

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

REPETITION
AND
PHILOSOPHICAL CRUMBS

SØREN AABYE KIERKEGAARD (1813–1855) was born in Copenhagen, Denmark's main trading port. He was a defining figure in Denmark's 'Golden Age', when its art and literature rivalled the best from Paris or Berlin. He earned the equivalent of a doctorate in 1841 with a dissertation on *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates*. A substantial inheritance freed him to write full time and sidestep the compromises of an academic career. Though he went through an abortive engagement, he never married and was freed from the distractions of family life. He published *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, and *Philosophical Crumbs* in 1843–4, and several other works in a variety of innovative genres thereafter. His writing career was to end with the massive *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), intended to be, indeed, his concluding statement, after which he would lead the simple life of a pastor. But by nature incurably polemical, a bitter dispute with a popular Copenhagen weekly kept him in the public eye. His critiques of the popular press, mass politics, and 'social club religion' were to have a profound influence on twentieth-century existentialist, Marxist, and religious commentary on bourgeois society. As philosophers and social critics Heidegger, Arendt, Camus, and Sartre relied heavily on him, while his dazzling insights and literary skills were to influence the writers Ibsen, Rilke, and Kafka, Auden and Dinesen, as well as such theologians as Tillich, Barth, Buber, Bonhoeffer, and Levinas.

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==
SØREN KIERKEGAARD

Repetition
and
Philosophical Crumbs

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Translated by
M. G. PIETY

With an Introduction by
EDWARD F. MOONEY

and Notes by
EDWARD F. MOONEY and M. G. PIETY

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INTRODUCTION

In 1843, a few months before the publication of *Repetition* and about a year before that of *Philosophical Crumbs*, Kierkegaard published *Either/Or* in two volumes; the first ('Either') evokes a fragment of life from the angle of an aesthetic existence, the second ('Or'), from an 'ethical' standpoint. The compilation of papers evoking an aesthetic way of life includes poetic musings, music criticism, and reflections on tragedy. A mood of somewhat sinister dissipation and manipulation permeates the psychological intrigues of 'The Seducer's Diary', a small novelette that has often been published separately. The second volume, also a compilation, includes letters addressed to the aesthete of Volume 1. They come from the pen of one 'Judge Wilhelm', a worthy citizen who gives a rather long-winded defence of an ethical way of life. There is a tension, then, between the *Either* and the *Or* that invites readers to weigh the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of their own orientations in life. Just to complicate matters, a short religious tract is inserted in the final pages. Beyond the life of a poet or a judge is the life of a pastor or priest. The pastor's contribution to this 'fragment of life' is a severe, accusatory sermon on our being 'always in the wrong' as against God. Thus, in Volume 2 we have a critique not only of the self-indulgent 'aesthete' but also of the self-satisfied Judge.

Either/Or, like *Crumbs* and *Repetition*, seeks to map the subtle ways that suffering is imposed and self-imposed, and to suggest paths of relief. We are aware that the book holds up a troubling mirror to our lives, and we see that as readers we have a role to play in negotiating the tensions between the ethical and the aesthetic, for instance. The book's use of pseudonyms, and complex dramatic stagings, are characteristic. While *Either/Or* is but a small fraction of Kierkegaard's total literary, philosophical output, *Repetition* and *Crumbs* represent an even smaller fraction, but their small size and lavish detail make them marvellous doors into Kierkegaard's worlds.

Repetition marks the end of Kierkegaard's initial, and in many ways richest, year of publication, 1843. *Philosophical Crumbs* comes a few months later. The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, a 500-page sequel appearing in 1846, is a tragi-comic treatise that stages Kierkegaardian subjectivity and objectivity, the roles of knowledge and passion in

orienting a self, and the face-off between Reason and Faith. Front and centre is a self radically distinct from any social mass or group membership. Singular individuals struggle to make sense of things, to find a basis for life-shaping decisions, to find insight to ease the ubiquity of affliction, not least one's own. *Repetition* and *Philosophical Crumbs* open these themes, and display the artistry and wit of Kierkegaard's infinitely restless moral and religious imagination.

REPETITION

AT TIMES *Repetition* reads like a short novel, full of puzzles and twists of fate. At other times it reads like a technical disquisition on a quasi-metaphysical concept called 'repetition'. In the first half of the book Kierkegaard's narrator, Constantine Constantius, introduces the contrast between 'repetition' and the ancient Platonic concept of recollection. Plato's idea is that we already possess the rudiments of all the knowledge we need. It is part of the inherited structure of our minds. Once we begin thinking, we have a glimmer of the ideas that 2 plus 2 equal 4, and that we should always do what is good, for instance. All we have to do is remember these truths, and a teacher like Socrates can prompt us. The royal road to knowledge, for Plato, is through prompted remembering or recollection. But Constantine says that the modern age needs a new concept, and that he will provide it. He calls the alternative royal road to insight 'repetition'. Repetition means getting our cognitive and moral bearings not through prompted remembering, but quite unexpectedly as a gift from the unknown, as a revelation from the future. Repetition is epiphany that sometimes grants the old again, as new, and sometimes grants something radically new.

The second half of this strange and innovative book is a series of letters between Constantine and a lovesick, overwrought young man. This nameless young man seeks a 'revelation' that will remove, or at least ease, his sorrow. He seeks out Constantine as a mentor, wise in the ways of breaking-up, of love lost, and perhaps wise in erasing the false promise of love altogether. He needs stable footing. Perhaps he needs to make peace with the fact that he has jilted his sweetheart, or perhaps he needs to keep the flame of that love alive. He seems excessively happy, at the end, to learn that she has released him by marrying another man. But that may be false bravado; we don't really know.

In any case, he needs the return of a viable life, a ‘repetition’ that will end his heartache.

Constantine’s response is jaded. His friend’s *angst* is ‘an interesting issue’. It’s doubtful that he has any sympathy for the young man. He suggests a cruel stratagem to destroy any lingering attachment the girl might still have. He is cynical about love. Is the young man hopelessly lost? In the best case, repetition would be the hope that he will regain love. In a less than ideal case, the hope would be that he will ‘get over’ his attachment and thereby regain a guiltless outlook. The broad question *Repetition* poses is how a sense of meaning and direction in life can be regained as we suffer its absence.

Loss and Restoration

Abraham (in *Fear and Trembling*), Job (in the ‘Job Discourse’), and the young man in *Repetition* are afflicted or threatened by great loss. The first is about to lose his son — by his own hand, no less. The second has lost his wealth, children, health, even his friends — for no fathomable reason. The third loses his sweetheart — though it is hard to grasp why he dropped her in the first place, and why, as his letters continue, he nevertheless imagines himself in the role of her husband. Behind this writing on loss and redemption is Kierkegaard’s broken engagement to the young Regine Olsen. He was a melancholy 27; she an innocent 16. Perhaps he believed his gloom would poison her brightness; perhaps he thought that domestic life would derail his vocation as a writer. In any case, as he broke off the engagement he wrote books that take up themes of inexplicable loss and the dream of requital.

Kierkegaard wonders painfully if he is made with sufficient strength to wrest meaning from loss. Socrates and Hegel bet that human wit and will are sufficient to expel despair. Looking at Job and Abraham and his own ill fortune, Kierkegaard has doubts. Both *Repetition* and *Crumbs* are preoccupied with the question of whether we are built with sufficient resources to expel despair on our own — or instead, are radically insufficient to the task.

More often than not, especially in the first five years of his authorship, Kierkegaard publishes under pseudonyms. *Philosophical Crumbs* is by Johannes Climacus (John the Climber), *Repetition* by Constantine Constantius, *Fear and Trembling* by Johannes de silentio, and so on. Pseudonyms leave a subtle air of mystery — though everyone in



Copenhagen knew who invented them. They also convey a more sophisticated point. A book takes a particular angle on life, and as that angle changes from book to book, so, in a way, does the author doing the writing. *Fear and Trembling* is signed 'Johannes de silentio' in part because the horror of the story reduces *that* author (and Kierkegaard) to silence. Constantine Constantius is constantly looking for constancy. The flesh-and-blood author 'Søren Kierkegaard' is of little interest relative to the Constantine or the Johannes involved in writing *this* title or *that* one. The complex standpoint of a singular book is what matters, and that standpoint is just a small fragment of the amazing range of Kierkegaard's attunements to life, of the full range of the writer.

Although it often makes sense to distinguish the stance of a pseudonym from that of the writer behind it, flesh-and-blood Kierkegaard may believe much that a pseudonym brings out. The first order of business, therefore, is not to make hard-and-fast, all-purpose divisions between pseudonyms and 'pure Kierkegaard', but to inhabit a text's singular viewpoint, and to give it the best reading we can. If we hit on a difficulty in interpretation, there is no turning to the Copenhagen writer for sure-fire rescue; pausing over the pseudo-author's name *might* help. Does Johannes Climacus provide as with a ladder to climb out of the cellar? Constantine might offer a stable centre around which renewal revolves. Or he might hint that even the constant holds motion in store. Mr Constant is Constant-Constant.

The wit that dances on nearly every page keeps us from simple answers. It works also as self-protection. Kierkegaard knows he has massive intelligence and talent, and knows he must resist the hubris of taking those gifts too far. After crowing proudly, he will efface himself. He undersells *Repetition* by calling it, in his *Journal*, 'insignificant, without any philosophical pretension, a droll little book, dashed off as an oddity'. Yet he opens it by suggesting that western metaphysics ought to set Platonic recollection aside and embrace *his* concept, repetition. So Constantine's 'oddity' aims to accomplish in just a few pages a revolution on the scale achieved by Heidegger or Wittgenstein. He would change the world with sly words, a love story, and a wink.

Choice and Reception of Meaning

Many commentators assume that Kierkegaard is a source for the view, promoted by Jean-Paul Sartre, that ethical values and standpoints are



a matter of radical choice. Moderns are aware of a primordial freedom that leaves them in the lurch to choose both their own selves and their own values. Sartre seems to lift this view from the ethical Judge Wilhelm. But this is not fair to the text of *Either/Or* or to Kierkegaard's considered view. The self that the judge enjoins the aesthete to choose is embedded socially and historically, encumbered by a deep sense of humanity. It is not a site for unconstrained choice.

In addition, the judge enters a counter-proposal to the theme of self-choice. Rather than self-choice, self-reception becomes the operative term. We find this elaborated in *Repetition* and in 'the Job Discourse', the sixth of his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* of 1843. Job waits through his suffering with *nothing* to choose. He is only dust and ashes. Out of nowhere a storm appears, singing the rebirth of his world. Through the Wind's poetry he is given seas, great birds, infinite stars, the glory of dawn: 'the shape of things is changed by it—they stand forth, as if clothed in ornament' (Job 38: 12, 14). The moral is that when caught in despair there is, at the limit, no 'autonomous choice' by which one lurches out of the muck. One is remade and saved (if one is) by an intervention of the other, as it were. One is offered a call or vision not of one's choice or making: the birds of the air, an assembly of true friends (not Job's mockers), an icon, a Saviour. One does not *create* Truth *ex nihilo*. It jolts one awake, strikes one dumb, steals one's heart.

Reversing the usual flow of meaning-carrying passions will undo a false valorization of choice and unqualified autonomy. The dominant modern image has meaning flow outward, projected from a source in the autonomous self to adhere to others and the world. 'You are what I make you to be, or as I construe you!' The inversion of that image gives a pre-modern or non-modern picture. Meaning arrives in an incoming flow from a source 'without', from the other, the world, the divine. 'I acknowledge and accept who you are; what you are shapes my responsiveness.' Meaning installs itself, breaching autonomy. Under the dominant model of modernity, the 'self-sufficiency model' that Kierkegaard calls 'Socratic' (for us it is the Nietzschean model), selves are autonomous projects, constructors of manifold institutions, practices, even character traits that are then owned or disowned. Under the 'insufficiency' non-Socratic model (a biblical model), selves are passions or souls bequeathed, seated to receive life, making acknowledgement of interdependence inescapable.

Yielding and Dependence

Autonomy is an antidote to servility, while any breach of autonomy is typically assimilated to slavishness—what Kant called heteronomy. To be servile is to be held hostage or intimidated by another, but yielding to another is not always servile. If we are to be loved, we must yield to a passion from another and let responsiveness to that other unfold. But letting oneself be loved, though it requires a yielding will, is not letting oneself be crushed or intimidated. Hearing poetry often means yielding to an image or a sound. Caring for infants (at least some of the time) means listening for their emerging will and desire—not being servile before them. In teamwork, we depend on our coach and each other. In large choral performances, we yield to and are dependent on the spirit of the music, our fellow singers, the wishes of a conductor.

As an autonomous, executive self, Constantine Constantius tries to make repetition happen. This is a satire of true repetition, which is a Job-like yielding to meaning conferred. Constantine tries to induce repetition by retracing his steps in Berlin. It's fine if he longs to have experiences of a former journey come back, but repetition is awaiting the arrival of the new, and welcoming it, if it should arrive. It is precisely *not* scouring the past for the source of its echo. He seeks the excitement of an earlier theatre performance by returning to the spot. In repetition, one faces forward precisely because retracing one's steps won't work. Trying to recover an experience explicitly, as a *project*, is to welcome disaster. If we look up an old flame, the spark *might* reignite, but vibrant happiness can't be *made to happen*, on cue. As the subtitle to *Repetition* tells us, Constantine attempts a 'psychological experiment'. But he is far too detached, as a disinterested observer, for his attempt to be credible. Job is the model for repetition. His world gets restored in his yielding, and in his dependence and acceptance of the wondrous beyond all choice or control. He does not set out on a ridiculous attempt to construct repetition. It happens on its own, in a fresh burst of glory that overtakes and humbles our sense of studied control.

Change and Transition

For Plato, cognitive insight is discovering a changeless past truth that makes the current world of change an illusion. If we need love,

we ‘think back to’ or ‘recollect’ a reassuring, timeless essence already there to revive us. We have ‘known love’ all along, but have momentarily forgotten. We try to recall a first love, when all was alive and exciting. Constantine will replace Platonic recollection with repetition. But he has another model to consider. Hegelian ‘mediation’ also traces the emergence of insight, providing a schema for understanding historical transitions as progressive realizations of insights and co-relative institutions through a conflict of opposites. In the domain of world history, the medieval world, for example, might harbour internal conflicts that give birth to the insightful Renaissance world-view. In the domain of individual history, an adolescent might harbour internal conflicts that give birth to a more insightful young adulthood. Progress is a ‘mediation’ between an initial state, its opposite, and an emerging resolution. Constantine mocks this ‘1, 2, 3, three-step’ of Hegelian progression (p. 77). To change existentially or religiously is not to be caught up in a mechanical historical advance conceived under the banner of capitalism, socialism, or some cultural or theoretical fad.

Constantine tells us that repetition and recollection are the *same* movement, but in opposite directions. Meaning or value might collect or gather as it is unearthed from the past; but it might also gather as it arises newborn. In repetition, meaning gathers before my front-facing receptivity. Musical meaning is about to peak in a phrase not yet uttered by the cello. Whether it will (or not) is nothing I can control. I await something momentous, gathered as the *future* unveils it toward me. I tilt forward in anticipation, in a hope for the gift of repetition, for I half-know what to expect. Without repetition or recollection, Constantine tells us, ‘all of life is dissolved into an empty, meaningless noise’ (p. 19). Kierkegaard wants us to feel the allure of true repetition (not Constantine’s travesty of it). The overwrought young man’s ennui will not fall away as he ‘remembers’ a pregnant past. He seeks what Job and Abraham found, a transforming cloud-burst or the intervention of a sudden angel that instils alertness to future promise. He needs openness to the possibility that a lost world might be regained, whether as marriage or freedom from it.

Faithful Trust

The young man ‘awaiting his thunderstorm’ is a mild parody of Job. His suffering does not match Job’s, nor does he have Job’s

dignified courage. His plight is a lightly comical anticipation of New Testament apocalypse. He is amidst destruction and awaits a return. He speaks of marriage, yet he also seems to welcome a freedom from marriage. Abraham and Job have no uncertainty about what they want through the office of repetition. One wants the return of a son; the other wants the return of a life. Awaiting repetition is not just a wish but a *faithful trust* in a fulfilling restoration. The young man has only the bare germ of such trust. He *says* he awaits repetition, but his 'despair' can seem like a hysterical affectation, just 'too much drama' to be credible. And what is the restoration he craves? Does he want the girl? Perhaps he just wants to forget her to be rid of guilt and its drag on freedom. Constantine calls him a poet on the *verge* of the religious, but at best he is a religious lightweight, and most likely a *poseur*.

In *Crumbs*, such faithful trust in restoration is spelled out as a non-Socratic possibility. Under the non-Socratic 'insufficiency model', vision or Truth arrives beyond effort or will, and perhaps against them, in great wonder and unlikelihood. The theme of a primitive trust-in-requital, arriving as revelation from a future unknown, travels quietly from *Fear and Trembling* to its explicit treatment in *Repetition* and onto the pages of *Philosophical Crumbs*, when it appears in the contrast between trust that Truth will arrive on its own and trust that it is ready at any time to percolate up from a subject's own resources.

The Suspicion and Need of Metaphysics

Ideas of form and matter, mind and body, substance, consciousness and freedom, passion and reason, and so forth, are Greek metaphysical concepts that have filtered down through the centuries in various articulations. But it is doubtful that they can be joined in a system that gives ultimate knowledge or practical insight. Kierkegaard writes in the wake of Kant, who abandoned the search for knowledge of metaphysical structures. The world is properly studied by natural science, and metaphysics should step aside. Theology evokes virtues of the heart, but will never prove the existence of God. Ethics may appeal to freedom, but freedom cannot be an item of certain knowledge. Although the questions of metaphysics cannot be answered, nevertheless Kant concedes that it is hard to forget them. Metaphysics

presented tasks he could neither 'abandon nor carry to completion'. Metaphysical questions are hopeless, but we ask them anyway.

Constantine echoes Kant when he announces a 'new concept', repetition, which is both 'the interest of all metaphysics and [also] the interest upon which metaphysics becomes stranded' (p.19). We are fascinated with the fact that, against all odds, Isaac is returned, or that the world is returned to Job. Fascination grows toward a metaphysical interest. Is there an abstract account of how meaning and truth emerge? We can have a passion for metaphysics, for asking 'why?', but that does not mean that there are answers to be found. Insofar as Job wonders *why* he has been deprived of a world, he has an *interest* in the quasi-metaphysical concept of repetition. But his faithful trust in restoration does not win him a metaphysical answer. Job gets the *wonder* of a world returned, but he does not learn *why* he suffers. Metaphysical wonder is uncoupled from metaphysical explanation. The reception of a life beyond dust and ashes throws the *need* for an answer aside. In nautical images, we would say that metaphysics (as knowledge, answer, or explanation) founders; its sailing is suspended. For Job, as for the young man, to seek repetition is to ache for a restorative impact.

The consolations of explanation or theory pale beside the shattering wonder of restoration. The impact of such experience overwhelms paltry attempts to *theorize* it. In *Philosophical Crumbs*, Kierkegaard returns in a Kantian vein to the impossibility of metaphysical answers to our deepest questions. Metaphysics is stymied (roughly) because the mind is not designed to answer questions that arise at the deepest level of metaphysical interest. The Socratic position is the optimistic view that, under prompting, we can access truth stored in memory; we are designed that way. The non-Socratic, biblical view is more pessimistic. We are flawed. Our design leaves us irremediably in error, insufficient to acquire truth on our own. For Socrates, limits on knowledge reflect temporary ignorance that can always be cured under proper tutelage. We are innately fitted out to make progress toward infinite knowledge. Inverting this position gives us the biblical position. We are *not* up to the task of acquiring infinite knowledge. Our basic design is flawed. We are in Error (or sin). Nevertheless, we yearn for the infinite.

Philosophy (or metaphysics) is a tragic passion. Metaphysics as an *explanatory system* comes to grief even as metaphysical *interest*, the passion for knowing *why*, continually re-emerges. A biblical revelation

responds to a metaphysical ‘why’ even as it models a Truth that inexplicably ‘comes out of nowhere’. The advent of love might relieve metaphysical *angst*, but it does not *explain* anything. The event of repetition only qualifies inexplicable pain, making it sufferable; it remains inexplicable. Repetition provides new and vivid registers of perception. A new world (or love) floats in for us experientially, awaiting poetic articulation. It appears as a site of marvel, praise, and astonishment, and flows healingly, working as a salve. Of course, we must be receptive to such an encounter. In letting go of the drive for *explanation* of hurt, we forgo a striving-to-achieve, forgo the impulse of an autonomous, executive self. This allows receptivity and willingness to supervene. A craving for self-sufficiency subsides. Such is the heart of *Repetition*, and the heart of the Christian option mapped out in *Philosophical Crumbs*.

PHILOSOPHICAL CRUMBS

Philosophical Crumbs reads more like the philosophical first half of *Repetition* than the second. It might be philosophical-theology, although sometimes it sounds like its parody. Like *Repetition*, it unsettles our expectations, starting with the title. A serious heading would be ‘Philosophical Reflections’ or ‘Philosophical Investigations’. At its full length, however, we have the title *Philosophical Crumbs, or a Crumb of Philosophy*. We don’t know whether to laugh at this poke at ‘serious’ philosophy, or to weep at the thought that the only wisdom available is crumbs—or to scowl because the author is pulling our leg. Kierkegaard, or his present pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, is willing to provoke philosophers and theologians who are typically put off by wit and lightheartedness. The Danish word ‘*Smuler*’ means ‘bits, scraps, crumbs, or trifles’. For years it has been translated in English as ‘fragments’. But ‘fragments’ is not among a dictionary’s favoured options for ‘*Smuler*’, and it guarantees that the nimble irony of that topsy-turvy title is lost.

Kierkegaard loved to satirize all-too-serious ponderous thinkers. Take his *Postscript*. The title signals an addendum to something considerably longer. But *Postscript* is a 500-page sequel to the 100-page *Crumbs*. At full length its title runs: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Crumbs: a Mimic-Pathetic-Dialectic Compilation: An Existential Intervention*. Seriously hilarious, he takes a poke at stiffness,

keeps humour alive and minds alert, mocking the pretension to summon the whole universe or all history—and have it delivered in a three-course meal. He will toss you a crumb.

In the title *Philosophical Crumbs, or a Crumb of Philosophy*, the halves are divided by an ‘or’ and they mirror each other in a whimsical repetition. Why should philosophy be sombre? ‘*Smuler*’ (‘scraps’, ‘bits’, ‘crumbs’) suggests the remains of a banquet. In the Gospel story Lazarus was content to gather crumbs falling from the rich man’s table (Luke 16: 21). Jesus broke bread into bits and scraps. *Philosophical Crumbs* is a parody of books that promise a banquet containing everything.

Reading Kierkegaard requires a rare combination of nimble wit, irreverence, and religious concern. He downplays his own part in the composition, putting forward Johannes Climacus as the author. But ‘S. Kierkegaard’ is ‘responsible for publication’. We are set adrift, left to our own interpretative devices, sharing a raft with a speaker who has only scraps in his sack and who disguises his real name. The original St John Climacus (c.570–649) was a Christian monk whose name, meaning John of the Ladder, derives from the title of his treatise on monastic life, *The Ladder of Paradise*. He might have been climbing to heaven. Yet he knows that God knocked down the Tower of Babel, also a ladder. A ladder might be no more than a logo to attract converts. Or it might offer a step up, not to storm heaven but to widen one’s horizon for a better survey of common ground. A better vantage on the vagaries of earthly life might improve one’s sense of the contrast, which is *religious* virtue or Truth.

Beginning the Text

The motto from Shakespeare at the start of the book, ‘Better well hanged than ill wed’, can be read as ‘I’d rather *be hung on the cross* than bed down with fast talkers selling flashy “truth” in a handful of proposition’. A ‘Propositio’ follows the preface, but it is not a ‘proposition to be defended’. It reveals the writer’s lack of self-certainty and direction: ‘The question [that motivates the book] is asked in ignorance by one who does not even know what can have led him to ask it.’ But this book is not a stumbling accident, so the author’s pose as a bungler may be only a pose. Underselling himself shows up brash,

self-important writers who know exactly what they're saying—who trumpet Truth and Themselves for all comers.

Climacus is not a learned hero or trumpeter or bungling under-study. He suggests in the Preface that he might be like Archimedes, the Greek mathematician, who finds a sword over his head after encircling armies break into the city. Archimedes does not beg for his life, but for his geometry. His circles, sketched in the sand, must not be disturbed. Climacus might bequeath gems hidden in scraps in the sand. He styles himself a bumpkin of little learning and no opinions, but this masks a clever urbanity. Climacus writes as a soul at risk. This precludes him from 'having opinions', in this sense: if one is about to drown, one has not the *luxury* of opinions. Diogenes appears, rolling his barrel as his city rushes this way and that preparing for siege. The citizens of Copenhagen are rushing about *their* business. Is Climacus another Diogenes, aimlessly tossing his crumbs? There follows a more remarkable image. Climacus is 'a nimble dancer in the service of thought', a dancer 'to the honour of the god'. A few sentences later we learn that he dances with no human partner, for he is wed to another dancer, the nimble 'thought of death'.

In Chapter I the writer is an assistant professor, a talking head, pacing at the blackboard charting differences between Socratic and Christian sites of Truth. Earlier, he's a show-off tossing witty crumbs at those who couldn't care less. Later he is a poet in the service of imagination. And in the Preface, he's a dancer with death before the god. This is fluid, polyphonic identity. Each face carries its own mood. The face of philosophy counters the purveyor of crumbs, each laughing at or mocking the other. Disruptive wit is steadied by chapter-by-chapter argument on salvation and history, sin and error, change and necessity, the reliability of ancient testimony. These steady arguments respond to the questions on the title page: *Can an eternal consciousness have a historical point of departure; could such a thing be of more than historical interest; can one build an eternal happiness on historical knowledge?*

The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith

In the decades before and on through Kierkegaard's university and writing years, a controversy simmered in sophisticated circles about

the relevance of historical scholarship to religious faith. ‘The search for the historical Jesus’, championed first by German scholars, might be a great boon for Christians: faith might be confirmed through historical fact (with attendant reasoned argument) rather than through revelation or the authority of a priestly institution. On the other hand, the search might also be a fruitless diversion. Archaeological digs and examination of texts might determine the *historical* truths round and about Christianity. One could compile a record of the life of a Jewish prophet, a political agitator, or the Son of God (as the case might be). Perhaps centuries of debate and bloody religious wars would cease, as truth replaced fiction, fact replaced myth. But Climacus never joins this parade. Faith or salvation can’t be based on historical records. Just as there will always be gaps between the history of purported egalitarian societies and the egalitarian ideal, so there will always be gaps between the historical Jesus and the Christian ideal. Research won’t detect a risen Christ.

Even if one tried, it is not easy to eke out credible narratives about Jesus. The record is scant, transmitted at third- and fourth-hand, and passed down through centuries with little check on accuracy of transmission. There are no ‘disinterested’ spectators, disciples, reporters, editors, or curators. Even the best-case scenario yields only *the most likely* story. Second, faith seeks immediate assurance and conviction, while historical reports, even reports of revelation, speak from a cautious, narrative-building mind—not from the heart that testifies. Yet again, even if history gave some credence to the fact of a risen Christ, there would be no data confirming a Christ whose *concern endures even to the present*. In *Postscript*, Kierkegaard quotes Lessing’s ‘leap over an enormous ditch’. From this we get allusions to Kierkegaard’s ‘leap of faith’, pictured as a hero vaulting wildly over a pit of poisonous snakes. But Kierkegaard’s ‘leap’ is closer to the shifts from numbers to values, from the story of good Samaritans to answering a cry for help, or from evidence of atrocities to faith in (or despair of) humanity. To cross over to value or faith or faithful action of any sort, we must leap these sizeable gaps.

The Impact of Truth

Sunsets touch us because we have receptors designed for us to be so touched. We learn simple mathematics so quickly because we are



designed to handle arithmetic. We learn by ‘remembering how to do it’, as it were. That is the Socratic model. Yet Truth can also strike us as utterly strange: *it happened, but I’ll never believe it!* And in some cases, it strikes and we are changed in the knowing of it: *I’ll never be the same!* Rather than our *doing* something to access truth, through its impact truth accesses *us*. Think of the horrors of battle exposing a soldier to a shattering revelation. It would be non-Socratic, because (a) he had not ‘always known’ these truths (of brutality, or suffering, or the necessity of doing evil); (b) he is changed through and through by the encounter with them; (c) he can be broken under the impact, showing that he is *not* ‘designed’ to handle them; (d) he can emerge a new man, as the misfit between who he was before and who he becomes, between his earlier self-sufficiency and his later humbling tremors, resolves itself.

In place of battle-trauma, imagine truth breaking through in soul-shattering conversion-trauma. Christ can make unbelievers Christians ‘in the twinkling of an eye’. His Truth fits nothing we were or could know (‘Love your enemies!’). Unlike Socrates, a saviour provides a jolting awareness of the heterogeneous. In his technical jargon, Climacus says that Socrates gives us the *occasion* for the arrival of innate Truth, while a saviour gives us the design feature and weakness required as a *condition of receiving* Truth. For a Christian, receiving Truth is receiving the saviour who *is* Truth, whose intervention hollows out a space for his own reception. The Socratic models self-realization as becoming what we already ‘eternally’ are. The Gospel models radical reconstruction, accepting new being with-and-for-others. But this offer will seem exorbitant and offensive in its demands. To accept appears to be participating in one’s own extinction.

It is as hard for a human to be Christian as for a fish to sing. A human’s design must be totally altered; by nature, it is radically unsuited. ‘The god’ has to ‘create a new being’ that after conversion might not look *that* different. But while appearing only to swim, she would be newly fitted to sing, and perhaps do more singing than swimming. Refitting our condition happens in the ‘twinkling of an eye’, in a poetic ‘flash of transforming vision’. Yet the sense of that impact may remain strange. Wonder steps with humble ignorance and fearful unknowing.



Hebraic, Socratic, Christian

The idiom of ‘crumbs’ mocks professorial chatter. If Climacus is to avoid the appearance of chatter, he must not appear to run on a radically Christian ticket against the Socratic–Hegelian alternative. At most he tenders a case for the *possibility* of a Christian position: if the Socratic stance is incomplete (as the plausibility of transforming truth seems to show), then there is a chance that the alternative is correct — that insight arrives in the fullness of time wherein we are made new. Climacus doesn’t worry about all the implications. He assumes the Truth exists; he doesn’t consider nihilism, a dismal possibility. And if Truth comes through a revelation that I am powerless to summon, then I may be condemned to endless waiting. At least the Socratic option lets me hunt for a good teacher. Climacus assumes that Truth arrives either from outside or inside the human. But Truth might arise in a negotiation between the other and the familiar. A subject’s initiative could be met halfway by an initiative from outside, and vice versa. Additionally, Truth might be non-Socratic and still not quite Christian. It might arrive through Job’s Whirlwind — *not* Christ’s incarnation.

Repetition’s young man is not Christian, nor about to become one. If anything, he is Hebraic. The Socratic model of grasping an innate Truth does not fit the arrival of Job’s ‘thunderclap’ or the return of Isaac. But the advent of a God-man, a *Christian* revelation, is not quite what Job or Abraham undergo, either. Yet the young man of *Repetition* stands closer to Christianity than to Socratic recollection or Hegelian historicism. Neither his sweetheart nor his freedom can be regained through memory or time. An intervening ‘thunderclap’ is *somewhat* akin to a saviour’s advent.

It is remarkable that what starts as a bare outline of a non-Socratic position stealthily acquires the ornaments of Christian theology. Climacus has the teacher become Teacher and Saviour, ignorance become Error and Sin, the Saviour become Atoning Redeemer and Judge, deciding our fate; the Moment becomes Fullness of Time, the beholder Repents, is Converted, becomes a New Creature. These adornments are acquired in only half-a-dozen sentences.

A King and a Maiden

In Chapter II Kierkegaard introduces the fable of a king who finds himself in love with a poor maiden. Differences in class or wealth or

power short-circuit understanding, and so short-circuit love. The king's robes and throne hide *him*, for she will see glory and power, not his love. He cannot be generous, showering her with wealth and privilege, for then she would see a bestower of bedazzling goods. To see *him* in his *love*, she can't see his largesse. Seeing his generosity will trigger gratitude, but love in repayment of debt is tainted. The king wants a love that would flow even if he offered nothing but crumbs. If he sheds his glory and power, appearing as only a poor servant, his love still might be hidden. She could pity him as just another beggar looking for leftovers she could spare. The analogy is with God's love. For it to show, God must shed his glory and power. Christian love is love not just of the mighty, but of the least. For the poor and homeless to see God as love rather than might, he must arrive poor and homeless, the equal of those he loves. Yet to appear as a humble servant makes it no easier to show love; the poor can assume he wants company in his affliction. If God is love, he can be neither visible nor invisible.

To break this double bind—love must be seen and not seen—we have to imagine a miracle. The maiden would have to be reborn and refitted in a way that ensured that her love would be blind, at least partially, to wealth, privilege, and power (or their absence)—free from inhibiting gratitude and bedazzlement, yet attuned to the other's love. If the maiden is remade by a transforming revelation (in a Christian reading of the fable), then she may express gratitude (how could she *not!*) and be innocently won over. Yet all the while she is made to see *love as it is*, apart from its worldly disguises: it might arrive as king *or* servant *or* both!

Paradox, Passion, and Reason

Death as salvation, evil forgiven, power as powerlessness—each pair offends reason because each is recalcitrant to it. At a high pitch, this recalcitrance is the offence of Paradox, an incongruity that both stalls and arouses reason. Stalled and aroused, in Chapter III Climacus writes 'a metaphysical caprice' or whimsy. He plays disarmingly with such oddities as a truth that *seeks us*; that unites *temporal and eternal*; a love needing miracles. Running up against such enigmas arouses the passion of reason, making it work that much harder. Then Climacus announces that passion seeks its own *downfall*.

Why? Perhaps love needs to subside in order to reflect back on itself, to measure its strengths. To test a beam's strength, we bring it to its breaking point. To know its strength, the passion of reason must seek its match and its downfall. What better adversary than paradox?

We needn't fault reason for pushing to exhaustion and collapse; that is just the way of any passion. Short of a miracle, neither love nor reason can attain the peace and understanding that it seeks, for several reasons. Each harbours internal conflict: love of others needs self-love, but in ways they are opposites; effective practical reason and would-be imperial reason are mutually opposed. A strong self-love grounds the requirement that we love others as ourselves, yet being-for-others means keeping self-love in check. The more expansive and detached imperial reason becomes, the less it is locally effective. And each faces external conflict: falling in love puts the passion of reason on hold, and the passion of reason can put opportunities for love on hold. But paradox can frustrate reason, with salutary effect. The ever-restless knower-reasoner can be transformed into someone else—someone humbled, and for a moment, full of wonder. This clears the decks for a 'jolt' of transformation. From Climacus' perspective, the defeat of ever-expanding reason opens space for a God-man's arrival.

Offence

In an 'Addendum' Climacus looks further into the offence to reason as it breaks against paradox. He alludes to an 'acoustical illusion': the ear mishears. It is an illusion if reason hears a death-knell when it is frustrated, for reason can start again elsewhere. Paradox defeats reason, but not every defeat is a humiliation. There is nothing humiliating in reason's discovering its limits. Even the most powerful passions meet their match, if nowhere else, then in death, and there is no reason to take death as humiliation.

Openness to otherness means suspending the passion of reason. We must be quieted, as Job was, to let the Other speak. Job 'melts away' before the wonder of the Whirlwind and all it delivers. He knows directly the futility of his former questions and stops asking. The intrusion of paradox is coordinate with revelation that raises up life from the ashes of despair. If a person is a nest of self-expanding projects, rooted in desire or thought or imagination, each of these

passions or projects can be self-valorizing. When outreachings of the self are halted, time is ripe for refitting. Truth undoes and redoes the receptor to its own specifications. Job is reborn as an ear tuned to the poetry of the world. He is no longer a lawyer demanding *his* turn to speak, *his* turn to interrogate. Climacus takes a lead from the otherness of death; it suspends self-valorization. Death gives a sense to life's dance.

Interlude

Typically, an interlude is a moment of relaxation within a more taxing structure, as a musical interlude is. But Climacus makes the Interlude that follows Chapter IV the most condensed and difficult section in all of *Philosophical Crumbs*. It is worth wrestling with bits of it, though. For a start, he differentiates levels of faith. In ordinary knowing, say in simple historical knowing, faith operates at a familiar and uncontroversial level. We move from hints and possibilities to the assurance that we now *know* what happened, or are pretty sure about it. I may wonder if it is true that a well-known soldier was recently killed by 'friendly fire'. In fits and starts a record accumulates, full of gaps and contradictions. But as facts gather and cover-ups are exposed, a narrative emerges and my doubt subsides. I see that it is really *true* that, in a terrible mix-up, he was shot by his own troops. That occurs, if it does, on the basis of what we can call 'first-level faith', faith as a confidence in some stock of empirical beliefs that grows in scope every day.

A second-level faith is trust in a construal of first-level beliefs. I might construe history as an upward progress (or a slow decline), or construe persons as basically good (or bad, or neither). I might be assured that evil will be punished (or won't). These thoughts about 'the way things are' can be idle musings, or relatively firm beliefs subject to discussion, or indeed, matters of deep and unshakable conviction. A first-level faith brings closure to my belief that there are untold instances of evil-doing. A second-level faith can focus those beliefs into the conviction that 'men are inherently evil'. The 'existential grip' of unshakable conviction transcends what we would expect as a decision reached by discussion. Some might agree that Jesus comforted the poor (a first-level belief), and yet reach no agreement that his is the deepest compassion one could know

(a second-level conviction). For Christians, second-level convictions are about the centrality of compassion, but also about rebirth and creation, history and change, the necessity of the past or the indeterminacy of the future. We can subject these convictions to a kind of metaphysical analysis.

Necessity, Change, and History

Whatever undergoes change, Climacus says, already exists. For any change, there is a ‘that’ that changes. Now a change in being is marked by its invasion by something it is not. A possibility is ‘not-being’. Coming into being, then, is the invasion of being by non-being, of a being by what it is not, of actuality by possibility. For someone who earlier was suspicious of metaphysical reason, Climacus seems all too adept at it. It is his chance to show off, but not only that, for he has a metaphysical interest in freedom. If the necessary is a precondition of something coming into existence, then the original necessity cannot itself have come into existence. It is the realm of the unchangeable, where nothing comes or goes. But freedom must enter any account of change, because persons bring things into existence. So Climacus posits a freely acting cause, a basis from which things come into existence. Causes reach bedrock in freedom.

This metaphysical picture is meant to allay two worries. We cannot stomach the anxiety raised by the thought of a universe of *endlessly* receding causal chains. We need to say, ‘*In the beginning . . .*’ Second, we cannot stomach the anxiety raised by the thought of a universe of *nothing but lifeless* causes; there must be room for freedom. To allay both anxieties, Climacus posits a *first* cause (no infinite regress) that is *free* (no exclusion of free agency). This sounds suspiciously like positing God as first cause. Should we cheer Climacus for his brilliance or jeer him from the stage?

Climacus proceeds to differentiate two levels of history. Anything that comes into existence has a past and thus a history. Some things emerge as a matter of physics, chemistry, and physiology. Other things emerge through human choice and become embedded in culture. A natural history (*without* culture) has within itself the possibility of a ‘redoubled’ coming into existence (history *with* culture and agency). The past isn’t necessary, but nevertheless it can’t

be changed. Climacus concludes that to know history is to know a field of freedom. Thus it is *not* a matter of what had to be, or was fated from eternity.

Resolution and Scepticism

What defeats scepticism, as Climacus sees it, is not so much cognition as *will*. The greater the contingency of something we would believe in, the greater the leaps required for conviction. We have three gaps to leap if we are to be convinced that a child born under a star is a saviour. The first leap comes when we grant the near certainty that a particular mother gave birth to a child 2,000 years ago in a particular land. But another gap must be faced if we think it is important that this child, as an adult, is compassionate or healing. We need cultural, not merely biological, knowledge and resolution to believe that Jesus had compassion for others, or cried in anguish from the cross. And for some, there will be a third gap to leap. Perhaps this compassionate man is the Saviour, the eternal in time. But a resolution at this third level will have a radically different structure from the first two resolutions.

I can bring myself into a cognitive position ready to embrace the fact that a child came into existence 2,000 years ago, or that Jesus was compassionate in life and in anguish at death. (I go over the texts and decide that the evidence *tilts* that way.) But in coming to believe that Jesus is the Eternal in Time (for instance), I do not *bring myself into a cognitive position*. Something *displaces* my cognitive position, *obstructs* and *dismantles* it. If I come to believe that the Eternal entered Time, it is not because I have assumed a position appropriate for making good cognitive judgements. My best cognitive positions are roundly dislodged. The eternal disables my expectations and shuts down reason. If I emerge with a positive Christian conviction, it is because my receptive equipment has been refitted. Closure at this third level comes primarily through an unseen initiative that *undoes* my preferred cognitive position and simultaneously provides new angles of orientation—at first unsettling and offensive, at last, satisfying and saving.

Can this third sort of resolution have any appeal to those who are not already Christians? Can it appeal—even to *Christians*! There are severe limits to reason's capacity to exhibit the allure of the bibli-

cal model to the unconvinced, or even to those who think to be a Christian is just to accept one's present social status, for instance. A reader might well stick with the Socratic model, might fail to see why one should acquiesce in having one's will shaped by another. Delineating, as Climacus does, the possibility of a non-Socratic position with regard to Truth may convey to sceptical others some small bit of the allure it holds—generally, and for a believer. But it also may utterly fail. Whether we are persuaded that a revelation of our insufficiency, if it happens, should stick as a plausible description of our condition, or whether we are actually given the sort of revelation he sketches, are matters out of his control, and ours. There is no *forcing* radical transformation.

Closing

The book comes to an end in Chapter V, and a final 'moral of the story'. Climacus discusses the question whether persons who were in close proximity to Jesus have an advantage in grasping the Truth he embodies and speaks over those from later generations and centuries, the 'disciples at second hand'. He answers that those who were in close proximity have 'gaps' to leap every bit as daunting as those faced by persons living centuries later. Being proximate requires faith at three levels, just as being distant would. Being near might even be thought harder, since the templates suitable to assimilate the stark events, refined over centuries of tempering cultural interpretation, would be unavailable. On the other hand, nineteenth-century would-be Christians have to unlearn those accumulated interpretations that make Christianity all-too familiar, a matter of simple socialization from the cradle to the grave. Christianity has to be made strange. But comparing difficulties in understanding across historical eras is a bit like comparing trauma or joy across centuries. For Climacus, the point is that a shattering jolt is inescapable—no one is raised a Christian. It becomes just as impertinent to ask 'whose disruption is greater' as it is to ask 'whose trauma is greater'. A full human response to the witness and writing of Søren Kierkegaard in 1840s Copenhagen is not made less possible by the passage of 170 (or 300) years. Nor is a full human response to the witness and events witnessed now two millennia ago made less possible by the passage of time.

The final ‘moral of the story’ is concise. We are invited to consider a non-Socratic alternative; and this is clearly the Christian alternative. Climacus avers that to go *beyond* Socrates requires assent to ‘a new organ: faith; a new presupposition: the consciousness of sin; a new decision: the moment; and a new teacher: the god in time’. He does not conclude that the Socratic model is erroneous. The admonition is that Copenhagen’s so-called Christians, if they are to surpass the Socratic presumption that truth lies within, cannot dodge the requirements: that there is a new organ, a new presupposition, a new decision, a new teacher. To be true to Socrates *and* to Christ, one’s Christianity cannot be just another version of the Socratic. Yet as Climacus sees it, that is the radically *un-Christian* style of the philosophy and culture and religion around him.

Kierkegaard confessed late in life that his entire task as a writer had been Socratic. By that he meant, at the least, asking the deepest questions about how one should live, and pursuing them fearlessly. He also meant maintaining a certain irony about the limits of reason. Socrates professed ignorance, in part, to avoid the pretence that there were ready-made answers to deep questions, and to encourage those who listened to resolve these questions on their own, not on his authority. Kierkegaard was true to these features of the Socratic adventure and so characterized his career as Socratic, but he was also unmistakably Christian.

Because *Crumbs* ends with accentuating the *difference* between the Socratic and the Christian, we should note that Kierkegaard finally brings them together. He exploited his Socratic inquisitive challenges to the end of sketching the core of non-Socratic lives—some Christian, some nearly Christian, some anti-Christian, some anti-Socratic, some neither here nor there. He was Socratic in a venture to be Christian, and Christian in a venture to be Socratic. Climacus avers early in *Crumbs* that within the wonder of faith, ‘everything is structured Socratically’. Later in his writings we hear Kierkegaard say, in his own voice, ‘Socrates has become a Christian’. ¹But to pursue further how one can be both Socratic and Christian brings one to a new wilderness.

¹ *The Point of View For My Work as an Author*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 54.

The great appeal of Kierkegaard's writing in the twenty-first century and beyond rests on two striking accomplishments. He had an alarmingly powerful capacity to challenge, perplex, and sustain Christian and Socratic intuitions and institutions, not to mention a capacity to provide endless stand-apart aesthetic and ethical insights—challenges, insights, and affirmations that he then quilted into the shapes of a number of partially viable lives. And second, he conducted this venture passionately, poetically, and philosophically in a variety of wonderfully innovative genres, with a style and wit that the best of those who shape culture (poets and novelists, theologians and dramatists, philosophers and painters), have found strange, irresistible and transforming.

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NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

TWO VERY different translation methods have tended to dominate translations of Kierkegaard's works: the semantic method and the faithful method. The former approach allows for a certain creativity on the part of the translator. A faithful translation, on the other hand, strives for absolute fidelity. The difficulty is that the semantic method sometimes results in translations that are too free, and the faithful method often results in translations that are too literal.

Some earlier translators of Kierkegaard were understandably concerned to preserve fidelity to the original text. Precision is crucial in a philosophical translation. There are limits to the degree of precision that is possible, however, due to the nature of translation itself. Unfortunately, a zeal for accuracy can result in a loss of some of the literary quality of the original. Such a loss is particularly lamentable in the case of Kierkegaard because, unlike most philosophers, Kierkegaard was a great prose stylist. Many readers have been attracted to his writings for their literary quality alone.

I have thus, in the translation of these two works, chosen the semantic translation method, but with a keen eye to preserving distinctions that appear important in the original text. I have sometimes departed from the original for aesthetic reasons, as is the case, for example, with several of the poems, where I have made small changes to the wording to render a poem that preserves, as much as possible, both the metre and the rhyme of the original. Aesthetic concerns were also, arguably, behind my decision to translate the Danish *Guden* ('the God') in *Crumbs* sometimes with, and other times without, the definite article. Greek makes much more frequent use of the definite article than does English. Kierkegaard's decision to use the definite article was probably motivated by a desire, clear in other aspects of the work, to emulate the form of the Platonic dialogue. I have omitted the definite article, however, in places that depart, at least to some extent, from the Platonic form to consider more traditional theological questions, such as various proofs for God's existence, and where the inclusion of the article is thus jarring.

It was simple accuracy, however, rather than aesthetic concerns, which lay behind several other decisions. Unlike some earlier translators of Kierkegaard, I have endeavoured, for example, to preserve such important philosophical distinctions as those between ‘reality’ (*Realitet*), ‘actuality’ (*Virkelighed*), and ‘existence’ (*Existentis* or *Tilvaerelsen*), and between ‘romantic love’ (*Elskov*) and what Kierkegaard calls ‘the erotic’ (*Erotiken* and *Erotisk*).

These translations are based on the texts of *Søren Kierkegaard's Samlede Voerker* (Søren Kierkegaard's Collected Works), ed. A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg, and H. O. Lange, 2nd edn., vols. 1–15 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1920–36), as well as on *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* (Søren Kierkegaard's Writings), the new Danish edition of Kierkegaard's collected works. The former edition was generally considered to be superior both to the first edition of Kierkegaard's collected works, as well as to a later edition produced for popular consumption in the 1960s. This edition is, however, now out of print. As a service to the reader, I have therefore included page correlations in the margins to *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*. This edition is, regrettably, prohibitively expensive for anyone but the most dedicated scholars or libraries, but it is freely available online in a searchable edition.

Asterisks in the text indicate an explanatory note at the back of the book. Translations of short foreign words and phrases in Kierkegaard's text are provided as footnotes; other footnotes are by Kierkegaard, and indicated as such.

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E.F.M

A CHRONOLOGY OF SØREN KIERKEGAARD

- 1813 Søren Aabye Kierkegaard is born 5 May in Copenhagen; Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, his father, is a wealthy merchant of peasant origin; his mother, Ane Sørensdatter Lund Kierkegaard, had been a household servant; they were married shortly after Michael's first wife's death; his mother is 45, his father 56, at his birth.
- 1821 Enrolled in the Borgerdyd School; has by now acquired the pet-name 'the fork'.
- 1830 Enters the University of Copenhagen as a theology student.
- 1831 Passes exams in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and history *cum laude*, and in physics, mathematics, and philosophy *cum laude*.
- 1834 Begins the journal that will continue throughout his life; his mother dies.
- 1835 Travels to the rugged seashore at Gilleleie; there he confides to his journal that he seeks 'the idea for which I can live and die'.
- 1837 In early May, he meets the love of his life, Regine Olsen, then 15; begins teaching Latin.
- 1838 Drafts a philosophical comedy, 'The Battle between the Old and New Soap-Cellars' (left unpublished); father dies at age 82; publishes *From the Papers of One Still Living*, published against his will by S. Kierkegaard.
- 1840 Takes comprehensive exams (for his theology degree); proposes to Regine Olsen in September; begins seminary training for the pastorate.
- 1841 Preaches his first sermon; defends *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates*, his MA thesis (later upgraded to a Ph.D.) in September; breaks his engagement to Regine in October; leaves Copenhagen for Berlin, where he attends Schelling's lectures and begins to sketch out the first few books that establish his lasting reputation.
- 1842 Returns to Copenhagen in March, writing at rapid pace; begins 'Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est' (left unpublished).
- 1843 *Either/Or, a Fragment of Life* ('ed. Victor Eremita') appears, 20 Feb.; 16 Oct, *Fear and Trembling* ('by Johannes de silentio'),

- Repetition* ('by Constantine Constantius'), and *Three Upbuilding Discourses* (including a talk, or discourse, on Job) appear simultaneously; 6 Dec., *Four Upbuilding Discourses* published.
- 1844 *Philosophical Crumbs, or a Crumb of Philosophy* ('by Johannes Climacus') and *The Concept of Anxiety* ('by Vigilius Haufniensis') appear; also *Prefaces* ('by Nicolaus Notabene') and three sets of *Discourses*.
- 1845 *Stages on Life's Way* ('edited by Hilarius Bogbinder') is published, and two sets of *Discourses*.
- 1846 A feud with the *Corsair*, a satirical gossip sheet, begins; considers applying for ordination; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Crumbs: A Mimic-Pathetic-Dialectic Compilation: An Existential Intervention* ('by Johannes Climacus') appears; then *A Literary Review: Two Ages* ('The Age of Revolution' and 'The Present Age').
- 1847 Drafts 'The Book on Adler' (left unpublished); publishes *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, and *Works of Love*.
- 1848 *Christian Discourses* and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* ('by Inter et Inter') appear; writes *The Point of View of My Work as an Author* (published posthumously in 1859); 'Armed Neutrality' written (left unpublished).
- 1849 *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air* appears; second edition of *Either/Or*, followed by *The Sickness Unto Death* ('by Anti-Climacus'); three discourses and two minor essays published.
- 1850 *Practice in Christianity* ('by Anti-Climacus') and a discourse are published; Bishop Mynster, a leading cultural figure and long-time friend of the Kierkegaard family, is provoked into responding to Kierkegaard's charge that the elite of the church seek only a comfortable living.
- 1851 *On My Work as an Author* appears with two discourses; then, *For Self Examination*.
- 1852 *Judge for Yourselves!* written (not published until 1876).
- 1854 Bishop Mynster dies in January, succeeded by H. L. Martensen; Kierkegaard begins a full-scale attack on Martensen and the State Church in the journal *Fædrelandet*.
- 1855 Continues his attack on the church, widening it to include the clergy, publishing his own broadsheet, *The Moment [The Instant]*, in ten issues; publishes *This Must be Said; So Let It*

Now Be Said, then *Christ's Judgment on Official Christianity*, and *The Unchangeableness of God: A Discourse*; 25 Sept., last journal entry and last issue of *The Moment*; 2 Oct., collapses and enters Frederiks Hospital; dies 11 Nov.; buried Sunday, 18 Nov.; a disturbance breaks out at the graveside: students who sided with his attack on the church protest loudly that he would object to a church burial

