Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Søren Kierkegaard’s extensive catalogue of published and unpublished works had, both in Denmark and abroad, a profound influence on the theology, philosophy, and literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His religious philosophy, as well as his conflict-ridden relationship to the Danish State Church, not only greatly affected the Danish clergy but also served as an inspiration for Protestant and Catholic theology, as well as some Buddhist thought. Kierkegaard’s existential philosophy and his break with the systematic idealism of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel were crucial for both German and French existentialism, as well as for the Scandinavian writers of the Modern Breakthrough, whose main figures—the critic Georg Brandes and the playwrights Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg—were influenced by them. Kierkegaard’s acute psychological analysis, took as the basis for their work his understanding of the individual, despite their rejection of his Christianity. Through his unique ability to vary language according to the various viewpoints he adopted, Kierkegaard achieved significance both at home and abroad, setting a new standard for fiction and analytical prose.

Kierkegaard’s father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, married Ane Sørensøndatter Lund on 26 April 1797, after the death of his first wife on 23 March 1796. Although it was permissible for a widower to remarry after a period of three months, it was indeed awkward for the head of a household to be marrying his servant girl, who, by the time of the wedding, was in her fourth month of pregnancy. As a boy, Michael had traveled from the impoverished, heath-country parish of Sædding, near Ringkøbing Fjord, to be trained as a hosier in Copenhagen, where he later became a merchant. During the economic boom he had quickly amassed so large a fortune that he was able to build a house for his parents and three sisters back in Sædding. At the same time he acquired several properties in Copenhagen, all of which survived the great fire of 1795. By the time he married Ane, his holdings permitted him to retire from business and live as a rentier. Ane had, like her husband, left Jutland after her confirmation to earn a living, in her case as a domestic servant. Despite their considerable class and cultural differences, their marriage was a success. Michael Kierkegaard became increasingly concerned with religious and philosophical reading and speculation, while Ane had only a rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing.

The couple had three daughters, followed by three sons, from 1797 to 1809. After a few years as a country squire on an estate near Store Hestehave, near Hillerød, north of Copenhagen, the former hosier returned to the capital, where he purchased a home at 2 Nytorv, prominently situated on the former City Hall Square. There, on 5 May 1813, Søren Aaby Kierkegaard, the youngest in the family, was born. The family name referred to the occupation of his paternal grandfather, who was a sharecropper on one of the farms near the parish church in Sædding; the middle name came from a deceased relative, and the first name was that of his maternal grandfather, Søren Jensen Lund of Brande.

Every bit the last-born child, Søren Kierkegaard was spoiled, the two eldest children having died in 1819 and 1822. At the age of eight he matriculated at the highly regarded Bogerdydsskolen (School of Civic Virtue), located in what is now the headquarters of the Gyldendal publishing house, on Klareboderne in central Copenhagen. With his coarse clothing, he was awkward amid the children of the well-heeled. Although slight in stature, he avenged himself with a sharp tongue, with which he mocked and provoked both at school and at home. His childhood at 2 Nytorv was strongly marked by the influence of his ever-present and much-admired father, who involved his son in his philosophical and religious ponderings, as well as seeing to the development of his imagination and intellect. The young Søren
walked about indoors, conjuring up pictures of what he would have seen on a real stroll around town, a talent he later employed as he went about his apartment, jotting down thoughts and concepts on one or another of his several desks. His talent for classical languages, first demonstrated at the School of Civic Virtue, earned him, upon his graduation in 1830, a position as a tutor at the same institution. It was to be the only paid employment of his life.

As a student at the University of Copenhagen, Kierkegaard entered the King’s Life Guards but was discharged after only a few days because of the unequal length of his legs. He then threw himself into a broad range of subjects—aesthetics, philosophy, and theology—without, however, committing himself to any strict course of study or specific theoretical training. The goal was self-understanding, but by the mid 1830s his studies had led him instead to a bohemian existence, in which the bills from the tailor mounted and the enticing café life of Østergade consumed more energy than his academic work. His father at first complied, but when the expenses reached unacceptable levels, Michael Kierkegaard reined in his son’s spending with a contract. Shortly before his death in 1838, he indicated that Søren, who had left home in 1837, had kept his end of the bargain.

As a writer Kierkegaard made his public debut in 1834 in Johan Ludvig Heiberg’s Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post (Copenhagen’s Flying Post). Under the pseudonym “A” he contributed an article on the equality of women and, as “B,” a piece on freedom of the press, for which he received a response from Orla Lehmann, the leading liberal of the day. On 10 April of that year, in the same journal, Kierkegaard published his first article under his own name, in which he demanded that political reformers be held accountable for their views.

In addition to the two siblings who had died in childhood, Kierkegaard lost a brother in 1832, a sister in 1833, and, only a year later, another sister, as well as his mother. He spent the summer of 1835 on the northern coast of Zealand in the village of Gilleleje, which he recalled from earlier family holidays at Store Hestehave. He now applied himself to studying nature through a cultural perspective. J. M. Thiele’s Danske Folkesagn (1818-1823), a collection of Danish legends, guided him from place to place, and his observations of a family of charcoal makers in the Great Forest led him to experiment with a writing style much like that of Steen Steensen Blicher. Kierkegaard was interested in folk culture in connection with the humanist studies he pursued alongside his more fundamental academic work. He was especially concerned with the question of whether there was a common background to the stories of Don Juan, Faust, and Ahasuerus (the Wandering Jew). Although in fact unrelated, these figures have, especially in the popular tradition, served to inspire many tales—stories of seduction, self-understanding, and homelessness. Each received that which he coveted and hence became cursed. The summer in Gilleleje did not lead to a breakthrough in Kierkegaard’s studies, even though he considered not only theology and the humanities but also natural science. He did, however, come a little closer to an understanding of himself.

From the elevated coastal cliff over the village, Kierkegaard could view the broad horizon of the Kattegat (the arm of the North Sea between Jutland and Sweden), where the sea borders the heavens and the heavens the sea. In this experience of infinity and abundance, he felt God near him, and at the same time he felt a connection to his deceased family members. Of the large family, only the eldest brother, Peter Christian (born in 1805), remained. After a superb performance on the theological exam at the University of Copenhagen, Peter Christian had studied in Berlin and in 1829 had defended his dissertation, for which his ability in dialectical argumentation had been recognized. He became a pastor with a sympathy for the
teachings of the theologian and poet N. F. S. Grundtvig and later was made a bishop and minister of culture. Also still alive was Kierkegaard’s father, who came to feel that his family was under a curse. He saw himself as the cause, the punishment being that none of his children would live longer than the thirty-three years of Christ, and that he himself would outlive them all. He made his sons aware of this belief, which was perhaps rooted in the fact that, as a young shepherd boy in poor and barren Sædding, he had once cursed God for the miserable lot to which he had been born.

When, as a consequence of his background, Michael Kierkegaard had chosen to go to the capital, he was in fact taking part in a quite extensive movement from the country to the city. His religious and philosophical pondering was in essence rooted in the pietistic Christianity that he shared with the many other Jutlanders living in Copenhagen. The Moravian Brethren community (in Danish called Herrnhuterne, after the German village where Moravians fleeing religious persecution had settled in 1722), followers of the teachings of the German pastor Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, met regularly on Stormgade and claimed six hundred members, and Michael Kierkegaard was responsible for its organizational and financial matters. This brotherhood, with its fervent cultivation of “the heart of Christ, his blood and wounds,” had been established in 1727 and thrived in Denmark during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a religious sect outside the State Lutheran Church.

Poul Martin Møller, Søren Kierkegaard’s philosophy professor and partner in discussion, died on 13 March 1838, and Kierkegaard’s father, on the eighth or ninth of August of that year. Both deaths were deeply meaningful, requiring Kierkegaard to stand—spiritually speaking—on his own feet. Between the deaths of Møller and his father, he had written a literary review that appeared on 7 September, with the curious title Af en endnu Levendes Papirer (translated as “From the Papers of One Still Living,” 1990). Here Kierkegaard demonstrated his ability to carry out a literary analysis of the modern novel—specifically, Hans Christian Andersen’s Kun en Spillemand (1837; translated as Only a Fiddler, 1845)—according to the standards that literary critic and playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg had formulated on the basis of Hegel’s philosophy. But Kierkegaard carried out this analysis in continuation of his dialogue with Lehmann, by demanding of the novelist a consistent livsanskuelse (view of life) if the work is to be judged as ideologically and aesthetically coherent. Neither the word livsanskuelse nor the demand implicit within it were common at the time, but it clearly affiliated the student with the late Møller.

In the meantime, Kierkegaard had to acknowledge that he had survived his father, whom he had promised that he would complete his theological studies, which he did in 1840. That same year he took a pilgrimage to Sædding, where he was thanked for his father’s generosity, which had included support of the local school. Thereafter, Kierkegaard felt himself free enough to propose, on 1 September 1840, to the vivacious Regine Olsen, eleven years his junior, who had caught his eye when she was fifteen. For the next thirteen months he was not only occupied with Regine, his “Hjertes Herskerinde” (mistress of his heart), but also with his practical training at the Pastoral Seminary, as well as the philosophical studies that concluded with his dissertation. A few days after defending his dissertation, he broke the engagement because he felt that he could not commit to marriage, and he fled to Berlin, away from consternation and scandal. On 3 November 1847 Olsen married Frederik Schlegel.

Kierkegaard’s dissertation, published as Om Begrebet Ironi med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates (1841; translated as The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates, 1965), is, like Af en endnu Levendes Papirer, a study of a figure
related to an idea. In the dissertation, which formally concluded his humanistic studies, Kierkegaard employs his strong language skills in a philological uncovering of the figure of Socrates behind the various representations of him in antiquity. Without committing himself to any particular view of life, Socrates was able to reveal the blindness of others by asking questions as if to learn something, even though he already knew the answers; the actual reason for the questions was to reveal the respondent’s lack of knowledge. Socrates could therefore contribute to the unmasking of emptiness and deception without himself being responsible. He could in an indirect manner induce others to ask questions of themselves in such a way that they recollected the truth, heretofore hidden by deception inside themselves. Socrates therefore became the one who revealed—and thereby purified—the heathendom of antiquity, after which Christ could deliver the grace of God as the positive message. Similarly, irony in German idealist philosophy— from Immanuel Kant to Hegel—also became the object of Kierkegaard’s critique. The ironic writer is isolated from the ideal as well as concrete reality, and his existence is therefore without meaning. In contrast to the weltschmerz of the age (the term expressing Romantic pessimism used by German poets such as Heinrich Heine), which irresponsibly made a mockery of everything, Kierkegaard posited his Hegelian synthesis: "Ironi som behersket Moment" (irony which conquers the moment). Irony is controlled by the responsibility of individual existence and presents the possibility of critical liberation within Christianity. Just as doubt is the basis for science, so is irony the grasping of "det personlige Livs absolute Begyndelse" (the absolute beginning of the personal life). After this account of the maieutic method of Socrates, Kierkegaard was able to begin his own work of indirect communication.

From 1843 through 1855 Kierkegaard published under his own name a series of opbyggelige Taler (edifying discourses) from the Christian perspective for which he stood. At the same time, he pseudonymously published a series of literary works. In the latter he tested scenarios for various views of life, which, in the beginning, he called aesthetic, ethical, and religious, although he personally vouched neither for these experiments in psychology nor for the ways of life in question.

In the spring of 1843 Kierkegaard published, under the pseudonym Victor Eremita, the immense two-volume Enten-Eller. Et Livs-Fragment (translated as Either/Or: A Fragment of Life, 1944). The work consists of two parts, the first including the papers of the aesthete "A," the second those of the ethicist "B." The first part is a collection of works in three genres: the aphorisms of "Diapsalmata" (the term diapsalma stems from the Greek translation of the Psalms; Kierkegaard uses the plural form of the term, meaning "interlude" or "refrain"); six critical essays on aesthetic questions; and, finally, a novel titled "Forførerens Dagbog" (translated as Diary of a Seducer, 1932). In contrast to these diverse and heterogeneous offerings, the three long texts by B, the ethicist, range from an official statement of account to a personal letter. Whereas the first of the three texts considers the aesthetic from the perspective of the ethical, the second ponders the ethical in its own right, before the ethical collapses into the religious in the final piece. On the surface, Enten-Eller concerns two views of life from which the reader must choose, but that from which he is to choose influences the choosing. While the aesthete focuses on what it is to be chosen and the excitement of the choice itself, what is important to the ethicist is the individual’s discovery of the truth through the act of choosing, as well as the ethical obligations of the manner in which he chooses. At the conclusion of the two parts, both points of view are brought together. The aesthete is forced to choose again and again. The ethicist must see his own humane point of view overcome by a sermon demonstrating that against God one is always in
the wrong. The truth, therefore, is not, as Plato held, to be sought in man, but in God.

In the last of the many "Diapsalmata," the aesthete A is able to choose from all the world's glories, and he chooses always to have laughter on his side. The "Diapsalmata" may be understood as a designation of monotonous, repetitious refrain, which, similar to Hegel's "false infinity," is without movement, because the laughter is without perspective or responsibility, and because the dialectic still has not been set in motion. The "editor," Eremita, indicates that the short pieces in the "Diapsalmata" were found in no particular order, although some of them appear to be paired, so that they form a kind of dialogue. One of them expresses, through an apparently irrefutable philosophical proof, the contemporary European weltschmerz:

Jeg gider slet ikke. Jeg gider ikke ride, det er for stærk en Bevægelse; jeg gider ikke gaae, det er for anstrængende; jeg gider ikke lægge mig ned, thi enten skulde jeg blive liggende, og det gider jeg ikke, eller jeg skulde reise mig op igen, og det gider jeg heller ikke. Summa summarum: jeg gider slet ikke.

(I don't feel like doing anything. I don't feel like riding--the motion is too powerful; I don't feel like walking--it is too tiring; I don't feel like lying down, for either I would have to stay down, and I don't feel like doing that, or I would have to get up again, and I don't feel like doing that, either. Summa Summarum: I don't feel like doing anything.)

As a commentary on this humorous passage, "Diapsalmata" features a longer text headed "Enten-Eller," which begins with the injunction "Gift Dig. Du vil fortryde det; gift Dig ikke, Du vil ogsaa fortryde det; gift Dig eller gift Dig ikke, Du vil fortryde begge Dele" (Marry, and you will regret it. Do not marry, and you will also regret it. Whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way). But the reader should neither cease to act because everything is equally regrettable, nor, in a Hegelian manner, attempt to mediate the two alternatives. They should instead be considered from the viewpoint of eternity. In other passages the aesthete comes as close as he is able to eternity, which for him exists in the sky between the clouds. He knows not the Christian heaven but plays on such words as "baptism" and "eternity." The closest he comes to eternity is in a portrait of an old man who is explaining the images of folk literature to a child, suggesting the interest in folk culture that set Kierkegaard in motion with Enten-Eller. Aside from such glimpses, all else is put to mockery in the passages of "Diapsalmata," which, taken together, formulate the aesthetic view of life in its most rudimentary form, precisely where the dialectic takes off from "false infinity."

If "Diapsalmata" mirrors the fashionable café life of Kierkegaard's student days, then the six aesthetic essays demonstrate that he had also received an aesthetic and philosophical schooling. In two dialectical movements the essays follow the aesthetic from its most unreflective forms to its most reflective. First is "De umiddelbare erotiske Stadier eller det Musikalsk-Erotiske" (The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical-Erotic), in which Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera Don Giovanni (1787) is judged to be the supreme work in its genre, and the music in it—and music in general—is judged to be capable of expressing the aesthetic wholly unreflected, since language in itself is too reflective. Yet, the author expresses this "Musikalsk-Erotiske" in a language itself so musical that Kierkegaard contradicts his own point of view. The next essay is an examination of how the unreflective sorrow of antiquity is absorbed in the reflective anguish of modernity, an exercise corresponding to the treatment of irony in the dissertation. Last in the first series of three essays is "Skyggerids" (Silhouettes), a psychological survey of reflective sorrow, which lies beyond the possibility of artistic representation. After this demarcation of the aesthetic sphere, the next series of three essays
attempts to pinpoint the aesthetic personality. First is a psychological analysis of "Den Ulykkeligste" (The Unhappiest One), who, caught between hope and recollection, is denied access to both. Next is the aesthete's examination of Eugène Scribe's reflective comedy Les premières amours (First Loves, 1825), which Heiberg had translated in 1832 as Den første Kjærlighed (The First Love) and placed in a prominent position in the repertoire of the Royal Theater. This analysis may be understood as a contrasting piece to the treatment of Mozart's opera in "De umiddelbare erotiske Stadier eller det Musikalsk-Erotiske." The final essay is "Vexeldriften" (The Rotation of Crops), subtitled "Forsøg til en social Klogs kabslære" (A Venture in a Theory of Social Prudence), in which A wittily proclaims three maxims of wise counsel: beware of friendship, marriage, and the taking of any official post. This ethos--written by an aesthete for a like-minded reader--marks the distinction between the two ways of life. The aesthete does not desire friendship, sex, or productivity, but he is able in freedom to define the premises of his existence. Arbitrariness and laughter shall always be on his side.

This program is seen in action in the novel "Forførerens Dagbog." During the period in which Kierkegaard desired to end his engagement, he laid out in his diary a plan in which, by behaving repulsively, he would cause Regine herself to break it off, thereby allowing the slander to fall on him. It did not succeed. But in "Forførerens Dagbog" the diarist, Johannes, succeeds in both seducing a woman and disposing of her by conducting an experiment "saaledes at digte sig ud af en Pige, at man kunde gjøre hende saa stolt, at hun bilde sig ind, at det var hende, der var kjed af Forholdet" (in poetizing oneself out of a girl in such a way as to make her so proud that she imagined it was she who was so bored with the relationship). Johannes fashions himself as a scientist of the erotic, an amalgam of Faust and Don Juan, and when his experiment is completed, he is, like Ahasuerus, forced to repeat it again and again, damned as he is by his triumph.

The diary consists of three courses of events. The first takes place in the cafés of Østergade and in the galleries and various other places around Copenhagen where the well-heeled maintained their semiofficial environs. The reflective flaneur Johannes, whose name suggests the unreflective Don Juan, has his hunting grounds in these places, which he surveys with the keen eye of a detective. Three girls engage his interest briefly, but they are each sent packing. Thereafter he encounters, just as accidentally, the one whom he chooses; although unreflective, she has the capacity for passion and consciousness of pain. The section concludes in her private room, into which Johannes has gained access to convince himself that she has the psychic energies required to enter into his reflection and his experiment. Cordelia is her name, and she shares all of the gentleness and faithfulness of her namesake in William Shakespeare's King Lear.

The second course of events takes place in a typical Biedermeier living room, in which Johannes wins over Cordelia's aunt in part for his own sake and in part so that he may impress on Cordelia an increasing measure of cold irony and higher flights of thought. He is an expert strategist, gaining the aunt's assent through rapid subterfuge and immediately afterward planting the embryo of future disgust at his and Cordelia's eventual engagement.

In the third section Johannes wages two wars against Cordelia. The first is a war of liberation, in which she will learn to triumph as he himself retreats. At the same time her mind will be formed by the letters, and her sense of the erotic by the pictures, that he sends to her. After this double movement of liberation and binding follows the war of conquest, in which, through his mockery of the engagement, he induces her to come forward as a sexual being who hunts him. The consummation will take place in a
room he has arranged as a copy of the aunt's living room out of which he led Cordelia. The impending union connects Johannes to the pagan Roman myth of the power of love. The love that may be played out in bourgeois marriage he must see as a pale, passionless reflection of the attempt to unite man and woman, whom Jupiter had separated from one another because early humankind before this sundering was too powerful for the gods. This account is as close as Johannes may come to the biblical story of the Fall and Exile.

In the second part of *Enten-Eller*, B, Judge William, has the floor, and he proceeds in the exacting, logical, and tedious manner of the public official. Through his three letters he hopes to bring A out of the aesthetic and into the ethical. In contrast to the momentary impressions of the senses is offered a lasting joy; in contrast to seduction, the institution of marriage. William asserts that it is actually within the ethical that the aesthetic is realized, for it unites love and responsibility and through marriage is placed in relation to sin. When A says "either/or," it is in B's opinion the avoidance of choice. Against the nihilism expressed in A's pondering of his choices, B argues that what is of importance is the seriousness and pathos by which one chooses. B would gladly drive A to the point of despair, where it would be necessary to choose oneself as the absolute. In this case, A wants to create something that already exists. Therefore, he is not like God, who creates something new. But there emerges in the choice something new, which he has himself drawn out of the natural state of man. Whereas the aesthetic is, according to B, to be understood as "det i et Menneske, hvorved han umiddelbar er Den, han er" (that in a man whereby he immediately is the man he is), the ethical is "det hvorved et Menneske bliver det, han bliver" (that whereby a man becomes what he becomes). The individual must find the truth in himself and develop a self that is personal, social, and civic. This development occurs through friendship, marriage, and an official calling, which, precisely because of their binding nature, are capable of internalizing responsibility, so that it is not a power imposed from without.

The artistic type A falls short of the biblical account of the Creation and must remain in the paganism of Faust, Don Juan, and Ahasuerus, and in this way the public official B is developed dialectically within his limits through his letters to A. He asserts, like the Greeks, that man has the truth within himself, but this position is rejected in the final letter, which includes a sermon in which the thesis is that against God, man is always in the wrong. If the truth is with God, then it must be found through edification. The ethicist's final message to A is that "kun den Sandhed, der opbygger, er Sandheden for Dig" (only the truth which edifies is truth for you). Therefore, the choice between the aesthetic and the ethical became a neither/nor, and hence the floor was given to Kierkegaard himself as the author of *To opbyggelige Taler* (Two Edifying Discourses; translated in *Edifying Discourses*, 1943), which was published as an accompaniment to *Enten-Eller* on 16 May 1843.

The edifying discourses are written in a clear, accessible language and form a parallel series to the pseudonymous works, beginning with *Enten-Eller* and including *Øieblikket* (1855; translated as "The Moment," 1998), which was accompanied by the discourse *Guds Uforanderlighed* (translated as "The Unchangeableness of God," 1941), published on 3 September 1855, a little more than two months before Kierkegaard's death. Most of these works are untitled, or rather bear a title simply denoting the genre. Especially in the beginning, he included the number of discourses in the title, in 1843 and 1844 publishing volumes called *To-, Tre-, and Fire opbyggelige Taler* (Two, Three, and Four Edifying Discourses). According to Kierkegaard, these texts were called "Taler" (speeches) because, as an unordained theologian, he had no right to preach, although the use of this term also served to distance him
from the teach "from above," for he preferred to edify "hiin Enkelte" (that single individual) whom he addressed in the foreword of each of the volumes. In the beginning this approach was a nod to Regine, for whose religious education he still felt responsible, but later it came to be directed at anyone who might be "that single individual," for religious edification presupposes that man is subjective.

From beginning to end, Kierkegaard ritually upheld the practice of dedicating each volume in the series of edifying discourses to the solemn memory of his father. In relation to the rest of Kierkegaard’s works, these texts are an expression of a surprising stability, which may well be likened to the regular churchgoing he maintained throughout all of the pressures of work and inner turmoil. Although he wished to distance his discourses from sermons proper, they have many characteristics in common with the new, psychologically oriented, and more literary and aesthetic—and effective—style that Bishop Jakob Peter Mynster had successfully introduced into the Danish State Lutheran Church.

As a young country pastor in Spjellerup, Mynster had long considered the question of how one could find authentic Christianity in a situation in which the traditional faith in the Scriptures as the truth revealed by God had been discredited by sciences such as archaeology and philology, even though efforts in these sciences to demonstrate the truth had failed. Mynster was influenced by Kant’s distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal realities, which liberated religiosity from being merely an extension of the usual educational endeavors. Hereafter, the question of what this new freedom meant became the central problem of the new generation of Romantic theologians. In Mynster’s account this freedom led, via Benedict de Spinoza, to a choice between conscience and faith in God. Mynster’s mild Lutheranism did not much diverge from tradition, but he himself saw it as enough of a break to constitute the framework for that of which his predecessors had been incapable. The practical expression of Mynster’s 1803 Spjellerup religious breakthrough was his working out of a new type of sermon. He published the first volume in 1810 and the next in 1815. In 1812 his deliberations on the genre appeared as Om den Kunst at predike (On the Art of Preaching). Back in Copenhagen in 1811 as resident curate at Vor Frue Kirke (Our Lady’s Church), Mynster won a large following among educated and cultivated citizens through his sermonizing, which united a carefully crafted oratorical and gestural idiom with a melodious text cleansed of heavy biblical citations. His style, furthermore, closely resembled contemporary poetry. Mynster not only provided an aesthetic awakening but also employed his psychological empathy with the congregation to support these bureaucrats and businessmen in their roles as decision makers.

Kierkegaard had learned much in both manner of expression and practical psychology from Mynster, his father’s pastor and the man who confirmed him, although Kierkegaard in his writings speaks more intimately than Mynster to his readers. In his last edifying discourse, Guds Uforanderlighed, Kierkegaard returned to the same passage from the Epistle of James that he had used in the conclusion of the To opbyggelige Taler of 1843: "Al god Gave og al fuldkommen Gave er ovenfra" (Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above). While he is gently persuasive in the early discourses, in the later works one can see Pietism more clearly. Faith in paradox likewise also appears in these texts. (Paradox is a significant concept in Kierkegaard’s work, for example, in his concept of the "moment" in which time and eternity meet.) Nevertheless, the author’s humble praise of God and entreating of hope and consolation for each individual remain unchanged. At the same time, these discourses markedly distinguish themselves from the understanding of the religious in the rest of Kierkegaard’s work, which functions as their partner in dialogue. In his role as an edifying—rather,
evangelical--author, Kierkegaard operates in a space seemingly undisturbed by what he has written elsewhere. One can choose to take his proclamation at his word or conceive of this series of discourses as the primary axis of his writing, which would place the reader in agreement with the interpretation that Kierkegaard himself delivered, first in Afslutende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift til de philosophiske Smuler (Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments, 1846; translated as Kierkegaard’s Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 1941), then in Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed (1851; translated as "On My Work as an Author," 1939), and finally in the posthumously published Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed (1859; translated as "The Point of View for My Work as an Author," 1939), written in 1848. Even if one agrees with this interpretation, it must be admitted that Kierkegaard is at his most original in texts other than the discourses. They are perhaps a symbol of the comfortable, peaceful position that he now and then dreamed of realizing by abandoning writing in favor of a post as a country parish pastor.

On 16 October 1843 Kierkegaard published three works: Frygt og Bæven. Dialektisk Lyrik (translated as Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric, 1939), Gjentagelsen. Et Forsøg i den experimenterende Psychologi (translated as Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology, 1941), and Tre opbyggelige Taler (translated in Edifying Discourses, 1943). In Gjentagelsen the pseudonymous author, the cynical, stoic aesthete Constantin Constantius, seeks cohesion in his existence. In vain he searches for the aesthetic repetition of a Berlin theater experience and in so doing tells the story of "Det unge Menneske" (the young man), who, after his engagement, suddenly realizes that his betrothed is only his muse, only the occasion for the undertaking of difficult spiritual questions. To live with her in the ethical repetition of daily life would drive her to despair. He wonders whether the right thing to do in this situation is to break off the engagement. By reading the Book of Job, he comes to understand that even if what is most humane is right, it is still not in right relation to God, as man in relation to God is always in the wrong. He wants now to return to the relationship but discovers that the woman has married another; hence, in a proper understanding, the young man is free. He has, by humbling himself like Job, received everything in return, as well as the opportunity for a reconciliation with the woman on a higher, more spiritual plane. Thus, he has reached repetition in a religious sense. The whole is, however, revealed as a fiction, contrived by Constantius and conducted as "Et Forsøg i den experimenterende Psychologi" with a view to the understanding of his own existence.

Frygt og Bæven concerns the boundary between the ethical and the religious. From his interpretation of Abraham's plan to sacrifice his son Isaac, the pseudonymous Johannes de Silentio asserts that between the ethics of man and the demands of God for sacrifice, there is a radical break, a "leap." Abraham must step outside human society, which cannot tolerate the behavior demanded of him. He must surrender everything to his faith in the paradox of the "God-Man." Therefore, he may make "Bevægelsen i Kraft af det Absurde" (the movement by virtue of the absurd), or "Uendelighedens Dobbelt Bevægelse" (the double movement of infinity), and thus receive everything back again. Johannes’s book is characterized as a "Dialektisk Lyrik." He remains silent in his inner submission to the paradox, but Kierkegaard distances himself both from the humanism of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in which the life of the individual is seen to develop harmoniously from phase to phase, and from the thought of Hegel, in which each individual concept is dialectically annulled in the next, contradictions are resolved through speculation, and radical paradoxes do not appear. In Frygt og Bæven Kierkegaard has replaced the choice between the aesthetic and the ethical with the choice between Christianity
understood as a cultivated, higher ethic and Christianity understood as passionate faith in the absurd, which also includes the "teleologiske Suspension af det Ethiske" (teleological suspension of the ethical). Johannes remains the rational investigator in spite of the nature of the material he considers.

The breakthrough year of 1843 concluded with *Fire ophyggelige Taler* (translated in *Edifying Discourses*, 1944), which was published on 6 December. Corresponding to the structure of *Enten-Eller*, the nine discourses published in this year cohere in a dialectical composition, from "Troens Forventning" (The Expectation of Faith) and "Bekæftelsen i det indvortes Menneske" (Strengthened in the Inner Man) to "At erhverve sin Sjæl i Taalmodighed" (To Acquire One's Soul in Patience), in which the ethicist's concepts of choice and personal development are challenged. Man does not own his own soul and thus cannot through personal development come to acknowledge the authentic self. This self belongs to God, and man can only acquire it through patience. In 1844 Kierkegaard published a corresponding series: *To ophyggelige Taler* (translated in *Edifying Discourses*, 1945) on 5 March, *Tre ophyggelige Taler* (translated in *Edifying Discourses*, 1945) on 8 June, and *Fire ophyggelige Taler* (translated in *Edifying Discourses*, 1946) on 31 August. The three installments may be seen as accompaniments to *Philosophiske Smuler eller En Smule Philosophi* (translated as *Philosophical Fragments; or, A Fragment of Philosophy*, 1936), which appeared on 13 June 1844; *Begrebet Angest* (translated as Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Dread*, 1944); and *Forord. Morskabslæsning for enkelte Stænder efter Tid og Leilighed* (translated as *Prefaces: Light Reading for Certain Classes as the Occasion May Require, by Nicolaus Notabene*, 1989), both published on 17 June.

In 1841 Kierkegaard had practiced preaching at the seminary, and in 1844 he gave his probational sermon. He later preached three times in Vor Frue Kirke and gave a final sermon at the Citadel Chapel, also in Copenhagen, in 1851. On 3 September 1855 he published this sermon as *Guds Uforanderlighed*, the final installment of the discourse series, thus demonstrating that the distance between the two genres was not decisive. The idea of becoming a country pastor was not only an economic but also a psychological safeguard. In the meantime, Kierkegaard's efforts were directed elsewhere.

*Philosophiske Smuler* was published under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus. On the title page Kierkegaard is identified as the editor, just as in the later works published under the pseudonym denoting Climacus's counterpart, Anti-Climacus. Kierkegaard's journals further demonstrate that Climacus and Anti-Climacus were new kinds of pseudonyms that were closer to his own views on existence. The name Johannes Climacus was inspired by a seventh-century monk, St. John Climacus, author of *Climax tou paraideisou* (Ladder of Divine Ascent); in *Philosophiske Smuler* Johannes Climacus, who himself takes the point of view of the Greeks--outside of Christianity--seeks through his thought to climb from the Old to the New Testament. On the title page are two questions: "Gives der et historisk Udgangspunkt for en evig Bevidsthed?" (Can an historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness?). Therefore, can one "bygge en evig Salighed på historisk Viden?" (build eternal happiness on historical knowledge?). The answer is no.

*Philosophiske Smuler* distinguishes between what can be demonstrated by historical knowledge and by eternal consciousness, which may only appear through leaps and paradoxes. Climacus thereby dismisses the relevance of the scientific efforts of historians, archaeologists, and philologists to examine the truth of the utterances in the Bible on the basis of the sources. According to the thought experiment in *Philosophiske Smuler*, the Greeks' notion that man has the truth within himself cannot be proven,
because it is administered by God. But if truth is not a part of human nature, then there must be an absolute distinction between God and man, who must thus become a paradoxical entity—a "God-Man"—to be able to transgress the gulf. Man then receives the truth from a paradoxical giver in a "leap," which in itself includes both eternity and temporality, and he can therefore choose faith only through his subjective intimacy and contemporaneity with the paradoxical. On the final page Climacus must self-critically acknowledge that his own perspective sets limits to the way the problem presents itself. He purports to have gone further than "the Socratic" by substantiating "faith," its precondition of "consciousness of sin," the particular choice of faith in "the moment," and the paradoxical "new teacher: God in time." But he is prevented from evaluating the truth in the dogmatics he has established because he views Christianity from the outside.

**Begrebet Angest** is subtitled *En simpel psychologisk-paaegende Oeverveielse i Retning af det dogmatiske Problem om Arresynden* (A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Problem of Hereditary Sin). The work involves a psychological investigation of despair as the foundation of faith. The pseudonymous author is Vigilius Haufniensis (He Who Watches over Copenhagen), and the book is dedicated to Kierkegaard’s late professor, mentor, and inspiration in the philosophy of personality, Møller: "Græcitetens lykkelige Elsker, Homers Beundrer, Sokrates’s Medvider, Aristotles's Fortolkner" (The fortunate lover of Greek culture, the admirer of Homer, the confidant of Socrates, the interpreter of Aristotle). The examination of the psychological preconditions of faith takes place from a position outside of Christianity. Vigilius desires to be considered a layman, "der vel speculerer, men dog staaer langt udenfor Speculationen" (who certainly speculates, and yet stands far outside speculation); that is, the Hegelian speculative philosopher.

Vigilius distinguishes between fear, which has external causes and which his aesthetic colleague in psychology has described in *Fygt og Baven*, and anxiety, which is a foundational human condition. In the state of innocence he understands man as "sjelelig bestemmet i umiddelbar Eenhed med sin Naturlighed" (psychically qualified in immediate unity with his natural condition). The spirit is still only latent or "dreaming" in this state of rest, the opposite of which is not "Ufred og Strid, thi der er jo Intet at Stride med. . . . Hvad er det da? Intet. Men hvilken Virkning har Intet? Det føder Angest" (contention and strife, for there is indeed nothing against which to strive. . . . What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety). Anxiety is therefore defined as a "Bestemmelse af den drømmende Aand, og hører som saadan hjemme i Psychologien" (qualification of dreaming spirit, and as such it has a place in psychology). Man is now defined as "en Synthese af det Sjeelige og det Legemlige" (a synthesis of the psychical and the physical), although Vigilius adds that "en Synthese er utænkelig, naar de Tvende ikke enes i et Tredie. Dette Tredie er Aanden" (a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third. The third is spirit). Spirit in relation to the balance between the psychical and the physical represents something alien, which, however, is necessary for the maintenance of balance. Man relates anxiety to that ambiguous power, nothingness. Vigilius then discusses the concept of subjective anxiety, which has as its background the Fall and man's constant intensification of sin. It breaks forth in the life of the individual as a qualitative leap:

Angest kan man sammenligne med Svimmelhed. Den, hvis Øie kommer til at skue ned i et svælgende Dyb, han bliver svimmel. Men hvad er Grunden, det er ligesaa meget hans Øie som Afgrunden; thi hvis han ikke havde stirret ned. Saaledes er Angest den Friheds Svimlen, der opkommer, idet Aanden vil sætte Synthesen, og Friheden nu skuer ned i sin

(Axiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness. Further than this, psychology cannot and will not go. In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises, sees that it is guilty. Between these two moments lies the leap, which no science has explained and no science can explain.)

When spirit breaks through the gulf between soul and body in "the moment," the individual is torn out of his immediate chronology of time (past/present/future) and placed in relation to the contradiction between temporality and eternity. When, after the qualitative leap, sin enters the individual’s world, anxiety changes in character from being nothing to being tied to the distinction between good and evil. The individual can then limit himself by remaining in anxiety of evil, but the anxiety can correspondingly become tied to fate or good; in the latter emerges the demonic. Yet, anxiety may also be used to approach faith. Having come as far as he is capable, the psychologist Vigilius on the last page delivers the concept of anxiety to Climacus's dogmatics.

Forord is ascribed to Nicolaus Notabene, who has had to promise his wife not to be an author, for that is, according to her understanding, the worst form of infidelity for a married man. Therefore, between the foreword and afterword he includes only a series of prefaces, which are addressed to the contemporary literary debate, and in this manner they function as an extension of the critique of Andersen in Af en endnu Levendes Papirer. In that work Kierkegaard had tried to qualify himself as a critic in the manner of Heiberg, but the master had refused to publish the result in his journal, Perseus. Thereafter Kierkegaard had, with the long, dialectically organized Enten-Eller, delivered a freestanding novel, "Forførerens Dagbog," and received only a cool response from Heiberg. In Forord, then, arrived the official prelude to the satire of Heiberg, which continued through much of Kierkegaard’s writing. Along the way, Mynster’s edifying sermons received similar treatment.

On 29 April 1845 Kierkegaard published, under his own name, Tre Taler ved tænkte Leiligheder (Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions; translated as Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life: Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions, 1941) and a day later pseudonymously published Stadier paa Livets Vei (translated as Stages on Life’s Way, 1940), subtitled Studier af Forskjellige, sammenbragte, befordrede til Trykken og udgjorne af Hilarius Bogbinder (Studies by Various Persons, Compiled, Forwarded to the Press, and Published by Hilarius Bookbinder). This great work is an outgrowth of Enten-Eller. The "stages" should not be understood as steps on a ladder but as independent ways of life from which the individual must choose. The reader is instructed that although the stages appear in the same volume, they are not the work of a sole author but were collected by the bookbinder. It is, however, revealed that the stages share love as a common theme. The aesthetic is dealt with briefly, for it is presented as already experienced, for which reason "In Vino Veritas" appears as a recollection of a symposium on women. The speakers are all men, and among them are found Eremita and Johannes, the seducer from "Forførerens Dagbog," who, together with their aesthetic colleagues, offer
opinions on the virtue and consciousness of women, ranging from those of the most innocent to the most cynical and reflective seducer. The ethical stage is represented by a defense of marriage, in which the married man in the meantime does not triumph. In contrast to *Enten-Eller*, the religious life is included as an independent third stage. The text is represented as the diary of Frater Taciturnus (Brother in Silence), "Skyldig?--'Ikke-Skyldig?'" ("Guilty?"--"Not Guilty?"), which is subtitled "En Lidelseshistorie, Psychologisk Experiment" (A Story of Suffering, a Psychological Experiment). In this text, which was originally intended to be included in *Enten-Eller* as a counterpart to "Forfererens Dagbog," the cold, intellectual Taciturnus documents a psychological experiment with a protagonist he himself invents. This Quidam is a melancholy man whose many possibilities for uniting with his beloved are demonstrated by Taciturnus. Quidam can acknowledge the religious, but he can neither grasp nor live it. With his experiment Taciturnus has "lagt et Problem tilrette for det Religieuse: Syndsforsladelser" (laid out an issue for the religious: the forgiveness of sin). In this issue lies the possibility of annulling the schism between hereditary curse and marriage, which is the realization of the universal. The discussion of absolution Taciturnus must leave to the edifying discourses in *Tre Taler ved tænkte Leiligheder*. The three imagined occasions for the discourses are confession, marriage, and burial.

The greatest attention to Kierkegaard's 1846 publications was given to Climacus's extension of and eventual break with Hegel in *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*. This massive volume supplemented the tenuous-appearing *Philosophiske Snuler*. The work is "Concluding" because Kierkegaard thought at this point that he would retire from writing, now that he had said all he had desired; "Unscientific" because it is a critique of contemporary science, which Heiberg had made Hegelian; and a "Postscript to the *Philosophical Fragments*" because it worked further with Climacus's problem of the subjective and the objective with respect to the acquisition of faith. The peculiar subtitle, *Mimisk-pathetisk-dialektisk Sammenskrift*, *Existentielt Indlæg* (A Mimetic-Pathetic-Dialectic Composition, an Existential Contribution), is a result of Kierkegaard's working behind the mask of pseudonymity and functioning as both poet and thinker from the passionate position of existence. Climacus still stands outside the religious stage. He develops the doctrine of the three stages by inserting irony as an intermediate stage in between the aesthetic and the ethical, and humor--his own position--between the ethical and the religious. While irony may conceal the ethical, humor may be understood as the humanist's mask for the religious; yet, it is the stage nearest to it. The humorist understands that suffering belongs to existence, but he does not understand its religious meaning; he "gjør den svigefulde Vending og tilbagekalder Lidelsen i Spøgens Form" (turns deceptively aside and revokes suffering in the form of the jest). On the other side lies religiosity; as Climacus writes as a potential consumer, his aim is to understand how he, "barnefødt her af Byen, nu tredive Aar gammel, et slet og ret Menneske ligesom Folk er fleest" (now thirty years of age, born in Copenhagen, a plain and common man like the run of them), may come to enjoy the highest good, which has been called "en evig Salighed" (eternal blessedness).

In the first part Climacus examines the various attempts of the sciences to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. He also examines the attempts that evoke the authority of the Scriptures, the life of the congregation, and the institution of the Church. Chief among these efforts was the Hegelians' reduction of Christianity to an historical phenomenon, which would be absorbed as a subordinate segment in the unfolding of the Absolute Spirit. In the second part, against these objective attempts to justify Christianity, Climacus poses, with the poet and thinker Gotthold Ephraim Lessing as his starting
point, the question of how man can justify himself in relation to faith, and hence how subjectivity may exist, if Christianity is to be grasped. While the result is important for the objective thinker, the process is also significant for the subjective thinker, because existence is an incomplete movement. Where acquisition is the principal question, communication becomes doubly reflective; that is, it subsumes the relation between the communicated and the communicator’s position of existence. In a supplement Kierkegaard allows Climacus to go through the whole of his previous work as an example of such a doubly reflective communication, after which Kierkegaard in his own name acknowledges his paternity to the pseudonyms.

The seed of Climacus’s long duel with Hegel is in the observation that if there exists an all-comprehending system of existence, then it would exist not to be comprehended by man but only by the paradoxical “God-Man,” who is both within and outside of existence. Climacus views Hegel’s system as incomplete, in part because it lacks God and in part because it lacks the individual, and thereby each single existence, whose life is an incomplete process. Every existence finds itself in a tension between subjective existence and objective thought, and this tension may not, according to Climacus, be annulled in a higher synthesis, as Hegel had argued. Climacus says that every individual is from the beginning a subject, and that is why one’s first task is, through personal development, to divest oneself of the subjective in the sense of the selfish, the incidental, and the particular. Hereafter, science asserts that the task consists in becoming objective, while the doctrine of Christianity holds that it is in a higher sense that of becoming a subject. Man should dare to be “a single individual”: “At være et enkelt individ, er Verdenshistorisk slet Intet, uendelig Intet–men dog er det et Menneskes eneste sande og høieste Betydning” (to be a single individual is world-historically absolutely nothing, infinitely nothing—and yet it is the only truth and the highest meaning of the individual). While the sciences stress the truth as an object outside the acknowledged, Christianity understands truth as “Uendelighedens Lidenskab” (the passion of infinity). In this sense, subjectivity is the truth, although this position does not entail the assertion that in other, nonexistential relationships the truth is in subjectivity—a view that would make every understanding of anything equally valid and therefore equally invalid. But in the existential area defined in the Afsluttendeovidenskabelig Efterskrift, the absolute contrast in Christianity between good and evil and truth and falsehood applies, and not the Hegelian synthesis, which can mediate every contradiction.

Climacus distinguishes between two types of religiousness: religiousness A is found also among the pagans, for example, in Socrates. The individual in this case exists in inner consciousness of guilt, seeking to withdraw from the world through penitence or the cloister. Man believes he knows his god, who relates to him through knowledge and thought. Religiousness B builds upon the ethical-religious duty of religiousness A, but consciousness of guilt is in this case supported by consciousness of sin, which leads man out of his relation to the universal and the human. Consciousness of sin implies a rupture of the subject as a thinking being and his relation to others, for it arises from the paradox of “God in time,” the paradox in which God has made himself into a man. To this paradox one may relate only through faith and in constant uncertainty, and that is why Climacus states his thesis that the truth is subjective in this way: "den objective Uvished, fastholdt i den meest lidenskabelige Inderligheds Tilegnelse, er Sandheden, den høieste Sandhed, der er for en Existerende" (An objective uncertainty, held fast in an appropriation of the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth attainable for the existing individual). [Italics in the original.]
In 1846 Kierkegaard continued the work as literary critic that he had begun with his book on Andersen. In *Af en andnu Levendes Papirer* he had mentioned several other Danish prose writers, including "Forfatteren til *En Hverdags-Historie*" (the author of *An Everyday Story*), Thomasine Gyllembourg, whose novella *To Tidsaldre* (Two Ages, 1845) was the object of Kierkegaard’s *En litterair Anmeldelse* (A Literary Review; translated as "The Present Age," 1940), published under his own name on 30 March 1846. Kierkegaard’s interest in Gyllembourg, Heiberg’s mother, was no accident, and yet her comparison of the revolutionary 1790s of her youth with the relatively tame 1840s in *To Tidsaldre* was affirmed in Kierkegaard’s characterizations of the masses, the process of democratization, and the public. The politically engaged period of the movement in Denmark toward representative government, which in 1849 replaced absolute monarchy, had warned him that content could be boosted by form when supported by such abstractions as "the public": "Publikum er Alt og Intet, er den farligste af alle Magter og den meest intetsigende; man kan tale til en heel Nation i Publikums Navn, og dog er Publikum mindre end et eneste nok saa ringe virkeligt Menneske" (A public is everything and nothing, the most dangerous of all powers and the most insignificant; one can speak to a whole nation in the name of the public, and still the public will be less than a single real man, however unimportant). The alternative, for both Kierkegaard and Gyllembourg, was an age without passion.

*Opbyggelige Taler i forskjellig Aand* (Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits, 1847) is divided into three parts, each with its own title page to emphasize the distinctions. The first consists of the confessional discourse "Hjertes Renhed er at ville Eet" (Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing; translated as *Purify Your Hearts!* 1937). God is understood as an eternity in each individual, the good, and when a person wills the good, he wills only one thing, and therefore his heart is pure. The second discourse demonstrates how one may learn to be untroubled by the temporal from the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. The final discourse is "Lidelsernes Evangelium" (translated as "The Gospel of Suffering," 1947), in which suffering is understood as a privilege that may prepare one for eternity. These discourses are referred to as Christian, and thereby Kierkegaard singled them out as expressions of the more strict understanding of Christianity he had developed over the years. The same sentiment is found in the subtitle, *Nogle christelige Oevervielser i Talers Form* (Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses), of *Kjærlighedens Gjerninger* (1847; translated as *Works of Love*, 1946), in which Kierkegaard, writing under his own name, offers a Christian ethics. The acts implied by love are understood as set down by God, and in the first section the Commandment on love of one’s neighbor is analyzed.

In 1848 Kierkegaard published *Christelige Taler* (translated as "Christian Discourses," 1939). The following year, he published *Lilien paa Marken og Fuglen under Himlen. Tre gudelige Taler* (The Lily of the Field and the Bird beneath the Heavens: Three Devotional Discourses; translated as "The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air," 1939). Here, the effort is directed at demonstrating the difference between poetry and Christianity, which, unlike the former, does not seduce through beauty. One may learn silence from the lily and the bird, who are absolutely obedient. Silence is an expression of deferential respect for that with which one cannot speak and also the beginning of the search for the kingdom of God.

*Tvende ethisk-religiouse Smaa-Afhandlinger* (translated in *The Present Age and Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises*, 1940) was published under the pseudonym H.H. on 19 May 1849. The title of the first treatise poses a question: "Har et Menneske Lov til at lade sig ihjelslaae for Sandheden?" (Does a Person Have the Right to Let Himself Be Put to Death for the Truth?). The answer is no, if it is a worldly truth, over which
one could argue with another who thinks otherwise. Nor is it permissible if the action is the result of a discussion between Christians with a different understanding of the truth. But perhaps a person does have this right if Christendom is not at all Christian but in fact more heathen than heathendom. The essay also includes discussion of the question of martyrdom. In this connection Kierkegaard uses for the first time the concept of the witness for the truth. The second of the two essays, "Om Forskjellen mellem et Genie og en Apostle" (On the Difference Between a Genius and an Apostle), is a small excerpt from a large manuscript on the Bornholm pastor Adolf Peter Adler, which Kierkegaard had begun in 1846 but by and large chose to withhold from publication. The manuscript was found among his papers and was published posthumously in Søren Kierkegaards Papirer (1908-1948) as "Bogen om Adler" (The Book on Adler; translated as On Authority and Revelation: The Book on Adler; or, A Cycle of Ethico-Religious Essays, 1955). While the genius, the poetic author, receives his extraordinary ability from God, he does not write with a purpose, whereas the apostle has a calling, a commandment from God: "absolute paradox et 'for at'" (absolutely and paradoxically, an "in order that"). The apostle is a paradoxical figure, made for imitation.

Now Kierkegaard, after long deliberations, took a new pseudonym, Anti-Climacus. He defined his own position as between that of Climacus, who thought himself incapable of realizing religiousness B, and that of Anti-Climacus, who characterized himself as a Christian in the absolute sense. Because of his nearness and somewhat vacillating relationship to these two pseudonyms, Kierkegaard functioned as "editor" of the writings of both. Sygdommen til Døden (translated as The Sickness unto Death, 1941) was published as the work of Anti-Climacus in 1849; the subtitle, En christelig psychologisk Udvikling til Opbygglese og Opværkelse (A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening), indicates that Kierkegaard’s intention was to influence readers in a Christian direction by means of a psychological investigation. Anti-Climacus takes as his starting point Frygt og Bæven when he defines the human self as set out by God and as "another," who appears when the relationship between soul and body is made apparent. The sickness unto death should not be understood as a sickness that leads to death but as the despair in either not willing or willing to be a self. Soul and body both belong to the mortal, but when God has set them in relation, the self is immortal. Despair is sin, and sin is the sickness that exists in a contradiction between the temporal and the eternal in the soul. This sickness may in the meantime lead to a rising acknowledgment of sin and hence to faith. In reference to Romans 14:23, Anti-Climacus emphasizes that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith. The accompanying discourses to Sygdommen til Døden were published in November 1849 as "Ypperstepræsten," "Torderen," "Synderinden." Tre Taler ved Allergangen om Fredagen ("The Greatest Pastor," "The Customs Official," "The Sinneress": Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays; translated as "Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays," 1939). In these works Kierkegaard continued the series of Communion discourses that he had begun in the final section of Christelige Taler.

In December 1850 Kierkegaard published Anti-Climacus's Indøvelse i Christendom (translated as Training in Christianity, 1941). This work, in which the Christian challenge is most intensified, was supplemented by En opbygellig Tale (translated as "An Upbuilding Discourse," 1997), in which the ritualization of the discourse series had gone so far that the preface includes only a note referring to the preface of the To opbyggelige Taler of 1843. Indøvelse i Christendom forms the foundation of Kierkegaard’s later conflict with the Danish State Lutheran Church, which had its basis in the idea that Christianity had drifted from the Christian; hence, the task was now to reintroduce Christianity to Christendom. In place of what, in his opinion,
was a heathen admiration of Christianity, exemplified by the Christian art of the profound thinkers of Christianity and the sermons and analyses of theologians, Anti-Climacus argues for an understanding of Christianity as imitation. He desires not to judge, but to serve the truth; that is, Christianity in its strictest sense. He does not assert that every true Christian should follow Christ as a martyr for faith; yet, he finds it reasonable that every true Christian should "gøre en Ydmygelsens Inddrømmelse, at han dog er sluppet lettere end de i strengeste Forstand sande Christine" (make a confession of humility, that he has gotten by more easily than they who are true Christians in the strongest sense of the word). Without naming names, Kierkegaard had already criticized the Christianity of Mynster and the theology professor Hans Lassen Martensen.

After his many problems in distinguishing his own position from that of Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard finally abandoned indirect communication in 1851, when, under his own name, he published a summary of all the books he had written since Enten-Eller. Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed was actually only a short summary of the more in-depth Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed, which, although written in 1848, did not appear until 1859, when Peter Christian Kierkegaard, his brother, published the manuscript. Neither of the two works lifts the veil on Søren Kierkegaard’s authorship. Nor do they include commentary on the journals and unpublished, uncompleted manuscripts that were found in his workplace after his death. All of these papers, which, taken together, constitute far more pages than those that Kierkegaard allowed to be published during his lifetime, reveal doubt and conflict all along the way. But of this doubt the public was made aware only with the posthumous publication—and then only in part—of Kierkegaard’s papers. In both Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed and Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed his primary intention is to demonstrate that throughout he was a Christian author. In the latter work he writes that he has set forth "Christendommen, det at blive Christen, heelt og holdent ind i Reflexion" (Christianity, what it means to become a Christian, wholly and entirely within reflection). He continues spontaneously: "Hans Hjertes Reenhed var: kun at ville Eet; hvad der i levende Live var de Samtidiges Anklage mod ham, at han ikke vilde slaae af, ikke give efter, netop det Samme er Eftertidens Lovtale over ham, at han ikke slog af, ikke gave efter" (His purity of heart was to will only one thing. What his contemporaries complained of during his lifetime, that he would not abate the price, would not give in—this very thing is the eulogy pronounced upon him by after ages, that he did not abate the price, did not give in). In the end, he concludes by attributing his entire body of work to "bestyrelsen" (governance) and by describing himself as "Forfatteren, der, historisk, døde af en dødelig Sygdom, men digterisk døde af Længsel efter Evigheden, for uafbrudt ikke at bestille andet end takke Gud" (the author, who historically died of a mortal disease but poetically died of longing for eternity, where uninterruptedly he would have nothing else to do but to thank God).

On 7 August 1851, the day after Om min Forfatter-Virksomhed appeared, To Taler ved Altergangen om Fredagen (translated as "Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays," 1941) was published; again, Kierkegaard’s intention was to cease writing at this time. Yet, on 10 September he published Til Selvprøvelse, Samtiden anbefalet (translated as For Self-Examination, Recommended for the Times, 1940). In this work he was on the verge of formulating his attack on the Danish State Lutheran Church, but he held back out of concern for the aging Mynster. In 1851 and 1852 Kierkegaard worked on Dømmer selo! Til Selvprøvelse, Samtiden anbefalet (translated as "Judge for Yourselves!" 1941), but for the same reason it was kept back and remained unpublished until Peter Christian Kierkegaard brought it out in 1876. Both Til Selvprøvelse and Dømmer selo! are attempts at a
broader, more popular formulation of the Christian message. In the former, Kierkegaard disavowed himself of the role of witness for the truth, describing himself only as ”en umyndig Digter, der rører ved hjælp af Idealerne for at opnaa ’Redelighed’” (a poet without authority, who with the help of the ideal tries to achieve ”honesty”). While he waited in vain for the Church, through the figure of Mynster, to admit what he later called the ”Kriminal-Forbrydelse” (criminal acts) of Christendom, he wrote much in his journal but published nothing.

Mynster died on 30 January 1854. Two days before Mynster’s burial, on 7 February, Martensen, who had been a tutor to the student Kierkegaard, gave a speech in Christiansborg Chapel in which he praised Mynster, referring to him as a witness for the truth. For Kierkegaard the term witness for the truth indicated either martyrdom or confession, and from both of these traditions Mynster had remained distant. Kierkegaard immediately wrote a rebuttal but withheld it until 18 December of that year, in order to avoid the association of his intentions with the naming of the new bishop. The title of the article demonstrated the new, hard-edged journalistic style characteristic of his struggle against the Church: ”Var Biskop Mynster et ’Sandhedsvinde,’ et af ’de rette Sandhedsvinder’-er dette Sandhed?” (Was Bishop Mynster a ”witness for the truth”, one of ”the genuine witnesses for the truth”–is that the truth?). Predictably, Martensen received the appointment as bishop. The first phase of Kierkegaard’s struggle against the Church consisted of, in all, twenty-one articles published in the daily Fædrelandet (The Fatherland). It may be seen from the title of the last article, published on 26 May 1855, that Martensen (who continued Mynster’s policy of silence toward the attack, which was otherwise loud enough) was himself the real target of Kierkegaard’s polemic: ”At Biskop Martensens Taushed er 1) christeligt uforsvarlig; 2) latterlig; 3) dum-klog; 4) i mere end en Henseende foragtelig” (That Bishop Martensen’s Silence Is 1) Christianly Indefensible; 2) Laughable; 3) Dumb-Clever; 4) In More Than One Respect Contemptible). Kierkegaard attacked not only Martensen’s attitude but also his Hegelian theology in the salvos of satire, which he furthermore began to direct at still others: first, the ”velvet-bellied pastors”; then, all of the citizens who believed themselves Christians; and finally, Christendom itself. From 24 May, Kierkegaard continued the attack in his own journal, Øieblirket (translated as ”The Moment,” 1998), the ninth issue of which appeared on 24 September 1855. He continued the critique as well in the pamphlet Hvad Christus dømmer om officiel Christendom (translated as ”What Christ Judges of Official Christianity,” 1998), published on 16 June, and in the last of the edifying discourses, Guds Uforanderlighed.

Common to all the issues of Øieblirket is the concise format and a direct, aggressive style, much closer to journalism than to the academic prose of the period. From this platform Kierkegaard came full circle in terms of genre, with the aphorisms of ”Kort og Spidst” (Short and Sharp), which in form point back to the ”Diapsalmata”; biblical interpretations that resemble the edifying discourses; the short story ”Først Guds Rige” (First the Kingdom of God); and satirical mini-essays, which are the form most liberally represented. Many of the texts are witty to the point of mockery, just as when Kierkegaard was a boy.

The manuscript to the tenth issue of Øieblirket was ready for publication at the time of Kierkegaard’s death. In ”Min Opgave” (My Task), dated 1 September 1855, he attempted again to define his position. The world, in which all call themselves Christian, is referred to as ”Vrøvlets Verden” (The World of Nonsense). In it the truth seems to be madness; hence, Kierkegaard asserts that he himself is not a Christian. He characterizes himself as a unique figure in the 1,800-year history of Christianity. His only model is Socrates, who exposed
paganism and became a martyr for his thought: "Du Oldtidens ædle Eenfoldige, du er det eneste Menneske, jeg beundrende anerkjender som Tænker: det er kun Lidt, der er opbevaret om Dig, blandt Mennesker den eneste sande Intellectualitetens Martyr, lige saa stor qua Charaktere som qua Tænker; men dette Lidet hvor uendelig Meget!" (Thou noble simpleton of olden times, thou, the only man I admiringly recognize as a teacher; there is but little concerning thee that has been preserved, thou amongst men the only true martyr to intellectuality, just as great qua character as qua thinker; but this little, how infinitely much it is!).

The analogy with the hero of Om Begrebet Ironi med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates consists in Kierkegaard's defining his task as Socratic after Christ: "at revidere Bestemmelsen af det at være Christen: selv kalder jeg mig ikke en Christen (holdende Idealet frit), men jeg kan gjøre aabenbart, at de Andre ere det endnu mindre" (to revise the definition of what it is to be a Christian: I do not call myself a "Christian" [thus keeping the ideal free], but I am able to make it evident that the others are that still less than I).

Søren Kierkegaard died at Frederik's Hospital (now the Museum of Applied Arts) on Bredgade in Copenhagen at nine o'clock on the night of 11 November 1855. His funeral service was performed at Vor Frue Kirke on the eighteenth of the month. He was buried at the family plot in Assistens Kirkegaard. In accordance with his wishes, his gravestone bears a verse from the Danish hymn writer Hans Adolph Brorson—a final nod to Kierkegaard's connection to the pietistic tradition, to which his father also belonged:

Det er en liden Tid,
Saa har jeg vundet,
Saa er den ganske Strid

Med Eet forsvunden,
Saa kan jeg hvile mig
I Rosensale,
Og uafsladelig
Min Jesum Tale.

(In but a little while
Then I will have won,
Then is the entire strife
All of a sudden gone,
Then can I rest
In rose halls
And uninterruptedly
Speak with my Jesus.)

Kierkegaard's oeuvre belongs among the most significant bodies of thought in a global context. His work provided a fundamental critique of Hegel's ideas, which had dominated European philosophy during the first half of the nineteenth century, and it contributed a new concept of the individual to the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian literature during the second half of that century. Kierkegaard's significance for twentieth-century philosophy and theology, not to mention literature, was also decisive. He formulated an understanding of identity, relevant to Christians and non-Christians alike, that elevated the idea of the individual into the forefront of contemporary discourse. Interest in his work is continually rejuvenated by the demands of the modern age on the individual to make existential choices, especially in eras marked by violent upheaval.
With the individual as his point of departure, Kierkegaard brought the basic concepts of his philosophy of personality--irony, angst, the stages, repetition, and the moment--into everyday language. By virtue of his critique of Hegelian idealism, which placed him in stark contrast to his European contemporaries, Kierkegaard may be regarded as a poet-philosopher. Finally, he is of great significance to the Danish language as a prose stylist, a writer who understood how to draw out the rhythms and nuances of the language.

Papers: Søren Kierkegaard’s papers and manuscripts are at the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen.

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