Kierkegaard Research:
Sources, Reception and Resources
Volume 17

Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms

Edited by
Katalin Nun
and Jon Stewart

KIERKEGAARD'S PSEUDONYMS

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Edited by
KATALIN NUN AND JON STEWART

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Contents

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Preface

One of the elements that many readers admire in Kierkegaard's skill as a writer consists in his ability to create different voices and perspectives in his works. Instead of unilaterally presenting clear-cut doctrines and theses, he confronts the reader with different personalities and figures who all espouse different views. It has been thought that this is a part of Kierkegaard's general strategy of communication that creates a context that allows the readers to consider issues critically for themselves instead of simply looking to him to provide the answers for them. This puts the focus on the reader and on one's own subjectivity. Kierkegaard was keen to shun any sense of authority that often accrues to writers, and so it was important to him to find ways to avoid being immediately associated with the thoughts that were being presented in his works.

One important aspect of this play of perspectives is Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms. As he outlines in *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* and *On My Work as an Author*, he divided his authorship into signed works and pseudonymous works. The goal with this was to reach different kinds of readers in a way that was most appropriate for them. The signed works spoke to the common religious believer and had a primarily religious content. By contrast, the pseudonymous works tended to be somewhat more academic in nature and, while including many religious themes, treated other topics as well, such as philosophy, theater, and literary criticism. Moreover, in some cases Kierkegaard's name appeared as editor of a work that was ascribed to a pseudonym, a constellation that raises further questions.

The creation of the series of pseudonymous writings allowed Kierkegaard to distance himself from the content of his works. It made it possible for him to present ideas in the name of a fictional author. This was not unusual at the time; indeed, the famous Danish-Norwegian writer Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) used pseudonyms a century earlier, and this was also a common practice among both the German Romantics[1] and many authors of the Danish Golden Age.[2] But in Kierkegaard's case the matter was more complex and even convoluted. He used a pseudonym not because he feared persecution from the censors, as was often the case, but for different reasons like those just noted concerning his conceptions of Christianity and communication.

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[1] Here one need only think of the pseudonyms Novalis (for Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg) and Jean Paul (for Johann Paul Friedrich Richter). A similar strategy is employed by E.T.A. Hoffmann in *The Life and Opinions of Tomcat Murr*. There Hoffmann appears as the editor of the work, which is said to be written by a cat by the name of Murr.

[2] See the extensive list of pseudonyms from the period that appear in H. Ehrencron-Müller's *Anonym- og pseudonym-lexikon, for Danmark og Island til 1920 og Norge til 1814*, Copenhagen: H. Hagerup 1940. Uffe Andreasen, "Pseudonymliste," in *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, vols. 1–4, ed. by Uffe Andreasen, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Boghandel A/S 1980–84, vol. 4, pp. 600–601.

Up until the publication of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in 1846 Kierkegaard took pains to keep up the façade of the pseudonyms. Indeed, in that work he has his pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus review the works of the other pseudonymous authors in the chapter "A Glance at a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature."[3] But then, presumably thinking that the *Postscript* would be his last work, he wrote "A First and Last Explanation" which he appended to the text. There he reveals that he is the author behind the pseudonyms Constantin Constantius, Frater Taciturnus, Hilarius Bookbinder, Johannes Climacus, Johannes de silentio, Nicolaus Notabene, Victor Eremita, Vigilius Haufniensis, and William Afham.[4] He gives these authors the responsibility for the ideas and thoughts contained in the works. Quite surprisingly, he states "in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me."[5] Further he asks the reader to refer to these authors and not himself when discussing the ideas presented in these works: "Therefore, if it should occur to anyone to want to quote a particular passage from the books, it is my wish, my prayer, that he will do me the kindness of citing the respective pseudonymous authors' name, not mine…."[6]

In the history of Kierkegaard research his use of the pseudonyms was long regarded as an oddity. Even scholars who were otherwise quite sympathetic to him dismissed this as a wholly superfluous feature of his writing that had its origin in some idiosyncrasy of Kierkegaard's personality. But in the end it was thought that all of the ideas and analyses contained in the pseudonymous works could safely be attributed to Kierkegaard. For example, Walter Lowrie (1868–1959) wrote in the introduction to his translation of *The Concept of Dread* in 1944, "We need not therefore apply to this book S. K.'s emphatic admonition not to attribute to him anything that is said by his pseudonyms. This was his first completely serious book, and everything we find in it may safely be regarded as his own way of thinking."[7] This sentiment was representative of the general view that there was no real reason to be particularly concerned with this somewhat eccentric feature of his writings.

In the last 25–30 years, however, this view has changed as scholars became more attentive to the differing views of the pseudonymous authors. How could all of these be ascribed to Kierkegaard's actual position if in fact the views presented were very different or even contradictory? Some scholars began taking the pseudonyms more seriously,[8] but this did not become a major issue in the research literature until 1993

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3 *SKS* 7, 228–73 / *CUP1*, 251–300.

4 *SKS* 7, 569 / *CUP1*, 625.

5 *SKS* 7, 569f. / *CUP1*, 625–6.

6 *SKS* 7, 571 / *CUP1*, 627.

7 Walter Lowrie, "Translator's Preface," in Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. by Walter Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1944, p. x.

8 For example, Lars Bejerholm, *Meddelelsens dialektik. Studier i Sören Kierkegaards teorier om språk kommunikation och pseudonymitet*, Copenhagen: Munksgaard 1962, see pp. 211–303. Alastair McKinnon, "Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms: A New Hierarchy," in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1969, pp. 116–26. Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins*, trans. by George C. Schoolfield, New Haven: Yale University Press 1980, pp. 21–3. M. Holmes Hartshorne, *Kierkegaard, Godly Deceiver: The Nature and Meaning of his Pseudonymous Writings*, New York: Columbia University Press 1990.

when the literary scholar Roger Poole (1939–2003) published his influential book, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication*.[9] Influenced by postmodernist literary theory and notions such as the death of the author and the infinite deferral of meaning, Poole argued that if one wished to understand Kierkegaard correctly it was imperative that his different pseudonyms be kept separate from one another and taken seriously in their own right. He argues that Kierkegaard's use of irony, humor, and other forms of misdirection required that the reader become more reflective about the nature of the interpretation of his works. He condescendingly dubbed the earlier scholars "blunt readers" in the sense that they immediately ascribed to Kierkegaard whatever they found in the works of his pseudonyms without considering that by writing under a pseudonym Kierkegaard might have had something more sophisticated in mind.

Poole's work evoked a critical discussion about the issue, especially with his suggestion that a part of the goal of the use of pseudonyms was to undermine the ideas presented. Since many readers identified with the conception of Christianity or Christian faith that appeared in Kierkegaard's works, Poole's thesis seemed threatening since it seemed to imply that none of this was ever meant to be taken seriously, or worse, that Kierkegaard presented these views in order to covertly undermine them.[10] Other critics insisted that despite the different pseudonyms, there is still always something distinctively Kierkegaardian that runs throughout his writings and that there is a unity in the authorship as a whole.[11]

Poole's view seems to presuppose that Kierkegaard had a clearly conceived strategy from the start such that Kierkegaard knew when he started to write a given work that it would be ascribed to a specific author. Thus he could put ideas or stylistic elements into the text that would be characteristic of that author. This raises important philological questions since it is necessary to determine exactly when in the course of the composition of a specific work Kierkegaard hit upon the idea of ascribing it to a pseudonym. But contrary to Poole's view, it seems that in the case of some of the pseudonymous works, the idea of the pseudonym was not something carefully planned from the start but rather was almost an afterthought that Kierkegaard came up with at the very last minute before delivering the manuscript to the printer. This presents a problem for Poole's reading, which seems to rely on a highly self-

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[9] Roger Poole, *Kierkegaard: The Indirect Communication*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1993. See also his "Towards a Theory of Responsible Reading: How to Read and Why," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2002, pp. 395–442, especially pp. 413ff.; "The Unknown Kierkegaard: Twentieth-Century Receptions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. by Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 48–75, especially pp. 58–66.

[10] See C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and the Self: Collected Essays*, Waco: Baylor University Press 2006, p. 29; p. 35; pp. 67–9; p. 80. See also Evans' book review of Poole's *The Indirect Communication* in *Religious Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1994, pp. 531–2. Mark Tietjen, *Kierkegaard, Communication, and Virtue: Authorship as Edification*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2013, pp. 17ff. David R. Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013, p. 3, note 8. Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Faith*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 2014, p. 138.

[11] George Pattison, *Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology*, London and New York: Routledge 2002, pp. 4ff.

conscious and reflective use of the pseudonyms by Kierkegaard. If Kierkegaard did not have the idea of the individual pseudonyms meticulously formulated as a part of his grand authorial strategy after all, but rather they simply appeared in a somewhat arbitrary or *ad hoc* fashion at a stage when the actual texts were already written, then this would clearly damage the view that Poole is defending.

Examples of this kind of problem can be seen in the genesis of *The Concept of Anxiety*, which, as is well known, is attributed to the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis. Philological evidence shows that this pseudonym was a last-minute idea and not a part of a careful plan from the start.[12] Here the tension is clear since Kierkegaard originally planned for this to be a work signed in his own name, and although he decided to change this to make it a pseudonymous work, he had already included certain elements in the text that could only refer to him as an author and not the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis. The work begins with a personal dedication to "the late Professor Poul Martin Møller," who had died in 1838, but this only makes sense coming from Kierkegaard, as one of Møller's devoted students, but not from Vigilius Haufniensis.[13] Similarly in one passage Kierkegaard refers to his experience attending Schelling's lectures in Berlin,[14] and once again this only makes sense as a reference to Kierkegaard himself. There is no reason to think that Vigilius Haufniensis went to Berlin to attend Schelling's lectures. Elements of this kind call into question the idea that each work can be conceived as a unitary whole reflecting the ideas and world-view of a specific pseudonymous author. It appears that the composition of the works is more complicated than that view would allow.

While Poole's views were controversial, his work did play a role in the change of sensibilities in the field with regard to the treatment of the pseudonyms. Now it is common practice among Kierkegaard scholars to distinguish different works by means of the pseudonyms and to say "Johannes Climacus writes…" or "Nicolaus Notabene says…" instead of "Kierkegaard in *Philosophical Fragments* writes…" or Kierkegaard in *Prefaces* says…." This has also led to a new interest in the use and nature of the pseudonyms.[15]

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[12] Søren Bruun, "Tekstredegørelse" to *Begrebet Angest* in *SKS* K4, 307–39. See also Søren Bruun, "The Genesis of *The Concept of Anxiety*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2001, pp. 1–14. For an account of other philological problems with this view, see Jon Stewart, "Søren Kierkegaard and the Problem of Pseudonymity," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 32, 2012, pp. 407–34.

[13] *SKS* 4, 311 / *CA*, 5.

[14] *SKS* 4, 364n / *CA*, 59n. See also *SKS* 4, 328n / *CA*, 21n.

[15] Michelle Stott, *Behind the Mask: Kierkegaard's Pseudonymic Treatment of Lessing in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses 1993. Daniel W. Conway and K.E. Gover, "Introduction" to *Søren Kierkegaard: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, vols. 1–4, ed. by Daniel W. Conway and K.E. Gover, London: Routledge 2002, vol. 1, *Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and His Pseudonyms*, pp. 1–4. Alain Bellaiche-Zacharie, "Kierkegaard et Pessoa: pseudonymie et hétéronymie," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, vol. 93, 2009, pp. 533–550. Stewart, "Søren Kierkegaard and the Problem of Pseudonymity." Philipp Schwab, *Der Rückstoß der Methode. Kierkegaard und die indirekte Mitteilung*, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter 2012 (*Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series*,

The present volume is dedicated to exploring the different pseudonyms and authorial voices in Kierkegaard's authorship. The working assumption is that there is something unique and special about each pseudonym. The authors have been requested to try to explore the pseudonym in question as a kind of literary figure and to explain what kind of a person is at issue in each of the works and what that tells us about the content that is presented in these works. In this sense this volume serves as a complement to volume 16 of the present series, *Kierkegaard's Literary Figures and Motifs*, since pseudonyms are conceived as a special category of literary figure.

An attempt has been made to include all of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms and other main voices. This volume thus features articles on A, the Aesthete, the author of Part One of *Either/Or*; A, B, and A.F., the authors of Kierkegaard's early articles, Anti-Climacus, the author of *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*; Constantin Constantius, the author of *Repetition*; Frater Taciturnus, the discoverer of " 'Guilty'/'Not Guilty' " from *Stages on Life's Way*; H.H., the author of the essays—"Does a Human Being Have the Right to Let Himself Be Put to Death for the Truth?" and "The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle"; Hilarius Bookbinder, the editor of *Stages on Life's Way*; Inter et Inter, the author of the article "The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress"; Johannes Climacus, the author of the *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*; Johannes de silentio, the author of *Fear and Trembling*; Johannes the Seducer, the author of "The Diary of a Seducer" from *Either/Or*, Part One; Judge William, the author of the long letters in *Either/Or*, Part Two; Nicolaus Notabene, the author of *Prefaces*; the mysterious, unnamed One Still Living in the title of Kierkegaard's signed work *From the Papers of One Still Living*; Petrus Minor, the intended author of *The Book on Adler*; Quidam, the author of the diary that comprises " 'Guilty'/'Not Guilty'?" from *Stages on Life's Way*; Victor Eremita, the editor of *Either/Or*; Vigilius Haufniensis, the author of *The Concept of Anxiety*; William Afham the author of "In Vino Veritas" from *Stages on Life's Way*; and Young Man, the other main figure (along with Constantin Constantius) in *Repetition*. The hope is that by taking seriously each of these figures as individuals, we will be able to gain new insights into the texts which they are ostensibly responsible for. This is after all the true measure of the importance of the individual pseudonyms. If new insights can be gleaned from this approach, then it will be vindicated. But in the absence of research into the pseudonyms of this kind, the issue of their importance remains an open question.

Perhaps the problem with the different approaches to the pseudonyms lies in the fact that they have been rather extreme views. In other words, the claim is either that Kierkegaard's use of the pseudonyms can be entirely ignored and is in no way relevant for the content of his thought or the opposite opinion that says that careful attention to the pseudonyms is the *sine qua non* of any meaningful interpretation of Kierkegaard at all. Perhaps a more productive approach lies somewhere in the dialectical middle ground between these two positions. One can certainly acknowledge the importance of the pseudonyms and try to be attentive to them to

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vol. 25). Joseph Westfall, "Pseudonymity," in *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, Tome V, *Objectivity to Sacrifice*, ed. by Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2015 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 15), pp. 153–8.

the extent that this proves useful for one's interpretation or research project. But there is no reason to insist on this absolutely or to push this to extremes if it turns out that in fact special attention to the pseudonyms is not relevant for the given issue in Kierkegaard that one wishes to treat. The articles in the present volume all work within this middle ground. This collection hopes to create a forum for discussion for an exploration of the pseudonyms that will inspire other authors and provide a useful basis for future research.

Katalin Nun and Jon Stewart

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List of Abbreviations

Danish Abbreviations

B&A *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Søren Kierkegaard*, vols. 1–2, ed. by Niels Thulstrup, Copenhagen: Munksgaard 1953–54.

Bl.art. *S. Kierkegaard's Bladartikler, med Bilag samlede efter Forfatterens Død, udgivne som Supplement til hans øvrige Skrifter*, ed. by Rasmus Nielsen, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1857.

EP *Af Søren Kierkegaards Efterladte Papirer*, vols. 1–9, ed. by H.P. Barfod and Hermann Gottsched, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1869–81.

Pap. *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, vols. I to XI–3, ed. by Peter Andreas Heiberg, Victor Kuhr and Einer Torsting, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1909–48; second, expanded ed., vols. I to XI–3, by Niels Thulstrup, vols. XII to XIII supplementary volumes, ed. by Niels Thulstrup, vols. XIV to XVI index by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1968–78.

SKS *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vols. 1–28, vols. K1-K28, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, Alastair McKinnon and Finn Hauberg Mortensen, Copenhagen: Gads Forlag 1997–2013.

SV1 *Samlede Værker*, vols. I–XIV, ed. by A.B. Drachmann, Johan Ludvig Heiberg and H.O. Lange, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag 1901–06.

English Abbreviations

AN *Armed Neutrality*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.

AR *On Authority and Revelation*, *The Book on Adler,* trans. by Walter Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1955.

ASKB *The Auctioneer's Sales Record of the Library of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. by H.P. Rohde, Copenhagen: The Royal Library 1967.

BA *The Book on Adler*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.

C *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.

CA *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. by Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980.

CD *Christian Discourses*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.

CI *The Concept of Irony*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989.

CIC *The Concept of Irony*, trans. with an Introduction and Notes by Lee M. Capel, London: Collins 1966.

COR *The Corsair Affair*; *Articles Related to the Writings*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982.

CUP1 *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992.

CUP2 *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 2, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992.

CUPH *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2009.

EO1 *Either/Or*, Part I, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987.

EO2 *Either/Or*, Part II, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987.

EOP *Either/Or*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1992.

EPW *Early Polemical Writings*, including *From the Papers of One Still Living*; *Articles from Student Days*; *The Battle Between the Old and the New Soap-Cellars*, trans. by Julia Watkin, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.

EUD *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.

FSE *For Self-Examination*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.

FT *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1983.

FTP *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1985.

JC *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985.

JFY *Judge for Yourself!*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.

JP *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vols. 1–6, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (vol. 7, Index and Composite Collation), Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press 1967–78.

KAC *Kierkegaard's Attack upon "Christendom," 1854–1855*, trans. by Walter Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1944.

KJN *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, vols. 1–11, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2007ff.

LD *Letters and Documents*, trans. by Henrik Rosenmeier, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1978.

LR *A Literary Review*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 2001.

M *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.

P *Prefaces / Writing Sampler*, trans. by Todd W. Nichol, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.

PC *Practice in Christianity*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991.

PF *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985.

PJ *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1996.

PLR *Prefaces: Light Reading for Certain Classes as the Occasion May Require*, trans. by William McDonald, Tallahassee: Florida State University Press 1989.

PLS *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1941.

PV *The Point of View* including *On My Work as an Author*, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, and *Armed Neutrality*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1998.

PVL *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* including *On My Work as an Author*, trans. by Walter Lowrie, New York and London: Oxford University Press 1939.

R *Repetition*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1983.

SBL *Notes of Schelling's Berlin Lectures*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989.

SLW *Stages on Life's Way*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988.

SUD *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980.

SUDP *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. by Alastair Hannay, London and New York: Penguin Books 1989.

TA *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age. A Literary Review*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1978.

TD *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.

UD *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.

WA *Without Authority* including *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air, Two Ethical-Religious Essays, Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays, An Upbuilding Discourse, Two Discourses at the Communion*

on Fridays, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.

WL *Works of Love*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995.

WS *Writing Sampler*, trans. by Todd W. Nichol, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.

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"A" the Aesthete:

Aestheticism and the Limits of Philosophy

Ryan Kemp

Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* showcases two competing life views: a life of aesthetic pleasure on the one hand, and a life of ethical commitment on the other. Each view is represented by a pseudonym and the "papers" of the pseudonyms are juxtaposed in two parts. Part One features an anonymous aesthetic character referred to simply as "A." While A plays a key role in defining the general features of Kierkegaard's "aesthetic stage," his importance lies less in outlining the boundaries of aestheticism than in presenting the view in its full force. Far from being a clumsy pseudonymous front, A's aestheticism is meant to represent a serious challenge to any would-be defender of the ethical life, not the least his pseudonymous counterpart "Judge William."

Despite A's sophistication, many readers of *Either/Or* have taken it for granted that, of the two pseudonyms, Judge William presents the better case.[1] It is assumed that William successfully reveals both (1) the internal inconsistency of A's governing practical assumptions and (2) how those governing assumptions are satisfied only in the ethical life. In doing this, Judge William sketches a dialectical "bridge" that permits A to recognize the ethical life as a fulfillment of practical principles he already endorses.[2]

Thanks to John Davenport, Fred Rush, Jon Stewart, and Walter Wietzke for feedback on earlier drafts of the article.

[1] See, for example, Anthony Rudd, "Reason in Ethics Revisited: *Either/Or*, 'Criterionless Choice' and Narrative Unity," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2008, pp. 178–99; John J. Davenport, "The Meaning of Kierkegaard's Choice between the Aesthetic and the Ethical: A Response to MacIntyre," in *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre: Essays on Freedom, Narrative, and Virtue*, ed. by John J. Davenport and Anthony Rudd, New York: Open Court 2001, pp. 75–113; and Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard*, New York: Oxford University Press 2006, pp. 147–52.

[2] A commendable example of this style of interpretation can be found in M. Jamie Ferreira's *Transforming Vision*. In her attempt to explain Kierkegaard's concept of a "pathos-filled transition," Ferreira argues that we should look to Aristotle's notion of an "enthymeme." An enthymeme is a syllogism that attempts to convince an audience of a conclusion by showing how an opinion they already hold entails the conclusion in question. While Kierkegaard's journals do suggest that he found Aristotle's notion of an enthymeme to be a helpful model for understanding his own notion of transition, Ferreira is, I think, mistaken about the sense in which the concept is instructive. If you look at the broader context of the journals' discussion

In this article, I call into question the above story by drawing attention to the extraordinary ingenuity of A's aestheticism. Against Judge William, I suggest that the ethical stage's dialectic fails to address A's more sophisticated practical presuppositions.[3] The Judge's failure is a product not just of A's reflective cunning, but the rules of engagement that the former is forced to play by, rules internal to ethics itself. Because modern ethics is conditioned by a demand for normative transparency,[4] any potential justification of the ethical life requires that an agent can (at least in principle) recognize its authority for himself.[5] This is a justificatory burden that William implicitly recognizes and—ultimately—cannot meet. Despite this failure, one might think that a kind of "ethical" life may still be better than an aesthetic life. For this reason, I conclude by suggesting that A's real need is not an ethical "midwife" who can coax out the implicit ethical assumptions already present in his practical framework, but a "seducer," someone who can "impregnate" A with new reasons. Though such a "conversion" would not be rational in the sense that modern ethics requires, I argue that it is the only kind of transition possible for A.

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of the "leap," it is apparent that Kierkegaard is interested in the enthymeme's status as a *subjective* appeal. He commends Aristotle and others for noticing that "the ultimate can be reached only as limit" (*SKS* 18, 225, JJ:266 / *JP* 3, 2341). For Ferreira's discussion see *Transforming Vision*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991, pp. 45–7.

[3] Though, in this respect, I will be defending a conclusion that many contemporary Kierkegaard scholars consider mistaken, my thesis is not without its proponents, most recently John Lippitt, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Fred Rush. My reading of *Either/Or* is crucially indebted to each, especially MacIntyre's modified view developed in his essay "Once more on Kierkegaard," in *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre*, pp. 339–55. For Lippitt see John Lippitt, "Getting the Story Straight: Kierkegaard, MacIntyre and Some Problems with Narrative," *Inquiry*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 34–69. Fred Rush's influence has been exercised through many valuable conversations. I should also make clear that my interpretation of *Either/Or* has, in the last several years, undergone a significant transformation. I once placed more faith in the power of Judge William's dialectic. See Ryan Kemp, "Making Sense of the Ethical Stage: Revisiting Kierkegaard's Aesthetic-to-Ethical Transition," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2011, pp. 49–70.

[4] The "peculiar institution" inherited from Enlightenment giants like Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. For an analysis of ethics understood in this sense see Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1985, pp. 174–96 and Raymond Guess, "Outside Ethics," in *Outside Ethics*, ed. by Raymond Guess, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005, pp. 40–66.

[5] Of course, what it means to "recognize" is incredibly important to the analysis. Though I develop this point later, I should say here that my view is that even when the conditions are very weak (for instance, that a person recognizes the authority of a norm under conditions of reflective equilibrium or after having undergone cognitive psychotherapy), A still does not "recognize" the ethical life as valid for him. Here, I disagree with Lippitt who thinks the debate properly concerns what is compelling to the aesthete in his current, perhaps self-deceived, state. Against Lippitt, I think the more interesting question concerns whether A actually has a reason to be ethical given his current set of desires. Effectively motivating (or "compelling") a potentially irrational person to act on reasons he, in fact, has is an entirely different matter. See Lippitt, "Getting the Story Straight," p. 60.

While the debate concerning whether or not A has a reason to be ethical may seem peripheral to the larger concerns of this volume (namely, introducing readers to Kierkegaard's pseudonyms), I take A's relationship to the ethical stage to be essential for understanding A more generally. Determining A's relationship to the ethical stage amounts to nothing less than determining whether A's life view is rationally sustainable. On the way to answering this more foundational question, I make a few more specific, but nonetheless important, claims about A. I argue (1) that his reflective aestheticism is fully equipped to achieve the aim of aestheticism (namely, enjoyment), (2) that he does not see his life as one of despair, and (3) that the fact that there is no reason to be ethical shows (perhaps counterintuitively) that, if given a choice between aestheticism and ethics, *one actually has a reason to be aesthetic*.[6]

My discussion has four sections. In Section I, I offer both a general sketch of Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage and a specific sketch of A's particular brand of aestheticism. After tracing the finer details of A's position, I move on in Section II to present what I call the "internalist burden" of modern ethics. Here I show how Judge William's notion of ethical normativity demands that he can justify the ethical life by showing how its basic commitments satisfy desires A already endorses. Establishing that Judge William is committed to a form of "reasons internalism" is important, because it makes clear that a person like A does not have a reason to be ethical unless he also has an antecedent interest in being ethical. Next, in Section IIII, I examine both what Kierkegaard means by "despair" and what it would take for A to *realize* that his own life view is subject to it. Insofar as A's reflective aestheticism sufficiently insulates him from coming to understand his despair as such, I argue that he does not have an all-things-considered reason to be ethical. Finally, in Section IV, I suggest that if the Judge (or anyone else) hopes to convert A, he would do well to employ a touch of seduction. Of course, admitting a need for seduction is just to admit that the modern ethical project is, by its own standards, untenable. It is, in its own way, aesthetic.

I. A and his Aestheticism

My task in this section is to provide a sketch of the hero of *Either/Or*, Part One—A. With this end in mind, I begin with a general outline of the aesthetic stage and then narrow my focus to A's particular species of aestheticism, what A and Judge William call "reflective aestheticism."

If the aesthetic stage can be reduced to any single normative commitment, it is the following: pursue pleasure at all costs.[7] This rather simple commitment, however,

[6] This follows from the fact that ethics presupposes an ability to self-justify. If it fails in this regard, there can be no reason to be ethical because there is nothing that answers to the name.

[7] Though this is how the aesthetic stage is commonly interpreted (see, for example, Thomas Miles, *Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on the Best Way of Life*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 14; Merold Westphal, *Becoming a Self*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press 1996, p. 22; and John Caputo, *How to Read Kierkegaard*, London: Granta Books 2007, p. 23), Michelle Kosch has argued that the aesthetic stage should be understood in terms of

threatens to mask aestheticism's remarkable complexity, for—as any self-respecting hedonist knows—pleasure comes in many varieties. In the interest of space and relevance, my analysis will be limited to just two varieties, what A calls enjoyment's "first" and "second" forms. In his introductory remarks to the "Seducer's Diary," A explains:

> [Poetic reflection] was the second enjoyment, and [Johannes'] whole life was intended for enjoyment. In the first case, he personally enjoyed the esthetic; in the second case, he esthetically enjoyed his personality. The point in the first case was he egotistically enjoyed personally that which in part actuality has given to him…[I]n the second case, his personality was volatilized, and he then enjoyed the situation and himself in the situation. In the first case, he continually needed actuality as the occasion, as an element; in the second case, actuality was drowned in the poetic.[8]

The form of enjoyment A refers to as "first" is elsewhere associated with "immediacy." This form of pleasure is immediate in two senses. First, it is directly grounded in sense experience, for example, the feeling one gets when tasting something sweet as opposed, say, to the feeling one gets when *recollecting* (or *imagining*) the experience of tasting something sweet. While the distinction between pleasure grounded in sensory experience and pleasure grounded in a *mere* idea is imprecise (especially the sense in which the former is supposed to be "directly" caused by sensation), the distinction attempts to express an established intuition: the person who lives a life of reflective enjoyment is—unlike his immediate counterpart—a person who "lives entirely in his head." As A puts it, the reflective aesthete drowns *actuality* in the poetic.

The second sense of "immediate" is a refinement of the first: immediate enjoyment is non-self-referential. By way of example, consider the pleasures associated with being in love. I can, on the one hand, simply and immediately enjoy all the idiosyncrasies of the beloved—the way the beloved's face looks under the light of the moon, the beloved's charming wit, and so on. On the other hand, I can enjoy the *idea* of being in love. The object of this second, more reflective, pleasure is the thought that I find myself in such-and-such a situation. Like the person who

its denial of free will (Kosch, *Freedom and Reason*, pp. 147–52). While I think it is a mistake to suggest that the aesthetic life is *necessarily* marked by such a denial, Kosch is right to think that aestheticism *can* be understood with respect to its account of freedom. This follows from the fact that a life arranged around the pursuit of pleasure can also be understood as a life governed by a particular conception of volitional activity. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel offers an account of "the *immediate* or *natural* will" as one that is concerned with desire satisfaction (G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. by Allen Wood, trans. by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, p. 45). Under this construal of the will, desire satisfaction counts as a kind of freedom. The same goes for Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage. Though aestheticism is typically understood as a life centered around enjoyment, it can just as easily be understood as a life governed by a particular conception of agency. This helps to explain why Judge William provides A with two distinct arguments for the superiority of the ethical stage. The first addresses aestheticism *qua* life of enjoyment, the second addresses aestheticism *qua* theory of agency. I address this in more detail in the Section II of the article.

[8] *SKS* 2, 295 / *EO1*, 305.

lives in his imagination, the person who limits himself to this kind of second-order pleasure possesses only a tenuous relation to actuality.[9]

To distinguish better between immediate and reflective enjoyment A offers a series of character profiles. The exemplar of aesthetic immediacy is Mozart's Don Giovanni. The first thing to notice about Don Giovanni is that his desire is "sensual": he is the "incarnation of the flesh."[10] While Don Giovanni likely employs several reflective categories (presumably the concept "female"), he otherwise avoids reflection. A even tells us that, technically speaking, Don Giovanni is not a seducer, insofar as the latter possesses "the power of words."[11] In contrast to his wordy Byronic counterpart, Don Giovanni is a sheer force of nature: he sees and he possesses.[12] His enjoyment lies neither in pursuit (something reserved for those with less erotic prowess) nor in the recollection of past triumphs, but the immediate gratification of sensible desire.

Additionally, Don Giovanni's pleasure is unself-conscious: his pleasure is not grounded in a conception of himself as a "lover" or a "seducer." *Qua* force of nature—one "whose history one cannot learn except by listening to the noise of the waves"[13]—Don Giovanni does not achieve the reflective distance required for this kind of self-referential pleasure. So while Leporello (Don Giovanni's servant and "accountant") may feverishly note his employer's conquests, Don Giovanni's own reputation is, for him, beside the point.

In contrast to Don Giovanni and the immediate erotic, A's most developed portrayal of reflective aestheticism is found in the "Seducer's Diary." The Diary contains the self-reports of a certain "Johannes" who models a method of aesthetic cultivation that A calls "crop rotation." Since familiarity with the crop rotation method is essential to understanding both A and reflective aestheticism, I will outline its commitments before returning to the "Seducer's Diary."

Crop rotation develops out of crisis: pleasure depends on novelty,[14] and novelty is a finite resource. In response to this challenge, an especially industrious aesthete varies his landscape. He travels, dates around, tries new restaurants, and tries his hand at basket weaving. The problem with this *extensive* strategy is that its returns quickly diminish; even an aesthete with the resources of Nero will eventually struggle to keep things new. What the aesthete needs is a more sophisticated method, namely, an *intensive* one. Instead of casting one's lot with the external world, the aesthete

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[9] Johannes the Seducer puts the contrast between the two forms of enjoyment nicely when he writes, "How beautiful it is to be in love; how interesting it is to know that one is in love" (*SKS* 2, 323 / *EO1*, 334). The immediate Don Giovanni seeks beauty; the reflective Johannes seeks the interesting.

[10] *SKS* 2, 93 / *EO1*, 88.

[11] *SKS* 2, 103 / *EO1*, 99.

[12] *SKS* 2, 100–101 / *EO1*, 96.

[13] *SKS* 2, 97 / *EO1*, 92.

[14] Thus, the relevance of A's discourse on "first love" and Don Giovanni's enviable ability to experience each love as though it were his first. Don Giovanni avoids staleness by literally being ahistorical. As an imaginative representation of the erotic, he has no past. The reflective aesthete's goal is to approximate Don Giovanni's sense of newness in the midst of a historical existence.

must learn to use actuality as a "sounding board" (*Resonansbund*)[15] for the rich and boundless world of inner experience. The key to this venture—what A calls playing "shuttlecock with all existence"[16]—is learning to limit one's environment, a large-scale editorial project that requires a deft application of two skills: "recollection" and "forgetfulness." Of these two skills, A writes: "The more poetically one remembers, the more easily one forgets, for to remember poetically is actually only an expression for forgetting. When I remember poetically, my experience has already undergone the change of having lost everything painful."[17] Recollection and forgetfulness complement one another. A skilled aesthete reshapes his experience by forgetting aspects that are painful or uninteresting. These creative fantasies are then called to mind so that the aesthete can continuously relive (and live in) them.[18]

Johannes the Seducer models the intensive method's principle of limitation.[19] In concert with A's recommendations, Johannes employs recollection and forgetfulness in order to construct an image that can "refresh" his otherwise restless soul.[20] The shape of the beloved's foot, the color of her cloak, the sound of her voice, these are all elements that Johannes frames neatly in his story. The intensity of Johannes' method is symbolized in the chastity of his affair—it is never his intention to consummate, at least in any straightforward physical sense. The whole affair is concocted with an eye toward its place in Johannes' larger fiction. The "Diary" is thus no ordinary historical chronicle; it takes the place of the lover as the primary object of enjoyment. Johannes feeds his desire on the little bits of the beloved that are worthy of his scrapbook.

Of the two aesthetic categories—immediate and reflective—A resides in the latter. Not only does Judge William recognize him as such, A's "Diapsalmata" (a collection of aphorisms that express A's own practical outlook) make plain that his life is centered around enjoyment and that immediate enjoyment is, in itself, insufficient. Consider the following reflections that trace A's views on (1) the fate of erotic (or immediate) pleasure, (2) the suggestion that immediate pleasure must be transformed, and finally (3) the means by which it is transformed through recollection. A writes:

> [1] Girls do not appeal to me. Their beauty passes away like a dream and like yesterday when it is past. Their faithfulness—yes, their faithfulness! Either they are faithless—this does not concern me anymore—or they are faithful. If I found such a one, she would appeal to me from the standpoint of her being a rarity; but from the standpoint of a long period of time she would not appeal to me, for either she would continually remain faithful, and then I would become a sacrifice to my eagerness for experience, since I would have to bear with her, or the time would come when she would lapse, and then I would have the same story.[21]

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15 *SKS* 2, 283 / *EO1*, 294.

16 Ibid.

17 *SKS* 2, 282 / *EO1*, 293.

18 *SKS* 2, 284 / *EO1*, 295: "In this way, forgetting and recollecting are identical, and the artistically achieved identity is the Archimedean point with which one lifts the whole world."

19 *SKS* 2, 315 / *EO1*, 325.

20 *SKS* 2, 314 / *EO1*, 324.

21 *SKS* 2, 38 / *EO1*, 29.

> [2] If erotic love is to have any meaning, in its hour of birth it must be shone upon by the moon, just as Apis, in order to be the true Apis, must have been shown upon by the moon. The cow that gave birth to Apis is said to have been shone upon by the moon in the moment of conception.[22]
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> [3] To live in recollection is the most perfect life imaginable; recollection is more richly satisfying than all actuality, and it has a security that no actuality possesses. A recollected life relationship has already passed into eternity and has no temporal interest anymore.[23]

While this story arc ([1] disillusionment with immediate enjoyment *to* [2] the foundation of a new method *to* [3] aesthetic bliss) should by now be familiar, there is one aspect of A's aestheticism that the above analysis does not bring out: A sees his life as one of sorrow (*Sorg*) and melancholy (*Tungsind*).[24] This revelation will play an important part in determining A's relationship to the ethical stage and is thus something I analyze in more detail in Section III of the article. For now though, I turn to examine Kierkegaard's account of practical reason. Before we can judge the rational stability of A's aestheticism, we need to make clear what it would it mean—*ex hypothesi*—to present A with a "reason" to be ethical.[25]

II. Modern Ethics' Internalist Burden

Broadly speaking, there are two contemporary views about what constitutes a practical reason. The first, *reasons internalism*, claims that a reason to φ always depends on motivational facts about an agent, whether it is something as strong as being effectively motivated to φ or as weak as possessing a mere desire to φ. In contrast, *reasons externalism* denies that reasons have any necessary relationship to motivational facts; an agent can have a reason to φ without being motivated—whether actually or counterfactually—to φ. In this section of the article, I argue that Judge William follows his philosophic contemporaries in adopting an *internalist* account of reasons. I begin by suggesting that Hegel's dialectical method is designed to meet certain characteristically internalist desiderata,[26] and then move on to show how Judge William adopts the same method for similar reasons.[27]

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22 *SKS* 2, 37 / *EO1*, 28.

23 *SKS* 2, 41 / *EO1*, 32.

24 Interestingly, he never acknowledges that his life is one of "despair" (*Fortvivlelse*).

25 This section has benefitted from conversations with Fred Rush.

26 Though my account begins with Hegel, internalism's inception can be traced at least as far back as Descartes' *Meditations* where the truth aptness of "clear and distinct" ideas permit the lone meditator to call into question the authority of any would-be metaphysical or scientific framework. Rousseau is among the first to take Descartes' internalist revolution seriously at the practical level and Kant is responsible for translating Rousseau's internalist intuitions into a systematic ethical theory.

27 Though my argument concerns what we can infer about the Judge's view of reasons given the structure of his appeal, Walter Wietzke has recently argued that Kierkegaard's notion of "the single individual" provides support for reading Kierkegaard more generally as a reason's internalist. See Walter Wietzke, "The Single Individual and the Normative Question," *The European Legacy*, vol. 18, no. 7, 2013, pp. 896–911.

A. Hegel's Internalism

Michael Forster argues that Hegel's method has three distinct philosophical functions: (1) a pedagogical function, (2) an epistemological function, and (3) a scientific function. One of the method's epistemological functions is to show how the Hegelian system is provable from the viewpoint of any other philosophical position. Forster explains:

> Hegel constructs [a] dialectical "ladder" in such a way that, having run through and discredited all non-Hegelian viewpoints, it eventually reaches the stable, self-consistent viewpoint of the Hegelian system. Hence each viewpoint can, by climbing onto the ladder and seeing where its own commitments lead, come to recognize its own (and indeed every viewpoint's) implicit commitment to the truth of Hegel's system.[28]

While it would perhaps be foolhardy to try and tease an internalist account of reasons out of the method's epistemological function, it seems clear that the motivation for Hegel's method has much in common with the motivation that lies behind reasons internalism. Just as Hegel thinks that establishing the superiority of his own philosophical outlook requires that he be able to demonstrate how it is entailed by all other outlooks, the reasons internalist thinks that the normative legitimacy of any putative reason to act is dependent on being able to establish a positive link between the action in question and an agent's motivational set (his beliefs, desires, and dispositions).[29] Like the internalist, Hegel thinks that normativity (construed as *Wissenschaft*) depends on an ability to establish this kind of link.

B. Judge William's Internalist Appeals

Like Hegel, the Judge appreciates that his appeal to A must literally appeal to A. In his second letter, "The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical," Judge William writes, "if a person fears transparency, he always avoids the ethical, because the ethical really does not want anything else."[30] Several pages later the Judge elaborates:

> The primary difference [between an ethical and an esthetic individual]…is that the ethical individual is transparent to himself.…This difference encompasses everything. The person who lives ethically has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates his whole concretion with his consciousness.…The ethical individual knows himself, but this knowing is not simply contemplation.…It is a collecting of oneself, which itself is an action, and this is why I have with aforethought used the expression "to choose oneself" instead of "to know oneself."[31]

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28 Michael Forster, "Hegel's Dialectical Method," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Frederick Beiser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993, p. 137.

29 The notion of a "motivational set" is developed by Bernard Williams in his essay "Internal and External Reasons," in his *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 192, pp. 101–13. By "motivational set" Williams just means the sum total of an agent's desires and dispositions.

30 *SKS* 3, 242 / *EO2*, 253–4.

31 *SKS* 3, 246 / *EO2*, 258.

By making the "primary difference" between the aesthetic and ethical spheres a matter of transparency, the Judge hints that the transition from one stage to the other is just a matter of drawing out already present aspects of A's motivational set. If A can finally come to see the situation as it is, he will be able to appreciate that what he *really* desires is an ethical life. In the Judge's two letters to A, we see this tactic played out in two ways. I will outline the Judge's first argument in some detail and then, more briefly, suggest the way in which the second possesses a similar structure.

In his first letter, "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage," Judge William argues that, "All the beauty implicit in the erotic of paganism has its validity in Christianity insofar as it can be combined with marriage."[32] This is significant for A, since erotic love is intended to represent A's principle normative commitment (to seek pleasure). Thus, if the Judge can show that erotic love (construed as enjoyment) has its validity in Christian marriage (the ethical relationship *par excellence*), he will have demonstrated how A's guiding normative principle is, in fact, satisfied by the ethical stage.

The Judge begins with an analysis of romantic love: "Romantic love manifests itself as immediate by exclusively resting in natural necessity. It is based on beauty."[33] Romantic love rests in natural necessity because it depends on aspects of the beloved that he or she has no control over, aspects of a person that Kant associates with gifts of skill and fortune. In addition to being grounded in the "sensuous," romantic love aims at continuity. The Judge writes: "The lovers are deeply convinced that in itself their relationship is a complete whole that will never be changed."[34] This combination of ground (accidental beauty) and self-conception (immutability) proves fatal for the erotic, leading to (what Hegel would have called) the "negativity" of romantic love. William explains, "The lovers are deeply convinced that in itself their relationship is a complete whole that will never be changed. But since this conviction is substantiated only by a natural determinant, the eternal is based on the temporal and thereby cancels itself."[35] Having been "canceled," romantic love turns to its opposite, what William calls "reflective love."

Though reflective love manifests itself in a couple ways, it is best illustrated in the "marriage of convenience." By grounding love in nothing more than an act of will—a pact invulnerable to the winds of chance—reflective love attempts to satisfy love's immutability condition. However, despite its best effort, the Judge regards reflective love's prudence as evidence of its implicit dependence on the temporal. He writes: "[Reflective love is] daunted by a pedestrian commonsensical view that one ought to be cautious….Consequently, the eternal, which, as already indicated above, belongs to every marriage, is not really present here, for a commonsensical calculation is always temporal."[36] Thus, it turns out that reflective love, like its erotic counterpart, fails to live up to its self-conception as an *eternal* pact.

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32 *SKS* 3, 20 / *EO2*, 10.
33 *SKS* 3, 29 / *EO2*, 21.
34 *SKS* 3, 30 / *EO2*, 21.
35 Ibid.
36 *SKS* 3, 35 / *EO2*, 27.

In response to the "negativity" of romantic and reflective love, the Judge proposes Christian marriage as a synthesis of the two. Though the brunt of Judge William's lengthy letter is devoted to making good on this claim, he offers the following precis of the project:

> Therefore, inasmuch as in the foregoing I have indicated romantic love and reflective love as confrontational positions, it will be clearly apparent here to what extent the higher unity is a return to the immediate, to what extent this contains, in addition to the something more that it contains, that which was implicit in the first…[I]t is clear that [reflective love] points beyond itself to something higher, but the point is whether this something higher cannot promptly enter into combination with the first love. This something higher is the religious [true marriage].[37]

The Judge is prepared to argue that romantic and reflective love (though inadequate in isolation) are synthesized in the ethical stage in such a way that the one-sidedness of each is compensated for by the other. This means, among other things, that A's principle of pleasure finds its completion in the ethical life.

The Judge's second argument repeats the structure of the first. The Judge begins with a premise purportedly accepted by A and then shows how that premise presupposes ethical content. The difference between argument one and argument two, is that the second, instead of beginning with aesthetic *enjoyment*, begins with the structure of aesthetic *agency*. Though the Judge's two arguments are for this reason genuinely distinct, we should read both of them as targeting the same principle. A's commitment to enjoyment can just as easily be construed as a commitment to an account of agency, for instance, freedom as desire-satisfaction. This, in fact, is the way Hegel describes what he calls the "*immediate* or *natural* will."[38] Because the Judge borrows from the account in his argument to A, it will be beneficial to quickly sketch Hegel's analysis.[39]

In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel identifies three progressively sophisticated accounts of the will: (1) the immediate will, (2) the arbitrary will, and (3) the cultivated will. The immediate will (§§ 8–9) is distinguished by its object of desire. It is free when it gets what it wants: it eats the sandwich; it drinks the beer (maybe even does both). The problem for such a will is that it cannot adequately explain a *resolution* to act in cases where the specific object of desire and/or the means to satisfying it are underdetermined (§§ 11–14). What the immediate will needs and lacks is an agent over and above its desires, a will that can "resolve" such dilemma's through choice. Hegel calls this will the "arbitrary will" (*Willkür*). Unlike its immediate predecessor, the arbitrary will (§§ 15–18) is capable of spontaneously endorsing any of its desires, organizing a multiplicity of drives and inclinations in a single unified choice. Despite this advantage, *Willkür* too possesses its own negativity. Insofar as the desires it endorses are simply given (that is, elements of

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37 *SKS* 3, 38 / *EO2*, 30.

38 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, p. 45.

39 Jon Stewart draws attention to the "Hegelian" structure of the Judge's two arguments in his analysis of *Either/Or*. See Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 182–225.