

Kierkegaard's Socratic Role for Twentieth Century Philosophy and Theology

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It is my aim in this lecture* to discuss briefly three distinct, but connected problems.

First of all I shall deal with the way in which knowledge of Kierkegaard has spread in the present century.

Then I shall discuss the way Kierkegaard research has developed .

Finally, and most important, I shall deal with problems of the role Kierkegaard has played in twentieth century philosophy and theology. To illustrate this last problem I shall take as examples four important and influential philosophers and theologians.

Obviously in a short lecture like this there can be no question of going into detail. Only typical features can be mentioned.

I The spread of knowledge about Kierkegaard

Thanks to Hans Christian Andersen and Kierkegaard Danish is a world language, just as Greek and Latin were once and English is now.

Unfortunately this world language is only spoken and read by a small number of people, and of these only a minority uses it correctly. In order therefore to make oneself at all understood as a Dane, both at home and out in the wide world, it is necessary to employ various auxiliary languages.

Only a few years after Kierkegaard's death the first translations of individual works of his appeared in Swedish and in the 1880's the German translations began to appear. In the period around the First World War a more or less complete translation of Kierkegaard's collected works came out (Vols 1-12, 1909-22, Himmelstrup's Bibliography No 941). It was not a good translation, on the contrary. It was tendentious and faulty. In spite of this it was of considerable importance for the young philosophical rebels of

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that time, that is, for the men who were the most important and influential for a whole generation of theologians and philosophers. Here I shall not answer the question whether they led astray more than they acted as guides; but philosophers like Heidegger and Jaspers and theologians like Barth and Bultmann did not remain unknown. Subsequently more accurate German translations of his works and papers have come out.

In the French-speaking world the translation of Kierkegaard was slower. Most frequently use was made of the older German translation mentioned above. Jean Wahl and Pierre Mesnard for example used it for their major accounts of Kierkegaard's thought and Jean-Paul Sartre used it too. French translations of individual works appeared before the Second World War but it is only in our own day that a complete edition is being prepared. Oddly enough one of Kierkegaard's earliest works, "The Concept of Irony" did not come out in a French translation until 1975. It first came out in English at the beginning of the 1960's.

In the English-speaking world it was different. The pioneers were the American professors of philosophy Hollander and Swenson. The latter in particular earned much gratitude by translating Kierkegaard's "Philosophical Fragments". It gives food for thought that while in Kierkegaard's lifetime only a few hundred copies were sold of this work which came out in 1844 in the small town of Copenhagen in the small country of Denmark, more than 43.000 copies have now been sold of Swenson's translation as revised by Hong. More than anyone else however it was Dr. Walter Lowrie, an American clergyman, who after many years of working in Rome, where he wrote large books on church archaeology and liturgical subjects, returned to Princeton at the age of 65. He then began to learn Danish, from his butler among other people, and he translated the major part of Kierkegaard's works at an impressive speed, while Alexander Dru translated a rich selection of Kierkegaard's journals.

These translations were widely disseminated and their influence can be seen everywhere in the English-language literature on Kierkegaard and in a variety of theological, philosophical and literary works in the period from the beginning of the Second World War to our own time.

Meritorious as these translations are it is equally certain that the time has now come to revise them or actually to make a new translation of Kierkegaard's works. A complete edition of Kierkegaard's works, with introductions,

notes etc is being prepared and will be published in 26 volumes. Howard Hong, who has now completed his major translation of Kierkegaard's "Journals and Papers" is the leading figure in this major project, which can be expected to be ready in the course of the next ten years.

II *The Study of Kierkegaard*

In the different language areas the study of Kierkegaard has developed in rather different ways.

In the Scandinavian countries people were for a long time, in my opinion for far too long, concerned with Kierkegaard the individual, the man behind the works, not the author in the work as a whole. Biographical and psychological studies flourished. Kierkegaard himself was not without blame for this. Probably under the influence of certain Romantic poets he strove to make himself interesting and enigmatic not only to himself but also to the public, although the external events of his life were few and commonplace. The really interesting thing was not these external facts and events, namely an elderly and old-fashioned father, a fanatical elder brother, a charming young girl, a conservative bishop and an impudent journalist. Such commonplace circumstances have been encountered by many other people than Kierkegaard in their lives. The really interesting thing is how much Kierkegaard was able as writer and thinker to get out of so little. We have the result in Kierkegaard's literary works, his authorship, as he himself called it.

This came to the fore after the Second World War. It was then that the philosophical and theological interest in and involvement with Kierkegaard's ideas began on a serious scale. For a number of years the monographs became fewer. Instead shorter specialist studies appeared in increasing numbers.

In Germany things were different. Almost every self-respecting philosopher or theologian had to concern himself with Kierkegaard and express his opinion about him.

It was the same for a period in Japan, where there is a whole literature on Kierkegaard (in addition to many different translations) – a world of its own.

In the English-speaking world the study of Kierkegaard developed differently in England and Canada on the one hand and in the USA on the other.

In the USA a large number of contributions to Kierkegaard scholarship have appeared. There are hundreds of theses and a quantity of books – dif-

fering widely in standpoint and quality. By far the largest number of these are based on Lowrie's translations. In the last dozen years there has been an increasing realization of the need to learn Danish if one wishes to study Kierkegaard seriously. The most striking thing about this realization in my view is that it has come so late. No one would dream of studying Shakespeare without knowing English or studying Goethe without knowing German.

The most recent American books on Kierkegaard have for the most part been written by scholars who have taken the necessary trouble to learn Danish. Even such strongly critical books as those of Louis Mackey and Josiah Thompson bear witness to their author's efforts to learn Kierkegaard's mother tongue. More successful books are Paul Sponheim's and Mark Taylor's among others.

In England T. H. Croxall, who lived for a time in Denmark, was an enthusiastic pioneer. He was also one of the few who as well as understanding Kierkegaard also understood music. J. Heywood Thomas as theologian and Ronald Grimsley as historian of literature have earned much gratitude with their painstaking and well-informed studies.

It is however my general impression that as a whole there has been more reserve towards Kierkegaard in England than in America. I shall not attempt to explain the reason for this as I do not know it.

Today the study of Kierkegaard is international and it is developing in the form of close cooperation between experts from many countries and with very varied backgrounds.

III *Kierkegaard's Socratic Role for Twentieth Century Philosophy and Theology*

Kierkegaard did not have much respect for the most famous names of the past philosophy and theology. Socrates and Descartes, Lessing and Hamann found favour in his eyes. Luther he ended up criticising severely and of later dogmatic theologians he had only a certain respect for Schleiermacher.

Kierkegaard's posterity has had more respect for him. Kierkegaard has been studied and he has inspired and influenced many theologians and philosophers in this century. He has been a new Socrates; but just as Socrates did not only have his greatest disciple, Plato, who abandoned existential thinking to become a speculative philosopher, so has Kierkegaard had more

than one Plato this century who has "gone beyond", but he has also had more than one Xenophon.

If, following the Swedish Kierkegaard scholar Valter Lindström and in any case greatly simplifying, we say that the first part of Kierkegaard's authorship deals with how the individual person becomes a Christian ("The theology of the stages") and the second part deals with how a person lives as a Christian ("The theology of imitation"), it can be stated without further ado that these Kierkegaardian problems are almost totally foreign to twentieth century philosophers and theologians.

The philosophers, in particular the German and French philosophers of existence, have asked, and answered, the question of how man becomes man, i.e. how man understood as an autonomous being can realize his possibilities.

The theologians have to a great extent been absorbed in the traditional subjects, exegesis and dogmatics, although they have undeniably often been so in an untraditional way.

Martin Heidegger, who like Wittgenstein was born in 1889, was as a young man interested in religion and entered the Jesuit order as a novice. For a few terms he studied Catholic theology at the University of Freiburg, but felt increasingly attracted by purely philosophical questions. His later philosophical works show that his acquaintance with theology and medieval Christian philosophy had a lasting influence and left deep and permanent traces in his own philosophy. In 1914 Heidegger submitted his doctoral thesis, "The theory of judgment in psychologism" ("Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus"). This work is strongly influenced by Husserl's criticism of the psychologising tendencies in contemporary formal logic. Here Heidegger already shows his characteristic style by calling psychologism an "unphilosophy" (Unphilosophie). A year later, in 1915, he qualified to teach philosophy at a university with the still well-known work on "Duns Scotus' Doctrine of Categories and Meanings", which he dedicated to the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). Duns Scotus, Immanuel Kant, Franz Brentano (1838–1917) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) are Heidegger's main teachers; but he was not satisfied with them. In 1917 he was passed over for an appointment and for the next 5 years worked as leader of Husserl's philosophical seminar. In 1923 he became a professor in Marburg, and in 1928, the year after the publication of his most famous work "Sein und Zeit" (Being and Time), he returned to Freiburg to succeed Husserl. Heidegger's further career

and fate will not be discussed here; but the relation of his major work to Kierkegaard will be dealt with in a little more detail.

In "Being and Time", which remained uncompleted, Kierkegaard is mentioned both with approval and with criticism altogether three times.

It is characteristic that Heidegger has greatest approval for "The Concept of Anxiety", which was written as a parody of a speculative philosophical textbook of the middle of the nineteenth century.

That Heidegger only mentions Kierkegaard directly in these three places is not conclusive. Without any doubt Kierkegaard acted as a major inspiration for the whole of Heidegger's work.

It is Heidegger's aim in "Being and Time" to develop a dynamic ontology as the basis for a corresponding fundamental ontology. His point of departure is the everyday understanding of existence. His purpose is to give an ontological or so-called *existential* description of the specific character of human existence, in accordance with which he claims that all understanding of being must be deduced from the understanding of the human form of being, existence (*Existenz*) and its essential constituents.

The method Heidegger employs in "Being and Time" is Husserl's phenomenological method. In his analysis of man's form of being, existence, Heidegger everywhere uses a threefold structure, namely 1) freedom, 2) facticity (i.e. the unavoidable conditions of life), and 3) the degree of consciousness and energy with which man asserts his freedom in the face of his actual circumstances. The first two moments, freedom and facticity constitute the structure of human being (its "Seinsverfassung"), while the third moment constitutes the mode of this structure of being (its "Seinsart").

Negatively Heidegger dissociates himself radically and everywhere from all traditional metaphysics and theology on the one hand and from all branches of science, both natural science and the humanistic disciplines on the other.

Heidegger claims that his whole work is a neutral phenomenological analysis, the results of which have universal validity. He provides no proof, however, for this claim and it is therefore understandable that a philosopher like Gilbert Ryle (in an article in "Mind", 1929, pp 355-70) has dismissed the whole work as nebulous, mythological discourse.

This discourse is however expressed in a direct, didactic, authoritative form. It will be remembered that Kierkegaard had no interest in constructing an

ontology, that he did not employ a phenomenological method, that he did not use the same structure in his various works that he never taught directly and that he never spoke with authority.

It is thus easy to see the differences between Kierkegaard and Heidegger; but there are also similarities. We need only mention their common rejection of metaphysics on the one hand and of science on the other.

If we ignore what for Heidegger is the essential, namely his aim, method, scheme and direct form of communication, and only consider the actual content of "Being and Time", the fundamental characteristics of human being in time, the *Existentialia*, it is not difficult to see that he has actually done nothing other than isolate the purely formal, natural, non-theological side of Kierkegaard's thought, in particular from the "Concept of Anxiety" and the "Concluding Unscientific Postscript". This is the side that is expressed in the proposition "subjectivity is truth", while Heidegger completely leaves out the dialectical opposite, which for Kierkegaard is absolutely decisive, that "subjectivity is untruth".

Where Heidegger abstracts, Kierkegaard concretizes, and he does so consciously, with the intention namely of keeping himself and his reader to the given existence and the responsibility for it. For Kierkegaard every abstraction signifies a flight from reality to the uncommitted sphere of the intellect.

Kierkegaard only calls attention to the formal character of responsibility of existence in order to bring the individual to a single, decisive, concrete choice, namely: either to become a Christian or to admit his distance from Christianity. Heidegger on the contrary does not propose any concrete alternative, but will nevertheless deduce an imperative from his many indicatives.

Heidegger learned much from Kierkegaard, more than he himself admits. But he was not a good disciple of his Socrates in "Being and Time" and was even less so in his later philosophy where he went along his own almost impassable paths, ending up as a local poet of the Black Forest.

If we turn from Heidegger to his slightly older contemporary Karl Jaspers (born 1883) we enter a world which in many respects resembles Heidegger's and in many respects differs from it.

Jaspers says himself that he started reading Kierkegaard in 1914 and that it was a revelation to him, quite different from the usual German academic philosophy ("Psychologie der Weltanschauungen" [Psychology of world

views], p. X). Jaspers himself had not studied philosophy as a subject at the university, but medicine. At the age of 30 he made his name with a huge work on "Allgemeine Psychopathologie" [General Psychopathology] (1913). Another bold work of youth followed only six years later, namely "Psychologie der Weltanschauungen" [Psychology of World Views] (1919), where the inspiration of Kierkegaard is particularly evident. But with Jaspers the encounter with Kierkegaard had a more long-term effect than with Heidegger. In his old age Jaspers was still writing articles about Kierkegaard which were respectful of his genius but at the same time critical (see eg "Aneignung und Polemik" [Appropriation and Polemic], 1968).

Like Heidegger, Jaspers in his youth made extensive use of Husserl's phenomenological method (see his Autobiography, German edition p. 12); but Kierkegaard put him on the right road. Jaspers just did not keep to it.

Jaspers himself calls his three-volume work which came out in 1931 with the title "Philosophie" [Philosophy] his favourite work. In the following I shall base myself on this since it achieves greater clarity than the 1919 work and the influence of Kierkegaard was still strong.

In this work Jaspers claims that as I awaken to consciousness of myself I discover that I am in a world, in which I orientate myself. I have had things in my grasp and dropped them again. They were simply there. But now I respond with wonder and ask what really is, for everything in this world is transitory. I was not there at the beginning and will not be there at the end, but I ask about both. To this question I want an answer which will give me rest since in the awareness of my situation which I neither fully understand nor see through in its origin, I am oppressed by a vague anxiety. I seek a being which does not pass away, eternal being.

For Jaspers however, wonder, or anxiety and despair are not the only possible points of departure for philosophical thought. Doubt can also be a point of departure. Jaspers points furthermore to a fourth point of departure, to which he attributes very great importance, namely the need to reach other people, the need for deep inter-personal relationships, an "existential communication".

We must not, Jaspers claims, take refuge in "seductive metaphysics". Nor must we settle down in the certainty of science. To the question about eternal being there is, however, according to Jaspers, no answer in the ordinary sense. Eternal being cannot be made an object for my consciousness. What I can

become conscious of in my situation is that I am a subject confronting a world of objects. Eternal being is not outside, but within me. This is Platonic discourse.

Jaspers' "Philosophie" [Philosophy] is divided into three parts, namely "world-orientation", "illumination of existence" and "metaphysics". The subjects of these three parts are the world, existence and transcendence respectively. To the two latter correspond in mythology, according to Jaspers, the soul and God.

That "world-orientation" comes first is natural. What I am immediately confronted with is what collectively constitutes the world.

Jaspers speaks of two kinds of world-orientation namely the scientific and the philosophical, which supplement each other. Thus Jaspers does not reject science like Heidegger. Scientific world-orientation provides objective knowledge and thus frees me from subjective prejudices and limitations.

Science however can give no information about the being which does not manifest itself in a generally compelling way as an object for consciousness. Here the philosophical world-orientation comes in and opens us to the totality of being, what Jaspers calls "the encompassing" (*das Umgreifende*), which both appears to us and is in us, and which reaches out over all horizons. The philosophical world-orientation will also show the contradictions, gulfs and limitations we encounter when we try to understand the world as a whole.

Jaspers' analyses lead to a critique of positivist thought, but this is at the same time a critique of philosophical idealism which makes the ego as spirit absolute, while the world becomes secondary. In Jaspers' view neither the ego nor the world can be regarded as absolute, but from this it follows, he goes on, that "I am floating in a bottomless space".

What then am I to do in this situation?

Jaspers replies that there are two alternatives. The one is to go back to authority and revelation, the other to go forward to philosophical independence. Jaspers himself can only take the latter course. Kierkegaard chose the former.

Having set out on the road to philosophical independence Jaspers proceeds to carry out his "illumination of existence". Like Kierkegaard he reserves the use of the word "existence" for discussion of man's being. Being in general merely means being present in the world and this being can be studied by science. Existence on the other hand cannot be made an object for conscious-

ness. Illumination of existence is self-knowledge, introspection, that is, it is what Kierkegaard called the highest that could be attained within the human sphere, immanence, where subjectivity is truth, as it was for Socrates. Here inner action is as much involved as thought in the normal sense. Man actualizes himself in illumination of existence.

The result, in short, is that in the first place I become conscious of having an historical existence, which involves originality in the eternal. Secondly the ego becomes conscious of its freedom, this act of becoming conscious taking place in the choice, the decision that the ego will become itself. Thirdly illumination of existence results in communication, which means both self-abandonment and self-assertion.

This, however, is not the end of the ego's search for eternal being. The ego reaches beyond itself. Existence is not sufficient to itself.

Jaspers aims to show this in the third part of "Philosophie", i.e. in metaphysics. Real being, eternal being comes to me from the unconditioned, transcendence as Jaspers calls it, or God, as the theologians say.

Jaspers emphasizes that it is not possible to construct any adequate doctrine of God on the same lines as theories about things in the world. A genuine theology, a doctrine of God, would according to Jaspers presuppose that God was in the world as an object for consciousness. For Jaspers God only appears to us through our existence. If we try to say anything about God the statements we make will only point beyond the normal meaning of the words and will then be what Jaspers calls "ciphers" or symbols.

The attitude of the philosopher, as Jaspers claims in a later work, will be an openness toward the unknowable transcendence, a philosophical faith with no specific content.

That Jaspers was inspired by Kierkegaard in his analysis of existence is clear enough. But it is equally clear that he has a different point of departure, a different method and a different goal from Kierkegaard. Just as Plato went beyond Socrates and constructed a metaphysics, so Jaspers went beyond Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard chose Christian faith, Jaspers preferred philosophical faith. Expressed in another way, Kierkegaard chose the leap; Jaspers stayed put.

If we go from the two German philosophers Heidegger and Jaspers, of whom particularly the former has had an influence on continental theology

for almost half a century which it is still not easy to survey, to the theologians, it will be most natural to discuss the young Barth and the young Bultmann as inspired by Kierkegaard.

Karl Barth (born 1886) belonged all his life to the Reformed (Calvinist) Church. As a student he was influenced in particular by the Ritschlian, Wilhelm Hermann. In his early years Barth was a country pastor in Switzerland, and from 1921–35 he was a professor at various German universities, in the last part of the period at Bonn. But in 1935 he had to leave Germany for political reasons and was at Basle until 1962.

The young Karl Barth's first edition (of 1919) of his commentary on Saint Paul's epistle to the Romans caused a certain stir but only three years later, in 1922, it was followed by a new revised edition. The preface to this is rightly regarded as the manifesto of dialectical theology.

Karl Barth wrote his commentary on *Romans* while he was a country pastor. Bultmann, whom I shall discuss shortly, was a university theologian all his life, and primarily a scholar, not a preacher, which Barth really remained all his life.

Barth did not turn his attention to St Paul for historical reasons, but in order to speak to his own contemporaries about the same thing that St Paul had written his epistle about. Barth's commentary on *Romans* was to be theology in the genuine sense, talk about God.

That was the immediate difficulty for Barth. He discovered, under the direct inspiration of Kierkegaard, that St Paul taught an "infinite, qualitative difference between time and eternity, between man and God".

According to Barth the gulf between God and man is not removed but accentuated in St Paul's talk of God's revelation. In this talk, in this proclamation, it is not said that the revelation in Christ opens a new way and gives a kind of spiritual supplement to man's ethical or religious endeavours. On the contrary, Barth claims that for St Paul revelation means a sovereign act on the part of God, an act which does not make God an object of human knowledge but rather enables man to be an object for what God wills.

What Barth sought to proclaim in his commentary on *Romans* was inspired by certain ideas of Kierkegaard; but Barth tore them right out of their context in Kierkegaard and took them far further than Kierkegaard had intended.

Barth wanted to show once again that the impossible had proved possible and that everything which was purely human, everything without exception, was judged and condemned, and not least man's religion.

Where Kierkegaard had a well-considered theology of the stages followed by a theology of imitation, the young Barth had only a "neither-nor".

Barth got no further than this in the 1920's. In the draft "Christliche Dogmatik" (Christian Dogmatics) of 1927 the inspiration from Kierkegaard can still be seen. It disappeared however and did not return. In his very individual account of the history of theology in the nineteenth century, Barth does not discuss Kierkegaard in a chapter to himself but only here and there in passing.

It is odd that in the last volume (IV, 4) of his monumental "Church Dogmatics", which he began publishing in 1932 and which ended, uncompleted, in 1967, Barth does not mention Kierkegaard at all, although there are clear points of similarity between Barth's critique of child baptism and Kierkegaard's.

While Kierkegaard assumed that Christian dogmatics was known and accepted, Barth formulated a completely new dogmatics which at nearly every point was sharply critical not only of the dogmatics of theological liberalism, or only of Schleiermacher, but also of orthodox dogmatics and that of the Reformers.

While Barth simply had contempt for philosophy as a whole and only had a very fragmentary knowledge of it, Bultmann was in this as well as in other respects quite different from Barth.

In Bultmann's (1884-) thought a whole series of factors are combined. As New Testament exegete he had a perfect command of the philological and historical method and in his earliest works, at the beginning of the 1920's, put forward theories which were more radical than those of any liberal theologian. As a systematic theologian he was influenced by such different men as Wilhelm Hermann and Karl Barth. A strong influence from the German Luther renaissance is evident and then there is the inspiration from Kierkegaard.

There is still more to be said however, namely that a strong dependence on Neo-Kantianism, which in Bultmann's student years was so to speak the

official German university philosophy, was combined in a quite irrational way with the views of the anti-Kantian Heidegger, as I have outlined them above. In his work of 1954 against Bultmann's later theology, the so-called demythologizing, Jaspers criticises Bultmann with uncharacteristic severity for philosophical confusion and dilettantism, among other things because Bultmann had virtually rejected the New Testament in favour of Heidegger's "Being and Time", which for Bultmann was an infallible guide or rather the rigid frame within which all his thinking, including his account of New Testament theology, took place.

Bultmann scarcely ever discusses Kierkegaard directly in his many books and articles. The inspiration, however, in his early works is clear enough, although it is not always easy to determine whether it is mostly direct or indirect.

In opposition to the dominant liberal theology, Barth had strongly asserted, in his commentary on *Romans*, the objective aspect of Christianity, what it proclaims as truth. Barth did not entirely evade the question of appropriation, which was one of Kierkegaard's main problems, the question of how Christianity becomes truth for the individual person. But in his early works he strove to formulate this "subjective" side of Christianity in such a way that Christianity was not reduced to subjectivism, psychologism or religious experience.

Bultmann agreed with Barth in this basic standpoint. He did not however agree with him about its formulation.

Bultmann's dissatisfaction was expressed in a major review of Barth's commentary on *Romans* (in the journal "Die christliche Welt" (The Christian World), 1922).

In this review the influence of Kierkegaard appears more clearly than is usually the case with Bultmann. There is therefore good reason to devote some attention to it.

Bultmann stresses three things, namely:

1. If Christian faith is to be personal, to be "mine", it must represent a content of consciousness and not merely be an "empty space", as Barth said. Faith means that a particular content is appropriated and determines man's consciousness, whereupon faith is expressed in word and deed. As a subjective conviction and attitude faith has parallels in phenomena like love, trust and

gratitude. These phenomena also determine a person's consciousness and are expressed in word and deed. This whole side of faith Barth almost completely ignored.

2. It is a theological task to discover what Christian faith as a subjective phenomenon means, i.e. what appropriation means. Bultmann remarks that it is of decisive importance to realize that appropriation does not mean "to think with assent" (*cum assensu cogitare*), as the followers of the orthodox theological thought. If appropriation is understood in this way, then, Bultmann claims, Christianity is reduced to a system of propositions and that would on the one hand reduce faith to submission to an external authority and on the other turn faith into an intellectual feat. Unlike orthodoxy, liberal theology made faith an experience, not of God but of the believer's own psychological state.

The question of how the truth and reality which Christianity proclaims can determine the individual personally, is the question of appropriation, which Barth did not answer satisfactorily but which Bultmann raised anew – inspired by Kierkegaard and probably also by Luther.

The Christian message meets the individual – a Kierkegaardian category – as a personal address which requires a decision for or against. The message meets the individual in his individual existence.

3. The relationship between the Christian message and human existence can never, Bultmann goes on to claim in his criticism of Barth, be determined definitively by a formula. Each individual and each generation must start from the beginning. The meeting takes place in the instant – again a Kierkegaardian category.

4. If neither the Christian message nor human existence can be fixed once and for all, the theologian and the preacher are not, as Barth held, bound to the New Testament forms of expression and the Biblical view of the world.

– Here Bultmann laid the foundation for his later theology. The world-famous demythologizing programme, which he did not put forward until a dozen years later and which he himself regarded as an unbroken continuation of his early theories, was in fact outlined in the above review of Barth's commentary on *Romans*.

I hope that this very summary account of the importance the encounter with Kierkegaard had for four of the most influential philosophers and

theologians of this century has shown some of the most characteristic features.

Common to Heidegger and Barth is the fact that there is a marked difference between the works of their youth, which are wholly or partly inspired by Kierkegaard, and the works of their manhood – which I have not discussed in detail – where Kierkegaard slides right into the background or simply disappears. Heidegger was a philosopher, Barth was a theologian. Neither of them was both.

Common to Jaspers and Bultmann is the continuity in their authorships. Neither of them has subsequently neglected or dissociated himself from Kierkegaard; but both have developed a long way away from Kierkegaard.

Unlike these four, Kierkegaard himself spoke sometimes as a philosopher, sometimes as a theologian, sometimes as a psychologist, sometimes as an aesthete, sometimes as a poet and sometimes as a polemicist against the Church.

On all four Kierkegaard acted as a disquieting Socrates; at a particular point in their development he gave them a decisive stimulus, not to become followers of Socrates, something none of them were or became, but to become themselves. Neither the individualist Heidegger, the all-embracing Jaspers, the great preacher and dogmatic system-builder Barth nor the philologist and prophet Bultmann became Kierkegaardians. In this they were undeniably faithful to the Kierkegaard who wanted no followers and disciples. Instead they became themselves.

All four went beyond Kierkegaard. Finally we can just raise the question whether they went forwards or backwards in relation to Kierkegaard. My own answer to this question I need scarcely state.