



Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch
"George Baritiu" Institute of History
Department of Socio-Human Research

International Journal on Humanistic Ideology

Vol. XI, No. 1, 2021



Cluj University Press



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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON HUMANISTIC IDEOLOGY

VOL. XI

No. 1

2021

TOPIC:

Kierkegaard's Humanistic and Literary Heritage

I

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Manuscript Editors: Cristian Bodea, Virgil Ciomoș.

Web Designers: Petru Diaconu, Silviu G. Totelecan; *Cover:* Radu Nebert.

ISSN: 2285 – 4517 (Online)

ISSN: 1844 – 458X (Print)

ISSN–L: 1844 – 458X (Print)

I. Ciomoș, Virgil (Ed.)

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CLUJ UNIVERSITY PRESS

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**Kierkegaard's
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Guest Editor:

Flaviu Victor Câmpean

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ / CLUJ UNIVERSITY PRESS

2021

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Argument:

Emptiness and Uniqueness as Heritage

The heritage of an author can never be reduced to the composite historical material that lags or develops after him, encompassing a discontinuous tradition or a function of discourse, as Foucault pointed out in his famous essay. I would rather say that the tradition or the function, be it ideologically or linguistically / symbolically charged, always pertains to a new existence that leaves the author behind, ignoring the meaning and interpretation that any discourse entails. The very etymology of the Latin *heres* would sustain such an interpretation, which is not a new one but prior to any judicial or philosophical sense of individualism. Thus, the Proto-Indo-European root *ghe* originally meant to be left behind and abandoned, moreover, to be left *empty* – an emptiness which Foucault or Barthes (in *The Death of the Author*) correctly emphasized within the evolution of any discourse. Beyond the Foucauldian and Barthian hypotheses, the literary and humanistic perspectives that Kierkegaard, the ever modern and Christian *virtuoso* of deconstructivism before his time, can offer for us now, are relevant precisely by virtue of this abandon.

An apparently idealistic author, Kierkegaard seems to have become one of the canonical standpoints of the Modern philosophy of the subject while also revealing the already crumbling metaphysical remainders of the universal systems. But existence as perpetual transcendence, as a living interiority in and between the leaps, is not only a metaphysical end of inwardness following Hegel, as Jacob Taubes described it, putting it alongside Marx's "exterior" telos within the engrossing Hegelian eschatology. Due to the frankness of Kierkegaard's address to the unique individual (his original *den Enkelte*), existence is never a simply subjective melancholic ruin of universal consciousness/ awareness or a Platonic analogue of pure being. While Kierkegaard's stances with regards to his own melancholia are various and often contradictory, the religious identity,

particularly that of religiousness B, on the one hand, and the relational nature of selfhood on the other, surpass the “idle” philosophical eschatology of Christendom. Melancholy is otherwise a failed address to the selfhood’s identity as such, proving that selfhood should relate to the O/other in its own emptying out (that can be compared to a *kenosis*) in order to become a unique human identity. This is where I would situate the heritage between individuals and between human and God, that Kierkegaard’s oeuvre strives to approach, from the pseudonymous works to the Journal, the notes, and finally the theological discourses – all of them request this specific anti-melancholic receptivity. Moreover, I think that this emptiness is where the calling to assume a heritage can be grasped and that the writing as cure for melancholia is an abandon of the illusion of self-awareness in favour of uniqueness; hence the indirect communication and the request to take pseudonyms as full right authors. Kierkegaard clearly knew that his unique heritage would withstand the shock of fast change in civilization and that his “thick letters of friendship” (to paraphrase Sloterdijk’s essay on humanism, *Rules for the Human Zoo*) would address the unique individual and not the ideal author and thinker. It is up to our own uniqueness to still assume a humanistic and literary heritage whose stake is identity as such, to be contemporary with the letter of a poet of religiousness, but also to the wandering idea of the young Kierkegaard, who, contemplating the beaches at Gilleleje in 1835, had a revelation within a quasi-Pascalian train of thought: “I felt at one and the same time how great and how insignificant I am. Those two great forces, pride and humility, amicably confined. Fortunate the man for whom this is possible every moment of his life...”

I wish to express my thanks to the editing board of the IJHI, to the contributors and to all those who supported this two-volume special issue on Søren Kierkegaard.

Flaviu Câmpean

