, reworking of European philosophy.

For Heiberg, logic or metaphysics scratches away everything that is superfluous in order to find the mind's or language's most basic building blocks in order then to see the entire structure in its internal relations—from the manifold to the individual to the manifold again. But "do not make haste," advises one of Heiberg's contemporaries, for if you manage this "journey to the Alps of the mind, there the most beautiful views await"—for "the goal of logic is to win life by losing it."

It is these beautiful intellectual views that Heiberg wishes to present to his reader with his text with the somewhat more prosaic title, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. Here it becomes immediately clear that “our present”—that is the age at that time—is in a crisis. The crisis consists, among other things, in the fact that religion has lost its elevated status. And it is here that the discussion has its decisive message for our time. That religion in our time has not lost ground is what the modern person perceives as an expression of the crisis of our age. In our own age post-modernity is exhausted, and we are again ready for absorption in something else. In both cases philosophy, with Heiberg, has something to offer.

Heiberg begins his text by speaking about the crisis. The crisis here is not the psychotherapeutic negative, the crisis is the expectation of spirit. It is there where “the old ends and what is new begins”(p. 87). As a turning point, the crisis “does not exist” in the sense of a fixed state of affairs, or, in Heiberg’s own words, the crisis is “the absence of a condition,” “a suspension between being and nothing, that is, a contradiction, which, like every other contradiction, must be sublated and pass over to an actual condition”(p. 91). The crisis is the development of spirit—individual and general—the crisis is the course of world history.

We do not see all at once that there are omens about the times to come. Just as the seismograph warns that the earth shakes, so also the highest “representatives of humanity”(pp. 92-93) warn that spirit is shaking, that there is something new underway. Heiberg finds these representatives among the “artists, poets, teachers of religion and philosophers”(p. 92), who in addition are called “humanity’s teachers and educators”(p. 92). This is not due to any personal ingenuity on their own part but because they best register the movement of spirit. What is common to these representatives of art, religion, and philosophy is that, each in their own way, they are on a journey towards the truth. In other words, any populist talk from judges of taste, every currying to the lowest common denominator is excluded.

The dethroning not only of religion but also of art warns of the crisis. Art is no longer taken seriously but rather has come to be regarded as a leisure time activity—and the educated world has already done away with religion (p. 95f.). And how do these so-called educated or free-floating people live, Heiberg asks: they become “politicized,” and thereby they are already cast out into the crisis. They want to “build an eternal state and constitution”(p. 95)—they want to trace immutability in the mutable, see eternity expressed in time, and create a cosmos in a chaos. They look around themselves and discover that eternity’s categories were lost with religion and the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. They are lacking, as one says, a frame of reference, something to take their bearings from. In despair, some seek the way back to religion—“like merchants who, although near bankruptcy, nevertheless do not dare to admit their poverty to themselves”(p. 96). And it is here that Heiberg strikes a blow, and indeed a powerful one, for the significance of philosophy.

Philosophy does not just offer itself, its entire world of thought—it also provides for art and religion the honor and dignity that are rightly theirs. Philosophy can think immediate opposites as finite and infinite; philosophy can give an account of the fact that art’s various forms are each an expression of the truth—that religions each give truth a form in a divinity. Philosophy finds itself expressed in the respective fields of thought.

Art, religion and philosophy are all concerned with the truth, says Heiberg. But there is a difference—for while art and religion give the truth form and defend this form rather than another, philosophy is concerned with the truth itself. When a determinate religion claims to be the most true, the most developed, the most sublime, it is already in competition with other religions, which try to contest this status—the truth itself is then, says Heiberg, the only thing that one cannot deny. One can deny this or that god, but one cannot deny the truth itself.

It is therefore philosophy—and not this or that particular religion—which creates cosmos in chaos. Philosophy does not choose this or that religion as the sole salvation, just as philosophy does not affiliate itself with a determinate political party. Heiberg formulates it thus: “Only philosophy can go into the many details of our finite goals, particularly our political ones. Only it can see their tendency toward the infinite and, with this knowledge, clarify their obscure aspects”(p. 101). And thus is Heiberg’s call to every present age.

The present reviewer, who looks forward to the day when these texts can also be published in the original Danish, can for the time being only highly recommend these two excellent volumes of translations to the English reader. They open up a new world of possibilities for Kierkegaard research, but this is ultimately only a small part of what they really offer. With them the road is cleared into the treasure chest of wonderful philosophical texts from the Danish Golden Age.