

Thirdly, there is (from a European perspective) a lacuna in Westphal's depiction of available theological positions. The possibilities, we are told, are Christianity, or Hegelianism, or Spinozism (defined as different forms of pantheism). This leads to his quite mistakenly naming Part 1 of *The Sickness unto Death* "Christian": it is nothing of the sort, but simply theistic. Kierkegaard speaks of that power (which is God) in which the relation that is the self rests. Part 2 then proceeds to re-run the argument from a specifically Christian perspective. It has apparently not struck Westphal that one could be theistic (and not pantheist) without adhering to Christian dogma. Yet this would be where most people I know today (who are not simply atheist) stand.

The problem is that Kierkegaard is agile; Westphal flat-footed. Kierkegaard leaves his readers free; Westphal coerces a biblicist and relativistic (such that a biblicist position is as "true" as any other) position. I think Kierkegaard querulous when, by 1849—alone, having lost his wealth, and bitter—he tells us (as a consistent deduction of his position) that to deny Christ "is the highest intensification of sin." But I know he also believed (inconsistently) that "we will all be saved"; this, he says, "awakens my deepest wonder." (Not my vocabulary as one who is not a Christian, but I note Kierkegaard's generosity of spirit.) Westphal's understanding of Christianity revolves around "commands" (God's) and "obedience" (ours). By contrast Kierkegaard at times opens up profoundly imaginative ways of thinking of God—revolutionary even by today's standards.

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Excursions with Kierkegaard: Others, Goods, Death, and Final Faith. By Edward F. Mooney. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. xv + 211 pages. \$34.95 (paper).

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Edward Mooney has an impressive record of scholarship on Søren Kierkegaard; his *Knights of Faith and Resignation* is among the important studies of *Fear and Trembling* from the boom in Kierkegaard studies that followed the publication of new English translations of Kierkegaard's works in the 1980s and 1990s. In *Excursions with Kierkegaard*, Mooney meanders through ten essays about how Kierkegaard's texts can inform a person's self-understanding in the face of others, God, and death. Much of the work here was previously published in journals and collections over the past five years.

The essays have a strong focus on selfhood. Among Mooney's most prominent points is that Kierkegaard shows us that the self is not an "executive" or "CEO," a stable center for managing the person's faculties, but rather a decentered and unstable interweaving of many strands, including those of others and ultimately of God, too. In Mooney's account, Kierkegaard's use of pseudonymity in about half of his published works, as well as his *mélange* of genres within many of the pseudonymous works, evokes the self as "carnivalesque," a riot of disparate voices. Though Mooney offers a number of compelling images for the reader to make sense of this approach to selfhood, he does not break truly new ground.

A larger concern I have with the book is that Mooney's Kierkegaard is almost entirely ahistorical. There are no references to the major studies of Kierkegaard's life or historical context, and hardly any references to Kierkegaard's contemporaries. Mooney sees Kierkegaard in Socratic terms, as a benevolent yet mischievous sage. And he does indeed have much to teach us. But we still have license to criticize his motives and decisions as an author, which come to light once his works are historicized. In fact, we might then be able to learn more from him.

For example, the puzzle of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms seems different once we note that pseudonymity was a common practice in the Danish and German literary scenes of Kierkegaard's time. Perhaps Kierkegaard is using pseudonymity to educate the reader about selfhood—but he's also adhering to a convention within his literary circle. Even Kierkegaard's great ecclesiastical rival, Jakob Peter Mynster, wrote under a pseudonym. Granted, Kierkegaard took pseudonymity much farther than his contemporaries. This and the other literary flourishes that Mooney admires are all methods of "indirect communication"—but they are also sometimes annoying and might betray an author too much in love with his own talent. There might be a different lesson about selfhood at work here.

In the wake of Joakim Garff's massive biography of Kierkegaard, published in English in 2005, book-length studies of Kierkegaard the author cannot ignore Kierkegaard the man—including Kierkegaard the rich, obnoxious, and petty man. To admit that the title of one of Kierkegaard's books, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the "Philosophical Fragments": A Mimical-Pathetical-Dialectical Compilation, An Existential Contribution*, oversteps the line separating clever from stupid is not to diminish Kierkegaard's genius. It is rather to see him as a truly *human* author, who, like every other, makes missteps in the pursuit of a point.

Mooney is right: we should read Kierkegaard's books as "works of art that address us" (71). That means we should treat them not only in the way we treat philosophical treatises, not only in the way we treat existential alarms,

but also in the way we treat novels and paintings: by putting them in context, attending to their reception, and acknowledging their triumphs and flaws.

Though Mooney writes in an accessible way, he presupposes familiarity with Kierkegaard's body of work and much of modern philosophy. For this reason, I cannot recommend this book for an undergraduate course. The lack of either close philosophical analysis or a consideration of history makes it inappropriate for graduate courses. Readers who know Kierkegaard somewhat and wish to kindle his thoughts in their minds will get the most out of this book.

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The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights. By Meghan J. Clark. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. xiii + 166 pages. \$39.00 (paper).

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The literature on the official documents of Catholic social teaching is immense and still growing. A lifetime could be spent sifting through the relevant Vatican texts on social and economic issues and digesting the numerous commentaries on them. Meghan Clark's new book achieves something quite rare: it proposes a substantially original thesis regarding foundational issues in recent Vatican social teachings, then illustrates it by drawing compelling connections to contemporary global justice issues. Clark, a young but already well-traveled scholar at St. John's University in New York, draws richly on her involvement in global health issues and theological education to demonstrate the salience and demanding nature of the main points in this important book.

As the book's subtitle suggests, the central thesis is that human rights and solidarity emerge as twin pillars of recent Catholic social thought, not by some accident of history, but precisely because the underlying social anthropology of a Catholic worldview demands such a dual prioritization. The two are intrinsically linked because (as recent popes and their ghostwriters came readily to recognize) their connection allows simultaneously for acts of expanding human rights and building community. It is through the very practice of forging proper respect for human rights that solidarity, as a key social virtue, is cultivated and habituated. The strength of Catholic social thought—namely, its highlighting of the relational nature of the human person and the key role of participation—shines most brilliantly when contrasted with the shortcomings of strictly secular approaches to human