

The Theory and Practice of Language and Communication in Kierkegaard's Upbuilding Discourses

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1. Introduction

Kierkegaard's writings contain many theoretical reflections on the nature of language and communication, and these reflections are complemented by the way in which he uses language in the practice of religious communication. This is no less true of the religious writings published under his own name and sometimes spoken of as examples of 'direct' communication than it is of his pseudonymous works. In what follows I shall seek to illustrate the interdependence of the theory and the practice of language in the context of a specific example of Kierkegaard's religious writing, the discourse 'Strengthening in the Inner Being', the third of the three upbuilding discourses published on October 16th. 1843, together with *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*

We should not, of course, assume that 'language' and 'communication' are synonymous terms for Kierkegaard. Not all communication is contained in language. Language arises out of and continually points towards existential realities 'outside the text'. Such 'realities' include emotion, will, faith, prayer, sacramental action, suffering and bearing witness. Even if it is immediately added that all of these states or actions usually occur in close connection with language, so that they are generally inseparable from their articulated form, this is not to say that they are 'nothing but' language. On the contrary, I would wish to maintain that even if religious communication must embrace language (and for Kierkegaard as a religious writer such an embrace is both intimate and in-

eluctable), the meaning of religious language is continually constituted as an ever-renewed appeal to the *hors texte*.

We should also mention straightaway that Kierkegaard's view of the religious life is highly differentiated. There is no single religious feeling or act in which the whole process of 'becoming a Christian' is comprised. The Christian life is not something that can be spatially compressed into the matter of an isolated moment or instant. It is something that is what it is only as it is extended through time. Within the overall economy of the religious life, then, we may expect that the place and function of language will vary from moment to moment. Such variation will apply both to the theory and to the practice of language. Different stages on the religious way will offer different understandings and uses of language (as, analogously, the Seducer and the Assessor have a different understanding of how language ought to function and themselves write in very different styles).

In what follows, I shall hope to illustrate these points by means of a worked example. The example is the discourse 'Strengthening in the Inner Being', the third of the three upbuilding discourses published on October 16th 1843, simultaneously with *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*.

If we compare the religious perspective of this discourse with the standpoint of later religious works (such as those by the pseudonym Anti-Climacus or Kierkegaard's own Attack on "Christendom") it is easy to find significant differences. The whole thrust of the discourse is, for instance, directed towards increasing the dimension of inwardness, 'the inner being' alluded to in the title. There is no direct discussion here of the need for public acts of witness, nor of the sufferings that result from the Christian's opposition to the established order, sufferings that are, in the later writings, said to culminate in persecution and even blood-martyrdom.

These differences are not merely ideological, in the sense of having to do with opposed concepts of what it is to be religious or to be a Christian. They are also exemplified in the understanding and in the style and structure of language and communication in each case.

This point may be made by referring to an important passage in one of the later writings, *Practice in Christianity*, where Kierkegaard/Anti-Climacus criticizes the manner in which the clergy of establishment Christianity 'communicate' (or rather don't communicate) the gospel. In the sixth of a series of meditations on the text 'And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto myself' (John 12.32), Anti-Climacus describes how the authentic style of Christian preaching has become lost in a Church that, by virtue of its complacency, has become aestheticized and naturalized. Authentic preaching, he claims, is direct speech, spoken in the first person singular and addressed to a particular individual or individuals. 'I say to you...' is the principle of such communication. In established Christianity, however, the priest typically turns the pulpit into a stage, on which, like an actor, he holds up to his audience (or 'spectators' as the Danish term may be more directly translated) a sequence of images, introduced by such phrases as 'Let us reflect on..' , 'Consider...' or 'Behold...', phrases constituted by or evocative of metaphors of vision. Such a preacher no longer communicates as an impassioned subject, addressing his hearer with the urgency of apostolic conviction, but is as one who has withdrawn into himself, avoiding eye contact with his congregation, almost statue-like – an aesthetic object to be looked at, not a living person to be responded to. This communicative style shows how, in Christendom, Christ has been aestheticized and turned into an object of admiration – whereas he himself had always called for followers, not admirers.

The way in which the established clergy use language both reveals and helps to bring about this 'fall' from apostolic purity. Such priestly speech is, albeit in a strictly negative sense, performative utterance, for by the way he talks the priest performs the subversion of the message the text was intended to bear. The medium frustrates the message. Language has been subordinated to the requirements of aesthetic communication – since what is decisive for aesthetic communication is not word, but image.

At a much earlier stage in Kierkegaard's authorship Assessor Vilhelm had emphasized the conventional distinction between plastic and musical media of communication with regard to the representation of temporality and the implications that follow for ethical existence.¹ Consistently (and here, if not elsewhere, I believe the Assessor speaks for Kierkegaard) the point is made that the abstract, timeless (or, more precisely, merely momentary) character of the pure plastic image, of spatial or visual representation, renders it incapable of serving the needs of ethical communication, since these needs hinge on the ethicist's strenuous and continuous wrestling with time. This temporalizing aspect of ethics is moreover subsumed into the religious project as, for example, that is represented in the upbuilding discourses. Against this background we

can see how the dissolution of the verbal into the visual provides a clue to the way in which the gospel has been betrayed in Christendom as the word becomes image, the pulpit a stage and the congregation spectators.

If we now turn to the discourse 'Strengthening in the Inner Being' we might well be more than a little puzzled. For here Kierkegaard himself seems to be guilty of the very faults that Anti-Climacus castigates in the figure of the establishment preacher. For a start, the discourse is punctuated by repeated injunctions to 'Behold...' a succession of characters – *dramatis personae* we might almost say – who represent the spiritual possibilities with which the discourse is concerned. So, we are called upon to behold the 'lucky one' (p. 89)², the 'favoured one' (p. 90), 'the person who is intimate with adversity' (p.92), 'the concerned one' (p.94), 'the person who was wronged' (p. 95) and 'the person who was tried, who was tested in the distress of spiritual trial.' (p. 97)

Earlier on in the discourse, even before we are explicitly invited to engage in these acts of visualization, the descriptive quality of Kierkegaard's style has already put us in the mood to be responsive to such invitations. Thus, although the opening meditation on the apostle Paul does not attempt to give us a 'picture' of the apostle (in the sense of a describing his appearance), pictorial and dramatic devices are used to 'show' his spiritual situation. Particularly striking is the way in which the image of the apostle is thrown into relief by contrast with that of Imperial Rome. Nor is it accidental that, in the lines immediately preceding the introduction of Paul, Rome itself is figured as a stage: '...far-famed Rome, where everyone who in any way believed himself able to capture public attention hastened as to his rightful stage...' (p. 80). Although Paul himself does not seek such display, living in a 'quiet and unobtrusive' (p. 81) semi-confinement, Kierkegaard's evocation of the decadent splendour of Rome is certainly used in the text as a verbal stage on which the figure of the apostle – a prisoner, a stranger, ignored and marginalized in the midst of all the turmoil going on around about him – makes a striking appearance. Paul is, in this way (like the favoured one, the concerned one and all the others), made into a figural type for the reader's contemplation – and thereby aestheticized. Has he – and have we as readers – therefore been subjected to the same demoralizing treatment as that diagnosed by Anti-Climacus?³

This would seem to be an odd outcome – even if the spiritual standpoint of Anti-Climacus is very different from that of the upbuilding writings. For, although Kierkegaard does distinguish between the

different religious stages of his authorship, the critique of the standpoint of hidden inwardness represented in the upbuilding writings does not imply that this standpoint should simply be dismissed. It is, rather, to be integrated into the process of radical discipleship and witness.

I suggest that there are in fact three elements in the discourse itself that help to prevent the figurative language that is undoubtedly being used from contributing to the aestheticization of Christianity and that actually show how such language can have a legitimate use within the overall economy of Christian communication.

The first of these three ways concerns the requirement of existential appropriation – or, to put the issue in terms of language, the relationship between indicative and imperative. The second, which can be understood as a refinement of the first, involves considering the ‘subjunctive’ mood of Kierkegaard’s writing. The third has to do with the unique logic of ‘God’ and issues of analogy. Finally, in the light of these three points, we can relate the theoretical recommendations of Anti-Climacus to the communicative practices used here by means of a general consideration of Kierkegaard’s authorial strategy.

2. Indicative and Imperative

Anti-Climacus’ critical remarks concerning preaching in Christendom might be read as suggesting that the only legitimate form of Christian communication is direct ‘I-Thou’ speech in which the Christian imperatives – ‘Believe!’ ‘Do!’ – are proclaimed with kerygmatic simplicity. Such a view would however render the whole programme of indirect communication meaningless. In what way then can the requirement of direct, kerygmatic utterance and the exigencies of indirect communication be reconciled?

We might begin to answer this question by considering why Kierkegaard believes indirect communication to be necessary. One reason has to do with his understanding of the present age. For in an age of reflection even the most direct apostolic statement will immediately find itself entangled in an endless web of interpretation and counter-interpretation. More fundamentally, even if the Christ were to be physically present (at any point in history) and to declare his true identity, the humanity of his form would mean that the communication of his Godhead would still remain indirect – it could not be shown, only believed. On

the other hand, indirect communication will itself collapse into the meandering meaninglessness of the idle chatter that is characteristic of an age of reflection if it is not invigorated by the will to direct communication. Everything depends on an appropriate interdependence of means and ends. The Christian communicator must be indirect insofar as he must meet his 'audience' where they are, in the realm of the aesthetic and the babel of hermeneutic ambiguity. But it is never his intention simply to leave them there. His aim is rather to bring them to a point at which they will be appropriately receptive to the kerygmatic imperatives of the gospel.

As an example of what this means for the practice of Christian communication we might take an example that Kierkegaard himself found illuminating: the prophet Nathan's use of a parable to bring home to King David his guilt in having had Uriah murdered so that he, David, might have Uriah's wife Bathsheba.⁴ Nathan's parable concerns two men, a rich man and a poor man. The rich man has great herds of livestock, the poor man only one little ewe. When a visitor has to be entertained, however, the rich man refuses to slaughter any of his own animals and takes the poor man's ewe. In the scriptural version of the story Nathan then asks David's advice as to what should be done. David declares angrily that the rich man should be put to death, whereupon Nathan retorts 'Thou art the man.' David immediately sees the point and repents.

In *For Self-Examination* Kierkegaard embellishes the simple biblical narrative, introducing David as 'the crowned poet and connoisseur of poetical works'.⁵ Nathan offers the story to this 'expert on matters of taste' as a poetical work, inviting the King's aesthetic judgement on it. It is only when they have discussed the parable as a piece of literature that the prophet rounds on his critic and tells him 'Thou art the man.' In this way, Kierkegaard suggests, the aesthetic appearance of the parable has been used to engage the attention of the King and thus bring him to a position from which he can see his own misdemeanours in a true light. The parable thereby achieves what the mere objective reiteration of the commandment – 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt do no murder' – was unable to achieve. Aesthetic reflection – in the form of a narrative spoken in a simple indicative voice – provides the stage, the setting, on which the imperatives of prophetic condemnation can first be heard in their authentic urgency and severity. Kierkegaard then extrapolates from these reflections a fundamental principle for the interpre-

tation of scripture: 'It is I to whom it [scripture] is speaking, it is I about whom it is speaking' – a point he further illustrates with reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

All of this is directly relevant to 'Strengthening in the Inner Being'. Here, for instance, we find that in much of the discourse, beginning with the introductory meditation on Paul and continuing through the sequence of fortunate and unfortunate characters already listed, Kierkegaard seems to be taking us through a picture gallery of spiritual types that we are invited to observe and comment on. The situation is rhetorically arranged so that 'we', the writer and his readers, understand ourselves as the subjects who observe these types as objects of our contemplative gaze and reflective judgement. Then, quite suddenly, in the final paragraph of the text, everything changes. The question is now no longer how Paul and the others are to be understood. It is rather a question about the reader's own God-relationship. The reader is invited to consider his own understanding of human and divine fatherhood. 'How is it with you?' the discourse asks. Indeed, the flood of second person singular pronouns – in Danish 'Du', 'Din' and 'Dig' – that suddenly covers the page is visible even when the text is held at arm's length! The distancing of the subject from the object, that is integral to aesthetic contemplation, can no longer be sustained as the text almost physically grabs the reader in his immediate subjectivity, allowing no escape from the directness of its address.

Just as in Nathan's parable, the aesthetic way of representing an abstract spiritual possibility has been used to lull the reader into a sense of false security. The story is not about what happened far away and long ago. The story is about what is happening here and now. It is the reader's own destiny that is in question. The mood has changed from indicative to imperative.

3. The Subjunctive

However, rather than simply seeing in it a foil for the imperative turn, it is also possible to see a more positive value in the preceding calls to contemplation. A closer consideration of this question will help us to see exactly where the conventional aestheticization of the sermon goes astray.

A clue to this positive aspect, indeed a clue to one of the fundamental strategies of Kierkegaard's own aesthetic writings, is to be found

in a group of early journal entries that deal with the subjunctive mood. A statement in the subjunctive, as Kierkegaard understands it, does not make the kind of claim to objective representational validity that is implied by the use of the indicative. Neither does it make the kind of direct appeal made by the imperative. It does not directly refer and it does not directly command. A subjunctive statement transposes its content into pure ideality or possibility. In Kierkegaard's view it therefore follows that there is a close correlation between the subjunctive on the one hand and the ideality of the aesthetic and of philosophy on the other. Thus; 'The indicative thinks something as actuality... The subjunctive thinks something as thinkable'⁶ and 'The grammar of the indicative and the subjunctive contains basically the most aesthetic concepts and gives rise to almost the highest aesthetic enjoyment (it borders on the musical, which is the highest), and of the subjunctive the hackneyed proposition *cogito ergo sum* holds true: it is the subjunctive's life principle (... the whole of modern philosophy ... is indeed purely subjunctive).'⁷ These remarks would seem to make the use of the subjunctive inappropriate in the context of ethical or religious communication. However, a further entry suggests another function for the subjunctive, that it '... occurs as a glimmer of the individuality of the person in question ... a dramatic re-tort in which the narrator steps aside as it were and makes the remark as true of the individuality (that is, poetically true), not as factually so ... but ... presented under the illumination of subjectivity.'⁸ What is interesting about this entry is that the subjunctive, though previously linked to the ideality of philosophy and of aesthetics, is now brought into relation to the highly existential concepts of individuality and subjectivity. How can these emphases be reconciled?

In attempting to answer this question we may firstly consider that the directness of direct religious communication is not simply the directness of normal descriptive language. That is indeed how it is understood in Christendom, but that reduces religion to a merely objective matter, a matter of statements that may be true or false without regard to their impact on the believing subject. Nor, on the other hand, is the directness of religious language the directness of a simple imperative command. For the imperatives of religion cannot be separated from their narrative context – 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other gods than me.'⁹ Religious communication requires both the indicative and the imperative and it is with regard to the peculiar tension between these moods that the sub-

junctive is able to play a distinctive role. For although the transposing of an indicative statement into the subjunctive brings the content of that statement into the realm of ideality (and thus the realm of both philosophy and aesthetics), it does not necessarily do so in the manner of philosophy. Philosophy, it is true, deals in the ideality of the universal but it understands the universal in indicative terms as what is or is not universally the case. The ideality of the subjunctive, however, concerns what may be a possibility for subjective appropriation. It shows its content ideally – but as an ideal lit up by ‘the illumination of subjectivity.’ We may also link these considerations to Kierkegaard’s polemic against reducing Christianity to a matter of historical fact. Christianity rather concerns the existential possibility that can be elicited from history – and the process of eliciting this possibility cannot be achieved without ideality.

The situation can be stated in this way: if the dialectic of religious communication is constructed out of indicative and imperative statements alone, then we are perilously close to the situation of legalism: ‘This is the case, therefore do this.’ If, however, the indicative statement is transposed into the subjunctive, it is then open to a subjective process of appropriation and response that is not predetermined by the closure of the indicative. In other words, it is no longer bound by the chains of objective fact (whether these are understood empirically, historically or metaphysically).

On this model the crucial element in religious communication has to do with the axis between the subjunctive and the imperative. For the imperatives of faith are imperatives that appeal to the subject in its essential freedom. The subject’s task is not merely to reduplicate the content of a given factual statement, but to come to itself in the freedom of its own response.

Thus, in the discourse ‘Strengthening in the Inner Being’ the apostle Paul and the other spiritual types are not represented historically as objectively given entities whose meaning is fixed and invariable. On the contrary, they are represented as possibilities that engage the existential concern of the reader. It is worth recalling that the task around which the discourse revolves is the awakening of the concern (Danish: ‘Bekymring’) in which the subject transcends ‘mere knowledge about the world and about himself as a part of [the world]’ (p. 86) in order to understand himself in relation to the world. Behind each of the vignettes describing one or other spiritual type lies the question ‘Is this – should this be – me?’

The fault of the preacher in Christendom is therefore not so much

that he invites us to 'Consider...' or to 'Behold...' but that the objects to which our gaze is directed are presented as if objectively determined, indifferent to our subjectivity and rendered altogether commensurable with the referential one-dimensionality of the indicative.

4. The Logic of God

We may, nonetheless, still detect a significant difference between the position of the upbuilding discourses and that of *Anti-Climacus*. For even if the upbuilding discourses are framed in such a way as to engage the reader's subjective response, that response does not seem to be directed (as it is in the *Anti-Climacus* writings) towards public acts of witness but towards the resolve of hidden inwardness, the awakening of a 'merely' subjective self-concern.

Here, however, we need to consider the overall economy of the religious life in Kierkegaard's thought, something to which attention has already been drawn. If the requirement of the active reduplication of Christ's public sufferings comes to predominate in the later phases of the authorship, that does not rule out the validity of what must remain a fundamental dimension of such discipleship: the God-relationship in which discipleship is 'rooted and grounded' (to quote from the text on which 'Strengthening in the Inner Being' is based: Ephesians 3.17). Moreover, it is precisely in this relationship that the freedom that makes possible the obedience of faith is given to us. Even if, as Kierkegaard increasingly emphasizes in the course of his authorship, faith is inseparable from works, those works themselves are nothing if they are not the works of a free and responsible subject. It is the God-relationship that awakens, establishes and guarantees that freedom.

The relationship between the freedom of the subject and the God-relationship is, indeed, precisely the theme of 'Strengthening in the Inner Being'. As has already been indicated, the awakening of freedom is treated in terms of the arousal of concern, understood as the state in which the subject gains transcendence over the determinacy of a merely immediate and instinctual immersion in worldly existence. But if it is in concern that the inner spiritual existence of the subject 'announces itself' (p. 87), that announcement cannot be dissociated from the God-relationship. For the content of concern is exclusively God and the self. In concern 'the inner being...craves an explanation, a witness that explains

the meaning of everything for it and its own meaning by explaining it in the God who holds everything together in his eternal wisdom ... and through every explanation that he gives a person, he strengthens and confirms him in the inner being... – the inner being that is concerned not about the whole world but only about God and itself...' (p. 87) For Kierkegaard it is axiomatic that the opening up of a horizon within which the self is given to itself as a free and self-transparent subject is inseparable from the God-relationship – a situation which is crucial in considering Kierkegaard's relation to later existentialism, especially that of the early Heidegger. In the terminology of the discourse this means that the self only finds itself in relation to the 'explanation' that God gives and the 'witness' of the Spirit that the explanation is indeed 'of God'.

But how to speak of God? If we make the assumption that language is constructed out of a complex of intra-worldly relationships, how can language deal with that which comes to us from outside the world, with the transcendent?

In this discourse Kierkegaard focuses the issue on the question of God's fatherhood. This, he concedes, 'is a metaphorical expression...' (p. 99) As such it might seem to be ultimately inadequate, 'external', 'figurative', 'dwindling away the higher it ascends, like an earthly longing which always speaks only obscurely.' (p. 99) Even if, for example the idea of God as 'Creator of heaven and earth... the common father of all' is 'greater' than the idea of a 'merely' human father, it is still a relative concept, embedded in the concreteness and particularity of human father-child relationships. Thus, it might seem, we inevitably measure or understand God by the standard of our own limited and finite experience. And yet, Kierkegaard argues, human fatherhood is incommensurable with divine fatherhood, since God can participate in our joy, understand and accept our sorrow and give strength to us in our suffering in a way that far exceeds the capacity of any human father. But: 'Then you perceived that it is not because you have a father or because human beings have fathers... that God is called Father in heaven, but it is as the apostle says – from him all fatherliness in heaven and on earth derives its name. Therefore, even though you had the most loving father given among men, he would still be, despite all his best intentions, but a stepfather, a shadow, a reflection, a simile, an image, a dark saying about the fatherliness from which all fatherliness in heaven and one earth derives its name.' (p. 100)

Kierkegaard, then, would seem to anticipate and affirm Karl Barth's 'analogy of grace', arguing (against the classical Thomist view of analo-

gy) that analogical speech about God is not derived from human speech but is a derived and analogical rendering of divine speech, i.e., of God's word about himself as revealed in scripture. Yet (and here the 'subjective' quality of Kierkegaard's writing differs from Barth's more objectivizing approach) speech about God as father can only take place in the context of the awakening of concern in the self. As the 'explanation' of the 'witness', it is meaningful only to the one who is concerned that there be an explanation.

It is of further significance that it is precisely in the passage dealing with the fatherhood of God that the language of the discourse changes from third person to second person, from reflection to address. The imperative that confronts us is therefore not an ethical imperative about what we must do in the world. It is a religious imperative concerning our own interior God-relationship. Believe that God is your father, we are being told, believe that in the awakening of your sense of self or in your sense of freedom, the power that is working in you is the power of God.

However, the modulating of the discourse into the imperative mood at this point is not only to be understood as a warning that God cannot be a father to us when he is merely an object of aesthetic contemplation, an image or a figure to 'behold'. It is that, of course: 'God is your father in heaven' is not to be read as a simple indicative statement, as a proposition concerning what is or is not the case. It is to be read as a subjective possibility for existence, something to be believed. But it is also important that the imperative turn is understood in relation to the subjunctive quality of the preceding argument. 'What' we are required to believe by the religious demand cannot be translated back into indicative statements. The peculiar conjunction of subjunctive and imperative moods at this point rules out the legitimacy of any discussion of what the English philosopher of religion Don Cupitt has called the supposed 'extra-religious reality' of God – and it does so, not by denying the existence of God but by evading the linguistic mode in which affirmations and denials of existence make sense.

The closing section of the discourse that deals with the fatherhood of God, also throws further light on the communicative strategy of the discourse as a whole. For although language about God poses particular problems, there is nonetheless a relationship between Kierkegaard's reflections on the metaphorical nature of directly theological language and his own use of figurative language earlier in the discourse. After all, as we have seen, the discovery of the subject's own identity as a free and

responsible self and the revelation that it is God who constitutes the subject in this way, are interdependent: should we not expect the same interdependence to characterize the two types of language being used? So, just as Nathan's 'Thou art the man' revealed to David the true nature of the parable he had just heard, the injunction to believe in God as father – even though there is a profound gulf between divine and human notions of fatherhood – illuminates the preceding reflections on Paul and on the various fortunate and unfortunate spiritual types. For in the same way that, with hindsight, Nathan's parable reveals an ethical interest that is not apparent in its superficial aspect as a piece of storytelling, Kierkegaard's aesthetic and reflective considerations of these human types reveals an ultimate theological interest. They are not complete or self-contained aesthetic ideals but aspects of an unfinished and agonal process. One important consequence of this is that the figurative language of the discourse – even when it is merely applied to human subjects – is touched by the enigmatic and ambiguous character that language acquires when it is directed towards God. For because these figures are what they are by virtue of a process whose conclusion can only be established as a response to the imperatives of faith, they cannot escape the metaphorical colouring that necessarily goes with the human reception of those imperatives. When we read them aesthetically, as objects for our detached contemplation, it seems as if we know exactly what each image means. We know (we think) what it is to be favoured, or wronged or concerned. However, because the meaning these characterizations have only finally emerges when they are brought into connection with the God-relationship, and since language about God is, as we have seen, allusive, imprecise and indirect, the same metaphoricity is extended to these anthropological descriptions. The images become questions that challenge us existentially: what is it to be favoured or wronged or concerned? Do we really know? How indeed can we know unless we know the explanation and the witness that God alone gives? Not only religious language but all serious existential language is thereby brought into the realm of the metaphorical and enigmatic.

Conclusion

We have shown how the language of the discourse, though apparently re-enacting Christendom's fall from the verbal into the visual and there-

by determining itself as essentially aesthetic, in fact serves the purpose of Christian communication in three ways. Firstly, analogously to Nathan's parable, it provides a setting that, by lulling the reader into a false sense of security, enables the imperatives of faith to stand out the more clearly. Secondly, read as an exercise in the subjunctive mood, it highlights the issue of faith as an issue of subjective possibility. Lastly, it shows how the metaphoricity and imprecision that inhere in the attempt to speak of God also rebound onto all attempts to speak of the human situation in a manner that is existentially appropriate to a subject whose destiny is to be summoned to faith and (although this lies outside the limits of the discourse) active witness.

Although this study has focused on one particular text it does, I believe, reveal principles that are exemplified in many of Kierkegaard's upbuilding writings. Indeed, I would suggest that they are not only illuminating for the wider understanding of his project of indirect communication, but also for his relevance to contemporary debates about the nature of religious belief.

Notes

1. See, George Pattison, *Kierkegaard: The Aesthetic and the Religious* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp.137-9.
2. Page references given in the text are to the English translation by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong: S. Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
3. On the tension between temporal and figurative dimensions in Kierkegaard's religious writings see Pattison, *op.cit.*, pp. 159-70.
4. For a particularly interesting commentary on this passage see Hugh Pyper, 'The Apostle, the Genius and the Monkey' in G. Pattison (ed.), *Kierkegaard on Art and Communication* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).
5. See S. Kierkegaard (tr. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong), *For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.38.
6. S. Kierkegaard (ed. Heiberg, Kuhr and Torsting), *Papirer* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909-48, 20 Vols.), II A 156,
7. *Papirer* II A 159.
8. *Papirer* II A 161.
9. See, for example, the remarks about communication of knowledge and communication of capability in Kierkegaard's notes for a series of lectures on communication. *Papirer* VIII 2 B 81-89.