

Chapter 1 : Project MUSE - Kierkegaard and Christian Philosophy

In this book renowned philosopher Merold Westphal unpacks the writings of nineteenth-century thinker Søren Kierkegaard on biblical, Christian faith and its relation to reason.

While his literary style was experimental, his writings call for Christian morality; a defense of faith and religion. This book was first published by Harper in 1968. It was translated from the Danish and contains an introductory essay by Douglas V. Gougeon. Yet in times of outward or inward searching these books seem to many to be the one thing needful and men seek them out. The creative writing of this Danish Pascal was nearly all done in a phenomenally productive six-year period between 1843 and 1846. Kierkegaard died in 1855 at the age of forty-two. The neglect of one who has influenced German theological thought for forty years and who more recently has been openly acknowledged as a formative force upon the minds of such divergent figures as the German philosophers, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger; as Karl Barth; as the lay Catholic thinker, Theodore Haecker, the Jesuit Pryzwara; and as the Spanish philosopher Miguel Unamuno can scarcely be charged to the insularity of the English-speaking religious and philosophical world or to the mere barrier of language. This insularity has been penetrated by far less significant continental and Scandinavian figures, and admirable translations of Scandinavian literature have been available for several decades. A deeper reason must be sought for this Anglo-Saxon neglect and for the present quickening of interest. The Liberal theologian of England and America is described with commendation by Dean Inge in the closing chapter of his *Types of Christian Saintliness: Theological Liberalism* is thus a kind of consecration of all the best ethics and science and philosophy regarded as the manifestation or revelation of the will of God to man. But the World War and the condition of soul revealed by the subsequent social, political and economic unsettlements as well as the open contempt for Christianity shown by the new economic and nationalistic religions have forced liberal Christianity to search its very foundations in order to see what is unique in its Christian faith; to ask whether Christianity is simply a synthesis or amalgam of all the finest world thought; to ask where the spring of its dynamic, of its power, of its revolutionary character is to be found; to ask why Christianity is on the defensive, instead of on the offensive; to inquire what the Christian religion demands of a man. It was written in and was included in the volume of *Edifying Addresses of Varied Tenor* that appeared in Copenhagen on March 13, 1846. Here the Esthetic way of life and the ethical way of life are personified in well-drawn characters and presented in meticulous detail down to their most subtle refinements. Both of these ways of life are shown to be ultimately unstable in one who is aware of their full implications, and to point beyond themselves to the religious way of life, different aspects of which are represented in *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, the *Concept of Dread*, *Philosophical Fragments*, and the *Final Unscientific Postscript*. They prepare the way. They are intended to unsettle the reader by revealing to him the true character of the dwelling he has inhabited. They plunge abruptly into the religious way of life itself and explore it from within. The title of *Edifying Addresses* *Opbyggelige Taler* sounds quaint and uninviting to the ears of this century. An "address" sounds formal and reminiscent of the days of rhetoric and of ponderous oratory. *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, like the rest of this series, is really not an address in the ordinary sense at all. It was never spoken aloud to an audience. It was aimed at an audience who read and who pondered what they read. In creating these addresses he always spoke them aloud sentence by sentence before he set them down. This may account for the unusual degree of intimate intensity that characterizes them. The addresses are written to "edify. They were not written as the present-day mind would perhaps prefer them: No, it was rather an "upbuilding" that called for a costly abandonment of the security of the old under walls. Men must build on a new foundation. They must bottom themselves in a new center. They wish to keep at least one key back. As Christian swimmers they long to keep one foot on the bottom. Kierkegaard sought to draw them out into water that is 70,000 fathoms deep where life depends not upon half-measures, but upon faith. These *Edifying Addresses* call for self-examination. They explore it slowly and deliberately. They look at each facet. They would leave no way of escape for one who enters. They would track down evasion into its hidden ways, they would expose every attempt to simulate, they would bring the reader into the very inmost demands of existence within the religious mode. They require

patience on the part of the reader, but if he follows them through to their conclusion he can scarcely escape their grip upon his life. As a writer he knew how difficult it was to get his own thoughts embodied in suitable words. He suggests that if this is hard, it is ten times as hard to get these words of his to redistill their meaning into the thoughts and into the will of another. He was always ready, therefore, to take infinite pains with what he wrote, and the Edifying Addresses were all written over at least three times before they were finally published. Anyone who wishes to understand Kierkegaard properly will do well to begin with it. German edition, -- Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Gottingen, The fact that this address was written as a spiritual preparation for the office of confession does not limit its interest to those who observe church occasions. This office can be celebrated at any moment in the heart of one who is made ready. The "indirect" method of insinuation which characterizes his approach to this problem in so many of his works is laid aside here. In one whole section with a relentless persistence he makes almost a choral refrain of the question, "Do you live as an individual? In this original preface he explained the dedication to hiin Enkelte "that solitary individual" and emphasized the importance of this category of the individual to his thought. This important preface which he later expanded somewhat, was followed by a second one on the same theme, written in and , and by a postscript added in All three of these have been preserved and were attached as a supplement to the posthumously published *The Standpoint of My Activity as an Author* which appeared in In these notes he wrote of the Edifying Addresses: When Kierkegaard speaks of hiin Enkelte in his dedicatory preface, he means more than we do by our words "that individual. Perhaps Descartes was on the right road when he sought to isolate the individual I in man from all other experience and make it the starting point for his system. But he was wrong and even culpable in not pressing on in his exploration of the I beyond its capacity to think, for thought, Kierkegaard would insist, is not its most unique endowment. Kierkegaard does not risk smothering his reader with leniency. He is prepared to be hard, to wound in order to heal, to use the knife. Here he left them. For here that in man which makes him a responsible individual must itself act or it must take flight. No other can make this decision. Only when man is alone can he face the Eternal. And the act that is called for at this point is not one of mere noetic recognition. When all is known that can be known, the responsible core of the will in the man has still to yield. He must act, he must choose, he must risk, he must make the leap. For in an existence where qualitative differences remain, there is no other entry into the deepest level of existential living as an individual. Only by this leap on faith could one know the release of guilt, the sense of commitment, the acceptance of a vocation, of a calling in whose service is perfect freedom. For in any lesser service there is servility. Only the Omnipotent One dares exercise that restraint of true love that makes Its associates free and heightens, not debases, the individual core of responsibility and integrity within them. Man is to be saved by identification with a set of external arrangements. This for Kierkegaard is the ultimate blasphemy. For instead of heightening his core of responsibility and integrity man is invited to do what he is already enamored with doing, to join the crowd, the mass, to be dissolved into the organic whole. To become a set of relations within the whole is all too congenial to modern man, Kierkegaard believed. All of these changes of outer arrangements, whether they be ecclesiastical, social, or political, seemed to Kierkegaard to gloss over the real problem -- which was the awakening of the individual. The inward reformation was yet to come. Kierkegaard believed himself to be its prophet. Here, too, was rooted his disappointment and impatience with the social revolutions of that believed by an upheaval of mass external arrangements to be able to resolve the basic problem of men. For they still rely on outer arrangements, they are still concerned primarily with "housekeeping," and the deeper problem is left untouched. The effort of Gruntvig and his school to whip up the national pride of Denmark by recalling it to the Nordic sagas and its glorious history, Kierkegaard felt to be so much public flattery and a violent poison to the real individual need of the soul. The comfortable Danish church in general he found to be blind to its compromises with bourgeois life which had reduced it to a low-pressure form of Christianity. This church stood out for him in sharpest contrast to the primitive Christian community. All attempts at mass prescription, all things attainable in the mass as such, in fact the very notion of the crowd, of the mass, drew the most violent invective Kierkegaard had at his command. For he believed the crowd, the mass, to be a hiding-place in which the individual may abdicate his true quest for inward intensity and responsibility. The crowd is a sink of cowardice in which individuals are

relieved of individual responsibility and will commit acts they would never dare to do alone. When a man is to be executed by shooting, not one executioner shoots, but several. When the noble Caius Marius was seized, no individual soldier dared touch him, but a crowd of them had no such restraint. Now the situation is one where Christ is alone, so that someone as an individual alone with Christ stepped up to Him and spat upon Him: As they became a crowd, however, they had the courage to do it -- oh, terrible falsity. The mass flatters, the mass excuses, the mass condemns, the mass counts heads, the mass pronounces on truth, and in all these things the mass, for Kierkegaard, is that which is both false and debasing. To speak of social salvation, of salvation by group, by tribe, by race, by class, by nation, is for Kierkegaard an act of spiritual betrayal. This isolation of man from the flock, from the mass, from the crowd and the heightening of his consciousness as an individual which the Eternal accomplishes is a central theme of *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*. Before the quiet gaze of the Eternal, there is no hiding-place. As individuals we are what we are before God, and no mass opinion affects this in the least. Kierkegaard believed that his generation was seeking to live in mere time and to make the Eternal superfluous. In memory, in conscience, in remorse, in work at a calling, in the solitude, the Eternal still impinges upon the individual and awakens him to a consciousness both of himself and of his responsibility and of his worth to the Eternal. In this polemic against the mass, the crowd, Kierkegaard could never be justly accused of parading a new snobbish aristocracy, a small upper-house of supermen. God in heaven, what if the religious way should fall into such an inhuman division of mankind! No, the mass is a number, the numerical. A number of the nobility, the millionaires, the highest dignitaries, etc. For as a man is in a crowd, he is released from repentance and responsibility or at least is weakened in responsibility for himself as an individual.

Chapter 2 : Kierkegaard - Hardcover - Sylvia Walsh - Oxford University Press

"Kierkegaard's reputation as a profound religious, poetic, philosophical and psychological thinker and writer is widely recognized, especially in the academic world, but his devastating critique of Christendom is often lost at the level of the institutional church, for which it was primarily intended and where it was and is most needed.

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Is despair a merit or a defect? Purely dialectically it is both. If one were to think of despair only in the abstract, without reference to some particular despairer, one would have to say it is an enormous merit. That tension between two aspects of the "self" that must be brought into balance. When the self is out of balance, i. Notably, Anti-Climacus says one can be in despair even if one feels perfectly happy. Despair is not just an emotion, in a deeper sense it is the loss of self, i. The A is an aesthete well aware that he can use the power of interpretation to define who he is and what he takes to be valuable. He knows he can shape and reshape his own self-identity. Nothing binds him to his relationships. Nothing binds him to his past actions. In the end though, he also knows he lacks a consistent understanding of who he is. He lacks a self that resists his own power of reinterpretation. Another perspective, one in which an individual can find some measure of freedom from despair, is available for the person with religious "faith. In *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de Silentio argues that the choice of Abraham to obey the private, unethical, commandment of God to sacrifice his son reveals what faith entails: His God requires more than being good, he demands that he seek out an inner commitment to him. If Abraham were to blithely obey, his actions would have no meaning. It is only when he acts with fear and trembling that he demonstrates a full awareness that murdering a son is absolutely wrong, ethically speaking. Despair has several specific levels that a person can find themselves, each one further in despair than the last as laid out in *The Sickness Unto Death*. The first level is "The despair that is ignorant of being despair or the despairing ignorance of having a self and an eternal self. In this sense, the person does not recognize his own despair because he often measures the success of his life based on whether he himself judges himself to be happy. Regardless of whether you know you are in despair or not, Kierkegaard asserts, you can still be in that state. He notes that this is the most common in the world. The next level of despair is "The despair that is conscious of being despair and therefore is conscious of having a self in which there is something eternal and then either in despair does not will to be itself or in despair wills to be itself. These three divisions are mostly the self-worth the person has and the amount to which they understand their own despair. The despair to not be oneself is pretty straightforward. A person sees themselves as unworthy and as such does not see themselves as worthy before something they do not understand. The lowest form of this group, however, is the desire to be a new self. Once in despair, without a complete relation to God one will always be in despair, so to be in this level one understands the permanence of the despair. The despair in this group arises from the nature of sensate things and physical desires. These three sub groups are also grouped under the heading "Despair over the earthly. Unlike in the upper level, this weakness is understood and as such, instead of turning to faith and humbling oneself before God, they despair in their own weakness and unworthiness. In this sense, they despair over the eternal and refuse to be comforted by the light of God. The last and lowest form of despair is the desire "In despair to will to be oneself. In this form of despair, the individual finds him or herself in despair, understands they are in despair, seeks some way to alleviate it, and yet no help is forthcoming. As a result, the self becomes hardened against any form of help and "Even if God in heaven and all the angels offered him aid, he would not want it. This is the least common form of despair and Kierkegaard claims it is mostly found in true poets. This despair can also be called the despair of defiance, as it is the despair that strikes out against all that is eternal. One last note is that as one travels further down the forms of despair, the number of people in each group becomes fewer. Silentio argues that Abraham is a knight of faith. The divine command theory is a metaethical theory which claims moral values are whatever is commanded by a god or gods. However, Kierkegaard is not arguing that morality is created by God ; instead, he would argue that a divine command from God transcends ethics. This distinction means that God does not

necessarily create human morality: But any religious person must be prepared for the event of a divine command from God that would take precedence over all moral and rational obligations. Kierkegaard called this event the teleological suspension of the ethical. Abraham, the knight of faith, chose to obey God unconditionally, and was rewarded with his son, his faith, and the title of Father of Faith. Abraham transcended ethics and leaped into faith. But there is no valid logical argument one can make to claim that morality ought to be or can be suspended in any given circumstance, or ever. Thus, Silentio believes ethics and faith are separate stages of consciousness. Either one chooses to live in faith the religious stage or to live ethically the ethical stage. This results in a battle between those who want to live for pleasure and those who demand an ethical existence. But Kierkegaard always points toward the religious goal, an "eternal happiness", or the salvation of the soul as the highest good. He says, be whatever you want, but remember that your soul belongs to God, not to the world. By now you have easily seen that in his life the ethical individual goes through stages we previously set forth as separate stages. He is going to develop in his life the personal, the civic, the religious virtues, and his life advances through his continually translating himself from one stage to another. As soon as a person thinks that one of these stages is adequate and that he dares to concentrate on it one-sidedly, he has not chosen himself ethically but has failed to see the significance of either isolation or continuity and above all has not grasped that the truth lies in the identity of the two. The person who has ethically chosen and found himself possess himself defined in his entire concretion. He then possesses himself as an individual who has these capacities, these passions, these inclinations, these habits, who is subject to these external influences, who is influenced in one direction thus and in another thus. Here he then possesses himself as a task in such a way that it is chiefly to order, shape, temper, inflame, control-in short, to produce an evenness in the soul, a harmony, which is the fruit of the personal virtues. So, too, a dog can be taught to walk on two legs for a moment but then, then comes the mediation, and the dog walks on four legs "mediation also does that. It may be very commendable for a particular individual to be a councilor of justice, a good worker in the office, no. If, then, at the moment of resignation, of collecting oneself, of choice, an individual has understood this, it surely cannot mean that he is supposed to have forgotten it the next moment. Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Hong, pp. Love for the neighbor is therefore the eternal equality in loving. Equality is simply not to make distinctions and eternal equality is unconditionally not to make the slightest distinction, unqualifiedly not to make the slightest distinction. The essential Christian is itself too weighty, in its movements too earnest to scurry about, dancing, in the frivolity of such facile talk about the higher, highest, and the supremely highest. With the neighbor you have the equality of a human being before God. God is the middle term. Soren Kierkegaard, Works of Love, , Hong p. Becoming aware of our true self is our true task and endeavor in life"it is an ethical imperative, as well as preparatory to a true religious understanding. Individuals can exist at a level that is less than true selfhood. We can live, for example, simply in terms of our pleasures "our immediate satisfaction of desires, propensities, or distractions. In this way, we glide through life without direction or purpose. To have a direction, we must have a purpose that defines for us the meaning of our lives. You are a hater of activity in life-quite appropriately, because if there is to be meaning in it life must have continuity, and this your life does not have. You keep busy with your studies, to be sure; you are even diligent; but it is only for your sake, and it is done with as little teleology as possible. Moreover, you are unoccupied; like the laborers in the Gospel standing idle in the marketplace, you stick your hands in your pocket and contemplate life. Now you rest in despair. Wherever there is something going on you join in. You behave in life as you usually do in a crowd. In this sense, a human results from a relation between the Infinite Noumena, spirit, eternal and Finite Phenomena, body, temporal. This does not create a true self, as a human can live without a "self" as he defines it. Instead, the Self or ability for the self to be created from a relation to the Absolute or God the Self can only be realized through a relation to God arises as a relation between the relation of the Finite and Infinite relating back to the human. This would be a positive relation. An individual person, for Kierkegaard, is a particular that no abstract formula or definition can ever capture. Including the individual in "the public" or "the crowd" or "the herd" or subsuming a human being as simply a member of a species is a reduction of the true meaning of life for individuals. What philosophy or politics try to do is to categorize and pigeonhole individuals by group characteristics, each with their own individual

differences. Only in this way is equality the divine law, only in this way is the struggle the truth, only in this way does the victory have validity- only when the single individual fights for himself with himself within himself and does not unseasonably presume to help the whole world to obtain external equality, which is of very little benefit, all the less so because it never existed, if for no other reason than that everyone would come to thank him and become unequal before him, only in this way is equality the divine law. Modern society contributes to this dissolution of what it means to be an individual. Through its production of the false idol of "the public", it diverts attention away from individuals to a mass public that loses itself in abstractions, communal dreams, and fantasies. It is helped in this task by the media and the mass production of products to keep it distracted. Even the fight for temporal equality is a distraction. In Works of Love he writes, To bring about similarity among people in the world, to apportion to people, if possible equally, the conditions of temporality, is indeed something that preoccupies worldliness to a high degree. But even what we may call the well-intentioned worldly effort in this regard never comes to an understanding with Christianity. Well-intentioned worldliness remains piously, if you will, convinced that there must be one temporal condition, one earthly dissimilarity " found by means of calculations and surveys or in whatever other way " that is equality. In community, the individual is, crucial as the prior condition for forming a community.

Chapter 3 : Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode by Sylvia Walsh eBook for iPhone

Series: Kierkegaard as a Christian Thinker Authoritative study of Kierkegaard by a Christian philosopher who has been called a "living legend" In this book renowned philosopher Merold Westphal unpacks the writings of nineteenth-century thinker Soren Kierkegaard on biblical, Christian faith and its relation to reason.

He rarely left his hometown of Copenhagen, and travelled abroad only five times—four times to Berlin and once to Sweden. His prime recreational activities were attending the theatre, walking the streets of Copenhagen to chat with ordinary people, and taking brief carriage jaunts into the surrounding countryside. His teachers at the university included F. Martensen also had a profound effect on Kierkegaard, but largely in a negative manner. Kierkegaard regarded Martensen as one of his chief intellectual rivals. Martensen was only five years his senior, but was already lecturing at Copenhagen University when Kierkegaard was a student there. Heiberg, more than any other person, was responsible for introducing Hegelianism into Denmark. Kierkegaard spent a good deal of energy trying to break into the Heiberg literary circle, but desisted once he had found his own voice in *The Concept of Irony*. Much of the thrust of his critique of Hegelianism is that its system of thought is abstracted from the everyday lives of its proponents. This existential critique consists in demonstrating how the life and work of a philosopher contradict one another. Kierkegaard derived this form of critique from the Greek notion of judging philosophers by their lives rather than simply by their intellectual artefacts. Because of his existentialist orientation, most of his interventions in contemporary theory do double duty as means of working through events from his own life. His mother does not rate a direct mention in his published works, or in his diaries—not even on the day she died. However, for a writer who places so much emphasis on indirect communication, and on the semiotics of invisibility, we should regard this absence as significant. Kierkegaard was deeply enamoured of the Danish language and worked throughout his writings to assert the strengths of his mother-tongue over the invasive, imperialistic influences of Latin and German. With respect to the former, Kierkegaard had to petition the king to be allowed to write his philosophy dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates in Danish. Even though permission was granted he was still required to defend his dissertation publicly in Latin. Latin had been the pan-European language of science and scholarship. In *Repetition*, the character and pseudonymous author Constantin Constantius congratulates the Danish language on providing the word for an important new philosophical concept, viz. This may explain the sense of urgency that drove Kierkegaard to write so prolifically in the years leading up to his 34th birthday. The breaking of the engagement allowed Kierkegaard to devote himself monastically to his religious purpose, as well as to establish his outsider status outside the norm of married bourgeois life. It also freed him from close personal entanglements with women, thereby leading him to objectify them as ideal creatures, and to reproduce the patriarchal values of his church and father. The latter included viewing women in terms of their traditional social roles, particularly as mothers and wives, but also in their traditional spiritual roles as epitomes of devotion and self-sacrifice. This problem was compounded by the fact that Denmark had recently and very rapidly been transformed from a feudal society into a capitalist society. Given this problematic in this social context Kierkegaard perceived a need to invent a form of communication which would not produce stereotyped identities. On the contrary, he needed a form of rhetoric which would force people back onto their own resources, to take responsibility for their own existential choices, and to become who they are beyond their socially imposed identities. In this undertaking Kierkegaard was inspired by the figure of Socrates, whose incessant irony undermined all knowledge claims that were taken for granted or unreflectively inherited from traditional culture. In his dissertation *On the Concept of Irony* with constant reference to Socrates Kierkegaard argued that the historical Socrates used his irony in order to facilitate the birth of subjectivity in his interlocutors. Kierkegaard sought to provide a similar service for his own contemporaries. He used irony, parody, satire, humor, and deconstructive techniques in order to make conventionally accepted forms of knowledge and value untenable. He was a gadfly—constantly irritating his contemporaries with discomfiting thoughts. He was also a midwife—assisting at the birth of individual subjectivity by forcing his contemporaries to develop an inner life through critical self-reflection. Hegelianism

promised to make absolute knowledge available by virtue of a science of logic. Kierkegaard thought this to be the hubristic attempt to build a new tower of Babel, or a scala paradisi—a dialectical ladder by which humans can climb with ease up to heaven. Instead of seeing scientific knowledge as the means of human redemption, he regarded it as the greatest obstacle to redemption. Instead of seeking to give people more knowledge he sought to take away what passed for knowledge. Instead of seeking to make God and Christian faith perfectly intelligible he sought to emphasize the absolute transcendence by God of all human categories. Instead of setting himself up as a religious authority, Kierkegaard used a vast array of textual devices to undermine his authority as an author and to place responsibility for the existential significance to be derived from his texts squarely on the reader. Kierkegaard distanced himself from his texts by a variety of devices which served to problematize the authorial voice for the reader. He used pseudonyms in many of his works both overtly aesthetic ones and overtly religious ones. He partitioned the texts into prefaces, forewords, interludes, postscripts, appendices. Sometimes Kierkegaard appended his name as author, sometimes as the person responsible for publication, sometimes not at all. Sometimes Kierkegaard would publish more than one book on the same day. These simultaneous books embodied strikingly contrasting perspectives. He also published whole series of works simultaneously, viz. All of this play with narrative point of view, with contrasting works, and with contrasting internal partitions within individual works leaves the reader very disoriented. Christian faith, for Kierkegaard, is not a matter of learning dogma by rote. This belief is offensive to reason, since it only exists in the face of the absurd the paradox of the eternal, immortal, infinite God being incarnated in time as a finite mortal. These works fall into three genres: The point of indirect communication is to position the reader to relate to the truth with appropriate passion, rather than to communicate the truth as such. It draws on irony, the comic and is high-spirited, in order to get thoughts into motion prior to action. A deliberation is a weighing-up, as a propaedeutic to action. It seeks to build up the faith that it presupposes. Kierkegaard published many of his Edifying Discourses in short collections to accompany particular pseudonymous texts, then later published them again in larger collections. These are particularly intimate addresses to the sincere Christian, who strives to deepen the subjective passion of faith through confession and through acceptance of divine forgiveness. This was aimed at subverting our focus on worldly goals in order to refocus on other-worldly goals. Our struggle to accept divine forgiveness can become mired in despair, including the second-order despair over the impossibility of forgiveness of our sins and the demonic despair of defiance in which we refuse to accept forgiveness. The first is the aesthetic, which gives way to the ethical, which gives way to the religious. The aesthetic stage of existence is characterized by the following: The figure of the aesthete in Either-Or Part One is an ironic portrayal of German romanticism, but it also draws on medieval characters as diverse as Don Juan, Ahasuerus, and Faust. Johannes the seducer is a reflective aesthete, who gains sensuous delight not so much from the act of seduction but from engineering the possibility of seduction. His real aim is the manipulation of people and situations in ways which generate interesting reflections in his own voyeuristic mind. The aesthetic perspective transforms quotidian dullness into a richly poetic world by whatever means it can. That is, the aesthete uses artifice, arbitrariness, irony, and wilful imagination to recreate the world in his own image. The prime motivation for the aesthete is the transformation of the boring into the interesting. This type of aestheticism is criticized from the point of view of ethics. It is seen to be empty self-serving and escapist. It is a despairing means of avoiding commitment and responsibility. And it is self-deceiving insofar as it substitutes fantasies for actual states of affairs. But Kierkegaard did not want to abandon aesthetics altogether in favor of the ethical and the religious. As far as the aesthetic stage of existence is concerned what is preserved in the higher religious stage is the sense of infinite possibility made available through the imagination. But this no longer excludes what is actual. Nor is it employed for egotistic ends. Aesthetic irony is transformed into religious humor, and the aesthetic transfiguration of the actual world into the ideal is transformed into the religious transubstantiation of the finite world into an actual reconciliation with the infinite. Language and all other media of representation belong to the realm of the ideal. No matter how eloquent or evocative language is it can never be the actual. Therefore, any representation of faith is always suspended in the realm of ideality and can never be actual faith. In fact Johannes Climacus acknowledges this implicitly when at the end of Concluding Unscientific

Postscript he revokes everything he has said, with the important rider that to say something then to revoke it is not the same as never having said it in the first place. His presentation of religious faith in an aesthetic medium at least provides an opportunity for his readers to make their own leap of faith, by appropriating with inward passion the paradoxical religion of Christianity into their own lives. These works include those by Anti-Climacus, who represents the Christian point of view par excellence, beyond where Kierkegaard placed himself. Kierkegaard also used many biblical figures and stories with poignant and striking effect in the religious writings he published under his own name. As a poet of the religious Kierkegaard was always preoccupied with aesthetics. In fact, contrary to popular misconceptions of Kierkegaard which represent him as becoming increasingly hostile to poetry, he increasingly referred to himself as a poet in his later years all but one of over ninety references to himself as a poet in his journals date from after Kierkegaard never claimed to write with religious authority, as an apostle. His works represent both less religiously enlightened and more religiously enlightened positions than he thought he had attained in his own existence. Such representations were only possible in an aesthetic medium of imagined possibilities like poetry. It is used to denote both: These social norms are used as reasons to make sense of, or justify, an action within a community. Even human sacrifice is justified in terms of how it serves the community, so that when Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia he is regarded as a tragic hero since his community understands that the sacrifice is required by the gods for the success of the Greek expedition to Troy Fear and Trembling. Kierkegaard, however, recognizes duties that cannot be justified in terms of social norms. That is, Abraham recognizes a duty to something higher than both his social duty not to kill an innocent person and his personal commitment to his beloved son, viz. However, he cannot give an intelligible ethical justification of his act to the community in terms of social norms, but must simply obey the divine command. In order to raise oneself beyond the merely aesthetic life, which is a life of drifting in imagination, possibility and sensation, one needs to make a commitment. That is, the aesthete needs to choose the ethical, which entails a commitment to communication and decision procedures. The metaethics or normative ethics are cognitivist, laying down various necessary conditions for ethically correct action. The choice of metaethics, however, is noncognitive. There is no adequate proof of the truth of metaethics. The choice of normative ethics is motivated, but in a noncognitive way. The Judge seeks to motivate the choice of his normative ethics through the avoidance of despair.

Chapter 4 : Influence and reception of Søren Kierkegaard - Wikipedia

Kierkegaard was also an inspiration for the early Wittgenstein, who reportedly said Kierkegaard was "by far the most profound thinker of the [nineteenth] century. Kierkegaard was a saint."

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: The Thomist Press, Washington 17, D. He wanted to avoid scholarly embalment and to discourage the growth of a Kierkegaardian cult, but on both counts his wishes were denied him. Minute scholars and enthusiasts have found him a fair subject for their attentions, and there is certainly room for both scholarship and enthusiasm in any assessment of his mind and personality. But if these qualities are divorced from critical independence of outlook, they serve only to betray him and to give us a false impression. Kierkegaard could never tolerate personal adulation or an indiscriminate reception of his message. Like Bergson and Marx, he repudiated in advance any attempt to attach an "ism" to his name: Kierkegaardianism seemed as ridiculous to him as Socratism, since both thinkers located truth in the personal relation of man to man. This does not rule out a legitimate study of his mind in accord with the canons of historical research. But Kierkegaard requested the historian of philosophy and religion to present his thoughts in such a way that they would offer a constant challenge in regard to their relevance for contemporary problems. In avoiding these two abuses, Kierkegaard nevertheless looked forward to the advent of both his poet and his critic. The former personage would be one possessing sufficient insight and sympathy to grasp the meaning of his life and convey to others something of its original venturesomeness. To a man whose own days were spent in the shadow of misunderstanding, this hope of an eventual transparency before men as well as God was a great support. Hence he consistently refused to regard his position as an ultimate standard, but only as the standard which was most needed during his lifetime. This does not mean that he denied permanent norms of thought and conduct or that he tried to disregard them. It is rather an acknowledgment of his own limitations, his proclivity towards the one-sided and paradoxical, and the specially unbalanced condition of his own world. Thus he felt the need for more than a poet. He expected that there would be a critical sifting of his convictions and an integration of them with a norm, a normal outlook. It is unlikely that any single individual can successfully claim to be the poet or the critic hailed from afar by Kierkegaard. The work of understanding and evaluating him is a cooperative one, one which may be carried out in several different ways. The great majority of them can be classified among either the existentialist philosophers or the crisis theologians. In their different ways, they have called attention to his general importance and to many particular points of interest. Their estimates of his mind, however, often stand in sharp mutual contrast, leaving open the question of his basic contribution to the human search after truth. But the atheistic, temporalistic interpretation is forced to discard or explain contrariwise all the convictions which he considered most valuable and unambiguous. For their part, the crisis theologians have retained most of his religious beliefs. You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 5 : Kierkegaard (Outstanding Christian Thinkers by Julia Watkin

On May 5, 1813, Søren Kierkegaard was born to Christian parents in Copenhagen, Denmark, where the Evangelical Lutheran Church was supported by the state with the Danish monarch as its supreme authority.

Chapter 6 : Project MUSE - Kierkegaard and Christian Faith

Kierkegaard as a Christian Thinker This new series, coedited by C. Stephen Evans and Paul Martens, aims to promote an enriched understanding of nineteenth-century philosopher-theologian Søren Kierkegaard in relation to other key figures in theology and key theological concepts.

Chapter 7 : Søren Kierkegaard (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

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Chapter 8 : Kierkegaard: A Christian Thinker for Our Time? - PhilEvents

Kierkegaard and Christian Faith responds directly to the perennial and problematic concern of how to read Kierkegaard. Specifically, this volume presses the question of whether the existentialist philosopher, who so troubled the waters of nineteenth-century Danish Christendom, is a "Christian thinker for our time."

Chapter 9 : Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing

"Kierkegaard and Walker Percy's The Last Gentleman: A Christian Thinker contra the Felo-de-se of Hegelian Scientism"â€”Troy Wellington Smith, University of Mississippi Chairâ€”Stephen Barnes, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.