

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

Friends of the Kierkegaard Library – Spring 2008

The Friends of the Howard V. and Edna H. Hong Kierkegaard Library held their spring meeting for 2008 on Monday, May 5, Kierkegaard's birthday. The group had their business meeting from 11:00-11:45 in the Library followed by a luncheon in the Kings Room at 12 noon. A conversation and critical discussion followed on the topic of Kierkegaard and travel led by Jamie Lorentzen. A handout of readings from *Postscript*, *Three Discourses, Letters and Documents*, and the *Journals* as well as passages from Joakim Garff's *Kierkegaard: A Biography* served as the basis for discussion. The fall meeting of the Friends will take place in conjunction with the November 18th event scheduled by the Library for the 3rd Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture to be given this year by Bruce Kirmmse.

3rd Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture – Fall 2008

Bruce Kirmmse, Editor of *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks* (Princeton University Press, 2007 -) and Professor Emeritus of History at Connecticut College, will give the Watkin lecture on November 18, 2008 at 7 PM, sponsored by the Hong Kierkegaard Library. The Friends of the Kierkegaard Library will meet in conjunction with this lecture. All welcome.

Summer Fellows Program – 2008; Applications for 2009

Summer fellowships for research-in-residence are offered to scholars for use of the collection between June 1 and August 20. The awards include housing on campus 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 2009. Decisions will be made on these applications by March 1.

Scholars working as Summer Fellows in the Library this summer, 2008, are the following: Trevor Beach, Dustin Feddon, Hannah Mikul, Mariana Alessandri, Alexander Stehn, Alina Vaisfeld, Brian Barlow, Luca Maueri, Adolfo Mancera Sandoval, Emily Budwill, Ashleigh Elser, Michael McEvelly, Joseph Christianson, Jeffrey Hanson, Ryan Kemp, David Moon, Carl Hughes, Jennifer Ryan Lockhart, Sarah Cabral, Manuel Caraza Salmeron, Leo Stan, Elisabete Sousa, Ingrid Basso, Elisabetta Basso, Marcio Gimenes de Paula, David Coe, and Duk-Yung Yoon.

If you would like to apply to be a Summer Fellow in 2009, please send your application to Gordon Marino. Please send your CV, proposal for research, and 2 recommendations by email/attachment or in printed form. It is helpful to receive applications as soon as you are sure of your interest.

Danish-Kierkegaard Course – July 2008: Applications for 2009

The Danish-Kierkegaard Course at the Hong Kierkegaard Library is an intensive language course that is tailor-made for Kierkegaard scholars.

The course provides a foundation (basic grammar, phonetics and linguistic structures) for eventually developing a good reading knowledge of Danish and it explicitly incorporates Kierkegaard into exercises. The course will give the scholar an expanded knowledge of Kierkegaard's Danish which will enable him/her to examine sentences and smaller passages in the original language and check translations.

The whole purpose of this course is based on the idea of giving scholars access to Kierkegaard in his original language as many subtleties are lost in translation. However, learning a language is a time-consuming process and this course can only serve as an appetizer that hopes to nourish a desire to further explore Kierkegaard's works in Danish.

The class meets 3 hours a day for four weeks, Monday-Friday, and homework can be expected to take 1-2 hours a day. A certificate will be awarded after finishing the course.

The course was created and is taught by Dr. Sinead B.L. Knox, a native speaker, Kierkegaard scholar, and former fellow at the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

Scholars who have participated in the course this year from July 7 – August 1 are the following: Mariana Alessandri, Sarah Cabral, Dustin Feddon, Jeffrey Hanson, Erik Hanson, Carl Hughes, Ryan Kemp, Jennifer Ryan Lockhart, Michael McEvilly, and Will Williams.

To apply for the course in 2009, please notify Cynthia Lund at lundc@stolaf.edu as soon as possible. Cost of the course is \$1200 with a \$300 deposit due by March 1 to hold your place in the class. If we have 10 students with interest, we will hold the class for sure. If you are also accepted as a Summer Fellow as well, cost of the course is reduced to \$900 with the possibility of waiving your stipend to reduce the fees further.

Young Scholars Program 2008; Applications for 2009

This program is designed for college seniors or recently graduated college graduates prior to their graduate school programs. Young Scholars should apply as Summer Fellows. If there is a core group among our applications, Professor Marino will convene the Young Scholars Program which meets daily with him usually during the month of July. In-depth study of a chosen Kierkegaard text or other topic will be the focus as well as Professor Marino's mentorship for the scholar's own research and study.

This year the Young Scholars Program has focused on study of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Participants have included the following scholars: Trevor Beach, Hannah Mikul, Adolfo Mancera Sandoval, Emily Budwill, Ashleigh Elser, Michael McEvilly, Joseph Christianson, Ryan Kemp, David Moon, Alex Robins, and Maria Squadroni.

To apply for the Young Scholars Program, please send your CV, proposal for research in the Library, and 2 recommendations to Professor Marino as soon as your interest is established. Decisions will be made on March 1 for the following summer. Sometimes later applications can be accepted for this program.

Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellowships – Reinstated

Applications will again be considered for the Kierkegaard House Foundation fellowship program for stays beginning June 2009.

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 close to the St. Olaf 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:

Professor Gordon Marino, Curator, Hong Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, 1510 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057.

Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellows currently working in the Kierkegaard Library are Tamara Marks and Simon Podmore who are Fellows during the calendar year, 2008.

VISITING SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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 upon 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 Gordon Marino, Curator, Hong Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, 1510 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057.

Visiting scholars who will have joined us this summer include the following: Michael Karper, Christopher Simpson, Rob Puchniak, Jason Mahn, Timothy Polk, and Almut Furchert.

Donors to the Kierkegaard Library since December 2007

Books, articles, and financial gifts were given to the Library by the following individuals: Narve Strand, Donald and Lorena Nelson, Manuel Caraza Salmeron, Roman Kralik, Julie Allen, Karel Eisses, Donald Fox, Patricia Dip, Alvaro Valls, Ettore Rocca, Gordon Marino, Miriam Eytan, Simon Podmore, Rafael Garcia Pavon, Catalina Elena Dobre, Shin Fujieda, Jacob Olsen, Oscar Parcerro Oubinya, Dolors Perarnau Vidal, Joseph Brown, Andrew Burgess, Luca Maugeri, Elisabete Sousa, Ingrid Busso, Elisabetta Basso, Leo Stan, Søren Landkildehus, and the Norwegian-American Historical Society (NAHA).

OTHER NEWS

Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks

Update from Bruce Kirmmse:

“According to what I have been told by people at Princeton Univ. Press, KJN vol. 2 will be in print and bound by Christmas, so it should be available for purchase in January. KJN vol. 3 is well along, and we expect it to be out a year after vol. 2.” The publications of following volumes are expected to follow a similar pattern.

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

Søren Kierkegaard Society Dinner and Presentation – Chicago AAR, October 2008.

Speaker: Gabriel Merigala, Chennai, India. For information about the following organizations and events, please see: <http://www.fordham.edu/philosophy/davenport/skconferences/htm>

Søren Kierkegaard Society and the AAR

For information about the annual meeting in Chicago, October, 2008, including Kierkegaard sessions, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting/Current_Meeting/default.asp

World Congress of Philosophy – Seoul 2008

See <http://www.wcp2008.or.kr/main.asp>

For information about Kierkegaard sessions at the Congress and the associated meeting of Kierkegaard scholars, please contact Andrew Burgess at aburgess@unm.edu.

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY (IKC)

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'The Moment' and Late Writings

Due date: 1 September 2008 Prospective authors should write the editor to discuss their intention to contribute to this volume.

LAST CALL FOR PAPERS

International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'The Point of View'

1 September 2009

VOLUME IN PROCESS

International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'The Book on Adler'

Volume to be mailed to the press by 1 June 2008

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED VOLUME

International Kierkegaard Commentary: 'Christian Discourses' and 'The Crisis and A Crisis in the Life of an Actress.' This volume was on display at the AAR and delivered to contributors the week before Thanksgiving, 2007.

Robert L. Perkins, Editor International Kierkegaard Commentary, 225 South Boundary Avenue, DeLand, FL 32720-5103 United States 1-386-734-6457

Søren Kierkegaard Research Center of the University of Copenhagen

Please note the following announcements:

Søren Kierkegaard Skrifter, vol. 25 containing NB26-NB30 from 1852-54 will be published September 30, 2008.

There will be a Søren Kierkegaard and Henrik Ibsen conference in Lysebu, Oslo, Norway, 5-7th September 2008.

“Kierkegaard, Ibsen og det moderne” –[Kierkegaard, Ibsen and Modernity]

For more information: <http://www.hf.uio.no/ibsenenteret/moderne/>

[This conference is also sponsored by **Det Norske Søren Kierkegaard Selskap** and **Henrik Ibsens Skrifter, Oslo**]

Sociedad Hispanica de Amigos de Kierkegaard

<http://www.hiin-enkelte.info/02e5ad996801c6e4a/index.html>

Edited summary of June conference submitted by José Garcia Martin:

On June 4, 2008 the first Conference of *Sociedad Hispánica de Amigos de Kierkegaard* (S.H.A.K.) took place at the (University of Malaga. After a few words of welcome by the President, Dr. José García Martin, Dr. Francesc Torralba Roselló (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ramon Llull in Barcelona) gave a lecture. According to his paper, entitled “Kierkegaard in the XXth Century: The Hermeneutics Diaspora”, Søren Kierkegaard's thought has been very fecund throughout the last century. In addition to his lecture. Professor Torralba explained the levels of reception of Kierkegaard's work and interpretations of Kierkegaard in principal philosophical movements of the XXth century.

Later in the conference, the Hispanic Kierkegaardian Society was presented by Dr. José García Martín. He spoke briefly on the purposes of the society, as well as on the activities planned (such as the publication of a collective volume on the reception of Kierkegaardian thought and Kierkegaard's influence in Spain and Spanish America). Finally, the Ambassador of Denmark to Spain, Mr Niels Pultz, had the floor. In his closing speech, he offered a detailed view of the epoch in which Kierkegaard (1813-1855) lived, known as the Golden Age in Denmark. He portrayed the historical-cultural context including contemporaries of Kierkegaard such as H. C. Andersen, the physicist H. C. Ørsted, and the reformer and father of the popular Danish schools, N. F. S. Grundvig.

For more complete information on the June conference, please contact Jose Garcia Martin at josegm@hiin-enkelte.info.

Kierkegaard on Hidden Inwardness

By Søren Landkildehus
Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellow, 2007

Papirer X4 A 327 did not make it into the Hongs edition of *Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*. In many ways, this is curious, because the entry from 1851 is a vital source for what Kierkegaard thought about “hidden inwardness” and the deictic nature of the concept. The only English version of X4 A 327 is found in Dru’s translation.¹ However, the quality of that translation is rather poor, which is why I have provided my own.

“This deeply untruthful, hypocritical, and delusional confusion about hidden inwardness – that is what needs to be disclosed. Rarely more than one per generation is sufficiently profound in truth to have, or sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness. But nothing is more dangerous than to let people loose and give up control in such a way to allow anyone to reassure^[2] about what he keeps in hidden inwardness. And nothing is more contrary to Christianity, which precisely wants everything revealed. No stop! Regarding myself it is the case with some truth that I have been sufficiently unhappy to need to retain hidden inwardness. Just this that some truth resided in me^[3] was the reason why I was given the job to shed some light in this field. Look here. Just this that some truth resided in me with hidden inwardness, is why in accordance I am the only one who has said: I do not have faith. This is exactly the code: if there is to be truth in hidden inwardness, then you may not – damn it – say yourself that you retain hidden inwardness, no, you need to have the negation. You cannot in direct terms run about reassuring that you retain faith in hidden inwardness, so you will have to say: I do not have faith, and take the consequences. Oh, this hidden inwardness, it is terrible to place in close proximity to it the average of man, to become delusional fools or hypocrites.”

My aim in this article is to discuss two possible interpretations of this passage. One interpretation tries to see the irony of what Kierkegaard is writing; the other makes the claim that Kierkegaard is writing a dialogue. But before I do that, I perform a dissection of the text. We should first note the composition. As I see it there are 7 separate units each with a peculiar function. We start out with an outburst:

(1) This deeply untruthful, hypocritical, and delusional confusion about hidden inwardness – that is what needs to be disclosed.

This expression is not out of character for Kierkegaard. In *The Book on Adler*,⁴ he is dealing with the modern confusion of religiosity as Adolph Adler exemplifies it. Adler is confused because he has not got his concepts right. Kierkegaard sees his work in *The Book on Adler* as a work of “drilling” the reader in the proper use of concepts (BA, 3). There are rules about what can be claimed, one of which, having a life-view, ensures congruence between an author and his audience. That people are confused about hidden inwardness is just one instance amongst many in need of clarification. Confusion about the religious categories produces the consequence of false, delusional, and hypocritical behaviour.

The next statement is one of an alleged fact:

(2) Rarely more than one per generation is sufficiently profound in truth to have, or sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness.

This articulation should not strike us as any less Kierkegaardian. But what kind of fact is it? Is it an empirical fact that rarely more than one per generation qualifies to have or to need to have hidden inwardness? The case might be, in ages past, that circumstances would have been such as to turn out more profound or unhappy people, thus increasing the number of possessors of hidden inwardness. Accordingly, in the age of modernity when everything has been levelled down, no one is sufficiently profound to have hidden inwardness, and only those who have some pathos would be likely to be sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness. But this brings on other questions: for how are we to discriminate between cases, and by which criteria do we determine sufficiency? Unhappiness would be unsatisfactorily determinable by outward manners alone, since

the good citizen of Copenhagen who is well to do, established in society, and very like his peers outwardly, might retain faith in hidden inwardness such as Kierkegaard describes *mutatis mutandis* in *Fear and Trembling* (FT, 38-41). Turning again to *The Book on Adler*, the issue for the author (Petrus Minor) is precisely that what is at stake is the possibility of criticizing Adler (or anyone for that matter) to see if he understands himself in what he says (the deictic nature of communication). There can be two scenarios in this regard. Adler may understand himself to have had a revelation, but does not understand how to communicate it, the fact of which does not apparently impede his venture. If he did have a revelation then he would be sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness, that is to say he should have kept quiet. Alternatively, Adler may communicate that he has had a revelation, but he does not understand himself in this, in which case the injunction is that he should have kept quiet because he is not sufficiently profound to have nor sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness, but just plainly ignorant about what he communicates. In either case, confusion is a disparity of self-understanding and understanding what one says. For Kierkegaard the matter here is not whether we might describe empirically the rarity of profoundness or unhappiness. The rarity has to do with our ability to judge whether people are justified in having hidden inwardness.

This brings us to the unit of text which presents a problem:

(3) But nothing is more dangerous than to let people loose and give up control in such a way to allow anyone to reassure about what he keeps in hidden inwardness. And nothing is more contrary to Christianity, which precisely wants everything revealed.

We can become hypocrites and delusional fools by thinking that amongst many other roles, we may fancy this or that one without living it; just as we may say that at heart we are patriots while doing things that are clearly incongruent with patriotism. Alternatively, we might claim to be Christian without showing it. But, Kierkegaard says, this would be contrary to Christianity, because Christianity would require people to be what they say they are. Hidden inwardness is not an excuse for not being consequent about the choices in life. Besides, the paragraph presents another problem. It could be the case that people inordinately assume to have or to need to have hidden inwardness. This would be insubordination insofar as Christianity requires people not to be hidden. This gauge of what is permissible would conflict with those who would be sufficiently profound or sufficiently unhappy to have or to need to have hidden inwardness.

So, Kierkegaard exclaims:

(4) No Stop!

Just as in *The Rotation of Crops* the case here is that what goes for Tom, Dick, and Harry does not go for the particular author. The rule applies not universally, and applies only to cases of confusion. In this sense, the rule is not a rule by which one ought to live, namely, as some such saying “you must be revealed” etc. under the authority of Christianity. Rather, it is some sort of grammatical rule that merely presents itself as a corrective once the mistake has been made. Imagine this case: ‘No, Søren, you split your infinitives. In English this is not correct.’ The rule is directive in the sense only in which I ought to remember later on not to make the mistake of splitting my infinitives. Likewise with Christianity. The rule of revealed Christianity is just directive about a certain way of constructing “infinitives” such that one’s life in *expecting an infinity* (sic.)⁵ is not perforated by outward display. However, we may be wary about accepting such rules. For example, by what authority do we adhere when avoiding splitting our infinitives in English? Some might say that this practice is rooted in an antiquarianism of the English language.⁶ This line of thought would continue along the lines of saying that just because Latin operates in a specific way regarding infinitives, we should not assume that the same goes for English. Thus, some judicial use of split infinitives might prove *to contextually enlighten* ordinary English, whereas strict rule following might seem *to benign unnecessarily* already cramped sentences. The jury may still be out on whether the split infinitive is good style even if it is now allowable use. The point I am tracking is that given the allowed *dressing up* of infinitives when splitting them we may see how what seems to be a general rule does not hold in some particular cases, namely the ones in which we “split” judicially. As a result, the analogy to Christianity says that although one should not “hide” inwardness, there are cases in which judicial use of “hiddenness” is appropriate. In this way, Kierkegaard’s exclamation is one of reserving an “extraordinary” seat in the theatre of existence. This is a seat which he describes this way:

(5) Regarding myself it is the case with some truth that I have been sufficiently unhappy to need to retain hidden inwardness. Just this that some truth resided in me was the reason why I was given the job to shed some light in this field. Look here. Just this, that some truth resided in me with hidden inwardness, is why in accordance I am the only one who has said: I do not have faith.

Kierkegaard's position is one of the rare ones. He is extraordinary because he is sufficiently unhappy – with *some truth*. There is a distinction between *having truth* and *being in truth*. The key criterion for determining such a case is just this little fact, that *some truth* resides in him, which demands the utterance: I do not have faith. But because of this little fact the case is also that, as *some truth* resides in him, he is able to distinguish between those who would be eligible to be classified as sufficiently profound or unhappy to have or to need to have hidden inwardness. This means of being a competent judge is what we see expressed in the slogan “*unum noris omnes*” (CA, 79) – *one* knows in virtue of self-knowledge *every other*. The role of *some truth* needs not be taken to mean some invariant substantial truth one is required to have to be a competent judge. Rather, this is reminiscent of *disjunctivism* which would say that there is no shared basis between appropriate and non-appropriate cases of hidden inwardness. Although we may not distinguish which is which on appearances, it is possible to make a distinction from within, which importantly favors self-examination.

The fact that I am compelled to retain hidden inwardness is *either* because I am confused, i.e. I “hide” because I *believe* I should, *or* because I am subject to conditions that warrant it, I “hide” because inwardness should be kept quiet (cf. BA, 280). The competent judge knows that “hiding” is the appropriate response not because he believes that he ought to keep silent, but because of inwardness. As a result, *some truth* would here be indicative of warrant, which would be wholly missing in non-appropriate cases of hidden inwardness. The reason warranting hidden inwardness would likewise capacitate the subject to distinguish those who would not have such warrant, precisely by subjecting these to criticism.

Kierkegaard's further understanding of *some truth* is:

(6) This is exactly the code: if there is to be truth in hidden inwardness, then you may not – damn it – say yourself that you retain hidden inwardness, no, you need to have the negation. You cannot in direct terms run about reassuring that you retain faith in hidden inwardness, so you will have to say: I do not have faith, and take the consequences.

To be one of the rare ones is also to remain unacknowledged as such. “Hiding” cannot be announced, unless one is then guilty of confusion. The fact that one is warranted to retain hidden inwardness requires a self-understanding in congruity with what one says: if you hide something you cannot have it hidden and have it known that it is “hidden.” Such disclosure would be symptomatic of lacking an understanding of oneself in the context of retaining hidden inwardness.

However, Kierkegaard manages to moan at the end that what undercuts the simplicity is the mediocrity of human beings, the far too many who may think that this is an option for them, he writes:

(7) Oh, this hidden inwardness, it is terrible to place in close proximity to it the average of man, so as to become delusional fools or hypocrites.

* * *

This short analysis of a strange piece of text from Kierkegaard's *Papirer* is really much more charitable than needs be. Why not cut to the chase and say: what really ought to upset us is the fact that Kierkegaard himself does not understand the rules he is setting up. He cannot say that he has been sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness. His report to the aftermath, which will devour each and every sentence of what he wrote, will fall upon this passage. We have become subject to communication which has its cake and eats it too. He manages to say that he needs hidden inwardness, congratulates himself of not revealing it, justifies this by a principle, all the while as an audience we watch how he digs his own grave deeper and deeper. He lacks the kind of truth and transparency that would have kept hidden what needs to be hidden. This of course is not the

only time Kierkegaard undercuts himself in this way. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard devotes a lengthy footnote to responding on behalf of the author of *Repetition* to Heiberg's review of that particular work, while congratulating the pseudonym author of *Repetition* (Constantin Constantius) for not having responded! (CA, 17-19; Kierkegaard's footnote.) What is happening?

There is a real conversation going on, not unlike a call and response between selves, personae, ego and superego, or God and human. In paragraph 5, Kierkegaard uses exclusively I in a self-referential way, whereas in paragraph 6 Kierkegaard is addressing "you" and "I" is merely used in reported speech. So the 6th paragraph responds to the 5th admonishing what the "I" of the 5th is doing. The 5th is precisely running about addressing in direct terms that the subject is hiding something, making itself interesting to a public audience. Whereas the voice of the 6th sees through this immediately and calls the poor deluded creature of the 5th into check: You can only say: "I have not got faith" and then take the consequences. But the 5th wants to say more, wants to spill the beans as Kierkegaard could not spill them to Regine, and only with restraint managed not to spill them to Rasmus Nielsen who at one time became very close to Kierkegaard.⁷ The 5th is the tragedy of wanting to explain oneself, of making oneself understood, whereas the 6th is the corrective editor who informs that the voice of the 5th does not understand himself. Indeed, he is deluded in his mediocrity, and not as extraordinary as he might think. In this way the "No stop!" does not function as a way to make a positive exception for himself, but rather is the cry of trampled down Søren who wants a little explanation to be communicated. His cry is a rebellion against what has just been written in paragraph 3, which said: it is dangerous to let loose, it is dangerous to let go of control. It is dangerous to let anyone know that you hide something, because then *they* will want it revealed. The conversation might be scripted like this:

SAK [with magisterial authority]: This deeply untruthful, hypocritical, and delusional confusion about hidden inwardness – that is what needs to be disclosed.

SK [nodding approvingly]: Rarely more than one per generation is sufficiently profound in truth to have, or sufficiently unhappy to need to have hidden inwardness.

SAK [admonishing]: But nothing is more dangerous than to let people loose and give up control in such a way to allow anyone to reassure about what he keeps in hidden inwardness. And nothing is more contrary to Christianity, which precisely wants everything revealed.

*S** [crying out]: No stop!

SK [quickly piggy-bagging on the interruption to explain]: Regarding myself it is the case with some truth that I have been sufficiently unhappy to need to retain hidden inwardness. Just this that some truth resided in me was the reason why I was given the job to shed some light in this field. Look here. Just this that some truth resided in me with hidden inwardness, is why in accordance I am the only one who has said: I do not have faith.

SAK [with exquisite disdain]: This is exactly the code: if there is to be truth in hidden inwardness, then you may not – damn it – say yourself that you retain hidden inwardness, no, you need to have the negation. You cannot in direct terms run about reassuring that you retain faith in hidden inwardness, so you will have to say: I do not have faith, and take the consequences.

*S** [walking away dejectedly]: Oh, this hidden inwardness, it is terrible to place in close proximity to it the average of man, to become delusional fools or hypocrites.

Let *SAK* be a philosopher, *SK* is an involved existing thinker, and *S** is the voice of a muffled individuality which on occasion pops up and says the most peculiar things, like berating Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard for submitting *S** to a treatment no child should endure.⁸ *SAK* is very much to the point of what is required conceptually in each case answering the pretensions of *SK*, who in turn tries to carve out for himself a position of exception. For *S**, *SAK* is too rigid whereas *SK* is in danger of delusion. *S** is here audience to a discussion between two conflicting lines of thought: a generalist (*SAK*) and a particularist (*SK*). The former insists that what he has to say about rules and regulations hold across the board; the latter suggests that there is room for

exceptions even if this would be putting oneself in close proximity to fools. Perhaps such a “wise fool” is *S** who like some character out of *King Lear* objects to an over-articulation of what must be showed only.⁹

Because of the multiplicity of voices there is no irony, only disagreement between voices. Irony would occur only as long as one voice to another share a context in which what is said is clearly a dissimulation or simulation of what is being stated. If such background is not shared then whatever means of dissimulation or simulation by any voice is left undetected to its own detriment. However, if we stipulate unity of voice of author in this piece, then the picture changes. What we should find interesting under such circumstances is a rotation of ironies. Here are some examples which all share a dialectic interaction: Paragraph 3 says concerning Christianity that it wants everything revealed. From this point of view the author simulates in paragraph 6 combined with 2, namely, that there is such a position of hiddenness but it needs to remain hidden. Switching positions, then the author is dissimulating his position from the viewpoint of 6 and 2 when expressing 3, which is trying to hide the position of the author of 6 and 2. In paragraph 5, the author reveals himself and what he has done, only to dissimulate this in paragraph 6 by telling himself off. Turning the tables subsequently from viewpoint of 6 what the author is doing in paragraph 5 is simulating a position which is not his own. In paragraph 3, the author says that it is unwise to allow people to think they can have hidden inwardness. From that viewpoint, the author simulates the view of paragraph 5 which says that some “I” has this hidden inwardness. But for the author of 5 paragraph 3 is a dissimulation of his position, since through 3 he is berating what he does in 5.

Undoubtedly there are many more examples to be drawn out of this passage. The two readings have different ways of accounting for the mess that is Kierkegaard’s text. It is certainly not direct communication of any kind. But whereas the idea of the unity of voice may speak to our ordinary understanding of the author qua this single body writing, the idea of multiple voices (without thereby arguing for any kind of pathological psyche of the author) offers a more productive way of assessing Kierkegaard’s text.

The ironies are of course interesting but they render the text very little useful for other than what one might expand as a thesis, namely, that what Kierkegaard demonstrates in his writing is somehow a forerunner to Wittgensteinian nonsense. Becoming mired in the *Spiegel im Spiegel* reflections of the ironies that dialectically turn on one another may just be part of the kind of trap that sees Kierkegaard outrunning any of his readers. In contrast, one can argue that Montaigne as an ironist, the sixteenth century humanist, was much more *collected* as an author than Kierkegaard. Montaigne’s dissimulation as presented in the *Essays* deals with an ethical justification of his choice of how to live. Whereas there is no doubt Kierkegaard worries a great deal about self-understanding, his particular cross is to see every issue from several sides simultaneously. He is not as collected an author as Luther about whom he derides: “Luther was no dialectician, he saw continuously only one side of every case.” (Pap. X 4 A 394.)

The idea that Kierkegaard is a multi-vocal author not just in his exhibited pseudonymous work seems to me to exact an angle to reading Kierkegaard that does not lessen any single paragraph, but neither sees the text vanish in the vertigo of irony which dissolves any standpoint with regard to the text. This is not to say that irony in no way is present, but that as a criterion of reading the text it has been retired. What we identify in Kierkegaard’s text are the multiple voices that participate in dialogue about the issues raised in the text, for example about the author’s self-understanding, whichever voice the “author” may embody.

Although there is no unity of voice, this is not to say there is no preferred voice. One voice that kept recommending itself was one Kierkegaard seems to have needed to choose repeatedly, understanding himself as at odds with the modern age, and as someone called to bring to attention the ways in which we fail in our existence because of the age.

¹ Cf. entry 1226 in Alexander Dru, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1938/1959).

² The Danish phrase says “at forsikkre om”, one might add in English “to reassure themselves and others”; I thank Gordon Marino for this point.

³ The Danish phrase says “var nogen Sandhed i mig”, I have chosen “reside” to indicate the fragility of truth such as is indicated in the passage, it is extremely likely to be in untruth with regard to hidden inwardness.

⁴ All references to English translations of Kierkegaard are to the Princeton edition, and sigla follow the IKC convention.

⁵ The Danish is “evighed” which I render “infinity”; the Hongs translate it “eternity” EUD, 27.

⁶ I owe this point to Antony Aumann, who helped me escape a mistake.

⁷ Compare Bruce Kirmmse, *Søren Kierkegaard Truffet*, (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1996) 323-324. See also SKS, 21: 365-366, SKS, 22: 397-400.

⁸ Cf. SKS, 20:170, entry 69.

⁹ As an aside Kierkegaard would have watched *King Lear* at the Royal Theatre in 1851, compare Peter Tudvad, *Kierkegaards København* (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag 2004) 286.

To Be A Christian: Anti-Climacus’ Trio of Movement

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What moves a self towards Christian faith, a faith which is child-like, contrary to worldly glory and rational certainty? Anti-Climacus, in *Practice in Christianity* provides an answer to this question.¹ He describes a youth’s examination, with the examination being life itself. To pass, the youth must move beyond human grounded understandings of existence towards a child-like faith modeled on the suffering, paradoxical Christ. In this exam, the youth fails.

For Anti-Climacus, the exam measures how far a self makes the existential movement to Christian faith. The causes of this movement are the self’s imagination, will and love. He writes, “Every human being possesses to a higher or lower degree a capability called the power of the imagination, a power that is the first condition for what becomes of a person, for will is the second and in the ultimate sense the decisive condition.”² As the first condition, he understands the imagination as the power to perceive and hold onto an idea or image of how one might act and understand existence. The will then chooses to become the image as the second, and decisive, condition. Yet, the youth’s existence is framed by love. It is only through the desiring capacity of love that a self moves towards paradoxical faith, a faith given by God through love. Consequently, it is only when all three of these capacities work together that a self is able to move towards child-like faith.

Movement’s First Condition: The Imagination

For Anti-Climacus, in order for a self to move towards any type of existence or being in the world, it must have some idea about types of existential possibilities that are available to a self. In short, as a self develops within contingent history and time, it needs an image of how to exist in the world. The imagination perceives existential images and thus provides this image holding and making capacity. But if the image arises out of human understanding, rather than divine revelation, the imagination’s power can lead a self away from faith.

M. Jamie Ferreira, in *Transforming Vision*, provides one examination of the role of the imagination within a self’s movement to faith. She argues for a clear connection between the imagination and willing. Suggesting that any understanding of a simple volitional ‘leap’ to faith is a misread, she asserts that willing towards faith “can be fruitfully read as an attempt to highlight the activity of *imagination*—either in contrast to a simplistic

notion of decision or as part of an enriched understanding of willing itself.”³ To willfully choose faith is to choose ideas paradoxical to human understanding, such as Christ, the absurd God-in-Time. The imagination fills the rationally uncertain hole that the paradox creates, and leaves the will open to divinely-revealed, paradoxical faith. Imaginative activity thereby is a will-filled activity which has both volitional and antivolitional elements.

Though helpful in understanding Anti-Climacus’ idea of the imagination, he differentiates between the capacity of the imagination and the will more clearly than Ferreira, giving the will the more decisive power of the two. As such, it is necessary to examine the imagination separately from the will. Specifically, the imagination, as the first condition for movement, has the capacity to perceive an image or thought. The object perceived is an image of perfection, an ideal. “With [the youth’s] imagination (*Indbildningskraften*) he perceives some image (*Billede*) of perfection (ideal).”⁴ Thus, the imagination has the ability of perception. As such, it is the imagination which has the capacity to grasp external or internal things and present them to other capabilities, most notably the will.

Yet, what is an image of perfection? What is an ideal? Anti-Climacus gives the imagination the power to grasp an image as an ideal. In this instance, an image is not merely any image—say of a new car; instead, it is of how to perfectly exist in the world. It is about an existential possibility: an image of how being a certain type of person in the world, say an airline pilot, baseball player, Hindu. This image contains then both the ideal about how to act in the world but also how to understand oneself as a being.

This ‘beingness’ relates to Anti-Climacus’ assertion that the examination judges whether a person has become a certain type of being: “the supreme examination is: whether one will in truth be a Christian or not.”⁵ The true existential possibility is to move towards the Christian image of existing. As such, this image, perceived and held by the imagination, becomes the normative ideal for becoming a perfect self. It is about the “image of the perfect one”⁶ that a self is to strive to become. The truthful ideal is divinely revealed in the image of the suffering, loving paradoxical Christ. Christ’s love of neighbor to the point of his crucifixion becomes the image to which a self is to move towards within existence. As such, it serves as the existential norm for one’s existence. A self, in order to be a true Christian, must conform to this image within its actions and understandings.

The importance of the imagination in relation to this ideal is that this ideal image is perceived by the imagination. However, as being within the imagination, the image can be rationally perfect and merely a mental image. Consequently, it may not be able to be enacted or lived. Indeed, the dilemma for any such self is to conform to it as perfectly within actual existence as it is perfect and pure within the imagination. But as such, the truth of being and existing as such a truth is extraordinarily difficult, which necessitates an idea of life being an examination. Life itself is the attempt to unify Christian truth with existential actions as a test.

Anti-Climacus does not describe the youth’s ideal as a Christian image, however. This raises a problem with the imagination; it has the capacity to perceive untrue images as well as create images independently of divine revelation. This image-making ability is signified in the very word *imagination* and the Danish *Indbildningskraften*. In both words, the idea of ‘image’ forms the substantive basis for the word’s construction. In this creative power, images can correspond to merely thoughts of actions, say of courageous action, as well as of material forms, such as a table, rather than things in the temporal world. And as creative, it is a decidedly human capacity; anyone can create fantastic images in one’s mind, images which have little to do with actual existence.

In the case of the youth, the image comes from one of two means: human understanding or the imagination itself. The first means of reception is through ideas created by humans within human history. Anti-Climacus hints at the various traditions that educate a self through a worldly idea of perfect existence based on human rationality alone. In particular, he is subtly criticizing Idealism and its Hegelian focus on rational thought.

Kierkegaard's authors view Idealism as providing an ideal that is far removed from actual temporal, contingent, sinful existence. In Hegelian Idealism's "real being the ideal" and the "ideal being the real," mental ideas—rather than existential actions within time—become the truth of existence.

Thus, Idealism is an example of worldly understanding as it is not grounded in divinely-revealed truth. It seeks truth as certainty, grounded in human rationality. Christian truth, of the absurd God-in-Time, cannot be rationally understood. If the highest existential truth comes from eternal, infinite God and is paradoxical to human understanding, as it does for Anti-Climacus, any truth which contradicts divine revelation runs counter to the movement towards faith. It leads a self away from the true ideal.

The second means of receiving the image is through the creative power of the imagination itself. It has the power to create its own normative ideal image through its own power. Here, Anti-Climacus is criticizing the German Romanticism of thinkers like Friedrich Schlegel and the Danish Poet Adam Oehlenschläger. Such Romantic thinkers argue that the imagination creates truth, and that it is through imaginative ideas, revealed through poetry and art, that matter for a self's development. For Anti-Climacus, any self-created image removes a self from actuality. The image becomes merely a mental image of imagined perfection, rather than an act in time. In fact, the ease with which the imagination creates the image gives the image a persuasive power. It seems only too easy to become the image, because it was so easy for the imagination to create it.

Herein lies the primary problem with the imagination: as something that can produce images, it is distant from existence. Anti-Climacus views the imagination, though necessary, as a power that is largely distant from the demands of acting, choosing and living within the material, temporal world. In relation to the youth, he describes "the imagination's infinite distance from actuality."⁷ In a way similar to Kant's "pure" reason, the imagination is not restricted by material boundaries and thus can move a self into a realm of infinite, abstract thought alone.

In this rational purity, the imagination lacks something: the ability to imagine suffering, which is existential perfection. In its distance from actuality, it only has the capability to think in imagined, rather than actual, experiences; "in other words, the imagination is in itself more perfect than suffering in actuality."⁸ True perfection is of "the suffering belonging to actuality or the actuality of suffering."⁹ To suffer each day throughout existence is, for Anti-Climacus, the highest ideal, the imperfection that is existential perfection. But suffering cannot be imagined, except as a mental ideal, "in a mitigated, toned-down, foreshortened depiction."¹⁰ Imagined ideals are too mentally clean and pure and thus distant from the messiness of human finitude and sinfulness. Suffering must be experienced in time to be understood. It is not a thought but an experience.

Consequently, on the one hand, the youth's imagination is the first condition for the movement of a self as it perceives an ideal image of how to exist. This image is a normative one, and becomes the image for a self to become. But on the other hand, this image may be merely a mental perfection, impossibly distant from actuality. And the youth is led astray, as he "has not watched his step, has not paid attention to where he is"¹¹ by following the ideal given to him by Idealism or the imagination itself. By implication, a self, in its movement towards true Christian existence, must steer itself through this imaginative dilemma towards a truth from beyond human understanding or abilities.

Movement's Second Condition: The Will

With the self's imagination perceiving existential possibilities, it is the will that must choose an existential image to become in the self's movement towards child-like faith. Therefore, for Anti-Climacus, it is will's choosing that serves as the second, and decisive condition, for in this act a self takes responsibility for becoming a particular type of self. In this choice, a self becomes opened up to God's actions, which ultimately move the self to faith. The youth's will, however, is unable to let go of the untrue existential image. His will is choosing wrongly and he is never fully opened to God's actions as such.

In regards to the will, Kierkegaard's authors wrote from within the Augustinian-infused Protestantism as well as Kantian-grounded Modernism. Unlike Augustine's idea of the bonded will as either sinful *cupiditas* or converted *caritas* or Kant's idea of the free will, connecting *apriori* freedom and *a posteriori* volition as a kind of causality, Kierkegaard's will exhibits elements of both traditions. As such, Anti-Climacus' will provides an example of a tension between the will being both bound and free.

A helpful introduction to this tension is in Timothy Jackson's "Arminian edification: Kierkegaard on grace and free will."¹² He argues that without having some element of freedom of the will, Kierkegaard's self would be utterly dependent upon God's grace. Lacking freedom would make him a predestinarian, like Jacob Arminius, the 16th Century Dutch Calvinist. But as Jackson writes, "Coming to faith is not a matter of Promethean self-creation (since grace is required), but neither is it mainly a matter of accurate cognition or preordained experience. True freedom is, for Kierkegaard, a highly individualized *libertas* in which voluntary *consent* to grace takes the form of a passionate leap...."¹³ This idea of free choice towards divine grace gives the Kierkegaardian self responsibility for its selfhood; it is through the will having the possibility of a free choice (i.e. through the will) which creates the possibility of God acting to complete the movement to faith.

Anti-Climacus' youth exemplifies this tension. Within the free element, through the will,¹⁴ a self can freely choose to exist based on a particular idea of existence. The sincere purpose of life "is to *will* to be, to *will* to express the perfection (ideality) in the dailyness of actuality...."¹⁵ To take living, acting and developing as a human seriously is to ensure that the will chooses perfection, as a norm of existence, within all of the moments of everyday life. Through this act of will, a self becomes responsible for its actions and thus its selfhood, which is why the will is decisive as the second condition for a self's movement.

In the end, however, with the youth's imagination presenting perfection based on human understanding, the youth's will is deceived by the imagination. The youth's imagination perceives an ideal given by worldly understanding or the imagination itself. Rather than choosing the true norm given through Christian revelation, the will chooses something opposed to true existence. "Look, there is a youth who has let himself be enticed by his imagination to go out too far...."¹⁶ Yet, the very act of choosing makes the self responsible: God says: "Good for you! Now the earnestness of life is beginning for you...."¹⁷ What matters is that the youth has chosen to become some type of self through choosing a perfection to exist through.

As such, in the act of willfully choosing to 'express perfection', the youth opens himself to the possibility for God's actions. "In a certain sense the youth's imagination has deceived him, but indeed, if he himself *wills*, it has not deceived him to his detriment, it has deceived him into the truth; by means of a deception, it has, as it were, played him into God's hands."¹⁸ By taking responsibility through willing to become a self, even if the image is flawed, the self is ripe for God's actions to move the self towards faith.

Yet, only to a point. In the end, though it opens up a self to God's action, the will must eventually choose Christian truth in order to allow God to act and move the self to faith. Before God can act, a self must recognize that the true image of existence must come from something other than any human capability. It must recognize that existential realities, including sin, make any idea of imagined perfection impossible and that life is a constant demand to relate to the divinely revealed Christian God despite faith's uncertainty. As a result, the will must will itself into a state of passive dependence. It must choose to express a perfection revealed through divine revelation.

The youth does not make this true choice, however. He is too enthusiastic about his ideal existential image. Though God waits for him, he cannot "abandon the image—no, that he cannot persuade himself to do."¹⁹ It is as if the youth is saying, "I am going to achieve my perfection because I will it." Though God constantly supports him during his willing, the youth suffers because he holds onto this flawed perfection. But as human created, his choice leads him away from true existence. In his enthusiasm, the will does not open the possibility for God's

actions. The youth must recognize human dependence on the divine in order for God to act; he does not, and the will is trapped willing merely human ideals.

Consequently, the will's decisiveness comes from its ability to make a self responsible for moving towards a type of self. The imagination may perceive possible ideals for a self to become, but it is only when a self's will chooses to strive for a perfection that a self develops agency. Yet, as exemplified by the youth, the will can aid or stand in the way of becoming faithful. On the one hand, in freely choosing an existential image, it makes the youth responsible for becoming a type of self. This responsibility is necessary for it is only through such an act that a person has the potential for receiving God's actions. On the other hand, the power of the will may still stand in the way. If one is overly zealous and will-filled towards the human image of perfection, the will prevents a self from moving towards a child-like faith.

Movement's Third Condition: Love

In the youth's failed movement to become faithful, the capacity of the imagination and the will are the two explicit primary conditions. The will is the decisive power as it is through the will that a self chooses the normative image the imagination perceives. Yet, it is not the will in its choosing that moves a self towards the image. Anti-Climacus repeatedly describes the image as the object of the youth's love. The will chooses, but it is love that pulls the image before the will and keeps it there in his enthusiasm. Further, God's actions towards the youth, which Anti-Climacus calls Governance, arise out of love. As such, it is love that works in concert with the imagination and the will to cause movement towards an existential image for Anti-Climacus.

Within this section of *Practice*, love has two dimensions, human and divine. Human love has two types, one which pushes the self towards an image and the other that won't let it go. In the first instance, love moves a particular self towards an image. "So this image of perfection is his love."²⁰ In this case, love moves the will, the seat of choice, towards the particular image, imaginatively perceived. "He becomes infatuated with this image, or this image becomes his love, his inspiration, for him his more perfect (ideal) self."²¹ The love of the image has such a power that the youth can think about nothing else. And it is through this love that the will develops the clarity to choose it. In short, love moves the image within the purview of the will. Love, as infatuation, pulls the will towards the ideal, demands attention and a self willfully make decision on the matter.

The second type of human love refuses to let go of the image, despite any attendant suffering associated with it. The youth "perseveres, and by persevering in this way he is strengthened, as one is strengthened in suffering—now he loves that image of perfection twice as much...."²² Here there is a correlation between loving and choosing. The will and love 'persevere' together, thereby symbiotically strengthening both the love and the will's choice. The will chooses the image because the youth loves it so much. But the act of having chosen it, despite suffering for it, only intensifies the love. It also intensifies the will's choice, "for it is love—however tight it will turn the screws on him, if I may put it this way, and however hot it will heat the oven, if I may put it this way, in which the youth must be tested like gold."²³ As the true aspect being tested, it is love that is determinant for the movement of a self for it is the push and pull behind the will's choice. Love then matters for the will's ability to and its intensity of choice.

In the end, loving the image with such intensity prevents the youth from recognizing his existential image as humanly derived, rather than divinely revealed. Despite this misrecognition, the love of God, as the second dimension of love, grounds the movement of a self. Divine love supports the self in its willing, despite the fact that the self is willing towards untruth. The youth's suffering is made more palatable through God's love. "Now he is probably able to bear it—yes, he must be able to, since Governance does it with him —Governance, who is indeed love."²⁴ Governance here is divine governance. In this case, it is God's actions to love a self despite the self who seeks the ideal apart from God.

As such, human and divine love play a part in moving the self. Love pulls a self towards an object or idea of the

imagination, which a self then chooses through the will. Even if this choice is flawed, it is God's love that supports the self in movement. Love works with the imagination and the will in making movement possible.

Conclusion

At the end of this example, Anti-Climacus states, "To *be* a child and to *be* a youth when one is a child or a youth is easy enough, but a *second time*--the second time is what is decisive." This child-like existence is necessary in order to gain heaven for to be like a child is to live through paradoxical faith, rather than rational certainty. Yet, it takes the capacities of the self's imagination, the will and love combined in order to move the self towards child-like faith. All three work in concert to effect this movement. All three, however, when based merely on human capability and truth, fall short of attaining this ideal. In the end, the youth himself provides an example of such a movement that falls just short.

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, trans. by Howard & Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 186-192.

² *Ibid*, 186.

³ M. Jaime Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 10.

⁴ *Practice in Christianity*, 186.

⁵ *Ibid*, 186.

⁶ *Ibid*, 187.

⁷ *Ibid*, 187.

⁸ *Ibid*, 187.

⁹ *Ibid*, 188.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 187.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 189.

¹² Timothy P. Jackson's "Arminian edification: Kierkegaard on grace and free will," *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. by Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹³ Jackson, 252-3.

¹⁴ Anti-Climacus' *The Sickness Unto Death* offers the clearest explication of the will in Kierkegaard's writings. In *Sickness*, the will is an important component in creating the self's relationship to external, finite things, leading to despair, as well as to eternal, infinite things, leading to faith. "The formula that describes the state of the self when despair is completely rooted out is this: in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it." (from: Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. by Howard and Edna Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 14.) In this formula, Anti-Climacus demands both willful choice but also the recognition that true selfhood only comes as a gift from God. Though having this power to shape a proper relation to God, the will is nonetheless trapped within the bound/free tension. It is free in the sense that it can shape this relation through a recognition, ironically, of its being bound to the Christian God.

¹⁵ *Practice in Christianity*, 190.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 189.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 189

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 190.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 190.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 189.

²¹ *Ibid*, 187.

²² *Ibid*, 191.

²³ *Ibid*, 190.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 191.

Søren Kierkegaard, The *Quixote*, and the Plunging Guadalquivir—or Guadiana

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In his journals from his early twenties to the final years of his life, Søren Kierkegaard displays a solipsistic knack for coining unusual and, for the most part, highly original metaphors and similes to describe his own personality, vocation, and role in society. Among the earliest is his oft-quoted self-description on 14 July 1837 as “a two-faced Janus”: with one face he laughs, and with the other, cries, he tells us, alluding to his own tendency to unit the comic and the tragic.¹ The next year, calling himself “a literary weed [*Ukrudt I Litteraturen*],” literally a weed in literature, he identifies himself as “Proud Henry [*Stolt Hendrik*],” an herb from the goosefoot family (*Chenopodiaceae*) known also more fully in Danish as *Stolthenriks gåsefod*, Proud Henry’s goosefoot.² Also in 1838, having met his future fiancée Regine Olsen the previous year, he playfully identifies with the lovesick, mad protagonist of the Spaniard Miguel de Cervantes’s novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (pt. 1, 1605; pt. 2, 1651), known in English as *Don Quixote*. Recalling a recent encounter with a pair of girls who were dancing to the flute music of two boys, Kierkegaard writes: “I almost began to dance with them—so there is still that kind of poetry in the world.—If I encounter more such phenomena, I will certainly become a Don Quixote who sees such things in everything.”³ Over a decade later, now a Copenhagen celebrity, with his protracted public conflict with the Copenhagen literary tabloid *The Corsair* only a couple of years behind him, he records his sense that his contemporaries see him as “fighting almost like a Don Quixote [*som en Don Quixote*].”⁴ Still later, in 1854, a year before his death, when about to launch his direct attack upon “Christendom,” he fancies himself “a vexing ‘gadfly’” (*en plagende ‘Bremse’*) against the “spiritlessness” of the established Danish church.⁵

The sources from which Kierkegaard drew these metaphors and analogies are not difficult to infer. He putatively took the image of Janus from Ovid, whose telling of the latter’s trickery and rape of the nymph Cardea is summed up in Paul F.A. Nitsch’s *Neues mythologisches Wörterbuch*, a copy of which Kierkegaard owned, and is mentioned by the Seducer in Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* (1843).⁶ By his labeling himself a “literary weed” and “Proud Henry,” the same weed to which Quidam in “‘Guilty?’/‘Not Guilty?’” will later analogize his own existence,⁷ we are reminded of the scientific interest Kierkegaard took in plants as a young man: at age twenty-two, as an admirer of the botanists Joakim Frederik Schouw (1789-1852) and Jens Wilken Hornemann (1770-1841),⁸ he even accompanied the cousin of pastor he knew on “a little botanical excursion” in Sweden to collect specimens.⁹ Presumably it was in this period that he encountered the name Proud Henry. His comparisons of himself to Don Quixote clearly stem from his familiarity with Cervantes’s novel, which, as we shall see, he had evidently read as early as 1835, and almost surely reread at least one time in later years. Finally, his calling himself “a vexing ‘gadfly’” was consistent with his well-known, long-standing sense of a spiritual kinship with that paradigmatic self-proclaimed gadfly, Socrates.

As easy as it is to discover how Kierkegaard had at his disposal the images of Janus, Proud Henry, Don Quixote, and the gadfly with which to identify, the question of how he came up with a certain other image he identified with is much more intriguing—even mystifying. As the focus of this article, this question will require us to follow an investigative course as strange and unlikely as the geographical course followed the actual river that furnished the image.

Kierkegaard's Allusions to the Guadalquivir

In an undated entry in his journal of 1839, Kierkegaard, then twenty-six years old, and in his ninth year as a student at the University of Copenhagen, declared: For the period of a year, a mile in time, I will plunge underground like the river Guadalquivir—but I am sure to come up again!”¹⁰ This entry, written in July, as he was beginning to prepare for his *Magister* degree exam the next summer,¹¹ is assumed to express Kierkegaard's feeling that he needed to concentrate upon his studies.¹² Clearly the Guadalquivir¹³ simile caught his fancy. Two years later, in his dissertation *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates* (1841: accepted 16 July, printed 16 September, defended 29 September), he reused the comparison, applying it this time to the figure who would become his favorite exemplar other than Christ: “With Socrates the stream of historical narrative, just like the river Guadalquivir [*sic*], drops underground for some distance, only to rush out again with renewed power,” that is, with all “the noisy attempts of the many and very different schools of [Socrates'] followers to trace their origin in this hidden and cryptic source.”¹⁴ Then, in uncanny accord with the image it evokes, the Guadalquivir simile plunged from sight for years in Kierkegaard's writings, only to resurface in a journal entry of 4 June 1849: “Just as the Guadalquivir River plunges into the earth somewhere and then comes out again, so I must now plunge into pseudonymity, but I also understand now how I will emerge again under my own name.”¹⁵

At the time he wrote this, Kierkegaard was engaged in an inner crisis as an author. The bulk of his published oeuvre was behind him, formally bifurcated into the “aesthetic” writings he had published under pseudonyms, and the “religious” writings, published under his own name. The former works included *Either/Or, Fear and Trembling* (1843), *Repetition* (1843), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), *Prefaces* (1844), *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (1848). The signed religious writings included *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (first published in six groups successively, 1843-44; then together, 1845), *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847), *Works of Love* (1847), and *Christian Discourses* (1848). From early 1846 on, Kierkegaard had seriously considered putting an end to his career as author after *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and becoming a rural parish pastor or teaching at the pastoral seminary.¹⁶ Farther in the last entry quoted above, having applied the plunging-and-emerging-Guadalquivir simile to evoke his authorial practice of alternating between pseudonymous self-concealment and signed self-disclosure, Kierkegaard obsesses over how to time the publication of, and about whether or not to publish pseudonymously, such forthcoming works as *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), *Practice in Christianity* (1850), and *The Point of View* (published posthumously, 1859).

Kierkegaard does not forget his self-comparison to the Guadalquivir. Rather, as reflected in three subsequent undated entries, all still from 1849, his fondness for the analogy grows. In the first of these entries he notes that *The Sickness Unto Death*, published pseudonymously with him named as editor “about this time” (30 July), is said by its subtitle to be “for upbuilding,” a category he places above that of his own (signed) discourses, “the poet-category: upbuilding.” He then elaborates: “Just as the Guadalquivir River (this occurred to me earlier and is somewhere in the journal [that is, in the entry of 4 June]) plunges down somewhere into the earth, so is there also a stretch, the upbuilding, which carries my name. There is something (the esthetic) which is lower and is pseudonymous and something which is higher and is also pseudonymous, because as a person I do not correspond to it.” The distinction here, he clarifies, is between on the one hand, Johannes Climacus, the pseudonym of *Philosophical Fragments* and of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, who denied he was a Christian and hence exemplifies the “lower”/“aesthetic”; and on the other hand, Anti-Climacus, the pseudonym of *The Sickness Unto Death* and, later, of *Practice in Christianity*, who exemplifies “the opposite extreme: a Christian on an extraordinary level—but I myself manage to be only a very simple Christian.”¹⁷ In another entry not long afterwards, having elsewhere indicated that he would place himself “higher than Johannes Climacus, lower than Anti-Climacus,”¹⁸ he confirms his resolve to publish *Practice in Christianity* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus and with himself only as “editor,” and congratulates himself on this “sound idea: to stop my productivity by once again using a pseudonym. Like the river Guadalquivir—this simile appeals to me very

much.”¹⁹ Then, in yet another entry shortly thereafter, with reference to the two works that will soon appear as the first two of *Practice in Christianity*’s three parts, he announces:

With this the writing stops.... The pseudonymous writer [Anti-Climacus] at the end is a higher level, which I can only suggest. The second-round pseudonymity is precisely the expression for the halt. *Qua* author I am like the river Guadalquivir, which at some place plunges under the earth; there is a stretch which is mine: the upbuilding; behind and ahead lie the lower and the higher pseudonymities: the upbuilding is mine, not the esthetic, not [the pseudonymous works] for upbuilding either, and even less those for awakening [i.e., *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*, no. 1].²⁰

Of the total of six comparisons to the Guadalquivir in all of Kierkegaard’s writings, it is noteworthy that the only one to appear in a published work, the one in the dissertation comparing Socrates to the Guadalquivir, is also the only one to analogize an aspect of anyone other than Kierkegaard himself to that river. The other five comparisons all occur in journal entries, one from 1839 and the other four from 1849, and liken Kierkegaard and then his authorship to the river.

Given his stated fondness for this simile, it seems curious that Kierkegaard never introduced it in any of his published writings, especially the two writings he produced in the late 1840s to explain the “movement” of his whole authorship: *On My Work as an Author* (1851) and *The Point of View on My Work as an Author*, the second of which was “as good as finished” in November 1848²¹ but was first published four years after his death, by his brother Peter Christian. In the former work, he asserts that the “movement” the authorship describes is “*from* ‘the poet,’ from the esthetic—*from* ‘the philosopher,’ from the speculative—*to* the indication of the most inward qualification of the essentially Christian; **from** the *pseudonymous Either/Or*, **through** *Concluding Postscript*, with my name as editor, **to** *Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*.”²² The fact that any river entails “movement” goes without saying. Moreover, in an updated journal entry of 1851 discussing the “significance” of *On My Work as an Author*, he evokes the nautical image of “what the sailor calls tacking” to illustrate the—in his words—μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος (shifting to another genus) that this book represents in the course of his authorship as a whole.²³ In *The Point of View*, he employs another metaphor consant with a fluvial, river image, characterizing *Either/Or* as a “poetical emptying [*en digterisk Udtømmelse*]”²⁴ and telling how the “poetic element” of his whole authorship “had to be emptied out [*maate udtømmes*]—for me there was not other possibility. But the entire esthetic production was taken into custody by the religious; the religious put up with this emptying out [*det Religieus fandt sig i denne Udtømmelse*] of the poetic but continually pressed on.”²⁵

Why does Kierkegaard keep as a secret to himself his self-comparison to the Guadalquivir? Before pursuing this question, we should take account of an odd, heretofore unacknowledged error built into the comparison, and next consider what may have been the source of his awareness of the Guadalquivir in the first place.

A Case of Mistaken Identity

Although scholars have sometimes mentioned Kierkegaard’s self-comparisons to the river Guadalquivir, which bore the Latin name Baetis or Betis, and the Arabic name W^adī al-Kabīr (“Great River”), no one I am aware of has ever noted the glaring error inherent in the analogy.²⁶ To put it bluntly, the river Kierkegaard is thinking of in each of his allusions to the Guadalquivir and its subterranean plunge is not the Guadalquivir but rather a wholly different river, the Guadiana, known in Latin as Ana, a name retained in its Arabic appellation, W^adī Ana. Both the 830-kilometer-long Guadiana and the 602-kilometer-long Guadalquivir are major rivers of central and southern Spain. They each flow mainly westward, more or less parallel to each other, the Guadiana being the northernmost of the two. Both rivers eventually curve southward before emptying into the Gulf of Cádiz on the Atlantic Ocean, although the Guadiana, unlike the Guadalquivir, passes through a portion of southeastern Portugal.²⁷

How did Kierkegaard know of these two rivers, and what may account for his having confused the one for the other? Although the answer to these questions cannot be known for sure, it most likely lies in what we do know about Kierkegaard's deep and informed admiration of *Don Quixote*.

The *Quixote* Connection

An investigation into the important and textually demonstrable influence that the *Quixote* exerted upon Kierkegaard from as early as 1835, when he first mentions the novel in his journal, to the end of his life, is unnecessary here. It has been elsewhere that Don Quixote furnished for Kierkegaard the prototypical example or "signpost" of "enthusiasm," the "ambition of absurdity,"²⁸ and also a symbol of the comic principle present in every stage of existence, as well as an analog to Christ, Christ's disciples, and the true Christian individual struggling within modern secular society.²⁹ But how does the *Quixote* bear upon the Guadalquivir and upon Kierkegaard's mentioning of that river?

The Guadalquivir is mentioned twice in the *Quixote*, each time by the river's Latin name Betis and only in passing, early in the novel's first part. The song by the heartbroken Grisóstomo (Chrysostom) about his unrequited love, read aloud to Don Quixote, the latter's squire Sancho Panza, and a group of goatherds after the young man's death, makes reference to "the olive groves of the famous Betis [*del famoso Betis las olives*]"³⁰ as one of the places where his pained laments will not be heard. Later, upon misperceiving two flocks of sheep as armies about to battle one another, Don Quixote likewise mentions "the olive-bearing Betis [*olivífero Betis*]"³¹ as a feature of what he imagines to be the native geographical region of one of these "armies."

How do these allusions to the Guadalquivir qua "Betis" pertain to Kierkegaard? A little past that last quotation, which figures in a passage that parodies the catalogs of squadrons and regions in chivalry books, Don Quixote additionally speaks of "the winding Guadiana famed for its hidden course [*el tortuoso Guadiana, celebrado por su escondido curso*]." ³² Aside from the fact that the Spanish names of the two rivers share the same first syllable, the fact that this first allusion to the Guadiana follows so closely after the second allusion to the Guadalquivir might account for Kierkegaard's confusing the one waterway for the other. This possibility seems especially compelling, because the fact that the Guadalquivir was mentioned only by its Latin name may have required Kierkegaard to look the river up in some dictionary or encyclopedia (although we can only speculate on this point). Moreover, the reference to the river's "hidden course" calls attention to precisely that hallmark of the Guadiana that inspired Kierkegaard's self-comparisons to it—or, again, to the Guadalquivir, *mistaken for the Guadiana*.

This is not the last allusion Kierkegaard would have encountered to the Guadiana and its "hidden course" in the *Quixote*. Shortly afterwards, Sancho embellishes a tale of his own with an allusion to the Guadiana, describing one of the visible, aboveground stretches of the river in that season when it is "swollen and almost overflowing its banks,"³³ However, still much later, about a third of the way into the novel's second part, the mysterious subterranean course of the Guadiana becomes a focus of special interest with Don Quixote's descent into the Cave of Montesinos, a cavern near one of the Lakes of Ruidera in La Mancha, the Guadiana's origin.

This adventure, one of the *Quixote*'s "most suggestive and elusive episodes,"³⁴ is narrated by the knight to Sancho and their guide, an inquisitive young scholar, after they have hoisted the former back out of the cave into which he had them lower him by a rope a little over an hour earlier. Having been fast asleep when he first reemerged from the cave, Don Quixote regained consciousness only after being rolled upon the ground and shaken by his two companions, and he now insists that he remained in the cave for three days and three nights, hosted by Montesinos, the keeper of an enchanted castle there. His ensuing testimony of what he saw and experienced there is so phantasmagorical that the (fictive) author of the *Quixote*'s "original" manuscript, Cide Hamete Benengeli, admits suspecting that the entire episode is apocryphal. Subsequently Don Quixote will

become so uncertain about the veracity of his own subterranean visions that he subjects the question of their truth to the judgment of a divining ape and, still later, to that of an enchanted head.³⁵

The account itself, although satirical, is suffused with characters and images of richly symbolic and allusive literary associations. The specific aspect that bears upon Kierkegaard is what Don Quixote learns in the cave about the river Guadiana and its “hidden course.” Guadiana, he discovers, is a person,³⁶ the squire of the unfortunate Durandarte, who, like Montesinos, became a hero of Spanish Carolingian literature but is unknown in French literature (although the name “Durandarte” was originally conferred upon the sword of Roland).³⁷ According to Spanish legend, Durandarte was slain in the notorious ambush at Roncesvalles (French: Roncevaux), but before dying had beseeched Montesinos to deliver his heart to Belerma. When Montesinos shows Don Quixote the seemingly lifeless body of Durandarte in the tomb, the supposed corpse suddenly cries out, reminding Montesinos of that last request. In response, Montesinos recounts to Durandarte in detail how he fulfilled that request, and how he, Belerma, Guadiana, Durandarte, and many more of Durandarte’s friends have been held under enchantment by the sage Merlin for the more than five hundred years that passed since then. While almost all these enchanted people are kept in the cave, Merlin apparently pitied the tearful dueTM a Ruidera and her seven daughters, and so changed them into the actual Manchegan lakes known as the Lakes of Ruidera. Guadiana was likewise metamorphosed:

“Guadiana your squire, who likewise bewailed your fate, was changed into a river bearing his own name, but when he came to the surface and beheld the sun of this other heaven, so great was his grief at the thought of leaving you that he plunged into the bowels of the earth. However, as he cannot help following his natural course, from time to time he comes out and shows himself where the sun and people can see him. The lakes I spoke of send him their waters, and with these, and others that flow to him, he makes a grand and imposing entrance into Portugal. Yet, wherever he goes, he shows his melancholy and sadness. . . .”³⁸

In his appreciative study of Cervantes’s “geographical expertise,” published in Madrid a year after Kierkegaard had inscribed his own first mistaken allusion to the Guadiana in his journal, the Spanish geographer and historian Fernn Caballero (1800–1876) singled out this passage for special praise: “In such a brief picture we have the number and domain of the lakes, the source and supply of the river, its filtration and vicissitudes, its considerable abundance, its course into the neighboring realm, the lack of pleasantness on its banks, and the coarseness of its fishing. Do many writers of geography say more, or even as much? Is there need for more words to say what he contains . . . ?”³⁹ Caballero further notes that the source and subterranean course of the Guadiana, as well as the river’s “natural bridge,” had been the subject of controversy and the object of “Spanish boasting and commonplace anecdotes” for centuries: “The phenomenon of the sinking of the Guadiana was so wondered at, that there is not an ancient book of marvels that does not earnestly speak of it.”⁴⁰ It is therefore easy to understand why the scholar who accompanied Don Quixote and Sancho to Montesinos’s cave declares afterwards that, among the several ways in which the experience of traveling with Don Quixote has enriched him, one is his having “learned what the cave of Montesinos contained, together with the transformations of Guadiana and of the lakes of Ruidera,” and another is his having “ascertained the source of the river Guadiana, heretofore unknown to mankind.”⁴¹

From around the time that Kierkegaard first ever mentioned the plunging Guadalquivir, other circumstantial evidence supports the plausibility that his appeal to that image was inspired by the *Quixote*’s account of the Guadiana’s intermittently subterranean course. His first reference to the plunging Guadalquivir was recorded in a period when the *Quixote* was clearly on his mind. As we noted in the opening paragraph of the present article, it was in 1838, the year after he met Regine Olsen, that Kierkegaard first felt a sense of kinship with Don Quixote, whose pining over Dulcinea is so renowned. The next year, in an entry written five months after he initially mentioned the Guadalquivir in an apparent reference to his feeling of pressure to submerge himself in studying for his exams the next summer, Kierkegaard bids farewell to what he calls his *lucida intervalla*,⁴² literally his “lucid intervals,” a medieval Latin expression for periods of temporary sanity between bouts of

madness.⁴³ Not only does this rhetorical flourish putatively constitute another allusion to his need to devote himself to his exam preparations,⁴⁴ but his use of the phrase *lucida intervalla* seems an obvious play upon the oft-quoted observation made by the son of the gentleman Don Diego de Miranda, Don Lorenzo, in the *Quixote*, about Don Quixote's madness: "It is a streaky madness, filled with lucid intervals [*lúcidos intervalos*]."⁴⁵

Alpheus, the Seducer, and the Volatized Kierkegaard

In the absence of definite proof, it nonetheless seems plausible that Kierkegaard's self-comparison as pseudonymous author to the plunging Guadalquivir—by which, again, he meant the plunging Guadiana—derived from a sense of affinity with the above-quoted Cervantine account of how the grief-stricken, metamorphosed Guadiana "plunged into the bowels of the earth," showing constant "melancholy and sadness." Kierkegaard's own proneness to melancholy, a characteristic often discussed in his journals,⁴⁶ is renowned. Georg Brandes, who considered melancholy a "disease," the prevailing "epidemic" of early nineteenth-century Europe, pointed to Kierkegaard, N. F. S. Grundtvig, and such fictive characters as *Either/Or*'s Seducer and Lord Byron's Cain and Manfred as variants of that era's definitive melancholic type, Chateaubriand's René.⁴⁷ A frequent trope in discussions of Kierkegaard during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,⁴⁸ melancholy was later the focal subject of various studies of him in the mid-twentieth century,⁴⁹ including one by W. H. Auden, whose labeling him "A Knight of Doleful Countenance" harks back to Don Quixote's own nickname: the Knight of the Sad Countenance (*el Caballero de la Triste Figura*).⁵⁰

This brings us back to our earlier question. Given Kierkegaard's apparent sense of kinship with the *Quixote*'s melancholic, metamorphosed, fluvial Guadiana, and given his later fondness for the simile linking that river (mistaken for the Guadalquivir) with his own authorship, why did he always keep this simile to himself? A likely reason is that for him to publicize it would have been to risk leading his readers to draw an undesirable association between him and his aesthetical pseudonym Johannes the Seducer. That notorious diarist in part I of *Either/Or* twice analogizes his own amorous obsession with the young Cordelia to an ancient Greek myth that bears a striking similarity to the story of Guadiana in the *Quixote*. In the first instance, Johannes alludes to the myth without explicitly identifying it.

My Cordelia,

We read in old stories that a river fell in love with a maiden. Just so is my soul like a river that loves you. It is still at times and reflects yours image deeply and calmly. At times it fancies that it has taken your image captive and tosses up its waves to prevent you from escaping again; then it ripples its surface gently and plays with your image. At times it has lost it, and then its waves become dark and despairing. —Just so is my soul—like a river that has fallen in love with you.

Yours Johannes⁵¹

Later, Johannes identifies by name the mythic stalker and the latter's prey to whom he is analogizing himself and his own object of obsession.

My Cordelia,

While he was hunting, Alpheus fell in love with the nymph Arethusa. She would not grant his request but continually fled before him until on the island of Ortygia she was transformed into a spring. Alpheus grieved so much over this that he was transformed into a river in Elis in the Peloponnesus. He did not, however, forget his love but under the sea united with that spring. Is that time of transformations past? Answer: Is the time of love past? To what can I compare your pure, deep soul, which has no connection with the world, except to a spring? And have I not told you that I am like a river that has fallen in love? And now when we are separated, do I not plunge under the sea in order to be united with you? There under the sea we shall meet again, for only in the deeps of the sea shall we really belong together.

Yours Johannes⁵²

Told in different versions by Pausanias and Ovid,⁵³ this myth of Alpheus (Alpheius), divine personification of the river Alpheus and son of Oceanus and Thetys,⁵⁴ is rehearsed in Nitsch's *Neues mythologisches Wörterbuch*. The parallel with the *Quixote's* Guadiana tale is patent. In each story, a grieving man becomes a river, and in each, the river follows a subterranean or submarine course: much as Guadiana, in the *Quixote's* earlier-quoted words, "plunged into the bowels of the earth," so Alpheus, as Nitsch sums up Pausanias's account, "unites himself, flowing across beneath the sea, with the aforementioned spring."⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, who could not have helped noting the parallel, would have had good reason for wanting to avoid associating himself in his readers' minds with a tale so similar to that classical myth to which the passages above link his pseudonymous Seducer. To be sure, in the privacy of an undated letter to Regine Olsen, written in the winter or spring of 1841, just months before he returned her engagement ring (on 11 August that same year), Kierkegaard did link himself and Regine to a metamorphosed pair of characters from a somewhat comparable Ovidian myth, in much the same way that the Seducer links *himself* and Cordelia with the transformed Alpheus and Arethusa. Assuring Regine that he was "present" with her, in whatever "feeling" she might be aware of having for him at that moment, Kierkegaard wrote: "Jupiter metamorphosed himself into a cloud so that he might visit Io, and so too when you volatize me into a cloud, then I am as well."⁵⁶

But this letter was written before Kierkegaard terminated the engagement, an act that, in becoming an immediate and lasting a public scandal, left latent but ineluctable traces throughout his writings.⁵⁷

Epilogue

Kierkegaard might have well vaporized like a cloud from Regine's midst when, on 25 October 1841, two weeks after having formally dissolved his engagement with her, he abruptly fled Copenhagen for Berlin. His ostensible purpose in the Prussian capital was to attend Friedrich Schelling's much ballyhooed lectures at the university on the philosophy of revelation. Although these proved a disappointment to him, it was also there that Kierkegaard composed the bulk of *Either/Or*. As the publication of that book two years later by the fictive "editor" Victor Eremita would signify Kierkegaard's first Guadiana-like plunge into pseudonymity, it seems especially apt that Judge Wilhelm, the ethicist of part II, should liken to Don Quixote the young aesthete whose papers comprise part I, "because you are continually fighting, . . . just like that Spanish knight, for a bygone time. Since you are in fact fighting for the moment against time, you actually are always fighting for what has disappeared"⁵⁸—that is, disappeared like the Guadiana beneath the ground.

¹ *Pap.* II A 662 / *JP* 5:5260. Cf. *Pap.* II A 132 / *JP* 5:5247. Hereafter *Pap.* Refers to *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 20 vols., 2nd edition (augmented), ed. Niels Thulstrup (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968-78); *JP* refers to *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 7 vols., ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967-78).

² *Pap.* II A 686 / *JP* 5:5293. This herb, known technically by the Latin term *Chenopodium bonus-henricus*, is known in English as Good King Henry.

³ *Pap.* II A 740 / *JP* 5:5319.

⁴ *Pap.* X¹ A 646 / *JP* 2:1781 (repr. in *PV* 206). Hereafter *PV* refers to Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View: On My Work as an Author, The Point of View for My Work as an Author, Armed Neutrality*, ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁵ *Pap.* XI³ B 53, p. 102, n.d. 1854 / *JP* 6:6943, p. 555.

⁶ Ovid, *Fasti* 6.101-130; Paul Friedrich Achat Nitsch, *Neues mythologisches Wörterbuch, für studierende Jünglinge, angehend Künstler und jeden Gebildeten überhaupt*, 2 vols., 2nd completely revised and enlarged edition by Friedrich Gotthilf Klopfer (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1821) (*ASKB* 1944-45) 1:465; *SV*¹ 1:363-64 / *EO* 1:396. Hereafter *SV*¹ refers to *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Væker*, 14 vols., 1st edn., ed. A.B. Drachman, J.L. Heiberg, and H.O. Lange (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1901-1906); and *EO* refers to Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 2 vols., ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁷ *SV*¹ 6:370 / *SLW* 397.

⁸ *Pap.* I A 72, p. 49, 1 June 1835 / *JP* 5:5092, p. 22.

⁹ *Pap.* I A 67, n.d. 1835 / *JP* 5:5098.

¹⁰ *Pap.* II A 497 / *JP* 5:5397.

¹¹ See *Pap.* II A 422 / *JP* 5:5385.

¹² See *JP* vol. 5, p. 496n. 532. See also *Pap.* II A 534 / *JP* 5:5406.

¹³ This is the more standard spelling of the river's name, although Kierkegaard routinely spells it Gualalquivir. In one instance, as we shall see, he employs the rarer spelling, Guadalquivir.

¹⁴ *SV*¹ 13:279 / *CI* 198. Hereafter *CI* refers to Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁵ *JP* 6:6416 / *Pap.* X¹ A 422.268

¹⁶ See *Pap.* VII¹ A 4 / *JP* 5:5873; *Pap.* VII¹ A 9 / *JP* 5:5877; *Pap.* IX A 54 / *JP* 6:6157; *Pap.* IX A 186 / *JP* 6:6217; *Pap.* X¹ A 45 / *JP* 6:6312. Discussed in *JP* vol. 5, p. 537n. 1359.

¹⁷ *Pap.* X¹ A 510, p. 329 / *JP* 6:6431. Cf. *SV*¹ 7:7, 538; translated in Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 2 vols., ed. and tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 1:16, 617; and *Pap.* X¹ A 517 / *JP* 6:6433. On Kierkegaard's distinction between "upbuilding" and "for upbuilding" see *Pap.* IV B 159:6 / *JP* 5:5686.

¹⁸ *Pap.* X¹ A 517, p. 330 / *JP* 6:6433.

¹⁹ *Pap.* X¹ A 546 / *JP* 6:6445.

²⁰ *Pap.* X¹ A 593 / *JP* 6:6461.

²¹ *Pap.* IX A 293 / *JP* 6:6258.

²² *SV*¹ 13:494 / *PV* 5.

²³ *JP* 6:6780 / *Pap.* X⁴ A 383.

²⁴ *SV*¹ 13:526 / *PV* 35. Cf. *Pap.* X³ A 258 / *JP* 6:6654.

²⁵ *SV*¹ 13:569 / *PV* 85.

²⁶ See, for example, the annotation by Lee M. Capel in his translation of Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 394n. 1-395; the Hong's "Historical Introduction" to *CI* x; Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, tr. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 147, 631-32; *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al. (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997-) K1:291.

²⁷ *The New Encyclopedia Britannica (Micropaedia)*, 15th edn. (2002) s.v. "Guadalquivir River," 5:527 and "Guadiana River," 5:529.

²⁸ See Martin Thust, *Søren Kierkegaard, der Dichter des Religiösen. Grundlagen eines Systems der Subjektivität* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1931), part 1, chap. 4: "Das Vorbild der Schwärmerei, der Ehrgeiz der Lächerlichkeit: der Wegweiser Don Quijote," pp. 126-49. Kierkegaard would presumably have been not a little piqued by the effort to systematize his thinking in the manner announced in the subtitle of Thust's book.

²⁹ See Eric Ziolkowski, "Don Quixote and Kierkegaard's Understanding of the Single Individual in Society," in George B. Connell and C. Stephan Evans, *Foundations of Kierkegaard's Vision of Community: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Kierkegaard* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1992), pp. 130-43.

³⁰ *DQ* 1:14, 126 / 91. Hereafter *DQ* refers to *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, 2 vols., ed. Martin de Riquer (Barcelona: Juventud, 1955; "New edition," 1979). Citations are by, successively, part and chapter, followed where necessary by the page, backslash, and the corresponding page of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, "The Ormsby translation," ed. Joseph R. Jones and Kenneth Douglas (New York: Norton, 1981). When referred to alone, the latter text will be signified as *DQ*, tr. Ormsby. In this instance I have supplied my own translation, more literal than Ormsby's.

³¹ *DQ* 1:18, 164 / 121.

³² *Ibid.* See also *DQ*, tr. Ormsby, p. 121n. 2.

³³ *DQ* 1:20, 183 / 136.

³⁴ Helena Percas de Ponseti, "The Cave of Montesinos," in *DQ*, tr. Ormsby, p. 979. The episode unfolds in *DQ* 2:22-24.

³⁵ *DQ* 2:25 and 2:62.

³⁶ The first hint of this came immediately after Don Quixote emerged from the cave unconscious, in a coma-like state, and Sancho and the scholar stretched him on the ground and revived him. Upon waking up, Don Quixote lamented having been removed "from the sweetest, most delightful existence and spectacle that ever human being enjoyed or beheld," and cried out: "O ill-fated Montesinos! O sore-wounded Durandarte! O unhappy Belerma! O tearful Guadiana!" (*DQ* 2:22, 701 / 549).

³⁷ As noted by Menéndez Pidal; cited in Riquer's Spanish edition of *DQ* 703n. 8-704.

³⁸ *DQ* 2:23, 706 / 552-53.

³⁹ Fermn Caballero, *Pericia geografica de Miguel de Cervantes, demonstrada con la historia de d. Quijote de la Mancha* (Madrid: Yenes, 1840) p. 100 (translation mine).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98 (translation mine). See also p. 98n. 1 where Caballero quotes from the German author Samuel Grosser's Latin work, *Otium Ulusseum studiosae juventutis h.e. Geographia quadripartite geodaetico-politico-historica* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: C. Wohlfart, 1696) [n.p.]: *Gloriantur hispani de ponte in quo magno ovium gregi pabulum quotannis gignitur, et intelligent meatum subterraneum Anae fluvii* (The Spaniards glory in the great bridge on which the fodder of the sheep flocks is annually brought forth, and they understand the subterranean flow of the river Anas [translation mine]).

⁴¹ *DQ* 2:24, 714 / 558, 559.

⁴² *Pap.* II A 576, 20 December 1839 / *JP* 5:5434.

⁴³ According to the *OED*, s.v. "lucid" (3rd def.), the Latin phrase is common in English legal documents from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries (for example, *non est compos mentis, sed gaudet lucidis intervallis*, "he is not of sound mind, but enjoys lucid

intervals”) and was also used by medieval commentators on Justinian’s *Institutes*. The etymological idea underlying the expression seems to be of the intervals of sunlight during a storm.

⁴⁴ *JP* vol. 5, pp. 499n. 574-500.

⁴⁵ *DQ* 2:18, 666 / 522. Here, at once above, I have supplied my own more literal English rendering.

⁴⁶ Pertinent references are indexed in *Pap.* vol. XV, p. 242, esp. s.v. “Melancholie, min”; and translated in *JP* 2:2688-2694. For discussion see *JP* vol. 6, pp. 25, 61, s.v. “depression” and “melancholy.”

⁴⁷ Georg Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, 6 vols., tr. Diana White et al. (London: W. Heinemann, 1901-1905), 1:29-42; *Samlede Skrifter*, 18 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1899-1910), 4:41-53.

⁴⁸ See Habib C. Malik, *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), pp. 218, 247, 250, 262, 268, 269, 285, 290, 302, 322-23, 325, 341, 349, 358, 361.

⁴⁹ H.V. Martin, *Kierkegaard the Melancholy Dane* (New York: Epworth, 1950); M. Grimoult, *La Melancholie de Kierkegaard* (Paris: Aubier, 1965); W.H. Auden, “A Knight of Doleful Countenance,” *The New Yorker*, 25 May 1968, pp. 141-58. Garff nonetheless finds in Kierkegaard “no signs of depression in the abnormal, clinical sense of the term” (*Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 438).

⁵⁰ *DQ* 1:19. For Auden’s article, see our last note above.

⁵¹ *SV*¹ 1:375 / *EO* 1:407.

⁵² *SV*¹ 1:407-8 / *EO* 1:440-41.

⁵³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.7.2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 5.572.

⁵⁴ Hesiod, *Theogony* 338.

⁵⁵ Nitsch (n. 6 above) 1:143.

⁵⁶ Letter no. 36 in *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Søren Kierkegaard*, 2 vols, ed. Niels Thulstrup (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953-54) 1:65, lines 18-19; as rendered in Søren Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, tr. Henrik Rosenmeier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 83. As noted by Thulstrup (*Breve og Aktstykker*, 2:38), Kierkegaard’s retelling of this tale is pursuant of Apollodor’s *Mythologische Bibliothek*, 2 vols., tr. Christian Gottlob Moser (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1828), 2:5, a copy of which he owned (*ASKB* 1050). The title of that work is misleading because the traditional attribution of the assemblage of myths entitled the *Bibliothēkē* to Apollodorus of Athens (fl. ca. 140 BCE) is false. A variant version of the tale of Jupiter and Io occurs in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, 1:588-600.

⁵⁷ Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 190:

“He could never distance Regine sufficiently to free her from her calamitous fate; she continued to be what she was—sensually heaven-sent, delightfully terrifying, dizzyingly forbidden—because her very nature caused warm springs to gush so seductively that Kierkegaard could not but let himself be carried along in the current—on paper.

“This story...became a grand drama about the extremes in the intellectual history of the West: immediacy and reflection, sensuous desire and self-control, presence and absence. And even though Regine is not named one single time in the whole of Kierkegaard’s published works, she is intertwined with it like an erotic arabesque, full of longing, sometimes confronting the reader when one least expects it.”

⁵⁸ *SV*¹ 2:127-28 / *EO* 2:141.

REVIEWS

**Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed*
New York: Continuum, 2007
166 pages. \$132.00.**

Reviewed by Joseph Ballan, The University of Chicago

Clare Carlisle's new book, the latest in a spate of fine introductions to Kierkegaard (George Pattison and John D. Caputo have also recently penned introductory texts), distinguishes itself by the way in which it acquaints the reader - most probably an undergraduate or a general reader interested in learning more about Kierkegaard - with Kierkegaard's *style* of thought. A good deal of this text comprises summary of the primary sources, but these summaries are consistently framed by the kinds of basic hermeneutical questions most crucial for new readers of Kierkegaard: is this philosophy? is it theology? why pseudonyms? what is the relation of this body of work to that of Hegel? If the measure of an "Introduction to *x*" is to facilitate a reader's entrance into the world of a given figure's *oeuvre*, Carlisle's book is exemplary.

One can imagine without much difficulty the syllabus of an undergraduate course essentially writing itself based on the structure of this book: beginning with biographical matters, it proceeds from a consideration of the communicative orientation of Kierkegaard's corpus, followed by an excursus on the relation to Hegel, finally to more sustained readings of five major texts, while quoting liberally from other works and from the *Nachlass* throughout. Without reducing his thought to his biography, Carlisle begins by suggesting that what Kierkegaard took to be philosophical problems often had their origin in his own life experiences. This accounts for one of the main sources of "perplexity" among newcomers to Kierkegaard, namely that what counts as a "problem" in his work often differs from what are commonly recognized as the standard, received "philosophical problems." Carlisle asks, ironically, "isn't it surprising that this approach seems to be so original?" Particularly salient is her repeated emphasis on Kierkegaard's hostility to the academic establishment of his day, an attitude that, when recognized, helps to explain some (though by no means all) of the positions taken by Kierkegaard, especially in relation to the Hegelianism that was in institutional ascendancy in his day. While asserting an intimate connection between life and work, Carlisle avoids collapsing the two, ending the first chapter on an appropriately deflationary note with regard to Regine: "perhaps his decision not to marry was less spiritual, less tragic, and less interesting than [Kierkegaard's] interpretations [of his decision] suggest...Constructing a glamorous, intriguing self-image can be for one's own benefit as well as for others - maybe we all do this to some extent, and in this way give meaning to our lives" (p. 24).

As a problem that constitutes both a central question for Kierkegaard the thinker and a practical issue for his interpreters, Carlisle rightly devotes the entirety of her second chapter to the question of communication. Focusing on the intent to effect "clarity of self-perception" (p. 25, 31) in the reader, she gives a clear exposition of the approach to "indirect communication" taken by Kierkegaard, as well as the motivation behind this approach. After laying out the interpretive options a propos of the pseudonyms, we finally come to Carlisle's own method, which consists in regarding "Kierkegaard's claim to share none of his pseudonyms' views as a piece of advice about how to read his books, rather than as a statement of historical fact" (p. 38). This chapter contains some of the most helpful introductory material to the style of thought referenced above. In her exposition of Kierkegaard's self-professed "polemic against truth as knowledge," Carlisle nicely demonstrates how Kierkegaard inaugurates - and this may just be his legacy, at least among the 20th century philosophers who followed in his wake - a new way of doing philosophy: marshalling philosophy's rigor and conceptual resources in order to more dramatically lay bare its profound limitations.

Carlisle's treatment of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegelianism in the following chapter promises to help correct for a new generation of readers the simplistic view of this relationship that prevailed in the 20th century. While maintaining that there does exist a Kierkegaardian "critique of Hegel," especially insofar as religion dissolves into rationality in the latter's system (though matters are more complicated, even here), Carlisle shows that Kierkegaard's actual knowledge of Hegel's work was relatively limited, that the targets of his attacks on Hegelian philosophy are often the Danish University professors who were developing their own particular reading of Hegel, and that he often conflates Hegelianism with the narrowness of academic life in general. Most helpful here is Carlisle's inclusion of one of the most relevant episodes in the history of Danish Hegelianism for the understanding of Kierkegaard: the debate between Mynster and Martensen on supernaturalism and rationalism (the primary texts, translated in *Kierkegaard Yearbook 2003* would nicely supplement this chapter in a classroom setting). Here the reader learns that Kierkegaard's formulation of an "either/or" was adapted from these debates, but also that his use of that trope (as a frame for a work whose universe of discourse is at the furthest possible remove from that of the public debates on the appropriation of Hegel) gives some indication of the complexity of Kierkegaard's relation to the philosophical discussions that were swirling around him in the middle of the 19th century.

One of the themes reiterated in all the chapters I have mentioned so far - Kierkegaard's use of philosophy against philosophy ('s institutional and existential narrowness and presumptuousness) - receives its most substantial treatment in a chapter on the *Postscript*, the first of the chapters devoted to individual texts. In a discussion dwelling at length on Kierkegaard's most famous, most misunderstood phrase, "Truth is subjectivity," Carlisle puts her finger on the root of the confusion surrounding Kierkegaard's thematization of truth, namely that at times he seems to be referring to an epistemological concept, at others to a soteriological one. In an effort to clarify, her exposition highlights what we might call the "evental" character of truth as something that *happens* when an idea becomes reality. The reference to subjectivity, then, is meant to designate that the truth-event implies a particular "way of being a subject" (p. 68). For Kierkegaard, on Carlisle's account, truth connotes qualities of "authenticity, fidelity, and honesty" (p. 71). In a mostly conservative book (conservative in the sense that it does not set forward any bold new proposals or theses), the suggestion that the concept of repetition might serve as "the key" to understanding what Kierkegaard means by truth as subjectivity stands out as provocative, but also very useful hermeneutically: just as Constantine Constantius contrasts the pair recollection/knowledge with repetition/life, so Johannes Climacus understands subjective truth to affirm a commitment to staying with the flux of ever-changing existence (p. 72-3). Here, as throughout, the reader becomes the beneficiary of Carlisle's extensive research on concepts of movement (like repetition) in the early authorship (see her *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions* [SUNY Press, 2005]).

Writing a text of this length (approximately 160 pages) for a readership that knows little about its subject matter is necessarily a matter of selection. For example, the chapter on *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* limits itself, in the main, to an attempt to make some sense of the notion of truth as subjectivity, largely to the neglect of the many other literary and philosophical issues raised by that book. The remaining chapters do not follow in any specific chronological or thematic order, but continue to introduce the reader to Kierkegaard's general approach to various theological and philosophical themes by giving summaries of the appropriate texts. Carlisle includes brief discussions of both *Concept of Anxiety* and *The Sickness unto Death* in her chapter on sin. Kierkegaard emerges from this chapter (rightly, I think) as a modern and, for the most part, conservative reinterpreter of the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition. One of the most helpful distinctions Carlisle makes here is between the traditional view of Adam's sin as *cause* of the sins of the rest of humanity, and Kierkegaard's view of Adam's action as *paradigm* for an event that comes about differently in the lives of each human being (p. 97). Concepts of movement and becoming continue to play a role in this chapter, with the sin of each person interpreted as a kind of repetition (both of Adam's sin and of one's own sinfulness) and repentance understood as that which thereby demands a movement of constant renewal. Accordingly, Carlisle gives a dynamic interpretation of what presents itself, on the surface, as a static metaphor: faith as the self's resting transparently in God requires the ceaseless reactivation of the movements of "purifying, emptying, receiving and making clear and light" (p. 108). Carlisle brings her subtle understanding of the "leap," that other oft-misunderstood

Kierkegaardianism, to bear on her discussion of *Fear and Trembling*, where she also points up the continuities in the early authorship by interpreting that text in terms of the concepts she introduced in her chapter on the *Postscript*. The chapters on *Fear and Trembling* and *Philosophical Fragments* give more complete accounts of the literary structure of these texts than do the other chapters devoted to individual works, making them particularly well-suited for close readings in a classroom setting.

Even though Carlisle does her utmost to cast Kierkegaard's positions in the best possible light, she nonetheless entertains objections - sometimes quite serious ones - to Kierkegaard's general philosophical approach, especially on three issues that newcomers to Kierkegaard are especially likely to struggle with: individualism and relationality, the place of religions other than Christianity, and the use of philosophy against philosophy. Carlisle imagines Kierkegaardian responses to these contemporary objections, but she does not cover over the difficulties involved in doing so, and that she considers them at all renders the book that much more well-rounded. If we were to offer a critical word on the text, it would be that citations are used more sparingly than one might hope, especially in the early chapters. For instance, the illustrative metaphor of a receptive reader as an empty jar, as opposed to the complacent listener, self-satisfied in his possession of the truth and therefore in need of indirect communication, is left uncited, as are several quotes surrounding it (p. 28; *Point of View* is mentioned as a source, but no page or chapter numbers are given). Likewise, Kierkegaard commentators who dispute the standard hierarchy of the "existence spheres" are mentioned as a group, but not by name, and without a footnote explaining who these scholars might be and which works of theirs defend the view in question (p. 83). Of course, in an introductory work of this kind, one does not expect extensive reference matter, but the possibility of following an intriguing quote back to its original context by means of a citation is one of the ways in which an introduction can open onto new worlds of thought and study for a reader. Happily, Carlisle's book is filled with many other such openings, rendering it more than a simple introduction to a new author, but an enticing invitation to the reader to encounter that author's works for herself.

**David J. Kangas, Kierkegaard's Instant: On Beginnings
Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007
xiii and 235 pages. \$45.00.**

**Reviewed by Christopher A.P. Nelson
South Texas College**

David J. Kangas' Kierkegaard's Instant: On Beginnings is nothing if not ambitious. Appropriately, the work begins with a series of loosely encrypted warnings issued to the attentive reader. The task of the book, as Kangas himself introduces it, is to read certain of Kierkegaard's early and mostly pseudonymous texts alongside certain texts in the tradition of German idealism. The reader unfamiliar with, or with a pronounced distaste for the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and/or Hegel has thus been served his or her fair warning: rough waters ahead. And the warnings are just beginning. Indeed, inasmuch as the book bears the marks of a concern with beginnings, temporality, philosophy, and anxiety, the name of another German philosopher is almost certain to spring to mind. Kangas does not miss the beat and quickly adds that "the book as a whole offers a counterargument" to Heidegger's occasional but pointed assessment of Kierkegaard's thinking on these matters (5). Another warning: the reader unable or unwilling to hear Heidegger lurking everywhere beneath the page might do just as well to stop reading. But wait, there's more. In re-thinking Kierkegaard's place between Hegel and Heidegger, Kangas effectively suggests a reading of Kierkegaard as significantly pre-Hegelian and post-Heideggerian in his thinking. To accommodate this peculiar place, Kangas proposes the entertainment of an intellectual genealogy that links "the Eckhartian tradition" (9) on the one end with "the deconstructive critique of transcendental subjectivity and representation" (11) on the other end, and runs straight through Kierkegaard.

A final warning: ‘mysticism’ (Eckhart, Boehme, et al.) and ‘postmodernism’ (Derrida, Levinas, et al.) are the poles between which this high-wire act of Kierkegaard-reading is going to be strung. If all of this seems a bit much to undertake, much less to accomplish, in one short book, the matter need only be considered in reverse: within the history of philosophy there is a tradition, within this tradition there is an authorship, and within this authorship there is a concept, Øieblikket, the unpacking of which affords an extraordinary view of this authorship, this tradition, and this history.

Through six tightly woven chapters of highly focused textual exegesis, Kangas attempts to unpack and highlight the significance of Kierkegaard’s concept of “the moment,” or as Kangas reasonably prefers to translate it, “the instant.” Conceived as the advent-event that cannot be recuperated in any way whatsoever, “the instant” obviously poses a threat to the allegedly clean balance sheet of a comprehensive idealism. But just how concerned is Kierkegaard with the assault on precisely this front? Kangas’ answer to this question shows him at his boldest. Apropos the extended treatment of the concept of “the instant” found in the introductory section of Chapter III of The Concept of Anxiety, Kangas writes: “The analysis of the instant is more than merely another moment in the dialectic of the book; rather, it is the hinge of the book on which everything turns. Indeed, it is the hinge on which the whole of the early authorship turns” (181). Never mind the implications for idealism, postmodernism, mysticism, or the history of philosophy – every student of Kierkegaard’s writings is now listening. For, if nothing else, they have been promised a radically innovative spin on a handful of otherwise familiar texts. Kangas does not disappoint on this score, bouncing from text to text and touching down in each long enough to sound the same aporetic note. In fact, this is precisely the over-arching strategy: to play up the specific performance of a generic aporia, text by text. Kangas identifies six such performances. Chapter 1, “The Infinite Beginning” (12-40), is devoted to The Concept of Irony, and the aporia of an “infinite absolute negativity.” Chapter 2, “Endless Time” (41-64), is devoted to the first part of Either/Or, and the aporia of mood-specific disclosures of “the transcendental problematic of temporality.” Chapter 3, “Entering into Philosophy” (65-90), is devoted to Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est, and the aporia of “a beginning that cannot be grasped as a principle.” Chapter 4, “Repetition” (91-124), is devoted to Repetition, and the aporia contained in the very concept of “repetition” vis-à-vis the competing metaphysical concepts of Platonic “recollection” and Hegelian “mediation.” Chapter 5, “Absolute Relation to the Ab-solute” (125-59), is devoted to Fear and Trembling, and the aporia of a wholly absolving duty. Chapter 6, “The Instant” (160-94), is devoted to The Concept of Anxiety, and the aporia, at last, of the place without a place, the “instant” which is and is not. On the whole, Kangas succeeds in finding traces of his aporia, the instant, everywhere. As to the parts – and this is always the mark of a good book on Kierkegaard – each chapter works just as well on its own merits as a provocative take on the text in question. So, given the admitted consistency of the whole, coupled with the admitted value of the parts, does this book work? Presuming an audience upon whom the inaugural warnings were not entirely wasted, a few partially rhetorical questions are in order in this regard.

First: Why these books, and just these books? To be sure, anytime anyone is writing about Kierkegaard, a clear declaration of and adherence to the texts and ‘authors’ with which he or she is working is and continues to be a welcome event. Kangas knows this as well as anyone, as evidenced in his reference to the texts in question as performances rather than mere explications. That being said, and taking the concept of “the instant” as a provisional touchstone, the elision of such ‘late period’ texts as The Moment [Øieblikket], along with such ‘middle period’ texts as Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits, Works of Love, Christian Discourses, and The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air – all of which contain significant discussion and elaboration of the concept of “the instant” – is not an issue. From the outset, Kangas has established and stated his focus upon the early and mostly pseudonymous works. Perhaps a sequel is in the works. Even so, what of such early pseudonymous works as the second part of Either/Or, in which “the instant of choice” figures so prominently? Or Philosophical Fragments, in which the absolute decisiveness of “the instant” is subject to so much emphatic discussion? The elision of these early pseudonymous texts, and these prominent and decisive “instants,” is curious, to say the least.

Second, and on behalf of the entire ‘tradition’ that runs from Kant to Heidegger and beyond: Does Kierkegaard really contribute anything to the discussion of temporality, other than the grumblings of a curious thinker and step-child of the tradition who was, as Heidegger himself seemed to qualify the compliment at every opportunity, pretty sharp for a theologian? For the most part, this question must be left, initially at least, to students of the afore-mentioned tradition(s) to answer. Happily, however, Kangas has done his part to couch the issue in terms readily amenable to the discourses in question. However frustrating it may be at times for those accustomed to Kierkegaard’s language and style, Kangas’ Kierkegaard – freely conversing with Hegel throughout – speaks the languages of Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas just as well. What makes this book unbearable for some is precisely what makes it immediately accessible for others. Some warnings, it would seem, also function as invitations.

Third, and on behalf of every student of Kierkegaard’s writings who thinks that becoming tired of ‘metaphysics’ was and is a sign of spiritual maturity: Is Kierkegaard really that concerned with the issue of temporality as such? To be sure, the question of “the beginning” – and with it the question of beginnings, and of time, and of change – has been with us, it seems, from the beginning. Indeed, if Kangas is right, this question actually constitutes the singular “obsession” of the western philosophical tradition (ix). But still, other than its being an incredibly interesting and enduringly fascinating question, is there something more pressing, in the existential sense, than the failure of systematic idealism to achieve comprehensive consistency vis-à-vis the concept of “beginning” at issue here? Inasmuch as the name of Meister Eckhart has already been invoked, might the concept of a radical “re-birth,” or what Kierkegaard calls “conversion,” be in play? Free association would suggest as much, and Kangas’ proposed intellectual genealogy would thereby reap the benefit of a further, precedent tether point in Augustine – and not merely vis-à-vis the extensive exegesis of Genesis 1:1 in book XI of the Confessions, but in the intense, soul-shattering cry of book VIII, chapter 12: “Why not now?” That is the tradition to which Kierkegaard – early, middle, and late – most assuredly belongs. That Eckhart is a key figure in this tradition is perhaps a long overdue insight.

In sum, it would seem that Kierkegaard’s Instant, in addition to being a formidable piece of carefully delimited scholarship in its own right, is ‘merely’ the beginning of something else – perhaps a prolegomenon of sorts. The general thrust of the book appears to consist in rescuing Kierkegaard from the reputation of being a singularly and narrowly obsessed niche thinker of merely ancillary interest vis-à-vis the canon of the western philosophical tradition, and reading him instead as both the more faithful heir of the Eckhartian tradition than either Hegel or Heidegger, and the most suitable precursor of and inspiration for certain developments in philosophy in the latter half of the 20th century. Of course, and notwithstanding the notable work of Michel Henry in this vein, the question as to whether Kierkegaard now needs be the latter in order to be former remains, for the moment, wide open. For anyone interested in that question, and for anyone with a specialized interest in any of the above mentioned texts (The Concept of Irony, Either/Or I, Johannes Climacus, Repetition, Fear and Trembling, The Concept of Anxiety), Kierkegaard’s Instant is highly recommended reading.