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Kierkegaard's Reception in Lithuania

Abstract: This article discusses the reception of Søren Kierkegaard in Lithuania. Kierkegaard was introduced into Lithuania in the 1970's through an extract from *Either/Or* and immediately received attention from the young upcoming scholar Arvydas Šliogeris. However, due to the politically charged preference for Marxism-Leninism, it is not surprising that the interest in Kierkegaard could gather pace only after Lithuania regained independence in 1990. Since then five books by Kierkegaard have been translated and published.

The history of Lithuanian philosophy has three clearly demarcated periods: the interwar period in the early 20th century (1918–1940), the Soviet period (1940–1990) and the Independence years (from 1990 until today). The first period saw the emergence of academic philosophy in Lithuanian. The first professional philosophers were educated in Russia, where they mostly attended religious academies rather than secular universities, and therefore were very much influenced by the ideas of Russian religious philosopher and theologian Vladimir Solovyov. Only in the latter part of this period did some Western educated Lithuanian scholars start to introduce neo-Thomist ideas (from Leuven) and phenomenology (from Freiburg). Even with these developments the religious dimension in mainstream Lithuanian philosophy remained strong. The young and small country was preoccupied with the nation-building, and, therefore, the questions of the importance of religiousness in society, spirituality as the main component of culture, the role of religious upbringing in formal education were all keenly discussed and addressed by the Lithuanian philosophers of the interwar period. It is safe to say that in these circumstances the ground was ripe for Kierkegaard and, in all probability, only the occupation and the abrupt end of Lithuanian statehood prevented Kierkegaard from being introduced as an important thinker.

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I Reception During the Soviet Period

Thus, one had to wait another few decades for Kierkegaard to be introduced as a self-standing thinker. The first appearance of Kierkegaard in the Lithuanian language occurred in 1974 as part of an anthology meant to showcase the developments of the so-called bourgeois philosophy in the Western world in 19th and 20th centuries. Kierkegaard was represented by selected extracts from the chapter “The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality” in *Either/Or II*.¹ The introduction, written by Jonas Repšys,² succinctly summarizes the Soviet approach to Kierkegaard. Repšys characterizes Kierkegaard as an insightful thinker who saw the social alienation brought about by idealistic philosophies of the Enlightenment, but who was also too reactionary (read: politically conservative) and idealistically oriented (read, religious) to provide practical solutions to the problem of alienation.

The first two articles on Kierkegaard appeared a few years later, penned by the (at that time) young and promising philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris—who would go on to become, by general consensus, one of the most important Lithuanian thinkers of the second part of the 20th century. The first article, entitled “The Problem of Being in the Philosophy of G. Hegel and S. Kierkegaard,”³ presents Kierkegaard, next to Marx, as another reaction to Hegel’s ultimately failed attempt to equate being and reason. Šliogeris points out what he perceives as similarities between Kierkegaard and Marx: (i) both thinkers come to the conclusion that “human existence cannot be described by or even less so substituted for pure thinking”;⁴ and (ii) they both introduce “a new dimension that was *terra incognita* for previous philosophy: it is the everyday human experience, a struggle for the improvement of material existential conditions.”⁵ Yet Šliogeris points out that whereas Marx “described concrete human existence in objective socio-economic parameters, Kierkegaard looked for the

1 Siorenas Kjørkegoras, “Arba-arba. Estetiškumo ir etiškumo harmonija asmenybės vystymesi,” in *Filosofijos istorijos chrestomatija. XIX ir XX amžių Vakarų Europos ir Amerikos filosofija*, ed. by Juozas Barzdaitis, Bronius Genzelis, Bronius Kuzmickas, Jokūbas Minkevičius, Kristina Rickevičiūtė, Vilnius: Mintis 1974, pp. 107–124.

2 Jonas Repšys, “S. Kjørkegoras ir egzistencializmas,” in *Filosofijos istorijos chrestomatija. XIX ir XX amžių Vakarų Europos ir Amerikos filosofija*, pp. 97–107.

3 Arvydas Šliogeris, “Būties problema G. Hegelio ir S. Kjørkegoro filosofijoje,” *Problemos*, vol. 19, 1977, pp. 23–34. (All the translations of Lithuanian quotations are mine.)

4 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

abode of existence in the inwardness of the individual.”⁶ In contrast to Marx’s commitment to materialism, Kierkegaard argues for a conception of religious existence as the proper abode of the single individual. Although Kierkegaard dislikes as much as Marx the modern, bourgeois *status quo*, his attack on the official Christendom lacked, according to Šliogeris, “real, social revolutionary content”⁷ and was “purely idealistic.”⁸ Šliogeris further dismisses Kierkegaard’s suggestions about how to overcome the “alienation between reality and society [as] utopian, even reactionary,”⁹ particularly in contrast to Marx’s “real plans for the revolutionary reorganization of society.”¹⁰

Another limitation of Kierkegaard, according to Šliogeris, is that his “depictions of unhappy consciousness”¹¹ necessarily lack objectivity, because, as he puts it, “phenomenological description cannot equate to scientific analysis,”¹² whereas “Marxist methodology allows one to explain the ontological, that is to say, social, causes of distorted phenomena of consciousness in determinist fashion.”¹³ Šliogeris thus characterizes Kierkegaard’s way of doing philosophy as essentially a kind of phenomenology, and he considers it fundamentally flawed for this reason. On Šliogeris’ view, phenomenology shares the idealistic tendencies that the Marxist approach repudiates as ultimately overly subjective to have any real pretense to truth. In the end Šliogeris concludes that Marx and Kierkegaard constitute opposite itineraries for post-Hegelian philosophy, with Kierkegaard representing the way of doing philosophy that places “philosophy in opposition to reason, existential openness to being—in opposition to the methods of objective cognition, and in this way engages in an implicit and explicit debate with the philosophy that has as its goal a rational knowledge of reality.”¹⁴

One problem that arises in analyzing the philosophy of the Soviet period is that one is never sure which parts of the philosophical endeavor to take seriously and which parts are merely nods to the ideological requirements of the time. The official Soviet philosophy was Lenin’s version of Marxism, which meant that all other philosophical positions had to be judged in relation to this version of

6 Ibid., p. 32.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 33.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

Marx's dialectical materialism. Unfavorable interpretation of Marxism-Leninism could end in the publication being rejected or, in the case of it slipping through, in various institutional sanctions. Inevitably, this led to some favorable references to Marxism-Leninism that served merely as a token. Šliogeris is a case in point—despite an apparently unfavorable first article on Kierkegaard in 1977, it seems that there is more to Šliogeris' opinion, as a year later he authors another article devoted to Kierkegaard, entitled "The Principle of Irony in S. Kierkegaard's Philosophy."¹⁵ Šliogeris sees Kierkegaard as the one who best formulated the problem of contemporary philosophy, namely, the problem of man's existence in the world. This, according to him, makes Kierkegaard unique in contemporary philosophy, which Šliogeris identifies as post-rationalist. Whereas rationalist philosophy starts from doubt but culminates in the belief that being is ontologically rational, "post-rationalist philosophy begins in despair,"¹⁶ which originates in the conflict between "the rational 'project' of being, created by man itself, and the real being."¹⁷ According to Šliogeris, "Kierkegaard defines the relation between individuality and being with the category of *irony*."¹⁸ In contrast to doubt, irony "moves not in cognitive, but existential space,"¹⁹ while nonetheless remaining a "negative ontological openness to being."²⁰

Šliogeris identifies two types of irony in Kierkegaard's thinking: irony as play and existential irony. After having described irony as a play, Šliogeris concentrates on the second type of irony, which he claims is "the basis of Kierkegaard's whole world-view and his irrationalist concept of man."²¹ Šliogeris claims that this existential irony is a historical necessity, which contributes to individuation in a specific way, namely, "by juxtaposing existential ideality [of the individual] to universality of the communal life."²² Šliogeris points out that, nevertheless, this opposition or negative relation to the universality of society "emerges only in the ideality of the ironist, thus the ironist's revolt against universality manifests merely in theory. If the negative attitude were realized in practical terms, i. e., in the relations of everyday life, the ironist would not be an ironist

15 Arvydas Šliogeris, "Ironijos principas S. Kjerkegoro filosofijoje," *Problemos*, vol. 21, 1978, pp. 27–39.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

anymore, but an egoist, posing danger to society. Society usually does not tolerate such an egoism.”²³

Šliogeris attempts to come to terms with Kierkegaard's appeal to Socrates as a historical example of irony, interpreting Socrates as the product of the broader historical process at work in the demise of Athenian civilization. For Šliogeris, contemporary culture is similar to the decadent and declining Athens of Socrates' time, and Kierkegaard is the Socrates of contemporary times. Šliogeris stresses that Kierkegaard sees positive value in irony: irony, which Šliogeris equates with infinite resignation, is, according to him, “the porch of the temple of the absurd religion.”²⁴

Finally, he makes a distinction between Socratic-Kierkegaardian and Romantic irony: unlike the Socratic-Kierkegaardian ironist, the Romantic one is not existentially committed and remains merely in a “publicist relation” with reality.²⁵ In this sense Šliogeris agrees with and even celebrates Kierkegaard. Once again, however, he concludes the article by criticizing Kierkegaard's ironist (or Kierkegaard *as* ironist) from a Marxist perspective. The ironist remains in opposition to the prevailing bourgeois etiquette and norms, but merely spiritually. In everyday life he in no way differs from the philistine, and his opposition does not materialize.

II First Translations by Jolita Q. Pons

Needless to say, the ideological and political climate of the Soviet period was hardly conducive to the flourishing of Kierkegaard studies in Lithuania. It is thus not surprising that after Lithuania regained its independence, interest in Kierkegaard increased exponentially. It is nonetheless still surprising and even puzzling that Kierkegaard attracted comparably more attention than any other philosopher in the Western tradition (with the possible exception of Plato) during that period. Since 1990 no less than five books by Kierkegaard were translated and published in Lithuanian: *Baimė ir drebėjimas* [*Fear and Trembling*],²⁶ *Pievų lelija ir padangių paukštis* [*The Lily of the Field and The Bird of the Air*],²⁷

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 36.

25 Ibid., p. 38.

26 Søren Kierkegaard, *Baimė ir drebėjimas*, trans. by Jolita Adomėnienė, Vilnius: Aidai 2002.

27 Søren Kierkegaard, *Laukų lelija ir padangių paukštis*, trans. by Andrius Stašaitis, Vilnius: Vaga 1997.

Liga mirčiai [*The Sickness unto Death*],²⁸ *Filosofiniai trupiniai, arba Truputis filosofijos* [*Philosophical Fragments, or a Fragment of Philosophy*],²⁹ and *Požiūrio taškas į mano autorinę veiklą* [*The Point of View of My Work as an Author*],³⁰ in addition to a separate publication of *Nusidėjėlė* [*The Woman Who Was a Sinner*].³¹ In December 2003, moreover, the Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology organized a conference devoted solely to Kierkegaard, under the heading of “Kierkegaard’s Relevance: Philosophical Interpretations,” the proceedings of which were published as a separate volume.³²

The most prominent contemporary Kierkegaard commentator, and perhaps the only person who might be called a Kierkegaard scholar, is Jolita Q. Pons.³³ Pons defended her PhD at Cambridge University on Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms,³⁴ and she is also responsible for the translation of four of Kierkegaard’s books. In her introduction to *The Sickness unto Death* Pons provides a historical context,³⁵ relates the writing of the book to the religious experience that Kierkegaard documented in his diary in April 1848, and attempts to give a textual overview of the book. According to Pons, at the heart of Kierkegaard’s interest is a question of how a human being can be free and dependent at the same time. Kierkegaard’s answer, according to Pons, is that philosophy is incapable of solving this problem and only faith can solve “the dialectical tension between the transcendent and the immanent, the eternal and the temporal.”³⁶ At the same time, failure to understand that this is the only way to resolve this contradiction causes illness, which Kierkegaard terms despair. Although despair is closely linked with sin and anxiety, their relation is not straightforward. To begin with, they belong in different conceptual domains: sin is theolog-

28 Søren Kierkegaard, *Liga mirčiai*, trans. by Jolita Adomėnienė, Vilnius: Aidai 1997.

29 Søren Kierkegaard, *Filosofiniai trupiniai, arba Truputis filosofijos*, trans. by Jolita Adomėnienė, Vilnius: Aidai 2000.

30 Søren Kierkegaard, *Požiūrio taškas į mano autorinę veiklą*, trans. by Jolita Q. Pons, Vilnius: Baltos lankos 2006.

31 Søren Kierkegaard, “Nusidėjėlė (Lk 7,47),” trans. by Jolita Adomėnienė, *Naujasis židinys-Aidai*, vol. 7–8, 1997, pp. 277–281.

32 *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos* [The Paradoxes of Existence: Philosophical Interpretations of Kierkegaard], ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, Vilnius: Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas 2006.

33 Up to 2003 she was Jolita Adomėnienė.

34 Jolita Pons, *Stealing a Gift: Kierkegaard’s Pseudonyms and the Bible*, New York: Fordham University Press 2004.

35 Jolita Adomėnienė, “Įvadas [Introduction],” in Kierkegaard, *Liga mirčiai*, Vilnius: Aidai 1997, pp. 9–29.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

ical; despair is ethical; and anxiety is psychological. Nonetheless, according to Pons, “despair participates in sin as a specific aspect of sin—that which creates and encourages the continuity of sin.”³⁷ And as Anti-Climacus emphasizes, despair can take many forms.³⁸

In her introduction to *Philosophical Fragments*³⁹ Pons provides a summary of the book and sees it, based on Niels Thulstrup's suggestion, as “a drama of five acts.”⁴⁰ Pons sees *Fragments* as similar to a Platonic dialogue in the sense that it is philosophizing *live*: that is, the concepts are being discussed and redefined progressively, and the reader can follow their emergence and refinement. The *Fragments*, according to Pons, is really about two historical figures, whose characters are being analyzed and commented upon in the book. The first three chapters are devoted to Socrates, while the last two depart from the Socratic viewpoint with Jesus Christ emerging as the main character. Thus, Pons concludes that the main question of the book—“Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness?”—is answered in the affirmative: it is the appearance of Christ, “a moment in time, when eternity miraculously intrudes temporality,”⁴¹ that allows for the possibility of such a historical point of departure.

Finally, in her article “Actuality, Possibility and the Possibility of Actuality”⁴² Pons turns her attention to the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and the dialectic between actuality and possibility in Climacus' text. What many of Kierkegaard's scholars miss, according to Pons, is that he “always clearly understands that while speaking about the actuality and possibility of existence, he always already is in the secondary, mediated sphere, in which the relations between actuality and possibility are already different and only indirectly point to what actuality and possibility is.”⁴³ Kierkegaard regards abstract language as especially unfit to talk about actuality, because actuality is not a stable being, but a process of becoming.

37 Ibid., p. 25.

38 SKS 11, 145–187 / SUD, 29–74.

39 Jolita Adomėnienė, “Įvadas,” in S. Kierkegaard *Filosofiniai trupiniai, arba Truputis filosofijos*, Vilnius: Aidai 2000, pp. 7–20.

40 Ibid., p. 11.

41 Ibid., p. 19.

42 Jolita Pons, “Tikrovė, galimybė ir tikrovės galimybė—Kierkegaardo *Baigiamasis nemokslinis prieraišas*,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, Vilnius: Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas 2006, pp. 199–206.

43 Ibid., p. 199.

Another problem, according to Pons, is that abstract language is unable to express the difficulty of existence, i.e., “the relation of the individual with his own existence, when he is not next to it, but fully in it, although always only becoming, never entrenched in existence.”⁴⁴ Thus, the difficulty encountered is the individual’s very interest in his or her own existence. Additionally, Pons points out that not only does abstract thought poses problems for the understanding of actuality: second-degree attempts at grasping it are at once unavoidable and at the same time problematic. Reflection and understanding are the modes of possibility—thus any grasped actuality is already transferred into the realm of possibility. The only actuality that remains actuality for the individual is his own actuality: thus “it is the only actuality that functions in two realms—it is actuality and it is conceived as actuality.”⁴⁵ Pons nonetheless concentrates on the transformations that actuality undergoes within the realm of thinking. “Since thinking cannot cancel actuality, this means that it cannot create or provide it.”⁴⁶ More to the point—precisely because of this any meaningful direct ethical relation between individuals is impossible—“they cannot *touch* each other’s actuality, but necessarily make it into possibility.”⁴⁷

III Kierkegaard as “Existing” Thinker

Another scholar who has expressed more than a passing interest in Kierkegaard’s thought is Tomas Sodeika, whose introduction to *Fear and Trembling – “Apie Soreną Kierkegaardą, jo baimę ir drebėjimą [On Søren Kierkegaard, his Fear and His Trembling]”*⁴⁸—became somewhat of a standard-bearer for Kierkegaardian studies in Lithuania. Sodeika sees Kierkegaard first and foremost as an “existing” thinker, i.e. a thinker whose very own particular existence—and private life—plays not merely an accidental and thus inessential role in his

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 201.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 202.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Tomas Sodeika, “Apie Soreną Kierkegaardą, jo baimę ir drebėjimą,” in Kierkegaard, *Baimė ir drebėjimas*, Vilnius: Aidai 1995, pp. vii–xxxv. A shorter version of this text was reprinted in the book *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos* under the title “Kierkegaard’s Indirect Communication” (Tomas Sodeika, “Kierkegaardo netiesioginė komunikacija,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 223–244). This version was later reprinted as a chapter “Søren Kierkegaard: Bio-graphy” in Sodeika’s monograph *Filosofija ir tekstas [Philosophy and Text]* (Kaunas: Technologija 2010, pp. 108–131).

writings, but rather a crucial one. On this interpretation, we cannot understand Kierkegaard's writings without attending to these personal elements. Thus, Sodeika sketches a kind of intellectual biography of Kierkegaard, where the crucial events in Kierkegaard's life (his father's cursing God; Kierkegaard's theological studies, trips to Berlin, and life as a dandy; his engagement and subsequent breakup; the *Corsair* affair and his attack on Danish church) are interpreted as Kierkegaard's ultimately failed attempts to engage with actuality. The dialectic of actuality and possibility, which Pons analyses as categories for Kierkegaard the philosopher, Sodeika interprets as a life task for Kierkegaard the individual. According to this interpretation, the very activity of authorship—Kierkegaard's *poetic existence*—is ultimately understood as an inescapable and unwanted, and therefore a tragic substitute for actuality.

Sodeika explores this theme further in "Tekstas ir tikrovė: Søren Kierkegaard 'pamokos' [Text and Actuality: The 'Lessons' of Søren Kierkegaard]."49 He registers the parallels between the literary strategies of German Romantics like Ludwig Tieck and Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann and Kierkegaard. The positive approach to irony as a communicative device puts Kierkegaard on the side of the Romantics against Hegel, who qualified irony as "infinite absolute negativity."⁵⁰ The Romantics also share with Kierkegaard the conviction that actuality is incommensurable: it is not, as Hegel maintained, transparent to consciousness. Yet, according to Sodeika, for Kierkegaard—*unlike* the Romantics and *in agreement* with Hegel—literary endeavor is not a way of expressing inwardness, but rather of forming it. Precisely this, according to Sodeika, gives Kierkegaard's project an ethical character. Kierkegaard has two teachers on how to approach this formation of inwardness: namely, Socrates and Jesus Christ. According to Sodeika, Kierkegaard attempted and aspired to become like Socrates, while Christ was a source of continuous inspiration.

Rita Šerpytytė is interested in Kierkegaard within the framework of her broader interest in the history of Western nihilism. In her study *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija* [*Nihilism and Western Philosophy*],⁵¹ Šerpytytė attempts to describe the various ways in which Kierkegaard approaches the question of nothingness, which she broadly associates with nihilism. Initially, she looks at

49 Tomas Sodeika, "Tekstas ir tikrovė: Søren Kierkegaard 'pamokos,'" *Darbai ir dienos*, vol. 27, 2001, pp. 275–296. Subsequently reprinted as a chapter under the same title in Sodeika's monograph *Filosofija ir tekstas* [*Philosophy and Text*], pp. 132–161.

50 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. by Bernard Bosanquet, London: Penguin 1993, p. 75.

51 Rita Šerpytytė, *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla 2007.

the way Climacus sees the limits of reason in *Fragments*⁵² and distinguishes between Kant's and Climacus' approaches to the issue. Kant, as is well known, attempts to show that all attempts to prove the existence of God are futile: that is, they lead to an impasse. Climacus, according to Šerpytytė, goes further—he is suspicious and skeptical about rational thinking itself: “He does not criticize the proofs of God (as Kant did, at the same time attempting to open the way for new proofs), but deconstructs the proof itself.”⁵³ Šerpytytė claims that God for Climacus remains, and is bound to remain, the great unknown, which leads her to explore the analogy between Climacus' understanding of God and what is known in Christian theology as the *via negativa*. Drawing on such various sources as Pseudo-Dionysius, Angelus Silesius, Meister Eckhart, and Jacques Derrida, Šerpytytė suggests that both in Kant's and Climacus' approaches to God, “the direction of annihilating effort [is] language itself.”⁵⁴ Despite her claim that, for Climacus, the effort of annihilation is directed toward thinking, she argues that “the representability of thinking, its expression in notions and representations, is an indicator of the connection between reflective thinking and language.”⁵⁵ Šerpytytė concludes that this attempt to annihilate language should be seen as part of the drive toward the movement of faith or direct experience of God. Despite having this as an aspiration, both Climacus (“who is unable to negate himself, to get outside himself”)⁵⁶ and Kierkegaard (who “reminds us of a dance teacher, who wants to show how to make a move which he does not know himself and is not willing to demonstrate by dancing”),⁵⁷ in Šerpytytė's opinion, fail to realize this aspiration.

Another aspect that Šerpytytė investigates as a nihilistic trend in Kierkegaard's authorship is the treatment of the tragic in *Either/Or I*.⁵⁸ Šerpytytė

52 This chapter, entitled “Kierkegaardas ir *via negativa* [Kierkegaard and Via Negativa]” (in *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, pp. 234–244), first appeared as an article “Ar Kierkegaardas buvo nihilistas? [Was Kierkegaard a Nihilist?]” (*Logos*, vol. 33, 2003, pp. 92–99), and was later reprinted in Latvian (“Vai Kirkegors bija nihilists?,” in *Eksistence un komunikācija. Sērena Kirkegora filosofija*, ed. by Velga Vēvere. Rīga: Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts 2006, pp. 103–113).

53 Šerpytytė, *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, p. 235.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 239.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 243.

58 The chapter “Apie tragiškumą ir jo alternatyvos galimybę Kierkegaard'o mąstyme [On the Tragic and the Possibility of Its Alternative in Kierkegaard's Thinking]” (in *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, pp. 245–251) first appeared as an article under the same title (*Logos*, vol. 36, 2004, pp. 101–105) and was reprinted with minor stylistic corrections in Andrijauskas' collection

attends to a rarely-commented-upon text, “The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama.”⁵⁹ However, the length and the quality of Šerpytytė’s analysis leaves the reader with much to be desired. Šerpytytė’s claims—that tragic thinking is “a perspective of thinking that, on the one hand, is related to nihilism, while, on the other hand, does not coincide with it” and that it is “a non-nihilist answer to the question of nihilism”⁶⁰—nonetheless indicate the general thrust of her interpretation.

Šerpytytė is also the first to discuss the themes of *The Concept of Anxiety* in Lithuanian. In the chapter “Ar Kierkegaard’as buvo nihilistas? [Was Kierkegaard a Nihilist?],”⁶¹ she tries to cover the main themes of this particular text: the distinction between anxiety and fear, the origin of anxiety, and its “ontological” interpretation by Kierkegaard. In line with her previous interpretations, Šerpytytė stresses the *existential* aspect over the *philosophical* one: anxiety is interesting as understood in relation to the distinction between actuality and possibility. According to Šerpytytė, “within the perspective of this fundamental distinction the difference between *fear* and *anxiety* is situated.”⁶² Despite a new Kierkegaardian theme one big downside of this particular discussion is Šerpytytė’s unclear and uneven use of the terms “fear” and “anxiety.” While in some cases she seems to acknowledge the difference between those terms (for example, in the passage quoted above), the majority of her analysis seems to conflate those terms (when she writes, for example, that “it is obvious that for Kierkegaard fear (anxiety) is essentially related to actuality”).⁶³ Despite this conceptual confusion, Šerpytytė helpfully explains that anxiety is a type of fear that has no object or, as Šerpytytė prefers it, “whose *object* is Nothing,”⁶⁴ while the problem of psychology, as she sees it, lies precisely in attempting to make this nothing of anxiety into the something of fear.⁶⁵ This, in Šerpytytė’s eyes, is to miss the essential maieutic feature of anxiety—namely, that “the relation of fear [sic!] with actuality is encountered not in a theoretical conception, but in our concrete experience.”⁶⁶

(“Apie tragiškumą ir jo alternatyvos galimybę Kierkegaardo mąstyme,” in *Egzistencijos paradokasai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, Vilnius: Versus aureus / Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas 2006, pp. 275–280).

59 SKS 2, 137–162 / EOI, 137–164.

60 Šerpytytė, *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, p. 251.

61 *Ibid.*, pp. 252–268.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 256.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Another important category that Šerpytytė considers is Kierkegaard's notion of paradox.⁶⁷ She approaches this topic within the context of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg's views of logic. Šerpytytė explores the similarities between the paradox of faith, presented in the *Postscript*, and a classical logical liar's paradox in which someone says 'I am lying right now.' If he is telling the truth, then he is lying; conversely, if he is lying, then he is telling the truth. The same "logic," according to Šerpytytė, is encountered in the paradox of faith: to rationalize faith is to destroy it, while leaving it beyond discourse risks having faith without content.

Finally, in the article "Pakartojimas ir nihilizmas [Repetition and Nihilism],"⁶⁸ Šerpytytė is the first Lithuanian scholar to make use of Kierkegaard's concept of repetition. She productively engages Kierkegaard's understanding and use of repetition as background to explore and elucidate the concept of repetition as it appears in the work of Giorgio Agamben. Meanwhile her chapter "Religion between Secularization and Nihilism," in *Sekuliarizacija ir dabarties kultūra [Secularization and Contemporary Culture]*,⁶⁹ juxtaposes this analysis of repetition to an analysis of the work of Marcel Proust and extends it to a discussion of Richard Kearney's work.

IV Overview of Remaining Approaches

The remaining Kierkegaardian scholarship since 1990 takes one of five approaches: Kierkegaard is viewed either as (i) an "alternative" philosopher, (ii) a philosopher of religion, (iii) a theorist of aesthetics, (iv) an "existing" thinker, or (v) is viewed through a comparative approach, where his work is juxtaposed to that of other philosophers or philosophical theories.

The first approach [i] is the one that treats Kierkegaard as a representative of a broader trend in Western philosophy, which places the emphasis on the irrationalist tendencies in philosophical endeavor. Antanas Andrijauskas, in his article "Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaard'o 'Egzistencinės krizės' filosofijoje [Principles of Non-Classical Thinking in Kierkegaard's Philosophy of 'Ex-

67 The chapter "Tikėjimo paradoksas ir nihilizmo 'logika': S. Kierkegaard [The Paradox of Faith and the 'Logic' of Nihilism: S. Kierkegaard]" (in *Nihilizmas ir Vakarų filosofija*, pp. 269–278) first appeared as an article under the same title ("Tikėjimo paradoksas ir nihilizmo 'logika': S. Kierkegaardas," *Religija ir kultūra*, vol. 4, 2007, pp. 38–44).

68 Rita Šerpytytė, "Pakartojimas ir nihilizmas," *Problemos*, vol. 84, 2013, pp. 46–59.

69 Rita Šerpytytė, "Religija tarp sekuliarizacijos ir nihilizmo," in *Sekuliarizacija ir dabarties kultūra*, ed. by Rita Šerpytytė, Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas 2013, pp. 25–117.

istential Crisis'],⁷⁰ provides what he regards as an overview of the context of Kierkegaard's thinking: he describes Kierkegaard's turn towards the particular individual existence, draws parallels with Nietzsche, underscores the influence by Romanticism on Kierkegaard's thought, and attempts to situate Kierkegaard in a tradition of philosophy that he terms non-classical. Laimutė Jakavonytė attempts to answer the question "Ar Sørenas Kierkegaardas buvo volicionistas? [Was Søren Kierkegaard a Volitionist?]"⁷¹ drawing on Alasdair McIntyre's critique of Kierkegaard's ethical views. Tomas Kačerauskas, in "Egzistencinio ir poetinio mąstymo sankirta Kierkegaardo filosofijoje [The Intersection of Existential and Poetical Thinking in Kierkegaard's Philosophy],"⁷² investigates the poetical inspirations of Kierkegaard's existential thinking, while Naglis Kardelis, in his "Kierkegaardo filosofija ir egzistenciniai religingumo profiliai [Kierkegaard's Philosophy and The Existential Profiles of Religiousness],"⁷³ suggests that "Religiousness B" should be viewed as a form of non-classical faith on account of the aesthetics of the absurd inherent in it. Vaida Asakavičiūtė sees the mystery of the act of faith as the crucial aspect of Kierkegaard's thinking.⁷⁴ Finally, Arūnas Sverdiolas explores Kierkegaard's relation to the hermeneutic tradition in his paper "Įkandin Abraomo. Sørenas Kierkegaardo

70 Antanas Andrijauskas, "Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaardo filosofijoje," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 15–58. This article is a revised and expanded version of a chapter "'Egzistencinės krizės' atspindžiai Kierkegaard'o estetinėje koncepcijoje [Reflections of 'Existential Crisis' in Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Conception]" from Andrijauskas' book *Grožis ir menas [Beauty and Art]* (Vilnius: VDA leidykla 1996, pp. 461–472), which also appeared as an article "Neklasikinio mąstymo principai Kierkegaard'o 'Egzistencinės krizės' filosofijoje [Principles of Non-Classical Thinking in Kierkegaard's Philosophy of 'Existential Crisis']," serialized in the journal *Logos* (vol. 34, 2003, pp. 65–75, vol. 35, 2003, pp. 41–52, vol. 36, 2004, pp. 28–32).

71 Laimutė Jakavonytė, "Ar Sørenas Kierkegaardas buvo volicionistas?" in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 97–108.

72 Tomas Kačerauskas, "Egzistencinio ir poetinio mąstymo sankirta Kierkegaardo filosofijoje," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 139–150.

73 Naglis Kardelis, "Kierkegaardo filosofija ir egzistenciniai religingumo profiliai," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 151–160.

74 Vaida Asakavičiūtė, "Egzistencinio tikėjimo slėpinys Kierkegaard'o filosofijoje [The Mystery of the Existential Faith in Kierkegaard's Philosophy]," *Logos*, vol. 86, 2016, pp. 28–35, vol. 87, 2016, pp. 29–34.

antihermeneutika [At the Tail of Abraham: Anti-Hermeneutics of Søren Kierkegaard].”⁷⁵

The second approach [ii] is more precise because it is interested in Kierkegaard as a philosopher of religion who suggested a new and interesting reinterpretation of religious faith. Stanislovas Mostauskis, in “Kierkegaardas: stovėseną niekio akivaizdoje [Kierkegaard: Standing in the Face of Nothing],”⁷⁶ and Šliogeris, in “Kierkegoras: tikėjimo paradoksas Kierkegaard: Paradox of Faith,”⁷⁷ attempt to explore the nature of religious faith and its relation to paradox, while Vytautas Radžvilas, in his paper “Dieviškumo ir demoniškumo sampyna Kierkegaardo tikėjimo sampratoje [The Interplay between the Divine and the Démoniac in the Kierkegaardian Concept of Faith],”⁷⁸ investigates the demonic and the divine in the relation to the individual. My article, “Etinė stadija ir jos ribos S. Kierkegaard’o filosofijoje [The Ethical Stage and Its Limits in Kierkegaard’s Philosophy],”⁷⁹ attempts to show how consciousness of guilt renders secular ethics insufficient, turning the individual instead towards a religiously-charged ethics. Tomas Kavaliauskas attempts the analysis of the relation between Abraham’s religious faith and his silence.⁸⁰ Andrius Bielskis, in his monograph, *Nešventas sakramentas: ideologija, tikėjimas ir išsilaisvinimo*

75 Arūnas Sverdiolas, “Įkandin Abraomo. Søren Kierkegaardo antihermeneutika,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 245–274.

76 Stasys Mostauskis, “Kierkegaardas: stovėseną niekio akivaizdoje,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 185–198.

77 Arvydas Šliogeris, “Kierkegoras: tikėjimo paradoksas,” in Šliogeris *Sietuvos [Swirls]*, Vilnius: Mintis 1992, pp. 78–106. In an interview (“Jei Dievas būtų žalias paukštis su raudonu snapu,” in Astrida Petraitytė, *Nuo Kierkegoro iki Kamiu*, Vilnius: Pradai 1997, pp. 7–28) Šliogeris confesses that the article was written in 1975—in the midst of the Soviet rule, thus it is not surprising that it was published only in 1992. Curiously this might be the first written (if not published) text on Kierkegaard in Lithuanian and was written a year after the appearance of the first of Kierkegaard’s texts in Lithuanian. It was subsequently reprinted with significant typographical mistakes and omissions in Andrijauskas’ collection as “Tikėjimo paradoksas Kierkegaardo filosofijoje [The Paradox of Faith in Kierkegaard’s Philosophy],” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 281–302.

78 Vytautas Radžvilas, “Dieviškumo ir demoniškumo sampyna Kierkegaardo tikėjimo sampratoje,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 207–222.

79 Viktoras Bachmetjevas, “Etinė stadija ir jos ribos S. Kierkegaard’o filosofijoje,” *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2012, pp. 92–97.

80 Tomas Kavaliauskas, “Abraomo tylėjimo ir pasi-tikėjimo reikšmė. Søren Kierkegaardo interpretacija [The Meaning of Abraham’s Silence and Trust. Søren Kierkegaard’s Interpretation],” *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2002, pp. 10–15.

politika [*The Unholy Sacrament. Ideology, Faith and the Politics of Emancipation*], devotes a chapter to *Fear and Trembling*, where he critically examines what he takes to be Kierkegaard's understanding of ethics.⁸¹ Although he commends Kierkegaard for emphasizing the necessity of the leap for faith, Bielskis criticizes Kierkegaard's "stylistic hyperbolizing and bourgeois approach to ethics."⁸² Finally, in his monograph, *Rezignacija, arba mirties filosofijos iššūkis modernybei* [*Resignation, or the Challenge of the Philosophy of Death to Modernity*], Krescencijus Stoškus makes use of the forms of despair presented in *The Sickness unto Death* in order to categorize possibilities for resignation.⁸³

Yet another direction that interests Lithuanian readers of Kierkegaard [iii] is the topic of Kierkegaardian aesthetics. Leonarda Jekentaitė, for example, employs Kierkegaardian concepts to analyze contemporary Lithuanian theatre, art, and literature in "Demoniškojo estetizmo pavidalai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos kultūroje [Forms of Demonic Aestheticism in Contemporary Lithuanian Culture]."⁸⁴

Then there is the approach of looking at Kierkegaard's *oeuvre* from a biographical perspective [iv]. In addition to Sodeika and (to a certain extent) Šerpytė, Arvydas Liepuonius attempts this way of reading Kierkegaard in "Psichoanalitiniai Kierkegaardo asmenybės ir kūrybos aspektai [Psychoanalytical Aspects of Kierkegaard's Personality and Work]."⁸⁵

But perhaps the most fruitful and most widely practiced approach to Kierkegaard scholarship [v] is a comparativist approach which attempts to juxtapose certain aspects of Kierkegaard's thought to other thinkers and/or philosophical schools. Vaida Asakavičiūtė, in "Asmenybės tapimo problema Kierkegaardo ir Nietzschės filosofijoje [The Problem of Becoming a Person in Kierkegaard's

⁸¹ Andrius Bielskis, *Nešventas sakramentas: ideologija, tikėjimas ir išsilaisvinimo politika*, Vilnius: Demos 2014, pp. 64–74.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸³ Krescencijus Stoškus, *Rezignacija, arba mirties filosofijos iššūkis modernybei*, Vilnius: Vilniaus pedagoginio universiteto leidykla 2011, p. 177.

⁸⁴ Leonarda Jekentaitė, "Demoniškojo estetizmo pavidalai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos kultūroje," *Logos*, vol. 34, 2003, pp. 165–179. Subsequently reprinted in Andrijauskas' collection with slight stylistic modifications under the title "Kierkegaardas ir demoniškojo estetizmo pavidalai šiuolaikinėje Lietuvos kultūroje [Kierkegaard and the Forms of Demonic Aestheticism in Contemporary Lithuanian Culture]," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 109–122).

⁸⁵ Arvydas Liepuonius, "Psichoanalitiniai Kierkegaardo asmenybės ir kūrybos aspektai," *Logos*, vol. 39, 2004, pp. 88–96. Subsequently reprinted under the same title in Andrijauskas' collection (in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 175–184).

and Nietzsche's Philosophy],”⁸⁶ compares Kierkegaard's knight of faith to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Jūratė Baranova, in “Gundymas ir mirtis: Kierkegaard motyvai postmoderniajame diskurse [Seduction and Death: Kierkegaardian Motives in Postmodern Discourse],”⁸⁷ situates Kierkegaard's thought within the context of Derrida's and Jean Baudrillard's theories. Agnieška Juzefovič systematically explores the parallels between Kierkegaard and Zhuangzi in terms of the individual's spiritual development,⁸⁸ the role of paradox and absurdity,⁸⁹ and the understanding and use of indirect communication.⁹⁰ The parallels between Kierkegaard's knight of faith and the man of faith in mystical traditions of Zhuangzi, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Ávila are explored by Agnė Budriūnaitė in “Tikėjimo riteris—tarp egzistencializmo ir misticizmo [The Knight of Faith—Between Existentialism and Mysticism].”⁹¹ Bronius Kuzmickas compares conceptions of faith as existence in Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel,⁹² while Mindaugas Briedis compares Kierkegaard's and Paul Tillich's approaches to the concept.⁹³ Jekaterina Lavrinec investigates the ways in which Kierkegaard and Franz

86 Vaida Asakavičiūtė, “Asmenybės tapsmo problema Kierkegaard ir Nietzschės filosofijoje,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaard filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 59–74.

87 Jūratė Baranova, “Gundymas ir mirtis: Kierkegaard motyvai postmoderniajame diskurse,” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaard filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 75–80.

88 Agnieška Juzefovič, “Zhuangzi ir Kierkegaard'as apie individo dvasinės raidos kelią [Zhuangzhi and Kierkegaard on the Path of the Spiritual Development of the Individual],” *Logos*, vol. 34, 2004, pp. 74–87.

89 Agnieška Juzefovič, “Paradokso ir absurdo vaidmuo filosofiniame tekste [The Role of the Paradox and the Absurd in the Philosophical Text],” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaard filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 123–138.

90 Agnieška Juzefovič, “Netiesioginės komunikacijos ypatybės I: autoriaus santykis su tekstu ir skaitytoju [The Specifics of Indirect Communication I: The Relation of the Author with the Text and the Reader],” *Logos*, vol. 45, 2006, pp. 144–154 and Agnieška Juzefovič, “Netiesioginės komunikacijos ypatybės II: autoriaus santykis su tekstu ir skaitytoju [The Specifics of Indirect Communication II: The Relation of the Author with the Text and the Reader],” *Logos*, vol. 46, 2006, pp. 188–200.

91 Agnė Budriūnaitė, “Tikėjimo riteris—tarp egzistencializmo ir misticizmo,” *Logos*, vol. 61, 2009, pp. 31–42; vol. 62, 2009, pp. 24–34.

92 Bronius Kuzmickas, “Tikėjimas kaip egzistencija: S. Kierkegaardas ir G. Marcelis [Faith as Existence: S. Kierkegaard and G. Marcel],” in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaard filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 161–166.

93 Mindaugas Briedis, “‘Stovėjimo ant ribos’ metafora P. Tillich'o sistemoje ir S. Kierkegaard'o religijos filosofijoje: *gnosis* ar *pistis*? [The Metaphor of ‘Stading on the Edge’ in P. Tillich's System and S. Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion: *Gnosis* or *Pistis*?],” *Logos*, vol. 48, 2006, pp. 63–74.

Kafka employ the genre of diary,⁹⁴ and Rūta Marija Vabalaitė sees Kierkegaard as proposing a correction to Kantian ethics.⁹⁵ The extension of Kant's ethical views is also seen in Judge William's letters by me in the article "Immanuelio Kanto etikos įtaka Sørenio Kierkegaard'o etinės stadijos sampratai [Immanuel Kant's Influence on the Søren Kierkegaard's Concept of the Ethical Stage]."⁹⁶ Finally, Kačerauskas carries on his investigation into poetical thinking and compares Kierkegaard's approach to those of Aristotle and Nietzsche.⁹⁷

Finally, secondary literature is replete with references to Kierkegaard, where he is mostly invoked as the founder of existentialism—one who rehabilitated religion in a secular age, faith in the age of reason, and the incommensurability of the human being in the age of transparency. In summary, one can safely conclude that Kierkegaard remains one of the most widely read and quoted philosophers of any century within Lithuania. There are two main reasons for such a popularity. The first one is that after the independence leading Lithuanian philosophers turned their attention to Kierkegaard (Šliogeris and Sodeika), which in turn inspired the next generation of philosophers to read Kierkegaard and make use of his ideas in their own research (Pons, Juzefovič, Budriūnaitė). And even those who did not feel that Kierkegaard is in their field of interest, sometimes felt compelled to address Kierkegaard's ideas because of their prevalence, even if only to dismiss them. The second reason is the emergence of a qualified and devoted translator of Kierkegaard, Jolita Q. Pons, whose work made Kierkegaard accessible to the students of philosophy, who otherwise would not be able to access Kierkegaard in other languages.

94 Jekaterina Lavrinec, "Istorijos apie save: autoriai-personažai ir viešieji dienoraščiai (skaitant Kierkegaardą ir Kafka) [Stories About Oneself: Authors as Characters and Public Diaries (Reading Kierkegaard and Kafka)]," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 167–174.

95 Rūta Marija Vabalaitė, "Du Kanto etikos papildymai Kierkegaardo teorijoje [Two Additions to Kantian Ethics in Kierkegaard's Theory]," in *Egzistencijos paradoksai: Kierkegaardo filosofijos interpretacijos*, ed. by Antanas Andrijauskas, pp. 303–312.

96 Viktoras Bachmetjevas, "Immanuelio Kanto etikos įtaka Sørenio Kierkegaard'o etinės stadijos sampratai," *Žmogus ir žodis*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2016, pp. 94–108.

97 Tomas Kačerauskas, "Įvykio poetika ir egzistencinis mąstymas [The Poetics of Event and Existential Thought]," *Logos*, vol. 36, 2004, pp. 78–85.

