

Christian theology is his emphasis on the personal and the subjective, this impersonal style is a bit strange, if not, deeply ironic. Let me leave you with just one example of this irony. Come says: 'The present author also believes that Kierkegaard's analysis and depiction of the inward, personal, subjective dimensions of this appropriation are more subtle, more sensitive, and more complex than that of any other theologian he knows of'. Need I say more?

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Robert L. Perkins (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* [IKC, Volume 12]. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997, 356 pages, Hb \$32.00.

Kierkegaard's writings fall into two broad categories: the pseudonymous works and the edifying or upbuilding works. Whereas the upbuilding works were published under Kierkegaard's own name, the pseudonymous works were published under a series of fictional names and have the unusual feature that they are narrated by different fictional characters. These characters possess distinct personalities (cf. the characters in a Platonic dialogue) and represent themselves in the works as the *authors* of these works (Kierkegaard calls them "pseudonymous authors"). Kierkegaard goes out of his way to insist on the importance of distinguishing any philosophical views expressed by a given pseudonym from any views that he himself expresses in the upbuilding writings (just as, e.g., the views voiced by Hamlet should not be identified with or confused with those of Shakespeare).

The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is a 600+ page sequel to the more slender, 111 page *Philosophical Fragments*. Both works are part of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous portion of his authorship, and were published as the writings of Johannes Climacus. Climacus is often characterized as Kierkegaard's most philosophical pseudonym; he is well-versed in Hegelian philosophy (though clearly not a follower of Hegel), a self-professed admirer of Lessing, and frequently, with approval, invokes the words and example of Socrates. Climacus is by far Kierkegaard's most Socratic pseudonym, one who rivals Plato's Socrates in his use of irony and humor, and in his keen dialectical skill.

In the *Postscript*, Climacus investigates the individual's relation to Christianity ("What is it to *exist* as a Christian?") and takes the reader on an

elaborate, roundabout philosophical journey. The scope and immense depth of this book strike me as close to inexhaustible. The *Postscript* is one of the philosophically richest and most eclectic works in Kierkegaard's oeuvre. Nominally a work in the philosophy of religion, it also engages issues of epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, ethics, philosophy of language, philosophical anthropology, and philosophy of mind. In addition, there is a lengthy appendix in the center of the book which provides an invaluable overview of all the works previously published by Kierkegaard. (This appendix, together with Kierkegaard's *The Point of View*, serves a similar function in Kierkegaard's writings to that played by *Ecce Homo* in Nietzsche's body of work.)

In response to Climacus' amazing edifice, Robert Perkins has assembled a collection of 17 essays by a host of Kierkegaard scholars, many of whom have contributed to earlier volumes of this series and are well known within the field. Perkins provides a very useful introduction to the collection that gives the reader a synopsis of each piece and draws attention to some of the larger themes that unite individual essays and which have helped to structure the overall organization of the volume. As a whole, this collection of essays does a good job of bringing into view the range and variety of topics addressed in the *Postscript*.

Several essays concentrate on the overall literary structure of the work, and attempt to assess the philosophical significance of a work's being written in such a form. Andrew Burgess ("The Bilateral Symmetry of Kierkegaard's *Postscript*") provides a series of schematic pictures of the *Postscript*, comparing it to a path with many branches, a set of nested boxes, and a ladder. Whether or not you accept his characterization of Climacus as a figure who is straightforwardly to be understood as "personally disinterested" about what he investigates (I, for one, do not), his essay provides a valuable set of tools for trying to achieve something like a synoptic overview of the elaborate structure of this work. He also includes a very useful diagram of the different parts of the book. William McDonald ("Retracing the Circular Ruins of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*") explores the sense in which Kierkegaard's authorship might be said to reduplicate polemically Hegel's system of speculative philosophy, focusing on the relationship between the *Postscript* and Hegel's preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hugh Pyper ("Beyond a Joke: Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* as a Comic Book") draws attention to the revocation in the appendix attached to the end of the work, and considers what philosophical value there might be to writing a work that is at bottom one large joke developed and elaborated by Climacus, a self-described humorist.

A number of essays devote themselves to the philosophical clarification of some of Climacus' key terms. Robert Roberts ("Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith") provides a helpful discussion of the notions of passion and pathos, including a characterization of faith. M. G. Piety ("The Reality of the World in Kierkegaard's *Postscript*") argues against an anti-realist reading of the *Postscript*'s metaphysics, and provides a valuable discussion of the distinction between "reality" (*Realitet*) and "actuality" (*Virkelighed*). Piety also draws attention to the important fact that Climacus' chief ethical concern is not to persuade his readers to accept particular ethical prescriptions or to impart to them the specific content of such prescriptions; rather, he is interested in combating an ethical form of self-deception where the individual knows very well what the right thing to do is but deceives herself about what this amounts to. Other essays in the volume that investigate key terms include Thomas Anderson's discussion of the difference between knowledge as approximation and knowledge of self ("Kierkegaard and Approximation Knowledge"); Lee Barrett's account of the relationship between Climacus' phrase "subjectivity is truth" and the apparently contradictory phrase "subjectivity is untruth" (Subjectivity is (Un) Truth: Climacus' Dialectically Sharpened Pathos"); John Glenn's examination of Climacus' account of eternal happiness ("A Highest Good . . . An Eternal Happiness": The Human Telos in Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*"); a helpful discussion by David Law of some key Christian concepts ("Resignation, Suffering, and Guilt in Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*"); and an interesting investigation by Louise Carroll Keeley of the understudied topic of spiritual trial ("Spiritual Trial in the Thought of Kierkegaard").

A central topic of the *Postscript* is Climacus' discussion of what Kierkegaard calls "indirect communication," and why there is an important sense in which one can only communicate *indirectly* with others about ethics and religion. Several essays in the volume engage this issue. Alastair Hannay ("Having Lessing on One's Side") provides a very thoughtful essay on the figure of Lessing who, along with Socrates, frequently serves as a model for Climacus. Edward Mooney ("Exemplars, Inwardness, and Belief: Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication") nicely complements some of what Hannay demonstrates about Lessing with some reflections on the value of spiritual exemplars. His essay seeks to shed light on the pedagogical role of Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms to portray concrete instances of specific ways of life, and tries to explicate the notion of indirect communication in terms of what the appropriate relationship should be between a writer and a reader if the reader's spiritual development is to progress. Nerina Jansen ("Deception in Service of the Truth: Magister Kierkegaard and the Problem of

Communication”) draws attention to Kierkegaard’s unjustly neglected notes on indirect communication, including several drafts of lectures he planned to deliver on this topic but which he never actually presented (see *Søren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers*, Vol. 1, ed. and tran. Hong and Hong, § 648–657).

Throughout this volume of essays, commentators again and again seek to shed light on Kierkegaard’s thought and writings by way of comparisons with earlier and later thinkers and the development of their thinking. Essays which stand out in this respect include Sylvia Walsh’s examination of Climacus’ distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, in which she argues for the value of Climacus’ discussion for feminist accounts of epistemology (“Subjectivity versus Objectivity: Kierkegaard’s *Postscript* and Feminist Epistemology”); Robert Perkin’s study of the political implications of Climacus’ critique of the official religious ideology and ecclesiastical practice by way of a comparison with Plato’s *Republic* (“Climacian Politics: Person and Polis in Kierkegaard’s *Postscript*”); Merold Westphal’s attempt to defend the idea that Climacus’ work makes possible a “robustly religious” postmodernism (“Kierkegaard’s Climacus – a Kind of Postmodernist”); and Julia Watkin’s discussion of Climacus’ arguments against the possibility of constructing a system of existence, and how these arguments might apply to current efforts by physicists like Stephen Hawking to arrive at a theory of everything.

Many will find this collection as a whole a useful scholarly supplement to Climacus’ *Postscript*. It is bound to open a reader’s eyes to some of what makes the *Postscript* one of Kierkegaard’s most philosophically rewarding texts, and to ensure that she or he is armed with a whole host of new questions with which to return for yet another reading of this truly great work.

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