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George Pattison
‘Poor Paris’. Kierkegaard’s Critique
of the Spectacular City

Kierkegaard Studies, Monograph Series 2,
Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, New York, 1999, 152 pp,
8 illustrations in colour

In the ‘Phaedrus’ (230d), Socrates states that he prefers the city to the countryside, because he learns nothing from landscapes and trees, whereas he learns a lot from the life of people in the city. Kierkegaard, who loved to pose as a dandy, »a man dressed in modern clothes, wearing spectacles and smoking cigars«, adopted this saying, and even if he did not consider Copenhagen more than a small market town parodying a world-historical capitol, he gave this city a prominent place in his writings. He really was a ‘vigilant Copenhagener’.

Paris, the capitol of the nineteenth century, was Copenhagen’s ‘significant other’, but to Kierkegaard the insignificance of Copenhagen was a quality, and he lets Frater Taciturnus speak up against all the praise of Paris, decrying the bigness of everything in Paris, the gap between appearances and reality, and summing it in the exclamation: ‘Poor Paris!’

George Pattison has chosen ‘Poor Paris!’ as the title of his book on Kierkegaard’s critique of ‘the Spectacular City’, and he gives some wonderful, contrasting examples of Johan Ludvig Heiberg’s and Kierkegaard’s views on Paris. This said, he actually is very reserved as concerns international references, and a few quotations may serve to introduce and illustrate the general importance of phenomenon of the spectacle.

In the 1820’s, -30’s and -40’s, the question of urban spectacles and of the city as a spectacle itself occupied a central position in the debate on the modern city. In 1822, with reference to the ongoing ‘London improvements’, Charles Lamb asked: »And what else but an accumulation of sights – endless sights – is a great city; or for what else is it desirable?« In 1845, however, Friedrich Engels noted that the beautification of the big city, the replacement of narrow overcrowded streets by broad, panoramic boulevards and places of entertainment, served to conceal from the eyes of the rich people »the misery and grime which form the complement of their wealth«.

Hypocrisy or not, London, Paris, New York, and Berlin were recon-

structed to create spectacular urban spaces, and in 1841 Théophile Gautier announced »the arrival of the epoch of purely visual spectacles«, while Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1842 explained why he had become all eyes: »In New York City, as in cities generally, one seems to lose all substance, and becomes surface in a world of surfaces«. Kierkegaard never visited New York, London, or Paris, but he visited Berlin several times, and in *Repetition* he lets Constantin Constantius declare that his favourite place in Berlin was the *Gendarmenmarkt* with the *Neues Schauspielhaus*, a square and a building, specifically created by Karl Friedrich Schinkel as a modern, panoramic, and spectacular urban space that would satisfy the need for all-embracing views in a world characterized by fragmentation and confusion.

In 1843, however, with the opening of the Tivoli Gardens, the epoch of purely visual spectacles and the world of enticing surfaces also came to Copenhagen. And, with »a nice irony«, as Pattison puts it, this was also the year when Kierkegaard with his publication of *Either/Or* opened up philosophical reflection to the relationship between modern urban life and the aesthetical attitude. Johannes is not only a seducer, but also a flâneur, and the only thing he is looking for is visual pleasure.

Pattison's well-written and well-informed account of Kierkegaard's critical response to the new world of spectacles – '*Udvorteshedens Spektakel*' – has a narrative drive inspired by the *Bildungsroman* and perhaps by spiritual biography, thus reminding one of Augustine who would forcefully and literally turn downcast eyes when confronted with the murderous and obscene spectacles of Ancient Rome. The clarity of Pattison's presentation already reveals itself in the titles of the seven chapters of the book. In chapter one, 'Kierkegaard enters the spectacular city', Pattison enters into the discussion of the various aspects of this spectacularization: the remodelleing of the city, self-modelling of the dandy and the flâneur who live to see and be seen, the new visual technologies such as the panorama, the kaleidoscope, and the daguerreotype. In chapter two, 'Unmasking the spectacle', Pattison shows how Kierkegaard interprets Paris as a harbinger of the process of modernization and how he conceives of this as a process of demoralization and levelling. In chapter three, 'Kierkegaard goes home', and the contemporary reality and the ideal of 'home' is elucidated with carefully chosen examples. In chapter four, Pattison analyzes 'the city in Kierkegaard's *Bildungsromaner*', the genre structured on the opposition of home and homelessness, and he offers some thoughtful observations on the interplay between city and country in Kierkegaard's novelistic philosophy. The fifth chapter focuses

on 'the urbane Johannes Climacus' and the three scenes in the *Postscript* where Copenhagen makes its appearance. The account of Kierkegaard's discussion of Frederiksberg Garden, Assistens Churchyard and the Deer Park reveals two things: the roles that concretion and differentiation play in Kierkegaard's observations – and the lurking tendency to collapse all differences in the damnation of the city. Finally, after 1846, according to Pattison – 'Kierkegaard goes to church' – and praising 'the downcast eyes' of the true Christian, Kierkegaard of course must lose sight of Copenhagen: the actual social environment of Copenhagen is replaced by such all-embracing, ready-made concepts as 'the world', 'the crowd', and 'man' while the seducers, assessors, and servant girls of the past are replaced by Pharisees, tax-collectors, and sinful women. The concluding seventh chapter discusses the value of Kierkegaard's critique of modern and urban life, and even though Pattison recognizes Kierkegaard's ambivalence, he emphasizes that it would be a mistake »to hear Kierkegaard as calling on us simply to abandon the call and care of the social moment«, for this moment is an urban moment, and Kierkegaard reminds us that our 'urban humanity' raises questions which cannot be answered by »the methods of natural, human, and social science«.

In Pattison's concluding remarks, I think there is a tendency to collapse the development of Kierkegaard's position towards the city into a too unified position. Kresten Nordentoft – who is not mentioned in the book – has described how Kierkegaard turned from a fierce critic of the opposition to a fierce critic of the establishment, with a growing sympathy for the man in the street, and I think it would have been interesting to read a discussion of the relationship – or lack of continuity – between the downcast eyes of the man who went to church and the burning eyes of the man who discovered the man in the street.

Nordentoft also draws attention to another kind of historical change: namely, Kierkegaard's sweeping sketches of the differences between Greek Antiquity, medieval Christianity, and Modernity, and here it is highly relevant for the discussion of the spectacle that Kierkegaard focuses on the eye and the gaze. In premodern societies a gaze of admiration was the link between 'master' and 'slave', whereas in modern societies an envious and suspicious gaze breaks all real ties between people. Pattison does not ignore this theme, but I think his analyses and historical explanations would have gained by a more detailed and a more systematic description of the visual exchanges in Kierkegaard's work.

A theme that goes almost unnoticed in Pattison's book is Kierke-

gaard's reflections on the comic. Ever since Cicero coined the word '*urbanitas*', this word has also had the meaning of wit, and wit and other aspects of the comic have been a persistent theme in Kierkegaard's writings, from *The Concept of Irony*, through the chapter on farce in *Repetition*, up to *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Since Pattison compares Kierkegaard to Baudelaire, it might be relevant to mention that Baudelaire wrote an essay on the essence of laughter, where he explicitly pointed to the importance of spectacle in the experience of the comic. And later Bergson, in his seminal work *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, notes emotional distance as a common feature of the field of aesthetics and the field of comedy.

Pattison kindly notes that he has been introduced to the concept of the spectacular by a few papers by the undersigned, and therefore it will come as no surprise that I share the interests and the perspectives of his book. But I would like to add that reading '*Poor Paris!*' has been an eye-opening experience for me to find out how widely the concept of the spectacular applies to Kierkegaard's writings. Indeed, it is Pattison's cross-reading of Kierkegaard which has made me think of yet other fields of the spectacular – such as the comic. Obviously, Kierkegaard was a keen observer of the signs of his time, and I think he would have loved to have read Gustave Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des Idées reçues* which includes this centenary commonplace: '*Exposition: sujet de délire du XIXème siècle*'.

Martin Zerlang

Darío González

Essai sur l'ontologie kierkegaardienne:
Idéalité et détermination

Éditions L'Harmattan, Paris, 1998, 220 pp.

In his preface to *Essai sur l'ontologie kierkegaardienne: Idéalité et détermination*, Jacques Colette observes that the subject of the book is »Kierkegaard the philosopher, the technician of the concept« (p. 7). An extremely apt turn of phrase, since the point of González's book is to show precisely how Kierkegaard, using the terminology of philosophy in general and German Idealism in particular, articulated his own particular vision. In other words, how Kierkegaard constructed his own house using

other people's bricks. Even more important for González is the notion that Kierkegaard also makes bricks of his own. The book itself makes four movements and culminates in a fifth. The first chapter of the book is devoted to showing the distinction between quantity and quality and the epistemological consequences of this distinction for Kierkegaard. The next move is to show how certain Christian notions are thought philosophically, such as infinite difference, sin, despair, and the concept of being 'before God,' is explanatory movement prefaces the third chapter where the relationship that obtains between ideality and temporality is explored. Here ideas which are normally viewed as peculiarly religious – such as 'the moment', 'eternity', and 'the occasion' – are re-worked with an eye to their overall philosophical significance. As philosophical concepts, they lay the foundation for the fourth and final chapter: the real and repetition. In this chapter, sections 4.6 ('Inter-esse and Ideality') and 4.7 ('The Extensive and The Intensive') are especially intriguing. One sees most clearly how González is not explaining Kierkegaard's view of existentialism but of existence and not that it is but why it is, how it could have come to be. The fifth move is found in the conclusion. It is the dialectic between manifestation and determination, where manifestation is defined as »the space within which presence in general is constituted« (p. 201). And thus we see why González is truly dealing with Kierkegaard's ontology: his notion of how being came to be is key to understanding anything else about Kierkegaard's philosophy. To understand him first as a 'Christian thinker' and then as a philosopher is to do Kierkegaard a disservice. It is González's intention to show that the philosophical explanations which Kierkegaard created and re-created to philosophically justify his view of the world are pivotal to even begin understanding his view of Christianity. As such, the book examines very critically and explains quite carefully not only Kierkegaard's own use of concepts but also the numerous interpretations found in the German, French, Danish, English, Spanish, and Italian secondary literature. In so doing, the author nests Kierkegaard's concepts of being within the history of Western philosophy from Kant to Levinas. Thus, the book is not only a serious philosophical discussion of Kierkegaard's concepts, it is also an adroitly located discussion within history. For the serious reader of Kierkegaard as a philosopher, this is not a book to miss.

Stacey E. Ake

*Isak Winkel Holm*Tanken i Billedet. Søren Kierkegaards Poetik
[Thought in Image: Søren Kierkegaard's Poetics]*Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 1998, 370 pp.*

Isak Winkel Holm's defence of his dissertation, of which this book is a slightly reworked version, together with his critics' reports, will have given readers of *Kierkegaardiana* 20 some insight into the main arguments of this book and the kinds of issues it raises. It will not, therefore, be appropriate here either to repeat at any length Winkel Holm's own summary of the thesis, nor the specific criticism brought against it. In what follows, therefore, I shall simply touch on some of the points I found most interesting in reading this elegant, provocative, and rewarding study.

The book turns upon the insight that, in addition to his espousal of an explicit aesthetic theory (which is, however, almost entirely second-hand Heiberg and Hegel, according to Holm), Kierkegaard's actual writing demonstrates a distinctive poetics, i.e., a certain understanding of the nature and manner of literary practice, that is far more interesting. Whereas Kierkegaard's aesthetics subscribe to a rationalistic view of art as the vehicle for expressing clear and distinct ideas, his poetics demonstrate the ineluctable interconnectedness of ideas and their sensuous and historical material. Against Kierkegaard himself, then, Holm argues that Kierkegaard shows how poetic writing and, consequently, philosophy itself (insofar as this is dependent on pre-philosophical literature) remain locked into a situation of struggle, hesitation, ambivalence, caught in the linguistic space between the sensuousness of the image and the clarity of thought. An appealing and effective illustration which Winkel Holm calls upon periodically throughout the book is that of the sea nymphs illustrated in Dr. W. Vollmer's 1836 dictionary of mythology (and reproduced on p. 27 of Winkel Holm's book). These are figures from Norse mythology that seem to take shape in the foamy crests of ocean waves. However, unlike Venus, born from the waves in such a way as to emerge in a single moment as a perfectly-formed and independent being, these nymphs never break loose from their generative milieu, and disappear whence they came, back into the ceaseless surge of the sea. Thus they can illustrate both Kierkegaard's Don Juan – a figure who is always in the process of coming to appearance but never fully emerges into autonomous existence – and Plato's repeated relapse into mythology. But Win-

kel Holm does not only argue his case in connection with Kierkegaard's more obviously 'poetic' writing (as in *Either/Or I*) but is also developed with reference to the discussion of original sin in, e.g., *The Concept of Anxiety*. In this latter case, Winkel Holm sees the poetological oscillation between image and thought as strongly analogous to the theological effort to find a middle way between Augustinianism, in which human freedom is determined or constrained by forces beyond its control, and Pelagianism, in which a man is regarded as master of himself – and, interestingly, of the debate occasioned in 1824 by one Dr Howtiz) and engaging the attention of many of Kierkegaard's teachers) as to the extent to which human beings' so-called 'free' actions are in fact caused by physiological factors and are consequently susceptible of being explained medically as forms of sickness.

In his response to Arne Grøn, however, Winkel Holm makes clear that he is not looking simply to deconstruct anthropology into poetics, as if the outworking of such critical topics in existential anthropology were nothing but a reflection of a primordial linguistic happening. Rather, he is seeking to demonstrate how valuable the interchange between poetics and philosophy can be (*Kierkegaardiana* 20, p. 172). In fact, I would say, he does more than this: he shows how deeply the aesthetic and philosophical aspects of Kierkegaard's authorship penetrate into one another, and each is continually needed for understanding the other. For the point is not simply to deconstruct Kierkegaard, to show that his attempts to construct meaningful discourse repeatedly collapse into chatter (as Fenves argues), but to explore precisely the middle ground between authorial activity and passivity, between speech and noise, word and vision, spirit and sense. This middle ground, what Heidegger (in the context of his Hölderlin interpretation) would call 'The Between', is the alchemical chamber, it seems, in which the real magic of Kierkegaard's authorship occurs and where, for Winkel Holm, its main fascination lies.

Undoubtedly a chief merit of this study lies in way in which the argument is developed through a succession of close readings of particular texts, such as the analysis of *Pap. III B 179* (an encounter with blind street musicians) in relation to Kierkegaard's interpretation of Don Juan. There are some truly wonderful passages of this ilk throughout. Winkel Holm's criticisms of Adorno's readings of Kierkegaard are also devastating, even though he also takes a certain orientation from Adorno's aim of restoring the text to its 'literality', to what it shows rather than what it consciously asserts. As he points out, Adorno's book on Kierkegaard is

one of the most translated texts in the whole secondary literature, but, as the 26-year old Adorno is shown repeatedly to have approached Kierkegaard with utter disregard for the texts themselves, it is really hard to see why. Even when Adorno does linger on a passage of Kierkegaard's actual writing for more than the time it takes to produce a suitably cryptic put-down, he misreads Kierkegaard's literary purpose, and overlooks key elements – a point Winkel Holm illustrates with particular reference to Johannes the Seducer's evocation of the sitting room in Cordelia's house (which, according to Adorno, is a key to Kierkegaard's authorship as a whole). Such irreverence is welcome, and a powerful antidote to the chronically servile attitude of contemporary work in the humanities towards over-inflated critical reputations, the invocation of which is repeatedly used to by-pass the labour of evidence and argument.

Nevertheless there are points with which I would disagree, and quite strongly. It is obvious from my own previous work that I regard Kierkegaard's actual aesthetic theory as more extensive, more interesting and more important than Winkel Holm admits. But this is not simply to negate his own positive account of Kierkegaard's poetics. Rather, I see the aesthetics as developing precisely to the same point that the poetics show in textual close-up (Winkel Holm, incidentally, likes to use filmic metaphors). For Kierkegaard does not simply replicate Heiberg's formalism. In addition to the presence of other key elements (e.g. P.M. Møller's personalism), Kierkegaard's Heibergianism is qualified by two factors. Firstly, his sense – as opposed to Heiberg – of the irresolveability of the crisis of contemporary reality, and his consequent refusal to accept that an age of reflection can give birth to a stable or enduring social order. That reflection thus finds itself caught up in a never-ending state of flux means that the 'classical' aspiration of Heibergian aesthetics cannot be fulfilled and that, just as Winkel Holm shows happening in Kierkegaard's poetics, literary form will never be able to achieve utter clarity or finality. Secondly, Kierkegaard's concern with the human subject's religious situation brings him up against contexts and situations in which there is a kind of opacity that inherently resists aesthetic representation and reception, or to which such representation and reception can never do justice on account of the apophatic implications of divine alterity. These *zeitkritisch* and religious angles therefore point – albeit from, as it were, the outside – towards the same dimension of radical disturbance that Winkel Holm elicits from the poetic character of the text. In this connection I would also want to question Winkel Holm's professed ex-

clusion of the sublime, and his self-limitation to the aesthetics of the beautiful (57-8). In particular I would want to question whether there is really a hard and fast distinction to be drawn here. Even in Kant's own terms there seems to be the possibility of some kind of cross-over from the arabesques of the aesthetics of the beautiful (a point of constant reference for Winkel Holm) and the numerical sublime, simply in terms of the final ungraspability of any extended arabesque sequence. This is obviously not the place to argue the case in full, but I would suggest that, at many points, Winkel Holm's own discussion could well be couched in terms of an aesthetics of sublimity. The advantage of doing so is precisely to do with the way in which, for Kant, the sublime marks a threshold of human freedom and, therefore, of the ethical. This, I suggest, would open up a fruitful avenue for further exploration of the area of common ground that emerges in the exchange between Winkel Holm and Arne Grøn.

George Pattison

Søren Kierkegaard

La malattia per la morte,

ed. and trans. by Ettore Rocca,

Donzelli editore, Roma 1999, xxvii + 212 pp.

This third translation into Italian of *Sygdommen til Døden*, by Ettore Rocca, comes 50 years after the previous ones and will probably become the definitive edition for future Italian scholars because of its philological accuracy, its stylistic elegance, and the range and quality of the critical apparatus. The new translation, written during a period at the SK Research Center in Copenhagen and based on the second edition of the *Samlede Værker* (SV2, 11, 129- 272) – but also taking into consideration the first edition of this work and the draft manuscripts prepared for the new critical edition of the *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* – aspires to »offer this work in radically new terms to the Italian philosophical, psychological and theological debate, removing the obscurities and distortions that up to now have obscured its power and beauty«.

The task of 'cleaning' this masterpiece begins with a new rigorous translation, both precise and elegant, starting from the title, separating it from previous Italian translations, deceptively entitled *La malattia mortale* (lit. *den dødelige sygdom*, the deadly sickness). The choice of the new title,

which also does justice to the biblical quotation from which it is taken (cf. John 11, 4), is thoroughly and convincingly justified in the Introduction of the translator, where, taking into account what is presented in this pseudonymous text by Anti-Climacus, a distinction is made between a *malattia mortale*, a sickness which leads to physical death, and that *malattia per la morte* which is despair, a sickness of the self which makes living the act of dying, but denying the consolation of physical death.

In his Introduction, Rocca also explains the form and the structure of the work, accurately following the Kierkegaardian text, both examining and commenting on – also using helpful diagrams – all the figures of this »phenomenology of the despairing spirit«. And yet the merit of this Introduction does not finish with a merely acritical paraphrase of the First Part of the book (‘The Sickness unto Death is Despair’); it also tries to give back the due theoretical dignity of the Second Part (‘Despair is Sin’), too often overlooked or undervalued by the many lay interpretations (not only Italian) proposed in the 20th century: »instead the work runs, almost hurries towards the second part where it finds its historical context, its theoretical foundation and the climax of its phenomenology« (p. XX). Only in the second part – the translator argues – can the subtitle of *The Sickness Unto Death* (‘A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening’) be fully understood, since »it is only in the second part that Christianity and ‘the Christian content’ become central« (ibid.). In this part, firstly, the eternity of the self is sustained by the eternity of God, through which it is measured, and, secondly, despair is here reconsidered through the introduction of the concept of sin as ‘revelation’, a revelation that cannot be rationally understood by man as a sinner, but only believed as an act of faith. Rightly Rocca emphasizes how the deliberate references to the confessional writings of Lutheran Evangelism (thoroughly quoted and commented on in the notes to the translation) should be understood as a critical reaction »to ‘speculative theology’ in its many forms, both from the Hegelian right and left«, which in its negation of Christ and of the paradox that he embodies, is the last and most extreme form of despair, a real ‘sickness unto death’ that infects all modernity.

Another undeniable quality of this new edition of *La malattia per la morte* is the great quantity of information and insights that can be found through the critical apparatus (which should be considered the widest of all the editions published up to now, including Hong’s edition in *Kierkegaard’s Writings*). Together with the Introduction and the vast number of translation notes, which demonstrates the excellence of and the large

amount of research undertaken by the translator, there is also the rich Appendix of Kierkegaardian documents which gathers, divided in four groups, annotations, notes from the journals, letters and rough texts originally present in the early drafts of the work, which were later discarded. This Appendix allows the reader to enter into Kierkegaard's activity as an author, to examine his thoughts and tribulations during the phase of writing and publication of *The Sickness Unto Death*, and to understand in a deeper way the unsurpassed psychological, philosophical and theological reflections expressed in this book, which Kierkegaard himself considered among »the most valuable I have produced« (*Pap. X 1 A 95*).

Andrea Scaramuccia

Isak Winkel Holm

Søren Kierkegaard i stykker

[Søren Kierkegaard – in pieces]

Høst & Søn, Copenhagen 1998, 126 pp.

Johan de Mylius

Søren Kierkegaard til hverdagsbrug

[Søren Kierkegaard for everyday use]

Aschehoug, Copenhagen 1998, 156 pp.

What upon first inspection seems to be easy can actually be difficult, such as, for example, quoting Kierkegaard. Often Kierkegaard's quotations either can hide or can allude to, in a completely private fashion, various events or even their own interpretation. What we perceive to be Kierkegaard's own text and as his own unique genius for a certain whim, a particular turn of phrase and whatnot, can be shown to have been derived from many another author, and thus it becomes really rather (seriously) difficult to talk about Kierkegaard quotations. The difficulty of the said task has nonetheless not deterred the two following authors, whose books are of the same type. They both have the same good intention: to bring fragments of Kierkegaard's texts to the reader – experienced or inexperienced – and through these various individual quotations thus inspire the reader to further reading. However, these two authors tackle the matter in quite different ways.

Johan de Mylius draws – with very few exceptions – only upon Kierkegaard’s published works. After an introductory preface (pp. 7-12) the book is divided into 23 small sections with quotations (pp. 13-122). Thereafter, comes one section entitled ‘Explanations’ (pp. 123-128), another dubbed ‘Postscript’ (pp. 129-135), a short literature list (pp. 136-137), and, in conclusion, a ‘Timetable’ (pp. 138-156). The book is entitled ‘Kierkegaard for everyday use’. What the author means by the expression ‘everyday use’ is not entirely clear, but it seems to have to do with using Kierkegaard »in that way in which something like this can be used« (p. 11), and what this is one must certainly find out. In this regard, the book’s postscript is actually the best place to begin, here a hint is given at what it requires to read Kierkegaard. The grouping of the individual quotations is undertaken from the position »that Kierkegaard with his poetical passion is present in all of his works, even in those that would seem to be his farthest-ranging pseudonyms« (p. 11) and can therefore be allowed »to demonstrate that even the most disparate of his books abound with surprising kinships in formulation and thought process« (p. 11). From this starting point, the publisher creates his own collection of selected texts, but how could it be otherwise, when one publishes a book of quotations. And now the problems begin. Precise references to those texts from which citations are taken are not to be found. The reader has no possibility to trace the excerpted text and read it in connection with that text which Kierkegaard published. Johan de Mylius has also – in deference to the so-called modern reader (p. 12) – arranged the quotations according to modern punctuation, spelling, and grammar. It calls extremely upon precise references, but what has the editor done with the text? A similar problem pops up in the section entitled ‘Explanation’. The editor has placed ‘new Danish’ words in the text and repeated Kierkegaard’s original text in the corresponding section! At other places, translations replace the original and the foreign language text is mentioned in the back. But the author is not consistent. Some words are allowed to stay in the text and are then explained in the accompanying list. But, elsewhere, other words are simply inserted, and Kierkegaard’s own words are noted in the list with a kind of corresponding commentary and occasionally with references made to other works. It is not possible to mention all the many problems which this strategy raises, but all of this section and the following timetable appear to have been completed in a fast and loose manner. The result is paradoxical enough, namely that the very reader who should be taken into consideration is left in the

lurch. The strategy reveals that – consciously or unconsciously – what is going on is actually quite the opposite of showing consideration for the reader; it is actually an underestimating of the reader's language-related curiosity and his or her mere ability to read. Why shouldn't the reader form an acquaintance with that Kierkegaard whom his contemporaries read and criticized? And where should the reader turn, when he or she on occasions runs into the original text and its original problems? And, finally, who will look after the tradition which Kierkegaard is a part of, if there is this constant interference with the text? In absolute fairness, this is precisely the question one can direct at the author. The book is being published at a time when secondary literature on Kierkegaard is gilded by many a publisher, but be careful! On average, most of the shortcuts to Kierkegaard are detours. And this is the first and last thing which the reader must determine for him- or herself.

Isak Winkel Holm draws upon quotations from Kierkegaard's published and unpublished texts as well as Kierkegaard's journals and papers. After an introductory preface (pp. 5-14) the book is divided into three sections. The first part deals with the life of the individual human being (pp. 15-73), the second part with the individual's relationship to another human being (pp. 75-93), and the third deals with the individual human being's communication with other human beings (pp. 95-122). This is followed by a list of key terms (pp. 123-125) and concludes with pages of notes to the introductory preface (p. 126). The book has a simple but brilliant title: 'Søren Kierkegaard i stykker' ['Søren Kierkegaard – in pieces'].

The goal of this book is to »liberate Kierkegaard's fragmentary extravagance« (p. 13), that is to say, to present a series of the original ideas and thoughts which are found in Kierkegaard. Here we also find a venue for breaking Kierkegaard's texts into pieces in order to examine how the individual parts can function if they are put together in different ways. Whether Winkel Holm's project succeeds, the reader must decide for himself. But if it does succeed, then it is mostly due to the fact that the author-editor has not, in his presentation, gotten mixed up in the problems of grammatical corrections, repetitions in 'New Danish', commentaries, timetables, etc. The references are precise and the reader can quickly refer to the quotations in their original contexts, if that is what he wants. Individual Latin words are discretely translated in square brackets and the publisher has kept »Kierkegaard's original spelling, abbreviations, and peculiarities« (p.14) in all the quotations. The style – both internally and externally – is simple, indeed almost soothing, but it

thus stands in sharp contrast to the content. The selection of texts which is presented here is overwhelming, and it is only the rare quotation which might lend itself to more festive occasions. A typical example from *The Concept of Anxiety*: »Anxiety is freedom's reality as the possibility of possibility« (p. 37). Now there's a quotation you could dwell on for an hour or two! A glance at the new text-critical edition tells us that there is a high degree of difficulty with this citation, and, indeed, it is so difficult that the text-critical publishers have chosen to inform the reader that in the manuscript that Kierkegaard actually sent to the printing house it says precisely the same thing (*Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* 4,348,6 Cph. 1998). In other words, there is no error or mistake in this citation. Yet there are other quotations that are crystal clear: »It is depressing not to find someone to whom one can surrender oneself, but it is unutterably depressing not to be able to surrender oneself« (p. 91). In this way, the quotations oscillate between the difficult and the easy, with the small catch that an easy quotation can be difficult and a difficult quotation easy. With this fine selection of quotations, Isak Winkel Holm challenges the reader. And it is a challenge that is worth taking up.

Søren Bruun

Charles E. Moore (ed.)

Provocations: The Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard

The Plough Publishing House, 1999, 430 pp.

The Plough Publishing House is an extension of what might be considered a rather strange group: The 'Society of Brothers' – not a Catholic order, mind you, but a 'Bruderkhof' group found in 1920 in Germany by Eberhard Arnold. Although a kind of 'Hutterian Brethren', they are not the same as, despite having some connections with, 'The Hutterites'. 'The Hutterites', by contrast, were established in Moravia (now the Czech Republic) in the late 1520's under the auspices of Jacob Wiederman and Jacob Hutter, taking their name from the latter. As we know from history, Moravia was a hotbed of proto-reformation and other heretical thought, starting with the Bohemian Jan Hus. Jan Hus' spiritual descendants, The Church of the United Brethren, in one of the many migrations enforced upon those religious groups which were neither fish nor fowl, neither Catholic nor Protestant and thus unallied with any

temporal power, sought refuge on the estates of one Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Saxony in the 1720's. This group of Moravian Pietists, along with other 'Protestant' refugees, formed a community which took its name, which means 'The Lord's Watch', from that estate. The name is Herrnhut, and these are Søren Kierkegaard's spiritual forebears. They also form the first wave of modern missionaries. And it will be under the influence of such Moravians that one John Wesley will come to feel his heart strangely warmed.

Yet when one comes to deal with the theology of such groups, a problem arises. They are, obviously, not Catholic. The Catholic Church expressed its disapproval of the theology of both Jan Hus and Jacob Hutter in the form of a fiery martyrdom. And while it is easy, perhaps all too easy, to dub in passing such groups as these as Protestant, I beg to differ. Unlike Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and other Calvinists, these groups have never been allied with any state. They are, in the best British sense, Dissenters. Dissenting to *Protestant Churches*. As such, they are not churches; they are sects. It was this disagreement with both of the ecclesiastical powers that be which resulted in the migratory existence of such small religious sects as the Moravian Herrnhutters and their eventual immigration, like their fellow Quakers, Shakers, Dunkards, and Amish, to the New World – one without political religious persecution. But it also resulted in something else: a very personalized understanding of the role of scripture and the meaning of the religious life for the sect members, both individually and communally. Here we do not find 'systematic theology' – that last breath of life-support provided by Hegel(ianism) to a Protestantism whose romance with reason had come to an abrupt end thanks to reformed Pietist Kant – nor do we find a reliance on overarching authority, such as a Pope, despite the existence of bishops, elders and such among these various sects. And even what might appear to be a rather Orthodox reliance on tradition is bound to be limited in any church whose history is less than 500 years old, if that.

And thus we come to the real problem: if one has been divested of the three historical hermeneutical favorites: namely, tradition, authority, and 'reason', where is a 'believer' to go in search of interpretation and insight? Well, a radical solution obtained: a personal relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, a spirit of truth *cum* hermeneut 'who will teach you all things' (see *John 14*) including, apparently, the Scriptures. Radical, indeed.

And now to the text under review. It is not a scholarly text in the

wissenschaftlich sense of the word. Nor is it intended to be such. Rather, it reflects a trend (seen in books like *The Parables of Kierkegaard*, for instance, and *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*) to wrest the melancholy Dane out of the hands of academics and place him in the hands of those he himself expressed a rather marked interest in: the man on the street, the woman in the marketplace. It also follows along the lines of other Plough books such as *The Gospel in Dostoyevsky*, *Walk in the Light* – a collection of tales by Tolstoy, and the rather delightfully entitled *The Early Christians: In Their Own Words* by Eberhard Arnold. This set of books is, I believe, an attempt at making primitive Christianity, early Christianity – yea, what C.S. Lewis had called mere Christianity, true regardless of time or place – accessible to people regardless of time or place.

Does this book perpetuate the dread heresy of the theory of stages? Why, yes, it does. And so? Heresies are truths taken to extremes by the disregarding other truths. In other words, they are not necessarily wrong; they are unbalanced. They are, in fact, provocative. But theories, in the end, matter most to those for whom *how* something is being said is more important than *what* is being said, and that is not the audience intended here. This is the book for the mother, the grandfather, the friend, the co-worker who, in looking for devotional or inspiration literature, does not share your enthusiasm for *Works of Love* or any of the various and sundry ‘Edifying Discourses’ and who politely, but firmly, and with a rather troubled look, returned unfinished your copy of *Fear and Trembling*, yet who has nevertheless been rather fascinated by what you’ve been saying about the erstwhile Dane for years and years and years.

Also, it has to be admitted that the pseudonyms and the journals do frolic together namelessly on the same page. Even though textual annotation is provided at the end of the book, no mention is made in the text proper. This will be troublesome to those who would grant Kierkegaard’s wish and hold the pseudonyms apart. And thus I return to my beginning, and my circle is complete. For this is not a book for the scholarly. It is a book for the believing. If it is to be appreciated for what it is, it should not be approached with the hermeneutics of suspicion but rather with the hermeneutics of faith. Otherwise, it is nonsense. As it should be. It owes its existence not to a need for understanding but the desire for edification. And it belongs to the reader who accepts that the God who could prophesy through an ass can edify even through a pseudonym.

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Søren Kierkegaard: Et autentisk liv

[Søren Kierkegaard: An authentic Life]

Kierkegaards lange og trange vej mod åndelig afklaring

C.A. Reitzels Forlag og Forlaget Scandinavia

Copenhagen 1998, 120 pp.

In the series 'Spiritual Geniuses' whose goal, in the words of the publisher, is to introduce the public to 'some of the great geniuses of history', the lot has now fallen to Søren Kierkegaard. The book, which is introduced with »a personal preface« (pp. 6-9), is divided into two parts. The first part is entitled 'Kierkegaard's World' and consists of five small sections (pp. 13-69). Here the reader is initiated into Kierkegaard's life and work, a process undertaken in part by the author and in part by means of various interviews with a host of Kierkegaard researchers. The second part consists of 'Selected Texts from Kierkegaard's works' (pp. 71-117). The book concludes with a timetable (pp. 118-119).

At first glance, this book looks like an introduction to Søren Kierkegaard's life and thought, but even in the introductory preface, which has the character of a personal testimony, it becomes clear that the book has more to do with the publisher's own journey of spiritual self-discovery than with »Kierkegaard's long and narrow path to spiritual self-discovery«. The writer's journey begins at the Copenhagen City Museum, where the mere viewing of Kierkegaard's personal writing desk invokes in a most mysterious way a meeting with the genius himself: »In a fraction of a second, it felt as if I had left my body and entered into his body and mind, and I experienced an amazingly melancholic rapture, a kind of creative energy that did not come from me« (p. 7). His subsequent readings of Kierkegaard's authorship results in the author's crossing »great gaps found within the subterranean regions of his soul« (p. 7). And this, in all truth, is what the book is really about. It should come as no surprise, then, when the author declares without apology that the book aims at »an evangelical market« (p. 9). By this, he admits that he is really using the Kierkegaardian text as a *means* and not as a *goal*. Moreover, there is not even a hint of a genuine introduction to Kierkegaard's thought. Introducing others to Kierkegaard's authorship is not a simple task, and it requires a certain critical distance. A distance which is here

rather sadly lacking. The book has – apart from the interspersed interviews and some biographical information – an overwhelmingly subjective bias, revealing a certain incapacity on the part of the author to place himself in relation to the subjects at hand. The many – all too many – postcard-like illustrations are decidedly kitsch: the Bible and the Danish Church Hymnal (*salmebog*) arranged on a table with burning candles, (pp. 70), sunflowers in verdant, blossoming meadows, etc. All of which are graced by a host of selected and formulated quotations from Kierkegaard's texts, and they are occasionally presented on pages where the background is composed of fragments from Kierkegaard's manuscripts, albeit enlarged and colorized. The pages of illustrations stand in complete and sharp contrast to the book's professed goal. Not a single illustration re-creates either the anxiety or the despair which are some of the book's purported themes. It is also unfortunate that the book contains a number of factual inaccuracies. For example, Kierkegaard did not return from his first trip to Berlin in 1841 (p. 38), but in 1842, and Kierkegaard was not taken, in October of 1855, to Frederiksberg Hospital (p. 58, p. 119) – it had not even yet been built – but to the old Royal Hospital, Frederiks Hospital, on Bredgade, now the Danish Museum of Decorative Arts. Furthermore, the references to Kierkegaard's works are not precise and the reader can only with great difficulty find the quotations in their original contexts. In other words: The reader is left behind. He or she is given no possibility whatsoever of studying the text in its own proper environment. The author has eliminated the possibility for each individual reader to decide whether a quotation can tolerate being torn out of a larger context.

The book was undoubtedly undertaken with good intentions, and the strong involvement of the author in the project is obvious, but this is not enough. This book ought not to be regarded as an introduction to Kierkegaard, but as a religious experience which, almost by sheer coincidence, happens to involve Kierkegaard. Apart from the interviews the book lacks a critical approach, and thus Kierkegaard's texts remain unmediated. Whether the book will succeed in the »evangelical market« (p. 7) is for others to decide, but chances are good.

Søren Bruun