

Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter



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St. Olaf College

Northfield, Minnesota

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Editor: Gordon D. Marino

Spanish Editor: Begonya Saez Tajafuerce



Announcement

THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD CONFERENCE

CALL FOR PAPERS

“WHY KIERKEGAARD STILL MATTERS”

The Hong Kierkegaard Library will hold its Sixth International Kierkegaard Conference June 27-30, 2010. As in the past, the conference will include a dissertation panel. The topic of the conference is “Why Kierkegaard Still Matters.” Not coincidentally, this is the same issue that will be explored in the *festschrift* for Robert Perkins to be published by Mercer University Press in November of 2010. Scholars interested in presenting papers should send an abstract to Gordon Marino by February 1st, 2010 and a completed paper by April 15th, 2010. A reading length of 20 minutes will again be strictly observed. People willing to serve as commentators on papers should contact Gordon Marino. There will also be a workshop pegged to the question, “What is the relevance of Kierkegaard to the clergy today?” People interested in guiding or participating in that workshop should email Gordon Marino at marino@stolaf.edu

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

Friends of the Kierkegaard Library

Fall Meeting 2008

This gathering took place in conjunction with the Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture which was given this year by Bruce Kirmmse on the evening of November 18 at St. Olaf College. The Friends held their business meeting in the afternoon and also met for dinner.

Spring Meeting 2009

May 5th, 2009 will be the next meeting date for the Friends of the Hong Kierkegaard Library, with a midmorning business meeting, followed by a luncheon and an early afternoon conversation on a selected Kierkegaard text. If you don't receive an invitation by mid-April and would like to attend, contact Friends Chair Jamie Lorentzen at jalorentzen@redwing.k12.mn.us.

Jamie Lorentzen also announces that the *Festschrift* in honor of Howard and Edna Hong entitled *Toward the Final Crossroads: A Festschrift for Edna and Howard Hong* will be available in the fall of 2009 from Mercer Press.

The DVD produced by the Friends of the Kierkegaard Library entitled *A Striving Born of Gratitude: The Hong Kierkegaard Library* is now available. Please contact Jamie Lorentzen if you are interested in obtaining a copy for fundraising or other purposes.

3rd Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture – Fall 2008

Bruce Kirmmse (Professor Emeritus of History, Connecticut College, and Former Director, Department of Kierkegaard Research, Theology Department, University of Copenhagen) presented the lecture for 2008 on November 18 at St. Olaf College. His lecture was titled "Poetry, History, Humanity: A Historian Reads Kierkegaard".

4TH JULIA WATKIN MEMORIAL KIERKEGAARD LECTURE

Andrew Burgess (Professor of Philosophy, University of New Mexico) will give the next Watkin Lecture in early November 2009. Date and title to be announced.

5TH JULIA WATKIN MEMORIAL KIERKEGAARD LECTURE

Vanessa Rumble (Professor of Philosophy, Boston College) will give the Watkin Lecture in November of 2010. Date and title to be announced.

Summer Fellows Program – 2009

Invitations have been sent to 24 scholars who applied and have been accepted as Summer Fellows at the Hong Kierkegaard Library for 2009. The fellows will be coming this summer from 6 countries and from 15 colleges, universities, and seminaries in the US to pursue their own research projects using the resources of the Hong Kierkegaard Library. They will also meet regularly for discussion seminars. For information about the program and applying for summer 2010, please see the Library's website or contact Gordon Marino at marino@stolaf.edu.

Young Scholars Program – 2009

In addition, Professor Gordon Marino has invited 10 younger scholars – older college students and graduated seniors – to join in daily discussions and personal research with his mentorship from July 8-31. The Young Scholars are also Summer Fellows but have additional discussion meetings on a daily basis. This year the Young Scholars include 3 St. Olaf College students as well as students from Swarthmore College, Macalester

College, and other US institutions. For information about the program and application for summer 2010, please contact Gordon Marino at marino@stolaf.edu.

Danish-Kierkegaard Course 2009

Dr. Sinead Ladegaard Knox from Copenhagen will offer her course in beginning Danish for Kierkegaard scholars from June 29 – July 4 again this summer to a group of 11 students coming from 10 colleges, universities, and seminaries in the US and Scotland. This group will meet daily Monday – Friday from 9-12 in a classroom near the Hong Kierkegaard Library. For further details about the course please see our website. To apply to take the course in 2009 or for next summer, 2010, please contact Cynthia Lund at lundc@stolaf.edu. Fees for the course are \$1200 (including housing on campus) or \$900 for accepted Summer Fellows and Young Scholars.

Kierkegaard House Foundation Fellowships – 2009 and following

The Foundation is offering fellowships which include housing near St. Olaf College and a stipend of \$1500 for more advanced Kierkegaard scholars for stays of 4 months – 1 year. Fellowships have been awarded now for the next 2 years to the following scholars:

Jamie Turnbull – January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009

Anthony Aumann – July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

Richard Purkarthofer – January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2010

Varughese John – May 1, 2010 – April, 30, 2011

Several other applications have already been received. Applications will be accepted for stays after January 2011 only. To find out more about this program or to apply for a fellowship, please contact the President of the Kierkegaard House Foundation, Professor Emeritus Walter Stromseth at stromse@stolaf.edu or Gordon Marino at marino@stolaf.edu. Information is also on our website.

VISITING SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Students and scholars as well as any other interested people are welcome to use the resources of the Hong Kierkegaard Library at any time of year either for short-term visits or for long-term study projects if they have their own funding. Please contact Cynthia Lund at lundc@stolaf.edu if you would like to visit the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

Donors to the Kierkegaard Library since August 2008

Books, articles, and financial gifts were given to the Library by the following individuals: Andrew Burgess, David Coe, Marcio Gimenes de Paula, Eduardo Oscar Charpenal Elorduy, Ingrid Basso, Elisabetta Basso, Juliet Rumble, Roman Kralik, Sylvia Walsh and Robert Perkins, Leo Stan, Joseph Brown, Donald Fox, Karel Eisses, Ted Schroeder, Helen and David Gangsei, Timothy Wilder, Gould Library at Carleton College, the Norwegian-American Historical Association, History at St. Olaf College., and the Friends of the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

Kierkegaard Library on Facebook!

Søren Landkildehus has brought us into the 21st century by starting a page on Facebook called “Hong Kierkegaard Library”. This is an open page if you wish to join. Anthony Aumann together with Eleanor Helms and Shannon Nason are administering a group on Facebook called Kierkegaard Camp. This is an open group for those who have spent summers at the Hong Kierkegaard Library.

Also please note the Facebook site for *Acta Kierkegaardiana* created by Jamie Turnbull, our current House Foundation Fellow and former Summer Fellow.

Kierkegaard Classic Studies Series

By the end of Spring 2009, the new *Kierkegaard Classic Studies Series* will be launched by Wipf & Stock Publishers with three initial reprints:

***Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion* by Reidar Thomte**
***Søren Kierkegaard and the Common Man* by Jørgen Bakdahl (translated by Bruce Kirmmse)**
***Kierkegaard's Psychology* by Kresten Nordentoft (translated by Bruce Kirmmse)**

This reprint project is being done in partnership with series forward writer Gordon Marino at the Kierkegaard Library in St. Olaf.

Books can be ordered for the normal 20% off retail price through Wipf & Stock Publishers via orders@wipfandstock.com or 541-334-1528 or www.wipfandstock.com.

OTHER NEWS

SØREN KIERKEGAARD SOCIETY (U.S.A.)

Call for Papers (2009-2010)

SKS Meeting at Easter APA

December 27-30, New York, NY – Marriott Hotel

Session theme: *Kierkegaard and Authenticity (Heidegger, Nietzsche, etc)*

Reading time: 20-25 minutes maximum

Deadline for submission: April 20, 2009 (2 open slots plus commentator)

SKS Meeting at the Central APA

February, 2010 (St. Louis? TBA)

Session theme: *Kierkegaard and Time*

Reading time: 20-25 minutes maximum

Deadline for submission: June 5, 2009 (2 open slots)

Upcoming Session

SKS Meeting at Pacific APA

April 8-12, 2009 Vancouver, BC – Western Bayshore Hotel

Session title: *Kierkegaard, Autonomy, and Freedom*

Keynote address: Anthony Rudd (St. Olaf College)

Papers by: Eric Hanson (Purdue University) and Paul Carron (Baylor University)

Comments: Michelle Kosch (Cornell University)

For further information on the Society, including the SKS within the APA and the AAR, please see <http://www.fordham.edu/philosophy/davenport/skconferences.htm>

INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY:

Last Call for Papers

Submitted by Robert L. Perkins, Editor

Mailing address: 225 South Boundary Avenue, DeLand, FL 32730-5103

rperkins6@cfl.rr.com // 386-734-6457

International Kierkegaard Commentary: ‘The Point of View’

Due date: 1 September 2009

Prospective authors should write the editor to discuss their intention to contribute to this volume. Expected date of publication is November 2010. The publication of this volume will complete International Kierkegaard Commentary

Volumes in Process:

International Kierkegaard Commentary: ‘The Moment’

The Contributors have done their part; the Advisory Board and editor are reading the papers and authors are responding to inquiries from the editor.

Most Recently Published Volume

International Kierkegaard Commentary: ‘The Book on Adler’ This volume was delivered to most contributors the week before or just after Thanksgiving, 2008.

We plan for IKC:TM will be in the Mercer University Press book stall at the AAR in November, 2009 and for International Kierkegaard Commentary: ‘The Point of View’ to be in the MUP stall in 2010.

Submissions that do not adhere to the conventions and sigla will be returned unread.
All essays are submitted to the Advisory Board for evaluation; no papers are commissioned.

Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks

Bruce Kirmmse reports that “KJN 3 will definitely be out within a few months at the most. KJN 4 should be out by the end of this year or early next year.”

SK Research Center Copenhagen

The following publications are now available:

1. ***Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter***, vol. 26 containing NB31-NB36 from 1854 will be published April 3, 2009
2. ***Yearbook 2008***. In *Kierkegaard Studies*, ed. on behalf of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Hermann Deuser and K. Brian Söderquist (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) ISBN 978-3-11-020533-6; ISSN 1430-5372
3. **Andreas Krichbaum, *Kierkegaard and Schleiermacher: Eine historisch-systematische Studie zum Religionsbegriff***. In *Kierkegaard Studies*, ed. on behalf of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser. Monograph Series, 18, ed. Hermann Deuser (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) ISBN 978-3-11-020104-8; ISSN 1434-2952
4. **Daniel Greenspan, *The Passion of Infinity: Kierkegaard, Aristotle and the Rebirth of Tragedy***. In *Kierkegaard Studies*, ed. on behalf of the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser. Monograph Series, 19, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) ISBN 978-3-11-020396-7; ISSN 1434-2952

Upcoming event:

There will be a Søren Kierkegaard and Arthur Schopenhauer seminar at Vartov, Copenhagen, Denmark on April 24.

Acta Kierkegardiana: Call for Papers

Submitted by Jamie Turnbull, Editor

Acta Kierkegardiana IV: Kierkegaard and the Religious Crisis of the 19th Century

In the wake of the Enlightenment, Europe in the nineteenth century was left in a deep religious crisis, which called into question most of the traditional Christian dogmas and beliefs. The aim of this volume is to explore

this religious crisis as a background to Kierkegaard's work, and his work as a response to it. How, exactly, does Kierkegaard characterise the religious crisis of his age? How is his work intended to solve that crisis? Moreover, does the religious crisis of the nineteenth century bear any similarity to our own contemporary ethical and religious dilemmas? If so, what solution can Kierkegaard's work provide to our problems?

The deadline for article submissions is the 10th of June 2009.

More information, including instructions for authors, can be found at www.actakierkegardiana.com

Acta Kierkegardiana also has a Facebook group. To join, simply search Facebook for Acta Kierkegardiana.

Kierkegaard Circle – University of Toronto

Professor Abraham H. Khan reports that the Kierkegaard Circle of Trinity College, University of Toronto, has an upcoming session on Friday, March 27, 2009 from 7:30-10:30 pm. Emeritus Professor Graeme Nicholson of the Department of Philosophy at Trinity College, Toronto will speak on "Autonomy and Devotion in *The Sickness unto Death*". For further information about this event or the Circle please see the website www.utoronto.ca/kierkegaard or contact Professor Khan at khanah@chass.toronto.ca.

Søren Kierkegaard Society of the UK

The Annual Meeting will take place on May 9, 2009 at Christchurch College, Oxford. The topic is Kierkegaard's understanding of love in works other than *Works of Love*, though of course presenters may refer to *Works of Love* as needed, and the organizers would be interested in hearing from people who would like to contribute either a paper or lead a reading of a relevant passage. Please contact the society's Chair Prof. Hugh Pyper if you are interested in contributing: h.pyper@scheffield.ac.uk. The meeting is free for members of the SKUK, though all are welcome to attend and welcome to join. For further information, see the website www.kierkegaard.org.uk.

Kierkegaard Symposium – Mexico City

On the 21st of April, the Iberoamericana University (Mexico City) will sponsor the Symposium "*S. Kierkegaard – the use of pseudonyms as existential communication*". This event is the result of many activities and interests that developed in Mexico with the collaboration of *Sociedad Iberoamericana de Estudios Kierkegardianos*.

To penetrate Kierkegaard's thought is to feel an extraordinary deep reflection; his unique style, his sharp observations, his special critique full of irony about the social and academic stereotypes were presented through a very well made network of pseudonyms. Each one assumes a special and unique position in relation with the life, with the religion and philosophy. In this way the result is a very special communication with his readers, an existential communication that make us feel in an intimate relation with the text. That is why the purpose of this event is to present some of the most important of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms and, at the same time, to see how they develop themselves in the project of indirect communication, which the philosopher proposes to us. In other words, the focus of this symposium is to understand this diversity of pseudonyms through what makes them different: the style, the personality, the interest of each one, the way they communicate and the main objective of what they communicate.

Participants in the Symposium include a number of specialists in Kierkegaard's thought, but also the Ambassador of Denmark to Mexico, Sr. Johannes Dahl-Hansen. For information the contact is:

luis.guerrero@uia.mx

Sociedad Hispanica de Amigos de Kierkegaard (S.H.A.K.)

President Dr. Jose Garcia Martin (University of Malaga, Spain) and the President of The Kierkegaard Society in Slovakia, Dr. Roman Kralik (University of Nitra, Slovakia) are pleased to invite everyone who is interested in the topic to submit papers for a collective volume on the topic "**Kierkegaard and Communication**".

Guidelines: a) maximum length 10,000 words

- b) interlinear space of 1.5
- c) letter size 12
- d) font style: Times New Roman
- e) Harvard System in notes and bibliography
- f) preferably in Spanish or English although other languages will be considered
- g) authors should include maximum 10-line Curriculum Vitae as a footnote of his/her name including email address
- h) provide abstract

Deadline: October 1, 2009

Contact Address for further information: josegm@hiin-enkelte.info

SOBRESKI – Kierkegaard Society of Brazil

Marcio Gimenes de Paula reports that the **IX JORNADA INTERNACIONAL DE ESTUDOS DE KIERKEGAARD** [the 9th International Conference of Kierkegaard Studies] sponsored by SOBRESKI (Brazilian Kierkegaard Society) and UFPB (Federal University of Paraiba) took place November 17-19, 2008. The place of the meeting was Joao Pessoa. More information can be found on the website www.jornadakerkegaard.blogspot.com.

Portuguese Translation Project

Submitted by Elisabete Sousa

The Philosophy Center at the University of Lisbon is underway with its translation project of the works of Kierkegaard published between 1838 and 1845 with 12 titles to be published through 2013. Three titles have been translated and will hopefully come out in 2009: *Repetition, Fear and Trembling* and *Prefaces*.

A new application has been submitted in order to increase financial and institutional support which will enable the research and translation team and the host institution to hold conferences at an international level and to establish scientific partnerships. The translation team includes Elisabete M. de Sousa and Professor José Miranda Justo will both be at the Hong Kierkegaard Library this summer as Summer Fellows.

Kierkegaard News from the Netherlands

Submitted by Karel Eisses

This year several Kierkegaard translations will be published; not only in the series *Søren Kierkegaard Werken* by Daman, e.g. the translation of a collection of *Letter of Kierkegaard* by Edith Koenders and Diederik Grit, uitgeverij Bornmeer (Spring 2009). People should be informed about the Dutch Kierkegaard website www.kierkegaard.nl and its ability to report news items very rapidly including new books and journals.

Kierkegaard in Slovakia

Submitted by Roman Kralik

We are grateful for the visits to the Kierkegaard Centre in Sala of Professor Abraham Khan, Father Pimen, two candidates for the post of the Slovak president, MP members – Mr. Kukan and Mrs. Vasaryova – as well as the planned visit of Professor Andrew Burgess in June of this year. These contacts have contributed greatly to the increased attention to Kierkegaard in Slovakia. Also, the number of publications by qualified Kierkegaard scholars is growing, as well as the number of members of our Kierkegaard society represented at universities. These scholars include Peter Sajda, Lucia Rakayova, Milan Petkanic, Tibor Mahrik, as well as myself and others.

In addition, our Kierkegaard Society is closely cooperating now with Professor Jon Stewart (University of Copenhagen), Professor C. Stephen Evans (Baylor University in the U.S.), Dr. Jose Garcia Martin (Malaga, Spain) and Dr. Jamie Turnbull (UK). Our thanks belong also to Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa v Nitre here in Slovakia. Prof. Dr. Gadusova and Prof. Dr. Diatka have significantly supported publishing efforts and lectures

about Kierkegaard. We highly appreciate and give thanks for the inspiration and support of the Hong Kierkegaard Library in Northfield and the city of Sala.

Our activities are supported also by the Royal Danish Embassy and Ambassador Jørgen Munk Rasmussen who has visited Kierkegaard Centrum often since 2006. We have also had visits from diplomats representing Canada, the Czech Republic, Romania and Spain. For further information about Kierkegaard in Slovakia please contact Roman Kralik at Kierkegaard@centrum.sk.

Søren Kierkegaard Bicentennial Bust Project

The Reverend Ronald F. Marshall of First Lutheran Church of West Seattle has sent an update on this project which is trying to raise \$6,000 to fund the creation of a bust in honor of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Søren Kierkegaard in 2013. This sculpture will be created by Rita Kepner, Sculptor.

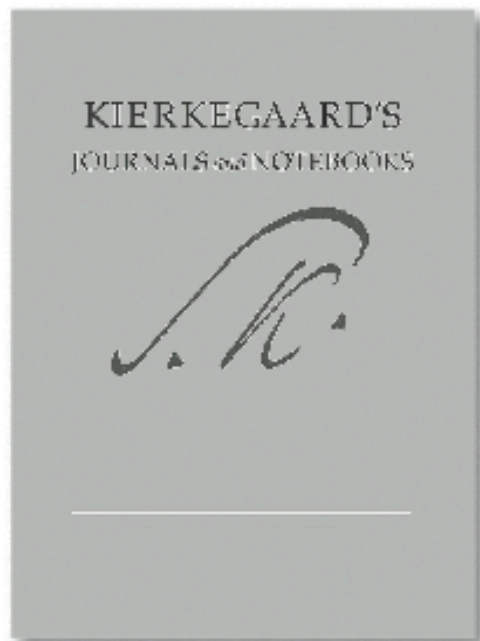
Already \$1,600 has been raised towards this goal and the project will be completed. All donors to the project will have their names permanently affixed to the pedestal of the statue which is being designed by a staff member of the Paul Allen Museum in Seattle.

If you are interested in contributing to this project, please send donations to First Lutheran Church of West Seattle with “Kierkegaard Statue” put in the memo line of this check. All gifts to this project are tax-deductible.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Reverend Marshall at deogloria@foxinternet.com.

“An editorial tour de force. . . . Indispensable for all libraries supporting graduate work on Kierkegaard.”—P.K. Moser, *Choice*

Søren Kierkegaard published an extraordinary number of works during his lifetime, but he left behind nearly as much unpublished writing, most of which consists of what are called his “journals and notebooks.”



Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks

Volume 3, Notebooks 1–15

Søren Kierkegaard

Edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble & K. Brian Söderquist, in cooperation with the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen

Volume 3 of this 11-volume edition of *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks* includes Kierkegaard's extensive notes on lectures by the Danish theologian H. N. Clausen and by the German philosopher Schelling, as well as a great many other entries on philosophical, theological, and literary topics. In addition, the volume includes many personal reflections by Kierkegaard, notably those in which he provides an account of his love affair with Regine Olsen, his onetime fiancée.

Cloth \$99.50 978-0-691-13893-0 February

Also Available

Volume 1: Journals AA-DD

The first of an eleven-volume series produced by Copenhagen's Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, this volume is the first English translation and commentary of Kierkegaard's journals based on up-to-date scholarship. It offers new insight into Kierkegaard's inner life. In addition to early drafts of his published works, the journals contain his thoughts on current events and philosophical and theological matters, notes on books he was reading, miscellaneous jottings, and ideas for future literary projects.

Cloth \$85.00 978-0-691-09223-5

Volume 2, Journals EE-KK

Volume 2 includes materials from 1836 to 1846, a period that takes Kierkegaard from his student days to the peak of his activity as an author. In addition to containing hundreds of Kierkegaard's reflections on philosophy, theology, literature, and his own personal life, these journals are the seedbed of many ideas and passages that later surfaced in *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Philosophical Fragments*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, *Stages on Life's Way*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and a number of *Edifying Discourses*.

Cloth \$99.50 978-0-691-13344-7

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Kierkegaard at the APA (?)

By Edward F. Mooney
Syracuse University

We can thank Steve Evans for giving us such a rich body of work, over a dozen books over three decades, nearly all on Kierkegaard. Protocol would have me consider at least an argument here or there from that impressive record, but as you may suspect from my title, I have other plans. I'll hover over the detail of Steve's work – I hope not too high -- to consider a question raised by its aims. There are six parts ahead.

One

Kierkegaard can offer us APA-style arguments and the materials to start them; it's good to lay them out in detail and test them, as Steve (and others) do. I'll say more about Kierkegaard's arguments, but I'll also spend considerable time on a question that has increasingly haunted me. The question is this: What if Kierkegaard wants his APA-style arguments to finally drop out of view? And if he wants them to disappear, Why? To what end?

Kierkegaard gives endless (and endlessly intriguing) arguments, and he also provides much else: jokes, lyricism, theatre, comedy, irony, tragedy, testimony, confession, parables, music criticism, sermons. Perhaps these can past muster within the argument culture of the APA as "speech acts", or as instances of what Stanley Cavell dubs "passionate utterance" -- speaking or writing that is "improvisation in the disorders of desire".¹ Such utterance serves as an invitation to realign mood, will, the heart, or imagination.

A wider focus on what is not argument shows Kierkegaard's extraordinary literary expressiveness, his poetry, striking narratives, and polemics. Jamie Ferreira quotes two writers who back the virtue of interweaving poetry and philosophy. From the poet's corner, we have Robert Frost: "*a poetic philosopher or a philosophical poet are my favorite kind of both*". And our philosopher is Wittgenstein: "*philosophy ought only to be written as a poetic composition*".²

Joining philosophy and poetry lets writing be maximally transformative. It effects transfigurations of imagination, intellect and consciousness, of passions and the heart. Poetic philosophy (or philosophical poetry) stirs the soul, excites the will, transforming our desires, apprehensions, and aspirations. It accomplishes "improvisation in the disorders of desire." For Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard this mix of writing can cure troubled souls. Accordingly, APA conservatives have two counts against Kierkegaard.³ First, he's a poet, and thus lacks philosophical rigor. Second, he attends to disorders of the soul – his own and a reader's. On most accounts, this moves him well outside the bounds of philosophical analysis.⁴

Argument formation is not the greatest good in the Kierkegaardian lexicon. The focus is moral, religious, or spiritual formation. Good argument aims for clarity, precision, and sound links among statements, but that's not the best game in town for Kierkegaard. He's taken with passions that promise change, with hope to counter despair, assurance to counter anxiety, patience or peace to counter sickness of soul. Kierkegaard writes through these passions, transfiguring consciousness toward a more open tilt toward neighbor and God, and toward the infinite ways we relate to the world and ourselves.

Two

Kierkegaard's categorical imperative is "*Change your life!*". If arguments play a considerable role in our work to hear and heed that counsel, all to the good! Not so long ago, APA conservatives assumed that Kierkegaard exiled rational argument from his kingdom. After all, he spoke approvingly of paradox and subjectivity, thus casting reason to the winds, and putting *him* beyond the pale -- beyond civil conversation generally. It's been a battle to invert this picture of an irrationalist Kierkegaard and bring him to the APA as a master of deflationary argument and analysis -- as well as a physician of the soul. Steve has been a driving force in establishing a Kierkegaard not a bit allergic to good argument. He has provided painstaking reconstructions of Kierkegaard's dialectical works, and more recently, of *Works of Love*. But the path was uphill all the way. Whatever cachet Kierkegaard had among theologians, existentialists, poets, or dramatists in the 50s and beyond, APA professionals took him to be the arch irrationalist.⁵

How things have changed! In the early '80s I suggested to a quite empty APA room that Kierkegaard's Abraham was not out of his mind, nor was Kierkegaard. Abe was undergoing what I called a moral-spiritual dilemma. He was the site of conflicting cares. Crowds next door were listening to Walter Kaufmann lament the scandal that Kierkegaard would support Abraham's climb up Moriah. By the mid-80s, out of reach of the APA, I gave my second Kierkegaard paper at St Olaf at a conference organized by Steve -- perhaps the first. There I suggested to a room quite pleasantly filled that Kierkegaardian subjectivity was no more dangerous than Harry Frankfurt's notion of second order cares or volitions, or Charles Taylor's view of self-interpretation. I could dress up Kierkegaard as a pillar of APA respectability.

Anyone wanting to make a philosophical case for Kierkegaard in those days would double-check their logic against Steve's, who served as a kind of intellectual conscience. His recent book continues his work to make Kierkegaard's arguments accessible. *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self* exhibits what's best in his engagements with the APA. To give you a sense of the scope and depth of these essays, let me quote at length from a recent piece in *The Review of Metaphysics*; you may recognize it as my own. (I know that Garff disapproves of self-plagiarism and repetition -- I hope it's excused in a pinch.)

Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self: Collected Essays gathers 19 chapters by an astute and seasoned Kierkegaard scholar. Evans takes up questions Plantinga or Alston might raise for religious epistemology (and to a lesser extent, ontology) as these are latent especially in *Unscholarly Postscript* and *Philosophical Crumbs*. Those familiar with "reformed epistemology's" response to classical foundationalism will be immediate beneficiaries in following the links to Kierkegaard, who thus gains a respectable voice in current analytical debates about justified belief, reliable perception, and the role of "properly basic beliefs". Kierkegaard is thus rescued from an extreme existentialist voluntarism or irrationalism (and from some skeptical variants of postmodernism). Evans also offers differentiated sketches of recent debates in metaphysics. At issue are realism and anti-realism, voluntarism in belief formation and formation of self.

Evans takes up Kierkegaard's definition of the self as "a relation to itself and to another," and its dovetail with recent preoccupations with "the other." The Abraham-Isaac story is not a valorization of absolute obedience to divine commands but a suggestion that ordinary civic ethics does not exhaust what can be asked of us. We find a corrective to MacIntyre's early view that Kierkegaard promotes Sartrean 'radical choice'. And Evans corrects the view that Kierkegaard's neighbor love denigrates preferential loves.

The book's great strengths map its inevitable limitations (*I continue here, more or less quoting*). Its evident excellence, drawing Kierkegaard into a powerful Anglophone tradition, guarantees that many issues will fly under the radar. Here are a variety of questions that an APA approach will miss:

- *What do poets and dramatists - W.E. Auden or Ibsen, for example -- find so alluring in Kierkegaard's evocation of faith and the self? (Auden published the first anthology of English translations in the early 50s.)*
- *The seeds of continental philosophy are sown in discussions in Paris in the '30s. Hegelians and Heideggerians, Levinas and Sartre triangulate their positions with constant reference to Kierkegaard. He was the beacon around which they clustered. What do these 'continentals' find in Kierkegaardian faith, morality, politics, and selfhood, and how does it contrast with Anglophone accounts?*
- *Kierkegaard's heartfelt, beautifully composed sermonic-like discourses give us an under-discussed religious dimension to "the" aesthetic. Why are poetry, narrative, and literary elaboration so central to explorations of virtue, faith, and religious passion?*
- *Are testimony or confession, prayer or edifying discourses, forms of 'passionate speech', speech that springs (as Cavell has it) as an "invitation to improvise in the disorder of desire"?*
- *Why is an autobiographical, first-personal frame so prominent in conveying moral-religious insight? Why are Rousseau's first-personal Reveries of a Solitary Walker or Kierkegaard's self-revealing Journals so philosophically effective?*

There's a quite general matter of the tone bound up with Kierkegaard's transformational aims.⁶ By and large, the philosophical discipline that Evans enlists seeks certainty, bit-by-bit, about realism, free will, properly basic belief, and so forth. It seeks a kind of philosophical certainty and clarity. Yet Kierkegaard often wants to *induce* uncertainties, to *destabilize* philosophical confidence as a precondition of self-transformation. Like Socrates, Kierkegaard is inclined ultimately to profess ignorance and disown philosophical knowledge. Argument, he intimates, will deliver far less than expected. We can't count on it to provide substantive declarative results sufficient to transfigure a soul. Kierkegaard aims to instill urgency around matters of life and death, to induce change in consciousness and orientation that only infrequently is related to argumentative success. To please intellect alone cannot be sufficient.

This ends my quoted reflections. We can return to ask where exactly we stand in determining Kierkegaard's status -- not just for the APA, but less parochially as a philosopher, broadly conceived?

Three

In my first years of writing I would never have called Kierkegaard a tragi-comic knight of interminable writing -- and withholding. Perhaps I shouldn't now! Back then, I proceeded on what seemed like a reasonable assumption. Because *Postscript*, for example, looked (from a certain angle) like a great philosophical tome, it should be read, I thought, as continuous with the big dialectical works of Hume or Kant. We could more or less disregard the rather quirky and amusing surface. Sidestepping the glitter and tears, you'd discover something any roughly analytical philosopher could respect. My task back then was to make the argumentative core more apparent. Of course, there was pathos, mimicry, exhortation, lyric, pure fun, anxiety, dynamite, jest and tragedy. But these seemed to me to be little more than superficial distractions, and frankly I didn't know what to do with them anyway.

At this early point in my philosophical education, I believed that Wittgenstein loved Kierkegaard because Wittgenstein could see a reputable, argumentative core at the heart of the Dane's writing, and that he liked what he saw. I now think I was utterly wrong on that score. Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard, as I now see it, are interested in something other than worthy arguments. That's the basis of their solidarity. They are writing to achieve worthy lives.

I wanted back then to have Kierkegaard preside over APA discussions. I didn't consider if he would *want* to be present. If I could show that Johannes de Silentio, properly paraphrased, could converse with the likes of Bernard Williams, Harry Frankfurt, or Charles Taylor then I would have achieved what's best in philosophy. I still think I achieved something, but I don't believe that my achievement stands for victory in reading Kierkegaard. The big battle lies elsewhere, wherever poetic, religious, and philosophical transformations take place. It's ongoing in and outside the halls of academia, on the streets, among families, and in solitude -- and it's never won.

Four

In a recent seminar on an old favorite of mine, *Fear and Trembling*, I set aside the search for “the” argument of the book in order to emphasize the difficulty of identifying exactly what sort of book was at hand. To that end, I provided two lists, the first, a number of possible argumentative aims, and the second, a number of possible genres the book might exemplify.

Argumentatively Kierkegaard might deliver:

- a critique of bourgeois market society (preface)
- a critique of direct communication (epigraph)
- a critique of religion as bible-based hero-worship
- an attack on rule-based and bureaucratic conventional morality
- a critique of holiness as nothing but absolute sovereignty, finding it in mothers weaning, shopkeepers strolling, knights sewing

- a critique of faux-religious voyeurism: keyhole fixations on blood-curdling terror and violence

- a critique of the Spectacular City – the flashing site of continuous bustle, circus, theater, not to mention commercial smoke and mirrors

- a critique of religious univocity in displaying the voices of terror, praise, satire, parable, evocation, detached analysis

- a critique of a univocal imagination of the tale: Abe dallies, rushes, stabs himself, asks God to do it, refuses, does it in despair or deception

And here is a list of the text's interpretative genres, each providing a different literary mood, hence a different 'world' as interpretative background:

- the carnivalesque and bawdy
- the fairy tale or fable
- the satirical or farcical
- the tragic
- the labyrinthine unfathomable
- the grotesque, the sublime
- the dialectical, the lyrical
- the fantastical and dreamlike
- the antinomian and apophatic
- the eu-catastrophical, the genre John Davenport credits as providing an unexpected finish that's

miraculously good⁷

Let me sum up this grave and motley array of genres with a whimsical and witty quote from Polonius announcing the itinerant players about to perform. Hamlet will give the perfidious King and Queen his “Mousetrap” (to expose them). I hear the thought that Kierkegaard provides both a mousetrap and what Polonius calls a “Poem Unlimited”. Here is the billboard for the players:

***THE BEST ACTORS IN THE WORLD,
EITHER FOR TRAGEDY, COMEDY, HISTORY, PASTORAL,
PASTORAL-COMICAL, HISTORICAL-PASTORAL, TRAGICAL-HISTORICAL,
TRAGICAL-COMICAL-HISTORICAL-PASTORAL,
SCENE INDIVIDABLE,
or
POEM UNLIMITED***

Five

The cool, might I say passionless, objective mood of APA-style and academic thinking does not sit well with Kierkegaard’s satire, fun, lyrics, anxiety, dynamite, and poetry. So how does one deal with them philosophically? The answer lies in acknowledging Kierkegaard’s first-personal address, which carries his imperative to change, and in acknowledging a scope to philosophy wide enough to secure autobiography, confession, or testimony, for instance. A wider philosophy could transfigure.

I hope it’s not *too* confessional to say that in meditating on Kierkegaard’s discourse “At a Graveside,” I’ve tried to imagine writing posthumously. I try to hear Hamlet, Faust, Quixote, and that consummate figure Socrates as Kierkegaard might hear them, as they become his essential others, prompting him, as it were, posthumously, from beyond the grave. Socrates, Faust, Hamlet or Quixote rise from their graves to give words for exploring tiny pockets and then vast panoramas of life. They speak from the dead -- or is it that we raise them from the dead – or that we pass over to share their ghostly realm to better understand them? Is philosophy *writing out our lives from beyond the grave – with the help of our essential (and ghostly) others?*

Less fantastically, it can seem, at least some of the time, that Kierkegaard is a loquacious Wittgenstein. His investigations are a series of fragmentary dialogues kept alive by the romantic ideal of saving us from abstraction, distraction, and disenchantment. He puts heart and soul back into ordinary life – back into moral, aesthetic, and religious life. To come closer to his *Postscript* idiom, Kierkegaard’s soul-forming writing is dialectical and mimic-pathetic. Its details are but a postscript or addendum to life -- for what matters is its existential contribution. His words are not *about* therapy, nor about metaphysics nor epistemology nor standard-issue ethics. They are not really “about”, but immersed *in*, your soul and mine. And in the end, as we know, our ministering interlocutor revokes his disquisitions. He leaves us to cope on our own.

Six

I hope I’ve explained the question mark at the end of my title, “Kierkegaard at the APA ? ” I don’t mean Kierkegaard should be refused entry, nor that there isn’t great value indeed in the rational reconstructions that Steve Evans (and others) so helpfully provide. My question is whether Kierkegaard would be altogether happy here.

Kierkegaard loved Hamlet, who communed with ghosts, was thoroughly literary, full of self-doubt, and as melancholy and anxious as Faust. And Kierkegaard loved the madness of that knight Quixote, jousting to bring old faith to a forgetful and cruel world. And he loved Socrates, on whom he conferred a ghostly post-pagan (perhaps mad) Christian status. As he put it, “I can't believe that Socrates has not become a Christian.” His task, he said, had always been to follow Socrates. I think that's right, and I'd only add that his task was *also* to follow Hamlet, Faust, and Quixote.

We should be able to dance with his ghosts, as he danced with these, and with death, writing somewhat in its embrace, as he did. We should be able to dance with his soul and ours, without looking over our shoulders for APA approval.

¹ See Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, Harvard 2005, p. 185, and my discussion, *On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemic, Lost Intimacy, and Time*, Ashgate, 2007, p. 53-6.

² Jamie Ferreira, *Kierkegaard*, Blackwell, 2009, p. 1.

³ The American Academy of Religion welcomes the philosophical-poetic more readily than the American Philosophical Association. The Modern Language Association can't escape writing that's transformative or poetic-philosophical (think of Dante, Thoreau, or Cervantes). Within the APA, the latter will not be heard, and even Plato or Hume can be stripped of literary or religious garments. Iris Murdoch, Sabina Lovibond, Cora Diamond, Martha Nussbaum, and Stanley Cavell herald a welcome breach of the walls that segregate literature's broadly religio-moral concerns from mainstream philosophy. And it's increasingly acknowledged that ancient philosophy was a spiritual discipline meant to purify a way of life. Philosophy *as* life allows us to follow Rick Furtak in linking Kierkegaard and Thoreau to the tradition of Socrates, the Stoics, and others. (See his *Wisdom in Love: Kierkegaard and the Ancient Quest for Emotional Integrity*, Notre Dame, 2005, and ed., *Thoreau's Philosophical Significance*, Stanford, forthcoming.)

⁴ To my chagrin, the very aspects of Kierkegaard's writing that make him valuable to me make him *persona non grata* in modern universities. Deans and department heads become upset as he disrupts the jurisdictions of philosophy, religion, literature and poetry, belonging nowhere and everywhere. A tragi-comic knight has no departmental fit. More disturbingly, he asks us to collude in care for the souls of those we attend, making an erotic-spiritual claim a secular university especially must disown.

⁵ Hegel, Fichte, Schiller and Nietzsche, Tillich, Sartre and that *bete noir*, Heidegger, had no standing either.

⁶ Richard Rorty ended a recent talk on William James' *Varieties* with the conclusion that although James' arguments were worthless, he would be endlessly read because he was clearly a good man and could teach us to be good. What's depressing is that Rorty delivered this in a final throwaway line. Something so important deserved more serious attention. How can good writers be evidently worthy persons, offer bad arguments, yet teach us to be good?

⁷ See John Davenport's "Faith as Eschatological Trust in *Fear and Trembling*," in *Kierkegaard on Ethics, Love, and Faith*, ed. Edward F. Mooney, Indiana University Press, 2008.

REVIEWS / RESEÑA

ALMEIDA, Jorge Miranda de;
PAULA, Marcio Gimenes de;
REDYSON, Deyve (org).
Soren Kierkegaard no Brasil.
Joao Pessoa: Idea, 2007.

Reseña – Marcio Gimenes de Paula
Universidade Federal de Sergipe
Brasil

Patricia Carina Dip
CONICET
Argentina

El progreso que puede observarse en los estudios de Kierkegaard en Brasil durante los últimos treinta años depende especialmente de la labor intelectual realizada por Ernani Reichmann (fallecido en 1984), quien introdujo las primeras discusiones de la obra del danés, y Alvaro Valls, profesor, investigador, divulgador y traductor de algunas obras de Kierkegaard al portugués. En ocasión del aniversario número 60 de su natalicio, un grupo de estudiosos, admiradores y amigos resolvieron rendirle un merecido homenaje publicando un *festschrift* en reconocimiento de su trabajo y dedicación.

Se trata de un volumen titulado *Soren Kierkegaard no Brasil*, compuesto por una introducción, 17 artículos y dos apéndices: uno sobre la obra del profesor Valls y otro sobre bibliografía kierkegaardiana en portugués. Consta de 354 páginas que ofrecen un panorama global de la producción, discusión e investigación en torno a la obra de Kierkegaard realizada en Brasil y Argentina durante la última década. En la Introducción, los organizadores presentan la historia de la recepción de la obra de Kierkegaard en portugués, especialmente en Brasil. En este contexto, sería imposible no colocar la obra de Valls junto a la labor pionera de Reichmann. Por eso, no fortuitamente, la introducción se llama *Soren Kierkegaard no Brasil: Reichmann e Alvaro Valls*.

Además del valor afectivo, la obra posee también un sentido teórico. Es un espejo que nos sirve para reflexionar en torno a la dimensión que los estudios kierkegaardianos han adquirido desde fines del siglo pasado en Latinoamérica. La obra del danés es discutida actualmente desde múltiples perspectivas de análisis que permiten observar el impacto que ha ejercido en áreas de discusión como la estética, la ética, la religión y la política. La voz danesa ya no clama sola en el desierto como hace tiempo atrás, sino que, gracias a las traducciones, comentarios y estudios dedicados a ella, ha trascendido los estrechos límites de la caricatura teológico-existencial para constituirse en el referente obligado de la constitución del pensamiento contemporáneo. ¿Cómo pensar hoy los fundamentalismos de distinto signo, el problema de la relación entre ciencia y religión, los dilemas morales de la época presente, el destino de la estética como forma de articulación del saber cognitivo, la diferencia entre educación y formación, sin Kierkegaard?

El volumen dedicado al reconocimiento de los esfuerzos realizados por el profesor Alvaro Valls para divulgar el pensamiento del autor danés responde este interrogante. El primer artículo, escrito por Deyve Redison, introduce una discusión de carácter antropológico en torno al problema de la paradoja entre la voluntad y la representación en Schopenhauer, Feuerbach y Kierkegaard. En el segundo artículo, Jorge Miranda analiza los desafíos que debe enfrentar quien intente pensar la obra de Kierkegaard desde una perspectiva educativa. En el

tercer artículo, Marcio Gimenes de Paula nos ofrece un análisis del discurso kierkegaardiano *Las preocupaciones de los paganos*.

Interrumpiendo la secuencia de trabajos dedicados a la obra kierkegaardiana, Luiz Rohden presenta, en el cuarto artículo, una propuesta provocadora que consiste en pensar la metafísica como experiencia poética. Kierkegaard establece aquí un diálogo fecundo con autores como Gadamer y Heidegger. En la misma línea, el trabajo de Marcelo Aquino se dedica, en el quinto artículo, a describir a Hegel como lector de Platón. Teniendo en cuenta que el danés, a pesar de todas las críticas realizadas al profesor de Berlín, jamás manifestó por él ni desprecio ni desconsideración, resulta alentador encontrar en un trabajo sobre Kierkegaard, un escrito de estas características.

El sexto artículo, escrito por Jonas Roos, retoma el análisis de textos kierkegaardianos en *estado puro*, centrándose en el problema de la angustia y el pecado original. Los artículos séptimo y octavo, son producidos por dos investigadoras argentinas: María José Binetti presenta un texto sobre el problema de la mediación y discute la filosofía de Kierkegaard en relación con Hegel; Patricia Dip hace un análisis marxista de la obra de Kierkegaard haciendo uso de categorías gramscianas que le permiten discutir la función intelectual del filósofo en su época. Silvia Saviano, en el artículo noveno, realiza un aporte interesante al discutir la relación de Kierkegaard con la literatura. Aborda la problemática de la soledad en el pensador danés y en la obra de Paul Auster. En el artículo décimo, Marcia Tiburi, realiza un homenaje al profesor Alvaro Valls, situándolo entre Sócrates y Cristo. Se trata de un texto personal de alguien que, como amiga y discípula, le rinde tributo a su maestro, sin descuidar por eso el rigor conceptual. En el artículo décimo primero, la investigadora Ilana Amaral trabaja el problema de la ironía en la *República* de Platón y la configuración de la misma en *El concepto de ironía* de Kierkegaard.

En el décimo segundo artículo, Inacio Pinzetta aborda la categoría kierkegaardiana de repetición. En el artículo siguiente, Gabriel Rossati reflexiona en torno a la temática de la industria literaria y juzga a Kierkegaard como crítico social. La relación entre Kierkegaard y Adorno es abordada en el artículo décimo cuarto por Fransmar Costa Lima. A continuación, Ricardo Gouvea se ocupa de analizar la teoría del romance literario en Kierkegaard. En el artículo décimo sexto, Daniel Nascimento aborda, con el título de *Entre el espejo y el fondo del lago*, las más variadas facetas del amor en la obra kierkegaardiana. Finalmente, en el último artículo Luis Onisto de Freitas investiga puntos de convergencia entre la obra de Kierkegaard y la producción cinematográfica de Ingmar Bergman.

El libro cuenta además con dos secciones finales, una de ellas dedicada a datos curriculares del homenajeado, tales como, trabajos publicados, traducciones, tesis y otras cuestiones relevantes; la otra, se trata de un apéndice que incluye las traducciones de Kierkegaard al portugués realizadas hasta el momento (incluyendo las obras impresas en Portugal) y un inventario completo de artículos y libros sobre la obra kierkegaardiana tanto de autores brasileños como de comentaristas traducidos al portugués. En suma, la obra puede pensarse como el reconocimiento de la síntesis intelectual y existencial de la labor realizada por el profesor Alvaro Valls en Brasil y América Latina.

Sørensen om Kierkegaard: Villy Sørensens udvalgte artikler om Søren Kierkegaard.
Edited and with an Afterword by Gert Posselt
Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2007

Reviewed by Poul Houe, University of Minnesota

I.

In the most recent survey of Danish Kierkegaard reception(s), Steen Tullberg's *Søren Kierkegaard i Danmark: En receptionshistorie* (2006),¹ few names figure more prominently, be it in terms of space allotted or praise bestowed, than that of Villy Sørensen (1929-2001), the foremost author and philosopher, critic and public intellectual of Danish letters in the post-WWII period. His collections of *Strange Stories* (tr. 1956) and *Tutelary Tales* (tr. 1988) from the 1950s and 1960s broke new ground, both aesthetically and philosophically, for a post-existentialist modernism in Danish literature, while volumes of interpretative essays from the same years dealt with *Digtene og dæmoner* (1959) and with precarious social and psychological choices and states of affairs under such evocative headings as *Hverken—eller* (1961) and *Mellem fortid og fremtid* (1969).

Doggedly grappling with dualisms and their implications for the individual, social, and political life of the age, Sørensen's work voices a holistic stance throughout and boldly propounds the intermediary, the in between scenario, the center, or the eye of the human storm as its intellectual priority. A collection of essays like *Uden mål—og med: Moralske tanker* (1973) epitomizes the kind of division to which this author responds most astutely; his analytical practice evokes the very synthesis (of reason and feeling) that is conspicuously absent in the debates under scrutiny. Both a critic of and an apologist for the Danish welfare state, Sørensen co-authored *Oprør fra midten* (1978) to articulate programmatically the pros and cons of this modern socio-cultural design and to drive his holistic points about a divisive modernity home politically.

Preceding this intervention, separate volumes about elected artistic and philosophical affinities—from *Kafkas digtning* (1968) to introductions to *Friedrich Nietzsche* (1963) and *Schopenhauer* (1969)—undergirded and overarched the spiritual complexity of Sørensen's writings. A number of later texts on pagan and biblical religion then expanded the involved dichotomies to transcendental levels. The Norse and Greek gods were treated, respectively, in *The Downfall of the Gods* (1982; tr. 1989) and *Apollons Oprør* (1989), and the divided wholeness inherent in Christianity appeared in *Jesus og Kristus* (1992).

Add to these titles a number of Danish and European works of poetry, fiction and philosophy from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century to which Villy Sørensen has tended in various shorter prose genres over four decades, and a nexus looms large between his modern humanism and a modernity of divide and rule; indeed, it can be traced back to antiquity in his seminal book on *Seneca: Humanisten ved Neros Hof* (1976). It is within this orderly variegated context that Sørensen's disquisitions on Kierkegaard play their role.

Initially they were published, in part or in full, in different venues, some of which were the books just mentioned, others that must be reckoned as less than widely known—prefaces, diaries, newspaper features, proceedings. Gyldendal publishers has done the general reader a service by making just about all of Sørensen's output on Kierkegaard available in one volume (comparable to the one issued with Sørensen's collected pieces on Hans Christian Andersen just a couple of years ago). Bypassing chronological considerations, *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* opens with an autobiographical section which brings the pieces to be assembled later in the book to the table; next follows a section with introductions to individual Kierkegaard titles: *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, and *The Concept of Anxiety*; then comes one section on general perspectives—the existential, the comical, and the *folkelige* (not to be confused with the popular!)—and another on more special perspectives; and finally there is a section devoted to Kierkegaard's relation to Hans Christian Andersen, Karl Marx, Schopenhauer, and Kafka in Sørensen's work.

Harking back to Steen Tullberg's discussion of Sørensen in his book from the year before, a topical horizon of expectations awaits the present volume. Inspecting this horizon will intimate what ranks Sørensen's reception of Kierkegaard on a par with that of scholars like Georg Brandes, the two Jørgen Bukdahls, Joakim Garff, Aage Henriksen, Harald Høffding, Aage Kabell, K.E. Løgstrup, Olesen Larsen, Johannes Sløk, and Niels Thulstrup. On Tullberg's view there are three things.

First, there is Sørensen's prefaced and timely editions of individual titles like *Begrebet Angest* (1960). Second, there is his personal use, rather than academic interpretation, of Kierkegaard's aesthetics, which, he argues against Aage Henriksen, lends rhetorical credence to Kierkegaard's philosophical writings without shaping their conceptual inventory artistically (112). As a corollary, Sørensen takes specific issue with Kierkegaard's distinction between the aesthetic and the ethical; more generally, being both an artist and a philosopher himself, he even draws a line of his own between art and philosophy that is both different from and inspired by the line the older philosopher-poet draws between the two.

Third, as a proponent of modern welfare state democracy, Sørensen is not surprisingly critical of Kierkegaard's indifference toward the ethical sphere and the idea of political equality. His criticism extends to the notion that equality at best is everyone's subordination to an essence of life that is not of this world. So, if it is true (as Jørgen Bukdahl puts it) that Kierkegaard's struggle with the Danish church had a social dimension, it is all the more important for Sørensen to challenge his precursor's view of the social as merely external noise. In one of his notes, Tullberg cites Sørensen's book about Jesus and Christ for precisely the point that "the difference between the ethical and the uniquely religious is—that the religious is the uniquely ethical."² That said, Sørensen proves not to be a neo-radical commissar but quite an open-minded reader of Kierkegaard who appreciates the cognitive value of religious and mythological symbols.

In his Afterword to *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* (277-288), Gert Posselt, the volume's editor, attempts to dovetail the former's dual inclinations with the latter's putative one-sidedness (281). Kierkegaard's influence was compelling but to a degree, at which point Sørensen found other sources of inspiration (Jaspers, Jung, etc.) (282); and he always "translated" the impulses he received into broader, more integrated patterns of current import (287). The stages are cases in point. The aesthetic has its parallel in a form of personal development; the ethical in a modern sense of the social and political; and the religious in a rather vague correspondence to modern metaphysics, the site for questions about the meaning of life as well as for artistic activity and the reality of dreams (284). This is quite unlike Kierkegaard's own religiosity, which Sørensen deems intellectually studied, or governed under the aegis of Governance (282 f.). In Sørensen's shorthand, the three Kierkegaardian stages end up as the first, second, and third personal pronoun in Danish and other European languages (285).

Beyond that, the rational modernity of Denmark's post-WWII middle class welfare state and society looms on the ideological horizon of Sørensen's reception of Kierkegaard. His textual theater and its refined abstractions and masks, pseudonymities and other means of indirect communication, enthrall his observer less than ever so rare occurrences of genuine emotions (285). And while Sørensen, ignoring second-hand introductions, encounters these qualities in direct dialog with the Kierkegaardian oeuvre, his critique of its issues with the clamorous ethical sphere espouses a new ethical sensibility emerging alongside the welfare state. Interpersonal relations increasingly become front and center in the lives of the up-and-coming middle class—and eventually such relations invade academic treatises as concerns about the everyday interdependence between you and I and the other. This is where the single individual's continuity comes true, no matter how (in)completely this individual's life may be constituted by its relation with God.

Still, in Posselt's account even such expansive academic contextualizations often go hand in hand with biases against the world outside the contextual box that are as strong as those held by the one-sided genius inside it; and so the reader of *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* is once again returned to this volume's after all more holistic mode of reception. Posselt's Afterword ends, not accidentally, with some Sørensen quotes from 1994, not specifically about Kierkegaard and thus not included in the volume's main text, but pointing to an applicable

distinction between *forstand* (intellect) and *fornuft* (reason, senses). The terms are hard to render precisely, but they do clarify Sørensen's point.

Playing on the Danish vocabulary, he reminds us that people can *komme til fornuft*, come to their senses, but not to their intellect; and they can *gå fra forstanden*, lose their intellectual brainpower, but not (in Danish!) their reason or senses. The reason (!) being that (only) reason is grounded in feelings, as the English "senses" somewhat suggests. A reasonable person is whole, because grounded (emotionally), while a pure intellectual, lacking such grounding, is but half-human. "Only thought, not the personality can relate to a paradox; only for the isolated thought and not for the complete person is passion the highest form of life," reads an entry in the 1949 diary (26), while a subsequent entry from 1950 states how Kierkegaard in 1835 relegated the intellect to philosophy and identified religion with consciousness of redemption (33). Thanks to its grounding and wholeness, reason and its senses can synthesize and grasp connections, both clear and murky, whereas the intellect must subdivide and overlook everything that smacks of obscurity. Only a reasonable and sensible being has the ability to come to her senses, that is, to become who she is!

Implied, if not explicitly stated, in Posselt's Afterword, is that both Kierkegaard and some of his academic readers might have aspired to Sørensen's holistic endeavor, had it been at their disposal. Is that to say, what Posselt almost says, that few but Sørensen could argue the holistic case so whole-heartedly? Is, in other words, his reception of Kierkegaard stated precisely, broadly by Tullberg, specifically by Posselt? At best, only the main text in *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* can furnish a final verdict; and that assumes that such finality is not an illusion in its own right.

Like all instances of reception, this review is (at least) of the second order: a reception of Sørensen's reception of Kierkegaard. Where do such constructions lead? Perhaps not to no end, but certainly only as high and far as communication permits. To be sure, both solipsism and massive acts of god could cause such intersubjective exchanges to come apart, which *would* spell the end of the reception tower of babel. But though Kierkegaard and Sørensen were not always on the same page, a calamitous reception failure was never in the cards. In fact, the scale of their communicative differences indicates a potential for broad and solid growth within Kierkegaard's (Danish) *receptionshistorie*.

II.

After pointing to Villy Sørensen as one of those readers for whom Kierkegaard was truly "an author's author," Tullberg hastens to add that his survey will not pursue "this important matter" further, though it "deserves an inquiry of its own." Suffice it to say, he says, that several Danish authors, Sørensen for one, perhaps, are influenced more by Kierkegaard in their creative writing than in their explicit treatments of his work.³

Sørensen om Kierkegaard validates the point, and Gert Posselt concurs. Some quotes in his Afterword from Sørensen's other writings bear significantly on Kierkegaard, whose stocks in the absurdist tales and stories are not negligible. While Posselt could have tracked the influence more closely, it would have taken a broader selection of primary texts to adequately account for Kierkegaard's impact on Sørensen's fiction. Besides, no author's Kierkegaard reception per se can be of special concern to *Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter*. Mindful of such terms of limitation, I keep Sørensen's other writings in mind and cross the borders between sections of *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* simply to watch how the old "author's author" is faring on this set of newly assembled reception pieces.

Posselt rightly notes a distinction between Villy Sørensen's own ethics and his critical understanding of Kierkegaard's: Committed to an ethical vibrancy grounded in feelings and ramifying into politics, Sørensen understandably disputes the noisily compromised ethical stage in some of Kierkegaard's writings but also tends to hypostatize and equate it with Kierkegaard's entire ethical outlook. True enough, a schism between the two authors' takes on ethics does surface early and widen later in Sørensen's career. Yet, on closer inspection the relation between the opposites is less confrontational than dialogic.

An early diary entry, from Oct. 1949, draws the line between feelings within the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious spheres. It stretches from “nothing” to “love” to “God” (22 f.). A secularist at heart, Sørensen settles for the middle ground, although it is quite unsettling. The ethical primacy of love is consigned to feelings by treacherously unctuous thoughts. As much as Sørensen envisions thoughts and feelings working in tandem, he also recognizes the intricacy of their companionship. In two pieces from 1988, he quotes B from *Either/Or* to the effect that the ethical must be lived and not poeticized (14, 72), a way, perhaps, of mobilizing the pseudonymous ethicist against the authorship’s overall inclination to abstractly sanitize the ethical spectacle.

In *Sørensen om Kierkegaard’s* selection of diary entries, our critic struggles to resolve his precursor’s dilemma on his—Sørensen’s—terms. Granted (by Kierkegaard, Feb. 1958!) that feeling is not a source of error, but the only source of truth (45), Sørensen argues (in the longest diary entry, from Jan. 1950) that while feelings would rule out purely intellectual approaches, an artistic production based on such feelings would be unthinkable as Kierkegaard was not in possession of them. An attempted compromise, backed by Poul Møller, supposedly was *stemning*: tone, mood, or atmosphere (34 f.). But on Sørensen’s view, Kierkegaard’s ethics remained artificial, if not based on the very mediation its own premises outlawed (60).

Contradicting the stance of his (tendentiously redacted!) pre-texts, Sørensen claims that his encounter with Kierkegaard’s ethics was initially a dramatic challenge to choose or lose oneself. The situation was an either-or (15)—in fact either ethical concentration or aesthetic distraction (70)—and it raised the added possibility that the one and only other, who perhaps was not the only other after all, could not even be chosen (17 f.), a troubling ethical question for someone in love and out of his mind who sets out to find himself in relation to the loved one (65); and clearly the aestheticist’s reflection is no solution as he is merely in love with himself falling in love (66).

The ethical in Kierkegaard that so attracts Villy Sørensen is a dangerously shaky ground. While adverse to the ethical, the Kierkegaardian aestheticist has affinity to the religious, as has the ethicist himself (73); and the reason, again, is historical and political. While Sørensen associates the ethical with a legitimate socio-political order in postwar Denmark, B in *Either/Or* finds the ruling order of the day out of order (75); meanwhile, in *A Literary Review* societal authenticity gives way to dissolving reflection, while revolutionary fervor (to which B is generally opposed [77]) yields to aesthetics and political censorship alike (76). In a review (of Johannes Sløk’s book on existentialism) Sørensen makes the self-serving point that only individuals already enjoying considerable freedoms can afford to ignore societal problems the way Kierkegaard did. Sørensen puns that because societal development since the mid-19th century has facilitated still greater individual freedom, it has rendered Kierkegaard increasingly appreciated by contradicting his view of societal development (206 f.).

All the same, Sørensen is puzzled that an existential author like Kierkegaard (or Judge William) can aim for a social, not just a personal, self and yet fail to propel existentially concerned people’s concern toward the social as well, especially since the social aim is never fully reached (207). One reason for this bewilderment may be the identification of Kierkegaard with the Judge; another, the slippery semantics of “the social.” In an essay from 1962, Sørensen argues that Kierkegaard actually aims for a golden mean between the extremely social and individual. The social always offends him and prods him to undermine its superficiality by reaching for deeper strata of human existence; but extreme individualism, being nothing but uncommitted private sentimentality, provokes him as much (190).

Worse even, such extreme opposites aggravate each other. Social measures within modernity (even by Kierkegaard’s standard) advanced the isolation of the individuals they were meant to benefit; and democracy as a social order similarly diffused ethical responsibility, which Sørensen, making current use of Kierkegaard once again, construes to be a problem for the individual of the 1840s that has later become a problem for the many in welfare state modernity (78-79, 109). In a review of theologian K.E. Løgstrup’s critique of Kierkegaard, he

notes that what Kierkegaard perceived to be the human condition overall, his 20th century existentialist and atheist followers regard more narrowly as the condition of contemporary bourgeois society (221).

For all its commendable nuance, the distinction that Sørensen brings to bear between individual and social dimensions of Kierkegaard's ethical realm does not bridge the century between the authors. Like most efforts to negotiate Kierkegaard's dilemmas in light of his own, this one, too, leaves the negotiator with the prospects of universal religiosity as the only substitute for a common ground (191). It is by no means a middle ground, let alone the middle classes of modern Denmark; and to the extent it is a populated ground, Kierkegaard's empathy is with "the people," his preferred others (at least as long as they appear as single individuals and not in mobs or crowds), and not with the educated bourgeoisie, technically *Melleminstanserne*, the "middle strata" or the "intermediaries" between the once creative spirits and the people: the professors and the clergy, or worse: the press (194-95).

To his reservations about Kierkegaard's ethics (and about the religious stage, too) comes the challenge of relating directly to the absolute, which was one that young Sørensen failed to meet. Only indirectly, "through symbols, in art, eros and religion," was such an encounter possible; and symbols cannot be chosen, they choose the "chooser" (18 f.). The whole paragraph is remarkably candid about its author's mode of adaptation. What otherwise had to be teased out of different contexts, the above passage about symbols and art imparts unreservedly, namely, that while Sørensen gladly appropriates the stages, he only does so primarily on the terms of his own holistic equilibrium and only secondarily on Kierkegaard's categorical terms of either-or. This seems to contradict the ethical imperative to choose and not just know oneself (in whatever context), since simply knowing, like abstract thinking, falls short of acting. The point is underscored elsewhere (68 f.) when Sørensen cites B to the effect that only problems of abstract thought can be seen in isolation; in a whole person, thoughts are an integrated part (and wedded to the person's feelings).

But there is yet another implication stemming from the passage on page 18 f. When Sørensen submits to the transcendent forces of symbols and art rather than to Kierkegaard's religious absoluteness, he makes a self-definition of the artist over against the philosopher. In his 1950 diary he compares artistic and religious inspiration and notes as the only difference that the former is momentary and enthusiastic, the latter lasting and passionate (28). But the distinction gains momentum in a 1959 piece about *The Magic Flute*. Kierkegaard holds that music, such as Mozart's, can fully express the aesthetic and the sensory, but not the ethical and spiritual; art at its best is a matter of the aesthetic, although the artist is an exceptional aesthete who puts the normal in perspective (97 f.). Not simply so, replies Sørensen, whose sense of art incorporates the ethical and whose balanced notion of the existential stages allows for art to articulate a purely human striving toward self-realization, regardless of how conflict-ridden and unsuccessful the process may turn out (88, 91), as he makes clear in a text from 1963 (163 f.).

Kierkegaard's Christian striving towards self-realization, on the other hand, is conflict-ridden beyond the artistic; unlike Sørensen's version it is fundamentally at odds with the world of mundane and bourgeois conformity (80, 104 f.). This does not preclude a certain agreement between the authors. Conformity is another word for the Hegelian systematics from which Kierkegaard sought to rescue the single individual, and Sørensen is the first to acknowledge that systematic threats to individuality have never been greater than in welfare state modernity (135 f.). In fact, it confounds him, in an excerpt from his book on Kafka, that so psychologically subversive a writer as Kierkegaard would lodge his departure from contemporary social and ethical norms in either an uncommitted aesthetics or a purely religious spirituality (262 f.). What comforts Sørensen the critic is solely that faith by virtue of the absurd eventually made Kierkegaard believe that the world could be different, as opposed to Kafka, who didn't harbor any faith by virtue of the absurd (52), but absurdly believed the world already was different (273).

This play on words happens to conclude *Sørensen om Kierkegaard* and leaves us with food for thought that has yet to pass the test of digestion. A text in the volume that deals more conclusively with Kierkegaard's ethic's is

actually Sørensen's review of K.E. Løgstrup's *Confrontation with Kierkegaard* (from the same year as the book on Kafka). Løgstrup challenges Kierkegaard's overt insistence on self-realization through Christian suffering (213) and counters with an emphasis on concern for others—without much ado, but with all the more sovereign spontaneity. The strength of this ethical imperative, which sits well with Sørensen, is its plain superfluity (217-18). It opens a gate to forgetting oneself that Sørensen finds wide-open in Schopenhauer, who psychologized the ethical, but hardly open in Kierkegaard's self-centered ethical psychology (256, 258).

III.

Kierkegaard's stages, writes Sørensen, are attitudes to life that become accessible once childhood innocence has been lost. Becoming oneself as an adult requires losing oneself as a child and reclaiming one's past on new terms. It is called repetition, as opposed to recollection of the lost innocence (96), which is all that can be expected on the aesthetic stage where *Repetition's* Constantius moves; or rather, moves as an ironist who, seeing through the aesthetic, at least notices an ethical possibility of repetition (94-95) that trumps the aesthetic alternative of "crop rotation" (119). But this is not all.

Sørensen proceeds to account for the difference between pagan and Christian repetition, the former being recollection and continuity in time, the latter being transcendent and eternal and thus a breach with time that will only be healed in the "fullness of time," or the moment when the God-man enters time and puts a decisive hiatus between past and present (102-03). The "fullness of time" is the Christian moment, not just recollection, of truth (120), because it reveals to humans that they are not just temporal compositions of soul and body, but parts of eternal spirit (140)—and thus of a life of suffering in the spirit of His suffering in this world (215). True repetition, still according to Constantius in *Repetition*, is neither aesthetic nor ethical; it is eternity! (117).

Having said as much, Sørensen has actually said little that any decent 'Kierkegaard for Beginners' could not have said; so his punch lines remain to be seen. But if the "fullness of time" has lost its Christian edge, if not its full meaning, over time, perhaps the chasm between innocent feeling and "established" adult intellect has become both more insurmountable and more general. It is conceivable that the slackening of religious norms can have made them easier to depart from. But is it not also conceivable that the division between feeling and intellect has become so ingrained in the age of the secular modern welfare state that the rebellious young man in *Repetition* is but the exception to confirm that the rest of us have more or less acquiesced to this division as an inevitable state of affairs (108 f.)? Villy Sørensen has found his own dilemma as a postwar Danish (European) intellectual foregrounded in Kierkegaard's work.

As is also well-known by students of Kierkegaard, repetition is one of the trickiest and most multi-faceted concepts in the author's inventory, and Sørensen is not unaware of its ambiguities, although they are his as much as Kierkegaard's (41). His most direct reference to *Repetition* is where it says: "when one says that life is repetition, one says: actuality, which has been, now comes into existence" (123)⁴; yet his main interest in this and Kierkegaard's other abstract categories is that they are "visible in every important work of art," which thereby "corroborates Kierkegaard's philosophy" and does so by reconciling "the aesthetic with the 'dogmatic,' the accidental with the essential" (126).

While repetition so understood may not have offset reconciliation behind the covers of the pseudo-artistic *Repetition* itself, it has likely inspired the modern idiom of Villy Sørensen and other artists (127) and has globally reconciled introverted philosophies in the East with extroverted ones in the West (129). And combined with Kierkegaard's rejection of artistic harmonies as premature, his own harmonic concords may, in Sørensen's estimate, have contributed to the disharmonic realism of much art that was in vogue around 1960 when Sørensen introduced the new edition of *Begrebet Angest* (130). If not a philosophical novel, *Repetition* (92) is deemed the work of a philosopher who is enough of a poet not to subject his concepts to a logical, but to a psychological treatment (92). Constantius's objective is primarily to feel the matters at issue, the fullness of experience and sensation (93), i.e., an aspect of "repetition" that is rarely appreciated in the scholarly literature.

But it is all the more a quality that Sørensen brings to modern European literature as he approaches some of its seminal figures with Kierkegaardian concepts as lenses in his reading glasses. Why he selected the three early 20th century novelists, Danish Harald Kidde, German Thomas Mann, and Austrian Herman Broch, none of whom is represented in *Sørensen om Kierkegaard*, to exemplify recollection, the breach/the Fall, and repetition, respectively, in his major collection of essays on Poets and Demons, and why and how this volume moves well beyond the literary to end with chapters on the welfare state, on personality, and ultimately on the fallen Europe, lies well beyond the scope of this review. That, however, does not mean, as I hope to have stressed, that there is no reason for others to consider Kierkegaard “the author’s author” as a structural force behind works of Sørensen (and others) that are neither fiction nor critically devoted to Kierkegaard per se. As I approach the conclusion to my review of Sørensen’s explicitly Kierkegaardian essays, I venture to pinpoint some boundaries, strengths and weaknesses, of his intellectual transformation of Kierkegaardian impulses.

Most noticeable is his contraction of the plurality of Kierkegaardian pseudonyms to more or less one Kierkegaard, and his conversion to semi-secular humanistic use of Kierkegaard’s religious vocabulary and sensibility. The two operations often overlap. In the introduction to his 1988 edition of *Enten/Eller*, he cites the letter from Kierkegaard to Regine where the author speaks of recollection as his true element (83). Sure, but so what? Does the statement affect the entire authorship, or is it, taken out of context, just the writer’s sentiment in one particular situation at one particular moment in time? One spirited voice—picked up by another creative mind? Sørensen raises the question about the aesthetic and poetic at the end of this piece, and without answering it gives the impression once again that the poetic in Kierkegaard is not as exclusively aesthetic as he (but not Sørensen!) would have it (84).

Then there is the question of faith in Kierkegaard, which, admittedly, is as abstract to Sørensen as he claims it is to Kierkegaard (46). He returns predictably to the “religious repetition, a movement ‘by virtue of the absurd,’ which to Kierkegaard is also the definition of faith” (101 and quite similarly 122). No, it is not. It’s one of many steps on faith’s way in Kierkegaard, and one which a number of existentialists and secular modernists with a love-hate relation to absurdities have found especially endearing. The paradox, the absurd, that which cannot be interpreted, are the very moorings of interpretation in Kierkegaard’s religious writings, according to the 1958 diary, and Sørensen fails to see the aesthetic quality in these works. Meanwhile, he fully respects religion as myths and wants their symbolic representation of the laws of the psyche to stand out in clarity (46-47). Rather old hat, even at the time of writing.

Sørensen does acknowledge, in one of his earliest diary entries (1949) that for the person of faith, faith is not a paradox; but then the paradox soon returns and faith subsides with it (24). He could as well have cited Papers (X.6 B 79) for saying that “Faith’s passion is the only thing that overcomes the absurd” or have continued quoting Holmes Hartshorne, where he writes that “it does not follow that subjective passion *is* faith—at least not Christian faith. Christian faith is a response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.”⁵ But ever since his early diaries (1952), Sørensen has identified existential philosophy with a philosophy of interpretation(s), appropriating Kierkegaard’s categories about the Fall and the breakthrough of the Moment to serve clarification of philosophy’s own situation (43).

The question of interpretation lies behind Villy Sørensen’s modus operandi, both as he simplifies the range of pseudonymity and revises the import of the religious. Yet an example from *Repetition* shows repetition, the basis for the pseudonymous Constantius’s philosophy, breaking into the young man’s life. The situation is absurd in that he is most unhappy where he should be most happy; but this is “the engagement situation” to which Sørensen has connected the thematics of Nordic medieval ballads,⁶ and so his special emphasis on the absurd in *Repetition* is instrumentally in sync with his own work (124).

Freedom, too, is for Sørensen a matter of interpretation; it is a freedom to interpret even given internal and external circumstances as willed or caused by oneself (147). But where does Kierkegaard come down on the issue? For Sørensen the question is rather how we administer the man’s legacy, which has never been more

precious than today, provided we prevent its dogmatic notion of original sin from obscuring his psychological insight into the angst, self-alienation, and divided selves, that have so dominated modernistic art (150, 139). For steeped in our positivistic sin, we might fall for the temptation to shun responsibility for the original sin that for Kierkegaard was the root of human freedom (146); its dogmatic character of “original” may cause us to say ‘not ours’ and to treat it as destiny (137), which would be the ultimate sin of not willing to be oneself (150-51, 161).

Both the discussion itself and its implications for interpretation hark back to the clash between the old Greeks and the new Christians. To the Greeks eternity meant freedom to make one’s own decisions and choose one’s destiny (142), but Christians’ disharmonious consciousness of sin splits the harmonious unconsciousness of the pagans (143) and pummels original sin as a self-inflicted human condition that needs divine intervention for its relief. To avert this rupture between earthly flesh and heavenly spirit, as it was attempted in Plato’s *eros* and Hegel’s philosophy, means for Kierkegaard to compromise the interpretation of life (144-45). His contempt for the insipid masses is rooted in the same belief (148), to which Sørensen, not entirely unsympathetic, adds his own mid-20th century notion that popular well-being may persist at the expense of true self-realization. It cannot be a coincidence that sickly works of art are particularly challenging to so-called healthy people, who obviously seek to avoid them, albeit to no avail (149).

And talking about true self-realization, “keeping the wound of negativity open,” (156, 159) it is in Kierkegaard’s case the very condition of possibility for truth, the willingness to be who one is. Aesthetic truth may be to spontaneously be who one is, and ethical truth to consciously become who one becomes. But only when the lost spontaneity has been reclaimed in light of faith in the God in Christ that posited the individual in the first place, is religious truth to be had (63-64). Sørensen doesn’t mention, but could have mentioned, how a writer like Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen elaborated Kierkegaard’s distinction by proclaiming that not on your face but on your mask shall I know you, since your face only tells me who you are, while your mask tells me who you can become. But he does quote Kierkegaard’s 1835 desire to live a complete human life, rooted not in objective thinking, but in innermost existence and subjective truth (188 f.), or in what Jørgen Bukdahl refers to as a self-realization in relation to the general, not just to private inclinations and experiences (193).

IV.

It stands to reason that Sørensen looks with satisfaction as Kierkegaard’s self-realization reaches beyond the individualistic and into the existential in general (157), and that he—Sørensen—conveniently omits to mention that self-realization in Kierkegaard is ultimately Christian. It shows that Kierkegaard’s truth is in the eyes of his beholder. And the way his truth serves the latter is often as a contrast to the artistic or philosophical truth in other writers’ bodies of work. For instance, Kierkegaard may have loved recollection, but Sørensen knows it was an unhappy love affair, much unlike the happy recollection of Hans Christian Andersen. Hence Kierkegaard’s critique of Andersen’s inadequate view of life, his overflowing privatism, his self-pitying genius. Yet unlike his critic, Andersen needed a view of life less than Kierkegaard, for he had extroversion and coherent recollection where Kierkegaard had but an introvert, disjointed memory (230-42).

In Karl Marx we witness a fanatic whose one-sidedness matches Kierkegaard’s; the one’s eternal bliss is the other one’s phantasmagoria (245). Still, societal alienation in Marx overrides the individual human being to whom Kierkegaard’s self-realization pertains, presumably one reason why Kierkegaard’s popularity has increased with societal wealth; as material problems decrease psychological ones are on the rise, and people have more time to address them (248).⁷ Meanwhile, liberation from life’s suffering in Schopenhauer is a matter of grace and mercy, whereas suffering in Kierkegaard’s case derives from the ethical demand and the individual choice, while liberation only occurs—thanks again to God’s grace—after this individual has been crushed by the demand and the choice (257). Last, but not least, in Kafka, with whose stories Sørensen’s have been quite sparingly compared, the elusive objective is a general harmony of individuals and society (268), a state of affairs so at odds with Kierkegaard’s outlook that Sørensen, with an affinity like Kafka’s, rather yields to an opponent like Kierkegaard.

Why Sørensen's introduction to Nietzsche does not employ comparisons to Kierkegaard (as his *Schopenhauer* in the same introductory series does) is not entirely clear. Only by the end of the Nietzsche book is there a passing comparison between *The Moment* and Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, although plenty of relevant points of comparison besides this final touch down present themselves, and so Nietzsche is not among the cultural icons featured in *Sørensen om Kierkegaard*. Nor is Freud, on whose work Sørensen elsewhere has written briefer introductory essays without Kierkegaardian references; here, too, the psychological stamina of both authors could be expected to have caught their critic's double vision, as it has caught the comparative eye of others. But let's not dwell on the missing. There are words of wisdom about so much else, humor, irony, and a host of other aspects of Kierkegaard's writing, in the volume at hand that one can truly call it a welcome contribution to the history of Kierkegaard reception in Denmark.

Sørensen was an unapologetic neo-radical in the cultural tradition of Georg Brandes (who penned the first book-length study of Kierkegaard). But he has a more generous, and less self-promoting, personality behind his critical practice. His depth and mature alertness, his gift for combining philosophical penetration and artistic creation, allowed him to connect with several central figures and themes in European art and culture, Kierkegaard not least among them. While Sørensen's legacy will not be a strictly scholarly one, and certainly not in the conventional academic sense, it will be one of intertextual dialog on behalf of himself and several critically elected affinities. Most remarkable is the fact that his many-sided exposure rarely diminished his independence and ability to discriminate between the many deep impulses he received. This has assured his readings of Kierkegaard a formative influence upon his own generation; whether they will hold sway over a comparable swath of younger readers is another question.

For the times, they're changing, and neo-radical intellectuals beholden to the social welfare state are filling today's curio cabinets. Villy Sørensen was a more exceptional product of the postwar era's humanistic Utopia and tutelary social technology than most, but a product he was, both as a fellow traveler and pungent critic of cultural radicalism; and so when (much of) this ideology is no longer,⁸ an either-or distinction that Sørensen famously made, becomes one from which his own legacy is not exempt. Between Past and Future, he said in his book with this title, there is either a dash or a period. Will he—and his appropriation of Kierkegaard—be the dash that carries over, or will he be the punctuation period that marks the end of what his own time period stood for?

¹ Tullberg, Steen, *Søren Kierkegaard i Danmark: En receptionshistorie* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2006).

² Tullberg, 151 (note 225); translations in the text are mine unless otherwise noted.

³ Tullberg, 85.

⁴ Cf. *KW*, VI, 149 (Hong tr.).

⁵ Both quotes from Hartshorne, M. Holmes, *Kierkegaard, Godly Deceiver: The Nature and Meaning of His Pseudonymous Writings* (New York, Columbia UP, 1990), 10 and 43, respectively.

⁶ For Sørensen's own mention of how he had "discovered how the Kierkegaardian concept of anxiety matched the problematics related to the medieval ballads, and had used it in that context," see his *Talt: Et interview ved Finn Hauberg Mortensen* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2002), 98.

⁷ See also Sørensen, *Talt*, *ibid.*

⁸ About the end of cultural radicalism in Denmark, see Rune Lykkeberg's recent *Kampen om sandhederne: Om det kulturelle borgerskabs storhed og fald* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008); see also Arne Hardis's interview, "Blindt had," with Lykkeberg about his book in *Weekendavisen* (Sept. 19, 2008) and Frederik Stjernfelt's review of it, "Smagsdommernes smagsdommer," in *Weekendavisen (Bøger)* (Sept. 26, 2008).

Merold Westphal, *Levinas and Kierkegaard in Dialogue*
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008
Xiii + 185 pgs. ISBN 13:978-0-253-21966-4 (pbk). \$22.95.

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John Caputo once wrote that one of the great joys of working in continental philosophy is having frequent occasion to read essays by Merold Westphal. Westphal's new book, *Levinas and Kierkegaard in Dialogue*, proves that Caputo's assessment continues to be right on target. This is a truly remarkable book that brings together eight essays by Westphal that are all entirely devoted to inaugurating a conversation between two of the most important philosophical and religious thinkers of the past two centuries.

Westphal makes clear from the outset that a dialogue between Kierkegaard and Levinas is not something that seems like an obviously productive endeavor upon first glance. After all, isn't Kierkegaard the great champion of the individual alone before God and Levinas the foremost philosopher of the encounter with others? Doesn't Kierkegaard dismiss ethics in favor of religion and Levinas reduce religion to nothing more than ethics? While Westphal does admit that these two thinkers do have fundamental disagreements about key issues of philosophical inquiry, theological content, and existential practice, he persuasively argues that to ignore the points of intersection between them would also be to fail to deeply read them as united by the idea that, as selves, "we are addressed" (2).

It is here that the real brilliance of Westphal's book lies: by bringing Levinas and Kierkegaard into dialogue, he demonstrates that the stereotypical readings of both thinkers (as expressed in the questions above) are fundamentally flawed and in need of substantial revision. The dialogical engagement allows Westphal to simultaneously contest the mis-readings of Kierkegaard as being unconcerned about ethics and Levinas as really not needing the notion of "God" at all. Westphal makes it difficult to continue to see Kierkegaard and Levinas as essentially at odds due to their respective religious traditions (Christianity/Judaism), their philosophical persuasions (Proto-existentialist/Neo-Phenomenological), or their historical location (Nineteenth/Twentieth Century). Rather, the differences between them are better understood as internal disagreements occurring within an overarching harmony regarding four key issues: epistemology, theology, subjectivity, and sociality. These four issues map onto the four parts of the book: Revelation, God, Heteronomy, and Reversal.

Part I—Revelation, begins with Westphal arguing that the tradition of "French negativism" (those thinkers who tell the story of the "wounded character of reason" (10)) rests on a "rather blatant non sequitur." Namely, "they often talk as if from their own confessed inability to embody an absolute standpoint, to see the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, it follows that there is no such standpoint" (11). Westphal notes that when this "dogmatic" atheism is exposed two things become clear: (a) atheism is not straightaway preferable to theism, and (b) theists are unable to so easily dismiss the important work of these French thinkers (11).

In contrast to these "negativists," Westphal locates the work of Levinas (and Ricoeur) as displaying an alternative trajectory. While also affirming the "wounding of reason," Levinas demonstrates the necessity of this realization for a "genuinely reasonable ethics" (14). The command that "you must" is not something that loses its weight when the cracks in rationality begin to show. Instead, Levinas argues for the "direct experience" of the ethical call as the "most fundamental element in all our language games and conceptual schemes" (14).

Here, Levinas refuses to recognize "*the* Shibboleth of continental philosophy" that "everything is mediated" (17). In 1961, and even more so today, Westphal asserts, "Levinas's heresy could hardly be bolder or more dramatic" (17).

Westphal then argues that Levinas's notion of immediacy should be read alongside Johannes Climacus's distinction between recollection and revelation in *Philosophical Fragments*. Between Kierkegaard and Levinas there emerges a "structural convergence" at the point where revelation requires a personal relation between teacher and learner and not simply a relation between learner and some learned content. Trust is the crucial unifying factor in both Kierkegaard's notion of religion and also Levinas's notion of ethics. For both, "the basis of the ethical and religious life is an authoritative revelation that in its immediacy comes to us from beyond our own powers of recollection" (26). In the reception of revelation, we are "placed under judgment by a voice older than any human a priori and higher than any human horizon" (27).

In Chapter Two, Westphal deepens this basic trajectory of moving beyond "recollection" by offering a sustained reading of Levinas's 1965 essay "Phenomenon and Enigma." Bringing together Levinas's notion of the "enigma" and Climacus's notion of the "paradox," Westphal develops two different lines of dialogue—(a) between Kierkegaard and Levinas on the one hand and Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida on the other hand, and (b) between Levinas and Kierkegaard themselves. In the first case, Kierkegaard and Levinas collectively contest the identification of Jewish and Christian faith traditions with "the onto-theologies often embraced within them" (36). In the second case, the "dialogue" between the two thinkers becomes a "debate" regarding key points. Focusing on the difference between how they conceive of the "face of the Other" and the "trace of God," Westphal contends that Levinas's "God" stands in stark contrast to the "God of the Bible." Celebrating the importance of a "fully personal God," and displaying his own personal predilection for Kierkegaard's conception, Westphal concludes that "Levinas would be a better Jewish thinker if his God were more nearly like Kierkegaard's in these respects just as . . . Christian thinkers who find themselves closer to Levinas than to Kierkegaard on these issues would be better Christian thinkers if the reverse were the case" (41).

Part II—God, consists of two chapters that bring Levinas and Kierkegaard together around two related notions: teleological suspension and commanded love. Solidly affirming that "a teleological suspension is not a reduction" (47), Westphal borrows from Kierkegaard's notion of a "teleological suspension of the ethical" and suggests that Levinas reverses its direction—what occurs is a "teleological suspension of the religious." Westphal notes that this articulation allows for a substantive reading of Levinas's apparent reduction of religion to ethics. Crucially, the teleological suspension of the religious is meant to resist the easy slide of religion into "defacement." Drawing on Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, Westphal emphasizes the way in which "both Levinas and Kierkegaard appeal to an immediacy that trumps all social mediation" (54). At the end of Chapter Three, Westphal wonders whether Levinas's critique of "a fully personal God" is really justified given the way in which the Kierkegaardian God does not bring about a disregard for other people, but an appropriate recognition of how loving one's neighbor is based on affirming a God who is both a "speaker" and a "lover" (56-7).

Chapter Four is primarily devoted to Levinas's essay "God and Philosophy." In this important piece, Levinas contests the basicity of being as manifestation, meaning as thematization, the primacy of the present, and the centrality of the "I think" (59). Appealing to the notion of the "infinite" found in Descartes, Levinas champions a "*Sinngebung* of which the I think is not the subject" (65). Westphal notes, however, that the appeal to Descartes is a bit odd given the specifics of Levinas's ethical project. Better sources for the Levinasian project, says Westphal, are Augustine and Kierkegaard who both (in various ways) link the notion of creation "to that of an obligation that precedes the I think" (69). Westphal closes the chapter by claiming that Kierkegaard goes a long way towards providing reasons for "hoping rather than fearing that there is a truly personal God" (72).

Part III—Heteronomy, extends the discussion of alterity begun in Part II. Here Westphal argues that "the heteronomy of divine transcendence . . . is so deep that it relativizes the very identity of the self while at the same time being essential to the birth of the responsible self" (75). For Levinas, the "trauma" of the ethical encounter is one that both "wounds" the cogito at the level of epistemic autonomy, and also "shatters" the cogito at the level of ethical obligation (81). Westphal offers five theses "possibility attributable to

Kierkegaard” that bring him very close to Levinas regarding intersubjectivity as the key to responsible selfhood. What Kierkegaard offers, and Levinas does not, is the possibility of being “reconciled to God” without falling into a problematic notion of reciprocity.

Chapter Six receives impetus from the work of Paul Ricoeur, Calvin Schrag, and Jacques Derrida on the “self after postmodernity.” Focusing on Levinas’s 1970 essay, “No Identity,” Westphal claims that, for Levinas, having “no identity” in a very specific sense is the very condition for responsibility (101). Accordingly, autonomy is not a fundamental characteristic of selfhood. Instead, the self is “born from transcendence” (103). Moving from Levinas to Kierkegaard, Westphal convincingly refutes the notion that Kierkegaard has “an atomic or monadic theory of the self” (105). The chapter closes with Westphal responding to Schrag’s dismissal of “classical theism.” For Westphal, we would be wrong to overlook the triple way in which classical theism provides a productive notion of divine transcendence—Cosmological, Epistemic, and Ethical/Religious. When viewed in this way, classical theism is not something to which Levinas and Kierkegaard stand in opposition, but is of a piece with their affirmation that the “shattering of the cogito” is the birthplace of the responsible self (111).

Part IV—Reversal, asks what a move from “cognition to solidarity” could mean and what it would entail. In these final two chapters, Westphal brings Levinas’s notion of solidarity together with Kierkegaard’s notion of “Religiousness C” in which Christ becomes the “Pattern” that we are called to imitate. Though Levinas and Kierkegaard do not move beyond abstract considerations and actually provide “a very full-fledged politics or social theory” (134), Westphal does contend that such a movement is something that should be undertaken in light of their philosophies. That is, the question of how to understand politics in light of Levinas and Kierkegaard is best asked as a question about what an “appropriate” response to the call of the Other might look like in a world of multiple others. This is a question that, for Westphal, is not detached from the question of how to live in the light of God’s grace. The God-relation and the Other-relation are original interruptions of my subjectivity that serve to inaugurate sociality as a space of singular responsibility and not simply collective projects.

Let me conclude by making three final points.

- In a time where continental philosophy of religion can often seem as a discourse devoted to trying to use the word ‘God’ as often as possible while eliminating all content from the term itself, it is refreshing to see Westphal’s defense of the legitimately philosophical possibility of a “truly personal God.” In some respects, Westphal is perhaps more post-modern than most postmodernists in his deep commitment to the historical specificity of the religious traditions to which continental philosophers often appeal.
- In the introduction to the book, Westphal admits that there will be more “space devoted” to Levinas than to Kierkegaard. This fact should not worry those readers who want to see Westphal’s take on the Kierkegaardian corpus. Instead, this book is most effective when read alongside Westphal’s previous work on Kierkegaard.
- Though there is much in this book that stands as an original contribution to continental philosophy, I do find that there are many places where the reader might wish that Westphal had continued a bit further and brought the engagement between Kierkegaard and Levinas into a more *direct* conversation with contemporary concerns in other philosophical arenas. For example, Part I invites more work to be done at the intersection of mainstream epistemology and analytic philosophy of religion; Part II anticipates a conversation with other figures in new phenomenology; Part III provides resources for extended engagement with current strands in ethical theory; and Part IV calls for more engagement with issues in Post-Rawlsian political philosophy.

Westphal says that Kierkegaard and Levinas “leave it to us to work out the concrete implications (theory) and applications (practice) of the logics of solidarity they present” (137). One can only hope that in future essays, Westphal will work out such concrete implications. In a world where continental ethics is often too far removed from the real suffering of existing individuals, such work is needed indeed.

