

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

NEWSLETTER NO. 9

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This issue of the Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter is an experiment. Ever since my days as a graduate student I have heard wistful longings for greater communication among those interested in Kierkegaard studies. Having discovered Kierkegaard's works quite by accident as an undergraduate, it was not until several years later in graduate school that I came upon a few others who had been deeply moved by his thought. A sense of isolation seems endemic to the study of the Single Individual, for many others have shared similar experiences as mine with me. In the light of Kierkegaard's own solitariness, there may be something altogether fitting about a certain amount of loneliness on the part of the pilgrim that finds Kierkegaard a companion on the journey to selfhood. Nevertheless, contrary to popular opinion and the opinion of some scholars who should know better, there is a profound appreciation of community and of open discussion of the most critical issues in life in Kierkegaard's works. It is, then, in the spirit of Kierkegaard's notion of "seriousness" combined, perhaps, with a touch of irony and humor that we have undertaken this enterprise of launching, not a battleship, but a rowboat of a periodical onto the congested waters of academic literature. Such vessels as rowboats surely have severe limitations. They are not elegant, nor powerful, nor very fast; but they are maneuverable and can be very useful in a tight spot. And if they are finally destroyed or abandoned for better things, no one has lost much - the memories of a few good times may suffice for the effort.

And so we shall embark on a little venture in taking little trips around the islands of Kierkegaardiana. From time to time the Newsletter will feature short reviews, pithy articles, correspondence from you, the readers, as well as the most most important news items from the world of Kierkegaard scholarship. In this issue we shall also experiment with the idea of including the International Kierkegaard Newsletter along with news from the USA. In this exemplar of the newsletter we have included three tightly written reviews of recent literature on Kierkegaard: John Donnelly has reviewed Alastair Hannay's KIERKEGAARD; George Stack has reviewed KIERKEGAARD'S "FEAR AND TREMBLING" CRITICAL APPRAISALS, ed. Robert Perkins; and George Stengren has reviewed Henning Fenger's KIERKEGAARD, THE MYTHS AND THEIR ORIGINS. I have included an abstract of Louis Mackey's paper for the AAR, "Starting from Scratch: Kierkegaard Unfair to Hegel," and have ended with an obscure speech by Karl Barth on his relation to Kierkegaard. I found the speech in a dusty packet in a corner of a Copenhagen bookstore.

I look forward to your responses to this experiment as well as suggestions.

Louis P. Pojman

Robert Perkins has announced that the INTERNATIONAL KIERKEGAARD COMMENTARY on Two Ages will be ready in December and will be on sale at both the AAR meeting in Dallas and the APA (Eastern Division) meeting in Boston. The volume on The Concept of Anxiety is now in production, but there is still opportunity to submit articles for the volume on Sickness unto Death. Write to Prof. Robert L. Perkins, Philosophy Department, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama 36688. The IKC is being published by Mercer University Press.

We are delighted to report that Prof. Stephen Evans of Wheaton College has been appointed Director of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, beginning next June, 1984. Steve will also be Associate Professor in Philosophy at St. Olaf.

St. Olaf College has announced that it will provide free room and board for scholars doing research in the Kierkegaard Library from June 10 through August 15. Those interested should write Prof. Howard Hong, Holland Hall, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057.

Florida State University Press announces the beginning of a series entitled KIERKEGAARD AND POSTMODERNISM under the general editorship of Mark C. Taylor. In this series authors from a variety of disciplines and perspectives will explore Kierkegaard's relationship to the complex issues that preoccupy the postmodern imagination. These studies will not simply survey Kierkegaard's works but will attempt to advance his insights by establishing a creative dialogue with subsequent writers. Among the topics to be considered are Kierkegaard's relationship to problems of aesthetics, literary criticism, and ethics, and to writers such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Derrida. Inquiries should be sent to Prof. Mark C. Taylor, Department of Religious Studies, Williams College, Williamstown, MA 01267.

The Kierkegaard Society will meet on December 28, 1983 at the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) meeting in Boston in the Hampton Room of the Sheraton-Hilton. The time of the society meeting is 12:00-1:50. Two papers will be presented: one by Gene Outka (title not yet announced) and a paper on "Prudence: From Virtue to Vice" by Robert L. Perkins.

Robert Perkins has sent us the following abstract of his paper:

Is Prudence a virtue or a vice? Why did Kierkegaard write, "If men do not succeed in breaking through and really learn to despise calculating practicality (Klogskab), then everything is lost"? Did Plato and Aristotle misconstrue the matter? Does the Catholic theory rest upon a horrendous moral blunder? or has the term changed in meaning over the years? If the concept changed over the years, how and why did it change? What are Kierkegaard's specific charges against prudence? Is he correct?

The American Academy of Religion meeting which meets in Dallas beginning on December 19 will include a program of the Kierkegaard Consultation. At this time I do not have the date or place but the program looks excellent. Louis Mackey will read a paper on "Starting from Scratch: Kierkegaard Unfair to Hegel" with a response from Mark Taylor. Paul Holmer will read a paper "Kierkegaard: Daring to be a Subjective Thinker" with a response from Robert Perkins. Sylvia Walsh of Clark College will preside.

Kierkegaard. By Alastair Hannay. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982. pp. xii & 385.

Hannay's book is part of the "Arguments of the Philosophers" series under the general editorship of Ted Honderich. I suspect most of us have read at least one of the some eighteen books already published in this distinguished series, and accordingly would have high expectations for the included book on Kierkegaard - especially, in light of the series' attempt to provide "an essentially analytic and critical account" of the respective philosophers selected for inclusion. Indeed, one would expect to discover in Hannay's work the first book-length study of Kierkegaard from the groundbreaking perspective of analytic philosophy. The result is a first-rate addition to Kierkegaardiana, but I am afraid we must still await that paradigmatic analytic study of Kierkegaard.

The problems discussed and critically assessed in Hannay's study include such central (and often interwoven) Kierkegaardian themes as "truth is subjectivity," the "teleological suspension of the ethical," "the crowd is untruth," the logical status of paradox (especially in religiousness B), the gospel of suffering, the nuances of existential decision-making, the dialectic of the stages on life's way, the role of faith and Christianity as an "existence communication," the use of indirect communication, the psychology of anxiety and despair, etc.

Given the constraints of a brief review, I am unable to adequately support herein my contention that Hannay has not succeeded in demonstrating the "over-all unity and logical structure" of Kierkegaard's thought. But if Hannay has failed to situate Kierkegaard at "the centre of the Philosophical stage," he has, nonetheless, placed Kierkegaard in the theatre - even in the first row.

Unfortunately, Hannay seems to adopt a rather noticeable parochial, but not provincial, attitude toward the contemporary secondary literature on Kierkegaard. For example, Hannay does not even mention in his book the work (to cite but five authors) of such accomplished Kierkegaard scholars as John Elrod, Paul Holmer, Louis Mackey, Frederick Sontag, and Mark Taylor. Moreover, given his stated intention to relate Kierkegaard to the mainstream Anglo-American style of philosophy, his failure to offer any interface with the writings of such analytically-oriented writers on Kierkegaard as Robert Adams, James Bogen (whose 1962 article on "the teleological suspension of the ethical" appeared in Hannay's journal Inquiry!), Elmer Klemke, D. Z. Phillips, Louis Pojman, Robert Solomon - and taking a reviewer's license, John Donnelly - is especially puzzling. I do not wish to make too much of Hannay's oversight here, for he does nicely compare and contrast Kierkegaard's thought with that of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, and Wittgenstein. Quite obviously, I feel confident that Hannay does not omit any discussion of such contemporary Kierkegaard scholars because he might share Kierkegaard's own views on academics and professors as "castrati"!

Hannay's ciceronian sentence construction (cf. p. 171) does not foster productive, philosophical reading. His textual reconstructions and critical argumentation are frequently not well-developed, and even when they are illuminating, often prove too labyrinthine, I suspect, even for Kierkegaard cognoscenti accustomed to desultory writing. In making this criticism, I am mindful and fully appreciative of Hannay's valiant methodological aim to steer between the Scylla of sheer exegesis, and the Charybdis of deflationary criticism. But I do not find the work of contemporary Kierkegaard scholarship (on the whole) lacking in Hannay's chosen heuristic modus operandi of "an appraising way of expounding doctrine."

At least a third of the book is spent discussing Kierkegaard's social ethics, and Hannay has some very interesting things to say about the Kierkegaardian notion of "double mindedness" in Purity of Heart and its connection to Kantian ethics. Hannay also nicely elucidates the Kierkegaardian notion of neighborly love (albeit his discussion of Fear and Trembling is sub-par), taking into account the various standard, philosophical objections to the concept of a dutiful love. Hannay skillfully manages to patch up heuristically Kierkegaard's account of practical love - especially the recognition of others as capable of fulfilling the ethical ideal of individuality in peculiarity.

I also found insightful Hannay's analysis/comparison of Kierkegaard's views on equality and equalization, with drawn links to Marx and Engels - especially the concept of sociality (located by Kierkegaard in subjectivity and one's relation to eternity) as an ethico-religious problem. Hannay prudently depicts the constructive aspects of levelling, pointing out how like anxiety and despair, it can be a positive catalyst to the task of self-realization.

To be sure, Kierkegaard's notion of community (unum noris, omnes) is not a social contract theory (for "the crowd is untruth"), but Hannay helps us to see how, for Kierkegaard, some associations are liberating if they presuppose as their cornerstone autonomous moral individuals. Hannay also ably charts Kierkegaard's concept of the individual, especially in light of Marcuse-type accusations involving Kierkegaard's alleged failure to consider the role of social forces in the process of human liberation, along with its attendant charge of excessive abstractionism which is hardly ancillary to the cause of "existence communication." In the offing, Hannay develops a plausible defense for the Kierkegaardian thesis that an individual's ethico-religious needs are primary in relation to any (subsequent) establishment of conditions in which a person's basic material and psychological needs are satisfied.

John Donnelly
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Kierkegaard's FEAR AND TREMBLING: Critical Appraisals. Edited by Robert L. Perkins. University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1981. Pp. xii + 251. \$24.75 (Cloth).

Kierkegaard's most controversial aesthetic work, Fear and Trembling, the creation of which he believed would make him an "immortal author," is subjected to a variety of interpretations in this rich collection of essays. The poetic elaboration on the meaning of Abraham's willingness to comply with Yahweh's command to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice is already made dialectically complex in the hands of Johannes de Silentio, a pseudonymous figure who finds both Abraham and his faith unintelligible. What Louis Jacobs appropriately calls Kierkegaard's Midrash on Genesis 22: 1-18 (in "The Problem of the Akedah ["the binding"] in Jewish Thought") has stimulated the reflections of twelve thinkers who are sensitive to the subtlety, complexity and daring of Kierkegaard's attempt to test the boundaries of ethics and probe the silent inwardness of Abraham's awesome faith.

Jacobs shows us that at least some Jewish commentators on "the binding" of Isaac anticipated de Silentio's views and others asked precisely the kind of questions that reverberate throughout this many-faceted study. Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son? Why would Yahweh try to "test" the faith of a man who already has displayed the character of a true "knight of faith"? Throughout these

essays, Kierkegaard's three questions haunt the authors: Is there such a thing as a teleological suspension of the ethical? Is there such a thing as an absolute duty toward God? Was Abraham ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purpose before Sarah, before Eleazar, before Isaac?

In "Abraham and Isaac: A Hermeneutical Problem before Kierkegaard," David Pailin offers informative insights into a variety of seventeenth and eighteenth century interpretations of the meaning of the story of Abraham and Isaac. The moral justification of God's commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac exercised many theologians, and many others discussed sought to find a rational explanation of what seems, on the surface, to be "beyond reason." As Pailin points out, many of the interpreters he considers struggle, sometimes desperately, to show the basic reasonableness of God's command and Abraham's response, primarily because of their commitment to "the canon of reason." The content of Pailin's essay may be contrasted to Nancy Crumbine's impassioned defense of the privacy, the inward silence and the sacrificial nature of Abraham's faith in "On Faith." Although she differentiates the role of "the absurd" in faith from the absurd manifested in the random, finite "immediacy" of Camus' "absurd hero," Meursault, in an interesting way, she accepts fully the absoluteness of Abraham's "trust" and faith in such a manner as to avoid the dark side of this religious phenomenon, the extreme danger of a totality of faith that transforms "even murder" into "holiness and sacrificial expression." Even her footnote pertaining to this view takes nothing back: Kierkegaard is said to have revitalized the idea of faith by showing that it is "not unconnected with contradiction, hopelessness, and murder." (245) In all likelihood, it is precisely this side of faith that Kierkegaard, through de Silentio, exposed as its resemblance to madness.

There are specifically philosophical approaches to Kierkegaard in this collection, too. In "For Sanity's Sake: Kant, Kierkegaard, and Father Abraham," Robert Perkins explores the similarities between Kant and SK, as well as the significant differences. Kant's repulsion in the face of the irrational in faith, his promotion of "ethical faith," his need to see the ethical and the religious as compatible, all are juxtaposed to SK's dramatic rendition of the inexplicable in faith in Fear and Trembling. Perkins suggests that Kant's Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone was on SK's mind in Fear and Trembling insofar as SK agrees with Kant that it is inconceivable that God would tempt Abraham in such a drastic way and that it is possible that Abraham was deceived by a demon. In "Abraham and Hegel," M. Westphal stresses SK's opposition to Hegelian ethics and correctly points out that Hegel venerated Sittlichkeit or public, institutional morality and the universality of the ethical. While Hegel feared social disorder and the rise of subjectivity, Kierkegaard feared the deification of law and order. (76) The paradox of faith exhibited in the case of Abraham is an "offence" to the Hegelian attempt to rationalize religious consciousness and "go beyond" the immediacy of faith.

Paul Holmer explores the idea of the self as exemplified in Abraham's being and decisiveness in "About Being a Person: Fear and Trembling." He maintains that Abraham was disciplined in "the universality of the ethical" before his crisis, that he made a momentous decision alone, apart from the support of others, that the self of Abraham is intensified in the radical "how" of his comportment. There is a discernible affinity between Holmer's sympathetic analysis and Jerry Gill's "Faith Is as Faith Does." For, Gill views Fear and Trembling as "ironic," as undermining our expectation that faith is something to be "understood." Abraham's faith is revealed in his living trust and obedience; SK's point is to show that faith is a "how," a way of living in trust, a manifestation of "faithfulness." Holmer and Gill also seem to be in agreement that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son is not a razor's edge that Johannes de Silentio seems intent on showing us as the dangerous aspect of surrendering

ethical duty to the absolute duty towards God. Abraham accepts a command to sacrifice his son as a divine command, silently goes about fulfilling this duty to God because of his total trust that God will restore Isaac. Although this faith is amazing, the suspension of the ethical for the sake of a telos beyond the norms of society is seen by de Silentio as decidedly a dangerous move.

The theme of the "teleological suspension of the ethical" is treated by a number of authors. In "Kierkegaard's Problem I and Problem II: An Analytic Perspective," John Donnelly raises a number of interesting points. He aptly disposes of Blanchard's charge against SK of "moral nihilism" and presents a good analysis of ethics as a system of duties. He cogently distinguishes between the "trial" of, and the "temptation" of, Abraham. Drawing on the "contextual implication" between the ethico-religious rule that God's commands ought to be obeyed and that one ought not to injure one's neighbors gratuitously (used, for some reason, in lieu of the more direct, "Thou shalt not kill."), Donnelly argues that the divine command given to Abraham is not to be acted upon with the resulting sacrifice of Isaac. (139) It is concluded that there is no such thing as a teleological suspension of the ethical, but there is an ethico-religious absolute duty toward God. Donnelly's analysis is ingenious, but not entirely convincing. Ironically, he bears a strong resemblance to the earlier interpreters of a most perplexing biblical text who shaped it to fit the "canons of reason."

Edward Mooney's internal analysis of Fear and Trembling, "Understanding Abraham: Care, Faith and the Absurd," explores the "knight of resignation" and emphasizes that faith is characterized by SK as the "capacity for care," that Abraham merits Isaac's return because of his selfless love and his persistent "care" in the face of the threat of losing what he loved. This focusing on the existential transformation of Abraham in "fear and trembling" is a theme in many of the essays collected in this volume. What is most strange is that Genesis does not indicate any fear and trembling at all in Abraham. He simply silently goes about fulfilling God's command until the ram miraculously appears and is substituted for Isaac. Here we find Kierkegaard's imaginative recreations of the tale that surely seems more allegorical and symbolic than historical. For, he looks into the biblical passage, beneath it and beyond it, displaying the many-sided nature of faith in order, as some of our authors have suggested, to block understanding and shatter our tendency to want to explain everything. That so many today take Kierkegaard's version of the crisis of Abraham and Isaac as the authentic version is testimony to his uncanny poetic abilities.

In "Abraham's Silence and the Logic of Faith" and "Sounds of Silence," David Wren and Mark Taylor (respectively) explore the meaning of Abraham's silence and the varieties of meanings that silence has in Kierkegaard's aesthetic writings. Taylor is especially adept at distinguishing the various modes of silence that Kierkegaard delineates (e.g., demonic silence, the silence of the sensuous aesthetic personality, and the solitary silence of Abraham's absolute relationship to God). C. S. Evans is especially attuned to Kierkegaard's point that faith is incommensurable with any rationally intelligible principles, is insightful in his belief that Johannes de Silentio is primarily concerned with showing the complexities and difficulties of religious faith. (143) It is almost as if de Silentio is testing the reader and tempting the reader as well by virtue of his paradoxical portraits of the meaning of faith, as if he is saying, "Do you really understand what a life of faith entails? Are you willing to be tested? Are you willing to have the ethical principles that guide your life suspended, if not transcended?" The thought and care that has gone into these essays we've been considering indicates the vitality of Fear and Trembling and its magnetic power that bewitches our understanding. In its elevation of religious faith above public or conventional morality it appeals to the subjective passion of faith. In its self-conscious awareness of the dark side of total belief it comes

within a hair's breadth of being a critique of faith. Although Kierkegaard's poetic puppet, Johannes de Silentio, claims not to understand Abraham or his faith, to be an aloof observer, the creator of this pseudonymous work understood faith very well, understood that faith is not something that can be "known" or "gone beyond," that it is something that is both "smiling and dreadful," something that can be 'understood' only by being lived.

George J. Stack
SUNY at Brockport

Henning Fenger, Kierkegaard, The Myths and Their Origins: Studies in the Kierkegaardian Papers and Letters, trans. by George C. Schoolfield (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).

A translation, it seems to me, should be evaluated on two grounds: first, is the original work an important enough contribution to the literature to warrant a translation, and, second, how good is the translation as translation? In the case of the present book, while I have some reservations about the first of these points, Schoolfield's translation deserves unqualified praise. One could wish, however, that he had devoted his efforts to more important works. Schoolfield has given us a uniformly excellent English version, although one might quibble pedantically here and there.

In this "Preface to the Second Edition" Fenger tells us that this is an essentially unchanged English version of his Kierkegaard-Myter og Kierkegaard-Kilder (Odense, Denmark: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1976) with the omission of a chapter on "P. L. Møller, H. P. Holst og Soren Kierkegaard indtil 1843." I am at a loss to understand why this chapter was left out, insasmuch as there is a great deal of valuable information about various contemporaries of SK and about various controversies they engaged in, including the Corsair affair. But Fenger does not mention that a "Summary in English" in the original publication has also been omitted. Of this, at least the "Preface for the Foreign Reader" should have been included, perhaps in his "Preface to the Second Edition." This would have helped the reader who does not have access to the Danish original to understand some of the peculiarities of the present translation. For example, in his "Preface for the Foreign Reader" (p. 271) Fenger says: "...I should like to comment on the tone and style of this text which, ironically enough, should be taken seriously. The use of mottoes above the nine essays, the sarcastic dealing with scholars and writers with whom you disagree - all this belongs to an old Danish tradition going back to the eighteenth century." True enough, and as he points out, both SK and Johan Ludvig Heiberg (as well as many of SK's contemporaries, including especially H. C. Andersen) used sarcasm and parody in their polemics. Fenger continues: "It should be considered a tribute paid to the spirit of Kierkegaard to write on him in a style which is not too pompous. It might be pedantic to tell the reader not too familiar with the subtleties of the Danish language and polemic tradition about this practice. These problems of tone and style do not change the main subject of the book: a most critical evaluation of the ways in which Danish Kierkegaard-scholarship has so far edited and interpreted the tremendous material which Kierkegaard left, besides the books he published himself during his life." Since this has to do with one of my main criticisms of Fenger's book, I shall come back to it shortly.

In this same passage, Fenger tells the foreign reader how the original version came to be. It seems to have grown out of a series of lectures given at the Universities of Cambridge, Aarhus, and Odense, as well as some articles and essays. This may explain what struck this reader as a certain unevenness at various points in the book. But Fenger advises us (p. 272) that the present book "should be considered as

an overture to a larger, more coherent work which has already partly been written in French. The title will be Kierkegaard--homme de lettres."

Kierkegaard, The Myths and Their Origins is an extended attack on almost all of the most respected names in Kierkegaard scholarship. Only Billeskov Jansen and the late Gregor Malantschuk seem to have escaped attack. Fenger does a particularly nasty job on Niels Thulstrup, devoting a whole chapter to Thulstrup's book Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel (Princeton University Press, 1980). Perhaps this is the place to point out an inconsistency between what he says about this chapter in the "Summary in English" (pp. 275-276) in the original, and what Fenger says in the present book. In the earlier version Fenger says: "This essay was originally a contribution [sic] ex auditorio, when Professor Niels Thulstrup, on June 1, 1967, defended his dissertation on Kierkegaard and his Relations to Hegel and the Dialectic Idealism" (p. 275). In chapter 5 of the English translation of his book (and in the original), Fenger mentions his statement on that occasion but then says: "My opposing statement, which many people asked me to publish, has not appeared, and it will not be provided in this chapter" (p. 132, English translation).

But far worse is the perfectly outrageous claim that: "Professor Thulstrup has obviously not gone into a historical study of what actually went on in the intellectual life and leading academic circles in the Denmark of the 1830's, and he neglects in a very nonchalant way the testimonies of those people who really knew Kierkegaard well at that time:...", etc. (p. 275 in the original). In the text itself (p. 109 ff in the original, p. 133 in the English translation) this is toned down somewhat: "In contrast to Thulstrup, I base my postulate upon an analysis of the sources."

Even the most casual scanning of almost any page of Thulstrup's book will show how preposterous this is. I know of no book in Danish or any other language, and certainly none in English, which gives such a thorough and careful examination of the sources relevant to Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. Fenger does not mention that Thulstrup also wrote a book on the history of the research on this topic (Kierkegaards Verhaltnis zu Hegel: Forschungsgeschichte, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer Verlag 1969).

There is more of the same sort of unfounded criticism both in the "Summary" and in the chapter "Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Niels Thulstrup" (Chapter 5 in the English translation). One might be inclined to wonder why Fenger devoted so much attention (a whole chapter) to a work he seems to consider worthless. This seems a bit out of proportion.

Fenger seems to have a particular animosity toward theologians, but almost all Kierkegaard scholars, whether theologians or not, are routinely and repeatedly called by him mistaken at best. We must take Fenger at his word when he says in the "Preface" (p. xiii, English translation): "If this little book has a thesis, it is simply that Kierkegaard research went down the wrong track at the outset and that 'the mistake,' to a certain extent--to a great extent--goes back to Kierkegaard himself." I think that it is fair to say that Fenger's book should be evaluated on the basis of this thesis.

Certainly Kierkegaard is frequently a very difficult writer. He engaged in elaborate subterfuges, false leads, and obscure, misleading, and sometimes deliberately opaque language. Certainly it is possible to interpret Kierkegaard in a variety of ways--from literary, philosophical, and theological (and other) perspectives. Certainly, SK falsified history, particularly his own, at times, as the title of the first chapter indicates.

Fenger's second chapter is concerned with "Kierkegaard's Papers and Library." There is no denying that there are serious editorial problems with the Papirer, both in the eight volumes of the Barfod-Gottsched edition of 1869-1881 and in the much more

complete 20 volumes edited by P. A. Heiberg and Victor Kuhr (1909-1948). The latter edition was reissued in a photographic reprint in 1970 with two additional volumes edited by Niels Thulstrup. Fenger prefers the Barfod-Gottsched edition, even though Barfod himself admitted that he was unequal to the task. Out of deference for his former teacher, Victor Kuhr, Fenger attributes all of the "faults" of the later edition to P. A. Heiberg. His evidence for all of his claims about the Papirer is far less secure (in fact, there is no evidence) than the evidence for the claims of various Kierkegaard scholars that Fenger criticizes throughout his book.

I pass over the third chapter, "Kierkegaard in the Doctor's Office." There is not much here that is not already known to anyone who is familiar with the literature on SK (even only that which is in English).

In the fourth chapter, "The Epistolary Novella, Letters," Fenger makes one of his major claims, namely, that from about 1830 to some later point, SK planned and worked on a novel Letters (?) in the tradition of Goethe, et al. Thus, according to Fenger, much of the material in the first three volumes of the Papirer (the P. A. Heiberg and Victor Kuhr edition) and many of the letters included in Thulstrup's edition of the Letters and Documents were actually drafts for his first novel. Fenger's claim labors under the difficulty that there is not a shred of evidence to support this notion, not to mention the fact that an entry such as IA75 is clearly in harmony with (if not a prospectus for) the major emphases of the Authorship as well as the polemic against Hegel, Speculative Idealism, The Established Church of Denmark, and the sham of "Christendom."

In chapter six, Fenger discusses "Soren Kierkegaard's First Love." Briefly, he maintains that SK's first love was not Regine Olsen, but Bolette Rørdam (or perhaps someone else). Again, Fenger's claim is more conjecture than proof. There is far better evidence for the claim that despite the cruelly broken engagement, etc., Kierkegaard loved Regine Olsen far more profoundly to the end of his life than is usually the case in such relationships. One has only to read his deeply moving "Last Will and Testament" (Letters and Documents, XXI, p. 33) to realize this.

In chapter seven, Fenger discusses SK's trip to Jutland and to SK's father's birthplace in the summer of 1840. Once more, we find a pastiche of conjecture without solid or convincing evidence for Fenger's claims against the standard interpretations of this aspect of Kierkegaard's life and thought.

Chapter eight deals with "The Wednesday Letters to Regine Olsen." There is much that is interesting as well as plausible in this chapter, but Fenger's implication that SK's attitude toward the end of this series of letters smacks of sadism really does not have much support. It is at least equally likely that Kierkegaard came to realize that he was totally unsuited to marriage with such an effervescent personality and tried to terminate the relationship (from religious and psychological motives) in a way that would not reflect unfavorably on Regine, and, if necessary, redound to the discredit of Kierkegaard himself.

The final chapter, "Concluding Nontheological Postscript," tells us more about Fenger's personal religious situation than about Kierkegaard and thus can be passed over in reverent silence.

In the "Sources" section at the end of the work, the Bibliography of the original edition is reproduced, except that works that have been translated into English have been marked with an asterisk. However, these English translations have not been precisely identified. More recent works, especially in English translations, should have been added, e.g., the translation of Thulstrup's dissertation. The stories of

Steen Steensen Blicher (translated into English) are not even mentioned here.

In summary, Fenger's book will irritate many Kierkegaard scholars, and perhaps this is a good thing lest we become complacent. But the novice should be warned to use this book with extreme caution and to take many of its claims cum multis granis salis.

George L. Stengren
Central Michigan University

Starting from Scratch: Kierkegaard Unfair to Hegel

Abstract

Kierkegaard's master's thesis, The Concept of Irony, stands outside and before the series of works he formally designated his "literature." Given the ironic tone and tenor of all his writings (at least the ones he called "aesthetic"), it is tempting to suppose that this early text provides the starting-point and the method for the books that follow it and make up the official canon. But a reading of the thesis itself disturbs this supposition. Far from offering the later works a starting-point, it makes the concept of "beginning" absolutely problematic. And far from sketching out a method, it evacuates the concept of method. As the standpoint of infinite abstract subjectivity, achieved by negating objective reality as such and in totality, irony is a dead end. As negative freedom, it cannot proceed beyond austere self-enjoyment. Every positive course of thought and action is proscribed in advance, or, what comes to the same thing, deprived in advance of all substance and value. Irony is a starting-point that can't get started.

Nevertheless, irony is the tone and tenor of Kierkegaard's works. The concept of irony and The Concept of Irony do--albeit ironically--provide Kierkegaard's works with several of their distinctive motifs. (1) Ironic negation is non-dialectical negation. Unlike the negation which is the motive power of the Hegelian system, ironic negation falls outside the system. (2) Ironic discourse, which negates both the saying and the said, respects the alterity of being. Ironic language is a mode of language that does not sublimate reality but leaves it inviolate. Taken together, (1) and (2) prevent the dialectical synthesis of subject and substance which is both the presupposition and the aim of the Hegelian philosophy. Finally (3) the more than ironic subtext of The Concept of Irony darkly hints that irony may be the wholly negative condition--the human abstract, as it were--to which the Wholly Other may address itself in the language of revelation. If this be the case, then the ironic tone and tenor of Kierkegaard's work defines it as the praeparatio evangelii he intended.

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MY RELATION TO SØREN KIERKEGAARD

by Karl Barth

(Part of Karl Barth's acceptance speech on receiving the Sonning Prize from the University of Copenhagen in May, 1963, was the following discourse on his relation to Søren Kierkegaard. It is taken from the Kristeligt Dagblads kronik, 17, May 1963. The translation below is from the Danish text.)

The first book of Søren Kierkegaard I bought - it was in 1909 - was The Instant [Attack on Christendom]. I suppose I read it at that time. However, it did not make a deep impression on me, because at that time I was intensely involved in the theology of Harnack, Hermann, and in "Die christliche Welt." In the following years I was involved in other things - namely with socialism - and therefore Kierkegaard had for a long time rest from me - and I from him! It was first in 1919 at that critical turning-point in my life, between the first and second edition of my Römerbrief, that he seriously and on a better foundation entered into my world of thought. This encounter was the beginning of the extremely significant role he would come to play in my written work.

Some of us at that time belonged to the younger [theologians] who already around 1916 had attempted the first daring forward steps on the way that led to a theology which was better suited (than the 19th century and turn of the century theology) to make a place for "God," as he who stands sovereign and wholly alone above men and especially the religious man, and to procure for God the honor which is his. This is how we thought ourselves to have understood the God of the Bible. Nonetheless, it was only gradually that we really became clear about the tremendous consequences this emphasis of God as the basis and object of faith would lead to. It was first of all under the influence of Hermann Kutter, that we reached forward to this standpoint. But even the first edition of my Römerbrief had still significant inadequacies in that regard. While the reformers of the 16th century still had not really entered into our discussion in these years around 1919-20, there were other authoritative voices from a little earlier time, which partly strengthened our own restlessness, and partly drove us to go further forward on the way. Among these older voices were, besides Dostoevsky and the older and younger Blumhardt (father and son), together with the remarkably strange Franz Overbeck, and besides Plato - Yes, you heard correctly, Plato! - besides all of them there was, also, precisely Kierkegaard.

The thing about him which especially attracted us, delighted us and taught us something new, was his indefatigable, piercingly sharp critique, which placed God's infinitely qualitative difference over against all man-made speculation, confronted all attempts at a direct communication of the Christian [revelation], all aesthetic superficiality, with the gospel's absolute demand and the necessity of arriving at a strictly personal decision, and who, in short, set this up against all sorts of innocuous renderings of the biblical message, up against all that which was too self-conceited, but also the too cheaply bought theological Christianity and ecclesiology with which we were surrounded and from which we ourselves were not liberated. In the second phase of our theological revolution Kierkegaard became for us one of those from near and far, whose cock-crow proclaimed that a new day was actually breaking forth. The second edition of my Römerbrief is a document of my part in clearly testifying to what someone has called "the Kierkegaard Renaissance." But for us - and therefore also for me - there had to come other days with new problems and new answers. I think, however, that I, through all the succeeding years and until today, have been faithful to the Kierkegaardian awakening-call, as I heard it at that time. From that time and until now there was for me no way back to Hegel - not to speak of Bishop Mynster.

As has been pointed out from many sides, however, it has happened that I in my later books, writings, and preaching have steadily decreased my explicit references to Kierkegaard. While his special tone has certainly not been completely silenced in me, it has become drowned by other tones, so that it has become a strong undertone along with other tones. At the same time in which I in the battle-situation had given him my support, I had also in the first round overlooked certain characteristic peculiarities in Kierkegaard's historic presentation.

Must we constantly continue by again and again pointing to the oppositions, contradictions, and abysses which Kierkegaard so masterfully portrayed, and constantly ever more strictly formulated, the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to be able to think and live in faith, in hope, and in love, so that we make these factual and extremely necessary negations into the theologian's theme and allow the little flock, who will gladly be Christian and who reckon themselves to be Christian, ever again and again to taste the bitterness, which Training in Christianity demands? Shall we do this - especially if what is at stake is the proclamation and exposition of God's message of joy for them, the gospel of God's free grace? It is remarkable how easily one himself becomes affected by the law which kills and makes disgusting, sad and heavy in spirit.

And further, how was it exactly, this relation to oneself with "this individual," on whose existence everything in Kierkegaard turns? Where with Kierkegaard is God's people, community, the Church? Where is the deacon's ministry and the task of mission? And where are man's social and political tasks? What meaning has it, that Kierkegaard, by his explanation of the command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," was in agreement with Augustine and the Scholastics - and therefore against Luther and Calvin! - that besides neighborly love there must be a love for oneself? How curious that we who still belong among those, who are so strongly involved in Christendom in its relation to the social questions, were not immediately reflective precisely on this point in Kierkegaard with his thoroughgoing saved-individualism!

And so there is still a third thing: does not Kierkegaard's whole theoretical basic formulation reveal a new anthropocentric systematic and to a high degree an opposition to that which we are working from? That a new existence-philosophy - Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre - certainly by looking away from the fact that Kierkegaard would be a Christian thinker and also that he in his own way was that - is it not understandable and with the above mentioned reservations also legitimate that they could tie themselves to him? But to create a theology, which in a decisive sense builds upon Kierkegaard and essentially lives from him, would only be possible if one had not read Schleiermacher with suitable devotion and therefore had not been sufficiently warned against all promises of his program and of an existentialist program. There, where this warning had not been heard, one took up afresh the experiment with a subjectivity, which as such accounts itself to be truth. It was an experiment with resting in oneself and with a self-moved faith, and therefore, and precisely in this form, also a faith which had neither a ground nor an object. Hence, there has arisen in the middle of our century and under the existence-dialectical signature of Kierkegaardianism a regular theological reaction. That this development from Kierkegaard was possible must cause us to have third thoughts which had not yet arisen in the beginning, forty years ago.

And now we must sum all this up. Kierkegaard was still definitely more tied to the 19th century than we realized at that time. One could perhaps also, by under-scoring the historic, place the question whether Kierkegaard's view [seine Lehre] was not the highest, most consistent and most thoroughly reflected perfection of that pietism which in the 18th century together with rationalism laid the foundation for

the Christianity and ecclesiology of the pious-orientated man which Kierkegaard so passionately fought, and which we forty years ago under the invocation of Kierkegaard's name again undertook to fight? But we could* attack the foundation itself, the whole anthropocentric-Christian thought process as such from Kierkegaard, because he himself had not attacked it - Yes, even more, because he, on the contrary, in a forceful and refined way and to a high degree had strengthened it.

From the perspective of this later understanding I am and I remain grateful to Kierkegaard for the immunity I received at that time through him, and I am and remain also full of deep respect for his life's noble tragedy and for the unusual intellectual clarity which is in his works. I consider Kierkegaard to be a teacher, through whose school every theology in every case must at one time go. Woe to everyone who neglects that school! But one must not remain sitting there - and still less - turn back there. Kierkegaard's "teaching" is, as he himself has said, "a little spice to the food," but not itself the food, which is the task of every proper theology to give the Church and mankind.

The gospel is (1) the glad message of God's Yes to men. It is (2) the message which the community must bring further to the whole world. It is (3) the message from above. It is these three points which I learned in other schools in addition [to what I had learned from Kierkegaard's school] after my meeting with Kierkegaard.

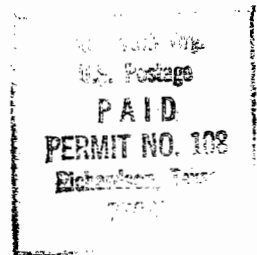
Karl Barth

tr. Louis P. Pojman

*I think a "not" belongs in the text at this point.

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