

# ‘We want to see Action!’<sup>1</sup>

## On Kierkegaard’s Ethical Instruction<sup>2</sup>

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*‘This shadow-existence is the secret of the system, knowing about, not being’*

*(Pap. VIII 1 A 554/JP 646)*

*‘Instruction in ethical capability is essentially upbringing’*

*(Pap. VIII 2 B 85, 10/JP 653)*

In 1837, fifty years after the publication of Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and after having attended some courses on Kant’s Ethics taught by H.L. Martensen<sup>3</sup> at the Theology Faculty of the University of Copenhagen, a very young Søren Kierkegaard writes:

It seems that, by Kant, Philosophy went bankrupt theoretically speaking so it was a question of whether there was something left to be saved on the practical way.<sup>4</sup>

Subtly echoing Kant’s suspicion and diagnosis regarding the limits of theoretical philosophy,<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard will remain faithful to and consistent with this *practical turn*, as it were, throughout his works, and he will drive it to its ultimate consequences, making it the core of his whole thought. But to set the record straight, let me state that, in the following, I will not be making a comparison between Kant and Kierkegaard, not even of their critical approaches to philosophy as sheer *theorein*, something which they obviously share. Rather, I will attempt to illustrate the ways and means by which Kierkegaard, as opposed to Kant, depicts a *heuristic* proposal which determines and, thus, sharpens the edges of the philosophical task and, specifically, of practical philosophy or ethics.

According to Kierkegaard, if there is something to be saved in philosophy, this is indeed its ‘practical way’. On the one hand, ‘practical way’

might be read here as the task of philosophizing, that is, the task of appropriating philosophical knowledge by rational means, namely, by appropriating at the same time the operating principles of reason. On the other hand, a 'practical way' designates a specific philosophical ground, namely ethics, which is neither solely nor mainly epistemologically determined but, on the contrary, practically determined, i.e., determined by means of *action*. In this 'way', the task of philosophy is, thus, to *demand*. Indeed, in Kierkegaard's view, this is precisely what the times [from a philosophical perspective] need,

What the world needs most of all right now is this You shall, pronounced with authority. This is the only thing that can give impetus.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, all philosophical undertakings and ethical philosophical undertakings in particular are therefore legitimate if and only if they aim at philosophizing, and thereby, at action; such undertakings are thus legitimate insofar as they bring about action. To do so, philosophy and/or ethics must serve and be grounded directly upon an existential concern, which, in Johannes Climacus' condensed formulation in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, reads as follows:

However, in order to avoid confusion, it should immediately be kept in mind that the issue is not about the truth of Christianity but about the individual's relation to Christianity, consequently not about the indifferent individual's systematic eagerness to arrange the truths of Christianity in § [paragraphs] but rather about the concern of the infinitely interested individual in regard to his own relation to such a doctrine.<sup>7</sup>

Very much aware of, and sensitive to, this 'main confusion' of modern times, Kierkegaard repeatedly warns against the cardinal sources, one by one, of all mistreatment of ethical truth, all deeply rooting in the fact that:

men still treat Christianity as a problem of knowledge, so that Christian knowledge in and for itself has value in the same sense as, for example, mathematics, history, and so on, intellectual disciplines which are not related to what kind of life a man lives, his character.<sup>8</sup>

As Kierkegaard himself maintains,<sup>9</sup> it seems to follow from the above that neither science nor scholarship can provide a non-dogmatic, that is, a le-

gitimate topos for the teaching of the ethical truths or contents wherein these become nothing more than academic chimeras or numerical accountings of human relationships. Kierkegaard's main critical point in this discussion is that both science and scholarship are unable to bridge 'ideality' and 'reality', and thus, allow these ethical truths to escape mere thought and enter into actual existence, simply because science and scholarship are indifferent to 'the task' and, hence, indifferent towards existence, and/or *action*. In Kierkegaard's own words:

Nowadays everything is admonition, directed only toward understanding, so that the child understands that one wishes him well, etc. – but it actually has no connection with existence.<sup>10</sup>

Expanding upon his pragmatic criticism while also indirectly asking about the way in which philosophy, and/or ethics might succeed in fulfilling 'the task' of bringing about (ethical) action, Kierkegaard quotes Socrates in order to essentially point out that ethical truths or contents (i.e., 'the difference between good and evil', as Judge William, the ethical rigorist, would put it in *Either/Or II*) cannot be taught:<sup>11</sup>

This Socratic thesis is of outmost importance to Christianity: Virtue cannot be taught; that is, it is not a doctrine, it is a being-able (*Kunnen*), an exercising, an existing, an existential transformation, and therefore it is so slow to learn, not at all as simple and easy as the rote-learning of one more language or one more system.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, what must be conveyed in this realm is not *information* or *knowledge* but an *ability* or *being-able*.<sup>13</sup> At this point, Kierkegaard considers a second type of what he calls 'instruction', upon which the bridge between ideality and reality might rest. This methodological point, followed by an itemized heuristical *proposal*, is based on the following insight as found in his journals:

The difference of all instruction is essentially only this – in what medium is the instruction to be communicated? Children and young people are instructed in the medium of the ideality of imagination. What is said there is true. And yet this very truth can become a trap in the medium of actuality. It is taught that one ought to love the good. Inasmuch as we all learn this, if we all acted accordingly, the medium of ac-

tuality would be just as ideal as the medium of imagination. But this is not the case. Then comes the last instruction. It teaches exactly the same thing as was taught to the young, but in addition it teaches how things go in the medium of actuality – that the good is persecuted.<sup>14</sup>

The interesting turn in this quotation – what is called the ‘addition’ of this second kind of instruction – is that it accentuates the medium of actuality as opposed to the medium of imagination. For this reason, the ‘last instruction’ underlines the trace of a fundamental misproportion between the *ought to be* (ideality) and the *is* (reality) found in actuality, the very misproportion where ‘last instruction’ itself originates. Insofar, the ‘practical way’ of philosophy is principally a *negative* way. Nonetheless, the ‘last instruction’ bears witness to a duty towards the actualization of ethical truths, compelling one furthermore to ‘act accordingly’ all the while stressing the risks of doing so. The ‘last instruction’ focuses not on the *a priori* of action and hence on its ideal conditions and presuppositions, but on its *a posteriori* and, thus, on its actual fulfillment and ‘consequence’. Here, the ‘practical way’ of philosophy is principally a positive way.

In this dialectical guise, Kierkegaard succeeds in shedding light upon the specific deficit of the ‘first’ mode of instruction. And this is two-fold. On the one hand, Kierkegaard’s reflection performs an *evaluative move*, by claiming that by no means do ideality or imagination overlap reality or actuality; on the contrary, Kierkegaard stresses their infinite distance. On the other hand, Kierkegaard’s reflection simultaneously performs a *normative move* by negatively requiring this infinite distance to be reduced; thus, ethical truths should no longer be understood in *abstracto* as idea(l)s nor under the subjunctive verbal tense, as ‘ifs’, but rather they should be translated into the present tense: they should be actualized. In other (key)words, considered from a Christian perspective, ethics should not be seen as ‘a doctrine but [as] an existence–communication’.<sup>15</sup> I would like to make Kierkegaard’s point extensive and advocate for the same qualification of ethics *senso latu*.

Thus, by stressing actuality, i.e., action and existence, legitimate ethical instruction is not only said to affect but also to occur within two domains, namely within *imagination* or ideality on the one hand, which allows a representation of the ethical by intellectual and/or poetic means,<sup>16</sup> and, on the other, within *actuality* or reality, the existential domain, hence allowing a practical determination of the ethical, i.e., its coming

*true*. And now that we have been presented the double dynamics of Kierkegaardian ethical instruction, let us observe its character.

In order to grasp the nature of Kierkegaard's ethical instruction, as well as its methodological implications, attention will be paid to those remarks in his journals, the propositional content of which might paradigmatically be referred to as follows: 'The instruction, the communication, must not be as of knowledge, but upbringing, practising, *art-instruction*'.<sup>17</sup> Tacitely, this remark seems to answer the essentially Socratic question of *how* ethics should be taught in order to bring about the ethical or, explicitly, its Kierkegaardian reformulation: *how* is the ethical to be communicated so as to perform an 'existence-communication'. In this respect, my undertaking begins just where the Kierkegaardian text suggests: that is, with Socrates.

The Socratic philosophical undertaking as conceived of by Kierkegaard is both the methodological and existential archetype to be followed. Kierkegaard's appraisal and, to a certain extent, appropriation of Socratic *maieutics* seems to be indisputable,<sup>18</sup> especially given the posthumously published *Lectures on the Dialectics of Ethical and Ethico-religious Communication* from 1847, found among his journals and papers, which are my main textual source for the reading here.

Kierkegaard points out that modern philosophy runs in the wrong direction, backwards, 'away from London'<sup>19</sup> or, we should rather say, away from Greece. Given this malicious inversion, Kierkegaard strongly recommends that it should 'turn around' and be sensitive to the methodological questions which the Socratic undertaking raises. These questions have a specific shape not only in Kierkegaard's conceptual framework but also in his own philosophical project, in his own text, namely: (1) *authority*, (2) *reduplication*, and (3) *seduction*. Moreover, it will be on behalf of these that the ethical and, in my view, ethics itself, will be conceived of as a *challenge*, and as such, for the teacher as well. Let us now examine them.

## Authority

In general terms, the question of *authority* becomes relevant in Kierkegaard's view because it is the *conditio sine qua non* for ethical instruction, and because it is paradoxically lacking. Thus in this view, authority makes ethical instruction at once possible and impossible, legitimate and

illegitimate. To make this apparent *status quo* productive, we shall expand the view upon the notions of *reduplication* and *seduction*, where authority is *not* established epistemologically, that is, it is not determined by knowledge, but *pragmatically*, by action(s),<sup>20</sup> and *rhetorically*, by discourse. The issue at stake here concerns the force by which instruction shall be addressed; a power which in the case of ‘reduplication’ will be ethically accentuated and, in the case of ‘seduction’, aesthetically.

To begin with, given that in his opinion everyone is in possession of the ethical in the sense that everyone knows it, Kierkegaard coherently disregards all kinds of epistemological authority. ‘In regard to the ethical – he writes in the *lectures* – proficiency cannot make a master-teacher’.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, ‘in regard to the ethical, one person cannot have authority in relation to the other because, ethically, God is the master-teacher and every man is an apprentice’.<sup>22</sup> And it is precisely this lack of authority that forces the teacher to ‘always dare only indirectly, because he must express that he himself is not a master-teacher but an apprentice and (...) because he must express that the receiver himself knows it’.<sup>23</sup>

One concludes that, in the very end, the teacher is also one who is being taught, one who is being educated,<sup>24</sup> and, not least, one who also is being challenged. This egalitarian and reciprocal starting point or fundamental position depicts the ideal communicative ‘situation’ given in actuality.<sup>25</sup> Once we have agreed on the ideal purpose and the actual conditions of such concrete situation, that is, once we have respectively agreed that the main concern of ethical instruction is to bring about action, and that its character is thus mainly challenging, it becomes even clearer why the lack of epistemological authority, that is, of a kind of authority which finds its source of legitimation in knowledge or in a very particular *besser-Wissen*, as it were, forces a reconception of authority and of the communicative structure which legitimately suits ethical instruction.

## Reduplication

Now, what supplies the teacher with the authority to teach the ethical if not the mere fact of knowing it? In this respect, Kierkegaard suggests elsewhere in his journals that ‘he who himself expresses what he teaches is a ‘teacher’’, because ‘anyone who does not himself existentially express what he teaches, or at least calls attention to this (...) is a Sophist, and all

such communication is sophistry'.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the teacher shall present and re-present the doctrine at one and the same time. It is all a matter of 'interiorizing the doctrine'<sup>27</sup> and bringing it about or *reduplicating* it.

This can obviously not be the place for a broader discussion of the notion of Kierkegaardian 'reduplication'. Nevertheless, in order to clarify my use of the notion in the present text, I shall here refer to Climacus' *Philosophical Fragments* and *Postscript* as my source of inspiration, if not of documentation. According to Climacus' own use of the terms, one must consider first 'redoubling' (*Fordobling*). He refers to this only once in the *Fragments*, and he defines it as 'the possibility of a coming into existence within its own coming into existence. Here, in the stricter sense, is the historical, which is the dialectical with respect to time'.<sup>28</sup> This first kind of reduplication is thus placed within the realm of possibility, and it might be thought of as a temporal reiteration. The second notion of reduplication is to be found in one of Climacus' discussions of the nature of truth, or, rather, the nature of the language and discourse of Christian truth, i.e., the way in which Christian truth is said. Here, Climacus explains that 'none of the formulas says more than that truth is, if this is (...) truth is a 'redoubling' (*Fordoblelse*), truth is the first [term], but the second [term], the fact that it *is*, is the same as the first one, its being is the abstract form of truth (...) truth is therefore an abstract redoubling (*Fordoblelse*) which is nevertheless canceled at the very same moment'.<sup>29</sup> This second kind of reduplication seems to affect the realm of actuality, i.e., the actual state of affairs, and it might be conceived of as a verbal-semantic reiteration, indeed as a tautology. Finally, the third kind of reduplication (*Reduplikation*) seems, for Climacus in the *Postscript*, to imply a generic modification or a '*metabasis eis allo genos*' as Kierkegaard with Aristotle would say, that is, a transformation. In this respect, Climacus writes that 'the reduplication of the content in the form is the artistry'.<sup>30</sup> More explicitly pertinent to our context, he makes clear in a passage devoted to the dialectics of seduction – to which we shall return – that the reduplication of truth in existence implies that the 'existing individual' appropriates it and actualizes it.<sup>31</sup> Consisting of an existential reiteration, 'reduplication' thus implies at once the acknowledgement of the infinite distance between ideality and actuality, and this is its *negative* moment, as well as the need for the bridging of both, this being its *positive* moment. Given its dialectical structure, 'reduplication' itself reduplicates, i.e., it actualizes the very structure of the ethical or 'last instruction'. In that, according to either one, attention is paid to

both ideality and actuality, which means that the infinite distance between them and the need to bridge them are concomitantly represented.

Furthermore, in placing this definition within the context of specific ethical instruction, Kierkegaard states that ‘the so-called master-teacher *shall* himself practice what he teaches’<sup>32</sup> or, at least, (s)he must always ‘strive to be that which he communicates’.<sup>33</sup> In so doing, that is, by accepting the challenge of ethics while addressing its demand to acknowledge the gap between ideality and actuality, one tends to bridge it. Therefore, rather than conceiving of the ethical as simply a logical or abstract possibility, as a mere ideal or as a doctrine or even as a decalogue, but instead as an ontological and concrete possibility to be actualized, the teacher acquires the proper, i.e., legitimate ethical authority: namely, the authority of *example*.<sup>34</sup>

Ethical instruction and its underlying communicative strategy, as it is presented in the *Lectures of the Ethical and Ethico-Religious Communication*, are consequently conceived of as a specific *πρόξις* (praxis) or *action*. It is an enterprise where *both* the teacher and the apprentice, by their own agencies, must come to *pragmatical* terms with the ethical they already know in order to become its representatives; both must indeed build the bridge between the idea(l) and the real, both must ‘exist’ in the ethical.<sup>35</sup> We already saw that only when the ethical undergoes the required ‘actual appropriation’,<sup>36</sup> namely, ‘reduplication’ is the ‘second’ ethical instruction not only made possible but legitimated. At this point, Kierkegaard is even more specific, and explains that this is so, because only in this case is the teaching of practical philosophy ‘pathos-filled’, and as such, a ‘dialectical transition’.<sup>37</sup>

In short: this Kierkegaardian ‘pathos-filled dialectical transition’ is first and foremost interesting because of both its ambivalent and agglutinating force, whereby all dualities are requalified. Firstly, methodologically speaking, it is within these specific dialectics that imagination and actuality, thought and existence, ideality and reality, are brought together; however, each of these as such remain apart. Secondly, heuristically speaking, we have seen the dialectic relationship between the teacher and the apprentice, forged in the heat of Socratic maieutics in order to keep them both balanced. Finally, linguistically speaking, the ‘pathos-filled dialectical transition’ takes place within discourse, that is, within language conceived of in pragmatic terms as action. From this perspective, this implies concretely that the ‘pathos-filled dialectical transition’

presupposes a non-descriptive or non-demonstrative use of language, and, specifically, an *expressive* and *communicative* one. If this is right, then the 'pathos-filled dialectical transition' is to be approached both from the (philosophy of language) speech-act theory and from (classical) rhetorical theory. In both cases, I insist that it is presupposed that language is (a kind of) action.

## Seduction

Thus, we see that language performs or, rather, that a specific performance is brought about by discursive means. This we call *seduction*. Kierkegaard agrees with Socrates that the teacher must have the maieutical skills necessary to 'make the reader or hearer himself active' in such a way that the communication 'does not end in a result but in a sting'.<sup>38</sup> Language thus *performs* a *demand*, it *compels*. Linguistic performance of this *authoritative* kind, provided by a specific *force*, has been studied in the philosophy of language and thematized as *perlocution* in the theory of speech-acts. Let me briefly quote J.L. Austin in his book *How to do things with words*, who inaugurated this sort of linguistic analysis, in order to make this (his) point clear:

Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it might be done with the design, intention or purpose of producing them; and we may then say (...) that the speaker has performed and act (...) We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a 'perlocutionary' act, and the act performed (...) 'perlocution'.<sup>39</sup>

It seems to me that this quotation clearly affirms Kierkegaard's view of maieutics and, consequently, of legitimate ethical instruction. However, linguistically speaking, the core of perlocution is its irregularity, that is, its grammatical and, thus, its logical unconventionality (Austin, 121 *et passim*): its unpredictability. Although the operating rules within language, concealed and supported by logic and grammar, constitute its authoritative structure, none of the rules of language can guarantee that perlocution is fulfilled, that is, that the hearer reacts to and/or represents what has been said in the expected manner. Hence, no rules can

guarantee, not even in Kierkegaard's second instruction, that the ethical demand will be fulfilled and that 'reduplication' will take place. Neither logic nor grammar seem to be qualified *authorities* for ethical instruction. Indeed, ethical instruction must be 'art-instruction'.<sup>40</sup> Over and against linguistic correctness and/or accuracy, which the knowledge of logic and grammar provide to the discourse, Kierkegaard has suggested *passion*, a 'pathos-filled' instruction. By means of passion, by grounding in passion, the discourse might rest upon a compelling but, at the same time, *non-authoritarian* communicative strategy. The teacher's authority is not based on his/her mastery of logic or grammar, but, on the very contrary, his/her authority is now partially founded on his/her *artistic* ability or τέχνη (techne). Climacus affirms in the *Postscript* that when 'appropriation is (...) the main point, communication is a work of art', and therefore, he adds, there is a need of 'artistic communication'.<sup>41</sup> And Kierkegaard, as mentioned before, corroborates this statement by writing that 'the instruction, the communication must be (...) upbringing, practising, art-instruction'.<sup>42</sup>

We have now reached the very point where the 'practical way' of philosophy acquires an artistic character, becoming an aesthetically configured path. As such, it signifies at once *aesthetic and ethical* action, gaining a new, authoritative, and 'passionate' source, namely *rhetoric*. The ground upon which ethical instruction is now built is called by Johannes the Seducer in *The Seducer's Diary* (and by Kierkegaard in his journals) an *actio(nes) in distans*.<sup>43</sup> Or *seduction*.

Now, conceived of as this specific *actio(nes) in distans* being seduction, ethical instruction consists of obtaining an effect (with)in/ from an 'object', with which there is no direct contact. The effect is caused by the inexorable force of the pulling or attracting, but also by the pushing or repelling, body or magnet.

Hence the teacher's authority is now based on his/her stylistically and figuratively grounded bi-polar magnetical force, as it were, to deceive the apprentice, to 'trick [him/her] out of' ideality and into actuality by the force of a more or less 'intentionally persuasive'<sup>44</sup> means. Beware that, for our purpose, persuasion (*Overtalelse*) is understood in Kierkegaard's own praising terms as found in *A Literary Review* of Thomasine Gyllembourg's *Two Ages*. Here, 'persuasion' is seen as a momentum of passion, as the 'friendly power' within literary discourse which supersedes 'captivation and entertainment',<sup>45</sup> and which is 'so great if one gives oneself to it'.<sup>46</sup> As opposed to logic and grammar, passion, and thus per-

suasion, does not elude deceit; indeed, Kierkegaard is aware that ethical instruction, based as it is on 'indirect communication first of all involves deception'.<sup>47</sup>

Rhetorically speaking, the teacher's authority (and success) depends, first of all, on his/her ability to reach the departing, i.e., original ethical 'situation' of the apprentice in actuality, who needs to be singularly considered; secondly, it depends on the teacher's ability to suggest that the apprentice adheres to the arguments given, in order for the ethical demand to be fulfilled, partly by means of *exemplifying* such fulfillment and partly by *persuading* him/her, by appealing the apprentice, by becoming intimate with him/her.<sup>48</sup> Once the end of this first, threefold move of attraction has been reached, once the teacher has presented before the apprentice the deficiencies in the ethical state of things, that is, the gap between ideality and actuality which needs to be bridged, repulsion begins. Certainly, success depends on the teacher's ability to get the apprentice to 'begin immediately to do it (...) as well as' she can on his/her own.<sup>49</sup> This is precisely the ability to *train* or *bring* the apprentice *up*,<sup>50</sup> to *move* the apprentice into the ethical, to get the apprentice ethically going, as it were.

Let me briefly summarize by pointing once more to the dialectical structure upon which, according to Kierkegaard, genuine ethical instruction rests. The discursive strategy underlying ethical instruction echoes the dialectical relationship shared by ideality and actuality, as founded on a misproportion, which, in its turn, makes explicit a demand. Ethical instruction, thus, consists of representing this specific demand of restoring the failed relationship between ideality and actuality, stressing actuality as the 'medium' in which this demand is to be fulfilled. One significant obstacle challenges the project as a whole, namely that the required conventional authority to legitimately convey the demand is lacking. The 'practical way' of philosophy reproduces at this point the founding dialectics by splitting and adopting two overlapping paths, namely an ethical and an aesthetic path, with these together creating an 'artistic' or passionate path, namely the path of reduplication or existential reiteration, and of seduction or persuasive discourse.

## Notes

1. *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torsting, eds., vols I-XI, second edition by N.Thulstrup, vols I-XVI, Copenhagen 1968-1978 [1909-1948] (hereafter *Pap.*) X 3 A 346; 1850 / *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. by H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong, vols 1-7, Bloomington & London 1967-1978 (hereafter JP, cited by paragraph number) 4185.
2. This paper has been made possible by a generous post-doctoral grant from the Ministerio de Educación y Cultura (Spain).
3. Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-1884), professor of Theology at the University of Copenhagen, who became J.P. Mynster's successor as Bishop of Sjælland on April 15th, 1854, one year before Søren Kierkegaard's death.
4. *Pap.* II C 23; p. 338-339/JP 5277.
5. At the end of the chapter devoted to the "Transcendental Method" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant makes the following interesting remark:  
 Man kann also unter allen Vernunftwissenschaften (a priori) nur allein Mathematik, niemals aber Philosophie (es sei denn historisch), sondern, was die Vernunft betrifft, höchsten nur philosophieren lernen (I. Kant, "Transzendente Methodenlehre", *KrV* B865,866/A837,838).  
 According to this, even if one considers both mathematics and philosophy as 'sciences of reason', it is nevertheless clear that only Mathematics might be an object of 'rational knowledge' (*rational Erkenntnis KrV*B864/A836); in which case, as Kant puts it, reason knows (from) *principles* and is described as "*cognitio ex principiis*". In contrast, philosophy is an epistemological candidate for 'historical knowledge' (*historisch Erkenntnis KrV* B864/A836), and here, reason knows (from) *facts*, being determined as "*cognitio ex datis*". Obviously, the latter represents a deficient use of reason for Kant. Knowing from facts implies that reason is, by definition, indebted to and limited by 'what has been given to it' (*KrV* B864/A836). Therefore, it is an alienated as well as a mimetical use of reason, judged negatively by Kant as 'subjektiv, bloss historisch' (*KrV* B864/A836). It is precisely to prevent such an inflated use of reason that Kant finally warns against philosophy being taught and/or learned and being thus reduced to an amount of *data*. A proper use of reason *sensu strictu*, on the contrary, would convey philosophy, *not* from an epistemological perspective but from a *practical* one, namely, as the *task* of *philosophizing*.
6. *Pap.* X 1 A 625/JP 4893.
7. *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*, 1. udgave, A.B. Drachmann, J.L. Heiberg and H.O. Lange, eds., vols 1-14, Copenhagen 1901-1906 (hereafter cited by volume and page number in parentheses besides the quotation: SV VII, 7)/ *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vols I-XXV, 1978-1998 (*idem.* KW XII.1, 15).  
 Astonishingly close to Kant, Kierkegaard rejects all *objective* or 'systematical' consideration of the significant 'truths' for individual existence, and thus, of very significant *ethical* truths. As opposed to mathematical truths, ethical truths are *subjectively* significant. Otherwise, contends Climacus, they are to be objectively considered, they turn into either an 'approximation-object', into sheer 'historical' truths (SV VII, 20/KW XII.1, 31) or, in an even worse scenario, by means of 'speculation', ethical truths turn into 'mystification' (SV VII, 43/KW XII.1, 57).
8. *Pap.* XI 2 A 191/JP 2303.
9. *Pap.* X 2 A 439/JP 1059.
10. *Pap.* X 4 A 289/JP 3693.
11. In Kierkegaard's own words: 'The fact of the matter is that there ought not to be teaching; what I have to say may not be taught; by being taught it turns into something en-

- tirely different. What I need is a man who does not gesticulate with his arms up in a pulpit or with his fingers upon a podium, but a person who gesticulates with his entire personal existence, with the willingness in every danger to will to express in action precisely what he teaches' (*Pap.* VIII 1 A 554/*JP* 646).
12. *Pap.* X 2 A 606/*JP* 1060.
  13. In the *Lectures on the Dialectics of Ethical and Ethico-Religious Communication*, as will be shown, Kierkegaard classifies communication according to its object, being either *knowledge* (*Viden*) or *ability, capacity* or even *power of action* (*Kunnen*), which will itself eventually be requalified as *obligation* (*Skullen-Kunnen*).
  14. *Pap.* VIII 1 A 62/*JP* 939.
  15. *Pap.* X 2 A 606/*JP* 1060.
  16. This is the case even when one admits that an epistemological determination of the ethical – as opposed to an epistemological determination of the religious – is *prima facie* unnecessary, because it is presupposed, i.e., because 'the ethical is the universally human self' and, therefore, to some extent, 'ethically man as such knows about the ethical' (*Pap.* VIII 2 B 82, 13/*JP* 650). Unlike the Greek conception of the ethical, the Modern Christian conception, which Kierkegaard shares, does not allow for any sort of elitist intellectualism; this means that, according to Kierkegaard, ethical knowledge does not guarantee that the ethical is *eo ipso* repeatedly present to the individual, nor that she represents it. That is, a representation of the ethical is needed insofar as its confrontation does not follow from its epistemological determination.
  17. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 82,13/*JP* 650. My emphasis.
  18. Kierkegaard confesses transparently: 'My service in using pseudonyms consists in having discovered, Christianly, the maieutic method' (*Pap.* VIII 2 B82, 13/*JP* 650).
  19. *Pap.* X 5 A 113/*JP* 3317.
  20. If we were to contextualize this discussion within the categorial framework of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, we would here not refer to 'action(s)' (*Handlinger*) but to 'works' (*Gjæringer*) or 'deeds'.
  21. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649, 18.
  22. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649, 16.
  23. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649, 20.
  24. Therefore it is possible for the Socratic midwife Kierkegaard to insist in his journals: 'I also view my whole literary activity as my own education' (*Pap.* X 2 A 196; X 2 A 375; X 4 A 85; X 4 A 647/*JP* 6533, 6577, 6737, 6820).
  25. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81,28/*JP* 650, 28.
  26. *Pap.* X 4 A 484/*JP* 4321. Kierkegaard had some years before, precisely in deep connection with such fears and accusations, already declared that 'the philosophers are worse than the Pharisees' (*Pap.* IV B 6/*JP* 3291).
  27. *Pap.* VIII 1 A 535/*JP* 4544.
  28. *SV* IV, 240/*KW* VII, 76.
  29. *SV* VII, 158 /*KW* XII.1, 190. Translation slightly modified.
  30. *SV* VII, 287 /*KW* XII.1, 333.
  31. Cfr. *SV* VII, 158 /*KW* XII.1, 190.
  32. *Pap.* VIII 1 A 535/*JP* 4544.
  33. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649,27.
  34. It seems clear that the authority of *example* cannot merely be considered as the authority obtained through *coherence* or even *consistence* (i.e., between what one says and what one does) because, if this were the case, then authority would again be merely epistemologically accentuated and, as such, it would only be, in the best of all cases, a weak or limited authority. On the contrary, 'practice' or 'actualization' gains full validity when *example* reads *paradigma* and, finally, *eikon* (*imago*); that is, when it corresponds to an *exemplary*

- person or *figure*, signifying his/her specific virtue, re-presenting it. Read in this latter way, *example* turns out to be the rhetorical resource upon which the ethical instruction or discourse must count.
35. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649,28.
  36. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649,32.
  37. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649,34.
  38. *Pap.* VII 1 A 74/*JP* 4266.
  39. Austin, J.L. *How to do things with words*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1975 [1962] p.101.
  40. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 82,13/*JP* 650.
  41. *KW* XII.1, 79/ *SV* VII, 60. As the matter of fact, *imagination* in the “second” ethical instruction acquires a new and different role inasmuch as there is talk of “the communication of an art” (*JP* 649,28/*Pap.* VIII 2 B 81). This consideration would bring us to the point of an ethical re-qualification of imagination, largely thematized in the secondary literature, by, for instance, J. Ferreira, *Transforming Vision. Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991; Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Post-modern Culture*. Minneapolis, 1988; and, David Gowens, *Kierkegaard: Dialectic of the Imagination*, Peter Lang: NY, 1989.
  42. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 82/*JP* 650,13.
  43. Aage Henriksen reminds us in his *Kierkegaards Romaner* (Gyldendal: Copenhagen, 1969, p. 55) that ‘*actio(nes) in distans*’ is a technical expression which refers to the effect of a magnet upon another body with which it does not have direct contact. The force of the magnet affects the body without its propagation through the interconnecting atmosphere. Faraday will reject this explanation of all electric and magnetic phenomena, proposing a counter-model according to which a common medium for the propagation of all electric induction should be presupposed.
  44. I dare to quote here the, but only apparently redundant, opening words of Paul de Man’s *Blindness and Insight*.
  45. Cf. *SV* VIII, 18/*KW* XIV, 19.
  46. *SV* VIII, 18/*KW* XIV, 19. On Kierkegaard’s conception of ‘persuasion’ and its implications for literary discourse, see Peter Fenves, ‘Chatter’. *Language and History in Kierkegaard*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1993 (pp. 199–204), and this author’s ‘A Literary Review: A Rhetorical Experiment or ‘Watchman, Hallo!’ in *Kierkegaard Studies. Yearbook 1999*, eds. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Jon Stewart. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999.
  47. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 81/*JP* 649,22.
  48. In his Rhetoric Lectures, held at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1964–65, Roland Barthes refers to the (‘good’) Platonic rhetoric, the so called ‘socratic psychagogy’ or the formation of the souls by means of the word, as ‘la rhétorique érotisée’, that is, the intimate dialogue, in fact, ‘le dialogue d’amour’ (p. 177), wherein the teacher and the disciple ‘*think in common*’ (‘L’ancienne rhétorique’ in *Communications*, 16 (1970) pp. 173–237). In this regard, the Kierkegaardian ‘second’ ethical instruction would similarly be and create the frame to ‘act in common’.
  49. *Pap.* VIII 2 B 85/*JP* 653,4.
  50. *JP* 650,12/*Pap.* VIII 2 B 82.