

Kierkegaard

Instructor: John Davenport
Spring 2005

PHGA 7159

Thursdays: 2 - 4 PM

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Instructor: John Davenport
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Office Hours: At RH: Thursday following class (4-5 PM). At Lincoln Center most Tuesday afternoons.

Main Themes. This graduate seminar on the thought of Søren Kierkegaard will focus mainly on major themes in his pseudonymous works (in part to minimize overlap with other courses). No prior knowledge of Kierkegaard is assumed, although students with some background in Kierkegaard are welcome. We will concentrate on understanding the distinctions and transitions between the “stages” of existence defined as aesthetic, ethical, and religious (and the subdivision of religious faith into types A & B, and possibly C). We will discuss all the Kierkegaard selections on the graduate comprehensive exam, plus some others. In addition to other articles in a course packet, we will use parts of two secondary works to help in understanding the existential stages.

In addition, our discussion will draw some connections between Kierkegaardian themes in these works and ideas in recent analytic philosophy on

- ethics and moral psychology, including conceptions of the will.
- philosophy of religion, including eschatology.
- metaphysics, including the concepts of possibility and necessity.

However, students are not necessarily expected to focus on these connections in their own written work. Approaches to Kierkegaard informed by recent continental thought will be equally welcome.

Texts: (Required)

Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* Vol. II, tr. Hongs (Princeton University Press, 1987)

Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, tr. Hongs (Princeton University Press, 1983)

Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Vols. I & II, tr. Hongs (Princeton U. Press, 1992)

Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, tr. Hongs (Princeton University Press, 1980)

Davenport & Rudd, eds., *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre* (Open Court/Carus Publishing, 2001).

Other articles and book chapters: I will make the originals available in the Philosophy Dept. lounge and on reserve in Walsh, and on ERES if possible. Each student should make his or her own copies.

Recommended texts ordered by the bookstore:

Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self* (Purdue University Press, 1996) [out of print in paperback]

Hannay and Marino, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (Cambridge U. Press, 1998)

Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (Routledge, 1991) [also out of print in paperback]

Grading System

Class participation:	15%	Attendance, contribution to discussions, discussion questions: Each student will hand in at least one question/comment on the readings for the day by email the night before class.
Two short response papers	30%	These 3-4 page papers will be responses to readings in the first half of the semester, chosen from a short list of options.
Introducing one reading:	15%	Each student will open discussion of a reading of their choice with remarks about the argument and questions for the class. You can hand in the written version of this oral report.
Research paper (15 pages):	40%	On a topic of the student's choice, directly related to our readings, but bringing in additional sources.

Depending on the student's level of preparation, the final course paper can focus on a single work by Kierkegaard along with relevant secondary literature, or compare/contrast themes from more than one work, or even relate Kierkegaard to Hegel, Levinas, or other relevant figures. A more advanced research paper defending a novel position in relation to the secondary literature might serve as a draft of a possible conference submission or journal article. How many additional sources beyond those in our reading list are needed depends entirely on the topic chosen.

Schedule for Readings and Discussion Topics

1/20: Introduction to the course.

- (1) Overview of Kierkegaard's Life and Works (including the Regine affair)
- (2) Kierkegaard's religious background and Danish Lutheranism:
Timothy Jackson, "Arminian Edification," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*.
- (3) The issue of pseudonymity (diverse interpretations: Platonic, deconstructive, etc).
- (4) "In Vino Veritas:" Diotima's Ascent and Kierkegaard's Stages of Existence

1/27: The Aesthetic. *Either/Or* Vol. I selections (original in lounge)

- (1) The Rotation of Crops (pp.285-300)
- (2) The Seducer's Diary (pp.301-17; 410-445)
- (3) The boring and the interesting: is 'life-meaning' a directly targetable goal? Discussion.
- (4) Suggested: George Lukács, "The Foundering of Form Against Life: Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen," in *Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Harold Bloom.

2/3: The Relation between the Aesthetic and the Ethical: *Either/Or* Vol. II, Part I on Marriage

- (1) "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage," pp.5-39; pp.134-154.
- (2) Mark Taylor's comparison of Hegel and Kierkegaard: *Journeys to Selfhood*, ch.6: pp.181-201; pp.228-41.
- (3) Begin "The Balance Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical," p.157 on.

2/10: The Ethical: *Either/Or* Vol. II, Part II on the 'Choice' to be an Authentic Chooser

- (1) "The Balance Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical," pp.157-201; pp.240-265.
- (2) Gordon Marino, "The Place of Reason in Kierkegaard's Ethics," in *Kierkegaard After*

MacIntyre [KAM], ch.5

2/17: The Relation between the Ethical and Religious: from *Either/Or* to *Fear and Trembling*

- (1) Edward Mooney, "The Perils of Polarity," in *KAM* ch.11.
- (2) *Fear and Trembling*, beginning through *Problema I*.

2/24: *Fear and Trembling* continued

- (1) *Problema II*.
- (2) Devin Johnston, "Faith as Eschatological Trust," forthcoming in *Kierkegaard Confronts Philosophy* (ed. Mooney).
- (3) *Problema III* (if time permits)

3/3: The Religious: Selections from *Fragments* and Introduction to *Postscript*

- (1) *Philosophical Fragments* §§I-III, pp.9-48 (photocopy)
- (2) Karen Carr, "After Paganism," in *KAM* ch.8.
- (3) *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Introduction and "The Historical Point of View."

3/10: The Religious: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

- (1) Part II §1 ch.2: Theses attributable to Lessing (pp.72-126)
- (2) Part II §2 ch.2: Subjective Truth as Inwardness (pp.189-250)
- (3) Bruce Kirmmse, "Affectation, or the Fabrication of the Self," forthcoming in *Kierkegaard Confronts Philosophy* (handout)

3/31: The Religious: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* continued.

- (1) Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, chs. 7-8 (photocopy)
- (2) Part II §2 ch.2 Appendix: A Glance at a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature (pp.251-300)

4/7: Religiousness A: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* continued.

- (1) Part II §2 ch.4: Division 2A: Pathos (pp.387-554)

4/14: Religiousness B: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* continued.

- (1) Part II §2 ch.4: Division 2B: The Intermediate Clause and the Dialectical (pp.555-580)
- (2) Part II §2 ch.5 Appendix: Understanding with the Reader & First and Last Explanation (pp.617-630)

4/21: All the categories from the perspective of Christian Faith: *The Sickness Unto Death*.

4/28: *The Sickness Unto Death* continued

- (1) Richard Johnson, "Neither Nietzsche Nor Aristotle," *KAM* ch.7

5/5: *The Sickness Unto Death* continued and Conclusion.

Final papers due May 8.