

Søren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks Volume 1: Journals AA-DD.

Edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, Vanessa Rumble, K. Brian Söderquist, and George Pattison.

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Here we have the first two installments in the new series *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks* (hereafter *KJN*). This is a major undertaking, edited and translated by a board of leading Kierkegaard scholars (Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David Kangas, Bruce H. Kirmmse, George Pattison, Vanessa Rumble, and K. Brian Söderquist), in collaboration with the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre in Copenhagen. With its eleven projected volumes, this series promises to be the standard English edition of Kierkegaard's journals, papers, and notebooks.

This is not the first collection of Kierkegaard's personal documents. There have been smaller collections, such as Alexander Dru's *The Journals of Kierkegaard* (1938), Peter Rohde's *The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard* (1960), and Alastair Hannay's *Papers and Journals: A Selection* (1996). These all provide adequate anthologies for the casual reader, but for English-language scholars the most valuable collection thus far has been the six-volume *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* (1976), edited and translated by Howard and Edna Hong. While this edition has been an important asset for Kierkegaard scholars, it has its limitations. First, despite its expansive scope, it is not exhaustive. Second, it follows the earlier ordering system of the Danish scholar P. A. Heiberg's *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer* (1909-48), which imposed an artificial chronological and categorical order on Kierkegaard's papers. Likewise, the Hong edition is organized thematically, with sections on particular topics and thinkers. This can be very helpful if one wants to survey Kierkegaard's entries under headings like 'anxiety', 'Descartes', or 'time'; but it does not reflect the Kierkegaard's own organization of his documents.

By contrast, the *KJN* series follows the new and authoritative *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* in order to provide the most thorough and accurate edition possible. Rather than reordering these documents according to chronology or topic, as Heiberg did, *KJN* follows *SKS* in reproducing Kierkegaard's original organization. One of the series' most significant innovations is to replicate Kierkegaard's practice of folding his journal pages into two vertical columns, reserving the outer column of each page for later comments and revisions. As a result the reader can see these entries as they actually appear on the pages of Kierkegaard's journals. The editors have even included all of Kierkegaard's partial entries, and the cryptic notes that he likely jotted down as reminders to himself.

The journals in Volume 1 date from the years 1835-39, and include a variety of entries. Several allow us a glimpse of the questions and themes that occupied Kierkegaard during his early twenties, such as the famous passage in which he describes his search for subjective truth—'*the idea for which I am willing to live and die*' (19). We can then observe the subsequent development of Kierkegaard's understanding of Christianity, as in one entry from July of 1838 in which he resolves to 'work on coming into a far more intimate relation with Xnty,' rather than relating to it in a merely external way (246).

Scattered throughout these journals are entries on the concept of irony, which was the eventual topic of his dissertation, and on his nascent concept of anxiety (128). There are extensive notes, reflections, and annotations that reveal his interest in aesthetics and poetics—particularly on two of his perennially favorite figures: Faust and Don Juan. Related to this is a fascinating pedagogical discussion regarding the art of telling stories to children. Kierkegaard understands storytelling as a Socratic art concerning the child's existential development; instead of merely conveying useful knowledge, stories should awaken a child's poetic capacities, and stir the appetite to ask questions rather than simply learn by rote (116-25).

The journals in Volume 2 cover a wide range of dates, from 1836-46. There is a significant amount of material from Kierkegaard's theological studies and his preparation for his qualifying exams, providing an illuminating look at the context of his intellectual formation. These resources include excerpts from several theological texts, notes on a course about Paul's epistle to the Romans, and lecture notes from H. L. Martensen's course 'Speculative Dogmatics' at the University of Copenhagen.

The second volume also contains many entries pertaining to Kierkegaard's early pseudonymous works, such as *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, and *Philosophical Fragments*, as well as a number of intriguing sketches for future works. Among these are two possible sequels to 'The Seducer's Diary', one entitled 'The Courtesan's Diary' (170) and another that goes by the pseudonym 'Johannes Mephistopheles' (183). There is also a later work called 'Confessions of a Poet' (225), and a memoir by King Nebuchadnezzar (168). These sketches evidence Kierkegaard's

fecund imagination and authorial creativity, and it is tantalizing to consider these works that might have been. To take another example, Kierkegaard re-imagines *Macbeth*, such that Lady Macbeth discovers her tendency to sleepwalk, and thereafter cannot allow herself to sleep for fear of betraying her secret—thus adding a dreadful anxiety to her tortured conscience (147-8, 233-4).

It is not possible to review the contents of these volumes in the usual way one writes a book review, i.e., as a critical analysis a book's thesis and its supporting arguments. However, I can say that Kierkegaard's journals are worth reading—not only for a deeper understanding of Kierkegaard, but simply because Kierkegaard is such a brilliant writer. These journals abound with pithy, profound, and perplexing entries, the best of which place Kierkegaard alongside Montaigne, Pascal, and Nietzsche as a master of the aphorism. For readers who want an overview of Kierkegaard's journals or perhaps an edition for their nightstands, one of the shorter collections edited by Dru, Rohde, or Hannay will continue to be the best option. But for Kierkegaard scholars seeking research tools, the *KJN* series is set to become the new standard. With that in mind, I have a few comments regarding the usability of these first two volumes.

First, the editors have decided to leave all foreign terms and passages (other than Kierkegaard's Danish, of course) untranslated in the main body of the text. As a result we can read Kierkegaard's use of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German as it appears in his journals. This is particularly important for his Latin translations of several lengthy passages from the Greek New Testament (139-88), since an English translation of these passages would defeat the purpose of their inclusion. In other cases, when Kierkegaard includes foreign quotations and phrases, the editors have included translations in the endnotes. This strategy is entirely appropriate for longer passages, but it can be cumbersome to have to flip to the endnotes if one wants to consult a translation of a short phrase. Thankfully, Volume 2 improves on this by including translations of these shorter passages at the bottom of each page.

Related to this, the endnotes are extensive (taking up nearly half of each volume), and they are highly informative. In addition to explanatory notes regarding Kierkegaard's philosophical, theological, and literary references, the editors have included detailed notes regarding Kierkegaard's references to people, places, and circumstances that are quite difficult to understand out of context. They have also included illustrations and engravings when Kierkegaard refers to a visual image; historical maps of Denmark, Copenhagen, and Berlin; calendars of the dates covered by the journals; and a concordance to correlate *KJN* with Heiberg's organization in *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*.

At this point the only real problem I have encountered in *KJN* is that these first two volumes do not include indexes. It may be that the amount and breadth of material here would render an index unmanageable, but the lack of an index does pose an impediment to readers seeking entries on specific topics. A general series index could

eventually resolve this problem. Additionally, an electronic version could make this wealth of material fully searchable. The Hongs' edition of *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* is currently available electronically in the *Past Masters* database, and it is a very helpful tool. The editors of *KJN* have expressed a desire to produce an electronic version once the series is completed, so hopefully that will come to fruition. Either way, this new series is highly commendable, and promises to be an indispensable resource for Kierkegaard research.

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