

RESCUING THE INDIVIDUAL:
THE KIERKEGAARD RENAISSANCE IN WEIMAR GERMANY

by
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the phenomenon of Kierkegaard's reception in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Kierkegaard's importance in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the Weimar Republic is oft-mentioned but has yet to receive systematic treatment. No single figure dominated Weimar's intellectual horizon more than Kierkegaard. Not only does he provide the connective tissue between figures like Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas. He also influenced the thinking of communist theorists, proto-Fascists, Catholic theologians, mystical novelists, and legal scholars. In a culture typically known for its fractures, Kierkegaard's reception points to many of the shared fears and desires of the Weimar Republic.

My dissertation looks at the individuals, mechanisms (books, articles, lectures), and organizations that mediated Kierkegaard's reception. In doing so it emphasizes the capaciousness of the Weimar Republic more than its fatedness. Within the circle of Kierkegaard interpreters discussed in the following chapters, there existed a dizzying array of possible paths for Germany's renewal: from Bolshevism to Fascism, and Lao-Tzu to Nietzsche. But each of these paths required a clearing out, a destruction of the existing societal structures. I find that this was Kierkegaard's primary attraction in 20th century Germany: he lent a potent voice to their societal frustrations, especially in the aftermath of World War I.

I also argue that Kierkegaard's popularity complicates the declension narrative of individuality in the late Weimar Republic. With his plangent insistence on the importance of the individual over and above any religious, social or political system,

Kierkegaard stands as one of the fathers of Existentialism. Yet his philosophy took root among a host of Weimar-era social movements, from the youth movement to socialism and fascism, which radically subordinated the individual in their respective schemas. This dissertation shows how communists and fascists used Kierkegaard as an appeal to individuality and as a way of shaping their respective images of authentic individuals.

In sum, Kierkegaard's reception serves as a thread running throughout the otherwise balkanized Weimar Republic. By following this thread, my dissertation uncovers a shared intellectual space between segments of German society otherwise viewed as radically dissonant.

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As I imagine is often the case with acknowledgments, I am keenly aware of how much more I could say, of who else I could thank. I'll conclude with the observation that however isolating the work of writing a dissertation could be, I never felt alone. In that I feel immensely fortunate and thank everyone who has touched my life in ways big or small.

Introduction

Kierkegaard and German History

In the summer of 2012 I welcomed a friend and fellow PhD student from my department to Copenhagen where I was a fellow at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Center (Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret). We met at the central train station and then jumped on a bus to take us back to my apartment in Nørrebro, a district located just northwest of the city center. Upon disembarking from the bus we encountered a homeless man I had seen many times in my neighborhood. Though we had never spoken before, he decided to strike up a conversation with us on this warm July evening. He quickly discovered, as did every Dane I had met that summer, that my Danish skills did not allow for a very efficient conversation. Whereas other Danes would seamlessly switch into English, leaving any assessment of my language skills unspoken, this man was more forthcoming. He eloquently explained that since his English was far superior to my Danish he would take pity on me and converse in my language. With a powerful scent of whisky on his breath, and in perfect English, he then asked us what had brought us to his country. I explained that we were both historians and that I was in Copenhagen doing research for my dissertation at the Kierkegaard Center. To my great surprise this spurred an angry diatribe: How dare someone from a land with no culture (the United States) think that he could understand Søren Kierkegaard? He continued to preach to the empty streets of our neighborhood while we continued on to my apartment.

We were not the first foreigners to voyage to Denmark with the goal of understanding

the thought of Søren Kierkegaard. Because Kierkegaard was largely unknown outside of his homeland at his death in 1855, those who wanted to learn more about this mysterious Dane had to learn Danish and often travelled to Copenhagen to do so.¹ The most consequential of these early devotees came from Denmark's neighbor to the south, and Germany became Kierkegaard's entrepôt to the rest of Europe and the world. In 1877, the influential Danish literary critic Georg Brandes—who encouraged Friedrich Nietzsche to learn about Kierkegaard²—bemoaned that if only Kierkegaard's texts had been “written in one of the main European languages, they would have made their author world famous.”³ Beginning in the late 19th Century and reaching its apex in the 1920s with the publication of the *Søren Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke* (Collected Works of Søren Kierkegaard), the German reception of Kierkegaard catapulted him onto the world scene. German made Kierkegaard world famous.

In a 1932 article for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the German-Jewish philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt explores the phenomenon of Kierkegaard's popularity in her time. “If we were to write a history of (Kierkegaard's) fame,” claims Arendt, “only the last fifteen years would concern us, but in those years his fame has spread with amazing speed...

¹ In fact, one of these pilgrims from Germany, Hermann Gottsched (1848-1916) eventually took over the task of gathering and publishing the vast store of diaries and papers left to Kierkegaard's brother. After completing the Danish publication, Gottsched turned to translating them for his homeland.

² As best as scholars can tell, Nietzsche only ever encountered excerpts from Kierkegaard in Brandes' writing and never took Brandes' advice to look further into the Dane's writings. For a recent investigation of what Nietzsche knew of Kierkegaard as well as a comparison of their philosophies, see Thomas Miles, “Friedrich Nietzsche: Rival Visions of the Best Way of Life” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 9: Kierkegaard and Existentialism*, ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 263-298).

he speaks for an entire generation that is not reading him out of historical interest but for intensely personal reasons: *mea res agitur*.”⁴ Although complete German translations of Kierkegaard’s works began appearing only in 1909, by 1932 he occupied a central place in Weimar’s tumultuous society, cropping up in sermons and philosophical tracts, newspapers and private correspondence. What were these “intensely personal reasons” that made Kierkegaard so attractive to Arendt’s generation, a generation sorting through the aftermath of defeat in World War One? My project argues that Kierkegaard channeled and shaped the frustrations of German society more than any other single figure at the time.

Kierkegaard’s importance in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the Weimar Republic is oft-mentioned but has yet to receive systematic treatment. The only extended study of Kierkegaard’s reception in Germany is Habib Malik’s *Receiving Kierkegaard*, which traces the early reception of Kierkegaard’s thought outside of Denmark.⁵ Important as Malik’s contribution is, it nonetheless stops in 1920. In his conclusion, Malik points to Kierkegaard’s reception in the 1920s as “the truly exciting part of the story.”⁶ This prediction has been borne out in some of the most innovative recent studies in Weimar intellectual history. In his

³ Quoted in Howard Hong and Edna Hong, “Historical Introduction” to Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way: Studies by Various Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), xviii.

⁴ Hannah Arendt, “Søren Kierkegaard,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 January, 1932.

⁵ Habib Malik, *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1997). Also worth noting is Heiko Schulz’s article “A Modest Head Start: The German Reception of Kierkegaard,” which does treat the Weimar reception of Kierkegaard. However, as a theologian and Kierkegaard scholar, Schulz’s approach differs greatly from mine. Focusing exclusively on the influence of Kierkegaard on various German thinkers and writers, Schulz is not as concerned with tracing out larger trends into which the Kierkegaard revival fits. Heiko Schulz, “A Modest Head Start: The German Reception of Kierkegaard,” in *Kierkegaard’s International Reception. Northern and Western Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 307–420.

examination of the origins of the philosophical concept of “the other,” Samuel Moyn repeatedly refers to Kierkegaard’s influence. “The thesis that the Kierkegaard enthusiasm,” Moyn acknowledges, “played a major—indeed, essential—role in the origins of Levinas’s doctrine may seem difficult to maintain. It is, nevertheless, correct.”⁷ Kierkegaard is equally as important in Peter Gordon’s examination of the deep connections between Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Heidegger, whose *Being and Time* Gordon describes as a melding of “phenomenological technique and Kierkegaardian passion.”⁸ The works of Gordon and Moyn are examples of an exciting trend in Weimar historiography: namely, an examination of the “shared intellectual horizons” among seemingly disparate thinkers.⁹

No single figure dominated Weimar’s intellectual horizon more than Kierkegaard. Not only does he provide the connective tissue between figures like Heidegger, Rosenzweig, Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas. He also influenced the thinking of communist theorists, proto-Fascists, Catholic theologians, mystical novelists, and legal scholars. One need only peruse the table of contents in the upcoming volumes (8-14) of the series *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* to grasp the breadth of Kierkegaard’s reach.¹⁰ These essays trace out

⁶ Malik, *Receiving Kierkegaard*, 393.

⁷ Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 165.

⁸ Peter Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), xxi.

⁹ Gordon nonetheless lists the relative lack of such studies as a central desideratum in Weimar scholarship: “Scholars have often failed to recognize just how much the leading intellectuals of that time worked within a shared intellectual horizon.” Gordon, “Introduction” to *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, eds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2.

¹⁰ Jon Stewart, ed. *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, (Copenhagen: Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, 2009-).

Kierkegaard's importance for such varied aspects of the Republic as juridical thought (Carl Schmitt, Carl Voegelin), various strands of philosophy (Franz Rosenzweig, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger), literature (Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Thomas Haecker), and, perhaps especially, Catholic and Protestant Theology (Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, Emmanuel Hirsch). These volumes offer the most thorough and current scholarship on Kierkegaard's reception in Germany (and elsewhere).

Nonetheless, the encyclopedic format—each author focuses on Kierkegaard's influence on one individual—limits the insight of these volumes.

My project focuses less on these flashpoints of Kierkegaard's popularity, and more on the figures and institutions devoted to providing access to him. While Kierkegaard's reception may be “unthinkable without Barth's stormy popularity and instant fame,” as Samuel Moyn claims, it is just as unthinkable without the slew of Kierkegaard translations and studies by lesser known (today) Kierkegaardians. Looking around at the state of Germany, and Europe more generally, these individuals—primarily publishers, authors, editors and translators—believed that their society desperately needed to hear Kierkegaard's message. The details of this message differed depending on the interpreter and the context; Germany looked much different in 1933 than it had in 1909. When excited readers of Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* or Heidegger's *Being and Time* wanted to explore Kierkegaard on their own, it is to these texts that they turned. This is also a story of the journals and publishing houses that produced the majority of German-language texts by or about Kierkegaard in the first third of the twentieth century. These institutions are the scaffolding of my project.

When I began my research I had a hunch about the underlying factors of Kierkegaard's popularity in Weimar Germany. I sensed a deep connection between Kierkegaard's clarion call to individuals—he is often described as the godfather of

Existentialism—and the crumbling of German society after World War One. I thought that as Germans watched the forces that ordered their world fall apart, they must have turned to Kierkegaard for stability and support. I expected a society with little else upon which to stand would serve as fertile ground for Kierkegaard’s insistence upon individual existence as the only possible Archimedean point. George Lukács made a similar argument in the 1950s when discussing Kierkegaard’s role in preparing the way for fascism. “The collapse of [the bourgeois milieu in the Wilhelmine regime]... threatened everything. The center had broken loose, and there was no more stability. In this wasteland stood the lonely I in anxiety and apprehension.”¹¹ Lukács’s disapproval is clear when he explains that Kierkegaard only offered this “lonely I” an irrational decisionism as the answer to its despair.

Examples of Kierkegaard’s popularity elsewhere in Europe seemed to confirm this narrative. “It is from this date forward,” observed a French philosopher referring to 1930s France, “that Kierkegaard’s renown really spread in France—just at the same time as France entered a ‘crisis’ not only economic but social and political in form.”¹² Peaking a generation later than it had across the Rhine, Kierkegaard’s French reception was very much mediated by Germany. It was the crisis of Nazism and occupation that attracted the French to Kierkegaard, a figure they were familiar with thanks to his earlier reception in Germany.¹³

¹¹ “Der Zusammenbruch jener Welt...droht an allen Ecken und Enden. Es gibt nicht Festes, keinen Halt mehr. Und in der Wüste steht das einsame Ich in Angst und Sorge.” George Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1953), 390.

¹² Nelly Viallaneix, “Lectures françaises,” in Niels and Marie Thulstrup, eds., *Biblioteca Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 8, *The Legacy and Interpretation of Kierkegaard* (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1981), 108-109.

¹³ For an account of Kierkegaard’s reception in France, primarily via German philosophers such as Heidegger and Rosenzweig, see Samuel Moyn, “Transcendence, Morality, and History: Emmanuel Levinas and the Discovery of Søren Kierkegaard in France,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 104 (2004): 22-54.

When I learned of the Russian Kierkegaard renaissance that followed immediately upon the collapse of the USSR, I felt more confident about my hunch: his radical focus on the individual provided a foothold for those who had witnessed society implode around them.¹⁴

But my sources told a slightly different story. Primarily, they reminded me of one of the great peculiarities of post-World War One Germany: the disjunct between the psychological and societal devastation of a lost war and the relative lack of its physical evidence in Germany. There were no occupying armies on German soil after World War One—save for the occupation of the Ruhr region on the French border. There were no *trümmerfrauen* (“rubble women”), a word coined to describe the women who helped clear and reconstruct German cities in the immediate aftermath of World War Two.¹⁵ Indeed, there was little physical evidence in Germany that a war had recently been fought, let alone lost. Most of the structures of their society remained the same as before: their opera houses, world-class museums, revered universities, and railroad tracks all seemed unchanged from 1913. And when it came to the most gruesome reminders of the destructiveness of the war, the battered and torn bodies of soldiers, German society exhibited a clear desire to remove them from public view.¹⁶ Perhaps most devastating for the fledgling republic, such disjuncture flowed

¹⁴ I learned of this phenomenon during a conversation with Niels Jørgen Cappelhørn, longtime head of the *Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscentret* (Kierkegaard Research Center) in Copenhagen. Dr. Cappelhørn told me of his experience leading the institute during the 1990s, when he received constant requests to speak throughout the former USSR, including an invitation at one point to the Kremlin.

¹⁵ For a recent history of, and challenge to, the legend of these “rubble women,” see Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen: Klartext, 2014).

¹⁶ See Sabine Kienitz, *Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914-1923* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008). Kienitz argues that the marginalization of the *Kriegsbeschädigte* (“war-injured”) is the best exemplar of Germany’s attempt to come to terms with the war and reconstruct society. Kienitz explores the numerous ways in which German society

into the potent myth that Germany remained undefeated in the field, but “stabbed in the back” at home.¹⁷

The lack of physical evidence of the largest war in European history only heightened the psychological confusion. 1918 witnessed the founding of multiple German republics, rampant fears of a Bolshevik-style revolution and civil war that permeated the streets of the major urban centers. The prolific essayist Siegfried Kracauer addressed the confusion of the times in a 1920 article for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. “An order that had long rotted from the inside had collapsed,” Kracauer explains, “the protective circle of forms was no more: and thus, the dark, nameless life-forces flooded unrestrainedly inward, shaking the foundations of the soul.”¹⁸ From the civil war in the streets to the political chaos of coalition governments collapsing as soon as they were formed, the post-war years were not devoted to rebuilding physical structures but rather to questioning the existing social, political, and religious structures.¹⁹

marginalized the war-injured as unwanted reminders of a lost war. See especially chapter four, “Unerwünschte Helden: Marginalisierungsprozesse.” For a recent diachronic study of Germany and the war-dead, see Alon Confino, Paul Betts, and Dirk Schuman, eds. *Between Mass Death and Individual Loss: The Place of the Dead in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

¹⁷ The so-called *Dolchstoßlegende* crops up in nearly every treatment of the Republic. For a recent study of its most potent proponent, see Anna von der Goltz’s *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis*. In it, von der Goltz argues that the Hindenburg myth was deeply entwined with the “Stab in the Back” legend, with Hindenburg embracing it repeatedly in his memoirs and speeches throughout the 1920s. Anna von der Goltz, *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Siegfried Kracauer, “Philosophie des Werks,” *Frankfurter Zeitung: Morgenblatt*, July 27, 1920.

¹⁹ In his classic study of the Weimar Republic, Peter Gay claims that “for the insiders of the Republic, the most insistent questions revolved around the need for man’s renewal, questions made most urgent and practically insoluble by the disappearance of God, the threat of the machine, the incurable stupidity of the upper classes, and the helpless philistinism of the bourgeoisie.” Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Norton, 2001), 7.

The figures at the center of Kierkegaard's German reception sought to destroy what they saw as the rotten structures of society. They turned to Kierkegaard not as a refuge, but as a wrecking ball. As the right-wing philosopher Alfred Baeumler bluntly phrased it, he hoped to use Kierkegaard as part of the "dynamite in the largest cities of Germany [that] would explode the foundation of the Republic."²⁰ This motivation cropped up consistently among Kierkegaard's German interpreters. Additionally, when these interpreters turned toward the construction of a future society, they moved on from Kierkegaard, or mixed him with other thinkers. My sources turned to an immensely varied group of thinkers in this way. In fact, the primary element that held their ideologies together was the vision of Kierkegaard as an agent of destruction.

As Peter Fritzsche noted for most histories of the Weimar Republic, "the plot that holds the story together has been fragile democracy and its demise."²¹ Whether depicted as simply a prelude to the Third Reich or as the greatest "crisis of classical modernity," the Weimar Republic often stands on the docket for its late collapse or for its deformities at birth.²² Disentangling Weimar from what came next remains one of the most consistent challenges for any historian of the period.²³ If we are to gain access to the lived reality of the

²⁰ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ludwig von Ficker: Briefwechsel, vol. 3: 1926-1959* ed. Ignaz Zangerle, Walter Methlagl, Franz Seyr, Anton Unterkircher (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1991), 191.

²¹ Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1996), 629-656.

²² Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

²³ Benjamin Ziemann offers a survey of Weimar historiography since Fritzsche's famous question. He concludes that historians should continue to "reject tragedy as the wrong form for an overall emplotment of Weimar's troubled history." Benjamin Ziemann, "Weimar was

time, we have to continually remind ourselves of one key fact: for those living through it, the Weimar Republic was a post-war period, not an inter-war period.²⁴ Nor was it, except perhaps for Hitler and his acolytes, a prelude to the Third Reich. The Weimar Republic survived for fourteen years: shorter than the forty-seven years of the Kaiser Reich, but longer than the twelve years of the Third Reich.

A recent group of historians have approached the task of viewing Weimar *wie es eigentlich gewesen* by arguing for the strength of the Republic.²⁵ Against the view of Weimar as a “republic without republicans,” these scholars argue that the Republic captured not only the minds—as in the idea of *Vernunftrepublikaner* (“Republicans by reason”)—but also the hearts of its citizens. Manuela Achilles and Nadine Rossol both focus on the annual celebration of

Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the German Republic” *German History* Vol. 28, No. 4, 569.

²⁴ There are numerous studies on the centrality of World War One in Weimar Germany, both in its interpretation and its continued effects. For some recent examples see: Vanessa Ther, “‘Humans are Cheap and the Bread is Dear.’ Republican Portrayals of the War Experience in Weimar Germany” in Heather Jones, Jennifer O’Brien and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian, eds, *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 357-384; Alan Kramer, “The First World War and German Memory” in the same volume, Jones, *Untold War*, 385-416; Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Greg Caplan, *Wicked Sons, German Heroes: Jewish Soldiers, Veterans and Memories of World War I in Germany* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2008); Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); see also his, “Germany after the First World War—A Violent Society? Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany” in Andreas Wirshing and Dirk Schumann, eds, *Journal of Modern European History: Violence and Society after the First World War*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2003): 80-95.

²⁵ As David Marshall states in his survey of recent literature on the Weimar Republic: “A shift in Weimar historiography has recently become palpable, even *de rigueur*. Whereas it was once common, in the wake of the Second World War, to speak of the sense in which Weimar was fated to failure, it has now become important to stress the role of chance, contingency and openness in the various chapters of Weimar history.” David Marshall, “Intellectual History of the Weimar Republic – Recent Research.” *Intellectual History Review* 20, no. 4 (2010): 503–17.

Constitution Day as one example of the symbolic capital of the Republic.²⁶ Adding to this revisionary approach, Eric Bryden examines the *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*, “the largest pro-Republican civic association of the entire period.”²⁷ This para-military organization composed primarily of veterans could boast of nearly three million members and supplied the backbone of support at the Republican celebrations discussed by Rossol and Achilles. Surveying the current state of Weimar historiography, Benjamin Ziemann concludes that “the history of the Weimar Republic cannot simply be written off as a narrative of tragic demise.”²⁸

My project enters this historiography from a more oblique angle. To be sure, the story of Kierkegaard’s reception does not offer a hopeful history of the Republic. The figures who popularized Kierkegaard in Germany did so almost entirely from a place of anger, doubt, and frustration. While their visions of the future varied immensely, Kierkegaard’s primary interpreters all agreed that the Republic was merely a temporary placeholder.²⁹ In this sense,

²⁶ Manuela Achilles, “With a Passion for Reason: Celebrating the Constitution in Weimar Germany,” in *Central European History* 43 (2010), 666; Nadine Rossol, “Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926-1936,” in *Central European History* 43 (2010), 616-638. Initially a small black-tie affair for federal officials, by 1929 Constitution Day in Berlin had evolved into a multi-day festival concluding with over 60,000 Germans gathering in Berlin’s Grunewald Stadium.

²⁷ Eric Bryden, “Heroes and Martyrs of the Republic: Reichsbanner *Geschichtspolitik* in Weimar Germany,” in *Central European History* 43, (2010), 639. Bryden focuses especially on the *Geschichtspolitik* (“political use of history”) of the Reichsbanner and their concerted attempt to legitimize Weimar by presenting it as a fulfillment of the failed democratic revolutions of 1848-49.

²⁸ Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations*, 9. In this excellent study, Ziemann focuses on the Reichsbanner and the *Reichsbund der Kriegesbeschädigten, Kriegsteilnehmer und Kriegerhinterbliebenen* (“Reichsbund of War Disabled, War Veterans and War Dependents”) in order to push against the historiography that views war remembrance as purely bellicose and restricted to the anti-Republican forces in Weimar.

²⁹ Another example worth mentioning, although he remains outside the purview of this dissertation, is that of Karl Barth and his famous insistence on “No!” as the only answer that God gives to sinful humanity. As Barth explains in his *Römerbrief*, this worldview was inspired

their lived reality lines up with the historical perspective of the Weimar Republic as doomed from the outset. These men never believed it would last, and they looked to Kierkegaard to hasten its demise.

Nonetheless, I argue that this story emphasizes the capaciousness of the Weimar Republic more than its fatedness.³⁰ In this way, my project aligns with the recent scholarship on crisis in the Weimar Republic. We should be suspicious, as the work of Rüdiger Graf has shown, of equating "crisis" with "catastrophe." In doing so we inject a post-1933 fatalism into all pre-1933 discussions of "crisis." After analyzing every mention of crisis in 1920s Germany that he could find—in speeches, journals, books, newspaper articles—Graf concludes that "crisis," almost without fail, carried with it more a sense of optimism and a call to action than of pessimism and fatalism. As a clear gesture to the centrality of Kierkegaard to this entire Weimar dialogue of crisis, Graf entitled his article "Either-Or: The Narrative of 'Crisis' in Weimar Germany and in Historiography."³¹

Within the circle of Kierkegaard interpreters discussed in the following chapters, there existed a dizzying array of possible paths for Germany's renewal: variants of Russian Bolshevism and Italian Fascism, mythologies from nearly every corner of the globe, the

by Kierkegaard's insistence on the "infinite qualitative distance between God and man." Analyzing the political effects of such a stance, Friedrich Wilhelm Graf concludes that Barth and his ilk must be counted among those who weakened the republic. "Gegen ein demokratiekompatibles Ethos des Kompromisses," explains Graf, "hätten die 'Dialektischen Theologen' nur die Denunziations jedes Ja zur bestehende Ordnung zu setzten vermocht." Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, *Der Heilige Zeitgeist: Studien zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Theologie in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 18.

³⁰ For ways in which Weimar contemporaries envisioned their future, see Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008).

³¹ Rüdiger Graf, "Either-Or: The Narrative of 'Crisis' in Weimar Germany and in Historiography," *Central European History* 43, no. 04 (2010): 592–615.

philosophies of Lao-Tzu, Cardinal Henry Newman, Nietzsche.³² Moreover, these same men found an equally extensive array of threats lined up against their respective projects. But there was a notable lack of concern regarding the threat of Nazism until it was too late. My project resists the tug of the Nazi teleology by respecting the fact that even within this group of thinkers united by a focus on existential threats to humanity, the Nazis barely registered.

There is one last irony worth mentioning in the Weimar reception of Kierkegaard. With his plangent insistence on the importance of the individual over and above any religious, social or political system, Kierkegaard stands as one of the fathers of Existentialism. One could say that his entire philosophy revolves around his concept of “the individual”—which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Yet his philosophy took root among a host of Weimar-era social movements, from the youth movement (via Eugen Diederichs) to socialism (via Wilhelm Küttemeyer) and fascism (via Alfred Baeumler), which radically subordinated the individual in their respective schemas. How does one make sense of this apparent dissonance?

I argue that Kierkegaard’s popularity complicates the declension narrative of individuality in the late Weimar Republic. According to this view, German society turned away from individualism as it embraced the collectivist ideologies of fascism or communism. And it was only after the implosion of 1945 that individualism made a return to German

³² In this sense they almost perfectly spanned Theodore Ziolkowski’s five “modes of faith.” In his survey of intellectuals in the decades surrounding WWI whose works and lives exemplify an attempt to find surrogates for their lost faith, Ziolkowski focuses on five “modes of faith”—art for art’s sake; the flight to India; socialism; myth; and utopian vision. Theodore Ziolkowski, *Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

society in the renewed focus on consumption and domesticity.³³ My project, however, supports Moritz Föllmer's recent work on individuality in the late Weimar period. Föllmer argues that rather than a loss of individuality in the face of collectivism, the supposedly collectivist ideologies of both the left (communism) and the right (fascism) incorporated the individualism of German society at the time.³⁴ He claims that both ideologies "introduced divisions not so much between collectivity and individuality but rather between legitimate and illegitimate individuals, promising to keep the specters of inauthenticity and materialism at bay by associating them with deviance."³⁵ Föllmer thus adds "Individualism" to the set of ideas—"Socialism," "Nationalism," and "Revolution," among others—that communists and fascists played with during the Weimar Republic as they developed their appeal to the masses.³⁶

³³ See Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), xi, 194-200, 306-313; Ulrich Herbert, "Europe in High Modernity: Reflections on a Theory of the 20th Century," *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 5 (2007), 5-20; Paul Ginsborg, "The Politics of the Family in Twentieth-Century Europe," *Contemporary European History*, vol. 9 (2000), 411-444.

³⁴ Erik Jensen's study of the sports culture in Weimar is relevant here as well. Focusing on the rise of individualistic sports like tennis, boxing, and track & field, Jensen likewise pushes back against the declension narrative of individualism in the Weimar Republic. Erik Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6. Föllmer pushes back against German historiography that too easily focuses on Individualism as a marker of early Weimar and as the enemy against which both Nazis and communists fought. Instead, he argues for a multi-faceted and ubiquitous focus on individualism throughout German society, which can be seen in both fascism and communism.

³⁶ For recent examples of scholarship that focuses on the shared space between communists and fascists, see Timothy S. Brown, *Weimar Radicals: Nazis and Communists between Authenticity and Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Pamela E. Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies: the Culture of Radicalism in Berlin*,

Both communists and fascists used Kierkegaard as an appeal to individuality and as a way of shaping their respective images of authentic individuals. Most consequentially, members of both groups couched their appeals to individuality in terms hostile to the Republic.³⁷ The shared attraction to Kierkegaard's philosophy of individuality thus offer another example of latent similarities between the extreme left and the extreme right in the Weimar Republic that contributed to its undermining. In the conclusion I will offer a larger assessment of the overall impact of Kierkegaard's reception on the health of the Republic.

Chapter Overview

These ideas are developed throughout the following chapters. Chapter One examines *Der Brenner*, the Austrian avant-garde journal most responsible for first introducing Kierkegaard to the German-speaking world. When *Der Brenner* began including Kierkegaard in its pages in 1914, very few of his texts were available in German. Over the next decade, *Der Brenner* established itself as the primary champion and interpreter of Kierkegaard in Germany. This role fell especially to Theodor Haecker (1879-1945), who more than anyone else shaped the image of Kierkegaard portrayed in *Der Brenner*. The "Brenner Circle," as they called themselves, ultimately shattered due to increasingly divergent interpretations of Kierkegaard between Haecker and another primary contributor to *Der Brenner*, Carl Dallago (1869-1949).

1929-1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Donna Harsch, "The Iron Front: Weimar Social Democracy between Tradition and Modernity" in *Between Revolution and Reform: German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990*, ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 252-291.

³⁷ As Föllmer argues regarding the capital city, "In late Weimar Berlin, individualist expectations put democratic reformism under massive pressure and ended up undermining it." Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity*, 76.

Their debates provide a glimpse in to the central tensions present in Kierkegaard's early reception.

Chapter Two introduces the eclectic worldview proffered by the publisher Eugen Diederichs and the place of Kierkegaard therein. Diederichs (1867-1930) sought to use his publishing house as a goad and guide for renewing German culture and Kierkegaard was central to his mission. With the publication of a selection of Kierkegaard's journals in 1905, Diederichs embarked upon a path that would soon make him the primary producer of Kierkegaard translations in Germany. *Søren Kierkegaard: Book of the Judge, Journals 1853-1855* proved hugely influential among the German-speaking intellectual elite in the decades to come.³⁸ Diederichs then began laying the groundwork for a much larger translation project: a twelve-volume collection of Kierkegaard's writings. This chapter concludes with an introduction to the two men Diederichs chose as co-editors/translators for the collection: Hermann Gottsched (1849-1913) and Christoph Schrempf (1860-1944).

Chapter Three takes the *Søren Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke* as its focus, especially the battle to mediate Kierkegaard's reception that Gottsched and Schrempf waged in the afterwords. This was a battle between two men who shared a commitment to bringing Kierkegaard's message to German society, but who nonetheless disagreed as to what that message should be. Their incompatible views led Gottsched to leave the project abruptly in 1912. Schrempf remained as the chief editor through the completion of the second edition. Schrempf's editions of the *Gesammelte Werke* became the standard German translations of

³⁸ Hermann Gottsched, *Buch des Richters: Seine Tagebücher, 1853-1855* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1905). Regarding its reception, see Habib Malik, *Receiving Søren Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 365-366.

Kierkegaard throughout the Weimar Republic, and they were not superseded until Diederichs commissioned a completely revised edition in the 1950s.

Chapter Four turns to the late 1920s and early 1930s and focuses on the attempt to create the first ever journal based explicitly on the philosophy of Kierkegaard. The initial impetus for the journal came from Alfred Baeumler (1887-1968), a philosophy professor in Dresden who later became the head of pedagogy in the National Socialist regime. Through his contacts with the Brenner Circle, Baeumler recruited a young Kierkegaard translator named Wilhelm Küttemeyer (1904-1972) to help him build a journal based on Nietzsche and Kierkegaard that would hasten the fall of the Weimar Republic. When the journal he hoped to create finally appeared in 1932, Küttemeyer had transformed it into a communist organ that attempted to meld the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Marx. This chapter thus delves into the extreme variety of interpretations and uses of Kierkegaard's ideas in the late Republic.

Chapter Five explores the short existence of Küttemeyer's journal, *Der Sumpf*. *Der Sumpf's* contributors created an unorthodox version of communism infused with Kierkegaardian concepts and priorities. Most consequential was Kierkegaard's concept of "the individual" (*der Einzelne*) and his desire to rescue the individual from all of the societal forces lined up against it. *Der Sumpf* was an attempt to create a communism of the individual. The chapter ends by arguing that Kierkegaard's influence ultimately hamstrung *Der Sumpf's* ability to assess the most profound threat within its society. Their experiment with Kierkegaardian communism came to an abrupt halt when the Nazis came into power. The journal folded and its contributors scattered: some to prison, some into hiding, some to war.

That Kierkegaard could be recruited into such divergent worldviews says as much about German society at the time as it does about Kierkegaard. Nonetheless, in the pantheon of popular figures of the Weimar Republic, Kierkegaard was perhaps the most elusive. His

insistence on the necessity of indirect communication—exemplified by the use of pseudonyms in his most popular works—ensured the philosophical and political lability of his writings. That he was both aware of the likelihood that posterity would puzzle over his writings, and even reveled in this fact, is perhaps best seen in the following entry from his journal:

After my death, no one will find in my papers (this is my consolation) the least information about what has really filled my life, find the inscription in my innermost being which explains everything and what, more often than not, makes what the world would call trifles into, for me, events of immense importance, and which I too consider of no significance once I take away the secret note which explains it.³⁹

Much of my dissertation focuses on the attempts made by Kierkegaard's interpreters to divine the "real Kierkegaard." By following these attempts, I am not trying to unveil, as the title of a 1929 text phrased it, "The Secret of Kierkegaard."⁴⁰ Rather, I am interested in examining Kierkegaard's reception as a nexus for many of the deep anxieties and soaring hopes pulsing through the Weimar Republic. In this I echo, *mutatis mutandi*, Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen's description of her study of Nietzsche's reception in America: "This is not a history of American 'Nietzscheans.' It is a history of American readers making their way to their views of themselves and their modern America by thinking through, against, and around Nietzsche's stark challenges."⁴¹ To this end, I do not offer much background on Kierkegaard's writings or philosophical concerns. The goal is to focus on the concerns and motivations of Kierkegaard's interpreters more than on the veracity of their interpretations. Nonetheless, so

³⁹ *SKS, JP*, 5645.

⁴⁰ Erich Przywara, *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards* (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1929).

⁴¹ Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 27.

as to provide some orientation, I will quickly sketch here the primary characteristic of Kierkegaard's writings that allowed for such divergent interpretations: what is known as his dual authorship.

From 1843 until 1846, Kierkegaard published two simultaneous series of texts, with texts often appearing on the same day. During these three years, he published the majority of the writings for which he is known today. One series consisted of his pseudonymous texts: *Either-Or* (1843), *Repetition* (1843), *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), and *Prefaces* (1844). Kierkegaard created fictional authors who wrote entire works that reflected their own unique worldviews, thus utilizing a variety of narrative viewpoints in order to communicate with his reader. Kierkegaard described his pseudonymous authors as "poetized personalities, poetically maintained so that everything they say is in character with their poetized individualities."⁴² Kierkegaard insisted that his readers respect the unique individuality of these authors and not confuse their voices with his own.⁴³

Kierkegaard limited the scope of these pseudonymous texts to what he described as aesthetic and ethical themes. He believed that his age suffered from a surfeit of such knowledge that, ironically, kept it from grasping any meaningful truths. His intention with the aesthetic/ethical works was to enter into, and ultimately undermine, the self-assured

⁴² Søren Kierkegaard, "Letter to Ludvig Jacob Mendel Gude" published in "Supplement" to *The Point of View: On my Work as an Author, The Point of View for My Work as an Author, Armed Neutrality* ed. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 288.

⁴³ "Anyone with just a fragment of common sense," wrote Kierkegaard, "will perceive that it would be ludicrously confusing to attribute to me everything the poetized personalities say." Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 288.

knowledge of his age and thus make space for these meaningful (read religious) truths.⁴⁴ Thus he criticizes speculative philosophy in *Johannes Climacus: or De omnibus dubitandum est. A Narrative*⁴⁵; explores the implications of the Greek (Plato, the Eleatics) concept of repetition in *Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology*; examines the tensions between a hedonistic pursuit of the beautiful and the ethical beauty of marriage in *Either/Or*. He even ridicules Copenhagen's literary scene in *Prefaces: Light Reading for People in Various Estates According to Time and Opportunity*. The aesthetic/ethical writings acted as Kierkegaard's Trojan horse: they spoke in the voice of the age while simultaneously attempting to undermine it.⁴⁶

At the same time, Kierkegaard published a series of religious texts in his own name. These were the contents of the Trojan horse that he hoped to smuggle into Christendom: *Two Upbuilding Discourses* (1843), *Three Upbuilding Discourses* (1843), *Four Upbuilding Discourses* (1843), *Two Upbuilding Discourses* (1844), *Three Upbuilding Discourses* (1844), *Four Upbuilding Discourses* (1844). Then, a day before publishing *Stages*, Kierkegaard released *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* (1845) under his own name. While the pseudonymous texts explored

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard explains his tactics as follows: "No, an illusion can never be removed directly, and only by indirect means can it be radically removed...By a direct attack he only strengthens a person in the illusion and also infuriates him. Generally speaking, there is nothing that requires such gentle handling as the removal of an illusion...the indirect method, which in the service of love of truth dialectically arranges everything for the one ensnared and then, modest as love always is, avoids being witness to the confession that he makes alone before God, the confession that he has been living in an illusion." Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 43-44.

⁴⁵ Reading this text nearly one hundred years later, Hannah Arendt described it as "perhaps still the deepest interpretation of Descartes' doubt." Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 275 fn.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 43-44.

philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical topics, the named texts focused exclusively on "the directly religious," as Kierkegaard later described them.⁴⁷

Kierkegaard's polyonymous approach to writing was more than just a stylistic choice: It stood at the center of his entire authorship. "My pseudonymity or polynymity," he explained in *A First and Last Explanation*, "has not had an *accidental* basis in my person...but an *essential* basis in the *production* itself..."⁴⁸ He argued that for necessarily subjective humans, some truths simply could not be communicated directly. His pseudonyms allowed him to communicate such truths indirectly.⁴⁹ As a result of this approach, two questions have attached themselves to Kierkegaard's authorship ever since.⁵⁰ First, how seriously should we take his insistence that posterity cite the respective pseudonymous author—and not Kierkegaard himself—when discussing a pseudonymous work?⁵¹ More specifically, how much of the ideas espoused by Vigilius Haufniensis (*The Concept of Anxiety*) or Johannes Climacus (*Philosophical Fragments*,

⁴⁷ Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 7.

⁴⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, "A First and Last Explanation" in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 625. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁹ See Antony Aumann's recent article for an explication of Kierkegaard's arguments for the necessity of indirect communication, which Aumann calls his "indispensability thesis." Antony Aumann, "Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication, the Crowd, and a Monstrous Illusion" in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Point of View*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 295-324.

⁵⁰ For the most recent consideration of the various implications and interpretations of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, see Edward F. Mooney, "Pseudonyms and 'Style'" in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard* ed. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65-91.

⁵¹ For an early example of this debate, see Wilhelm Kütemeyer, Nachwort to *Über den Begriff der Ironie mit Ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates* by Søren Kierkegaard (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929), 351. For a more modern iteration see C. Stephen Evans, "The Role of Irony in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*" in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, Volume 2004, ed. Heiko

Concluding Unscientific Postscript) can we reasonably attribute to Kierkegaard himself? After Kierkegaard's death, his brother even argued that the texts written in Kierkegaard's own name should be viewed as pseudonymous.⁵²

The second question centers on Kierkegaard's retrospective claim that his entire authorship had unfolded in accordance with a plan envisioned from the outset. Namely, how seriously should posterity take Kierkegaard's retrospective ordering of his authorship? Toward the end of his life, Kierkegaard wrote several texts (*The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, *The Single Individual*, *On my Work as an Author*) in which he offered an explanation of his complicated approach to writing. Kierkegaard pursued two ends in these texts. First, he argued for the primacy of his religious writings, all of which were written in his own name. "Although Either/Or attracted all the attention," he explains:

and no one paid attention to Two Upbuilding Discourses, this nevertheless signified that it was specifically the upbuilding that should advance, that the author was a religious author who for that reason never wrote anything esthetic himself but used pseudonyms for all the esthetic works, whereas the two upbuilding discourses were by Magister Kierkegaard.⁵³

Secondly, as is also clear from this quote, Kierkegaard wanted to dissuade his readers from concluding that he had simply turned to religion after having exhausted his philosophical and literary ideas. Religion is not his last resort but rather his lodestar. He points to the simultaneous publication of his religious texts as evidence that he was always a "Christian

Schulz, Jon Stewart, Karl Verstrynge (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter), 63-79. Retrieved 17 Nov. 2014, from <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/kier>.

⁵² Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard, a Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 422-423.

⁵³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 31.

author.⁵⁴ Kierkegaard argues that the one problem that guided his entire authorship was "how to become a Christian."⁵⁵

Both questions recur in the 20th century reception of Kierkegaard's writings. Some of Kierkegaard's interpreters ascribed the thoughts of his pseudonyms to Kierkegaard himself without compunction or explanation.⁵⁶ Others claimed that the true Kierkegaard could be found only in his signed, religious texts.⁵⁷ Still others argued that the truth lay somewhere in between.⁵⁸ Such arguments could only take place, however, after a critical mass of Kierkegaard's texts had become widely available in German. In 1909, where my dissertation begins, this was not yet the case. Before turning to Kierkegaard's reception in the 20th century, it is worthwhile to offer a survey of its early traces in the 19th century.

During his lifetime, Kierkegaard's writings made only the slightest impression on his southern neighbors. The first recorded mention of Kierkegaard in the German language was an 1842 review of his published dissertation *Concept of Irony*.⁵⁹ Six years later in a German survey of European poetry and literature since the 16th century, the author describes Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (1843) as "the finest product of modern Danish literature" and complains about the lack of German familiarity with Kierkegaard. Personal connections

⁵⁴ See Kierkegaard's "Armed Neutrality: Or my Position as a Christian Author in Christendom" in *Point of View*, 129-141.

⁵⁵ Kierkegaard, *Point of View*, 8.

⁵⁶ See the debate between Küttemeyer and Haecker in Chapter Four.

⁵⁷ See the discussion of Hermann Gottsched in Chapter Two.

⁵⁸ Christoph Schrempf, discussed in Chapter Three, is exemplary in this regard.

⁵⁹ A German-educated Danish theologian, A.F. Beck (1816-1861) who had been present at Kierkegaard's defense wrote the review for the 1842 edition of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*.

mattered in this early reception, as seen in the case of the friendship between Christian Molbech (1783-1857), the respected Danish historian and philologist and Edmund Zoller, the director of the Royal Library in Stuttgart. In 1847 Molbech sent a package of Danish books for the library to Zoller, included among which was a copy of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.⁶⁰

Another example of personal connections creating avenues of reception can be seen in the example of Ryno Quehl (1821-1864), the Prussian consul general in Copenhagen.⁶¹ Quehl's time in Denmark, from 1853 until his sudden death in 1864, coincided with the final years of Kierkegaard's life and thus the peak of his radical attacks on the Danish state church in his self-published periodical *Øjeblikket*. Quehl's interest in these events became clear in his 1856 book *Aus Dänemark* ["From Denmark"], which sought to introduce Germans to their northern neighbors.⁶² In this text, Quehl describes Kierkegaard's *Øjeblikket* in detail and translated several sections from the articles — thus offering the first German translations of Kierkegaard's writing. As the son of a Prussian pastor, Quehl clearly had an eye to the implications of Kierkegaard's arguments on the state church in Germany. Quehl stands as the first of many Germans who found Kierkegaard's complaints applicable in their own land.⁶³

⁶⁰ Molbech requested a first edition of *Either/Or* from Kierkegaard to send to Zoller. Evidently familiar with Zoller, Kierkegaard sent the requested book along with a note saying: "I hasten to comply with your wish for one or two of my books for that German friend of the Danish language." Malik, 55.

⁶¹ Karl Wipperman, "Quehl, Ryno," in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 27 (1888), S. 31-32 [Onlinefassung]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd10205021X.html?anchor=adb>

⁶² Ryno Quehl, *Aus Dänemark. Bornholm und die Bornholmer. Dr. Sören Kierkegaard: Wider die dänische Staatskirche. Mit einem Hinblick auf Preussen* (Berlin: Decker, 1856).

⁶³ I drew primarily upon two sources for this account: Julie K. Allen, "Theodor Fontane: A Probably Pioneer in German Kierkegaard Reception," in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 12, Tome I: Kierkegaard's Influence on Literature, Criticism and Art: The Germanophone World*, ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 61-62; Malik, *Kierkegaard*, 124-126.

In 1861 the Oncken Publishing house in Hamburg published the first German translation of one of Kierkegaard's works.⁶⁴ Bearing the title *Christentum und Kirche. "Die Gegenwart."* *Ein ernstes Wort an unsere Zeit, insbesondere an die evangelische Geistlichkeit* ["Christianity and the Church. 'The Present.' A Serious Word about our Time, Especially about Evangelical Spirituality"], the text offered a rather clumsy translation of the first nine articles from *Øjeblikket*. A second edition appeared in 1864. Although the translator remained anonymous, the fact that Oncken was a Baptist publisher in a country that viewed Baptists as a fringe sect of Christianity likely contributed to its paltry sales. Nonetheless, this association helped establish Kierkegaard as first and foremost a theological critic of established religion.

For at least one early enthusiast, however, Kierkegaard did not represent a caustic attack on the Christian state. In 1862, a young theology student from Schleswig—a disputed region at the time between Prussia and Denmark—named Christian Hansen translated Kierkegaard's *For Self-Examination* (1851) into German as *Zur Selbstprüfung der Gegenwart empfohlen* ["Recommended for the Self-Examination of the Present"]. Hansen chose this text in order to emphasize the more devout Kierkegaard, one concerned more with exhorting his reader to scriptural devotion than in turning over tables in the temple. Although these two texts presented different angles on Kierkegaard, they shared two key convictions. First, that what he had to say about theology and religion was relevant to their own time and place; hence their emphasis on "the present" in both titles. Second, that Kierkegaard was to be understood primarily in theological, or at least religious, terms.

⁶⁴ Even though it was Quehl's text that first offered translations of *Øjeblikket* to the German-speaking world, it was tucked into a larger account of Danish life. The Oncken publication was the first to offer a standalone translation of a Kierkegaard text. Malik, *Kierkegaard*, 125, fn. 178; 219.

These elements of Kierkegaard's reception found full expression in the person of Johann Tobias Beck (1804-1878), a protestant theologian at the University of Tübingen. Thanks primarily to Beck's colleague Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), Tübingen had become a center for the historical-critical approach to scripture, known as "higher criticism."⁶⁵ Beck, however, earned a reputation as a non-conformist who preached Biblical orthodoxy against the regnant liberal theology.⁶⁶ He despised most traces of modernity within German theology, especially the influence of Hegel and Schleiermacher. He bucked against the German ecclesiastical hierarchy and took a dim view of modern culture in general. Perhaps most controversial considering his institutional home at Tübingen, Beck called for a strong distinction between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith. Only the latter could serve as the object of Christian faith. While it is not clear precisely how Beck first encountered Kierkegaard, it is not hard to understand the appeal once he did. In Kierkegaard's attacks on modern Christendom and disdain for the (German-based) search for the historical Jesus, Beck found a brilliant antecedent to his own views.

Beck's central role in Kierkegaard's early reception in Germany did not result from his pen, but rather from his influence on the small coterie of students who gathered around him. Some of these young theologians found in Beck a shared premonition that our grasp of the universe was not as firm as Hegel and Schleiermacher would have it. Others welcomed his

⁶⁵ The so-called "Tübingen School of Theology," founded by Baur, was at the pinnacle of its influence in the 1840s and then had largely dissipated by the 1860s. For English language scholarship on the school see especially Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F.C. Baur* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990); P. C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

⁶⁶ The minimal historical scholarship on Beck resides primarily in larger studies related either to Kierkegaard or to Karl Barth. Here I have drawn mostly from Malik, 220-225; Dorrien, 48-50.

spiritual gravitas, which they felt was lacking in liberal theology. Most important for the current study, however, was the role Beck played in introducing his students to Kierkegaard; or, more precisely, the role his students played in introducing Kierkegaard to Germany. Several of his students taught themselves Danish and begin translating Kierkegaard's texts into German. Two of his students, Hermann Gottsched and Christoph Schrempf, translated and edited the first German edition of Kierkegaard's Collected Works—the topic of Chapter Three. And this influence could span generations: Beck, who had taught Karl Barth's father and grandfather, played a large role in the youngest Barth's revolt against liberal theology in the early 1900s. Barth described Beck's biblical commentaries as a "gold mine" that guided him in his attempt to reimagine the Pauline message.⁶⁷

But it was Albert Bärthold (1843-1918) among Beck's students who had the most immediate impact on Kierkegaard's reception in Germany. Like so many of Beck's students, Bärthold found in Kierkegaard a desperately needed prophetic voice, one that could call out the hypocrisy of German cultural Christianity. But only if they could hear it. And aside from the two spotty translations mentioned above, Germans only access to Kierkegaard in their own language came in the form of the occasional book review. After teaching himself Danish, Bärthold churned out translations and or commentaries on Kierkegaard at a pace of at least one per year throughout the 1870s, making him the first consistent German translator of Kierkegaard.

Bärthold looked to Kierkegaard as a prophet who could help purify German Christianity. This can be seen both in the texts that he chose to translate as well as in the commentaries that often accompanied them. In 1872, for example, Bärthold published

⁶⁷ Quoted in Dorrien, 48.

Einladung und Aergerniss. Biblische Darstellung und christliche Begriffsbestimmung von Søren Kierkegaard [“Invitation and Aggravation. Biblical Representation and Christian Terminology from Søren Kierkegaard”], which offered selections from Kierkegaard’s *Practice in Christianity* (1850). The explicit purpose of *Practice*—as Kierkegaard saw it—was to reintroduce true Christian faith back into a Christianity that had strayed from its radical beginnings. Kierkegaard described this text as his “most perfect and truest work.” In the short preface to the translation, Bärthold describes Kierkegaard as the one “who purified the spiritual atmosphere from all illusions” and as the “wise counselor.”⁶⁸

In the 1870s Bärthold became involved in an illuminating dispute regarding Kierkegaard with the Danish literary critic Georg Brandes (1842-1927). As a young man from a secular Jewish family, Brandes was initially fascinated by Kierkegaard’s melancholic religiosity, which threw him into a deep spiritual crisis.⁶⁹ But after Brandes passed through this period, without converting, his attraction to Kierkegaard’s unique religious vision soured to antipathy. While retaining immense respect for Kierkegaard, Brandes became convinced that Kierkegaard’s greatness emerged in spite of his religion. He once described Kierkegaard as the “Tycho Brahe of our philosophy” in that he was undeniably brilliant but like Brahe failed to identify the sun as the center of our solar system; in Brandes’ analogy, the sun

⁶⁸ Quoted from Malik, 221. Albert Bärthold, *Einladung und Aergerniss. Biblische Darstellung und christliche Begriffsbestimmung von Søren Kierkegaard* (Halberstadt, 1872) iv.

⁶⁹ After a failed attempt at proselytizing by his friends, Brandes wrote in his diary: “To set my mind in vibration, there was needed a brain that I felt superior to my own; and I did not find it in them. I found it in the philosophical and religious writings of Søren Kierkegaard, in such works, for instance, as *Sickness unto Death*.” Quoted in Malik, 232.

represents reason.⁷⁰ In his many articles and texts about Kierkegaard, Brandes sought to reorient Kierkegaard's writings according to this rationalist universe.

In the 1870s Bärthold and Brandes established — by way of translations, commentaries, and biographical treatments — the two poles of Kierkegaard reception that would remain in place for decades to come. Brandes emphasized the aesthetic and philosophical writings as Kierkegaard's most valuable contributions. Thus from the outset of Kierkegaard's reception in Germany the question of how one relates to the dual-authorship played a key role. He dismissed Kierkegaard's religion as an unfortunate remnant of Kierkegaard's upbringing in the gloomy pietism of his father's house. He found great promise in Kierkegaard's theories about the individual, but felt that religion kept Kierkegaard's individual from realizing its full potential. In an interpretive move that would be used repeatedly by later interpreters, Brandes argued that had Kierkegaard only lived longer he would have overcome this part of his past and embraced a fully rationalist worldview.⁷¹

For Bärthold, it was precisely Kierkegaard's religious voice that he felt Germany most needed to hear. And this conviction guided his entire Kierkegaard output. In his 1876 biography of Kierkegaard — the first in the German language, Brandes' bio was translated from the Danish in 1879 — Bärthold explicitly praised Kierkegaard's championing of faith over reason. In *Die Bedeutung der ästhetischen Schriften Sören Kierkegaards, mit Bezug auf G. Brandes* ["The Meaning Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Writings, with Reference to G. Brandes"], his 1879 response to Brandes' anti-religious depiction of Kierkegaard, Bärthold argued that

⁷⁰ Quoted in Malik, 230.

⁷¹ At about this time, Brandes began corresponding with a relatively unknown German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, whom Brandes welcomed as the fulfillment of Kierkegaard's promise.

Kierkegaard's aesthetic authorship must be seen as subservient to his religious writings. And in *Regarding Kierkegaard's Theological Meaning* (1880), Bärthold focused on Kierkegaard's distinction between true Christianity and Christendom. In so doing, Bärthold helped spread what had been the central theme of Beck's lectures in Tübingen. As one scholar observed, "an armada of theologians" of the next generation—Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen, Friedrich Gogarten, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann—soon embraced this distinction as the cornerstone of their theology.⁷²

As Habib Malik notes, throughout the 1870s and 1880s theological questions remained the focal point of Kierkegaard's reception.⁷³ This was partly a matter of selection bias. The circle of students around Beck who did so much to shape the early reception of Kierkegaard were pastoral theologians—rather than professors of theology—whose interests lay more with fostering purity of heart than with engaging Hegelian philosophy. Reviews of new literature on Kierkegaard appeared almost exclusively in theological journals, thus further deepening this association. Bärthold's writings failed to achieve much of an audience outside of such circles.

In many ways, Brandes was perfectly suited to introduce Kierkegaard to a broader audience. On the one hand, Brandes had a much more polemical approach than Bärthold,

⁷² "Das von Beck und Bärthold formulierte Anliegen, die Differenz zwischen Christentum und Christenheit wieder zur Geltung zu bringen, wird in den folgenden Jahrzehnten zum Merkmal einer ganzen Flotte von Theologen, die mehr oder minder unter der Fahne Kierkegaard einen teils starker, teils weniger stark ausgeprägten Dulaismus entgegensteuern." Matthias Wilke, *Die Kierkegaard-Rezeption Emanuel Hirschs: eine Studie über die Voraussetzungen der Kommunikation christlicher Wahrheit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 33.

⁷³ Malik notes that this began to shift soon thereafter, partly due to the availability of "abundant and readily accessible translations" and partly due to much larger shifts in German culture as a whole as "the combined forces of biblical higher criticism, new discoveries in science, and spiraling industrialization, exerted tremendous pressures on dearly held beliefs among German Protestants and Catholics alike..." Malik, 308-309.

garnering attention even if only to combat him.⁷⁴ By 1876 Brandes had gained such a reputation as a dangerous “freethinker” that a planned lecture series was canceled when the university in Sweden refused to let him speak publicly at any official gatherings. More importantly, Brandes’ training was not in theology but in literature and thus he wove Kierkegaard into a different cloth than Bärthold. In his articles, books and extensive lecturing throughout Eastern Europe and Russia, Brandes connected Kierkegaard to Dostoevsky and Nietzsche—as well as to Romantic writers like Schlegel and Novalis—rather than to Luther. Such associations helped pique interest in Kierkegaard for those outside of German theological circles. As Malik points out, Brandes’ personal connections with leading European intellectuals, combined with his lectures and writings, played a major role in transmitting Kierkegaard far beyond his native Denmark.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, in fin de siècle Germany, the focus in Kierkegaard’s reception remained more on *why* Kierkegaard thought what he did than on *what* Kierkegaard thought.⁷⁶ Initially this resulted from the theological categorization debates: was Kierkegaard a Christian or not? That is, did he critique Christianity in the name of reform as an insider? Or did he do so as someone who had left the fold? The popularity of Brandes’ deeply psychologizing biography of Kierkegaard—translated into Swedish (1877), German (1879), Czech (1904) and even Yiddish (1918)—slightly shifted the parameters but only deepened this focus on Kierkegaard’s person. At the same time, it became clear to several Kierkegaard interpreters

⁷⁴ Brandes’ reputation as a “freethinker” often caused problems for Brandes in academic circles. For example, a lecture tour through Scandinavia was cut short when Christiana University in Norway rescinded their invitation after hearing the content of his planned lecture. Malik, 240.

⁷⁵ See Malik’s chapter on Brandes’ role in Kierkegaard’s reception. Malik, 211-282.

⁷⁶ Malik, 284.

that in order to address such questions, Germans needed more access to Kierkegaard's writings in their own language. The individuals and institutions that sought to provide such access in the early 20th century lie at the center of this study.

Christoph Schrempf (1860-1944) stands as the key figure in the transformation of Kierkegaard's spotty 19th century reception in Germany into a widespread phenomenon in the 20th century. Like Bärthold and so many others, Schrempf initially encountered Kierkegaard as a student of Beck at Tübingen. In 1886, just two years after first reading Kierkegaard in Hansen's translation of *For Self-Examination*, Schrempf published his first article, in which he defended Kierkegaard against a negative review by a follower of Adolf von Harnack, the doyen of Protestant liberal theology. Schrempf proceeded to then study Danish and, in 1890, produced his first Kierkegaard translation. *Zur Psychologie der Sünde, der Bekehrung und des Glauben* ["Regarding the Psychology of Sin, Conversion, and Faith"] combined two texts, *Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments*, both offered for the first time in German.

It was during this period, however, that Schrempf experienced a major crisis of faith, ultimately resulting in public scandal as the ordained pastor left behind his church and his faith. This did not, however, mean that he was done with Kierkegaard. Rather, Schrempf credited Kierkegaard for helping him see the hypocrisies of the church and openly hoped that his translations would do the same for others. Schrempf's most important contribution to Kierkegaard's reception came with his position as general editor, alongside Hermann Gottsched and Albert Dorner, of the first German edition of Kierkegaard's *Gesammelte Werke* (1909-1922). By translating and editing more than half of the twelve volume series—and then the entirety of the 2nd edition—Schrempf did more to provide access to Kierkegaard's writings in German than any other figure in the first half of the 20th century.

Much more will be said about Schrempf, his Kierkegaard-induced loss of faith, and his role with the *Gesammelte Werke* in later chapters. Here I want to make one observation about the way in which Schrempf built upon this early reception of Kierkegaard in Germany. For part of Schrempf's appeal to early 20th century Germans resided in the way he combined the theological and pastoral training of Bärthold with the bitter religious resentment of Brandes. Bärthold had approached Kierkegaard with the concerns of a devoted Christian and Brandes with the dismissiveness of a committed rationalist. Yet Bärthold softened the blow of Kierkegaard's harshest critiques of the church and Brandes simply ignored or dismissed the religious content of Kierkegaard's writings. By contrast, Schrempf's writings about Kierkegaard are those of a man tortured by the effects of turning his back on the faith of his youth. As we will see in Chapter Four, Schrempf remained fascinated by Kierkegaard's religious views while often inverting those views to combat Kierkegaard's conclusions. His writings about Kierkegaard are imbued with both bitterness and hints of longing: bitterness toward the man who pushed him over the edge and longing for the sure footing that had been left behind. Such tensions found deep resonance in a country moving from the self-certainty of the Kaiserreich into the vertigo of World War One.

Schrempf's writings eventually made their way into the hands of Theodor Haecker (1879-1945), a philosophy student in Munich. Haecker found Kierkegaard's message compelling but sensed that Schrempf had distorted it in his translations.⁷⁷ Like Schrempf, Haecker decided to learn Danish in order to access Kierkegaard's words directly. After years of independent study, Haecker published *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*

⁷⁷ Schrempf openly acknowledged that he deleted, changed and added to Kierkegaard's texts in his translations. Much more will be said about Schrempf's questionable translations in Chapter Three.

(1913) [“Søren Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Inwardness”]. This text earned him the attention of the Austrian avant-garde journal *Der Brenner*. In 1914, *Der Brenner* recruited Haecker for the task of introducing his understanding of Kierkegaard into the German-speaking lands; a task he approached with the zeal and caginess of one describing a hidden treasure. He wanted to build a broad audience for Kierkegaard’s writings while also ensuring that this audience held the proper (i.e. Haecker’s) view of Kierkegaard. In Chapter One, I turn to Haecker and *Der Brenner*’s role in shaping the early reception of Kierkegaard, as well as the difficulties faced in controlling its precise form.

Chapter One

"Lighting the Way" Kierkegaard in *Der Brenner*

Named after the "Brenner Pass," the most important Alpine pass on the Austro-Italian border, *Der Brenner* was a fortnightly avant-garde literary and philosophical journal published in Innsbruck and directed at the German-speaking world. Ludwig Ficker (1880-1967) founded the journal in 1910 primarily as a vehicle for the writings of Carl Dallago (1869-1949), a south Tyrolian author with an eastern-oriented religious bent. After reading Theodor Haecker's 1914 work *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* Dallago asked Haecker to join *Der Brenner*, which he did that same year. With Dallago and Haecker at the helm, *Der Brenner* emerged as a key player in the German intellectual scene of the 1920s, including among its subscribers Thomas Mann, Martin Heidegger, Rainer Maria Rilke and Franz Kafka. Ficker kept the journal running until financial problems forced him to shut down in 1928. *Der Brenner* opened again for two years between 1932 and 1934. After World War Two, *Der Brenner* published three issues in 1946, 1948 and 1956.

Because *Der Brenner* was central to the transmission of knowledge about Kierkegaard in the German-reading world—it produced original German translations of Kierkegaard's texts as well as commentaries arguing for his contemporary relevance—it is worth analyzing the content that readers encountered in its pages. What was the intellectual landscape surrounding *Der Brenner* and its representation of Kierkegaard? What earned him praise and (to the degree that he was) on what grounds was he critiqued? Following Haecker's conversion to Catholicism in 1921, an intellectual conflict broke out between Haecker and Dallago centering on their respective interpretations of Kierkegaard. Sensing that the editorial voice of *Der Brenner* was siding with Haecker in this conflict, Dallago left the journal in 1926. How then did this conflict affect the image of Kierkegaard offered to readers of *Der Brenner*? And how did it inform the image of Kierkegaard propagated by Dallago in articles for *Der Sumpf*—the topic of Chapter Five—during the 1930s?

This chapter explores the similarities and divergences between the readings of Kierkegaard offered by Haecker and Dallago. It provides the scaffolding upon which later chapters will build. As was the case throughout Kierkegaard's reception in Weimar Germany, *Der Brenner* held him up as an exemplar of insitutional critique and as a prophetic visionary of the breakdown of European society. Consciously mirrored after Karl Kraus' *Der Fackel*, *Der Brenner* positioned itself in its early years as a gadfly of European, primarily German-speaking, society. Kierkegaard's jeremiads against the hypocrisies of his day provided ample ammunition for critiques of twentieth-century German society.

This chapter also focuses on the apparent limits of Kierkegaard's reception at the time. Following the catastrophe of World War One—which the authors of *Der Brenner* felt they had in many ways predicted—*Der Brenner* supplanted what had been a purely critical voice with an attempt to provide a more constructive worldview. It is telling that this shift coincided with a

move away from Kierkegaard. Haecker looked to the traditions of Roman Catholicism for answers and started writing primarily for *Hochland*, a catholic magazine based in Munich.¹ Dallago maintained his intensely critical spirit but no longer felt welcome at the journal originally created as a vehicle for his writings.² The appeal of Kierkegaard's radical criticism followed by the difficulty of folding him into any type of constructive approach to the problems of society is a recurrent theme in Kierkegaard's German reception.

Carl Dallago

Carl Dallago was born in 1869 in the city of Bozen, the capital of the province of South Tyrol.³ At the time of Dallago's birth South Tyrol stood as one of the many contested borderlands of 19th-century Europe: the newly created Italian state to the south and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the primary geopolitical loser from Italian unification, to the north. Bozen, like the rest of South Tyrol, was populated primarily by German speakers with

¹ In a 1925 letter to a financial supporter of *Der Brenner*, Ficker complained about Haecker's clear preference for *Hochland*: "Hingegen muß ich damit rechnen, daß er mit seiner *wesentlichen* Produktion, um mit seinem Gewissen nicht in Konflikt zu kommen, vom 'Brenner' abfällt, zumal er auch das Bedürfnis haben dürfte, nunmehr auch einem größeren Leserkreis bekannt zu werden. So hat er ja auch seinen großen abschließenden Aufsatz über Kierkegaard, den ich ihm gerne honoriert hätte, nicht dem 'Brenner,' sondern dem 'Hochland' zur Verfügung gemacht." Ludwig Ficker to Herr Baron, 4.1.1925, in *Ludwig von Ficker: Briefwechsel, 1914-1925*, ed. Ignaz Zangerle, Walter Methlagl, Franz Seyr, Anton Unterkircher (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1988), 396.

² He had great difficulty in publishing his writings after leaving *Der Brenner* and depended largely on the largesse of his friends to survive. He finally found another outlet for his attacks on the hypocrisies of Catholicism in *Der Sumpf*, which he helped create and which is the topic of Chapter Five.

³ Most of the biographical details I present here come from Anton Unterkircher's recently published biography of Carl Dallago, the first such attempt to date. Anton Unterkircher, *Ich habe gar nichts erreicht, Carl Dallago 1869-1949* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2013).

only a small minority speaking Italian. Dallago was one of nine children in his German-speaking, Catholic, and solidly middle-class family. Following his graduation from high school in Bozen, Dallago attended business school in Innsbruck and then returned in order to run his father's sales firm. Soon thereafter, in 1892, Dallago married Adelheid Auckentaler (1869-1953), and by the end of the decade the Dallago's had five children. Yet, just months after the birth of the last child, Dallago sold his firm to a partner, left his family and moved into the mountains to pursue his passion as a writer.⁴ As he would later describe it, he had long felt pressed to "break with the conventional," and in 1900, he did just that.⁵

While it is difficult to trace out precisely what precipitated the events of 1900, in hindsight one can see aspects of Dallago's discontent with his stable bourgeois trajectory. For starters, Dallago despised Catholicism with the passion of a disillusioned former believer. He came of age in the immediate aftermath of the *Kulturkampf*—Bismarck's persecution of German Catholics from 1871-1878—and his first foray into writing grew out of his involvement with the German nationalist and anti-clerical group known as the "Young Tyrolians." It was also likely through this group that Dallago encountered a whole milieu of thinkers deeply critical of modern society.⁶ As his biographer explained, "the Church increasingly appeared to him as the evil par excellence in the world."⁷ But it was Nietzsche's acidic social criticisms that struck

⁴ As his biographer put it, "er hielt es nicht mehr aus, dass im bürgerlichen Leben immer das Scheinen vor das Sein gestellt wurde." Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 21.

⁵ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 21.

⁶ For an account of Dallago's involvement with the Young Tyrolians, see Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 30-34.

⁷ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 9.

closest to home with Dallago, convincing him that they shared a deep "soul connection."⁸

Dallago was especially grateful to Nietzsche for dispatching with bourgeois morality.

It is worth noting here that Dallago's disdain for all things bourgeois was not purely philosophical in origin. Dallago published a collection of poems under the pseudonym C. Bergheim in 1898 entitled "27 Poems in 64 pages." More consequential in hindsight than their content in hindsight is the dedication "to F.M on 9 March 1898." As became clear two years later, "F.M." referred to Fanny Moser (1879-1974), the Dallagos' nanny and Carl's lover. So long as it remained discrete, such affairs were certainly not unheard of at the time and were often tolerated. But this proved unacceptable to Carl, primed as he was to reject the constraints of modern society. So with Nietzsche in his head and Fanny in his heart, Dallago left his former life behind.⁹

For the next ten years Dallago managed to make ends meet with contributions to several German and Austrian journals: *Der Scherer*, *Tiroler Waatl*, *Freiwatt*, *Der Sturmbock*. While most of these journals shared a focus on radical regeneration of the German people—*Der Scherer* was closely associated with the radical pan-Germanist Georg Ritter von Schönerer—Dallago's contributions focused largely on poetic explorations of love and nature.¹⁰ While it was clear that he shared many of the criticisms of his colleagues, Dallago was much more

⁸ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 58.

⁹ Dallago still had to jump through many a bureaucratic hoop. As an Austrian citizen Dallago was forbidden from remarrying after leaving his wife. In Hungary, where civil marriage had recently been introduced, this was not the case. Making use of a legal loophole recently exploited by his friend, Arthur von Wallpach, Dallago became a Hungarian citizen in order to legally marry Fanny. While not exactly clear how he managed this—there were restrictions in place specifically to avoid such moves—it seems likely that Dallago achieved his citizenship by paying a Hungarian, perhaps his lawyer, to adopt him. See Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 67-72.

¹⁰ One fellow Young Tyrolian complained that Dallago's verses were often too laden with emotion and "focused too much on women." Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 31.

concerned about individual than societal regeneration. Thanks to his writings as well as contacts at various journals, Dallago soon encountered Ludwig von Ficker. A semi-successful playwright from Innsbruck, Ficker had recently decided to devote himself less to his own work and more to supporting other Austrian writers. Ficker was so impressed with Dallago's vision of a new humanity that he invited Dallago to be the primary voice of his new journal, *Der Brenner*. For the next sixteen years Ficker and *Der Brenner* provided Dallago with a reliable source of income—for the first time since his "break with the conventional"—and an outlet for his writings.¹¹

Kierkegaard in *Der Brenner*

The association between *Der Brenner* would have never occurred were it not for the addition of Theodor Haecker. Haecker was born in 1879 in the small town of Eberbach in the state of Baden-Württemberg.¹² Dire financial straits forced Haecker to leave school and work as a salesman in order to support his family. Through his childhood friend Ferdinand Schreiber (1877-1942) Haecker began work at the Schreiber Publishing House in Esslingen, where he earned a living for the rest of his life. Haecker eventually completed his high school diploma, and enrolled at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich in 1905.

¹¹ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 107.

¹² For Haecker's biography see: *Theodor Haecker: Leben und Werk. Texte, Briefe, Erinnerungen, Würdigungen*, ed. Bernhard Hassler and Hinrich Siefken (Stadtarchiv Esslingen am Neckar, 1995), 9-25; Hinrich Siefken, "Leben und Werk des christlichen Essayisten Theodor Haecker. Eine Einführung," in *Theodor Haecker (1879-1945). Verteidigung des Bildes vom Menschen*, ed. Gebhard Fürst, Peter Kastner, and Hinrich Siefken (Stuttgart: Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart, 2001), 17-41.

It was at Munich that Haecker encountered the great philosophical influence of his youth: Max Scheler (1874-1928). Initially, Haecker pursued his studies in a rather desultory fashion with his attentions divided between university and his work at Schreiber. But this all changed in 1907 with the arrival of Scheler in Munich. Although largely forgotten today, Scheler was one of the most influential German thinkers in his day. Looking back at Scheler's life in 1928, Heidegger described him as "the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such."¹³ Like Heidegger, Scheler was renowned for his oratory and ability to hold audiences spell-bound for hours as he explored the contours of his unique blend of phenomenology and religious sentiment. Haecker fell under his spell and focused exclusively on Scheler's courses for the next three years.

What exactly did Haecker find so attractive in Scheler's philosophy? Years later Haecker addressed his appreciation of, and distance from, Scheler in the Catholic journal *Hochland*. In "Sprit and Life: On the Problem of Max Scheler," Haecker praised Scheler for his grasp of the necessary centrality of spiritual matters in any metaphysical system.¹⁴ Against the "apotheosis of life" that Haecker found in Wilhelm Dilthey and Nietzsche, Scheler emphasizes the "apriori priority of spiritual values, even esthetic over life values."¹⁵ Scheler understood the danger of pulling the spiritual rug out from underneath society and thus attempted to undo the damage done by Nietzsche and his acolytes. Haecker discovered in Scheler the salvation of modern (academic) philosophy. In 1910, Scheler lost his position at

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* trans. Michael Heim (Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 50-52.

¹⁴ Theodor Haecker, "Geist und Leben: Zum Problem Max Scheler," *Hochland* 23, Bd. 2, (1926) 129-155.

Munich due to controversies surrounding the separation from his wife and rumored affairs with his students. Perhaps doubting the value of the entire enterprise of academia, Haecker dropped out of school that February and never returned.

It seems likely that Haecker first encountered Kierkegaard, or at least began serious study of his works at about this time. Primed by Scheler's search for a Christian response to Nietzsche, Haecker quickly latched on to Kierkegaard as the answer. Like most German-speakers of his day, Haecker was first exposed to Kierkegaard through the translations (and adaptations) published by Christoph Schrempf (1860-1944).¹⁶ Yet Haecker, like Rilke and Kafka after him, desired unmediated access to Kierkegaard and began to learn Danish. As he began picking through Kierkegaard's full Danish corpus, Haecker developed his own unique perspective. Of greatest significance for Haecker was the discovery of Kierkegaard's explicitly religious texts and convincingly pious journal entries. Schrempf, the apostate preacher, had neglected this side of Kierkegaard in his translations. For Haecker, these texts came to represent the gravitational center of Kierkegaard's corpus, without which all his other texts would fly out of their intended orbit.

Three years after dropping out of university, Haecker sought to realign the Kierkegaardian cosmos with his *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* ("Sören Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Inwardness").¹⁷ The goal of this short book, explains Haecker in the preface, is to "intertwine the thoughts of Kierkegaard, the most subjective

¹⁵ Theodor Haecker, "Geist und Leben," 135.

¹⁶ For a recent account of Schrempf's crucial role in shaping Kierkegaard scholarship in Germany see Gerhard Schreiber, "Christoph Schrempf: The 'Schwabian Socrates' as Translator of Kierkegaard" in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology, Tome I: German Protestant Theology* ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 275-319.

thinker of humankind, with the European life of the mind."¹⁸ Yet Haecker also clearly seeks to correct the picture of Kierkegaard offered by Schrempf, even if never mentioning him in the text. While Schrempf presents Kierkegaard as ultimately leading away from Christianity, Haecker is at pains to show that "Kierkegaard belongs fundamentally and in an eminent sense to Christianity, every bit as foundationally as Augustine, Pascal and Luther, even if his perspective is completely different and fully new."¹⁹ By establishing Kierkegaard's credentials as both a modern European philosopher and a fundamentally Christian thinker, Haecker could offer Kierkegaard as the fulfillment of Scheler's project. Kierkegaard's fresh, yet ultimately traditional, perspective could serve as a necessary antidote to the spiritual malaise of European society.

In order to place Kierkegaard in the European intellectual firmament, Haecker begins with Socrates, the only individual Kierkegaard had identified as his "Coequal" (*Gleichgestellten*).²⁰ Haecker describes Kierkegaard as "the greatest ironist since Socrates," in his adaptation of Socrates' dialectical approach to truth and maieutic method of teaching. Although bemoaning the fact that Kierkegaard's dissertation on Socratic irony is "completely unknown in Germany," Haecker offers little in the way of substantial analysis of the connection between the two thinkers—his focus is elsewhere.²¹ First, he argues for Kierkegaard's contemporary relevance by comparing him to the likes of Bergson, Nietzsche

¹⁷ Theodor Haecker, *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* (München: J.F. Schreiber Verlag, 1913).

¹⁸ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 61.

¹⁹ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 6.

²⁰ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 37.

²¹ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 38.

and Kraus. Second, he emphasizes Kierkegaard's Christianity by situating him within a community of canonical Christian thinkers.

"How fortunate is our generation," proclaims Haecker, "to have a superb metaphysician as our teacher: Henri Bergson." According to Haecker, "no other philosophy can offer such a decisive support to an understanding of Kierkegaard's thought as Bergson's, which fashions itself as the philosophy of becoming and freedom."²² Bergson, in Haecker's account, tilled the ground for the reception of Kierkegaard. Contra Hegel, Bergson argued that the individual exists in time and is constantly becoming; he claimed no privileged access to the world historical. Bergson also argued, against the "monstrous burden of scientific knowledge and erudition," that the will to the spirit is a stronger force than the will to life.²³ For a generation kicking against the restraints of a purely immanent philosophy, Bergson has "opened the window and allowed us to breath once again."²⁴ Haecker felt that a generation used to breathing this Bergsonian air would more easily accept the even more refined oxygen of Kierkegaard's philosophy.

Although considerably less well-known than Kierkegaard is today, Bergson enjoyed an immense popularity in prewar Europe.²⁵ Contemporaries heralded his "new metaphysics" as a welcome rejoinder to the moribund epistemological orthodoxy of Cartesian and neo-Kantian philosophy. As Samuel Moyn explains, "the breakthrough beyond Kantian idealism that first Henri Bergson in France then Husserl in Germany seemed to promise young philosophers

²² Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 13

²³ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 13.

²⁴ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 13.

²⁵ For my overview of Bergson's impact, I rely heavily on Samuel Moyn's chapter, "The True Bergsonians: Beginnings of a Philosopher," in *his Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 21-56.

allowed them to begin to see the limits of those theories that mentalistically and appropriatively reduced the world to contents of consciousness..."²⁶ Bergson's mix of intuitionism, psychology and spiritualism earned him followers on both sides of the Rhine.

For Haecker, however, Bergson's philosophy was lacking in one key facet. "Bergson," states Haecker, "gave us no ethics."²⁷ When Bergson discussed freedom and becoming, he focused more on the creative potential of nature than on that of the individual. In his appealing respect for the objects of perception—the focus on objects as more than simply the result of our perception spurred excitement about a “new scholasticism”—he failed to distinguish between things and people as objects of knowledge. Haecker was not alone in his longing for a Bergsonian ethics. Discussing Bergson's popularity in the years surrounding World War One, Moyn notes “the possibility of a Bergsonian morality and religion became the subject of intense, and international, speculation.”²⁸ Bergson nonetheless maintained a pregnant silence on the topic. In a 1912 letter responding to the excitement about the ethical implications of his latest text *Creative Evolution* (1907), Bergson stated “I am not sure if I will publish anything on this topic.”²⁹ In fact, Bergson stopped publishing altogether for the twenty five years following *Creative Evolution*. It seemed that Bergson would leave it to others to work out the ethical components of his thinking.

Haecker believed that Kierkegaard offered the most promising path forward from what Bergson had begun. Seen from Haecker's philosophy of inwardness, Bergson's metaphysics could only provide a background for the true task facing the individual. It is here

²⁶ Moyn, *Origins*, 21-22.

²⁷ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 13.

²⁸ Moyn, *Origins*, 37.

²⁹ Quoted in Moyn, *Origins*, 36.

that Kierkegaard becomes central to Haecker's entire philosophy. While Bergson focused on the becoming of nature and the crucial distinction between the organic and inorganic, Kierkegaard zeroed in on the becoming of the individual and the crucial distinction between the natural and the spiritual. Kierkegaard, or rather, Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, also began with the aesthetic, the natural. But unlike Bergson Kierkegaard did so in order to show the individual that the purely aesthetic life, at its core, offers only despair. Kierkegaard's ultimate goal, as Haecker puts it, was "to call attention to Christianity."⁵⁰ To this end Kierkegaard used the aesthetic category to get his reader to look inward, the ethical category to foster angst and then the religious to place him before God. Kierkegaard thus provided a path, in Haecker's mind, toward completion of the task begun by Bergson.

Haecker argues that Kierkegaard completes this task by offering a passionate unity of thought and existence. Here we get to the core of Haecker's philosophy of "inwardness," the sine qua non of his ideal of Christianity. As evidenced by Haecker's claim that "only inwardness can recognize inwardness," this central concept of his resists definition. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern some parameters of inwardness as Haecker sees it. First and foremost, inwardness means a passionate unity of thought and existence. Haecker points to Kant as the antithesis of Kierkegaard in this respect: in Kant, these modes are as far apart as can be imagined while in Kierkegaard they are fully twined. Haecker also acknowledges that the West as a whole has largely followed Kant in thinking that the way to faith is through pure reason. While accepting this as a valid path as far as it goes, Haecker insists that it does not go far enough. He points to Pascal and Kierkegaard as having shown the limits of reason with regard to matters of faith. "They both squeezed out of reason all that it had to give,"

⁵⁰ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 10.

argues Haecker, “and showed that it cannot give everything.”³¹ Following their lead, Haecker asserts, “there is in truth no greater European problem than the life of the spirit and its breakthrough.”³²

Inwardness must also include freedom, specifically the freedom of the individual toward becoming.³³ Haecker views Kierkegaard’s attack on the Danish state church in this light. Such an arrangement inserts an authority between God and the individual, and effectively outsources the individual’s spiritual work. Haecker hopes that removing this intermediary, the individual will embrace the fact that “all authority rests in God alone.” This fact should guide the individual’s path through life, as exemplified in Kierkegaard’s progression from aesthetics through ethics to the ultimate stage of standing before Christ.³⁴

Haecker's recruitment of Kierkegaard as an anti-institutional voice crying out in a European-Christian wilderness caught the attention of Dallago and Ficker at *Der Brenner*. Ficker had received a copy of Haecker's text from the Ferdinand Schreiber Press and passed it on to Dallago. In a letter thanking Ficker for the book, Dallago described it as "on the whole a felicitous work" from which "a nice breeze drifted." Especially attractive to Dallago was what he saw as a Haecker's capacious conception of being a Christian. Believing that he

³¹ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 41.

³² Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 59.

³³ “Denn wovon redet Kierkegaard am meisten in seinen philosophischen Schriften? Vom Werden und von der Freiheit.” Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 13.

³⁴ “Ehe [Kierkegaard] zum Christen gelangt, mußte er als Denker, der er war, alle Existenzformen, soweit sie vom Geist aus gesehen werden, durchlaufen, denn der Christ steht am Ende.” Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 10.

might be able to "yoke this Christian" onto the eastern figures—Lao Tse, Confucius, Buddha—that populated his own worldview, Dallago decided to review Haecker's text for *Der Brenner*.³⁵

In January of 1914, Ficker wrote to Haecker and expressed his appreciation of Haecker's book, as well as his intention to have it reviewed in an upcoming issue of *Der Brenner*. Ficker also asked whether Haecker might be interested in contributing some original work to *Der Brenner*. Referencing his perennial financial troubles, Ficker regretfully explained that they could not offer contributors any remuneration. Haecker responded that while he "could imagine a situation in which he would be grateful for such an offer" he himself was currently "too stricken with concern about work for [his] daily bread" to accept.³⁶

Less than three weeks later, however, Haecker wrote back to Ficker that he "found himself in a situation in which to take up the offer of hospitality from *Der Brenner*."³⁷ The "situation" was a review of *Innerlichkeit* that Franz Blei, a Viennese essayist and close friend of Kafka, had penned for the German monthly *Die Weisse Blätter*.³⁸ Ficker responded with enthusiasm and immediately began preparing Haecker's text, which Haecker had included in the letter, for publication.

Haecker's intention in "F. Blei and Kierkegaard," as the article was appropriately named, was twofold. Never one to mince his words, Haecker had slighted Blei in a footnote in *Innerlichkeit*, referring to him as a proponent of a "literary-Jewish neo-Catholicism without

³⁵ "Dank für Schrift über Kierkegaard. Daraus weht einem gute Luft an; es gibt mir auch Anlass zur Entwicklungsfrage wieder Stellung zu nehmen u. diesen "Christ" werde ich wohl für meinen Menschen einspannen. Als Ganzes eine treffliche Schrift, die mich sehr anregt." Carl Dallago to Ludwig Ficker, 8 December 1913, in Nachlass Carl Dalagt, 1 Kasette, No. 58, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

³⁶ Ludwig Ficker to Theodor Haecker, 1 January 1914, in *Briefwechsel, 1914-1925*, 209.

³⁷ Haecker to Ficker, 21 January 1914, in *Briefwechsel*, 199.

³⁸ Franz Blei, "Haecker's *Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*" *Die Weisse Blätter* vol. 1, Issue 5, 1914.

any true inwardness or even semblance of a tradition."³⁹ Blei continued such pugilism in his review of Haecker's text. Haecker's first goal, then, was simply to have the last word in the feud. "I stated quite clearly what I expected to hear from the university philosophers," writes Haecker dismissively, "there was really no need for Blei to repeat it all with lesser words and act as if I had never said it."⁴⁰ Blei is "no poet" and has no interest in "waging the decisive battle for spirit and truth."⁴¹ And even though Blei claims twenty-three years of experience with Kierkegaard—a fact Haecker relishes as evidence of Blei's inanity—Haecker finds his understanding of the Dane pathetic. "Any idiot can spit misunderstood sayings of Buddha in my face," exclaims Haecker, "why not also sayings from Kierkegaard?"⁴²

Haecker's flippant dismissal of Blei notwithstanding, the specifics of Blei's distortion worried Haecker enough to warrant correction. These primarily centered on Blei's misunderstanding, in Haecker's view, of the role of religiosity in Kierkegaard's life and writings. In passages Haecker included in his article, Blei argued that the central topic of all of Kierkegaard's writings was Kierkegaard himself:

he wrote nothing other than himself...all the various paths he takes are simply different routes to himself; he always returns to himself: he does not lead to God but drags God down into his cave. He was the return of Socrates and a dialectician of such zeal that it gave him a religious aura, he who was religious only in the sense of the Protestant paradox, which he thought out to the end and thus destroyed.⁴³

³⁹ Haecker, *Innerlichkeit*, 38n.

⁴⁰ Theodor Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," *Der Brenner*, February 15, 1914, 460.

⁴¹ Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," 460.

⁴² Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," 462.

⁴³ "Wohl aber im Hauptthema. K. hat nicht nur das vollständigste Buch über sich selbst in allen seinen Büchern geschrieben, das alle Bücher anderer überflüssig macht, sondern er hat überhaupt nichts anderes geschrieben als sich selber; er ist das einzige Thema seiner Bücher;

To be fair, Haecker's text did emphasize the individual and inwardness as being the focus of all of Kierkegaard's works. But this was only because Kierkegaard feared that the individual was being lost in an age of mass leveling, and because he believed that only an individual could relate to God. Kierkegaard's ultimate goal, in Haecker's view, was always to bring the individual into a relationship with his creator.

In response to Blei, Haecker emphasized the interpretive centrality of several of Kierkegaard's lesser-known (in German) texts.⁴⁴ "That a man who could write the *Works of Love* and *Christlichen Reden*," argues Haecker, "who sacrificed his civic-empirical person and temporal life so as to complete [what he saw as his God-given] task, that this man 'dragged God down into his cave' etc. etc., doesn't make any sense to me."⁴⁵ As he had argued in *Innerlichkeit*, Haecker insisted that the only way to truly understand Kierkegaard was to grasp

alle Wege, die er geht, sind freiwillige Umwege zu sich selber; er kommt immer zu sich selber zurück: kommt nicht zu Gott, schleppt Gott in seine Höhle; er war Sokrates noch einmal und ein Dialektiker von solcher Inbrunst, daß es ihm sogar den religiösen Charakter geben konnte, ihm, der nur im Sinne des protestantischen Paradoxes religiös war, dessen genialer Zu-Ende-Denker er war und dessen definitiver Erlediger." Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," 458.

⁴⁴ While nearly all of Kierkegaard's works (except for *Repetition* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*) had been translated into German at least once by 1909, it was only with the publication of the *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke* (*Sören Kierkegaard's Collected Works*) that his texts became widely available in German. Having begun in 1909, by the time of Blei's article in 1914 the *Collected Works* did not yet include *Christian Discourses* or *Works of Love*.

⁴⁵ Daß ein Mann, der die „Werke der Liebe“ und die christlichen Reden schreiben konnte, der sein Leben von Jahr zu Jahr vertiefte, indem er es „in Gott ausweitete“, der vor seinem letzten Kampf über ein halbes Jahr lang im Wachen und Beten „sich für ewig vergewisserte“, daß er in der Wahrheit sei und nun aber auch für diese Seligkeit, denn es war ja auch Seligkeit, unter vollkommener und rücksichtsloser Preisgabe seiner bürgerlich-empirischen Person und seines zeitlichen Lebens hinaus müsse in das Mißverständnis, auf Markt und Gasse, zur Vollendung der ihm zugewiesenen Aufgabe, daß dieser Mann „Gott in seine Höhle schleppte“ etc. etc., davon verstehe ich zwar nicht ein Wort." Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," 458.

the centrality of his Christian faith, which, Haecker would argue time and again, dictated the production of all of his works.

Additionally, by emphasizing the centrality of texts not yet available in German, Haecker staked his claim as the primary German interpreter of Kierkegaard. Blei served as a perfect foil for such a project. First, he committed the same cardinal sin that Haecker found so odious in Schrenpf. That is, he downplayed or ignored Kierkegaard's journals and religious writings. Secondly, Blei's inability to read Danish allowed Haecker to emphasize the importance of reading Kierkegaard in his mother tongue. "In order to read Kierkegaard," Haecker had already argued in *Innerlichkeit*, "one must learn Danish, just as one must learn Greek in order to read Plato." Perhaps so as to flaunt his superior translation skills—and privileged access to Kierkegaard—Haecker concluded his review of Blei's text with an insult in three languages: "c'est de la littérature, auf dänisch: Pjat, auf deutsch: Geschwätz."⁴⁶ Basically, it's all nonsense.

In the issue following Haecker's response to Blei, *Der Brenner* published its own review of *Innerlichkeit* with Carl Dallago's three-part "On the text of *Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*." These articles, which appeared in three consecutive issues in March and April of 1914, present Dallago's first foray into Kierkegaard scholarship. Yet as Dallago made clear in the opening paragraph, he had no intention of challenging (or confirming) Haecker's depiction. "Honestly I have yet to read anything from Kierkegaard," confesses Dallago, "and know nothing more about him than what's quoted in Haecker's text."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Haecker, "F. Blei und Kierkegaard," 459.

⁴⁷ Carl Dallago, "Über eine Schrift 'Sören Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit,'" *Der Brenner*, 1 March 1914, 467.

In his acknowledged ignorance of Kierkegaard, Dallago offers a blank slate for assessing Haecker's presentation. While it is clear that Haecker's texts introduced many German speakers to Kierkegaard, only rarely does this process receive such explicit exploration. Knowing nothing about Kierkegaard beforehand, what might a reader draw from Haecker's presentation?

Dallago depicts his encounter with Haecker's text as an intensely personal experience. "And so I view this text as a visitation," explains Dallago, "which was so exhilarating that it opened me wide and forced me to go deep inside myself and bring out what otherwise remained in hibernation."⁴⁸ Primarily, as he makes clear in *Der Christ Kierkegaard's*—a text he was writing during this time but did not publish until 1922—Kierkegaard forced him to reconsider Christianity. "I thought that Christianity was behind me," writes Dallago in the first line of this text, "but now I see that it is before me, placed in my way by Kierkegaard."⁴⁹ There was a certain "kinship" that Dallago felt with Kierkegaard that surprised and intrigued him. Dallago's "review" of Haecker's text focused more on his personal attempt to make sense of this kinship than on the details of Haecker's presentation.

Part of the shock of this kinship was the fact that Kierkegaard was a Northern European Christian thinker and Dallago, like so many of his German-speaking contemporaries, had long looked east for philosophical and religious guidance.⁵⁰ As he

⁴⁸ Dallago, "Über eine Schrift," 470.

⁴⁹ "Ich hatte geglaubt, das Christentum hinter mir zu haben; nun sehe ich, daß ich es vor mir habe, von Kierkegaard mir in den Weg gestellt." Carl Dallago, *Der Christ Kierkegaard's* (1914) (Innsbruck: Brenner, 1922), 5.

⁵⁰ For his own account see Dallago's "Die Seele des fernen Ostens," *Der Brenner*, 15 March 1911, 567. For a broader survey of this "eastern longing" among Germans at the time, see Suzanne Marchand, "Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair: Orientalism in 1920s

explains in the review, he felt that by omitting the east from its religious understanding, the west fundamentally misunderstood human spirituality. "Our Europe," explains Dallago, "is still quite young," and there is much we can learn from "older and wiser cultures."⁵¹ For Dallago, Christianity was simply an underdeveloped expression of a much deeper, broader, and older human enterprise. Jesus then stands out in history as one more exemplar of what Dallago calls "the pure human." These figures—including, among others, the Buddha, Confucius and Lao Tse—all stand above their respective religious movements and point toward "the eternal spiritual."⁵² Dallago made sense of the kinship he felt with Kierkegaard by arguing for his inclusion in this pantheon.

To this end, Dallago takes Kierkegaard's view of the ideal Christian (or Haecker's view of Kierkegaard's view) and compares it to his own "pure human." "When I encounter this Christian, I also encounter Kierkegaard," explains Dallago, "and when I compare this Christian to the human I do so in order to measure each concept against the other and assess their consistency."⁵³ Perhaps unsurprising given the fresh enthusiasm for Kierkegaard at *Der Brenner*, Dallago found substantial overlap between Kierkegaard's Christian and his own "pure human." "Everywhere in [Haecker's] text," concludes Dallago, "[Kierkegaard's] Christian corresponds to the human...the term 'human' is capacious enough to fully envelop

Central Europe" in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Dallago, "Über eine Schrift," 477.

⁵² Dallago's "das religiöse und geistliche von jeher" is difficult to render into English. Dallago uses it to refer to his belief in a deep foundation that undergirds all religious and spiritual endeavors of mankind; thus I chose to translate his phrase as "the eternal spiritual." Thanks to Lee Wandel for helping me smooth out this translation.

⁵³ "Wenn ich nun diesem Christlichen begegne, begegne ich auch Kierkegaard. Und wenn ich diesem Christlichen das Menschliche gegenüberstelle, ist es, um beide Begriffe an einander zu messen und ihre Beschaffenheit bestimmen zu können." Dallago, "Über eine Schrift," 515.

the 'Christian.'⁵⁴ Dallago concludes from this that Kierkegaard's Christianity ultimately transcends its narrow confessional bounds and reaches beyond into the realm of "the eternal spiritual." For Dallago, Kierkegaard's Christianity was more referential than fundamental: it pointed beyond itself.

For Dallago, then, Kierkegaard served as a sort of Christian archetype: an exemplar of Christianity to be placed alongside his counterparts from other religions. But Kierkegaard's exemplary Christianity is proven by the fact that he ultimately points beyond it to something more foundational and universal. With his eyes to the east, Haecker argued that Christianity is simply one more iteration of a spirit that long predates it. "The greatness and importance of Kierkegaard I would never call into question," explains Dallago, "just the greatness and importance of Christianity in itself in so far as I view the greatness and importance of Christianity as an expression of the generally religious, the human, something existing since time immemorial."⁵⁵

Notwithstanding his complete dependence on Haecker's view, Dallago carved out his own image of Kierkegaard. And although Dallago emphasized the harmony and compatibility between his interpretation of Kierkegaard and that of Haecker, the distance between them is worth noting. Haecker's explicit goal was to argue for Kierkegaard's Christian *bona fides*, both with regard to the importance of Christianity for understanding Kierkegaard's work, and in the sense that Kierkegaard should be included in the pantheon of great Christian thinkers.

⁵⁴ "Und so darf ich nun sagen: Ueberall in der Schrift entspricht das Christliche auch dem Menschlichen, der Christ dem Menschen. Der Begriff Mensch ist eben groß genug, auch den Christen völlig in sich unterzubringen." Dallago, "Über eine Schrift," 517.

⁵⁵ "Hier muß ich einsetzen, da es mir nicht darum zu tun ist, die Größe und Bedeutung Kierkegaards in Zweifel zu ziehen, sondern nur die Größe und Bedeutung des Christlichen an sich; und zwar darum, weil ich das Große und Bedeutende am Christlichen als das Religiöse

Dallago, on the other hand, essentially denudes Kierkegaard of his Christianity by equating Kierkegaard's concept of Christianity with his own concept of "the eternal spiritual."

Haecker and Dallago were clearly pulling Kierkegaard in different directions in these early texts. Yet both sought to emphasize Kierkegaard's critique of organized religion and focus on his individuality and inwardness. This substantial overlap allowed for a fairly coherent depiction of Kierkegaard to emerge in the *Der Brenner*. Readers of *Der Brenner* were asked to think of Kierkegaard as a necessary corrective for contemporary religion gone awry. Kierkegaard invites his readers to delve deep into their individuality with the ultimate goal of (re)establishing a relationship with God. And finally, his deep religiosity and radical individuality were capacious enough to incorporate many paths to the one God.

Kierkegaard Speaks

Following this initial series of review articles, Ficker wrote to Haecker that he had a "passionate desire to publish something from Kierkegaard himself" in *Der Brenner* and hoped Haecker would take up the task.⁵⁶ Addressing Ficker's concern about copyright issues, Haecker offered to translate works from Kierkegaard that had not yet appeared in German. Haecker then presented his plan and rationale for what texts should be chosen. "I would

überhaupt, ja als das Menschliche, als ein von jeher im Menschen Gelegenes, ansehen muß." Dallago, "Über eine Schrift," 519.

⁵⁶ "Nachdem das Thema Kierkegaard uns so anregend beschäftigt hat, empfinde ich den lebhaften Wunsch, von Kierkegaard selbst, wenn möglich, im 'Brenner' etwas zu bringen. Da ich aber selbst zu unorientiert bin und Dallago erst seit kurzem daran ist, sich in Kierkegaards Werk zu vertiefen, so erlaube ich mir an Sie, als an die berühmte Instanz, in dieser Sache, die höfliche Anfrage zu richten, ob Sie geneigt wären, mir einzelne kleinere Arbeiten Kierkegaards zu bezeichnen, die sich zu einem eventuellen Abdruck im 'Brenner' eignen würden." Ficker to Haecker, "23. III. 1914," in *Briefwechsel, 1914-1925*, 209.

suggest beginning with passages out of *Prefaces*," Haecker explained to Ficker, "an aesthetic occasional writing which will display some of the levity and joyfulness of [Kierkegaard's] production, in order to then penetrate with something of the heaviest gage in the next issue, one of his most important speeches, 'Thorn in the Flesh.'" Depending on the reception of these first two pieces, Haecker offered then to translate Kierkegaard's "Critique of the Present," claiming that it "seems to have been written precisely with our day and time in mind."⁵⁷

In May of 1914, subscribers to *Der Brenner* received their first translations of Kierkegaard. In this issue Haecker translated excerpts from Kierkegaard's *Prefaces* (1844) as well as the introduction from Kierkegaard's unpublished *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est*. As would become his custom in future translations, Haecker positioned Kierkegaard's text with a prefatory note. In his "Preliminary Remarks from the Translator," Haecker briefly introduces *Prefaces* and *Climacus*, explaining that the latter "contained autobiographical impartations of a sort that the later Kierkegaard rarely so directly offered."⁵⁸ Yet Haecker devotes the majority of his "Remarks" to venting his own frustrations with

⁵⁷ "Ich hätte auch die Auswahl schon so gut wie getroffen und würde zuerst Bruchstücke aus einer ästhetischen Gelegenheit 'Vorworte' bringen, die die Leichtigkeit und Freudigkeit der Produktion [Kierkegaard's] zeigen, um dann in einem nächsten Hefte gleich mit dem schwersten Kaliber aufzufahren, einer der wichtigsten Reden 'Der Pfahl im Fleisch.' Sollte das einschlagen, so würde ich Ihnen weiter raten, Bruchstücke aus der in meiner Schrift zitierten Arbeit 'Eine literarische Anmeldung' zu bringen, da in ihr eine Kritik der Zeit enthalten ist, die wie für Tag und Stunde der Gegenwart geschrieben scheint." Haecker to Ficker, "27 März 1914," in *Ficker Briefwechsel. 1914-1925*, 210.

⁵⁸ "Die Einleitung, die hier übersetzt wird, hat noch besonderes Interesse, weil sie in einem Maße autobiographische Mitteilungen enthält, wie sie der spätere Kierkegaard kaum mehr so direkt gegeben hat, und zwar handelt es sich um seine Kindheit und um das frühe Jünglingsalter bis zu seinem 21. Jahr, also die Zeit vor den erotischen Erlebnissen, vor seiner Verlobung und deren Aufhebung." Ludwig Ficker, "Vorbermerkung des Übersetzers," *Der Brenner*, 1 May 1914, 666.

modern German society, especially a subset he disdainfully refers to as the "*Berliner Tageblatt* bourgeoisie."⁵⁹

It is not surprising that Haecker was drawn to Kierkegaard's *Prefaces*. In its most immediate context, *Prefaces* was Kierkegaard's frustrated reply to critics of his work whom he felt had neither understood nor even read what they were critiquing. Thus his decision to use a pseudonym named after a scholarly marginal note, Nicolas Notabene. In its gleeful ridiculing of contemporary print culture, *Prefaces* shows Kierkegaard at his most caustically satirical. "What a pleasure it is indeed to have written a book!" exclaims Notabene, "...a book that is the fruit of a marriage of convenience between publisher and public, written as the publisher wants it and as the times demand."⁶⁰ Following on the heels of his own "Remarks," Haecker sought to establish the contemporary relevance of Kierkegaard's satire. After all, as the first sentence of Haecker's translation of *Prefaces* declares, "A preface is a mood."⁶¹

Haecker then offered a glimpse of the man behind the polemicist with his translation of the introduction to *Climacus*. Taken as a whole, *Climacus* presents Kierkegaard's attempt, as he puts it, "to strike a blow at [modern speculative] philosophy."⁶² His method of attack was to reconstruct the life of a fictional young man, Johannes Climacus, who "does what we are told to do—he actually doubts everything." Kierkegaard then traces out the costs exacted by taking seriously this sine qua non of modern philosophy. In the end, the spiral of doubt destroys

⁵⁹ Ficker, "Vorbermerkung," 670. The *Berliner Tageblatt* was, alongside the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the most influential liberal newspaper in early twentieth century Germany.

⁶⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, "Vorworte," trans. Theodor Haecker, *Der Brenner*, 1 May 1914, 673.

⁶¹ "Ein Vorwort ist Stimmung." Kierkegaard, "Vorworte," 671.

⁶² Quoted in Howard and Edna Hong, "Historical Introduction," to Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton, Princeton University Press; 1985), 234-35.

Climacus: "Now he despairs, his life is wasted, his youth is spent in these deliberations. Life does not acquire any meaning for him, and all this is the fault of philosophy."⁶³ Reading this text nearly one hundred years later, Hannah Arendt described it as "perhaps still the deepest interpretation of Descartes' doubt."⁶⁴

Haecker, however, had no interest in demolishing speculative philosophy. As he made clear in his "Remarks," what interested him about *Climacus* was the possibility of gleaning biographical material about Kierkegaard from the text. Thus he only translated the portion of *Climacus* that focuses on the young man's narrative and biography. In this introduction we learn about Climacus as a melancholic and eccentric young man for whom the normal attractions of youth had no draw. "He was passionately in love," exclaims Kierkegaard, not with a young lady but rather "with thought, or more correctly, thinking."⁶⁵ His greatest pleasure in life was found in philosophical constructions: "It was his delight to begin with a single thought and then, by way of coherent thinking, to climb step by step to a higher one, because to him coherent thinking was a *scala paradisi*, and his blessedness seemed to him even more glorious than the angels."⁶⁶

The text also focused on Climacus' formative relationship to his father. "His father was a very strict man," writes Kierkegaard, "seemingly dry and prosaic, but underneath this rough homespun cloak he concealed a glowing imagination that not even his advanced age could dim."⁶⁷ Although rarely allowing him out of the house, Climacus's father taught him to explore

⁶³ Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, 234-35.

⁶⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 275 fn.

⁶⁵ Kierkegaard, "Climacus," 674.

⁶⁶ Kierkegaard, "Climacus," 674-75.

⁶⁷ Kierkegaard, "Climacus," 676.

the world with his own imagination. They would walk hand in hand up and down the hallway with his father explaining everything they saw: "they greeted the passers-by; the carriages rumbled past, drowning out his father's voice; the pastry woman's fruits were more tempting than ever."⁶⁸ In lines that would provide much fodder for psychoanalytic readings of Kierkegaard, the narrator concludes, "His whole view of life was, so to speak, hidden in his father..."⁶⁹

Having now introduced Kierkegaard to *Der Brenner's* subscribers, Haecker felt the time was right for a more direct confrontation between contemporary society and Kierkegaard. After reading the first half of Haecker's translation of Kierkegaard's "Critique of the Present Age," Ficker agreed that it "simply must have an immense impact."⁷⁰ Haecker had his translation, as well as an introductory essay, ready for publication by mid-summer 1914. In light of possible disruptions from the impending war, Ficker rushed Haecker's text through the editing process, and published it in the July 1914 issues of *Der Brenner*.⁷¹

In many ways, Kierkegaard's "Critique of the Present Age" seems outdated, more applicable to an idyllic Victorian world than the hell of World War One. "Our time is essentially a sensible, reflective age," states Kierkegaard in the opening sentence, "devoid of

⁶⁸ Kierkegaard, "Climacus," 676.

⁶⁹ Kierkegaard, "Climacus," 682.

⁷⁰ "Nehmen Sie meinen wärmsten und verbindlichsten Dank für die Übersetzung von Keirekgaards 'Kritik der Gegenwart,' die ich erst ungefähr zur Hälfte lesen konnte, von der ich aber jetzt schon fühle, daß sie eine ungeheure Wirkung üben muß." Ficker to Haecker, 4 July 1914, in *Briefwechsel*, 230.

⁷¹ Ficker to Haecker, 10 August 1914, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

passion, flaring up in short-lived enthusiasm and smugly relaxing in indolence.⁷² Kierkegaard genuflects before all the knowledge our world possesses but bemoans the fact that nobody seems capable of making decisions or taking action. "The individual," writes Kierkegaard, "does not possess enough passion to break out from the weight of uncertainty of our time."⁷³ Kierkegaard's primary "critique of the present age" was that it was too complacent, lethargic and comfortable. Perhaps the only immediately relevant aspect of the essay was the dash of Kierkegaard's existential dread in his description of how "pointless chattering is terrified by the moment of silence, which would make manifest the Void."⁷⁴ But such talk would find more societal purchase in the later years of the war—when phrases such as "home by Christmas" evoked bitterness and not hope—than in the relatively heady days of mobilization.

As he would do with many of his translations, Haecker used an afterword in order to frame Kierkegaard and, in this case, explain how this text was "written for our time and place." Regarding place, Haecker played up Kierkegaard's essential Germanness. The folding of Scandinavia into broader conceptions of *Germanentum* had become a common move at the time.⁷⁵ Haecker's argument regarding Kierkegaard's Germaness, however, was more prosaic than the typical appeal to mystical conceptions of German culture. "His education," insists

⁷² Kierkegaard, "Kritik der Gegenwart," trans. Theodor Haecker, *Der Brenner*, 1 July 1914, 815.

⁷³ Kierkegaard, "Kritik der Gegenwart," 816.

⁷⁴ Kierkegaard, "Kritik der Gegenwart," 871.

⁷⁵ As Stefan Goebel notes on this topic, "By the 1920s, 'Germanic' had evolved into a widely accepted collective term encompassing roughly the period of German history (including Scandinavian) history between Neanderthal man and Charlemagne." Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 66. For an extended study of concepts of *Germanentum* in Germany at the time, see Rainer Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Formen und Funktionen historischer Selbstthematisierung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).

Haecker, "was through and through German."⁷⁶ Haecker then provided a litany of German thinkers and poets who populated Kierkegaard's intellectual commons: "Lessing, Hamann, Jacobi, the great philosophers Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel...the great poets Goethe, Schiller, the Romantics, namely E.T.A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Schopenhauer, at a time when he wasn't even read in Germany..."⁷⁷ Even Kierkegaard's love for Shakespeare furthers Haecker's point considering that Kierkegaard "read [Shakespeare] in Schlegel's [German] translation."⁷⁸ Due partly to Kierkegaard's extensive exposure to the German language and partly to a natural affinity between it and Kierkegaard's thought, Haecker argues that German was now the "most felicitous" for translation from the original Danish. "The German spirit," states Haecker emphatically, "has a right to Kierkegaard."⁷⁹

Having effectively Germanized Kierkegaard Haecker could now deploy him as a knowledgeable critic of German society. Though admitting that 1914 Germany differed from 1846 Denmark, Haecker insists that Kierkegaard had diagnosed many problems in his time that had fully metastasized in modern German society.⁸⁰ Haecker prefaces his section on the ills of modern Germany with two quotes from Kierkegaard: "Leveling does not come from God," and "Many, many will scream in despair, but now it is too late."⁸¹ He then launches into a multi-page invective against the contemporary forces that he feels have fulfilled

⁷⁶ Theodor Haecker "Nachwort," *Der Brenner*, 15 July 1914, 887.

⁷⁷ Haecker "Nachwort," 887.

⁷⁸ Haecker "Nachwort," 887.

⁷⁹ "Der deutsche Geist hat ein Recht auf Kierkegaard, denn dessen Bildung war durch und durch deutsch." Haecker "Nachwort," 887.

⁸⁰ Haecker "Nachwort," 890.

⁸¹ "Die Nivellierung kommt nicht von Gott." "Viele, viele werden schreien in Verzweiflung, aber jetzt ist es zu spät." Haecker "Nachwort," 895.

Kierkegaard's prophecy: primarily scholars at the universities who cry out for academic freedom but refuse to think *qua* individuals⁸² and popular newspapers, like the *Berliner Tageblatt*, who disorient the individual by conflating fact and opinion, politics and feuilleton.⁸³ Haecker decried a world clamoring for individualism but lacking individuals.

Fortunately for his reader, Haecker believed that Kierkegaard offered an antidote to this poisoned air. In Kierkegaard, Haecker found a vision of the world "as it looked on that first day when awareness shredded that tender childhood dream and the world was naked."⁸⁴ Casting aside the manifold distractions of society, Kierkegaard offered the individual a return to this "first day" and its pristine state of immediacy where "man stands once again in his proper place."⁸⁵ Haecker admits that not everyone would find Kierkegaard's world appealing. In a society where institutions like the state, the church, and the university still possess a "unified, cohesive, organizing power" only a very few will be able to hear Kierkegaard's siren call to the individual.⁸⁶ But for a society that has lost faith in such orderings, whose institutions no longer offer security and direction to the individual, for such a society Kierkegaard's worldview "stands as the only possible salvation for the individual."⁸⁷

Haecker's translation and "Afterword" appeared just two weeks before Austro-Hungarian troops fired the first shots in their invasion of Serbia, spiraling the "present age" toward the unforeseen — except perhaps by prophets like Kierkegaard — horrors of World

⁸² Haecker "Nachwort," 897.

⁸³ Haecker "Nachwort," 895-896.

⁸⁴ "die Welt wieder so zu sehen, wie sie aussah am Tag, als zum ersten Mal die Erkenntnis den zarten Kindertraum zerriß und die Welt nackt war." Haecker "Nachwort," 908.

⁸⁵ Haecker "Nachwort," 908.

⁸⁶ Haecker "Nachwort," 906.

War I. In the spring of 1915, Ficker sent out one last issue of *Der Brenner* to his network of subscribers across Germany and Austria. Although the spring 1915 issue of *Der Brenner* did not speak of recent battles, it clearly reflected a world awash in death. On the first page readers learned of the poet Georg Trakl's (1887-1914) death on the eastern front. Devoting this issue to his long-time friend and colleague, Ficker included a picture of Trakl in uniform and published his final poems. That Trakl had died not of a bullet wound but rather of a cocaine overdose in a military hospital, where he was convalescing after a failed suicide attempt, was not mentioned. His death served as a personification of the deeper tragedy of war, of the spiritual and cultural decay of which the war was yet another symptom.

Haecker provided two texts for this issue, both of which tightened *Der Brenner's* association with Kierkegaard. The first was a translation of Kierkegaard's "On Death," excerpted from his 1843 work *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*. Like "A Critique of the Present" and "Thorn in the Flesh," this was the first German translation of Kierkegaard's "On Death." It also fit into Haecker's project of emphasizing Kierkegaard's signed (as opposed to pseudonymous) works as being closer to the core of his authorship. Haecker's second text, "The Leading Intellectuals and the War," was a vitriolic diatribe castigating the German intelligentsia for their blind nationalism in the face of war.⁸⁸

Unlike his previous translations, Haecker released this one without any supplemental apparatus. As was clear from its title, "On Death" required little editorial lifting to establish its

⁸⁷ Haecker "Nachwort," 906

⁸⁸ Allan Janick described this article as "arguably the most vitriolic indictment of the chauvinistic element of the German intelligentsia written by a German during the war." Janick, "Haecker, Kierkegaard and the Early Brenner: A contribution to the history of the reception of *Two Ages* in the German-speaking world" in *Søren Kierkegaard: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, vol. 4, ed. by Daniel W. Conway and K.E. Gover (New York: Routledge, 2002), 126.

relevance and application for Germany in 1915. Presented as a speech given at a graveside, "On Death" serves as a primer on how the individual should relate to the fact of death. First off, explains Kierkegaard, the individual must face the fact of his own death. "To think of oneself as dead is earnestness;" declares Kierkegaard, "to be a witness to the death of another is mood."⁸⁹ Kierkegaard then devotes the majority of the text to exploring the earnestness that death can grant to life. "No bowstring can be tightened in such a way," writes Kierkegaard, "and is able to give the arrow such momentum the way the thought of death is able to accelerate the living when earnestness stretches the thought."⁹⁰ For Kierkegaard, the "earnestness" gained from contemplating one's own death should bring the individual to "recollect God" while still alive. This is the great service that death offers to those still living.

Yet as Haecker makes clear in his second article, German society seemed incapable of learning anything from the slaughters of World War One. Setting the stage for his article on "The War and the Leading Intellectuals," Haecker begins with a quote from Kierkegaard: "When the context becomes absurd, broad overviews can no longer help; in such a case it is best for one to examine each individual word."⁹¹ With this as his motto Haecker unleashes a furious attack on those he found responsible for the absurdity around him. "Due to the damned work of the press," argues Haecker, "the people of Europe have become completely blind and idiotic regarding spiritual matters."⁹² Haecker focuses especially on the role of *Neue*

⁸⁹ Kierkegaard, "Vom Tode," trans. Theodor Haecker, *Der Brenner*, Frühjahr 1915, 19.

⁹⁰ "Und keine Bogen-sehne kann so gespannt werden und vermag dem Pfeile solche Schnelle zu geben, wie der Gedanke des Todes den Lebenden vorwärtszuschellen vermag, wenn der Ernst ihn anspannt." Kierkegaard, "Vom Tode," 30.

⁹¹ "Wenn der Kontext sinnlos geworden ist, helfen große Uebersichten nichts mehr; es ist das beste, man nimmt jedes einzelne Wort vor." Haecker, "Der Krieg und die Führer des Geistes," *Der Brenner*, Frühjahr 1915, 130.

⁹² Haecker, "Der Krieg," 131.

Rundschau—which referred to itself as "Germany's leading intellectual monthly"⁹³—in propagating this madness. He attacks the paper for (mis)using Fichte to stir up German enthusiasm, failing to grasp the massive difference between Fichte's time and ours.⁹⁴ He expresses disbelief that the *Rundschau* could be so inane as to attack Henri Bergson simply because he was French; as if he had not been so five years before when the same people sang his praises. In Haecker's view, the contributors to the *Rundschau*—which included, among others, such German luminaries as Carl and Gerhart Hauptmann, Rudolf Eucken, Maximilian Harden, Karl Lamprecht, Alfred Kerr, Hermann Cohen, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Friedrich Nauman and Wilhelm Wundt—all "huff and puff" but ultimately have nothing substantive to say. Even so, Haecker found great danger in their vacuous huffing and puffing.

Taking a page from Karl Kraus, Haecker quotes verbatim, with very little commentary, several of the most noxious phrases from the *Rundschau*. One can imagine Haecker's pleasure in quoting Franz Blei, whose critical review of *Innerlichkeit* had been the catalyst for Haecker's first *Brenner* article: "What one calls peace is only the appellation of the condition antagonistic to the utterly other condition, which is war."⁹⁵ While Blei's main crime might have been obfuscation, others had no problems in clearly expressing their views. From Wilhelm Herzog, Haecker quotes, "We, friends of peace and prophets of a new ethic, come forward as war volunteers. We want to kill like the others." Haecker expresses doubts about Herzog's actual bloodlust considering that he remains in Munich and "only in the evenings

⁹³ Haecker, "Der Krieg," 130.

⁹⁴ Haecker, "Der Krieg," 135.

⁹⁵ "Was man Frieden nennt, ist nur die Zustandsbenennung antagonistisch dem äußersten andern Zustand, welcher der Krieg ist." Haecker, "Der Krieg," 148.

devotes his time to reenacting patriotic emotions." Besides, asks Haecker, "Who the hell is he going to kill in Munich?"⁹⁶

Although unafraid of Herzog's sword in Munich, Haecker found his propagation of this idea of a "new ethic" terrifying. Haecker traces this troubling phenomenon back to a schoolboy enthusiasm for Nietzsche. "They still live in the phraseology of Nietzsche which among schoolboys...resulted in a blindness and infatuation with Nietzsche but which has become among these 'intellectual leaders' and 'new ethicists' pure madness and impudence."⁹⁷ For Haecker, World War One provided ample evidence each day that German society required a Christian antidote to Nietzsche's attack on the foundations of contemporary society. The war had given lie to Nietzsche's belief that man "could actually exist beyond good and evil, on the other side of spiritual Being and Nonbeing."⁹⁸ Writing with the conviction of one who had himself survived the fever of Nietzschean infatuation, Haecker pointed to Kierkegaard as just such an antidote.

Kierkegaard and *Der Brenner* after the War

When *Der Brenner* once again fired up its press in 1919, Ficker and Haecker heralded Kierkegaard as a prophet of what now lay behind them. In his "Forward to a New Beginning," Ficker argues that no one in the Christian world outside of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky had

⁹⁶ "Wen um Gottes willen will er denn töten im München?" Haecker, "Der Krieg," 143.

⁹⁷ Sie leben noch in der Phraseologie Nietzsches wie weiland die Gymnasiasten von 1890 und 1900. Was bei Nietzsche Blindheit und Verblendung war, das wird bei diesen 'Führen des Geistes' und 'neuen Ethikern' Idiotismus und Frechheit." Haecker, "Der Krieg," 146.

⁹⁸ "Als ob Menschen und Völker jemals jenseits von Gut und Böse, also jenseits von geistigem Sein und Nichtsein handeln könnten." Haecker, "Der Krieg," 146.

any intimation of what was coming with World War One.⁹⁹ Haecker continues this theme in his "Forecast of the Times." "Historically, we are situated differently than Kierkegaard," writes Haecker, "who although prophesying the certainty of a European catastrophe, actually only experienced it as a possibility; it has fallen upon us as the most invasive reality."¹⁰⁰ Seen in hindsight, this praise of Kierkegaard's prophetic powers carried with it a suggestion that perhaps Kierkegaard had served his purpose. He had foreseen the destruction of World War One and attempted to stave it off. When it comes to the post-destruction recovery, Kierkegaard had less to offer.

Haecker draws attention to what he sees as the spiritual significance of the preceding four years. His desire is that out of the "disgraced and butchered Europe...a few missionaries would emerge to carry on the word of God." Haecker hoped that the world would set aside the hatred of the war and realize that "God wants only one thing: love, and for our hearts of stone to become flesh."¹⁰¹ Clearly agreeing with Haecker, Ficker explains to his subscribers that, "*Der Brenner* would now place Christianity at the center of its focus."¹⁰²

Der Brenner's postwar religious turn mirrored a similar trend in German society as a whole. As many scholars have noted, the trauma of the Great War opened up a floodgate of spiritual energies in German society. The majority of which, however, flowed in non-ecclesial

⁹⁹ Ficker, "Foreword to a New Beginning," *Der Brenner*, October 1919, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Haecker, "Forecast of the Times," *Der Brenner*, October 1919, 72.

¹⁰¹ Haecker, "Forecast," 79.

¹⁰² "...der Brenner nun das Christentum in den Mittelpunkt seiner Betrachtung rückt, so soll es mit jenem letzten Ernst zur Verantwortung vor einem höchsten Richter geschehen, der seinen führenden Männern entspricht und jede, auch die tiefste Gegensätzlichkeit, die in den Divergenzen ihrer geistigen Anschlußrichtungen zutage treten mag, in ihrer fraglosen Berufenheit zur Aussage, in der Rückhaltlosigkeit ihres Bekenntnisses und in der Lauterkeit ihrer Gesinnung bedingterweise ausgleicht und versöhnt." Ficker, "Foreword to a New Beginning," 2.

channels.¹⁰³ Many mirrored Dallago in turning to the mythical “East,” where the perceived stability of spiritual traditions appealed to those for who viewed the Great War as a great failure of western culture as a whole.¹⁰⁴ The rise in medievalism expressed a similar desire for stability and wholeness in the face of disruption and fragmentation.¹⁰⁵ As Thomas Mann wrote in 1920, “The modern Westerner’s problem is: to become, on a higher level of consciousness, *entirely* whole, as was the medieval person, to a high degree, and as Orientals, in many ways still are today.”¹⁰⁶ Others turned to the Occult in order to commune with the brothers, sons, and fathers who never returned from war.¹⁰⁷ Finally, figures such as Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig offered radical new interpretations of Christianity and Judaism, respectively, while claiming to restore their faiths to a sort of primordial purity.¹⁰⁸

Haecker, however, believed that the stability and holism of the Roman Catholic Church offered the best salve for the wounds of his time. Toward this end, Haecker convinced

¹⁰³ As Stefan Goebel puts it, “The Great War left a paradoxical legacy of religious awakening and ecclesiastical decline.” Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ See Suzanne Marchand’s work on German Orientalism, which she persuasively argues was of a different stripe than the Orientalism exposed by Edward Said in Britain and France. In Germany, Marchand writes, Orientalism was a “a tradition which tended to be not enlightened and imperialist, but romantic and elitist; German orientalists certainly believed in Europe’s cultural superiority, but they also emphasized, especially in eras of western crisis, the spirituality, integrity, and antiquity of eastern cultures.” Marchand, “Eastern Wisdom,” 342.

¹⁰⁵ See Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Mann to Keyserling, 1920, in Thomas Mann, *Aufsätze, Reden, Essays* vol. 3 1919-1925 (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1986), 8.

¹⁰⁷ For a fascinating account of the rise in German interest in the Occult, see Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ Peter Gordon describes the “new thinking” of Weimar modernism, within which Barth and Rosenzweig are certainly included, “as being torn between its celebration of theological

Ficker to add Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931) as a contributor to *Der Brenner*. A Catholic schoolteacher and respected philosopher, Ebner's works focused on using Kierkegaard to construct a dialogical approach to Christianity and philosophy. In his first article for *Der Brenner* Ebner mirrored Haecker and Ficker in praising Kierkegaard for foreseeing the destruction of World War One. "Two figures saw ahead of time what came and continues to come over Europe," explains Ebner, "two figures who sought the cure for humanity in the spirit of Christianity: Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky."¹⁰⁹ Like Haecker, Ebner found this "spirit" within the walls of the Catholic Church. In a later article Ebner argued that the only reason Kierkegaard failed to understand this was that his emphasis on loneliness precluded an appreciation of community of saints.

Prior to World War One, *Der Brenner* had never so explicitly aligned itself with any tradition save that of the cultural critic. In *Der Brenner's* attacks on all forms of cultural, religious and social degeneration, it made sense that Kierkegaard could "light the way for the entire *Brenner* movement." But the awkwardness of Kierkegaard's role in *Der Brenner's* new direction showed itself even in this first postwar issue.

Dallago, for one, proved less convinced of the salvific powers of Christianity. In his "The World War and Civilization," Dallago depicted the war as a decidedly Christian problem. "It was the 'Christian' world that conducted [the war]; it was the 'Christian' peoples and regimes that conducted it, and where other peoples and regimes joined in, they were forced into it by the same."¹¹⁰ For Dallago, the war was a condemnation of Christianity and

origins and its no less passionate celebration of post-Nietzschean modernity." Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Ferdinand Ebner, "Kultur und Christentum," *Der Brenner*, December 1919, 159.

¹¹⁰ Dallago, "The World War and Civilization," *Der Brenner*, October 1919, 17.

civilization alike. It was proof that spirituality and civilization should never mix. "What a Gordian knot," exclaims Dallago, "created by an almost unimaginable degeneration of the Religious in man!"¹¹¹ "I will do my best," concludes Dallago, "to hack it apart."¹¹² Dallago did not mention Kierkegaard once in his article. His reconsideration of Christianity, catalyzed by Kierkegaard, had come to an end.

Initially, readers of *Der Brenner* had encountered a relatively cohesive Kierkegaard, regardless of the author. Very little differentiated the Kierkegaard of Dallago from that of Haecker, Ficker or Ferdinand Ebner—the three primary authors of pieces about Kierkegaard. These authors situated Kierkegaard alongside Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in prophesying the imminent collapse of European civilization. But unlike Nietzsche, Kierkegaard sought the antidote in a purified Christianity. And thanks to his pietist upbringing, Protestant convictions, and German-oriented education, Kierkegaard was, unlike Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, thoroughly western. Moreover, outside of the translation acknowledgements, *Der Brenner* presented Kierkegaard as more or less a German thinker; a German thinker, however, who rescued the individual from the suffocating grip of overweening totalities, whether philosophical, religious, political, or national.

Starting around 1920, however, fissures began to emerge in *Der Brenner's* presentation of Kierkegaard. Primarily this resulted from Haecker's growing enthusiasm for the Catholic Church. Dallago later claimed that he knew Haecker was converting to Catholicism as soon as he read his 1920 *Brenner* article on John Henry Newman, the 19th-century Catholic

¹¹¹ Dallago, "The World War and Civilization," 18.

¹¹² Dallago, "The World War and Civilization," 18.

Cardinal.¹¹³ When Haecker confirmed these suspicions and announced his conversion in 1921, the fall-out with Dallago was immediate. Haecker's conversion, and Dallago's frustration with it, had immense implications for the image of Kierkegaard offered by *Der Brenner*.

Dallago and Haecker consistently projected their dispute onto their interpretations of Kierkegaard. Before 1920, Dallago had made little distinction between Protestantism and Catholicism. He clearly interpreted the Christendom Kierkegaard attacked as comprising all official Christianity; Kierkegaard's focus on Danish Protestantism was simply a historical contingency. But beginning in 1920 Dallago became more explicit about this assumption. For example, after quoting a series of vitriolic lines from Kierkegaard's *Das Augenblick*, Dallago concludes that they "retain their validity for Christianity as a church in general; for official Protestantism as well as official Catholicism, for Protestant as well as Catholic spirituality."¹¹⁴

In many ways, Dallago's increasing critique of Kierkegaard must be seen in light of his growing feud with Haecker. For at the same time as Dallago was attempting to denude Kierkegaard of the specifically Christian, Haecker was attempting to bring the protesting Protestant into the Catholic fold. Haecker had always been more comfortable than Dallago with Kierkegaard's Christian vantage, and found in Kierkegaard not an expression of "the eternal spiritual," but rather a purified Christianity. To Haecker, any attempt to deny the essentially Christian in Kierkegaard could only lead to distortion. "Whoever sees in Kierkegaard," argues Haecker in a 1920 *Brenner* article, "a man who leads out of Christianity

¹¹³ Dallago, "Eine Auseinandersetzung" *Der Brenner*, Frühling 1922, 177.

¹¹⁴ Dallago, "Eröffnungen" *Der Brenner*, February 1920, 181.

into some sort of free thinking (*Freidenkertum*), such a person necessarily and hopelessly says the falsest things."¹¹⁵

Initially, Haecker had turned to Kierkegaard primarily for his anti-institutional fire-power. And even while directing most of his ire at the German Protestant church, Haecker allowed that Kierkegaard's attacks applied to the Catholic Church as well.¹¹⁶ Thus, Haecker could refer to Carl Hilty (1833-1909), the famous Swiss writer who hoped for a new Christianity beyond dogma and politics, as "like Abraham, a friend of God...one of the wisest men of all time."¹¹⁷ In this, at least, Haecker and Dallago could wholeheartedly agree. Indeed it was this type of Kierkegaardian frustration with official Christianity that had convinced Dallago to lobby for a position for Haecker with *Der Brenner*.

The discrepancy between Dallago's and Haecker's view of Kierkegaard, however, was evident from the outset. For Dallago, Kierkegaard was a brilliant thinker who excised the inessential from Christianity thus bringing it (almost) in line with "the eternal spiritual." Haecker, on the other hand, looked to Kierkegaard as one who excised the inessential from Christianity thus restoring it to its original pristine state. To put it in other words, Dallago's Kierkegaard helped him to see the truth that united Christianity with all true spirituality. Haecker's Kierkegaard helped him to see the truth that set Christianity apart from all other spirituality (and from distorted Christianity).

From Denmark to Rome

¹¹⁵ Wer in Kierkegaard einen Mann sieht, der über das Christentum hinaus zu so etwas wie Freidenkertum führen kann, der sagt notwendig und hoffnungslos die falschesten Dinge." Haecker, "Wandel der Tragic," *Der Brenner*, April 1920, 279.

¹¹⁶ See Haecker, "F. Biel und Kierkegaard," 459.

Following his conversion, Haecker exchanged the ecumenical, almost universalist, passion of Hilty for the Catholic proselytizing force of Cardinal Newman.¹¹⁸ The most tangible effects of this move for Haecker's Kierkegaard interpretation was a call for more attention to texts that offer Kierkegaard as a pious religious author rather than as a scourge of institutional religiosity. Most of these texts had, Haecker points out, been left out of the recently completed twelve-volume *Collected Works*. In his 1922 article "Kierkegaard at the Foot of the Altar," Haecker bemoans Kierkegaard's imbalanced German reception with its focus on his philosophical-poetic and ignorance of his religious works. Although much of the former has entered into the German "common property" declares Haecker, "hardly a portion of [his *Upbuilding Discourses*] have been translated."¹¹⁹ Haecker acknowledges that some might consider Kierkegaard's aesthetic writings to be the unmediated, true Kierkegaard while the religious writings are simply a show. Yet Haecker dismisses this view as simply "a superficial perception" and argues that the exact opposite is closer to the truth. In Kierkegaard's *Discourses* we find "the *Center* of his person."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Haecker, "Übersicht," *Der Brenner*, June 1920, 357.

¹¹⁸ Newman became known in the 1830s as a polemicist for the influential group of Anglicans known as the Oxford Movement, who courted controversy in their attempts to reintegrate many Catholic doctrines and liturgical traditions into the Church of England. In 1845, however, Newman and many of his followers publicly left the Church of England and converted to Catholicism.

¹¹⁹ Haecker, "Kierkegaard am Fusse des Altars," *Der Brenner*, Spätherbst 1922, 74.

¹²⁰ Hier war das Zentrum der Person, und hier der absolute Gegenpart." Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 75. Italics in original.

Haecker imbues this article with a speculative argument that would become a hallmark of nearly all the Catholic Kierkegaard apologists to follow:¹²¹ if Kierkegaard had lived longer, he would have made his way to the Roman Catholic Church. Haecker builds his argument primarily upon two observations: that Kierkegaard viewed his own authorship as a progression and that it is necessary to separate Kierkegaard's message to his own day from his message to the present.

Haecker begins his diachronic argument with the very first line of the article, a quote from Kierkegaard referring to his final religious texts from which Haecker also drew the title: "A step-by-step, progressive authorial efficacy finds here its decisive resting point, on the foot of the altar."¹²² Haecker then offers a laundry list of all of Kierkegaard's writings, both pseudonymous and signed, from *Either/Or* in 1843 all the way to *Practice in Christianity* in 1850. He expresses amazement at the thoroughness of Kierkegaard's journey from the aesthetic through the ethical to the religious; a schema that Haecker claims originated with Kierkegaard and has since become the norm in contemporary European culture. But he also informs his reader that this journey must not be viewed as a dead-end or cul-de-sac (*Sackgäßchen*).¹²³ Rather, it must be seen as a brilliant fulfillment of the task accorded to Kierkegaard in his own time and place—a task befitting the larger mission of Christianity across the ages.

¹²¹ See the works of Ferdinand Ebner, Erich Przywara, or Romano Guardini for contemporary Catholic interpreters of Kierkegaard. Each of these figures had some connection with *Der Brenner*, either as subscribers or contributors. For a collection of essays examining Kierkegaard's influence on Catholic theology, see Jon Stewart, ed., *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 10, Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology, Tome III: Catholic and Jewish Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

¹²² "Eine stufenweise vorwärtsschreitende schriftstellerische Wirksamkeit findet hier ihren entscheidenden Ruhepunkt am Fuße des Altars." Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 71.

¹²³ Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 74.

Here Haecker introduces the second component of his argument, that “Kierkegaard’s mission had two faces, one clearly finished in his historical moment, and another that stretches into the present and the future and has yet to find its resting point.” Kierkegaard’s mission in his time, claims Haecker, was to attack the hubris of a humanity that believed it could reach God on its own strength. Thus he was a “genius against genius” who pushed back against the hubris flowing from the acolytes of Goethe and Hegel. He defended the “higher nature against the purely natural, the transcendence of God against the immanence of rational philosophy, the personal God against pantheism...the love of God against what mankind calls love, the holiness of God against the impurity and sentimentality of the ‘beautiful soul.’”¹²⁴ It would be a great mistake, argues Haecker, to adopt this face of Kierkegaard’s mission for our own. In his zeal to separate God from man, Kierkegaard lost all sight of the fact that God had freely created man, and the world he inhabited.¹²⁵ As a result, Haecker concluded that Kierkegaard’s mission, although useful in its time and place, brought him disturbingly close to gnosticism¹²⁶.

The value of Kierkegaard for the present and future can only be found by placing him within the *longue durée* of Christianity and leaving his historically-contingent message behind. According to Haecker, the primary essence of Kierkegaard’s message that stands the test of

¹²⁴ Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 77.

¹²⁵ One of the attractions of Newman for Haecker was the way in which the Cardinal mediated the distance between God and humanity, rather than emphasizing it as did Kierkegaard. He felt that this was the “mature” view of the situation compared to Kierkegaard’s youthful passion. Theodor Haecker, “Über Kardinal Newmans Glaubensphilosophie,” *Der Brenner*, June 1921, 775-806.

¹²⁶ While not mentioning him in the article, Haecker likely had in mind here Karl Barth and his *Epistle to the Romans*, the second edition of which had come out earlier that year. Barth’s Kierkegaardian-inspired view of Christianity, especially in its “infinite qualitative distinction between God and mankind,” drew accusations of gnosticism from many critics. For a recent examination of such associations, see especially Benjamin’s Lazier’s chapters on “The Gnostic

time can be found in his concept of the individual. Kierkegaard offered “the category of the ‘individual,’ in the sense of its religious import,” explains Haecker, “against the idea of a “socialism” without God, which was already on the rise in his day.”¹²⁷ According to Haecker, Kierkegaard’s focus on the individual in his/her “religious importance” came out most clearly in his journal entries and religious texts, hence their heightened importance for Haecker’s contemporaries.

Haecker actually comes close to dismissing all of Kierkegaard's philosophic-poetic works in favor of his simple religious writings. "After all," writes Haecker of Kierkegaard, "all of his major philosophical-poetic works were written under a cloud of depression."¹²⁸ Moreover, Haecker claims that this "depression" ultimately distanced Kierkegaard from his God. This was one more reason to elevate Kierkegaard's *Discourses*, where there is none of his "one-sided, false" understandings of faith. In the *Discourse* we see how "Love had led Kierkegaard to deeper, more valuable and more lasting insights than had faith."¹²⁹ By historicizing Kierkegaard's philosophical-poetic works and essentializing his religious works, Haecker presented Kierkegaard as a disciple of love instead of a prophet of angst.

Return,” and “Romans in Weimar,” in his *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 26-36; 37-48.

¹²⁷ “...die Kategorie des „Einzelnen“ im Sinne der religiösen Aussonderung gegenüber den eben in seinen Tagen aufkommenden Ideen eines „Sozialismus“ ohne Gott aufzustellen.” Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 82.

¹²⁸ Im Grunde sind seine großen philosophisch-dichterischen Werke von 1843—1847, wiewohl er die Taufe erhalten hatte, nach der es ihn verlangt hatte—einen Augenblick vergingen ihm die Sinne, so tief und so lange wurde er untergetaucht, aber dann kam er wieder ans Licht empor, neugeboren—im Grunde sind sie doch noch unter einer Wolke der Schwermut geschrieben.” Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 84.

¹²⁹ Die Liebe hat Kierkegaard zu tieferen, wertvolleren, bleibenderen Erkenntnissen geführt, als der Glaube, den er so einseitig irrig auffaßte...” Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 84.

Yet Kierkegaard's focus on divine love distorted his overall message in one key sense: he had no room for love between believers. He saw community "only in spiritual terms as the community of saints, which kept him from accepting its realization in the psycho-somatic sphere of actual people, through Church and sacrament."¹³⁰ Although not explicitly addressing it here, Haecker had made it clear in other writings—as well as in the fact of his conversion to Catholicism—that the fulfillment of Kierkegaard's mission was to be found in Rome. Moreover, even though not blaming him for it, Haecker felt that Kierkegaard's overly existential perspective on faith combined with his dangerous proximity to gnosticism opened him up to a high probability of posthumous misinterpretation. Assessing Kierkegaard from the solid foundation of the eternal Church, however, provided the necessary ballast against his more radical extremes.

Haecker's postwar reorientation toward Rome and the way it inflected his view of Kierkegaard infuriated Dallago. Dallago viewed Haecker's privileging of Kierkegaard's religious writings over his other texts as one more example of his "infidelity" to Kierkegaard.¹³¹ Far from offering support for a return to Rome, Kierkegaard's *Rede* offered proof that one can be deeply religious without being a part of an official church. Moreover, declares Dallago in a later article, anything that Kierkegaard critiqued about the official Protestant church could be laid even more severely at the door of the Catholic Church. Religiously speaking, concludes Dallago, the essential in Kierkegaard is that "as a Protestant he had turned original

¹³⁰ "So ließ sie ihn hier das andere große Prinzip des Christentums, dass der Gemeinschaft, nicht freilich nicht sehen, sehen mußte er es als Christ, aber es nur sehen im Pneumatischen als Gemeinschaft der Heiligen, und hinderte ihn, dessen Verwirklichung auch zu suchen in der psychisch-somatischen Sphäre des Menschen, durch Kirche und Sakrament." Haecker, "Fusse des Altars," 83.

¹³¹ Carl Dallago, "Die Menschenwerdung des Menschen," Herbst 1923, 139.

Christianity against official Protestantism, that is, against the church."¹³² Catholics who would follow Kierkegaard should do the same vis-à-vis their church. "The appointed advocate and interpreter of Kierkegaard's creations," bemoans Dallago regarding Haecker, can no longer hear the central message of Kierkegaard: "away with the Church!"¹³³

In his final articles for *Der Brenner*, Dallago became ever more militant in his insistence that Kierkegaard's faith and any version of official Christianity were simply incompatible. "Between Kierkegaard's beliefs about God and the conventional Church beliefs," declares Dallago, "there is, after all, a qualitative difference."¹³⁴ Dallago argues that Kierkegaard always emphasized the *How* of faith and not the *What*, how a person related to the eternal and not precisely to what a person thought they were relating.¹³⁵ While Haecker was frustrated with Dallago's attempt to denude Kierkegaard of his Christianity, it was Dallago's attacks on the church as a whole that most riled Haecker. When Dallago went so far as to call the church a "murderer of the eternal spiritual,"¹³⁶ Haecker demanded that Ficker write an official editorial statement distancing the *Brenner* from Dallago's views.¹³⁷ Ficker's response spoke his esteem for which he held Dallago, "without whom the *Brenner* would have never come into being."¹³⁸ But he also reasserted his loyalty to Haecker and the new direction of *Der Brenner*. Although confessing to the "torturous ambivalence" that he felt, Ficker included a "Note from

¹³² Dallago, "Menschenwerdung," 142.

¹³³ Dallago, "Menschenwerdung," 155.

¹³⁴ Dallago, "Menschenwerdung," 125.

¹³⁵ Dallago, "Menschenwerdung," 126.

¹³⁶ Carl Dallago, "Augustinus, Pascal und Kierkegaard" *Der Brenner*, April 1921, 701-702.

¹³⁷ Haecker to Ficker, 23 April 1921, in *Briefwechsel*, 296-297.

¹³⁸ Ficker to Haecker, 5 May 1921, in *Briefwechsel*, 299.

the Editor," in the following issue in which he reasserted *Der Brenner's* new direction.¹³⁹ In light of Haecker's Catholicism and Ficker's support for it, Dallago no longer felt comfortable at the journal that had been originally developed for him. In 1926, Dallago lent action to his increasingly frustrated words and parted ways with *Der Brenner*.

In the five issues following Dallago's departure and before being forced to close in 1928, *Der Brenner* included no works by or about Kierkegaard. Instead, *Der Brenner* offered a half-hearted attempt to include Kierkegaard in their new post-Dallago direction, comparing him to Karl Kraus¹⁴⁰ in one article and hinting at his under-realized importance for Catholicism¹⁴¹ in another. Kierkegaard clearly no longer "lit the way for the entire *Brenner* movement."

The example of *Der Brenner* presents some basic elements that define Kierkegaard's reception in early twentieth century Germany. Debates about Kierkegaard's Christianity remained front and center for most of his interpreters. Yet, while some continued this debate in terms of a Catholic versus a (purified) Protestant Kierkegaard, the parameters of the debate—as we will see in the following chapters—shifted strongly toward questioning Kierkegaard's Christianity *tout court*. Another theme that we will see again and again is the ease of using Kierkegaard to attack institutions and society as a whole combined with the difficulty of deploying him toward a constructive approach to society's ills. Indeed, I argue that these two trends are interrelated. Detaching Kierkegaard from his Christian focus both expanded the appeal of his criticisms while also limiting the possibility of looking to him for a

¹³⁹ Ficker, "Mitteilung der Herausgebers," *Der Brenner*, June 1921, 812-821.

¹⁴⁰ Wilhelm Weindler, "Die Traumwelt von Chorónoz" *Der Brenner*, Herbst 1932, 145.

¹⁴¹ Ignaz Zangerle, "Zur Situation der Kirche" *Der Brenner*, Weihnachten 1933, 54.

way forward. As Hermann Hesse wrote in 1923, “[Kierkegaard’s] problems are our problems, even if his path need not become ours.”¹⁴²

Finally, in the example of *Der Brenner* we see the importance of access, or lack thereof, to Kierkegaard’s writings in German. When Haecker wrote his first piece for *Der Brenner* in 1912, Kierkegaard was a largely unknown quantity in Germany and few of his texts were available in German. Haecker capitalized on his access to the original texts as a way of establishing his role as mediator of Kierkegaard’s reception in Germany. In the following two chapters, we turn to the publisher most responsible for bringing Kierkegaard’s texts into the German language: Eugen Diederichs. Diederichs’ most important contribution to Kierkegaard’s reception was the twelve-volume *Kierkegaards Gesammelte Werke*, begun in 1909 and completed in 1922. But before discussing this massive project, we will examine Diederichs’ fascinating approach to publishing, his eccentric worldview, and how Kierkegaard fit into both.

¹⁴² Hermann Hesse, “Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben,” *Vivos Voco: Zeitschrift für neues Deutschtum* vol. 1, No. 10, 1920, 658.

Chapter Two

Kierkegaard's Publisher: The Eugen Diederichs Verlag

In late summer 1921, the Jena police entered the city's meeting hall due to suspicions of unauthorized dancing. The group in question, several hundred strong dressed in colorful clothing, had been seen ambling down from the mountainside into the city with torches earlier that evening. They eventually found their way into the meeting hall where they had remained all night. They had not, however, registered a dance with the city authorities nor had they paid the required fee, hence the police investigation. Upon entering the meeting hall, the police found that all of the usual furniture had been removed and replaced with oriental—looking carpets for reclining. Moreover, there was a strange red glow due to the paper lanterns hanging throughout the room.¹ There had, in fact, been dancing, and so the police informed the guests that the festivities were now over. As the party—goers stumbled into the night, the police may have heard odd mumblings about the course of events that evening: Hercules and Dante walking in the fields, a lion entering the room, ancient temples and secret rites.

¹ These descriptions come from Diederichs account of the decor for the evening. Lulu von Strauss and Torney-Diederichs, ed., *Eugen Diederichs: Leben und Werk, Ausgewählte Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1936), 378.

While eclectic and expansive, the events of this evening did have a unifying theme: they were designed to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Eugen Diederichs Verlag. By the time of the celebration, Diederichs had become one of the most influential publishers in the business.² Moreover, the Diederichs Verlag was the epitome of the so-called *Kultur Verläge* (Cultural Publishing Houses). These publishing houses, which multiplied in fin-de-siècle Germany, differentiated themselves by claiming that the motivating force behind all decisions was not profitability but rather the furthering of a cultural program.³ As Diederichs himself defined it, "To be a *Kultur-Verlag* does not mean publishing this or that important and beautiful book, rather it means publishing without thoughts of momentary success and...believing in the ultimate victory of ideas."⁴ With the zeal of a religious reformer, Diederichs sought to spark German renewal with the perfect concatenation of folk tales, philosophical treatises and

² At the time of Diederichs death in 1930, he could count seven Nobel Prize winners among his authors. Mentioned in Andreas Meyer, "Der Verlagsgründer und seine Rolle als Kulturverleger," in Gangly Hübinger, ed. *Versammlungsort moderner Geister. Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag: Aufbruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme* (München: Diederichs Verlag, 1996), 32. As George Mosse noted about Diederichs, "He himself is no longer famous. Historians ignore him and philosophers do not discuss his mystical and social theories. Yet he was one of the most celebrated publishers from the first decade of the century until his death in 1927 (sic)." George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1998), 52.

³ Gideon Reuveni explains that for Kulturverlags, "the justification for making books cheaper and trying to popularize them was imparting cultural values and making intellectual capital, not financial gains." Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 48. For an excellent discussion of the phenomenon of *Kulturverläge* at the time, and Eugen Diederichs as the epitome thereof, see Meike Werner, "Provincial Modernism: Jena as Publishing Program," *The Germanic Review*, 76, no. 4 (2001): 319-334.

⁴ "Ein Kultur-Verlag sein heisst nicht dieses und jenes wichtige und schoene Buch verlegen, sondern unbeirrt vom augenblicklichen Erfolg und dementsprechend unbekuemmert um Tagesmode verlegen und an den Sieg der Idee glauben." Quoted in Meyer, "Verlagsgründer," 29.

spiritual texts. He wanted to recover the "well-springs" of human spirituality—he believed there were many—and make them "fruitful" once again.⁵

Diederichs also became the most important catalyst of Kierkegaard scholarship in Germany. In 1922, his publishing house finally completed a project begun thirteen years prior: the publication of Kierkegaard's complete works in the German language.⁶ So established was the association between Diederichs and Kierkegaard that Theodor Adorno remarked, with annoyance, that Kierkegaard had become the "house philosopher of Eugen Diederichs."⁷ As Chapter One showed, the relative paucity of Kierkegaard texts available in German permeated many of the early battles among Kierkegaard interpreters. Haecker bemoaned the distorted image of Kierkegaard that resulted, he felt, from the lack of access to his religious writings and journals. The pendulum then swung in the other direction—especially after Haecker's conversion—as Dallago and others insisted that the true Kierkegaard resided in his acerbic attacks on Christianity. With this series, the Eugen Diederichs Verlag sought to provide, as one of the translators phrased it, "unmediated access to Kierkegaard."⁸

⁵ Diederichs expressed this desire repeatedly in private correspondence and in published texts. "I consider it my duty," wrote Diederichs to one of his readers in 1903, "to bring to life the sources of Christianity in the form of new editions of Greek philosophy..." Quoted in Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, "99.

⁶ The twelve-volume series was "complete" in aiming to offer what the editors felt was a comprehensive overview of Kierkegaard's authorship, not every text in his corpus.

⁷ Theodor Adorno to Jean Wahl, 30 April, 1939, in *Theodor W. Adorno/Max Horkheimer: Briefwechsel II, 1938-1944* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 450-452. Adorno did not approve of Diederichs mystical and esoteric worldview. In the early 1930s, Adorno wrote his dissertation Kierkegaard's theory of aesthetics, published as *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933).

⁸ Hermann Gottsched, *Buch des Richters: Seine Tagebücher, 1853-1855* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1905), 2.

This claim notwithstanding, *Søren Kierkegaard: Gesammelte Werke* ["Søren Kierkegaard: Collected Works"] was, of course, a mediated product. This chapter focuses on the mediators—first on Diederichs as impresario and then on the two men he chose as editorial translators, Herman Gottsched (1848-1916) and Christoph Schrempf (1860-1944). These three men had very different ideas as to the specific value of Kierkegaard for their society. They nonetheless came together in the name of expanding access to Kierkegaard for their fellow Germans. Their efforts shaped Kierkegaard's reception in Germany, and beyond, for the next forty years.⁹

This chapter begins by mapping out Eugen Diederichs' attempt to remake German cultural and spiritual life. Diederichs is unique among key figures in Kierkegaard's reception in that he had very little personal knowledge of Kierkegaard's writings. Rather, he simply had an "instinctive feeling" that Kierkegaard should be a part of his much-desired German renewal.¹⁰ In order to understand the context of the reception of Kierkegaard's writings, we need to reconstruct Diederichs' concept of German renewal. Diederichs' 25th anniversary celebration will serve as a means with which to explore this project. The chapter then turns to Kierkegaard publications coming out of the Diederichs Verlag before the *Gesammelte Werke* got under way. Although Diederichs had expressed a desire to publish Kierkegaard's collected works as early as 1901, it was not until 1909 that he finally released the first volume. In the

⁹ It was only with the publication of Emmanuel Hirsch's version of Kierkegaard's *Collected Works*—also for the Eugen Diederichs Verlag—in the 1950's that Schrempf and Gottsched's edition was eclipsed. Regarding the international reception, Gerhard Schreiber notes "many translations of Kierkegaard's works into other languages were based on Schrempf's German text, rather than the original languages." Gerhard Schreiber, "Christoph Schrempf: The 'Swabian Socrates' as Translator of Kierkegaard," in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Bd. 10: Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology, Tome 1, Germany Protestant Theology* ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 296.

¹⁰ Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 59.

meantime, Diederichs published several Kierkegaard texts as a way of tilling the ground for this larger project. Examining these texts provides an opportunity to see Diederichs' vision for Kierkegaard's influence in practice. They also provide a glimpse into Diederichs' interactions with the men he chose to produce the actual translations.

Finally, the chapter concludes by introducing the two translators for the *Collected Works*. In their role as translators and, even more consequentially, authors of the afterwords, Hermann Gottsched and Christoph Schrempf played a larger role than Diederichs in shaping the final project. Why did Diederichs turn to Gottsched and Schrempf for this task? Conversely, what attracted them to this project? Much as we saw with Dallago and Haecker at *The Brenner*, the tensions between interpretations offered by Schrempf and Gottsched worked their way into the published *Werke*, and eventually pushed Gottsched to leave the project.

"The Youth Triumph over the Old:" Diederichs and his Vision for Germany

By examining the 25th anniversary celebration, we both gain access to Diederichs and, by extension, get a sense of the program that drove his publishing house. In many ways, there was little separation between the two, as nearly every aspect of the firm was an expression of Diederichs' personal hopes for Germany. As one of its house authors observed in a 1923 article "Ein Kultur-Verlag" for the *Ostdeutsche Monatshefte*, "every single book [published by the company] was chosen out of a deep personal conviction of Eugen Diederichs." Thus it was clear to this author that if he "wanted to write about the publishing house [he] had to write

about the man."¹¹ As we work our way through Diederichs' celebration, we will draw out the larger themes that define his worldview—comprising an emphasis on *Erlebnis* (experience), an attempt to transcend historical time, and a willingness to look outside of Germany for German renewal. Each of these provides clues as to what made Kierkegaard so attractive to him.

When Diederichs' friends and associates received their invitation to the celebration, they were likely nonplussed by the details of the evening. Diederichs' had earned a reputation for his eccentric and flamboyant lifestyle.¹² First came the sartorial directives. Diederichs insisted that his guests "come not in solemn clothing but rather colorfully dressed, with garlands and cloaks..." He then explained the course of events planned for the fest that was to begin at 3pm and last "late into the night."

Part 1:

You will drink coffee in Rome. Then you will be led to Rimini where you will find yourself in a field with a beautiful view of the Apennines. Dante walks somewhere through the grass. Pindar, Aeschylus and Sophocles speak through the mouth of Iphigenia. Malatesta and Isotta commune. A young woman from Weimar reads from the works of Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin and Novalis. Then Hercules marches by with mighty steps upon the earth. The land of the future awakens. Music begins to play and the guests hike around and strengthen their bodies.

Part 2:

It is evening, we find ourselves in a temple, nearby a lion's den, only torches burn. The spirit of youth reigns. What the night holds in events and adventures remains a secret. The youth triumph over the old, because they remain sitting the longest.—It will certainly not be boring.¹³

¹¹ A.H. Kober, "Ein Kultur-Verlag," in *Ostdeutsche Monatshefte*, no. 2 (1923): 73-76.

¹² George Mosse notes that Diederichs had a reputation for "displaying his love for the eccentric and his infatuation with the mystical essence of life." Mosse, *Crisis*, 53.

¹³ Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 376. Diederichs' wife included the invitation in this memoir-like publication of his letters and documents.

In a journal entry the following week, Diederichs recounted the course of the evening. The guests invoked Zeus to begin the festival and then listened to the words of Sophocles, Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin. Diederichs recalled one participant describing it as "pleasantly pagan." Around five hundred party goers then paraded through the city of Jena—Rimini for the evening—singing songs and holding banners. The highpoint of the afternoon was a play put on by Diederichs' wife, Lulu, in "the temple." Next, the guests stood outside and wondered at the mountains towering behind the building. "That these were actually the Apennines," writes Diederichs, "was confirmed by an Italian from Naples in the language of his homeland."¹⁴

Here we get a sense of Diederichs' flair for the dramatic as well as his focus on experience or *Erlebnis*. While the evening seems extreme and almost silly in its decadent reimagining of past and present, it likely surprised none who knew Diederichs. As George Mosse notes, Diederichs had a reputation for showing up at events in zebra-skin pants and a Turkish turban. And his youth meetings were "often transformed into Greek feasts pervaded by a sense of Dionysian abandon."¹⁵ Diederichs' passion for, and pursuit of, the mystical essence of life lent nearly all of his actions a certain eccentricity.

We also get a glimpse into Diederichs' unique sense of time: his bridging of past and present and attempt to transcend the strictures of time. Take for instance the putative location of the festival: Italy. Diederichs' decision on this front had both spatial and chronological significance. It was in Italy that Diederichs had founded his publishing house twenty-five years prior. As he noted in his recollection of the evening, he considered the Malatesta Temple

¹⁴ Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 377.

¹⁵ Mosse, *Crisis*, 52-53.

in Rimini as "the actual birthplace of my publishing house."¹⁶ Perhaps more significantly it also lent reality, actual flesh and bone, to a certain dechronologizing bent evident in his approach to publishing. Not only were his guests transported across space, they were also transported through time with the help of the various historical figures Diederichs invited. Moreover, they were taken to a place where Dante walked alongside Pindar and Hercules. This was not a specific time, but rather an a-historical space where great figures communed as contemporaries.

Diederichs attempted to do much the same in his publishing. His series, *Erzieher zu Deutscher Bildung* ("Educators for German Culture"), for example, exemplified this blurring of historical time.¹⁷ *Erzieher* was Diederichs' first undertaking after moving from Italy to Jena in 1904, and it represented his desire to revive German culture.¹⁸ The only way to accomplish this task, Diederichs felt, was to find a fruitful way to interact with the past. Diederichs followed Nietzsche here in an attempt to make history useful to the individual.¹⁹ He explicitly distanced himself from the tenets of historical criticism, and indeed academic scholarship. In

¹⁶ Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 377.

¹⁷ As Meike Werner described the series, "By eliminating textual annotation to context, by reducing exegetical traces, indeed by removing the dead hand of history, the volumes aimed at a new directness, a new authenticity." Werner, "Provincial Modernism," 327.

¹⁸ As Diederichs explains in the advertisements for the bookstores, the series should help "create culture." He also argues that, "it touches on their [the bookstores'] interests, if it succeeds in clearing the way for an increased, intensely spiritual German cultural life." Quoted in Irmgard Heidler, *Der Verleger Eugen Diederichs Und Seine Welt (1896-1950)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 238.

¹⁹ See Heidler's work throughout for discussions of Nietzsche's influence on Diederichs. "Diederichs' Nietzsche reception," writes Heidler, "resulted in an extraordinarily direct and personal transference [of Nietzsche's philosophy] onto himself and his self-understanding, as well as on his work and his publishing house." Heidler, *Diederichs*, 44. While in Naumburg, Diederichs encountered Nietzsche multiple times during walks in the forests, though

this series he "eschewed any philological apparatus and brought together a pithy selection of the most characteristic and meaningful writings and sayings...so that each thinker speaks to us himself."²⁰ In his own way, Diederichs pursued Kierkegaard's goal of removing the distance between present and past.²¹

The *mélange* of different cultures brought together for the evening is also worth noting. On one level, the inclusion of Pindar, Sophocles and Hercules suggests little differentiation from the growing *völkisch* nationalist movement in Germany. Adherents of such views had no problem finding German roots in Greek soil.²² But the fact that the evening was set in Italy and Dante was a guest of honor would have raised eyebrows among *völkisch* groups who defined themselves against decadent Latin cultures.²³

Nietzsche was already seriously ill at this point. He also developed a friendship with Nietzsche's sister during this period. Strauss and Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 54.

²⁰ Quoted in Werner, "Provincial Modernism," 327.

²¹ While Diederichs wanted to bridge past and present in order to tap into potent manifestations of *Geist* in other times and places, Kierkegaard's desire to pretend "like the past 1800 years never happened" was much more specific: he wanted to gain access to Jesus and the early church. Nonetheless, the basic desire was the same. Both men wanted to bypass an intervening time that they felt had distorted our view of the past.

²² For an account of Germany's extreme Graecophilia during this period, see Suzanne Marchand's classic work, *Down from Olympus: Archeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²³ Suzanne Marchand argues that German antipathy toward Rome solidified during the Napoleonic wars: "After 1870, Rome came to signify antinationalist tyranny, elitism, and ultramontanism." Marchand, *Olympus*, 159. The 19th century historian and public intellectual, Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) channeled such prussophile patriotism with his denunciation of Rome as the ultramontane enemy and demand for the elimination of all Latin influence from Germanic culture. For a representative example, see his "Unsere Aussichten," *Preussische Jahrbücher* 44 (1879), 559-76.

Diederichs differed from the mainstream völkisch nationalism of the time.²⁴ Granted, he devoted his life and work to a renewal of the German *Geist*. The emphasis, however, was different. Take Julius Langbehn's immensely popular paean to völkisch nationalism from 1890, *Rembrandt as Educator*. Langbehn put forth Rembrandt as the "educator" of the German race, but did so by identifying deeply "Germanic" traits within the Dutch artist. The same holds true for the Hellenic frenzy of the 19th Century, as Germans located the true birthplace of German culture and brilliance in ancient Greece.²⁵ Diederichs, however, found such genealogical machinations to be limiting to the true sense of *Geist*. He believed in a universal spirit, of which the Germans were only one manifestation and thus he felt no qualms about appealing to other peoples and cultures in his project of renewing the German Geist.²⁶

Diederichs' primary focus, however, was always on the future. By considering the progression of the festival, Diederichs' blueprint for the future of Germany becomes clear. The first part of the evening established the roots of true German culture in Dante, Aeschylus and Pindar. Then came the apex of German Geist in Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin. Diederichs waited until the sun had set, literally and figuratively, on the first part of the festival before turning fully to what he saw as the future of German Geist. As the moon rose

²⁴ Mosse, *Crisis*, 54-57.

²⁵ See Marchand, *Down from Olympus*.

²⁶ When describing, for example, his intentions for the translation of all the poetry and prose of Iceland since 1200, Diederichs explained that he wanted the series to "serve as a cultural-historical introduction completely free of any nationalism." Heidler, *Diederichs*, 566. Morse also notes Diederichs disdain for the way in which a purely nationalistic interpretation of *Geist* necessarily limited it. Morse, *Crisis*, 57.

behind the mountains, wrote Diederichs in his journal, "it was the youth's turn."²⁷ It was in this later part of the evening that Diederichs displayed his unique recipe for German renewal.

As the older guests reclined in the field the youth began to entertain. First they performed a piece from Karl Bröger, a well-known playwright of the youth movement. Diederichs captured the corporeal focus of the play with a quote from Faust: "All paths to the spirit pass through the body." Following the play there was singing and music making. It is clear that Diederichs carefully choreographed the music for maximum effect. It was as the "night turned bluish brown and the moonlight traced the mountains' edges" that the "most beautiful and most powerful" part of the evening occurred. "Violins and flutes began to play," exclaimed Diederichs, "as a chorus began singing with a zeal reminiscent of monks painting their miniature figures." Even the music kept with the dual theme of rootedness and new horizons. Although the music "built upon the deep words of our classics," it was in fact a completely new piece that Diederichs had commissioned especially for this moment in the celebration.²⁸

Not only did this second part of the evening make explicit Diederichs' faith in the promise of German youth, it also suggested that their inspiration would come from new sources. Dante did not appear in the second part of the festival, nor did it include readings from Goethe or Hölderlin. In fact, individual luminaries were completely lacking. Instead the youth turned to music and communal bodily movement. Following the performance on the mountain, they led the adults in a musical parade down from the mountain and into the meeting hall in the center of town. Simple red paper lanterns lit the largely empty room where

²⁷ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 378.

²⁸ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 378.

all of the furniture had been removed and the floor covered with plush carpets for reclining. Once the guests had settled in, about a dozen girls from the Loheländer school—an avant-garde dance and gymnastic institute located near Fulda—danced barefoot around the room "like butterflies."²⁹ Soon many of the other young women joined in, taking off their shoes and attempting to mirror the movements of the Loheländer dancers. As in the field, the adults largely took rest while the youth rejoiced in the movement of their lithe bodies.

The focus on dance at the festival speaks to Diederichs' emphasis on bodily movement as an aspect of religious experience, and indeed on experience as the most important component of religion. "Religious truth does not lie in history," wrote Diederichs in a 1903 letter, "but rather in religious experience, which seeks form in mythology."³⁰ Diederichs' guests experienced mythology by seeing Dante and Hercules with their eyes and hearing Aeschylus, Goethe and Novalis with their ears. Even their perambulation in the gardens took on a deep significance as "the music began to play and the guests hiked around to the strengthening of their bodies."³¹

Beginning with his first years in Jena, Diederichs had fostered various groups focused on corporeal experience, especially in the outdoors. The best example of this was his attempt to revive the ancient German custom of *Sonnwendfeier* (solstice celebrations). Diederichs focused especially on the religious significance of the act, something he felt was lacking in more recent iterations of these celebrations. In organizing his *Sonnwendfeier*, Diederichs explicitly drew upon Nietzsche's idea of Dionysian abandon. Students dressed in flowing white robes joined him in the mountains surrounding Jena, singing folk songs in bacchic-like

²⁹ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 378.

³⁰ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 85.

choirs and dancing ecstatically around the fire. At one such celebration in 1920, over 800 students participated in the festivities.³²

Finally, the evening wound down with a communal reading of fairy tales.³³ While Diederichs did not record which fairy tales were recited, they likely came from his series *Fairy Tales of World Literature*, from which the most recent publications were *Buddhist Fairy Tales from Ancient India* (1921),³⁴ *Indian Fairy Tales from South America* (1920),³⁵ *Caucas Fairy Tales* (1920),³⁶ *Indian Fairy Tales* (1919),³⁷ and *African Fairy Tales* (1917).³⁸ Having begun on the mountainside

³¹ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 376.

³² "Ein deutsch-schwedisches Fest," *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Juli 15, 1920, 89. German youth movements, of which such festivities were a part, have been the topic of intense historical interest for decades with the classic works coming from the pens of German emigre historians such as Walter Laqueur and George Mosse. Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1984). George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1998). For some recent scholarship on the topic, see Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, *The Rhythm of Eternity: The German Youth Movement and the Experience of the Past, 1900-1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

³³ Diederichs mentioned that some of the "corrupt adults" were getting drunk and rowdy in a nearby room and had to be quieted as the rest of them tried to tell fairy tales. Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 379.

³⁴ Heinrich Lüders, trans. *Buddhistische Märchen aus dem alten Indien* (Jena: Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, 1921).

³⁵ Theodor Koch-Grünberg, trans. *Indianermärchen aus Südamerika* (Jena: Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, 1920).

³⁶ Adolf Dir, trans. *Kaukasische Märchen* ((Jena: Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, 1920).

³⁷ Johannes Hertel, trans. *Indische Märchen* (Jena: Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, 1921).

³⁸ Carl Meinhof, trans. *Afrikanische Märchen* (Jena: Eugen Dietrichs Verlag, 1917).

surrounded by heroes from Greece and Rome, the group finished the evening reclined on carpets and listening to fairy tales from the East.³⁹

Diederichs' 25th anniversary celebration ended, quite literally, with a roar and a whimper. At around midnight the dancing was interrupted by his big surprise of the evening. As he wrote in his journal: "the lion entered." The doors of the room swung open and the guests gasped as a lion ambled into their midst. Diederichs claimed that the guests "greeted the lion without fear" because it was driven into the room by the whip of lion tamer. Lion and lion tamer then paraded around the room, the lion periodically electrifying the room with a cinematic roar. Diederichs made sure that his guests would always remember the golden lion that adorned the books of the Eugen Diederichs Verlag.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, the festivities fizzled do to bureacratic red tape. At around 2 a.m. the police arrived and informed Diederichs that he was committing tax evasion since no dance had been registered with the authorities. The guests begrudgingly accepted that they would have to end the evening, and so began stumbling home. Diederichs recalled one guest in particular, a "Goethe scholar from Weimar," who announced to the empty train station that "tonight I was a king but now I am a beggar again, for I have not enough money for the return trip to Weimar."⁴¹

³⁹ As one example of Diederichs' respect for the "orient," consider his remarks to Pastor Christlieb in 1903. Diederichs explained that he wanted books that explored the roots of Old Testament religion, "so that all theories of revelation could be discarded and, much more, so that the interconnectedness with other oriental religions would be respected." Quoted in Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 85.

⁴⁰ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 85.

The Verlag

However much time, energy, and money Diederichs invested in such festivals and celebrations, the publishing house was his primary mode of cultural intervention.⁴² To be even more specific, Diederichs focused especially on translating new works for German society. One early example of this can be seen in Diederichs' involvement in the Tolstoy craze at the turn of the century. By the time Diederichs began publishing Tolstoy's *Collected Works* in 1901, the Russian sage already had an immense following in Germany.⁴³ Among the educated elites in the Kaiserreich, the *fin-de-siècle* obsession with Tolstoy revolved less around his epic novels—which he had recently disowned as "bad art"—and more around his radical criticisms of nearly every aspect of modern institutional life. Tolstoy's reputation was as that of an anarchist, pacifist, and prophet of purified Christianity. Attracted by Tolstoy's cry against institutional religiosity (indeed against all institutions), Diederichs published his first Tolstoy translation in 1901. Under the title *An Appeal to Humanity*, Diederichs published three Tolstoy texts: "Must it really be this Way?," "How Shall we Escape?," and "Thoughts on God." In

⁴¹ Strauss and Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 85.

⁴² Nonetheless, Diederichs did invest an immense amount of time and energy into festivals, especially for German youth. The largest of these was the youth conference he organized on Mount Lauenstein in Thüringia in May 1917. The four-day event included as the high point a debate between Max Weber and Max Maurenbrecher on "the meaning and duties of our day." See Heidler, *Diederichs*, 91-98.

⁴³ For an account of Tolstoy's reception in Germany see Edith Hanke, *Prophet des Unmodernen: Leo N. Tolstoi als Kulturkritiker in der deutschen Diskussion der Jahrhundertwende* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993). Hanke claims that a looming question for critical middle-class Protestants at the turn of the century was "Gehen wir mit Nietzsche oder mit Tolstoi?" Hanke, *Tolstoy*, 61.

1902, Diederichs announced his plans to publish a 36 volume *Leo Tolstoi: Gesammelte Werke* ("Leo Tolstoy: Collected Works").⁴⁴

It was due to a separate pamphlet, which came out in 1902 but was not part of the *Collected Works*, that Diederichs gained notoriety as the great German populizer of Tolstoy. In February of 1901, Tolstoy's radical criticisms of institutional Christianity earned him an excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church. In his response, "Answer: To the Decree of the Synod," Tolstoy takes issue with the excommunication for a number of reasons, but freely shares his opinion that "the doctrine of the church is in theory a cunning and harmful deceit, and in practice a collection of the grossest superstitions and sorcery, which completely conceals the whole meaning of Christian teaching."⁴⁵ Diederichs immediately had the piece translated and published in Germany. In what became known as the "Tolstoy Process," the Church in Leipzig sued Diederichs (and his translator, Raphael Löwenfeld)⁴⁶ for publishing texts "which insulted Christianity." In the months leading up to the trial, a nationwide protest arose in the form of editorials and discussions in the press. The *Berliner Tageblatt* announced that Tolstoy was "the most important man of the present age," and in February of 1902, the discussion even reached the floor of the Reichstag. When the trial ended with an acquittal for Diederichs and Löwenfeld, it was seen by many as a victory for independent

⁴⁴ Announced on the back cover of Leo N. Tolstoy, *Was ist Religion und worin besteht ihr Wesen?* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs Verlag), 1902.

⁴⁵ Leo Tolstoy, "Answer: To the Decree of the Synod," in *The Complete Works of Count Tolstoy* ed. Leo Wiener (Boston, Estes Publisher, 1905), 230.

⁴⁶ Löwenfeld also served as the director the Schiller Theater in Berlin.

religious communities as well as a step forward in the fight to separate church and state in Germany.⁴⁷

The Tolstoy Process helped to establish Diederichs as a champion of the religious (and cultural) outsider. Two years later, in 1904, Diederichs furthered this association by moving his publishing house from Leipzig to Jena. For Diederichs, this move made perfect sense. As home to the largest book trade fair in Germany since the 17th century, Leipzig represented publishing as business. And Diederichs had moved to Leipzig for that reason, to establish himself in Germany. Yet, in his aspirations to have a *Kulturverlag*, Leipzig would never do. For him, "Jena" was as much an idea as a place. "It is no accident," wrote Diederichs in 1904, "that every German cultural movement has been closely associated with Thüringen [the state of which Jena is a part]."⁴⁸ Diederichs wanted Jena to stand alongside Weimar (with the Nietzsche Archive), Darmstadt (Jugendstil and the School of Wisdom) and Dresden-Hellerau (first Garden city in Germany), as a symbol of cultural regeneration in Wilhelmine Germany outside of Berlin, Munich or Leipzig.⁴⁹ Diederichs' contribution to a "revolt of the provinces," would come in the form of books, pamphlets, and journals.⁵⁰ These were the primary tools he hoped to use in order to realize his cultural program.

The *Tolstoi Gesammelte Werke* also provides an example of Diederichs' desire to follow this program regardless of market demands. For a variety of reasons, Tolstoy's popularity had

⁴⁷ For a thorough account of the trial and its ripples into German society, see Hanke, *Tolstoi*, 40-49.

⁴⁸ Werner, "Provincial Modernism," 4.

⁴⁹ Diederichs became a key participant in what scholars have come to call the "revolt of the provinces." Quoted in Werner, "Provincial Modernism," 1.

already peaked by the time of the trial.⁵¹ Diederichs noted with disappointment that the attention paid to the trial did not translate into book sales. The following year Diederichs hired a Tolstoy expert to drum up support by writing articles about Tolstoy's ideas and his "value for our contemporary way of thinking."⁵² By 1908, however, Diederichs had to accept that Tolstoy was simply no longer in style in Germany. Nonetheless, he pushed ahead with completion of the project.

Diederich's determination regarding Tolstoy must be seen in light of his overall vision for the publishing house. Diederichs once wrote that he hoped to bring together "all of the modern-religious currents that flowed outside of the Church in Germany."⁵³ Tolstoy represented just one more tributary in a current that included everything from fairy tales from the East to epics of the Nordic gods. Diederich's breadth of offerings spurred Max Weber to refer disdainfully to the Verlag—where his younger brother worked at the time—as a "warehouse for worldviews."⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Diederichs viewed the publications coming out of his Verlag as playing a key role in renewing German culture.

In a publishing brochure from 1908, Diederichs clearly lays out his plans for this renewal. Entitled "Paths to German Culture," this brochure claimed to set itself apart from the

⁵⁰ Klaus Jürgen Sembach coined this phrase to describe the artistic shift away from the traditional cultural centers in his study of *Jugendstil*. Klaus Jürgen Sembach, *Jugendstil: Die Utopie der Versöhnung* (Bonn, Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1990), 34-39.

⁵¹ According to Hanke, "new prophets were being questioned" among the German bourgeoisie by this time, including Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. For an analysis of the ebbing in Tolstoy's popularity, see Hanke, *Tolstoy*, 48-110.

⁵² Quoted in Hanke, *Tolstoy*, 142.

⁵³ Quoted in Stefan Breuer, "Kulturpessimist, Antimodernist, konservativer Revolutionär?" in *Romantik, Revolution und Reform: Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag im Epochenkontext 1900-1949*, ed. Justus H. Ulbricht, Meike Werner (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1999), 54.

"typical publishing-house catalogs." Diederichs designed the brochure itself as a "cultural program, with seven essays that tie together publications with modern intellectual trends and thus offer a sense of the intellectual history of the past decade." Diederichs hoped that the seven essays—"Living Religion," "Will to Action," "The Language of Form," "Cultural Development," "German Essence," "Ancient Thought," "Artistic Experiences"—would encourage his reader to become an "essential human in the sense of Goethe."⁵⁵

Yet the catalog went further than simply providing a retrospective on recent trends, it also offered a "practical guide to a new Idealism, which belongs in the hands of the leading sections of society and the coming generation." Diederichs unveiled three new publishing projects that he described as "emergency aids for modern intellectual trends." The forthcoming collected works of Kierkegaard would strengthen the individual standpoint of religious development, the series *Religious Voices of the Peoples* would expand this perspective beyond the purely personal, and finally, the collected works of Bergson would provide "the speculative foundation for the modern religious consciousness."⁵⁶ Kierkegaard's works thus played a foundational role for Diederichs as he envisioned, and sought to foster, the coming German revolution.

The uniqueness of Diederichs' exact vision for German renewal notwithstanding, its constitutive elements could be found throughout Wilhelmine society.⁵⁷ While the great

⁵⁴ Quoted in Hanke, *Tolstoy*, 42.

⁵⁵ Eugen Diederichs, "Wege zu deutscher Kultur," in *Eugen Diederichs: Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen*, ed. Ulf Diederichs (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1967), 34-36.

⁵⁶ Heidler, *Diederichs*, 158-159.

⁵⁷ For a solid introduction to, and examination of, the culture of Imperial Germany. See Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001). Against earlier scholarship that viewed Imperial Culture as a dank precursor to the

explosion of cultural pessimism and the concomitant desperation for cultural renewal is rightfully associated with the Weimar Republic, the fuses had already been lit before World War One. For example, Diederichs' fascination with the complexities of historical time stands as yet another ripple of the widely felt "crisis of historicism" that had erupted first in nineteenth century German historical and religious debates.⁵⁸ His eccentric cultivation of non-religious spirituality and poetic self-realization could be found in their purest form in the person of Stephan Georg—the "secret King of Germany"—and his acolytes who made up the "George circle."⁵⁹ Finally, the immense popularity of the German Youth movement, with its radical belief in the palingenetic potential inherent in a youth freed from the constraints of adult civilization, predated Diederichs' advocacy of the same.⁶⁰ All this to say: Diederichs'

exciting modernism of Weimar culture, Jefferies supports the arguments made by Weimar historians Detlev Peukert, Walter Laqueur, and Peter Gay that Weimar in fact only liberated what was already present in Imperial culture.

⁵⁸ See especially Thomas A. Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For its continued reverberations into Weimar see Charles Bambach, "Weimar Philosophy and the Crisis of Historical Thinking" and Peter E. Gordon, "Weimar Theology: From Historicism to Crisis" in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 133-150, 151-178. Gordon writes that "the paradox of relating eternity to time was one of the key preoccupations of Weimar theology." Gordon, "Weimar Theology," 151.

⁵⁹ For the only biography of George written by someone outside of his circle, see Robert E. Norton's *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Martin Ruehl pushes back against Norton and others whom he feels overstate George's role in preparing the way for Nazism, and also provides a useful overview of literature on George and his circle, in his "Aesthetic Fundamentalism in Weimar Poetry: Stefan George and his Circle, 1918-1933," in *Weimar Thought*, 240-272.

⁶⁰ As Andrew Donson wrote in his recent study of twentieth century German youth: "Germany also stood out in the world in having youth movements whose sine qua non was to challenge adult authority." Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 34. For the classic study of the German Youth Movements, see Walter Laquer, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York: Basic Books Publishing

ability to survive as a *Kulturverlag* reflects an elective affinity between his interests and contemporary currents already at work in German society.

Dostoevsky in Germany

One contemporary current that proves relevant here was the eclipsing of Tolstoy by his fellow Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky. Much like his contemporary Kierkegaard—Kierkegaard lived from 1813-1855, Dostoevsky from 1821-1881—Dostoevsky remained almost completely unknown in Germany during his lifetime. This even though his works were translated into German almost simultaneously with their Russian release. *Poor Folk* (1846), Dostoevsky's first major literary work, appeared in German translation the very same year as its Russian publication. *House of the Dead*, Dostoevsky's semi-autobiographical account of his time in a Siberian prison camp took a bit longer to cross the border into Germany, appearing in 1864, two years after its Russian release. Yet neither text received much attention in Germany. No German translator picked up *Crime and Punishment* until nearly two decades after its immensely celebrated Russian release in 1866. It was not until the year following Dostoevsky's death that *Raskolnikow*—as *Crime and Punishment* was titled in Germany—appeared in German translation.⁶¹ Perhaps thinking that the author's death would stimulate interest—his funeral in Russia had attracted close to 100,000 mourners—the translator Wilhelm Henckel published 1000 copies of the novel at his own expense. After selling only 100, Henckel elected to send the remaining texts to prominent German writers and critics in

Company, 1962). The Youth Movement also figures heavily in George Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1998).

hopes of finding a better reception there.⁶² The German public at the end of the 19th Century seemed not yet ready to make the move from the radical ethical and religious purity of Tolstoy to the dark and complicated depths of Dostoevsky.

One man who hoped to bring about just such a transition was Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (1876-1925).⁶³ Van den Bruck's legacy today is primarily shaped by his 1923 book, *Das Dritte Reich*, which represents the culmination of his decades-long advocacy of reactionary conservative movements in fin-de-siecle Germany. Yet van den Bruck made his name initially as a popularizer of Dostoevsky. From 1906 until 1922, van den Bruck oversaw the publication of Dostoevsky's *Sämtliche Werke*, a 22-volume series released by the Piper Verlag in Munich. Making explicit his intention regarding Tolstoy, van den Bruck wrote in a 1906 article:

Whereas Tolstoy's works contain their own completion, Dostoevsky establishes the evolution of Russian literature; and it is toward Dostoevsky—the true Russian, the sacrosanct, the epileptic man, in whose convulsions the slavish mystic weds itself to modern civilization for the first time—that all who share in the Russian hope and believe in the Russian voice now turn, in hopes that these forces will spur a deep renewal of the spiritual life of all humanity.⁶⁴

Van den Bruck left no doubts as to the shape of the renewal he hoped Dostoevsky's works would catalyze. In each afterword that van den Bruck penned, he folded Dostoevsky's ideas into his own radical, and radically modern, conservative worldview. Van den Bruck was

⁶¹ Fjodor Dostojewski, *Raskolnikow* trans. Wilhelm Henckel (Leipzig: Wilhelm Friedrich, 1882).

⁶² See Katya Tolstaya, *Kaleidoscope: F. M. Dostoevsky and the Early Dialectical Theology* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 184-186.

⁶³ Two recent books have taken van den Bruck as their subject, and I have used them extensively for the following account. Volker Weiss, *Moderne Antimoderne: Arthur Moeller van den Bruck und der Wandel des Konservatismus* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012); André Schlüter, *Moeller van den Bruck: Leben und Werk* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2010).

one of the founders of the so-called “Juni-Klub,” a powerful group of politicians, intellectuals, and activists brought together by their shared disdain for parliamentary democracy, liberalism, and communism. After contributing several articles to Diederichs’ journal *Der Tat*—which had itself become a central organ for young conservatives—van den Bruck helped establish a journal to spread the message of the Juni-Klub throughout Germany. Considering that *Gewissen* was not founded until 1921, Bruck’s primary organ for publishing for the previous fifteen years had been the *Sämtliche Werke*. And as one recent study concludes, the afterwords say “more about the editor [van den Bruck] than they do about the actual text in hand.”⁶⁵ Dostoevsky entered German culture as a fellow traveler of the young conservative movement.⁶⁶

By the time van den Bruck had completed the *Sämtliche Werke*, Dostoevsky’s popularity had overflowed any and all cultural boundaries. As scholars of Dostoevsky’s reception have shown, the First World War initiated the true beginning of the “Dostoevsky Boom.” Especially relevant here is the fact that the two most influential popularizers of Dostoevsky at the time, Martin Heidegger and Karl Barth, were also two of the most influential popularizers of Kierkegaard. In fact, they often mentioned the two side by side as primary sources for their respective projects. Heidegger mentions the publications of the Collected Works of both Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky as central to the “exciting years” of the

⁶⁴ Quoted in Weiss, *Moderne*, 168. Translation mine.

⁶⁵ Christoph Garstka, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck und die erste deutsche Gesamtausgabe der Werke Dostojewskijs im Piper-Verlag 1906-1919 (Berlin:Peter Lang, 1998), 75.

⁶⁶ For a recent extensive survey and analysis of the *Jungkonservative* network with van den Bruck at the center, see Claudia Kemper, *Das “Gewissen” 1919-1925: Kommunikation und Vernetzung der Jungkonservativen* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2011).

early 1910s as he formed his own unique phenomenological worldview.⁶⁷ Likewise, Karl Barth repeatedly lists Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky as the key figures—alongside Nietzsche and Franz Overbeck—who shaped his groundbreaking theological vision in *Epistle to the Romans*. In a survey of “nearly all books, all magazine articles, and even all major newspaper articles written on Dostoevski” from 1880-1920, Leo Löwenthal marvels at the extent of Dostoevsky’s reach. “Political organs ranging from the conservative through the National-Liberal to the political left,” explains Löwenthal, “literary periodicals in the strict sense, even scholarly journals devoted to philosophy, law, and medicine have published discussions of Dostoevski.”⁶⁸ By the 1920s, Dostoevsky had become nigh inescapable in German culture.

Kierkegaard in the Diederichs Verlag

As would be the case for many self-proclaimed outsiders to the Kaiser Reich, the experience of World War One would soon till and turn German society, providing even more fertile soil for Diederich’s seeds of German renewal. His frustration with traditional approaches to time, for example, found full expression in the Weimar obsession with transcending the strictures of historical time.⁶⁹ The Darmstadt School of Wisdom, founded in

⁶⁷ In this context he also mentions the new edition of Nietzsche’s *Will to Power*, Rilke and Trakl’s poetry and Dilthey’s collected works. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe I: Frühe Schriften*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), 56.

⁶⁸ Leo Löwenthal, “Die Auffassung Dostojewskis im Vorkriegsdeutschland,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 3 (1934): 343.

⁶⁹ Peter Gordon writes “the paradox of relating eternity to time was one of the key preoccupations of Weimar theology.” Gordon, “Weimar Theology,” 151. For an extended study of this preoccupation with time in German theology, see Alf Christophersen, *Kairos: Protestantische Zeitdeutungskämpfe in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

1920 to encourage the dissemination of non-western wisdom, institutionalized Diederichs' paligenetic faith in eastern religions and cultures.⁷⁰ The Weimar era turn to the mystical fringes of western religions, seen in the works of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and even Karl Barth, also mirrored Diederichs' championing of the same.⁷¹ Even the desire to emulate Goethe—especially against Kant—became a marker of what Peter Gordon describes as the “philosophical expressionism” of the Weimar era.⁷² His program—in so far as his eclectic ideas could be called a program—presaged much of what would come to define Weimar Culture.

While the publication of the collected works of Kierkegaard did not commence until 1909, Diederichs had wanted to include Kierkegaard as part of his publishing program since at least the beginning of the century. In a 1901 letter to Arthur Bonus—an important author of religious texts for the Verlag—Diederichs mentioned his interest in Kierkegaard. Someone had recently pitched a translation of Kierkegaard's *Either/or* to the Verlag and Diederichs

Charles Bambach discusses the analogous phenomenon in Weimar philosophy at the time in his, “Weimar Philosophy and the Crisis of Historical Thinking,” in *Weimar Thought*, 133-150.

⁷⁰ The founder of the school, Count Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946), and its most prominent lecturer, Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930), had both had their works published with the Diederichs Verlag. For a recent article regarding the *Schule der Weisheit*, see Suzanne Marchand, “Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe” in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁷¹ A 1913 lexicon article for “Neuer Mystik,” identified the Diederichs Verlag as the key producer of mystic texts in Germany: “Die Ausgrabung mystischer Schriften aller Zeiten und Völker ließ sich in Deutschland besonders der Diederichssche Verlag angelegen sein.” Walther Hoffmann, “Neue Mystik,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Michael Schiele and Leopold Zscharnack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913), 609. Consider also Diederichs' claim that Meister Eckhart, the great 13th century German mystic was “der größten religiösen Schriftsteller und Redner der Deutschen,” whose religious reformation should be more valued than that of Luther. Quoted in Heidler, *Diederichs*, 275.

⁷² According to Gordon, Goethe helped Rosenzweig and others express a longing for religious eternity as a “thirst for life, not transcendence.” Peter Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 26.

sought Bonus' opinion on the matter. "I have the instinctive feeling," explained Diederichs, "which has yet to be disproven by closer understanding, that Kierkegaard simply must be extracted from the theological circles and collections of sermons, and that he belongs among the coming men, whom the age is maturing."⁷³

In the years immediately following this letter, however, it looked like Kierkegaard's German publishing home would not be with Diederichs in Jena. In 1903, the Insel-Verlag in Leipzig published Kierkegaard's *The Diary of a Seducer*. Insel was the first of many German publishers to extract *The Diary* from its proper context and shamelessly market it as something it was not.⁷⁴ In context, "The Diary" is but one section of Kierkegaard's magisterial *Either/Or* in which Johannes the Seducer presents the purely aesthetic pursuit of life as he delves deep into the psychology of seduction. It is not clear if Johannes ever actually consummates his seduction and there is certainly nothing descriptive along these lines in the text itself. Nonetheless, Insel adorned the front cover of its version with a completely nude young woman, her hands raised up in front of her as if trying in vain to resist the powers of seduction. Insel clearly hoped that customers would judge the book by its titillating cover.

The following year, Hermann Gottsched, a Kierkegaard scholar who had overseen the Danish publication of Kierkegaard's journals, approached Diederichs with the idea of publishing selections from Kierkegaard's journals. Diederichs seized this opportunity. In his response to Gottsched in October of 1904, Diederichs explained how excited he felt upon

⁷³ The exact phrase used by Diederichs was "die kommenden Männer, denen die Zeit jetzt entgegenreift." Strauss and Torney-Diederichs, *Leben und Werk*, 59.

⁷⁴ For a thorough account of the fascinating international reception of Kierkegaard's "Diary of a Seducer," see Bradley's Dewey, "Søren Kierkegaard's Diary of the Seducer: A History of its Use and Abuse in International Print," in *Fund og Forskning*, Bind 20 (1973), Accessed March 21, 2014. <https://tidsskrift.dk/index.php/fundogforskning/article/view/1733/2910>

reading the manuscript. "Every single sentence from Kierkegaard," exclaimed Diederichs, "yes, every single word is valuable."⁷⁵ Diederichs believed that the collection would perfectly complement his *Erzieher zum Deutsche Bildung*, a series aimed at making "the deepest and richest thoughts of our most noble intellects" accessible to the average German. Diederichs envisioned the condensed volumes of *Educators* as a potent injection of culture, an "emergency aid," for modern Germans who felt themselves short on time and/or money.⁷⁶ But his intention was always to lead them to the original source, with as little mediation as possible.

The important source for Diederichs was always the individual thinker, not some disembodied collection of thoughts. Thus, his one critique of Gottsched's manuscript: Kierkegaard's personality did not come through enough. Diederichs suggested adding an introduction in order to provide a "more solid sense of [Kierkegaard's] character" for the reader. Perhaps Gottsched could organize the introduction in subsections—"Kierkegaard's views on art, on dogmatic religion, on nature, on philosophy, on women, etc"—that would help locate Kierkegaard, like coordinating satellites used to pinpoint location. "In my publishing house," explained Diederichs, "I always strive, first and foremost, to give 'personalities' space to have an effect."⁷⁷

In his focus on the power of personality, Diederichs once again reveals himself as a child of the times. Diederich's focus on accessing Kierkegaard's character via his views on a series of topics found systematic expression in the work of Eduard Spranger (1882-1963). A

⁷⁵ Eugen Diederichs to Hermann Gottsched, October 28, 1904 in Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 118-119.

⁷⁶ Eugen Diederichs to Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, January 16, 1905 in Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 123-124.

professor of philosophy in Berlin, Spranger presented his typology of character traits in his 1914 text *Lebensformen* (“Forms of Life”).⁷⁸ In Hamburg, psychology professor William Stern (1871-1938) developed his “personalism” doctrine to argue for a view of the individual as a psychological whole in a manner congruent with liberal individualism.⁷⁹ Concerns for social individuality and fragmentation define much of the work of pioneering German sociologist George Simmel (1858-1918). Finally, even Carl Schmitt—soon to be the greatest proponent of authoritarian jurisprudence—was wrestling at the time with how to carve out space for the individual in the modern state.⁸⁰

Gottsched could claim that he was uniquely well positioned to introduce Kierkegaard's true personality to the German-speaking world. As a theology student at Tübingen, he had first encountered Kierkegaard under the influence of J.T. Beck (1804-1878), one of the earliest Kierkegaard enthusiasts in Germany.⁸¹ Gottsched became so engrossed in Kierkegaard's writings that he, like so many of his fellow Germans in the decades to come,

⁷⁷ Eugen Diederichs to Hermann Gottsched, October 28, 1904 in Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 119. Diederichs was not unique in the emphasis he placed on the personality of his many authors. There

⁷⁸ These were: The Theoretical, The Economic, The Aesthetic, The Social, The Political, The Religious. Eduard Spranger, *Lebensformen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1914).

⁷⁹ Stern also developed the concept of the Intelligence Quotient, or I.Q.

⁸⁰ See his *Der Wert des Staates und die Bedeutung des Einzelnen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1914). Michael Dylan Rogers argues for the role of World War One in dramatically transforming Carl Schmitt's political views. By focusing on Schmitt's wartime diaries, Rogers presents Schmitt as a thinker genuinely torn between a deeply felt allegiance to individualism and the implications of his own juridical conclusions. The article offers a fascinating glimpse into the development of Schmitt's thinking and the role of his wartime (domestic) experience in pushing him to the authoritarian conclusions with which he is typically associated. Michael Dylan Rogers “The Development of Carl Schmitt's Political Thought During the First World War” *Modern Intellectual History*, April 2015, 1-27.

decided to learn Danish. In the process of doing so he developed a serendipitous friendship with Hans Christian Barfod. For over a decade, Barfod had been combing through Kierkegaard's voluminous diaries and trying, at the behest of Kierkegaard's brother, to prepare them for publication. In 1879 Barfod invited Gottsched to Copenhagen to assist in the mammoth project. Gottsched spent the following two years as the chief editor of the remaining volumes of Kierkegaard's journals.⁸²

Twenty-five years later, as Gottsched noted, there remained only two texts that offered German translations of these journals: Albert Bärthold's *Sören Kierkegaard's Persönlichkeit in ihrer Verwirklichung der Ideale* (1886)⁸³ ("Soren Kierkegaard's Personality in its development of the Ideal") and F. Venator's *Aus den Tiefen der Reflexion: etwas für den Einzelnen aus Sören Kierkegaard's Tagebüchern, 1833-1855* (1901)⁸⁴ ("Out of the Depths of Reflection: Something for the Individual from Kierkegaard's Journals"). Yet both of these offered only snippets of Kierkegaard's journals, whereas Gottsched intended to offer an "overview of the entire journals" in his text. Perhaps as way of emphasizing its official nature, Gottsched followed Kierkegaard's 1849 suggestion regarding the future publication of his journals: "If someone

⁸¹ See Introduction for discussion of Beck and his role in the early reception of Kierkegaard in Germany.

⁸² For an account of Gottsched's path to his role as editor of Kierkegaard's journals see Habib Malik, *Receiving Sören Kierkegaard: The Early Impact and Transmission of His Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 271-272. Or for Gottsched's own retelling, see his foreword to the fifth volume of Kierkegaard's *Efterladte Papirer*, comp. and ed. H. Gottsched (Copenhagen, 1880), pp. viii-ix.

⁸³ Albert Bärthold, *Sören Kierkegaard's Persönlichkeit in ihrer Verwirklichung der Ideale* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1886). Bärthold and Gottsched were friends from their days as students at Tübingen. Bärthold had actually introduced Gottsched and Barfod, which led to Gottsched's role as editor of Kierkegaard's journals. Malik, *Receiving Kierkegaard*, 270-273.

⁸⁴ F. Venator, *Aus den Tiefen der Reflexion: etwas für den Einzelnen aus Sören Kierkegaard's Tagebüchern, 1833-1855* (F. Lehmann: Zweibrücken, 1901).

wants to publish my journals after my death, it could be done under the title: The Book of the Judge."⁸⁵

When *Søren Kierkegaard: Buch des Richters, Seine Tagbücher 1833-1855 in Auswahl* ("Søren Kierkegaard: Book of the Judge, Journals 1833-1855") hit the stands in 1905, it contained the introduction Diederichs had requested. Gottsched begins by explaining his intention for the text. First and foremost, Gottsched simply wants "to provide access to Kierkegaard's journals" both to those already familiar with his writings and those for whom "this wonderful man" remained completely unknown.⁸⁶ Gottsched establishes the integrity of this collection in a number of ways. First of all, Gottsched emphasizes his role in publishing the complete Danish edition of the journals as a way of displaying his competence. He also argues for the veracity of the actual content. Gottsched hoped that his long history of working with the Danish editions of Kierkegaard's works, as well as translating many of them into German, would inspire confidence in his translation skills. He assures the reader that, to the extent that it was possible, he had captured "all the nuances of thought contained in the ever-so expressive Danish language." Moreover, besides two short accounts from Kierkegaard's contemporaries, this text contains "only the words of Kierkegaard himself." What the reader had before them, then, was as close as possible to "unmediated access" to the person of Søren Kierkegaard.⁸⁷

Yet the introduction itself mediated the image of Kierkegaard. Gottsched's quick biographical sketch presented Kierkegaard as the misunderstood tragic hero. "His entire life," explains Gottsched, "belonged to his father, who made him unhappy, and to his fiancée, whom

⁸⁵ Quoted in Venator, *Reflexion*, 365. Taken from Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers 6390 (XI A 239)

⁸⁶ Hermann Gottsched, *Buch des Richters: Seine Tagebücher, 1833-1855* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1905), 1.

he made, or believed to have made, unhappy." Not only his life, but also his authorship could be explained by these two poles: he devoted his religious writings to his father and his aesthetic writings to Regine. "Where has such chivalry and melancholic devotion," asked Gottsched, "ever been equaled?"⁸⁸

But it is only via Kierkegaard's diaries that we gain this privileged insight into his intentions, motivations, and struggles. Gottsched built on the voyeuristic thrill of this access by explaining how, in his own time, Kierkegaard created a public persona to blend in with "jolly Copenhagen." In this way the "sensitive and depressive man" hid his true self from the public, revealing it only in his diary.⁸⁹ So what exactly does Gottsched believe Kierkegaard revealed in these pages?

Gottsched makes two primary claims about Kierkegaard. First of all, he wants to explain Kierkegaard's "war against 'das bestehende ('the powers that be'),' " referring primarily to his attack on the Danish state church during the final years of his life.⁹⁰ In the years leading up to the publication of *The Moment*—his self-published periodical lambasting the church—Kierkegaard grew increasingly troubled by what he saw as a radical gulf between the official Christianity of his day and New Testament Christianity. According to Gottsched, Kierkegaard sought just one consolation from the pastors and theologians: he wanted them to admit that "we [Christians] today have it much easier than the Christians living during Jesus' time, as well as the apostles, and that if we hope to become as holy as

⁸⁷ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 2.

⁸⁸ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 3.

⁸⁹ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 4.

⁹⁰ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 1.

them we must doubly throw ourselves on God's grace."⁹¹ Yet when this was not forthcoming, Kierkegaard lashed out "with a primordial rage" against all the powers that be. And "just like Luther at Worms," Kierkegaard refused to recant any of his accusations.⁹²

But Gottsched also wanted his reader to understand that underlying all of Kierkegaard's vitriolic and destructive energy was a devotion to divine truth. "He had," argued Gottsched, "for some time and until the end of his life only one passion: the love of divine truth." Gottsched emphasizes this second claim. "In vain" proclaimed Gottsched, "do freethinkers attempt to claim Kierkegaard as one of their own."⁹³ The analogue to his attack on Christendom should be sought in Luther and not in Nietzsche.⁹⁴ Kierkegaard was a man fully devoted to God and God's truth who was tortured by how far the Church had drifted from both.

The reception of *Buch des Richters* shows something of the growing interest in Kierkegaard among German speakers at the time, especially from the intellectual elite. The prominent Viennese authors Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931) and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) both possessed copies in their personal libraries. Hoffmannsthal repeatedly quoted from *Buch des Richters* in his own journals between 1904 and 1921.⁹⁵ Many years later the book

⁹¹ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 5.

⁹² Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 6.

⁹³ Gottsched, *Buch des Richters*, 6.

⁹⁴ It was quickly becoming vogue at the time to compare Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. See previous chapter for an example of authors at *Der Brenner* engaging in this type of comparison. For an even more explicit contemporary comparison, see Karl Löwith, *Kierkegaard und Nietzsche: oder philosophische und theologische Überwindung des Nihilismus* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1933).

⁹⁵ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Aufzeichnungen*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14, ed. Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt, 1959).

found its way into Kafka's hands in Prague. In a diary entry from August 21, 1913, Kafka records, "Today I received Kierkegaard's *Buch des Richters*. As I suspected, his case is very similar to mine despite essential differences. At least he is on the same side of the world as myself. He corroborates me like a friend."⁹⁶ At the time, Kafka was torturing himself with doubts about his pending engagement. Like Kierkegaard, he soon became engaged and, also like Kierkegaard, soon broke it off to live the rest of his short life as a bachelor.⁹⁷ Four decades later, Karl Jaspers would write to Diederichs' son, "for more than 40 years, the small selection of Kierkegaard's journals, selected by Gottsched and published by your father as *Buch des Richters*, has had an immense impact."⁹⁸

Besides the private receptions mentioned above, *Buch des Richters* also received favorable reviews in the press. More importantly, the reviews echoed Diederichs' conviction that the time was ripe for Kierkegaard in Germany. One reviewer heralds Kierkegaard as an "appearance out of the Nordic heavens who is as attractive psychologically as he is aesthetically." He agrees that Kierkegaard had "remained unknown, outside of theological circles, for an inexplicably long time." In a 1906 essay in the *Neuen Rundschau*, the Austrian essayist and philosopher Rudolf Kassner describes Kierkegaard as "the most noble, unparalleled, unity of a life and a thought," that he had ever encountered. "He is the greatest

⁹⁶ Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher: 1910-1923*, ed. Max Brod (New York: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1948), 318.

⁹⁷ For a brief discussion of Kierkegaard's influence on Kafka see, Malik, *Kierkegaard*, 365-377.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Heidler, *Diederichs*, 282.

artist among philosophers,” continues Kassner, and therefore “one of the most modern spirits.”⁹⁹

In order to solidify—and control—Kierkegaard’s place among the “modern spirits,” Diederichs now moved forward with his plans to publish the first German-language collected works of Kierkegaard. He also initiated a strong marketing campaign in German bookstores announcing the series. The twelve volumes of *Sören Kierkegaards Gesammelte Werke* (“The Collected Works of Soren Kierkegaard”) would be available for purchase both individually and, at a discounted rate, as a subscription to the entire series. The audience for such a series, explains Diederichs, ranged from liberal and orthodox theologians to philosophers and aesthetes. “Kierkegaard is a classic of European culture,” exclaims Diederichs, “and one of the greats of world literature.” Finally, as a justification for purchasing Kierkegaard’s collected works, Diederichs concludes: “A literary individuality of such rare coherence demands to be captured as a totality. He who does not know [Kierkegaard] as a unified whole, can not know him at all.”¹⁰⁰

Rare coherence notwithstanding, Diederichs felt that the reader would need help capturing the “totality” of Kierkegaard. In the promotional material sent out to booksellers, Diederichs also announced the publication of a new biography that would serve as “an introduction” to the collected works. *Sören Kierkegaard: Sein Leben und seine Werke* (“Soren Kierkegaard: His Life and his Work”), written by the Danish philosopher-theologian O.P. Monrad, was the first full-length biography of Kierkegaard published in German since the translation of Georg Brandes’ text exactly three decades before (1879). Monrad’s goal was

⁹⁹ Rudolf Kassner, “Sören Kierkegaard–Aphorismen,” in *Die Neue Rundschau* 17, (Berlin, 1906), 518-521.

¹⁰⁰ Eugen Diederichs Verlag, Subskriptionsprojekt und Buchhandelsrundbrief, 10.1.1910.

simply to tell the story of Kierkegaard's life, offering a chronological narrative that avoided critical analysis. As he states succinctly in the conclusion: "We have delineated as objectively as possible the man and the author Kierkegaard. Criticism was not our task."¹⁰¹

Just as Gottsched had done with *Buch des Richters*, Monrad emphasizes the objective, unmediated nature of his text. "Here is Kierkegaard..," states Monrad on the penultimate page of the biography, "only so is he understood with total objectivity."¹⁰² Yet, like Gottsched, Monrad aimed to shape certain elements of how the reader encountered Kierkegaard. For Monrad, these elements consisted primarily of the relationship between Denmark and Germany—that is, how a German audience should think about a Danish author—Kierkegaard's "passion" as a defining force in his works, and finally, the deep interweaving of Kierkegaard's life and his writings.

Monrad's interest in culturally connecting Denmark and Germany is clear from the first page. In the opening sentence of his foreword, Monrad explains that he is excited to write this text for a German audience since "the thought of a mutual intellectual harmonization of the various German peoples is incredibly worthwhile to me."¹⁰³ Throughout Monrad's text one feels a tension between an emphasis on Kierkegaard's "specifically northern disposition"—¹⁰⁴which, in order to define, Monrad offers a brief cultural history of Denmark—and viewing

¹⁰¹ O.P. Monrad, *Sören Kierkegaard: Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Eugen Diederichs Verlag: Jena, 1909), 133.

¹⁰² Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 149.

¹⁰³ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 3.

all of Scandinavia as a “northern branch of Germanness.”¹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard is foreign enough to be tantalizing and yet culturally related enough to be understandable.

So how does Kierkegaard embody this “specifically northern disposition?” First, Monrad points to his passion, which he describes as “the deepest, truly northern, aspect of Kierkegaard’s thought.”¹⁰⁶ This passion can be seen in his melancholy, which determined so much of his life. It also plays a role in Kierkegaard’s “corporeality,” a topic about which Monrad thought not enough had been said, and by which he meant quite simply that Kierkegaard’s passions were not limited to the intellectual sphere.¹⁰⁷ Second, Monrad identifies Kierkegaard’s passion—and not his piety, as Brandes had argued—as the driving force in his final attack on the Danish state church.

Other components of this northern disposition include a prioritizing of ethics over wisdom, and an intense focus on personality. Monrad offers a poem from Havanal, one of the “greatest lyrical geniuses of Denmark,” as proof that Danes tend to place wisdom in the service of ethics. Wisdom, for them, is a means, not an end. Monrad sees Kierkegaard’s potent ethical demands—for instance, his plea with the state church for simple honesty (*Redelighed*)—as an instantiation of this tendency. Yet, at the very center point of the northern spirit, Monrad finds an “acute draw toward the principle of personality.”¹⁰⁸ Although Monrad describes Kierkegaard as the apogee of Danish “*Persönlichkeitswächter*” (guardians of personality), he also emphasizes the fact that Kierkegaard was not *sui generis* in this: most of

¹⁰⁵ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ As one example, Monrad offered a story of Kierkegaard catching a glimpse of a maidservant at a hotel and becoming so disturbed by his own physical reaction that he immediately left and returned home. Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 40.

what he had to say regarding personality could be found in his Scandinavian predecessors.¹⁰⁹ Nothing about Kierkegaard escaped Monrad's *reductio ad Scandinavian*.

With these two books, Kierkegaard officially became part of Diederichs' publishing program. Monrad and Gottsched both made sure to present Kierkegaard appropriately. Though in slightly different ways, both books satisfied Diederichs' insistence that "personalities' [be given] space to have an effect."¹¹⁰ Gottsched accomplishes this by focusing on the riddle of Kierkegaard's own enigmatic personality, opening the door for a slew of similar attempts in the years to come.¹¹¹ Monrad, on the other hand, emphasizes Kierkegaard's philosophical focus on personality. He argues that what Socrates had begun in offering "the first seed of the personal," Kierkegaard had brought to fruition.¹¹²

In a 1904 article explaining the goal of his Verlag, Diederichs argues that the "biggest obstacle for the development of the personality" in contemporary Germany was "the torpidity of the three powers: Church, the sciences, and school."¹¹³ But he also makes clear that he didn't only want to offer "fighting books" against these powers, but wanted also to provide books "that at the same time helped to build up and offer sustenance to the deep inner strength" present in his reader. By focusing on Kierkegaard's fight against institutional

¹⁰⁸ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 10.

¹¹⁰ Eugen Diederichs to Hermann Gottsched, October 28, 1904 in Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 119.

¹¹¹ The most explicit of such attempts was *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards* ("The Mystery of Kierkegaard") from 1929 in which the Catholic author Erich Przywara argues that the mystery of Kierkegaard is that ultimately he leads back to the Catholic Church. Erich Przywara, *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards* (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1929).

¹¹² Monrad, *Kierkegaard*, 49.

¹¹³ Diederichs, "Die Ziele des Verlages," in *Selbstzeugnisse*, 33-34.

authorities, while also presenting him as the greatest champion of the individual since Socrates, these two books offered Kierkegaard as the embodiment of Diederichs' project of German renewal. With the publication of *Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, Diederichs would make sure that Germans had unparalleled access to his Danish prophet.

Diederichs obviously respected Gottsched's Kierkegaard expertise—as well as the success of *Buch des Richters*—and thus trusted him as chief editor of this new series. Even so, there was a clear disconnect between Gottsched's more traditional Christian faith and Diederichs' desire to foster religious experience outside of the church. In a letter to a recently defrocked pastor, whom Diederichs was recruiting for his firm, Diederichs expressed his desire that "within the next decade my publishing house would succeed in becoming the leader of the religious fight outside of the church." Diederichs placed such importance on this that he later wrote, again to the same pastor, that he considered himself "not only as a publisher, but in many ways rather as an organizer of the extra-ecclesial religious movement."¹¹⁴ Thus while Gottsched attempted to rescue Kierkegaard from "freethinkers," Diederichs was trying to recruit them to his Verlag.

It thus made sense that Diederichs asked Christoph Schrepf to join the Kierkegaard project. Like Gottsched, Schrepf had discovered Kierkegaard as a student of J.T. Beck's at Tübingen. Also like Gottsched, Schrepf was so drawn to Kierkegaard that he learned Danish in order to gain more thorough knowledge of the Danish sage and began translating his works into German. But here the similarities end. For while Gottsched found in Kierkegaard a catalyst toward a purified Christian faith, Schrepf came to see him as a liberator from all forms of official Christianity. As a Lutheran pastor in Germany, Schrepf

¹¹⁴ Diederichs to Carl Jatho, July 14 1911, in *Selbstzeugnisse*, 201.

soon ran afoul of these same Christian authorities. In 1891, one year after producing his first Kierkegaard translation, Schrempf ignited a controversy by refusing to recite the Apostle's Creed during a baptismal service.¹¹⁵ The resulting fallout, which became known as "The Schrempf Affair," resulted in Schrempf's dismissal from his post.¹¹⁶

Schrempf then worked as an instructor in German, mathematics, and literature at Stuttgart's *Höhere Handelsschule*, a private vocational college, from 1895-1906. After completing his doctorate in philosophy in 1906, Schrempf took a position as an unsalaried lecturer (*Privatdozent*) at Stuttgart's *Technische Hochschule* (technical college), where he remained until 1921. During this period Schrempf also gave numerous public lectures on a wide variety of topics. In fact, for over two decades (1892-1914), Schrempf gave a speech in Stuttgart every Sunday after the church services. And in 1910, Schrempf gave one of the keynote speeches at the fifth World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress.¹¹⁷

Schrempf also made a name for himself as a Kierkegaard translator.¹¹⁸ His very first publication had been *Søren Kierkegaard sein neuester Beurteiler in der theologische Literaturzeitung*, (*Herr Wetzel in Dornreichenbach: Ein Pamphlet* ["Søren Kierkegaard and his most recent Judge in

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of the Schrempf Affair and an extensive bibliography of relevant literature, see Schreiber, *Schrempf*, 283-288.

¹¹⁶ The Schrempf Affair was the best-known example of a larger controversy regarding the apostle's creed that had been fermenting ever since the 1817 union of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in Germany. The Schrempf Affair gained even greater publicity when Adolf von Harnack, the paragon of German state Christianity, published his own views on the situation under the title, "On the Matter of the Apostle's Creed." Harnack, "Im Sachen des Apostolikums," in *Die Christliche Welt*, vol. 6, 1892, columns 768-770.

¹¹⁷ Christoph Schrempf, "Was unsereiner will, ein Bekenntnis, kein Programm" in Schrempf, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 332-346.

¹¹⁸ Schrempf also became the official court interpreter for Danish. Schreiber, *Schrempf*, 279.

the Theological Literature Journal, (Herr Wetzel in Dornreichenbach: A Pamphlet”)].¹¹⁹ This initial study already contains most of the topics that would fascinate Schrempf for the next several decades: Kierkegaard's view on the Bible, his individualist ethics, and his attacks on official Christianity. Schrempf followed this text three years later with *Zur Psychologie der Sünde, der Bekehrung und des Glaubens* [“On the Psychology of Sin, of Conversion and of Faith”].¹²⁰ This work combined Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Philosophical Fragments*, offering both for the first time in German translation. Considering his reputation as both a Kierkegaard scholar and freethinker, Schrempf fit naturally into Diederichs' project.

The Collected Works

In 1908, Diederichs, Schrempf, and Gottsched explained their goal for the project in their article "Anlagenplan einer Ausgabe von Sören Kierkegaards gesammelten Werken" [“Preface to a planned German Edition of Kierkegaard's Collected Works”].¹²¹ The editors envisioned twelve volumes, to be completed within three to four years. These twelve volumes were divided into three sections according to what they described as Kierkegaard's own plan. The first section offered Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings, which "artistically present the development of man into Christianity via the exhortations and reflections of fictional personalities." This section consisted of four texts: *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Studies along*

¹¹⁹ Christoph Schrempf, *Sören Kierkegaard und sein neuester Beurteiler in der theologische Literaturzeitung, (Herr Wetzel in Dornreichenbach: Ein Pamphlet)* (Leipzig: Fr. Richter, 1887).

¹²⁰ Sören Kierkegaard, *Zur Psychologie der Sünde, der Bekehrung und des Glaubens* ed. and trans. Christoph Schrempf (Leipzig: Fr. Richter, 1890).

Life's Path, and *The Concept of Anxiety*. The second section turned to Kierkegaard's "half-pseudonymous writings" —with Kierkegaard attaching his name as editor, but using either Johannes Climacus or Anticlimacus as the author—in which Kierkegaard "dialectically discusses the problem of Christendom and Christianity..." The four texts in this section were: *Philosophical Fragments, or a little Bit of Philosophy, Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments, Sickness unto Death, a Christian-Psychological Construction for Upbuilding and Awakening, and Practice in Christianity*. The final section, labeled "Kierkegaard's Open Fight Against Official Christianity" offered texts in which Kierkegaard "spoke judgment against the state church with devastating fierceness."¹²² This final section included six texts in three volumes: Volume 10: *The Point of View for my Work as an Author, a Direct Communication, Report on History, Two Small Ethical-Religious Discourses from H.H., On my Work as an Author*, Volume 11: *For the Self-Examination of the Present Age*, and "*Judge for Yourself, for Self-Examination, Second Episode*, and Volume 12: *The Moment*.

Even though many of his works had found their way into the German language, Kierkegaard had not yet "had the fortune of having the influence which he had intended."¹²³ The editors ascribed this lack to the spotty availability of his texts in German, the result of which was that "their place and meaning within the totality of his authorship was not properly understood."¹²⁴ Instead, readers only knew Kierkegaard "according to one of the various masks which he himself put on—as a classic meditations author, a sharp-witted psychologist

¹²¹ Christoph Schrempf, "Anlagenplan einer Ausgabe von Sören Kierkegaards gesammelten Werken," in Sören Kierkegaard, *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, Vol.12, Der Augenblick*, ed. and trans. Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909), 177-180.

¹²² Schrempf, "Anlageplan," 177.

¹²³ Schrempf, "Anlageplan," 180.

and dialectician, an adamant enemy of Christianity, a witty, titillating erotic."¹²⁵ With the *Collected Works*, German readers would finally have access to the Kierkegaard in his entirety. "For whoever does not know him in his entirety," concluded the article, "does not know him at all."¹²⁶ Beginning in 1909, with the publication of the first volume of *Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, the Eugen Diederichs Verlag undertook the task of introducing Kierkegaard, in his entirety, to Germany.

Three years before his 25th anniversary celebration, Diederichs published the final volume of the *Gesammelte Werke*. This chapter has laid the groundwork for understanding Diederichs' attraction to such an undertaking. Kierkegaard fit into Diederichs' pantheon of voices crying out in the wilderness against the evils of modern society. He saw Kierkegaard as one of the greatest anti-institutional crusaders, especially appreciating his vitriol for official Christendom. "I have the direct feeling," wrote Diederichs in 1901, "that I must use my publishing house to foster a deeper, non-dogmatic religion, and that the necessary men for such a task will arise in the near future."¹²⁷ The *Collected Works*, which serve as the subject of the following chapter, was Diederichs' way of ensuring that Kierkegaard be counted among these necessary men.

¹²⁴ Schrempf, "Anlageplan," 180.

¹²⁵ Schrempf, "Anlageplan," 180.

¹²⁶ Schrempf, "Anlageplan," 180.

¹²⁷ Diederichs-Torney, *Leben und Werk*, 59.

Chapter Three

“Whoever does not know him in his entirety, does not know him at all” Søren Kierkegaard’s Collected Works

In the spring of 1909 the first volume of *Søren Kierkegaard: Gesammelte Werke* [“Søren Kierkegaard: Collected Works”] hit the shelves of German bookstores. It contained new translations of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, the latter for the first time in German. The afterword to this volume presented Kierkegaard as both a literary and philosophical genius on par with Plato, as well as a prophetic force calling his readers back to a New Testament faith. Thirteen years (and eleven volumes) later, the series concluded with a recycled translation of Kierkegaard's *For Self-Examination: Recommended to the Present Age*. Its afterword dismissed Kierkegaard as lacking in discernment due to his obsession with the Bible. In fact, the stated purpose of this final afterword was to salvage something useful from Kierkegaard for those who don't share his outdated faith in the Bible. In the end, the editor thanks Kierkegaard for helping him realize that he is no longer a Christian.

This chapter analyzes the afterwords to each volume of the *Gesammelte Werke*, revealing a spectrum of views. The dissonance between the two volumes mentioned above results primarily from the fact that they were written by two different men: Hermann Gottsched in the first case and Christoph Schrempf in the second. We must consider each their approaches to Kierkegaard and to his works. What did they hope to accomplish with their contributions? In what ways did their approaches to Kierkegaard overlap and in what ways were they incompatible? Do we see their perspectives evolving over time? An attempt to answer these questions will necessarily take us beyond the views of these two men. Their interpretive battle, played out in the pages of the afterwords, offers a microcosm of the tensions present in Kierkegaard's reception at the time. The core elements of their disagreements echo the dispute between Dallago and Haecker in Chapter One: the question of Christianity's place in Kierkegaard's philosophy; how to interpret his pseudonyms; and finally, how to apply Kierkegaard's texts to contemporary society. Equally important for understanding Kierkegaard's reception, however, are the issues on which Gottsched and Schrempf agree. Whether presenting Kierkegaard as a reformer à la Martin Luther (as does Gottsched) or a more radical critic in the Nietzschean vein (as does Schrempf), both men agreed that Kierkegaard offered a powerful critique of contemporary religious institutions. The significance of this image will become even more clear in the following two chapters, as we turn to the final years of the Weimar Republic.

The *Gesammelte Werke* quickly became the standard for Kierkegaard texts in Weimar Germany, and even beyond.¹ It was the primary source on Kierkegaard for such key figures

¹ As Gerhard Schreiber notes, "many translations of Kierkegaard's works into other languages were based on Schrempf's German text, rather than the original languages." Gerhard Schreiber, "Christoph Schrempf: The 'Swabian Socrates' as Translator of Kierkegaard," in

of postwar Germany as Karl Barth² (1886-1968), Hermann Hesse³ (1877-1962), Emil Brunner⁴ (1889-1966), Rudolf Bultmann⁵ (1884-1976), Paul Tillich⁶ (1886-1965), Martin Heidegger⁷ (1889-1976), Karl Jaspers⁸ (1883-1969), and Theodor Adorno⁹ (1903-1969). And,

Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Bd. 10: Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology, Tome 1, Germany Protestant Theology ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 296.

² See Wolfdietrich von Kloeden, "Das Kierkegaard-Bild Karl Barths in seinen Briefen der 'Zwanziger Jahre.' Streiflichter aus der Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe," *Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 12, 1982, 93-102; Alastair McKinnon, "Barths Verhältnis zu Kierkegaard," *Evangelische Theologie*, vol. 30, 1970, 57-69; Heiko Schulz, "Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Brocken oder die Brocken in der deutschen Rezeption. Umriss einer vorläufigen Bestandaufnahme," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2004, 375-451.

³ Hesse wrote the following words for Schrempf's seventieth birthday: "The great German edition of Kierkegaard's works is his handiwork, as is his great Kierkegaard monograph...Several writings by that most deeply tragic and convoluted Antichrist [i.e., Kierkegaard] came to be important to me. I read them in Schrempf's masterful translations, and then I read his introductions to them as well; and once again I was disturbed and entranced by this wondrous and grand translator, whose modes of thought and writing seemed so different from mine, but who nonetheless gripped me so unsettlingly." Hermann Hesse, "Über Christoph Schrempf," in *Im Banne des Unbedingten. Christoph Schrempf zugeeignet*, ed. Hermann Hesse et al. (Stuttgart: Fromman, 1930), 8. Hesse wrote several statements about Schrempf, see: "Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben," *Vivos voco. Zeitschrift für neues Deutschland*, vol. 1, no. 10 (July), 1920, 658-659; "Beim Einpacken," *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 1928, no. 182 (August 5); "Christoph Schrempf. Zu seinem 75. Geburtstag am 28. April 1935," *Die neue Rundschau*, vol. 46, 1935, 540-543; "Nachruf auf Christoph Schrempf," *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, vol. 11, 1944, 717-726.

⁴ See Walter Ruttenbeck, *Søren Kierkegaard. Der christliche Denker und sein Werk* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1929), 314-318; Wolfdietrich von Kloeden, "Einfluß und Bedeutung im deutsch-sprachigen Denken," in *The Legacy and Interpretation of Kierkegaard*, ed. Niels Thustrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1981), 68-75; Schulz, "Brocken," 406-407; Schulz, "Germany and Austria," 337-338.

⁵ Heiko Schulz, "Faith, Love and Self-Understanding. The Kierkegaard Reception of Rudolf Bultmann" in his *Aneignung und Reflexion*, vol. 1, *Studien zur Rezeption Søren Kierkegaards* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 233-273.

⁶ Lee C. Barrett, "Paul Tillich: An Ambivalent Appropriation," in Stewart, *Kierkegaard Research: German Protestant Theology*, 335-376.

⁷ For the most recent article regarding Kierkegaard's influence on Heidegger, see Vincent McCarthy, "Martin Heidegger: Kierkegaard's Influence Hidden and in Full View" in

after beginning with Monrad's *Buch des Richters*, Franz Kafka also turned to Diederichs' editions in his pursuit of Kierkegaard's texts.¹⁰ It wasn't until after World War Two—when Emmanuel Hirsch offered fresh translations for the Diederichs Verlag—that these volumes were superseded.

Gottsched and Schrepf initially took turns at the helm as editorial translator. Of the ten volumes published before World War One, Gottsched produced three, while Schrepf produced seven.¹¹ Gottsched oversaw the inaugural volume, and used the afterword to explain the rationale of the pairing of these two texts (*Fear and Trembling, Repetition*) for the initial volume. Gottsched begins by explaining that since Kierkegaard had sent these two texts to his publisher on the same day in 1843, it made sense to bring them back together for the series. More importantly for Gottsched though, was the way in which these texts could serve as an introduction to Kierkegaard's style. The religious gravitas of *Fear and Trembling* is balanced by

Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, vol. 9: Kierkegaard's Influence on Existentialism ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 95-125.

⁸ See, for example, István Czakó "Karl Jaspers: A Great Awakener's Way to Philosophy of Existence" in Jon Stewart ed., *Kierkegaard Research, vol. 9*, 155-198.

⁹ Adorno wrote his *Habilitationschrift* on the concept of aesthetics in Kierkegaard's philosophy and primarily used the *Collected Works of Soren Kierkegaard* as his sources. Many years later, this text was published as *Kierkegaard: Konstruktion des Ästhetischen. Mit einer Beilage* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1962). One recent article describes Adorno's intention as follows: "Adorno seeks to uncover the theological underlay of Kierkegaard's philosophical system with a view to demolishing it." Roland Boer, "A Totality of Ruins: Adorno on Kierkegaard" in *Cultural Critique*, vol. 83 (Winter 2013), 1-30.

¹⁰ Moreover, when Diederichs published the second edition of the series beginning in 1922, Schrepf essentially expunged Gottsched from the project by rewriting his four afterwords.

¹¹ Schrepf's volumes (before 1914): *Vol. 12: Der Augenblick* (1909), *Vol. 6-7: Philosophische Brocken/Abschließende unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift, in Zwei Teile* (1910), *Vol. 5: Der Begriff der Angst* (1912), *Vol. 1-2: Entweder/Oder* (1911-1913), *Vol. 4: Stadien* (1914); Gottsched's volumes (before 1914): *Vol. 3: Furcht und Zittern, Wiederholung* (1909), *Vol. 8: Die Krankheit zum Tode* (1911), *Vol. 9 Einübung im Christentum* (1912).

the "light, carefree tone" of the philosophical explorations in *Repetition*.¹² Gottsched expresses hope that this volume, revealing Kierkegaard's breadth as a writer and thinker, would find its way to many "who are reading Kierkegaard here for the first time."¹³

Gottsched also uses the afterword to expand upon the laudatory views expressed in his introduction to *Buch des Richters* five years prior. "Kierkegaard plays with language," explains Gottsched, "like an instrument."¹⁴ According to Gottsched, every word flowing from Kierkegaard's pen furthers his masterful project. While some, for example, might view the use of a love story (in *Repetition*) to explore a complex philosophical topic as evidence of a second-rate thinker, Gottsched draws the opposite conclusion: "The fact that he displays such deep truth via a love story is proof of how sure he was in his skills."¹⁵ Gottsched shares this confidence in Kierkegaard's skills and hopes to instill it in his readers. "We have to look back perhaps to Plato," claims Gottsched, "to find such a wonderful mix of poet and philosopher."¹⁶

Gottsched acknowledges that, like Plato, Kierkegaard can be hard to follow and confusing at times. But he pushes back against any dismissal of Kierkegaard as dated or

¹² "Wohl spielt in der einen Abraham eine große Rolle und wendet sich die andere zuletzt an Hiob, aber während die erstere sehr ernst ist, schlägt die 'Wiederholung' oft einen leichten, übermütigen Ton an."

Hermann Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3: Furcht und Zittern, Wiederholung* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. and ed. Hermann Gottsched (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909), 205.

¹³ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3*, 205.

¹⁴ "Und dieser wesentlich trockene philosoph ist, obgleich er keinen einzigen Vers hinterlassen hat, zugleich nicht nur ein Sprachkünstler, der auf seiner geliebten Muttersprache wie auf einem feinen Instrument spielt und und ihm die mannigfaltigsten Töne entlockt, sondern ein Dichter mit einer Leier, die mit den gewaltigsten und zartesten, den düstersten und heitersten Saiten bespannt ist." Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3*, 206.

¹⁵ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3*, 207.

¹⁶ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3*, 205.

parochial. The difficulty of understanding Kierkegaard does not lie in his chronological or cultural distance. "His style came across every bit as unique and eccentric, just as alienating and magically attractive," argues Gottsched, "in his own day as it does today."¹⁷ At the same time, Gottsched does not wish to deny Kierkegaard's Danish roots. "Kierkegaard was a true son of his homeland," explains Gottsched, "who with a warm heart clung to his land, its people, and its language." Fortunately for Gottsched's readers, however, Germans share a "deep lineage" with Kierkegaard and could thus "inwardly understand his style."¹⁸

The first volume of the *Collected Works* communicated several key points about Kierkegaard. The choice of texts inserted Kierkegaard into contemporary debates in both religion and philosophy. With its radical reimagining of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, *Fear and Trembling* problematizes the comfortable relationship in modern society between (Christian) faith and ethics. Diederichs' prediction that the time was ripe for Kierkegaard was soon born out by the collapse of German liberal theology with its cozy yoking of throne and altar.¹⁹ *Repetition* offered a "playful" exploration of the philosophical

¹⁷ "Sein Stil klang damals geradeso eigentümlich und einzigartig, geradeso befremdend und wunderbar anziehend wie jetzt, so daß er wohl bleibende Geltung haben wird, und seine Gedanken sind von solcher Tiefe und Lebenswahrheit, daß noch wenig davon im Leben der Einzelnen zu Tat und Wahrheit geworden ist." Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 208.

¹⁸ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 209.

¹⁹ Karl Barth openly acknowledged that the worldview motivating his *Epistle to the Romans* from 1922, which did so much to destroy German Liberal Christianity, was largely inspired by Kierkegaard. Barth writes, "Wenn ich ein ‚System‘ habe, so besteht es darin, daß ich das, was Kierkegaard den ‚unendlichen qualitativen Unterschied‘ von Zeit und Ewigkeit genannt hat, in seiner negativen und positiven Bedeutung möglichst behaarlich im Auge behalte. ‚Gott ist im Himmel und du auf Erden.‘ Die Beziehung *dieses* Gottes zu *diesem* Menschen, die Beziehung *dieses* Menschen zu *diesem* Gott ist für mich das Thema der Bibel und die Summer der Philosophie in einem." ("If I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and

concept of repetition, which Kierkegaard believed should replace Hegel's mediation.

Gottsched argues that the combination of these two texts shows Kierkegaard's breadth and relevance to a vast spectrum of contemporary issues. Finally, thanks to Gottsched's adulatory afterword, this first volume presents Kierkegaard as a trustworthy guide to these issues.

The second publication from the *Collected Works* arrived on shelves that same year. At first glance, *Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, Volume 12: Das Augenblick* ["The Moment"] appeared similar to first volume. It had the same dark blue hardback with "Sören Kierkegaard *Gesammelte Werke*" adorning the spine in gold letters, and the same iconic golden lion of the Diederichs' publishing house standing alone on the front cover. Yet discerning readers would have noticed a slightly different voice here than the one speaking through the previous volume: more accessible, perhaps even more German in some sense.²⁰ It is on the periphery of the text, however, that the gulf separating the first two volumes becomes clear.

Although Gottsched remained chief editor of the series, this second volume was wholly the creation of Christoph Schrempf. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Schrempf had already translated and published *The Moment* more than a decade before.²¹ As Schrempf notes in the foreword (whereas the first volume only contained an afterword), the current version is

thou art on earth'. The relation between *this* God and *these* men, and the relation between *these* men and *this* God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy.") Karl Barth, Vorwort to *Der Römerbrief, Erste Fassung* (Bern: G. A. Bläschlin, 1919), 125. Emphasis in original.

²⁰ Schrempf described his goal in translating Kierkegaard as "to allow him to speak as he would have done if German had been his mother tongue." Quoted in the publisher's advertisement for the planned four-volume series of Kierkegaard's *Upbuilding Discourses*, in Soren Kierkegaard, *Leben und Walten der Liebe*, trans. Albert Dorner and Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1924), 412.

²¹ Sören Kierkegaard, *Sören Kierkegaard's agitorische Schriften und Aufsätze: 1851 bis 1855, Sören Kierkegaard's Angriff auf die Christenheit, Erster Band: Die Akten*, trans. and ed. Christoph Schrempf and Albert Dorner (Stuttgart: Frommanns, 1896).

"basically the same" as his earlier text.²² However, while the actual translation remained unchanged, the intervening years had changed the translator, with immense implications for the presentation of the text. While Gottsched appealed to history, philosophy and theology in his attempt to situate Kierkegaard, Schrempf focused almost exclusively on his own personal history with Kierkegaard.

Before reaching a single word from Kierkegaard, the reader encounters a "Translators Foreword" that sets up the new tone. "[One cannot publish] texts of such a personal nature as Kierkegaard's *The Moment*," explains Schrempf, "without expressing one's personal opinion of the topic as well."²³ This he will do, he assures his reader, in the afterword. But even in this short (barely a page) foreword, Schrempf cannot help but express his deep frustration with Kierkegaard. Referencing his earlier translation of *The Moment*, Schrempf mentions that he originally intended to include it in a larger series entitled *Kierkegaard's Angriff auf der Christentum*. Yet Schrempf postponed publication of the second volume for that series, as his opinion of Kierkegaard and the church had fundamentally shifted. While he does not offer much detail about this shift, he does state that he had "fully rejected..the premises with which Kierkegaard started regarding the church." "I simply have no more interest," continues Schrempf, "in adjudicating the justice or injustice of his verdict on the church."²⁴ Schrempf was much more interested in a personal confrontation with Kierkegaard.

²² Christoph Schrempf, "Vorwort des Übersetzers," to *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12: Der Augenblick* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909). The Foreword has no pagination.

²³ Schrempf, "Vorwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12.

²⁴ "Ich habe die Voraussetzungen, von denen Kierkegaard noch mit der Kirche ausgeht, völlig aufgegeben, und habe darum kein Interesse mehr daran, Recht und Unrecht seines Urteils über die Kirche einer eingehenden Untersuchung zu unterziehen." Schrempf, "Vorwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12

In fact, Schrempf's primary goal in the afterword was "not to influence an encounter between [Kierkegaard] and reader, but simply to bring one about."²⁵ Yet this claim appears disingenuous in light of the language Schrempf employs in the afterword. At times he is subtly dismissive. When summing up the basic argument of *The Moment*, Schrempf states that "Kierkegaard's opinion is short and good (or rather, short and bad) the following: Christendom is the downfall of Christianity..."²⁶ At other times, though, Schrempf directly dismisses, and even ridicules, Kierkegaard and his arguments. For example, Schrempf ridicules Kierkegaard's fundamental premise that the modern church should be condemned since it does not resemble the New Testament church.²⁷

Schrempf saves his most critical words for Kierkegaard's blanket condemnation of individual Christians for the sins of the church. "It remains true for [Kierkegaard]," explains Schrempf, "that what the church does, what Christendom does, her members do as well."²⁸ Schrempf drives the point home in the following paragraph:

So here is Kierkegaard's precise opinion: You and I are guilty of a criminal, blasphemous deception when we identify ourselves as Christians; you and I

²⁵ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12, Der Augenblick* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. and ed. Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909), 155.

²⁶ "Kierkegaards Meinung ist kurz und gut (oder vielmehr kurz und schlimm) diese: daß die Christenheit der Abfall vom Christentum ist, und daß sie sich eines verbrecherischen, gotteslästerlichen Schwindels schuldig macht, wenn sie sich trotzdem Christentum zuschreibt." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12*, 155.

²⁷ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12*, 159.

²⁸ "So bleibt für ihn dabei, daß, was die Kirch, die Christenheit tut, von ihren Giletern getan wird." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 12*, 156.

paint God as a fool when we actively or passively participate in a church service, baptism or confirmation or are baptized or confirmed.²⁹

After establishing Kierkegaard as the prosecutor and his reader as the defendant, Schrempf inserts himself as the counsel. "You ask," says Schrempf of his reader, "who is the person who dares to hurl such accusations in my face?" Schrempf then offers two possible answers to this question:

History, or rather this or that historian offers: Kierkegaard is one of the greats of world literature, exceptional in his mastery over language, his strength and diversity of voice, his psychological acumen, dialectical agility; a man of the utmost seriousness who completely understands seriousness.

Or

Kierkegaard is an author of undeniable talent, but he is sickly and morbid (a hysteric or the like), petty, a self-idolizer and misanthrope, a jester of thought, a man without seriousness...³⁰

Both of these responses, however, Schrempf dismisses as nothing more than dodges.

"They may rescue you from your accuser," he continues, "but you are not thereby free of the

²⁹ "Also ist Kierkegaards Meinung genauer diese: Du und ich, wir verschulden einen verbrecherischen, gotteslästerlichen Schwindel, wenn wir uns für Christen ausgeben; du und ich, wir halten Gott für Narren, wenn wir aktiv oder passiv an dem Gottesdienst der Kirche teilnehmen, taufen oder konfirmieren lassen." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 156.

³⁰ "Darauf antwortet die Geschichte / nein, der oder jener Geschichtschreiber: Kierkegaard ist eine der Größen der Weltliteratur, ausgezeichnet durch Macht über die Sprache, Kraft und Mannigfaltigkeit der Stimmung, psychologisch Scharfsinn, dialektische Gewandtheit; ein Mann des höchsten Ernstes, und der sich auch auf den Dernst verstand;

oder:

Kierkegaard ist ein Schriftsteller von unzweifelhafter Begabung, aber kränklich und krankhaft, ein Selbstanbeter und Menschenverächter, ein Tongleur des Gedankens, ein Mann ohne Ernst..." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 157.

accusations.³¹ Schrempf then devotes the rest of the afterword to assessing Kierkegaard's primary accusations from *The Moment*. For the most part, he finds them lacking. He sees no reason why we should attempt to glean a normative picture of Christianity from the glimpses we have in the New Testament, which "was neither intended to be, nor could be, a guide for living life."³² Kierkegaard also confuses the "good news" (*Evangelium*) of Jesus with the "law" (*Gesetz*) of the church.³³ If one truly wanted to mirror the faith of the first followers of Jesus, it would be a simple faith in Christ and not an attempt to follow the dictates of the New Testament, which obviously did not exist in Jesus' day.

So what value does Schrempf find in Kierkegaard's text? What are his hopes in expanding its German audience? In the final paragraph of the afterword, Schrempf directly addresses this question. "And therefore I advise you," begins Schrempf before backtracking:

no, no, I have no advice to offer you. I must now simply turn it over to you, that you yourself think through the issue, what is actually at stake here: your relationship to official Christendom; or even more: your relationship to yourself which has brought you to your relationship with official Christendom. And that you decide for yourself what the issue requires of you; that is: what precisely is required of you in your situation.³⁴

With these words, Schrempf concludes his first afterword of the *Collected Works* series. Schrempf's gesture of neutrality at the conclusion notwithstanding, he left little doubt as to his

³¹ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 157.

³² Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 159.

³³ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 160.

³⁴ "Und darum rate ich dir...Doch nein, ich habe dir nicht zu raten. Ich muß es vielmehr jetzt dir überlassen, daß du die Sache, um die es sich handelt, selbst durchdenkest: dein Verhältnis zum offiziellen Christentum; oder vielmehr: dein Verhältnis zu dir selbst, worein dich deine Verbindung mit dem offiziellen Christentum gebracht hat. Und daß du dann selbst

desired outcome for the reader. Schrempf structured the entire volume around the narrative of his personal encounter with Kierkegaard, an encounter that he connected to the key decisions of his life. His first readings of Kierkegaard caused him to walk away from his pastoral duties, as he felt unable to perform them with complete honesty. Ultimately, over the course of "twenty years of contemplation," Kierkegaard's influence culminated in Schrempf's decision to cut all ties with official Christianity.³⁵

There is a blunt normative force to Schrempf's narrative. First of all, he makes it clear that there is only one correct way to approach the text. "Kierkegaard's *The Moment*," Schrempf declares, "can only be correctly understood when the reader applies all that is said therein personally to himself."³⁶ Schrempf offers his own encounter with Kierkegaard as praiseworthy and exemplary, showing no interest in considering other possible responses to Kierkegaard—the most obvious counter-example being Gottsched's view of Kierkegaard as a reformer, not destroyer, of official Christianity. Schrempf essentially labels those who refuse to follow his example as cowards. At one point, Schrempf devotes several pages to an imaginary dialogue in which he questions the wisdom of allowing one's children to be baptized into the church. He takes it for granted that the parents, as his "free-thinking reader," no longer have faith in the church. "That our current religious circumstances are miserable and unhealthy," states Schrempf candidly, "nobody can deny."³⁷ The only reason Schrempf can imagine as to why a parent would stay in the church is to protect their children from the social consequences of an

bestimmest, was die Sache von dir fordert; das heißt: was du in deiner Lage dir selbst schuldig bist." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 171.

³⁵ See Schrempf, "Einleitung" (1931), in *Schrempfs Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4: *Über den Rubikon*, ed. Otto Engel (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1931), xxxii.

³⁶ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 170.

³⁷ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 165.

open break. Never one to blunt his opinion, Schrempf concludes that allowing one's children to be baptized when one has lost one's own faith is "a retreat from a first-rate freedom fighter to a lower level."³⁸

A quick biographical aside will illuminate Schrempf's intensely personal approach to these commentaries. Even though Schrempf had been dismissed from the pastorate in 1892, he remained a member of the church for the next seventeen years. It was not until 1909, the same year that he published this afterword, that Schrempf officially resigned his membership in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Württemberg. Schrempf's relief, and a certain amount of smugness, at having finally taken this step are evident in the afterword. "Now, after I have completed the inner and outer disentanglement from official Christianity," writes Schrempf, "I am truly happy for it and give thanks to Kierkegaard for constantly pushing me further and further." Not only was Schrempf happy to rid himself of official Christianity, he argues that because of this, he could now enter into a "new, natural and therefore (I hope) also fruitful relationship with Jesus."³⁹

Schrempf continued as editor and translator for the third and fourth volume in the *Gesammelte Werke* series, both of which appeared in 1910 and combined the texts *Philosophische Brocken* ["Philosophical Fragments"] and *Abschliessende unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift* ["Concluding Unscientific Postscript"].⁴⁰ Neither were first-time German translations, as

³⁸ "Indem er sie konfirmieren ließ, ist er aus dem ersten Glied der Freiheitskämpfer in das zweite zurückgetreten." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 166.

³⁹ "Wichtiger aber ist mir das andere: daß ich nun mit Jesus in ein neues, natürliches und darum (hoffe ich) auch fruchtbareres Verhältnis eintreten kann..." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 171.

⁴⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 6 & 7: *Philosophische Brocken, Abschliessende unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift*, in zwei Teile, trans. and ed. Christoph Schrempf and Hermann Gottsched (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1910).

Schrempf had previously published both nearly a decade before. And he once again uses the afterword to reflect upon his journey with Kierkegaard. In doing so, he decisively shapes the image of Kierkegaard put forth by the volumes. Finally, it is in this volume that Schrempf first explains his quite radical approach to translating Kierkegaard.⁴¹

With the official church no longer serving as a shared *bête noir*, Schrempf orients the entirety of this afterword around his personal frustrations with Kierkegaard. In the first volume, Schrempf had directed the brunt of his opprobrium toward official Christendom. He thus stood, in a sense, alongside Kierkegaard in this attack. *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, however, say comparatively little about Christendom. Instead, *Fragments* focuses on developing Kierkegaard's unique philosophical approach to Christianity while *Postscript* challenges the supremacy of Hegelianism and the way in which it Kierkegaard thought it disregarded the individual.

Schrempf attacks what he saw as the faulty presuppositions of Kierkegaard's pseudonym, Johannes Climacus. Climacus' primary guiding question in *Fragments* is the following: how can he, as an individual, take part in the eternal blessedness promised by the teachings of Christianity? Climacus has no interest in simply inheriting such a relationship from his family or nationality. Instead, he is convinced that Christ reached out to individuals with his salvation and it is only as an individual that one can accept such an offer. Schrempf dismisses this central question as simply misguided. "I would like to ask [Climacus] how he arrived at the presumption," writes Schrempf, "that he should expect eternal blessedness."⁴² Is

⁴¹ Schrempf clearly felt no need to dissemble on this topic, as he returned to it again and again in subsequent volumes and editions.

⁴² "Zunächst möchte ich ihn fragen, wie er zu der Annahme kommt, daß für ihn eine ewige Seligkeit zu erwarten ist." Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 6 e³ 7: Philosophische Brocken, Abschliessende unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift in zwei Teile*

it only because he wishes for it, wonders Schrempf? Does he ask himself where this desire originates? Ultimately, Schrempf condemns Climacus for not acknowledging the geographical rootedness of his entire inquiry:

Buddhism, for example, has its own highest good, which it calls Nirvana; the same is true in 'Mohammedism,' which has its highest good in Paradise. But simply because Climacus happened not to be born in Ceylon or in Arabia, but rather in Denmark, is not an acceptable reason for him to place more trust in the highest goods of 'Christianity' than in those of 'Buddhism' and 'Mohammedism.' Climacus must compare the conceptions of the highest good found in christianity, buddhism, and mohammedism, and then judge them according to some criteria in order to assess which of these descriptions of the highest good actually describes the highest good.⁴³

After accusing Climacus of parochialism for his myopic focus on Christianity—a complaint that must have pleased Diederichs—Schrempf turns to some of the key philosophical concepts developed in these texts. He finds the idea of indirect communication insulting. This central Kierkegaardian concept and the motivation behind his use of pseudonyms, appears to Schrempf as presupposing that Climacus/Kierkegaard possesses absolute truth that he then indirectly disperses.⁴⁴ He views Climacus' advice that we must become contemporaneous with Christ in order to be his disciples both appealing and utterly impossible.⁴⁵ Finally, he dismisses Climacus' obsession with self-examination as "not only

by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. and ed. Christoph Schrempf and Hermann Gottsched (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1910), 282.

⁴³ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e3 7, 285.

⁴⁴ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e3 7, 291.

⁴⁵ First of all, notes Schrempf, we can't be certain of the veracity of the words passed down about Christ. But even if we could be certain of the historical integrity of scripture—that what was written at the time is what we have before us now, 1900 years later—Schrempf does not see how we can believe in the miraculous events told therein. "I do not possess the paradoxical capacity," complains Schrempf, "that [Climacus] must well have, of being able to believe what I cannot believe." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e3 7, 288.

embarrassing and useless, but also dangerous."⁴⁶ In fact, he expresses concern about a foundational danger permeating Climacus'—and by obvious extension, Kierkegaard's—entire philosophy. "Climacus," explains Schrempf, "has what appears to me as a dangerously dark fondness for the unlikely and the incomprehensible."⁴⁷

Schrempf also exhibits little respect for Kierkegaard as a writer. "Although *Fragments* was somewhat carefully written," Schrempf writes, "*Postscript* is often unbelievably careless." Perhaps this carelessness, Schrempf admits halfheartedly, "had its charm in the original (though this is very doubtful to me), but in translation any charm was impossible for me to maintain."⁴⁸ This opinion led Schrempf to some very unique, to say the least, translation decisions.

Schrempf did not dissemble when explaining his approach to translating Kierkegaard, an act he described as *überarbeiten* instead of the typical *übersetzen*. The latter term literally means "setting something over," as in taking something from one place and setting it in another and is the common German verb for "translating." But Schrempf describes his approach to translating Kierkegaard as *überarbeiten*, literally "working over." Thus when translating *Fragments* and *Postscript*, Schrempf explains:

⁴⁶ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 290.

⁴⁷ "Dagegen hat Climacus eine mir gefährlich dünkende Vorliebe für das Unwahrscheinliche und Unverständliche." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 290. What stands as the central issue for Climacus, that Jesus was God, Schrempf dismissed as impossible to assert and irrelevant. This was even more so the case regarding the various miracles ascribed to Jesus. "What does it all mean for me?" asked Schrempf, "Nothing. I have no need to curse a tree or take a walk on the water; and while it might be nice to calm a storm simply with my words, Jesus didn't leave behind any instructions on how to do so." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 288.

⁴⁸ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 281.

I tried to dam up the often unbearable prolixity of expression; I excised, combined and relocated sentences...I got rid of repetition if it was not only superfluous but also broke up connections: Kierkegaard can't seem to get enough of employing his own catchwords. Further, I've gotten rid of allusions that don't clarify anything, are often impossible for the German reader to understand and moreover clearly weren't researched by [Kierkegaard]...I also inserted myself in places where it was necessary due to the often mercurial progress of his arguments.⁴⁹

Aware of the obvious concern that he had "foisted his own thoughts onto Kierkegaard's," Schrempf once again makes clear his distance from his subject. "There is no danger [of fusing his own thoughts with Kierkegaard's]," explains Schrempf, "because the more I work on his writings, the clearer it becomes to me how differently I think than him."⁵⁰ Schrempf approached Kierkegaard as an interesting, always provocative, yet often troubled interlocutor. But he certainly did not look to him as a teacher, or much less a prophet, as did Gottsched.

This distance between the two editors became even more explicit in 1911 with the fifth publication of the series, a new translation of Kierkegaard's text *Sickness unto Death*.⁵¹ Back in control as editor and translator, Gottsched uses this volume to reassert his approach to

⁴⁹ "So habe ich denn die oft unerträgliche Wietschweifigkeit des Ausdrucks einzudämmen gesucht; habe Sätze zerrissen und verbunden, auch umgestellt...Aber ich habe Wiederholungen gestrichen, wenn sie nicht bloß überflüssig sind, sondern auch den Zusammenhang unterbrechen: Kierkegaard kann seine Stichworte nicht oft genug anbringen. Ferner habe ich Anspielungen ausgemerzt, die nichts erklären, für den deutschen Leser oft unverständlich sind und von ihm auch nicht nachgeschlagen werden können...Andrerseits habe ich mir einzuschieben erlaubt, was mir zum Verständnis des oft sprunghaften Fortschritts der Entwicklung notwendig erschien." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 281.

⁵⁰ "Die Versuchung, Kierkegaard meine eigenen Gedanken unterzuschieben, war für mich deshalb kaum eine Gefahr, weil mir über der Arbeit immer klarer zu Bewußtsein kam, wo ich anders denke als er." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol.6 e³ 7, 281.

⁵¹ Sören Kierkegaard, *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8: *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1911).

Kierkegaard. Gone is Schrempf's adversarial tone of the previous two volumes. In its place there is once again a sense of awe and respect, both for Kierkegaard and for the topics of his writings.

Gottsched seems to have Schrempf in mind when explaining his approach to translation. Yet instead of directly addressing Schrempf, Gottsched discusses Albert Bärthold's 1881 German translation of *Sickness unto Death* as he explains why a new translation is merited in 1912.⁵² According to Gottsched, Bärthold understood that Kierkegaard was an acquired taste. Since Germans had had almost no exposure to Kierkegaard up to that point, Bärthold was justified in "smoothing out" the text. "[Bärthold] broke apart the hard shell," explains Gottsched, "in order to make the precious kernel accessible." But thanks largely to the labors of Bärthold, German understanding of Kierkegaard has matured and, Gottsched argues, such mediation was no longer required. Instead, a new edition "should offer a complete, exact translation of Kierkegaard's text."⁵³ Schrempf's approach of *überarbeiten* clearly fell short of this.

Gottsched also lauds the centrality of Kierkegaard's faith in his writings. "This entire text," notes Gottsched approvingly, "is oriented toward faith like a navigational mark, it is illuminated and suffused by the warmth of faith."⁵⁴ Gottsched describes Kierkegaard as a "knower of souls" and an empathetic doctor who "goes from bed to bed, offering to each a

⁵² Søren Kierkegaard, *Die Krankheit zum Tode: eine christliche psychologische Entwicklung zur Erbauung und Erweckung*, ed. Albert Bärthold (Halle: Julius Fricke Verlag, 1881).

⁵³ Hermann Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Søren Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 8: Die Krankheit zum Tode* by Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Hermann Gottsched (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1911), 131.

⁵⁴ "Auf den Glauben steuert diese ganze Schrift als auf ein Seezeichen zu, vom Glauben ist sie erleuchtet und durchwärmt." Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 8*, 130.

diagnosis and advice for healing and salvation.⁵⁵ If this was not enough to signal his differences from Schrempf, Gottsched goes further: "Just as it is barbaric and morally impossible to contemplate the attraction of the suffering and dying redeemer without faith..." observes Gottsched, "so Kierkegaard sets as a precondition for understanding his book the possession of at least a sense of faith."⁵⁶ In a huge departure from Schrempf's approach, Gottsched asserts not only that Kierkegaard's faith directs his writings, but that sharing this faith is a prerequisite for truly understanding them.

It thus made sense for Gottsched to produce the next volume of the series, a new translation of *Practice in Christianity* (1912), Kierkegaard's most explicit and thorough description of his ideal of Christianity.⁵⁷ In his journals, Kierkegaard described Anti-Climacus, the pseudonymous author of both *Practice* and *Sickness*, as "higher [than his other pseudonyms], a Christian on an extremely high level."⁵⁸ In *Practice*, Kierkegaard fully explores his concept of the religious individual, the importance of a "leap to faith," and the necessity of indirect communication. It was, Kierkegaard felt, his "most perfect and truest work."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, 130.

⁵⁶ "Wie es deshalb eine Roheit und moralische Unmöglichkeit ist, die Züge des ledenden und sterbenden heilandes ohne Glauben zu betrachten, Glauben an eigene Schuld und an seine Liebe, so setzt auch Kierkegaard zum Verständnis seines Buches wenigstens Sinn für den Glauben voraus." Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, 130-131.

⁵⁷ Bärthold's original version had been published in 1878 and, as with *Sickness unto Death*, Gottsched felt that the Germany was in need of a new translation. Søren Kierkegaard, *Einübung in Christentum* trans. Albert Bärthold (Halle: Julius Fricke Verlag, 1878).

⁵⁸ Quoted in Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Writings, XX: Practice in Christianity* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 281.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Howard and Edna Hong, "Historical Introduction to *Practice in Christianity*," in Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, xviii.

Gottsched agreed that this text displayed Kierkegaard at the height of his powers.⁶⁰ But more importantly to Gottsched, *Practice* also bears witness to the depth of Kierkegaard's faith and probity. Much like he argued in *Buch des Richters*, Gottsched claims that *Practice* "grants us access to [Kierkegaard's] inner self, to the sanctuary of his heart, where he, like Paul among the Corinthians, knows nothing other than Christ crucified."⁶¹ Like the Old Testament prophets and singers, he is "consumed by the spirit of God," and even though he possesses the greatest poetic powers, his language here is "simple, natural and therefore heart-penetrating in its beauty."⁶² With this text, claims Gottsched, Kierkegaard brings us into Christ's presence.

In the same year as Gottsched celebrates Kierkegaard's skill and probity, Schrempf uses the afterword to *Begriff der Angst* ["Begriff der Angst"] to warn readers about Kierkegaard's annoyingly Christian presuppositions. "Because Kierkegaard didn't take the time to let his thoughts mature," complains Schrempf, "Christian dogma retains more influence over his interpretation of his original experiences than is healthy..."⁶³ He then argues that Kierkegaard's concepts of sin, anxiety, good and evil were similarly distorted

⁶⁰ Gottsched was clearly aware of the importance Kierkegaard placed on this text and made sure to alert his reader to the same. "This book," explains Gottsched in the afterword, "stands as the culmination and crown of [Kierkegaard's] authorship, it is his most perfect and important work, the rich outpouring of his overflowing heart." Hermann Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 9: Einübung im Christentum* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. Hermann Gottsched (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1912), 241.

⁶¹ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 9*, 240.

⁶² Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke, vol. 9*, 241.

⁶³ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol.5: Begriff der Angst* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1912), 165.

because he already had the Christian salvation story in mind.⁶⁴ This often results in a frustrating experience for Kierkegaard's reader, who struggles, Schrempf explains in a slight rephrasing of Gottsched, to "extract the edible kernel from the inedible shell."⁶⁵

After breaking through this patina of Christianity, Schrempf focuses on what he considered the actual topic of the text: Kierkegaard himself. He dismisses Kierkegaard's confusing pseudonymous strategy as superfluous. "One should, without a second thought, see Kierkegaard in the pseudonymous author Vigilus Haufniensis," advises Schrempf before continuing, "and this text, as is made clear via a comparison to his private papers, offers without exception the actual opinion of Kierkegaard."⁶⁶ Moreover, when viewed in this way, we can begin to access hidden truths of Kierkegaard's life. "In *The Concept of Anxiety*," Schrempf explains, "Kierkegaard worked through many of his deepest, most secret experiences."⁶⁷ Schrempf's biographical approach to Kierkegaard's texts effectively shifted the emphasis away from Kierkegaard's stated concerns—Christianity, sin and anxiety—and toward Kierkegaard himself.⁶⁸

Soon after the publication of *Begriff der Angst*, Gottsched abruptly left the Diederichs project. Unlike the situation at *Der Brenner*, there was no official shift of focus dictated from on

⁶⁴ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, 169.

⁶⁵ "Seine theologisch-philosophische Befangenheit wird oft so empfindlich, daß man die Geduld verlieren möchte, den genießbaren Kern seiner Gedanken aus der ungenießbaren Schale herauszuklauben." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, 165.

⁶⁶ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, 164.

⁶⁷ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, 165. In this passage Schrempf opens up a topic—of Kierkegaard's sexuality—that he will return to in a later volume.

⁶⁸ Schrempf finds Kierkegaard's definition of sin to be confusing and incomplete and argues that the most useful aspect of his discussion of anxiety lies in his description of its "biological meaning." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, 167.

high. Diederichs was more so an impresario than a manager when it came to the series, unlike Ficker's involvement with *Der Brenner*. There is no evidence, for instance, that Diederichs intervened in the dispute between his editors. But the dissonance between the two editors' views of Kierkegaard brought tension nonetheless. At its most basic level, Gottsched filled his afterwords with praise and admiration while Schrempf used his to attack and criticize Kierkegaard. Gottsched became so upset by the polemical tone of Schrempf's afterword to *Das Augenblick* that he insisted it be rewritten. The result was slightly less polemical but every bit as critical as the original draft.⁶⁹ If the two men shared nothing else, they shared a strong faith in the veracity of their understandings of Kierkegaard. The tension between Gottsched and Schrempf left its mark on the initial volumes of the series.⁷⁰ Up until Gottsched's departure, the afterwords offered antithetical perspectives on how Kierkegaard should be viewed, the relevance of his concerns, and, finally, what actions his words entailed in 20th Century Germany.

Gottsched lists Kierkegaard as one of the true geniuses of European civilization, alongside Plato, Socrates, and Luther. Gottsched's Kierkegaard is not only a master poet and brilliant philosopher, he is also a prophet crying out for his people to return to the one true God. Although Kierkegaard's message was originally intended for 19th Century Denmark, Gottsched argues that it applies equally, if not more so, to 20th Century Germany. He implores his reader to trust Kierkegaard to guide them past the somnifacient threat of the modern church—but not out of the church altogether—and into the presence of Christ.

⁶⁹ For a brief discussion of the animosity between the two men, as born out in the series, see Schreiber, "Christoph Schrempf," 290.

⁷⁰ In the second edition of the series, Schrempf rewrote all of Gottsched's Afterwords and thus completely removed his influence from the project.

While Gottsched seeks to canonize Kierkegaard, Schrempf insists on a confrontation. There is nothing of the hagiographic feel of Gottsched's afterwords. Instead, Schrempf often seems annoyed by Kierkegaard. He complains about the extra work that Kierkegaard's sloppy writing (and thinking) required of him as translator. Even more damning, Schrempf expresses concern about the danger both of Kierkegaard's love for the irrational and his insistence on subjectivity. He also dismisses as outdated and irrelevant Kierkegaard's fixation on the veracity of scripture and the pristine example of the New Testament church. Kierkegaard's primary value, according to Schrempf, is to antagonize his reader and shake him/her out of complacency. Ideally, this confrontation leads to a break with official Christianity.⁷¹

Another helpful way of parsing the differences between Gottsched and Schrempf is to view them in terms of the classic binary theory of translation suggested by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Hoping to move past what he saw as a circular and stagnate debate between “word for word” and “sense for sense” views of translation, Schleiermacher proposed that a translator should focus rather on how best to bring the writer and reader together. According to him, this leaves only two paths open for the “true” translator: “Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him.”⁷² Gottsched's and

⁷¹ Although the parameters of what Kierkegaard meant by “official Christianity” could be debated—see previous chapter for Haecker's argument that he meant only Danish state Protestantism and not Catholicism—Schrempf interpreted the phrase to mean all institutional Christianity.

⁷² Friedrich Schleiermacher, “On the Different Methods of Translating,” in R. Schulte and J. Biguenet, eds, *Theories of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 49. Regarding the epochal importance of this article, which Schleiermacher penned in 1813, consider the claim made by two linguists in 2009 that “practically every modern translation theory—at least in the German-language area—responds, in one way or another, to Schleiermacher's hypotheses.” Harald Kittel and Andreas Poltermann, “The German

Schrempf's distinct approaches to translating Kierkegaard map almost perfectly on to Schleiermacher's two paths.

Gottsched takes the path of "bringing the reader to the writer," which was also Schleiermacher's preference. He stands as it were in Denmark, inviting his German readers to come visit this foreign sage. Linguistically he retains as much as possible of the syntax and rhythm of the original; recall his faith that Kierkegaard "plays with language like an instrument."⁷³ He acknowledges that the experience of reading Kierkegaard will be alienating at times, but argues that the alienation results from something inherent in the text rather than jet lag from the translation. Gottsched is also guided by a deep, nearly sacred trust in Kierkegaard's words, which makes them worthy of interlingual transfer.⁷⁴

Schrempf resolutely follows the other path; he seeks to "bring the writer to the reader." Indeed, Schrempf's approach has the feeling of a kidnapping in which Kierkegaard barely survives the transit. Schrempf drags Kierkegaard to his reader and forces him to speak German. Where Kierkegaard stumbles, either in language or thought, Schrempf simply steps in for him. In place of Gottsched's faith in the inherent value of Kierkegaard's message, Schrempf approaches Kierkegaard as a thinker who had stumbled across something valuable, but required Schrempf's assistance in order to realize its potential. Hence his description of his process as *überarbeiten* rather than *übersetzen*. Schrempf's adversarial approach to

Tradition," in M. Baker and G. Saldana, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 417.

⁷³ Gottsched, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 206.

⁷⁴ For the importance as well the pitfalls of such trust in translation endeavors, see George Steiner's chapter on "The Hermeneutic Motion" in his classic *After Babel*. Steiner makes "initiative trust" the first step in any translation: "There is an initiative trust...we venture a leap: we grant *ab initio* that there is 'something there' to be understood, that the transfer will

Kierkegaard offered him as a deeply troubled thinker whose value was limited to helping the reader come to terms with him or herself.

Schrempf in Charge

After 1912, Schrempf was able to put forth his opinions on Kierkegaard without threat of any blowback from Gottsched. The first example of this comes with Schrempf's translation of Kierkegaard's masterpiece, *Either/Or* (1911-1913). While the first volume had been published in 1911—thus with Gottsched still involved—the second volume was not released until 1913. Importantly, it is the second volume that contains Schrempf's afterword. Here Schrempf continues the discussion of his translation decisions and in the process insults Kierkegaard as a thinker and writer. He then describes the entire work as a missive to Kierkegaard's ex-fiancée, once again relegating the ostensible topics of the text— aesthetics, sin, ethics, religion—to second-tier status. Finally, he embraces a new theory for explaining many of Kierkegaard's perceived shortcomings.

Schrempf explains to his reader that Kierkegaard wrote this entire text in under a year. "Even a man of extraordinary genius," argues Schrempf, "can hardly write fifty good pages in this amount of time." Mistakes, then, are inevitable. Not only was Kierkegaard rushed in his writing, he was also quite lazy at times. "The sloppiness of his writing," complains Schrempf, "often trespasses far beyond what is acceptable."⁷⁵ In order to combat

not be void." Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 312.

⁷⁵ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 1-2: Entweder/Oder* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1911-1913), 309.

these issues, Schrempf admits to deleting and adding sentences as well as rearranging passages to help with the flow of the text. "We did this all in the service of Kierkegaard," explains Schrempf, "we didn't want to add anything, take anything or change anything about him; we only wanted to help him better express himself."⁷⁶

Schrempf continues with this heavy-handed editorial approach when describing the goal of Kierkegaard's text. Schrempf was aware of Kierkegaard's claim, in *The Point of View on my Work as an Author*, that all of his pseudonymous texts were designed to help bring the individual reader into a relationship with God. *Either/Or* presents two ways of approaching life, the aesthetic and the ethical, and then hints at a third, the religious. In *Stages on Life's Way*, Kierkegaard fully develops the religious stage as providing the highest aspiration for the individual. Yet Schrempf claims that the entirety of *Either/Or* is nothing more than Kierkegaard trying to exorcise his own demons. At the time he wrote *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard could "see no further" than his pseudonyms.⁷⁷ "The presentation of these two life stages [the aesthetic and the ethical] is not actually the point of this book," explains Schrempf, "rather they serve simply as an aid in pursuit of Kierkegaard's actual goal, his own personal orientation."⁷⁸ *Either/Or* is not the work of a careful genius but rather the outpouring of a tortured young man.

⁷⁶ "Das alles aber nur im Dienste Kierkegaards: wir wollten nichts in ihn eintragen, nichts ihm nehmen, nichts an ihm verändern; wir wollen ihm nur helfen, daß er richtig zum Wort komme." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 310.

⁷⁷ Schrempf suggested that the reader might as well consider the two primary pseudonyms of the texts as "Kierkegaard A and Kierkegaard B." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 318.

⁷⁸ "Die Darstellung zweier Lebensstadien ist also nicht die Absicht des Buches, sondern ein bloßes Hilfsmittel zur Erreichung der eigentlichen Absicht Kierkegaards, der persönlichen Orientierung." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 328.

The primary source of Kierkegaard's torture, argues Schrempf, was actually quite quotidian: he was in love and confused. Kierkegaard used *Either/Or* to work through this confusion.⁷⁹ "[One] doesn't have to read deep into Kierkegaard's soul," states Schrempf, "to see that with A and B he is actually depicting the two parts of his own soul that were at war with each other."⁸⁰ The entire book, concludes Schrempf, is little more than a message to his ex-fiancee, Regine Olsen. Whereas Gottsched praised Kierkegaard's ability to communicate deep spiritual truths in the form of love stories, Schrempf argues that it worked in precisely the other way: Kierkegaard simply put a spiritual gloss on his romantic confusions.

Schrempf expands this argument in the afterword for the following volume: a new German translation of *Stages on Life's Way* (1914). Just like *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, and *Repetition*, explains Schrempf, *Stages* must be read in light of Kierkegaard's own life. Although the text ostensibly sets up a taxonomy of worldviews ending with the complicated description of "Religiousness A" and "Religiousness B," Schrempf argues that Kierkegaard uses religious language and concepts simply because he "began with inherited religious presuppositions and wanted to return to them."⁸¹ But Schrempf doubts that the goal of the text was, as Kierkegaard claimed, "to illustrate the singular essence of the religious via a psychological

⁷⁹ "Im bisherigen bin ich," writes Schrempf, "ohne viele Umstände zu machen, von der Voraussetzung ausgegangen, daß wir in Entweder/Oder mit Kierkegaard selbst zu tun haben, nicht mit einem beliebigen Ästhetiker A und einem beliebigen Ethiker B." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 328.

⁸⁰ "Sie brauchte nicht eben tief in Kierkegaards Seele gelesen zu haben, um zu erkennen, daß er in A und B die zwei Seelen darstellte, die in ihm selbst im Kampf lagen." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 315.

⁸¹ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4: *Stadien auf dem Lebensweg* by Sören Kierkegaard, trans. Christoph Schrempf (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1911-1913), 476.

experiment."⁸² "I can't shake the suspicion," writes Schrempf, "that [Kierkegaard's] ultimate aim was something completely else, something private, directed solely to his bride."⁸³ Dressed in complicated Kierkegaardian fashion, *Stages* was also little more than a love letter.

Schrempf thus devotes the majority of the afterword to exploring Kierkegaard's relationship with Regine. He includes several relevant entries from Kierkegaard's journals as he tries to unravel what exactly Kierkegaard hoped to (indirectly) communicate to his spurned fiancée. Part of Kierkegaard's intention, suggests Schrempf, was to signal to Regine that there was a chance they might be able to reunite. But the biggest intervention made by Schrempf came in his explanation of why Kierkegaard broke off the engagement in the first place. While Kierkegaard blamed his deep melancholy—and the fact that he was "an eternity too old for her"—for the break-up, Schrempf offers a more sordid explanation. He suggests that the true difficulty stemmed from Kierkegaard's guilt from a youthful visit to a prostitute, which Kierkegaard alludes to in *Repetition*. He simply could not bring himself to confess his past to Regine and so he "transformed his concrete suffering into an abstract melancholy."⁸⁴ According to Schrempf, "the actual problem of Kierkegaard's life" was "whether a man who had lost his sexual innocence could ask for the love of a virgin."⁸⁵

⁸² "Sollte es wirklich seine eigentliche und letzte Absicht gewesen sein, an einem 'psychologischen Experiment' das eigentümliche Wesen des Religiösen zu illustrieren? Ich kann das nicht glauben." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 469.

⁸³ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 469.

⁸⁴ "Es war schwerlich zum Nutzen der Sache, daß Kierkegaard in der 'Leidensgeschichte' sein konkretes Leid in eine abstrakte Schwermut verflüchtigte." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 466.

⁸⁵ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 474. For scholarship on the ways in which appeals to a sexual crisis worked as a signal of progressive thinking at the time, see Kevin Repp, "'Sexualkrise und Rasse' Feminist Eugenics at the Fin de Siècle," in *Germany at the*

This “problem” of Kierkegaard’s life likely struck a familiar chord with Schrepf’s readers. It is hard to overstate the extent to which debates about sex and sexuality dominated German society at precisely this moment. One recent historian claimed that such debates “constituted one of the most important political and cultural conflicts in 20th century German history” and “became virtually inescapable for any member of the educated public.”⁸⁶ And the primary issue of contention, especially among the church groups and women’s organizations involved, centered on prostitution: whether it should be regulated, condoned, or condemned.

Placing prostitution at the very center of Kierkegaard’s struggles allowed Schrepf to argue for Kierkegaard’s contemporary relevance, and on a topic far removed from stale church doctrine. While countless organizations sprung up to challenge the role of prostitution in German society, there was no debate about its pervasiveness. In many ways, contemporary medical opinion had helped create the dilemma. It held that prolonged periods of abstinence were detrimental to the development and health of young men, while also holding that masturbation led to nearly every imaginable disease present in society at the time: including epilepsy, madness, suicide and homosexuality. However contemptable, prostitution seemed to be the only answer to this dilemma. A series of surveys between 1910 and 1914 found that between 60% and 93% of men had had their first sexual experience with a prostitute.⁸⁷

Fin De Siecle: Culture, Politics and Ideas ed. Suzanne Marchand and David Lindenfeld (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 103.

⁸⁶ Edward Ross Dickinson, *Sex, Freedom, and Power in Imperial Germany, 1880-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1.

⁸⁷ Referenced in Dickinson, *Sex*, 22. “Surveys published in 1910 and 1911 reported that some 93 percent of medical students and doctors had first had sex with a prostitute. Another study found that, of men infected with STDs in Hanover in 1907-1908, about nine out of ten had been infected through intercourse with a woman whom they paid for sex. A third study, published in 1914, found that 60 percent of men had first had sex with a prostitute.”

Schrempf's claim to uncover the "actual problem of Kierkegaard's life" gets at the core of his approach in this series. As he made clear in his first afterword, Schrempf had little interest in the topics ostensibly pursued by Kierkegaard. He finds Kierkegaard's focus on New Testament Christianity problematic and dismisses his obsession with forgiveness of sins as mostly the remnant of a disturbed childhood. Schrempf also expresses annoyance with most of Kierkegaard's key concepts: contemporaneity with Christ is impossible, indirect communication is presumptuous, and the pursuit of subjectivity is dangerous.⁸⁸ Likewise with Kierkegaard's entire pseudonymous project, ostensibly designed to carefully guide his reader into a true relationship with God. What if all of these machinations were nothing more than Kierkegaard's personal attempt to work through the confusing tensions of modernity? Schrempf acknowledges that the problems explored by Kierkegaard are original and useful, "but in his attempt to solve them he turned too easily back to the path [of Christianity] along which he believed he had to go."⁸⁹ Kierkegaard's problems, not his solutions, interested Schrempf. These, he believed, held a relevant message for 20th Century Germany.⁹⁰

Schrempf's approach to Kierkegaard during the first five years of the series bears witness to a larger theme in Kierkegaard's German reception. Just as with Haecker and Dallago at *Der Brenner*, Schrempf found Kierkegaard to be an instrumental destructive force,

⁸⁸ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 288; Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 291; Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1-2, 290.

⁸⁹ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 479.

⁹⁰ We can see this approach, of probing Kierkegaard for problems and not for solutions, taking root among several of Kierkegaard's more prominent readers in fin-de-siècle Germany. In a 1920 review of a collection of Kierkegaard's writings, Hermann Hesse concluded, "[Kierkegaard's] problems are the same as ours, even if we cannot follow his path. No, we would prefer not to take this path, the final fruit of this bitter and stunted life. We would rather not embrace this autumnal, rough, foundationally loveless art of Christianity with

but incredibly difficult to invoke constructively. Kierkegaard's ire for decrepit institutions and his radical championing of the individual easily took root among sections of the German-speaking world devoted to the same. But these same people found it awkward, or even impossible, to deploy Kierkegaard positively. Schrempf was more explicit than most in this regard. Haecker and Dallago both attempted, at least initially, to fold Kierkegaard into their respective approaches to the dilemmas of modern society. Schrempf, on the other hand, dismisses Kierkegaard's remedies as hopelessly outmoded from the beginning. Yes, Kierkegaard envisioned the iron cage of modernity long before Weber bemoaned its grip. But, at least in Schrempf's eyes, Kierkegaard's devotion to an ultimately traditional Christianity makes it impossible for him to offer any escape.

There is a certain parochialism worth noting in both interpretations of Kierkegaard. As stated in their advertisement for the series, their goal was to “present Kierkegaard in his totality.” In this sense, their analyses remain moored to Kierkegaard; their energies directed more toward deciphering him than toward applying his thought to larger societal issues. Granted, they argued as to whether Kierkegaard encouraged leaving the church or seeking to reinvigorate it. But this was nearly unavoidable given Kierkegaard's own focus on the topic. It was a natural extension of their attempt to depict the real Kierkegaard. Outside of such ecclesial debates, neither Gottsched nor Schrempf presented Kierkegaard as having a broader significance for society. Looking back at Kierkegaard's popularity during the Weimar Republic, Hannah Arendt wrote that the self-confidence of antebellum Germany mitigated the potency of Kierkegaard's writings. “It was only the post-war period,” continues Arendt, “with its propensity for spiritual destruction, that prepared the proper grounds for an appropriation

which Kierkegaard ends." Hesse, "Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben," *Vivos voco. Zeitschrift für neues Deutschland*, vol. 1, no. 10 (July), 1920, pp. 658-659.

of Kierkegaard."⁹¹ Gottsched's and Schrempf's historical role was to sow the seeds for this later appropriation. It would not be until after the trauma of a lost war that Kierkegaard's influence made itself felt in nearly every corner of Weimar culture. Such expansive adaptations of Kierkegaard, however, would be left to the next generation of commentators. Following World War One, Schrempf returned to his task of completing the *Collected Works*.

The Completion of the *Collected Works*

The experience of World War One only deepened Schrempf's bitterness toward official Christianity. Schrempf had been an outspoken pacifist for decades prior to 1914. In an 1886 speech to the Stuttgart branch of the German Society for Peace, Schrempf declared that "Christianity and war are incompatible. A Christian must subject himself to the words of Christ and foreswear the so-called right of self-defense."⁹² And while Schrempf's Christianity had waned by 1914, his devotion to pacifism had remained. Although Schrempf, at age fifty four, was too old for enlistment in World War One, he had long made clear his belief that Christians must choose the path of conscientious objectors. The fact that his youngest son, Gerhard, fought and died in the war only deepened his convictions.⁹³

⁹¹ Hannah Arendt, "Søren Kierkegaard," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 January, 1932.

⁹² "Christentum und Krieg vertragen sich nicht. Der Christ muss, durch Jesus Wort verpflichtet, auf das sogenannte Recht der Notwehr verzichten." Quoted in Harald Wagner, "Christoph Schrempf- ein Liebhaber der Wahrheit und des Friedens," in *Christenmenschen in Baden-Württemberg*, accessed July 23, 2014, http://www.ev-kirchengemeinde-heiningen.de/fileadmin/mediapool/gemeinden/KG_heiningen/Predigten-Texte/Lebensb_Schrempf.pdf

⁹³ Schrempf then lost his eldest son, Erich, in World War Two. In the end, Schrempf outlived four of his five children and two wives. Schrempf was intentionally cagey with respect to his personal experiences in life; not that he felt they were not interesting. In his typically

Diederichs, on the other hand, felt that the experience of war might be just the catalyst needed to bring about a German spiritual revolution, one free from the confines of the church. He hoped, along with many of his contemporaries, that 1918 could serve as a "zero hour" (*Punkt Null*) from which Germany could find a new beginning.⁹⁴ Hans Sluga writes of a "belief that the time was one of world-historical crisis, a crisis so deep that it was no longer purely a political event but a spiritual and philosophical one."⁹⁵ For example, the traditional religious outlets for mourning seemed ill-equipped to deal with the mass death of World War One. This helps make sense, for example, of the postwar vogue of medievalism; an epoch depicted as both full of death, in the form of plagues, and meaning, in the belief that the Middle Ages offered a less fragmented existence than modernity.⁹⁶ Others turned to the occult in an attempt to reconnect with their loved ones who had died, or were feared dead, in the war. The fascination with eastern religions and philosophy likewise registered a dissatisfaction with western frameworks for interpreting the world. While the best-selling book of 1919 was

bombastic, and even Kierkegaardian, fashion, Schrempf gave the following explanation for burning his own diaries: "If it were told, my life story would yield a novel more interesting than all the novels I have ever read. Precisely for this reason, the novel that is my life should die with me, should die in me. No one else should tell it either!" Christoph Schrempf, "Was mir das Leben zu verarbeiten gab" (1918), in Schrempf, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, 288.

⁹⁴ Diederichs suffered from an intense bout of depression following the war and, according to Heidler, attempted to combat it with this belief in a possible new beginning for Germany. See Heidler's section on "Intellectual Positionen der Nachkriegszeit" in Heidler, *Diederichs*, 98-103.

⁹⁵ Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993), 230.

⁹⁶ Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Rememberance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, number two that year was *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, Count Hermann Keyserling's spiritual exploration of Asian lands.⁹⁷

The Weimar era also gave rise to dizzying possibilities of renewal within the more established religions in Germany. Much has been written on this topic in recent years.⁹⁸ For our purposes, a quick survey of the two most emblematic texts in this regard, Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* (1921) and Karl Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* (1919), will have to suffice. These texts prove relevant here in three primary ways. First, both offered a radical reimagining of their respective traditions—Judaism for Rosenzweig and Protestantism for Barth—with the goal of reconnecting to something timeless that had been lost in religion's modern incarnations. Their attempts to pluck lasting truths from the flux of history helped initiate what Peter Gordon names as one of the “key preoccupations of Weimar theology,” namely, the “paradox of relating eternity to time.”⁹⁹ Their key methodological innovation, and this is the second observation, was to place revelation at the very center of their theology.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, both defined revelation as an interpersonal encounter between God and man as

⁹⁷ As one contemporary review put it: “He is a very poor geographical guide...in the presence of stupendous things, he is busy only with what is going on within. What we are getting all the time is the Diary of a soul, not the scenery and circumstance of an external world.” Rufus M. Jones, “Review of *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* by Count Herman Keyserling,” in *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 35, no. 3 (May 1926), 279-284.

⁹⁸ For the most recent studies, see Peter E. Gordon, “Weimar Theology: From Historicism to Crisis,” in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 150-178; Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Koshar, eds., *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012); Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, *Der Heilige Zeitgeist: Studien zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Theologie in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

⁹⁹ Gordon, “Weimar Theology,” 151.

¹⁰⁰ See Samuel Moyn's chapter, “*Totaliter Aliter: Revelation in Interwar Theology*,” for an excellent examination of the epoch-making importance of these two texts and the way in which they both reimagined revelation. Moyn, *Origins of the Other*, 113-163.

opposed to a historical event now mediated through religion. So intense was their guarding of revelation as a necessarily subjective experience that both men courted accusations of gnosticism.¹⁰¹

Thirdly, and most relevant to the topic at hand, both Barth and Rosenzweig acknowledge Kierkegaard's influence on their work. As Rosenzweig attempts to build an entire theory around the experience of revelation, he applauds Kierkegaard for "contest[ing] the Hegelian integration of revelation into the whole." Barth is even more explicit about his debt to Kierkegaard. Replying to a question about his theological method in *Romans*, Barth states, "if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and recognizing that this has a negative as well as positive significance."¹⁰² And when claiming his own lineage, Barth listed the prophet Jeremiah, the apostle Paul, Calvin, and, Kierkegaard.¹⁰³ While *Der Brenner* and the Eugen Diederichs Verlag did the most toward giving Germans access to Kierkegaard, it was Barth who made that access so attractive. "The reception of Kierkegaard's thought," notes Samuel Moyn, "is unthinkable without Barth's stormy personality and instant fame."¹⁰⁴ The heyday of the German intellectual fascination with Kierkegaard had begun.

Diederichs welcomed this explosion of extra-ecclesial spiritual energy, especially since Kierkegaard emerged as one of its primary reactors. As he looked to the completion of the Kierkegaard *Werke*, Diederichs claimed that he could sense a post-war shift away from

¹⁰¹ For an overview and examination of such accusation at the time, see Benjamin Lazier's chapters, "The Gnostic Return," and "Romans in Weimar" in *God interrupted*, 29-50.

¹⁰² Karl Barth, *Römerbrief*, xii.

¹⁰³ Karl Barth, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1924), 164.

Kierkegaard's aesthetic writings, and toward his religious texts instead.¹⁰⁵ This exposed a deep dissonance between his own position and that of Schrempf, one with consequences for the conclusion of the Kierkegaard series. In 1918, Diederichs requested that Schrempf participate in "a religious debate about the consequences of the war for holiness."¹⁰⁶ Schrempf declined and instead wrote an extensive reply explaining his disgust at the premise that the war had brought about a German spiritual renewal. Those who were experiencing it as such, explained Schrempf, were simply attempting to recycle their old faith during hard times. He also expressed disdain toward those who conflated their personal life with *das Volk*.¹⁰⁷ For Schrempf, the war was simply a "pure, unavoidable fact," that could not be analyzed.¹⁰⁸ And it most certainly should not be credited with catalyzing spiritual renewal.

Schrempf's heightened animosity toward attempts to revive German religious consciousness comes through in the final two volumes of *The Collected Works of Søren*

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 168-169.

¹⁰⁵ "Die Wirkung Kierkegaards und seiner Ideenwelt hat in den letzten 20 Jahren eine grundsätzliche Änderung erfahren. Vor dem Kriege waren es vornehmlich seine ästhetisch-künstlerischen und psychologischen Schriften, die dem subjektivistischen, psychoanalysierenden Bedürfnis engerer Kreise entgegenkamen, seit der geistigen Umwälzung aber nach dem Kriege ist es die große religiöse Persönlichkeit Kierkegaards und ihre grundlegende Auseinandersetzung mit der geistigen Existenz des Menschen innerhalb unserer Wirklichkeit und mit dem Christentum überhaupt, die zum Durchbruch gekommen ist." Eugen Diederichs, advertisement for *Søren Kierkegaard/Gesammelte Werke* in Søren Kierkegaard, *Christlichen Reden* trans. Wilhelm Küttemeyer (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1929), 426.

¹⁰⁶ "[Diederichs] laden mich ein, mich an der religiösen Debatte zu beteiligen die sich in der 'Tat' über die Folgen des Kriegs für die Frömmigkeit entsponnen hat." Schrempf, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, viii.

¹⁰⁷ "It is simply not true," repeats Schrempf again and again in his reply, "that the fate of the individual and the fate *das Volk* are one and the same." Schrempf, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, xiii.

Kierkegaard. In his contributions to the series before World War I, Schrempf had made no secret of his annoyance with almost every aspect of Kierkegaard. In these final two volumes, however, Schrempf no longer seems so sure that Kierkegaard was worth the effort. One example of this can be seen in Schrempf's actual translation work, or rather, in the lack thereof. For three out of the four texts included in the final two volumes, Schrempf simply recycles previous versions, the translator of which he thanks for "his service to the project in waiving his rights [to his translation]."¹⁰⁹ Schrempf explains that he still did some translation work in smoothing out the previous version. Adapting some of the irredentist language so familiar to post World War One Germany,¹¹⁰ Schrempf's motivation in these spot corrections was "to annex Kierkegaard to Germany; to make sure that the real Kierkegaard would become a real German author." This type of rebirth, Schrempf assures his reader, "is something that the Dane would have certainly welcomed."¹¹¹

For the penultimate volume, Schrempf combines three of Kierkegaard's texts: *Two Ethical/Religious Discourses*, *The Point of View for my Work as an Author*, and *Over my Work as an Author*. Kierkegaard originally wrote the latter two texts as a final retrospective on his entire

¹⁰⁸ "Denn jetzt ist der Krieg da: als rohe, entsetzliche, auch erhebende Tatsache." Schrempf, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, xxi.

¹⁰⁹ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke, vol. 10: Der Gesichtspunkt für meine Wirksamkeit als Schriftsteller; Zwei kleine ethische-religiöse Abhandlungen; Über meine Wirksamkeit als Schriftsteller* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1922), 171. Schrempf used the translations from H. Kurz's collection of Kierkegaard texts, *S. Kierkegaard's Angriff auf die Christenheit, erster Band: die Akten* (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns, 1896).

¹¹⁰ For an analysis of the immense popularity of geopolitical thought in Weimar Germany, see David Thomas Murphy, *The Heroic Earth: Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918-1933* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997).

¹¹¹ "Denn ich möchte das Meinige dazu beitragen, Kierkegaard sozusagen für Deutschland zu annektieren: so daß der wirkliche Kierkegaard ein wirklicher deutscher Schriftsteller würde.

(pseudonymous and signed) authorship. He sketches a master plan, of which each one of his works played a part, designed so as to guide his reader into a personal relationship with their creator. Unsurprisingly, Schrempf finds Kierkegaard's argument in these texts unconvincing and revisionist. "The tendency of his authorship that he here openly displays," writes Schrempf, "is not the intention with which he entered into it, but rather the intention of providence, which he believes, retroactively, ever more clearly to recognize therein."¹¹² As he had done throughout the series, Schrempf once again claims to know Kierkegaard better than Kierkegaard knew himself.

Schrempf's primary problem with these texts is that they weaken, in two ways, what he sees as the "greatest service" offered by Kierkegaard: his exposure of the deception of Christendom, or cultural Christianity. First, Kierkegaard's obsession with the "dialectic of communication" makes it almost impossible for his reader to know when to take him seriously.¹¹³ Schrempf feels that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous machinations come across more as a literary game than a serious project. Secondly, Kierkegaard becomes far too obsessed with his own psychological state and idiosyncratic concerns. This issue is especially evident in the third text of this volume, a new translation of Kierkegaard's *Two Ethical/Religious Discourses*. Kierkegaard's primary question here is whether it is possible for a nineteenth-century European to become a martyr or an apostle. Unfortunately, explains Schrempf, the only

Dieser Art von Annexion kann ja auch der Däne sich nur freuen." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, 171.

¹¹² "Die Tendenz seiner Schriftstellerei, die er nun offen darlegt, ist nicht die Absicht, mit der er in sie hineinging, sondern die Absicht der Vorsehung, die er nachträglich immer deutlicher darin zu erkennen glaubte." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, 180.

¹¹³ By "dialectic of communication," Schrempf is referring to Kierkegaard's approach to communicating truths. His belief that it must be done indirectly meant that, in his

nineteenth-century European who found such a question interesting or relevant was Kierkegaard himself. Kierkegaard's literary machinations and narcissism ultimately undermine his brilliant attack on the manifold deceptions of contemporary Christianity.

In 1922, thirteen years after the initial volume, Schrempf concluded the series with *Zur Selbstprüfung der Gegenwart anbefohlen* ["For Self-Examination: Recommended for the Present Age"].¹¹⁴ Kierkegaard begins the text with an invocation that he might "win men" for God. He then requests that the text be read out loud so that his reader would "have the strongest impression that [he] only has [himself] to consider, not me..nor others, which would be a distraction."¹¹⁵ The "self-examination" that Kierkegaard offers aims to help his reader discern whether or not they are truly Christians. Kierkegaard's concern is that Christendom has fooled the majority of his contemporaries into false assurance of their salvation. This text, he hopes, will help shake them out of their complacency.

Schrempf continues the confrontational tone of Kierkegaard's text in his afterword. To begin with, Schrempf argues that Kierkegaard trusts scripture so blindly that he lacks all discernment.¹¹⁶ A good translator's task, as he saw it, was to filter out aspects of Kierkegaard's thought infected by his scriptural beliefs and then see what remained that was useful. Schrempf acknowledges that there would be some readers who shared Kierkegaard's beliefs. For them, Schrempf had nothing to offer. "Because I have no wish to disturb the Bible-

pseudonyms, Kierkegaard championed multiple, and often incompatible, ways of viewing the world.

¹¹⁴ Christoph Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Søren Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, vol.11: zur Selbstprüfung der Gegenwart anbefohlen* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1922).

¹¹⁵ See the English translation, Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination, Judge For Yourself!* ed. and trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), XII-XIII.

¹¹⁶ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Søren Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, vol.11*, 195.

believing reader in his self-examination," explains Schrempf, "I suggest to him that the following is not intended for him and please not to read it."¹¹⁷ After making this disclaimer, Schrempf proceeds with his final afterword of the series.

Even more so than before, Schrempf explores in this final volume his personal encounter with Kierkegaard. Schrempf sets the stage with an extended quote in which Kierkegaard identifies doubt in the ascension of Christ as just one more example of modern society emptying Christianity of its value. "I doubt the ascension...I have also examined myself," states Schrempf rather combatively, "and have come to the conclusion that Kierkegaard has misunderstood me and therefore, slandered me."¹¹⁸ For Schrempf, the primary outcome of undergoing Kierkegaard's self-examination was that it became clear to him that he was no longer a Christian. He acknowledges that while this certainly wasn't what Kierkegaard intended, he would not be able to argue with the logic: "quite the opposite," argues Schrempf, "he would have to acknowledge that I simply drew the proper consequences from his instruction and admonition."¹¹⁹ As with Haecker and Dallago, Schrempf thus positions himself as the true fulfillment of Kierkegaard's project.

Even though Kierkegaard helped dissolve his relationship to Christianity, Schrempf argues that he also helped strengthen his personal relationship to Christ. "While I no longer have any official relationship with Christ," explains Schrempf,

¹¹⁷ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke*, vol.11, 192.

¹¹⁸ "Ich bezweifelte die Himmelfahrt...Ich habe mich geprüft. Und ich bin zu dem Ergebnis gekommen, daß Kierkegaard mich mißversteht und deshalb-verleumdet." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke*, vol.11, 192.

¹¹⁹ "Sie nimmt nich ganz von [Kierkegaard] gewünschten Verlauf. Doch könnte er, scheint mir, nichts wesentliches dagegen einwenden. Im Gegenteil: er müßte wohl anerkennen, daß ich damit nur die Konsequenz aus seiner Berlehrung und Mahnung ziehe." Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard Gesammelte Werke*, vol.11, 199.

I still have a relationship with him, just as I have a relationship with Socrates and Buddha, although an official relationship to Socrates is out of the question, and after dissolving my official relationship to Christ, I reject in advance and absolutely the possibility of entering into an official relationship with Buddha and becoming a 'Buddhist.' Kierkegaard has convinced me that it would be better if I completely avoid all official relationships to historical figures; another reason why, for example, I do not become a Kierkegaardian.¹²⁰

Somewhat paradoxical at first glance, this argument actually bolsters Schrempf's claim of fulfilling Kierkegaard's project. One of Kierkegaard's central arguments was that modern Christianity (and Hegelianism) had, in their obsession with a systematic understanding of the world, effectively abolished the individual.¹²¹ Kierkegaard then brutally attacks both speculative philosophy and modern Christianity in the hopes of opening up space for the individual. His mistake, according to Schrempf, was that he ultimately remained moored to Christianity and was not able to go far enough in his attack. Schrempf, on the other hand, had broken free of all official Christianity and could thus, in his mind, relate to Jesus—as well as to Socrates, Buddha and Kierkegaard—as a truly Kierkegaardian individual.

¹²⁰ “Habe ich aber kein offizielles Verhältnis mehr zu Christus, so habe ich doch noch ein Verhältnis zu ihm; wie ich auch zu Sokrates und Buddha ein Verhältnis habe, obgleich ein offizielles Verhältnis zu Sokrates gar nicht in Frage kommt und ich, nachdem ich das offizielle Verhältnis zu Christus gelöst habe, zum voraus und unbedingt es ablehne, etwa zu Buddha in ein offizielles Verhältnis zu treten, indem ich ‘Buddhist’ würde. Kierkegaard hat mich überzeugt, daß ich mich auf ein offizielles Verhältnis zu irgendeiner geschichtlichen Persönlichkeit besser überhaupt nicht mehr einlasse; weshalb ich z.B. auch nicht Kierkegaardianer wurde.” Schrempf, “Nachwort” to *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke, vol.11*, 196.

¹²¹ Kierkegaard's most explicit concerns along these lines can be found in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. “To be a human being has been abolished,” bemoans Kierkegaard, “and every speculative thinker confuses himself with humankind, whereby he becomes something infinitely great and nothing at all.” Or later in the same text: “The only actuality concerning which an existing person has more than knowledge about is his own actuality, that he exists, and this actuality is his absolute interest.” Screen Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 124 & 316.

Schrempf concludes this final volume by acknowledging that one could complain about his disproportional self-representation. "Perhaps some reader will remark with disapproval," admits Schrempf, "that I have misused these afterwords to Kierkegaard's texts by speaking too much of myself; perhaps this has even turned him against me." Schrempf, however, points to this observation as simply one final example of how well he fulfills Kierkegaard's project. "I haven't been talking about myself," explains Schrempf, "or about Kierkegaard, but rather about you, my reader. But I knew no better means of talking about you, than seemingly to talk about Kierkegaard and myself. And so I recommend these texts from Kierkegaard, along with my afterwords, to you for self-examination."¹²² Throughout the series, Schrempf argues that all of Kierkegaard's texts were, at their core, about Kierkegaard himself. Schrempf believed that understanding this allowed his modern German reader to bypass the dross of Kierkegaard's Christianity, coming to encounter the author as an individual. Schrempf sought to do the same in his afterwords. By focusing on his own personal narrative, Schrempf hoped to foster a similar confrontation with his reader as the one he had had with Kierkegaard.

Erich Przywara and Kierkegaard's "unconscious Catholicism"

What did Kierkegaard offer Germans who felt disillusioned with their respective religious tradition but for whom neither Schrempf's anti-ecclesial fervor nor Gottsched's pietist nostalgia proved appealing? Schrempf's call to leave the church behind notwithstanding, Barth showed us that one could harness Kierkegaard's radical criticism of

¹²² Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Sören Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, vol.11, 199.

Christianity while maintaining some vestige of support for its institutional integrity. Yet he did so within Protestantism, a tradition whose very name establishes the importance of critiquing decrepit institutions. But how might this function within the original Christian institution?

In the following pages we will turn to Kierkegaard's most influential Catholic interpreter, Erich Przywara (1889-1972). Like Barth, Przywara turned to Kierkegaard for help in reforming his religious tradition. Both men felt intense frustration with the recent history of their respective religious tradition and found themselves casting about for possibilities of renewal. The details of their frustrations shared little in common. The experience of World War One had convinced Barth that German Protestant theology—with its celebrated union of religion and nation captured in the phrase “Throne and Altar,”—had cast its lot too closely with the German nation. For the Jesuit theologian Przywara, who came of age in the midst of the “modernist crisis” within Catholicism, the problem with Catholicism was nearly the opposite: his church seemed woefully out of touch with the contemporary world. Both men, however, turned to Kierkegaard as a possible way out of their respective dilemmas. Moreover, Przywara argued that only within Catholicism could one live the Christian life as described by Kierkegaard.

Like Dallago, Przywara was born in a contested border region destabilized by the cultural and political force of Germany. Although upper Silesia had formerly been and would soon once again be a part of Poland, at the time of Przywara's birth it was German territory. His household, with a Polish father and German mother, bore the same tensions. Przywara's decision to join the Society of Jesus at age 19 brought him face to face with the anti-Jesuit laws still in force in Germany. Although individual Jesuits could still live and travel within Germany, these laws radically conscribed their activities. Unable to receive training in his home country, Przywara followed thousands of fellow German Jesuits into exile in the

Netherlands.¹²³ After his initial Jesuit training—known as the novitiate—Przywara studied philosophy from 1910 to 1913 at Ignatius College in Valkenburg. Przywara found employment for the next four years as minister of music for a Jesuit school in Feldkirch, Austria, before returning to Valkenburg to complete his doctorate in philosophy and theology. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1920 and, thanks to the repeal of the anti-Jesuit Law in 1917, was able to return home to Kattowitz to celebrate his first mass. But it was only in 1922, when he took a position as editor for *Stimmen der Zeit* [“Voices of the Time”]—a Jesuit periodical based in Munich—that Przywara returned to Germany for good. He remained with *Stimmen der Zeit*, editing and contributing regular articles, for the next two decades.

In order to understand Kierkegaard’s appeal for Przywara, it is necessary to understand the state of Catholicism in Germany at the time. Fin-de-siecle Catholicism was still reeling from the experience of the *Kulturkampf*, the state sanctioned persecution of Catholics in Germany from roughly 1871 to 1878. Granted, recent scholarship tends to emphasize the ultimate failure of the *Kulturkampf*: the new German state simply did not have the mechanisms in place for enforcement of anti-Catholic legislation; Catholics emerged more united and thus more powerful as a political force as a result of the persecution.¹²⁴ Yet this should not distract from the hardships and suffering that the *Kulturkampf* nonetheless

¹²³ Róisín Healy explains that in the face of these restrictions and limitation on their religious activities “most Jesuits preferred to emigrate. They sought refuge in Jesuit houses, often just across the German border, in Blyenbeck, Exaten, and Wijnandsrade in the Netherlands, in Belgium, as well as further afield, such as Ditton Hall and Portico in England, and their missions in Brazil and India.” Healy, *The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 73.

¹²⁴ For the most in-depth examination of the *Kulturkampf*—why it was implemented, how it functioned and why it failed—see Ronald J. Ross, *The Failure of Bismarck’s Kulturkampf: Catholicism and State Power in Imperial Germany, 1871-1887* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998).

brought upon German Catholics throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Tens of thousands of priests were imprisoned, lay Catholics lost their jobs, confessional houses were shut down, ecclesial property was confiscated and thousands of citizens were deported. Perhaps most insidious was the intangible effects of granting official approval to deep-rooted anti-Catholic bias.¹²⁵ As one prominent Catholic wrote in 1920, “it is difficult to make comprehensible to the present generation what the [anti-Catholic] mood had been like in the 1870s.”¹²⁶

For Przywara, at least some of the blame for the Kulturkampf could be laid at the doors of the Vatican. In the decades leading up to the Kulturkampf, a series of Papal decrees had confirmed many of the most insidious stereotypes about Catholics.¹²⁷ For many throughout Europe, the *syllabus of errors* from 1864 proved that Catholics stood against modernism, progress, and especially the political emancipation of European nations from the tradition of Catholic monarchies. Suspicion regarding the loyalties of Catholic citizens

¹²⁵ Some recent scholarship has argued that the historiography tends to overestimate the extent of animosity between the confessions during the Kulturkampf by focusing on the dictates coming from Bismarck rather than the lived reality on the ground. For an excellent example, see Oliver Zimmer’s article that analyzes a series of Corpus Christi processions in three towns as a cypher for examining the state of Catholic-Protestant relations in the late 19th century. Oliver Zimmer, “Beneath the ‘Culture War’: Corpus Christi Processions and Mutual Accommodation in the Second German Empire,” *Journal of Modern History* 82 (June 2010): 288–334.

¹²⁶ Georg von Hertling, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*, vol. 1 (Kempten, 1920), 261.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Zalar examines the validity of many of these stereotypes and finds that German Catholics were indeed far behind their Protestant neighbors in literacy and breadth of reading throughout the 19th century, with some changes occurring toward the end of the century. But Zalar blames internal causes (index of forbidden books, fear of Protestant “sinful” writings) as much as external causes (political and institutional inequalities beyond the control of Catholic church. Jeffrey T. Zalar, “The Process of Confessional Inculturation: Catholic Reading in the ‘Long Nineteenth Century,’” in *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (New York: Berg Publishers, 2001), 133-144.

reached a fever-pitch in 1870 with the declaration of papal infallibility. And nowhere was this suspicion as intense as it was in the newly formed and far from unified German Reich.¹²⁸

Przywara became deeply embroiled in the “modernist crisis” within Catholicism in the first decades of the 20th century.¹²⁹ At the center of this debate stood the papal encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907) in which Pope Pius X defined modernism as the “synthesis of all heresies.” The Modernists, he explains, “lay the axe not to the branches and shoots, but to the very root, that is, to the faith and its deepest fires...so that there is no part of Catholic truth from which they hold their hand, none that they do not strive to corrupt.” And perhaps most horrifying to the Pope was his conviction that, “the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church’s open enemies; they lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart.”¹³⁰ Pius acted on these fears three years later with a declaration demanding that any Catholic in a position of authority—clergy, pastors, preachers, religious superiors, professors—had to swear an oath against modernism. Even though the oath was not enforced in Germany, such attacks on modernity only made Catholic integration into German society that much more difficult.

Yet for Przywara, the most dire consequences of the Vatican’s stance were not cultural or political; they were theological. Przywara’s training at Valkenburg had fostered in him a

¹²⁸ So intense was the fall-out in Germany that it led to a short-lived split among German Catholics. The so-called “Old Catholics” attempted to break away from Rome in response to the declaration of papal infallibility. While the Old Catholics claimed to be orthodox, they made innovations, such as priestly marriage, that played a role in alienating them from other Catholics. They never attained much influence in Germany. See Ross, *Failure*, 38-45.

¹²⁹ See Darrell Jodock, “The Modernist Crisis,” in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*, ed. Darrell Jodock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-19.

¹³⁰ Pope Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis: On the Doctrine of the Modernists*, September 8, 1907, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10pasce.htm>.

desire to engage with modern thought rather than condemn it. As the Catholic Church mounted its campaign to root out all traces of modernity from the flock, the seminary at Valkenburg quietly encouraged philosophical dialogue between modernity and the middle ages, between Kant and Aquinas. As one biographer summed it up, “[Przywara] said he owed his attitude toward the relationship of church to culture and state to those teachers from whom he learned ‘to study in pure objectivity (without pastoral or apologetic secondary goals) each author (regardless of how anti-Christian or anti-religious), to understand them better than they understood themselves, and thus to begin a dialogue with them.’”¹³¹ Przywara constantly critiqued Rome for its role in fostering ignorance among the faithful and argued that her fear of modernity had caused much of the self-isolation of German Catholics. For him, modernity simply meant current lived reality. In this sense, both Aquinas and Augustine were modernists in that they engaged with their respective cultures in order to encourage dialogue with Christianity.

Przywara’s intense study of Aquinas and Augustine led him to the theory for which he is most remembered: the *analogia entis* (“analogy of being”). In Catholicism, analogic theology typically denotes scholastic attempts to talk about God.¹³² Most famously, Aquinas uses analogy in his *summae* in order to justify discourse about God.¹³³ Responding to concerns about how finite humans can talk about an infinite God, Aquinas claims that one could do so

¹³¹ Bernhard Gertz, “Erich Przywara (1889-1972),” in *Christliche Philosophie im katholischen Denken des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* ed. Emerich Coreth (Graz: Styria, 1988) 573.

¹³² For a recent overview of the use of analogy in medieval thinking, see E. J. Ashworth, “Analogy and Metaphor from Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus and Walter Burley,” in *Later Mediaeval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language, and Logic*, ed. Charles Bolyard and Rondo Keele (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 223-248.

by understanding that God left traces of himself in the structure of his creation. Although necessary limited, the created world does offer knowledge of God by analogy. For example, since God created the human family structure it is possible for us to capture something about God's being with the concept of a "good father."

Przywara took this scholastic term and filled it with modern relevance by connecting it to the contemporary trend of existentialist philosophies. Przywara uses the *analogia entis* to argue that we can gain knowledge of God by examining our own being. This is possible primarily in light of the doctrine of *imago Dei*, that humans are created in God's image. There is thus a structural analogy between God's being and our own. He replaced the scholastic gaze outward with the existentialist gaze inward.

This theory, which Przywara calls the "Catholic primal principal," helped him navigate the religious landscape of 1920s Germany.¹³⁴ In theology and culture alike, the Enlightenment had progressively made man the center of all things. Yet the war had laid bare the destructiveness of excessive subjectivity.¹³⁵ Przywara pointed to the flight into systems such as communism and fascism as evidence that people once again craved objectivity in their lives.¹³⁶

¹³³ For discussion of the role and importance of *analogia entis* in the theology of Aquinas, see Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E.M Macierowski, ed. Andrew Tallon (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004).

¹³⁴ Cited in O'Meara, *Przywara*, 77.

¹³⁵ As Karl Neufeld writes, Przywara sensed "the new opportunities emerging in the religious ethos after the collapse of the social order. With one stroke the prejudice, lying so deep in modernity, that religion and Christianity were relics of long transcended epochs of past human history, was eliminated." Karl. H. Neufeld, "Vertiefte und gelebte Katholizität. Erich Przywara, 100 Jahre," *Theologie und Philosophie* 65 (1990): 163.

¹³⁶ "Przywara perceived that World War I had shattered the rationalistic optimism of the Enlightenment and," observes Christopher Barnett, "at the same time, exposed the trouble with the Reformation's anthropological pessimism...the power of subjective reasoning had been challenged; the return of objectivity was inexorable. Only its *form* remained

“Contemporary culture is fashioning movements tending toward an absolute,” writes Przywara’s biographer of the 1920s, “political movements call up the power of the masses; the person experiences a cosmic totality which is both enormous and somewhat chaotic; the individual exists before what Tillich calls the demonic and Heidegger names care and nothingness.”¹³⁷ Przywara saw the same trend at work in the “harsh religion” of Barth and Rosenzweig, with its absent unknowable God casting a shadow on human certitudes. As a result, the only thing one can be certain of is man’s limitations and utter dependency on the unknowable creator.

Przywara offers his *analogia entis* as a balance between these extremes and limitation on each. On the one hand, it acknowledges the importance of the individual as created in the image of God. But on the other hand, since subjective individuals can never fully know God in his totality, it also demands submission to the authority of God’s chosen vessel on earth: the apostolic Church. Przywara refers to this as *katholische Sachlichkeit*, a religious objectivity that helps orient the believer in the midst of the numerous experiences of God.¹³⁸ “Catholicism is a surrender to the mystery of the ungroundable God,” writes Przywara in 1929, “*Analogia entis*, not a logic, but living relationship, implies a basic tension between love (‘God in us’) and reverence (‘God above us’)...Theology is then *reductio in mysterium*.” Contra Hegel, and in line with Kierkegaard, this dialectic is not *aufgehoben* but rather remains in effect and defines man’s relationship with God.

indeterminate.” Christopher Barnett, “Erich Przywara: Catholicism’s Great Expositor of the “Mystery” of Kierkegaard,” in *Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology, Tome III: Catholic and Jewish Theology*, edited by Jon Stewart (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 136.

¹³⁷ O’Meara, *Przywara*, 38.

¹³⁸ Przywara, “Die Religiöse Krisis in der Gegenwart und der Katholizismus (1925),” in *Katholische Krise* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1967), 61.

Przywara found these two strands of contemporary thought—extreme subjectivity and extreme objectivity—present in the German reception of Kierkegaard. In the opening pages to his magisterial study *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards* [“The Secret of Kierkegaard”](1929), Przywara sorts Kierkegaard’s contemporary reception into two camps.¹³⁹ In one, he sees the “psychoanalytic approach,” spearheaded by Brandes and defined by a focus on Kierkegaard’s interiority, his childhood, and his tortured romantic relationship with Regina Olsen. He describes the other camp as “harsh religion,” represented primarily by Barth and defined by an emphasis on Kierkegaard’s radical separation of human endeavors (whether religious or cultural) and divine reality.

Przywara acknowledges the validity of both interpretations before suggesting a third possibility, one in line with his *analogia entis*. Agreeing with the psychoanalytic approach, Przywara does not explain away or ignore Kierkegaard’s dual-authorship. Instead, he views the pseudonymous complexity as evidence of the centrality of Kierkegaard’s desire to “sink as deep as possible into existence,” as well as his prioritizing of “living thought over pure thought.”¹⁴⁰ Przywara’s primary critique of this school of Kierkegaard interpretation, however, is that it tends to ignore or dismiss the central motivating element of Kierkegaard’s philosophy: his Christianity. Taking Heidegger as an example of the whole, Przywara complains that he attempts to remove “what can only be removed with violence: the deeply religious and deeply Christian elements of his philosophy of existence.”¹⁴¹ Taking it one step

¹³⁹ Erich Przywara, *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards* (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1929). Heinrich Roos calls *Geheimnis* “the classic work about Søren Kierkegaard from the Catholic side.” Quoted in Barnett, “Przywara,” 8.

¹⁴⁰ Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 16.

¹⁴¹ Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 26.

further, Przywara states that “Kierkegaard’s existence-philosophy is in its depths ‘existential Christianity’” for it shows that the individual is ultimately based only in God.¹⁴²

The “harsh religion” camp naturally accepts the central importance of Christianity in Kierkegaard’s philosophy. And Przywara appreciates their focus on Kierkegaard’s radical Christianity as well as their attempt to deploy Kierkegaard in their critique of German cultural Christianity. He views Barth’s booming “Nein” to human claims of acting in the name of God as an invaluable corrective to the recent self-satisfaction of Western Christianity. But he nonetheless finds a fundamental flaw in this approach: it lacks any authority. “The final decider is missing,” writes Przywara, “that is the visible, humble man who is the official bearer of God’s authority.”¹⁴³ Without this “final decider,” the negative theology of Barth and acolytes will eventually turn in on itself and, Przywara argues, implode.

Przywara offers an interpretation of Kierkegaard that maintains the human complexity of the psychoanalytic camp as well as the existential passion of the ‘harsh religion’ camp and adds to both the authority of the Church. He does so by describing Kierkegaard as an “unconscious [*unbewusste*] Catholic,” thus sidestepping the awkwardness of arguing, à la Haecker, that Kierkegaard intended for his thinking to lead to Catholicism.¹⁴⁴ Instead, he explains that Kierkegaard “becomes a passage way for his disciples, one that they must leave behind, thankfully, but decisively. Kierkegaard thus is and remains an inbetween...” Przywara’s task is to convince his reader that Kierkegaard’s passage leads to Catholicism.

¹⁴² Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 56.

¹⁴³ “Es fehlt das letzte Entscheidende: der sichtbare, geringe Mensch als amtlicher Träger von Gottes Autorität.” Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 83.

¹⁴⁴ Przywara uses variations of the term “unbewussten Katholizismus” throughout his text, offering a clear example of the desire, instilled in him since Valkenburg, to understand authors better than they understood themselves.

He presents Kierkegaard as “the apex and the overcoming of Lutheranism,” whose example should encourage Lutherans to return the mother Church. In Kierkegaard, Przywara sees the culmination of the Lutheran focus on the sanctity of the individual and his/her relationship with the creator. Przywara acknowledges that Kierkegaard’s corrective was necessary in light of certain abuses in the Church. But a corrective, writes Przywara using Kierkegaard’s own words, “should never become the norm.”¹⁴⁵ This was the grand error of Lutheranism, it became the norm. By distilling Lutheranism to its corrective essence, Kierkegaard makes clear the choice before us: “(for the person whom Kierkegaard’s vortex has hurled into the ultimate depths of life) there is either the ‘return home to the mother [Catholic Church]’ or the wandering of Ahasverus searching out difficulties for their own sake...” Przywara concludes that only in Catholicism can one live the radical Christian life that Kierkegaard desired while also avoiding the existential vertigo of Barth’s negative theology.

Przywara devotes a large portion of his book to unpacking the evidence of Kierkegaard’s unconscious Catholicism. Unlike Haecker, Przywara does not argue that Kierkegaard was on the verge of converting to Catholicism, that he would have done so if only he had lived a longer life. Instead, Przywara views Kierkegaard’s entire life as an analogy pointing toward Catholicism, even if Kierkegaard himself remains unaware of this fact. Przywara makes the broken engagement to Regine Olsen central for this interpretation. But whereas the psycho-analytic camp views this episode as evidence of Kierkegaard’s repressed sexuality and the harsh religion adherents see it as proof of Kierkegaard’s devotion to his spiritual life, Przywara invests it with dense mariological significance. He finds here a deeply

¹⁴⁵ Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 70.

symbolic representation of the transition from the original sin associated with Eve to the redemption offered through Mary. Moreover, Przywara sees in the Eve/Mary binary the “sharpest symbol of the separation [between Catholics and Protestants]: Lutheranism as ‘Christianity of Christ’ and Catholicism as ‘Christianity of Mary,’ Lutheranism as “Christianity of marriage” and Catholicism as “Christianity of the Virgin.”¹⁴⁶ And it is for this reason that Przywara agrees “the Regine-Olsen-experience is not some personal fluke, but is truly metaphysical, indeed here it is a dogmatic symbol.”¹⁴⁷ Kierkegaard’s tortured decision to break his engagement with Regine and devote himself to God was more important than even he realized. It offered an analogy of the move from the original Adam, bound to Eve, to the new Adam, the son of the untouched virgin.

Przywara’s fascination with Kierkegaard had many facets. Philosophically, he appreciated Kierkegaard’s anti-Hegelian dialectic, in which the two poles of the dialectic do not move toward a synthesis but rather remain in opposition.¹⁴⁸ He also found evidence for his theory of the *analogia entis* within Kierkegaard’s writings and life. In his writings, Kierkegaard plumbed the depths of himself for knowledge of humans and God, thus providing support for the central tenet of the *analogia entis*: that we can learn about God’s being by studying human beings. In his life, Kierkegaard represented the end of Lutheranism and the necessary return to the Catholic Church. For Przywara, Kierkegaard is the last Lutheran, the death rattle of Protestantism.

¹⁴⁶ Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 108.

¹⁴⁷ Przywara, *Geheimnis*, 112.

¹⁴⁸ In O’Meara’s words: “Przywara’s dialectic, influenced by Newman and Kierkegaard, is not the stolid structure of Hegel where opposites eternally oppose each other, nor is it the dialectic of Schelling where all is resolved aesthetically; it is instead the polar tension of independent realities.” O’Meara, *Przywara*, 78.

Such invectives notwithstanding, Przywara developed a close relationship with his Lutheran counterpart Karl Barth.¹⁴⁹ Largely due to their shared fascination with Kierkegaard, the two theologians established an intense mutual respect for each other during the 1920s.¹⁵⁰ Barth invited Przywara to participate in several seminars and give talks at the universities where he was teaching in Münster and Bonn. In the preface to the 4th edition of his commentary on Romans (1924), Barth admits his surprise at finding that the Catholic theologian Przywara often seemed to understand him better than his fellow Protestants. Barth even called his relationship with Przywara the “first coming together of theologians of both confessions since the Reformation.”¹⁵¹ For his part, Przywara deeply appreciated the ways in which Barth and the dialectical theologians so thoroughly responded to the times. In opposition to the sclerotic Catholic response to modernity, Barth managed to speak about God in a way that was not only fresh and relevant, but also deeply biblical and Christocentric. This was precisely the type of theology that had intrigued Przywara since his days at Valkenburg. As Barth moved away from Kierkegaard in the late 1920s, his relationship with Przywara faded as well.¹⁵² But in the interactions between Barth and Przywara in the mid

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Christophe Chlamet, “Est Dues in Nobis? Die frühen Jahre der Barth-Przywara-Debatte,” in *Karl Barths Theologie als europäisches Ereignis*, ed. Martin Leiner and Michael Trowitzsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2008), 271-290.

¹⁵⁰ As O’Meara shows, this relationship was so close in the early to mid 1920s that both men came under attack for it: Barth for supposedly adopting Catholic tendencies and the inverse for Przywara. O’Meara, *Przywara*, 104.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in O’Meara, *Przywara*, 104.

¹⁵² As Barth moved away from his youthful Kierkegaardian radicalism into his later dogmatic interests, his relationship with Przywara faded. In 1932, Barth famously declared that “I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of the anti-Christ, and think that because of it one cannot become Catholic.” Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), x. For a recent thorough study of Barth’s changing views of

1920s we have an example of Kierkegaard's reception creating common ground between otherwise antagonistic traditions. In the following two chapters, we will examine a similar phenomenon occurring within the political realm of 1920s Germany.

Conclusion

Both Gottsched and Schrempf claim to discover the real Søren Kierkegaard. In some ways, this meant they mirrored the path followed by Haecker and Dallago. But as their emphasis was more on translation than interpretation, Gottsched and Schrempf's contribution offered less contemporary application of Kierkegaard than had been the case at *Der Brenner*. For Gottsched, the real Kierkegaard was the one revealed in his journals: a devout, pious genius whose one passion was "the love of divine truth."¹⁵³ For Schrempf, the real Kierkegaard could only be found by "reading between the lines."¹⁵⁴ After having done so, Schrempf discovered a much more troubled individual than had Gottsched. Schrempf's Kierkegaard was unsure of himself, tortured by romantic doubts and past sexual sins, trying (and failing) to break free from his religious background and recover his own self in modern society. When Hannah Arendt wrote that Kierkegaard "spoke with the voice of her generation," it was Schrempf's Kierkegaard she was hearing.¹⁵⁵

Pryzwara's central doctrine, see Keith Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (New York: A&C Black, 2010).

¹⁵³ Gottsched, *Buch des Richter*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Schrempf, "Nachwort" to *Søren Kierkegaard's Gesammelte Werke*, vol.10, 179.

¹⁵⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Søren Kierkegaard," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 January, 1932.

There exists one key overlap between Gottsched and Schrempf: both men emphasized Kierkegaard as a destructive force. For Gottsched, this destruction aimed at aberrations in modern Christianity. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, it was meant to be purifying, calling God's people away from false idols and back to their true religion. In Schrempf's hands, Kierkegaard's destruction became more total, and aimed at freeing the individual from all forms of institutional religion. While they differed in how far such destruction should span, both men offered Kierkegaard as a powerful ally for destroying decrepit institutions. For Schrempf, however, Kierkegaard's was a transitional service: He could help liberate the individual—from official Christianity primarily—but once this had been accomplished, Kierkegaard had little more to offer.

In their readings of Kierkegaard, Rosenzweig, Barth, and Przywara offer an interesting amalgam of Schrempf and Gottsched. Like Schrempf, they each turn to Kierkegaard as inspiration for their radical critiques of their respective religious traditions. They also adopt Schrempf's focus on Kierkegaard as a champion of the individual believer's personal experience of the divine in opposition to the authority of tradition. Yet each thinker also retains elements of Gottsched's desire to purify religious tradition. This is most pronounced with Przywara, who always posits the authority of the Church as ballast against an overly existential Christianity. But neither Barth nor Rosenzweig advocates a wholesale rejection of their respective religious tradition. Instead, in their reception of Kierkegaard all three thinkers combine Schrempf's anger with Gottsched's religiosity and create new avenues for the individual believer to exist within tradition.

By 1925, *Kierkegaard's Collected Works* had already gone through a second edition. Germany had access to Kierkegaard's words, but their meaning for contemporary society remained as elusive as ever. As the stress fractures of the Republic became more evident,

Kierkegaard's prophecies about the downfall of western society seemed ever more prescient. The Dane knew what was rotten in Germany. His German interpreters, however, continued to disagree as to the specifics of his diagnosis. In the next chapter, the story of Alfred Baeumler and Wilhelm Küttemeyer will give an example of just how broadly Kierkegaard could be interpreted in the Weimar Republic.

Chapter Four

“A shared space in our intellectual world:” Kierkegaard between Fascism and Communism

In late fall 1929 Theodor Haecker received an advance copy of a new German translation of Kierkegaard's dissertation “Über den Begriff der Ironie. Mit ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates” [*“On the Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates”*]. In a twelve-page diatribe to Ludwig Ficker, who had sent him the text, Haecker focused exclusively on the afterword, which he believed “belonged in the trash.” He described the author as a “Protestant fury” — certainly an insult of the highest degree coming from Haecker, who had recently converted to Catholicism — and concluded that he should be “stuck in a straight jacket and locked away.”¹ Haecker's diagnosis of insanity notwithstanding, the

¹ “Ein furor protestanticus, der eine solche eiternde Furunkulose hervorruft, gehört eingesperrt und in die Zwangsjacke gesteckt, nicht aber gepflegt und ausgestellt von dem Verlag Chr Kaiser in München.” Haecker to Ficker, 22 October 1929, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

Christian Kaiser Verlag in Munich began shipping the book out to stores before the end of the year.

The author of this controversial afterword, Wilhelm Kütemeyer (1904-1972), serves as the primary focus of this chapter. He knits together threads from the previous three chapters. Before he became Haecker's favorite *bête noir*, Kütemeyer hoped to be his colleague at *Der Brenner*. Like so many of his contemporaries, Kütemeyer first encountered Kierkegaard in the pages of *Der Brenner*, and when he embarked on his own Kierkegaard publications, he hoped they would appear in the journal he so revered. Kütemeyer then worked with Schrempf and the Eugen Diederichs publishing house on a translation of Kierkegaard's *Christian Discourses* (1929). Finally, in 1932 when Kütemeyer founded his own journal, *Der Sumpf* ["The Swamp"], he recruited Carl Dallago as one of his primary contributors. This journal—the topic of the following chapter—was shut down by the Nazi's in 1933 and takes us to the final days of the Weimar Republic.

The initial impetus for *Der Sumpf* came from Alfred Baeumler, a professor of philosophy in Dresden. A subscriber to *Der Brenner* who regretted its Catholic turn after the war, Baeumler wanted to create a new journal that would pick up where he felt *Der Brenner* had gone wrong. Specifically, he envisioned a journal based on the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche that would spark a revolution in German society. In the end, Baeumler concluded that the National Socialists offered the best hope for Germany's future. Baeumler then cut off all support for Kütemeyer and their shared project. When *Der Sumpf* finally made it to press in 1932, free of Baeumler's influence, it was as an unorthodox communist journal using Kierkegaard and Marx to combat the rise of fascism.

The intersection of Baeumler and Kütemeyer provides an interesting microcosm of the larger story of Kierkegaard's reception in Germany. Kierkegaard was the only connection

between Baeumler, the successful university philosopher and soon-to-be head of pedagogy for the Nazis, and Kütemeyer, the communist and would-be religious reformer. Their respective interests in Kierkegaard bears witness to the flexible nature of Kierkegaard's reception at the time and the disparate ways in which Germans sought to use his writings. Thinking in terms of a Venn diagram, however, the contents in the center provide the richest substance. What overlap exists between Baeumler and Kütemeyer in their respective appropriations of Kierkegaard?

This chapter argues that the two men ultimately turned to Kierkegaard for the same reason: they both found in him a potent source of destructive power. As we will see, they differed as to the exact application of Kierkegaard's destructive force, and their dissonant visions for Germany's future eventually torpedoed their shared endeavor.

From *Der Brenner* to *Der Sumpf*: Wilhelm Kütemeyer

Wilhelm Kütemeyer was born in 1904 to a Protestant family in the German state of Westphalia. When Kütemeyer left for college, he followed the typical itinerant mold of German students. He moved between Marburg, Munich, Cologne, and Freiburg as he pursued a degree in math and philosophy. During this time, Kütemeyer worked with both Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger. After Scheler's death in 1928 Kütemeyer struggled to find a new advisor for his dissertation on "Teachings on Emotions in Spinoza and Freud." Scheler's successor, Nicolai Hartmann, reportedly replied that the topic contained "two Jews

too many."² Küttemeyer soon gave up on the academy and attempted, without much success, to support himself as an independent author.

Most of what is known with respect to Küttemeyer's university days (1922-1928) comes from an extended epistolary exchange between him and his close friend Hans Jaeger (1902-1976). These letters also provide an early glimpse into Küttemeyer's exposure to Kierkegaard. What was it that so attracted him to Kierkegaard during this period? Moreover, to which figure of Kierkegaard was he relating? The pious prophet of Gottsched? The destructive iconoclast of Schrempf or Dallago? The proto-Catholic of Haecker? Küttemeyer, who was young enough to be any of these men's son, also provides an example of a new generation discovering Kierkegaard.

Much has been written about the truncated and intense generational divides of 20th Century German history.³ The quick succession of massive events—the founding of the German nation in 1871, World War One from 1914-1918, the founding of the Weimar Republic in 1919, the advent of the Third Reich in 1933—meant that Germans born 10-15 years apart entered radically different worlds, with the most substantial caesura being the Great War. Germans born between 1885 and 1895 were between the ages of 20 and 30 when the war broke out, and thus prime fighting age. Yet those born between 1900 and 1905 were

² Anton Unterkircher, "Briefe um die Berliner Widerstandzeitschrift 'Der Sumpf' (1932)" *Briefe in politischer Kommunikation vom Alten Orient bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Ed. Christina Antenhofer, Mario Müller (Göttingen: V&R unipress 2008), 253.

³ The classic assessment that shaped all subsequent scholarship on the topic can be found in Detlev Peukert's *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992). Peukert created the following four generational categories into which he sorted the major public figures of the Weimar Republic: "1) The *Wilhelmine* generation: contemporaries of Wilhelm II; 2) the *Gründerzeit* generation: those born in the decade of the establishment of the Reich; 3) the *wartime* generation: those born in the 1880s and 1890s, the generation which saw military service during the First World War; 4) the generation that was, in various senses, '*superfluous*': those born after 1900." Peukert, *Crisis*, 15-16.

only 10-15 when the war broke out, so their childhood was defined by a war in which they could not fight.⁴

In terms of Kierkegaard's reception, the interpreters publishing in *Der Brenner* and with the Eugen Diederichs house belonged mostly to what has been called the "Wilhelmine" generation, meaning they were contemporaries of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941). Gottsched (1848-1916) stands as the oldest of this group, and the only one born before Kierkegaard had died in 1855. Schrepff (1860-1944) and Carl Dallago (1869-1949) were almost exact contemporaries of Wilhelm. Theodor Haecker, born in 1879, belongs to a slightly later generation, sometimes called the *Gründerzeit* ("Founding epoch"), referring to the decade of the establishment of the German nation. But for our purposes, they all belonged to the first generation of German Kierkegaard interpreters. As a whole, they were mostly concerned with discovering Kierkegaard, and opening up his writings so that others could do the same. While they did not shy away from inserting Kierkegaard's message into contemporary concerns, their primary focus was on access to his corpus, on translations. They were the pioneers surveying the land.

The next generation found this Kierkegaard landscape mostly mapped out. Their focus was less on translation and more on interpretation: keeping with the cartographical analogy, these figures sought to claim the newly charted land for their respective worldview.⁵ Karl

⁴ For a recent examination of this final generation, which provided the majority of leading Nazi officials, see Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

⁵ Suzanne Marchand finds a similar narrative path at work in her study of German Orientalists, namely that one generation lays the academic foundations whereas it falls to the next generation to popularize the topic. "There is a process of cultural production here that should interest us," observes Marchand, "the more popular forms of orientalist critique are always constructed from the previous generations' more scholarly ones, as Voltaire drew on Jesuit scholarship and Bruno on the expert forgeries of Annius of Viterbo." Marchand,

Barth (1886-1968) stands at the vanguard of this group, with his Epistle to the Romans establishing a strong connection between Kierkegaard and the new theology of the Weimar period.⁶ Catholic theologians like Erich Przywara (1889-1972) followed Haecker's lead in arguing that Kierkegaard's attack on Protestantism should lead not to further reform, but to a return to the Roman Catholic Church. Przywara even argued that Kierkegaard's complex obsession with his ex-fiancee Regine should be read analogically as his desire for the Virgin Mary, providing more evidence that Kierkegaard was a "unconscious Catholic" (*unbewußte Katholik*).⁷ Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers took the next step and fully emancipated Kierkegaard's existentialism from its religious bonds. And, as we will see, Bauemler attempted to recruit Kierkegaard for political ends.

Kütemeyer belonged to the third generation of German interpreters of Kierkegaard. This generation encountered an intellectual culture saturated with Kierkegaard's works and their interpretations. On the one hand, this meant they could assume a certain familiarity with Kierkegaard's works in their audience. On the other hand, they also had to constantly define their own positions against those of the previous generation.⁸ For example, Kütemeyer was

"Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe" in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁶ Friedrich Gogarten (1887-1967), one of Barth's earliest theological allies, published his Kierkegaard-influenced theological study *Religion weither* one year before Barth's *Epistle*. Friedrich Gogarten, *Religion weither* (Jena: Diederichs, 1917). Peter Gordon describes Gogarten's text, in which the young theologian first develops his "I-Thou" focused theology, as "one of the earliest signs of the Kierkegaard-revival in Weimar thought." Peter Gordon, "Weimar Theology: From Historicism to Crisis" in Gordon, ed., *Weimar Thought*, 150-178.

⁷ This was the eponymous "secret of Kierkegaard" from Przywara's book, *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaards*. Erich Przywara, *Das Geheimnis Kierkegaard* (München: Oldenbourg, 1929), esp.45-70.

⁸ For the analogous ways in which the French reception of Kierkegaard was almost wholly in terms set by Heidegger and Barth, see Samuel Moyn, "Transcendence, Morality, and History:

reluctant to publish with the Christian Kaiser Verlag due to its associations with Barth's writings. Another example can be found in Theodor Adorno's (1903-1969) critique of Kierkegaard's influence in modern theology and philosophy—meaning primarily dialectical theology and existential philosophy. Adorno attacked especially the “magical incantations” he found distributed throughout Kierkegaard's writings, which he believed lent themselves too easily to fascist appropriations. It is worth noting here that Adorno's text arrived on the shelves on February 27th 1933, the same day that Hitler declared a national emergency and assumed full dictatorial powers. In his assessment of Adorno's Habilitationsschrift—the additional scholarly work required after a dissertation to become eligible for an academic post—Adorno's advisor Paul Tillich (1886-1965) noted the extent to which Kierkegaard permeated contemporary philosophy and theology:

Kierkegaard stands in the center of the theological just as much as of the philosophical discussion of the present. Evidence of this is, among other things, the quickly accumulating literature on him. From the theological side he has moved into the forefront through the so-called dialectical theology; from the philosophical side through the so-called existential philosophy.⁹

It is thus unsurprising that Kütemeyer encountered Kierkegaard early in his university career. The earliest letters we have from his correspondence with Jaeger are from 1924, and already at this time Kütemeyer shows extensive familiarity with Kierkegaard's corpus. Nonetheless, he constantly describes reading new Kierkegaard texts and expresses a desire to

Emmanuel Levinas and the Discovery of Søren Kierkegaard in France,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 104, 2004, 22-54.

⁹ Paul Tillich, “Gutachten über die Arbeit von Dr. Wiesengrund: Die Konstruktion des Ästhetischen bei Kierkegaard,” in *Gesammelten Werke*, vol. 11 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 337.

get his hands on more.¹⁰ He mentions Kierkegaard's *Critique of the Present Age*, the only German translation of which was Haecker's 1914 version for *Der Brenner*.¹¹ At the same time he acknowledged being completely unfamiliar with *Der Brenner* as a whole.¹² It was Schrempf who was Küttemeyer's primary guide to Kierkegaard.¹³ Not only did Küttemeyer read Schrempf's translations, but he also sought out Schrempf when embarking on his own Kierkegaard scholarship, eventually establishing with him a regular correspondence.

Küttemeyer also oriented himself with the Kierkegaard scholarship associated with *Der Brenner* and its authors, seeking to establish his own niche therein. He respected Haecker's early work on Kierkegaard, and even sought out his recent study of Cardinal Newman.¹⁴ He also agreed with Haecker that the key to understanding Kierkegaard lay in his journals and religious writings. But Haecker's reading of these texts, according to Küttemeyer, was distorted due to the fervor of his recent conversion.¹⁵ Armed with this conviction, and making use of his connection with Christoph Schrempf, Küttemeyer began work on a new translation of Kierkegaard's *Christian Discourses* for the Eugen Diederichs Verlag.

¹⁰ cf. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "23.10.25," Teilnachlass Wilhelm Küttemeyer, Kasette 2, Korrespondenzen, WK an Hans Jaeger, 112 St., 1924-1938, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv. Hereafter, letters from this collection are referred to as *TWK*.

¹¹ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Ende 1924," *TWK*.

¹² Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Köln 1925," *TWK*.

¹³ When discussing Brandes' study of Kierkegaard, for example, Küttemeyer notes that "Schrempf has no problem with it." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "7 February 1925," *TWK*.

¹⁴ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "23.10.25," *TWK*.

¹⁵ "Why must Haecker," wrote Küttemeyer, "attack Kierkegaard's dialectic from the standpoint of his Catholicism?" ("Warum macht Haecker gerade von seinem katholischen Standpunkt aus den Angriff auf Kierkegaards Dialektik?") Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "15.10.26," *TWK*.

In 1929 the Diederichs Verlag published Discourses as an extension of the Collected Works of Kierkegaard, even though it was not technically a part of the series. Aesthetically, the binding and cover mirrored that of the Collected Works. Küttemeyer also continued the Collected Works protocol, perfected by Schrempf, of using the afterword as a means of intervening in Kierkegaard's reception. On some points he simply expands upon Schrempf, largely agreeing with his predecessor and mentor. Yet, at a few key points, Küttemeyer addresses concerns that were not on Schrempf's radar a decade before.

Küttemeyer downplays the significance of the pseudonymous texts, arguing that they "are useful in helping one come to the painful consciousness of the sickness unto death, that one is sick unto death; but they offer no cure." In order to find help of this sort, one must turn to his religious writings. The religious discourses are "the central point of his authorial effectiveness,"¹⁶ and they are also "the only place in which, after Kierkegaard's death, one can personally make his acquaintance."¹⁷ Unlike Schrempf, who dismissed Kierkegaard's religious musings as both anachronistic and deceptive, Küttemeyer argues that it is, in fact, in them that we find Kierkegaard at his most honest and most valuable.

Nonetheless, Küttemeyer feels the need to warn his readers about some dangers lurking in Kierkegaard's religious writings. Primarily, Küttemeyer worries about Kierkegaard's lack of moderation in approaching faith. "He does not wish to lead you on the golden middle path,"

¹⁶ "Der Schwerpunkt der schriftstellerischen Wirksamkeit Keirekgaards liegt nicht in den sich dem öffentlichen Bewußtsein durch ihre, wenn auch antipathetische, Verbundenheit mit dem lärmenden Mächten der Welt aufdrängenden Pseudonymen.." Wilhelm Küttemeyer, "Nachwort," in Søren Kierkegaard, *Christliche Reden* trans. Christoph Schrempf and Wilhelm Küttemeyer (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1929) 420.

¹⁷ "Wer die Wahrheit in Wahrheit sucht—wer sie schon gefunden hat, der greift schwerlich noch zu Büchern—der wendet sich an die Reden, in denen allein man nach Kierkegaards Tode noch dessen persönliche Bekanntschaft machen kann—bis zu einem gewissen Grade." Küttemeyer, "Nachwort," in *Christliche Reden*, 420.

explains Küttemeyer, "he leads you deliberately into the insane recklessness of faith, where he can bring to full expression the disease of suffering."¹⁸ The only cure for this disease, in Kierkegaard's mind, is "eternal joy in God."¹⁹ But Küttemeyer worried about how exactly this cure functioned in reality.

Unlike Schrempf, Küttemeyer's concern here had little to do with an individual's relationship to the church, or even to God. He neither speculates on Kierkegaard's hidden orthodoxy nor tries to encourage his reader to leave the church. For Küttemeyer, the danger lies elsewhere. Someone who follows Kierkegaard's advice, worries Küttemeyer, "will be spoiled for the world and no longer useful, his reverence for everything lost, he no longer recognizes any authority, not that of the apostles, not that of any establishment, nor that of Holy Scripture—only God." Given that God is spirit, people in such a state will naturally flock to those who claim direct access to God. And, continues Küttemeyer, "it is only a small step, often none at all, from the agent of Christ on earth to Satan."²⁰ Ultimately, Küttemeyer fears that Kierkegaard's radical understanding of faith—with its utter rejection of compromise—proves incompatible with being a citizen in modern democratic society.²¹

¹⁸ "Nicht auf den goldenen Mittelweg will er sie führen; er leitet sie bedächtlich zur wahnwitzigen Rücksichtslosigkeit des Glaubens, indem er die Krankheit des Leidens zum vollen Ausbruch bringt." Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" in *Reden*, 417.

¹⁹ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" in *Reden*, 417.

²⁰ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" in *Reden*, 417.

²¹ Küttemeyer warned that Kierkegaard's "Schriften haben etwas von der Gefährlichkeit der Wahrheit selbst" ("texts had something of the danger of truth itself about it"). He expands upon this on the following page, explaining that: "Jemand der wahrgenommen hat—nie aber so grauenvoll wie auf Golgatha—daß der Sieg der Wahrheit ihr Untergang ist, dem es ein Fluch wäre, wenn jedermann gut von ihm redete, der die größten Verbrechen durch die öffentliche Meinung verherrlicht sieht und die kleinen verurteilt, der ist für eine staatsbürgerlicher Erziehung verdorben, wiewohl er dem Kaiser gibt was des Kaisers ist und der Räterepublik was ihr gebürt, der kann auch in der erlauchtesten Gesellschaft kein

Kütemeyer was not alone in his concerns about the potential for the political misuse of Kierkegaard. Many critics at the time, for example, attacked Karl Barth's Kierkegaard-inspired theology as dangerously gnostic with its radical emphasis on the "infinite qualitative distinction between God and man," and refusal to respect any earthly authority.²² At around the same time Theodor Adorno was attacking Heidegger and blaming his Kierkegaardian-inflected philosophy for poisoning not only the academic but also the political realm of the Weimar Republic.²³

But it is in Carl Schmitt's (1888-1985) thinking that Kierkegaard received his most potent political apotheosis.²⁴ Schmitt was not only one of the most important juridical thinkers in the Weimar Republic, he was also its most damning critic. For Schmitt, who had witnessed the collapse of the state at the end of World War One, the most important element of a strong

Bürger mehr sein" ("Someone who has ascertained—never so gruesomely as on Golgotha—that the victory of truth is its downfall, for whom it would be a curse if everyone spoke well of him, who sees the greatest crime honored by public opinion and the smallest judged, such a man is ruined for a proper bourgeois upbringing, however much he might give to the Kaiser what belongs to the Kaiser and to the Soviet Republic what belongs to it, he can no longer be a citizen of our illustrious society"). Kütemeyer, "Nachwort" in *Reden*, 418-419.

²² See Benjamin Lazier's chapters on "The Gnostic Return," and "Romans in Weimar," in his *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 26-36; 37-48. For an intensely critical assessment of Barth's influence in the Weimar Republic, see Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, *Der Heilige Zeitgeist: Studien zur Ideengeschichte der protestantischen Theologie in der Weimarer Republik*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), esp. 81-87. "Gegen ein demokratiekompatibles Ethos des Kompromisses," writes Graf, "hätten die "Dialektischen Theologen" nur die Denunziation jedes Ja zur bestehende Ordnung zu setzen vermocht." Graf, *Zeitgeist*, 18.

²³ See especially Adorno's Habilitation-lecture from 1931, "Die Aktualität der Philosophie," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 325-344.

²⁴ For an examination of Kierkegaard's influence on Schmitt's thought, see Bartholomew Ryan, "Carl Schmitt: Zones of Exception and Appropriation," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought: Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 14, ed. Jon Stewart, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), 177-208.

government was its sovereignty, or as he famously defined sovereignty, the ability to decide in the moment of crisis.²⁵ In his view, the “endless talk” of Weimar’s parliamentary democracy simply could not provide this type of authority. Schmitt thus hastened its demise and then welcomed its replacement with the strong hand of the Nazi Reich.²⁶

Kierkegaard’s influence on Schmitt is relatively well known. Unlike his friend Heidegger, Schmitt openly acknowledged the importance of Kierkegaard in his own philosophical system. At the very center of this system lay the Kierkegaardian concept of the exception. Pushing back against the tidy system of legal positivism, with its vision of jurisprudence as an entity entirely free of external concerns, Schmitt argued provocatively that it was precisely the exception that should hold our focus. In fact, Schmitt places the exception at the very center of his political theory, combining it with a Kierkegaardian focus on the existential import of decisions. In the potently direct language that characterized so much of Schmitt’s writings, he defines sovereignty simply as “he who decides on the exception.” As Schmitt makes clear in *Political Theology*, it was Kierkegaard, the “Protestant Theologian” who provided the most incisive understanding of the exception as a philosophical metric:

A Protestant theologian who demonstrated the vital intensity possible in theological reflection in the nineteenth century stated: ‘the exception explains the general and itself. And if one wants to study the general correctly, one only

²⁵ “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception” are the opening words to Schmitt’s *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 5.

²⁶ For a more positive, if not entirely convincing, appraisal of Schmitt’s legacy, see Ellen Kennedy, *Constitutional Failure: Carl Schmitt in Weimar* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Kennedy argues that Schmitt should be seen as a useful political theorist of democracy and not condemned outright for his eventual support for the Nazis.

needs to look around for a true exception. It reveals everything more clearly than does the general. Endless talk about the general becomes boring; there are exceptions. If they cannot be explained, then the general also cannot be explained. The difficulty is usually not noticed because the general is not thought about with passion but with a comfortable superficiality. The exception, on the other hand, thinks the general with intense passion.²⁷

Most accounts of Kierkegaard's influence on Schmitt begin and end with Schmitt's theory of the exception and the decisionism to which it led. Granted, this alone accords Kierkegaard pride of place in any account of Schmitt's intellectual development. As a recent study put it, "the fact remains that Schmitt uses Kierkegaard's "exception" (*Untagelse* from *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*) as the central thesis to his project, and views Kierkegaard as the most articulate thinker on the exception..." But in light of his apotheosis of the nation state and subsequent melding of politics and theology, it seems clear that Schmitt's ultimate goals betrayed their Kierkegaardian means. Most pronounced in this vein is the fact that Kierkegaard's radical focus on the individual—the golden thread running through Kierkegaard's reception at the time—seems to have no place in Schmitt's theory of the modern state.

Recent research, however, suggests a more complex role for Kierkegaard's theory of the individual in Schmitt's philosophy. Considering that Schmitt's mature worldview appears to completely devalue the individual in the name of an all-powerful central state, discerning this influence requires digging a bit deeper into Schmitt's intellectual development. By studying Schmitt's diaries and legal writings during the war, Michael Dylan Rogers argues that Schmitt underwent a profound transformation as a result of his experiences on the home front during World War One—Schmitt hurt his back during basic training and spent the war

²⁷ Schmitt, *Politische Romantik*, 22.

in a censorship office in Munich. What Rogers uncovers is a young thinker tortured by the implications of his own thinking. And at the center of Schmitt's internal battle was a very Kierkegaardian concern: the individual and its place in society. Surprising to those who only know Schmitt as the great jurist—and apologist—for untrammelled government authority, at the outbreak of the war his greatest concern was the potential loss of individuality in modern society.²⁸

As evidenced by his 1914 book *Der Wert des Staates und die Bedeutung des Einzelnen*, Schmitt's focus on this topic predates his experience in World War One.²⁹ The rise of the military state—which ultimately culminated by early 1916 in the de facto military dictatorship of Ludendorff and Hindenburg—deepened Schmitt's fear for the fate of the individual. As he confessed at one point in his diary: “there is no rescue and no help from militarism; after the war it will keep getting worse. The individual is nothing; frightful.”³⁰ But at the same time, Schmitt became ever more convinced of the need for a strong executive able to maintain order in the face of societal crises. Rogers traces out Schmitt's tortured path to accepting that the “merely normative demands of the individual must be subordinated to the concrete actuality of the political situation.”³¹ With the collapse of the German state in 1918 followed by the

²⁸ Michael Dylan Rogers, “The Development of Carl Schmitt's Political Thought During the First World War,” *Modern Intellectual History*, April 2015, 1-27.

²⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Der Wert des Staates und die Bedeutung des Einzelnen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1914).

³⁰ Carl Schmitt, *Die Militärzeit 1915 bis 1919* hrsg. Ernst Hüsmert und Gerd Giesler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 11 (17 Sep. 1915).

³¹ Rogers, “Development,” 2.

perceived fecklessness of the Weimar government, Schmitt became ever more adamant in his prioritizing of a strong state over and against the demands of the individual.³²

According to Rogers, the decisive year in Schmitt's development came in 1915. On the verge of suicide, Schmitt underwent a "Catholic reawakening of sorts" thanks to the reading of a pamphlet called *Wiedergeburt*, put out by the right wing Catholic group *Deutscher Orden*.³³ The ability to connect a deep respect for the individual with submission to authority and order helped Schmitt make peace with the competing poles in his political thought. Eventually, this would lead to Schmitt's famous dictum that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."³⁴ The apotheosis of the state had found one of its great champions.

At first pass it would seem that Schmitt's transformation signals a move away from Kierkegaard. Schmitt's subordination of the individual to the state would be nothing short of blasphemous to Kierkegaard, who viewed the individual as sacrosanct and politics as largely meaningless.³⁵ And while Kierkegaard devoted much of his writing towards the goal of separating theology and politics, Schmitt built his entire worldview on an existential

³² For an analysis of Schmitt's political theory in context at the time, see Duncan Kelly, *The State of the Political: Conceptions of Politics and the State in the Thought of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Franz Neumann* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³³ "Founded during the Third Crusade," explains Rogers, "the *Deutscher Orden* (Teutonic Knights) had given rise, by this point, to a politicized press representing what might be termed the Catholic wing of militant German nationalism. Rogers, "Development," 23.

³⁴ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

³⁵ For an overview of Kierkegaard's antipathy towards politics—he consistently ridiculed democratic movements in his day—see the Preface to Jon Stewart, ed. *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, vol. 14, Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), ix-xv.

connection between the two.³⁶ But another diary entry from 1915 suggests that Kierkegaard loomed large at the very moment of Schmitt's massive transformation. For on May 11th Schmitt records a serendipitous discovery in a Munich bookstore:

Went down the street, when the Captain had left for an hour, accidentally saw a book by Kierkegaard in the shop and bought it: *Kritik der Gegenwart*. was excited with joy (the translator is Theodor Haecker and lives in Munich), delved inside the book and didn't get any other work done. Ate with Cari and Georg in the Neue Börse for lunch, then we all had coffee on the first floor of café Bauknecht. Cari went to see the doctor, I went to the office...Eagerly reading Kierkegaard. In the evening happily at home. It's beautiful weather...³⁷

What was it about Kierkegaard's *Kritik der Gegenwart* ["Critique of the Present"] that caused Schmitt to be "excited with joy" upon reading it? And how are we to think of this enthusiasm in light of Schmitt's transformation during that same year? Unfortunately Schmitt left no explicit answers to such questions. But considering what we now know about Schmitt's intellectual concerns at the time, as well as the manner in which he eventually worked them out, it is possible to understand the excitement stirred up in Schmitt by Kierkegaard's text.

Kritik der Gegenwart focused on rescuing the individual from society.³⁸ The primary 'critique' offered by Kierkegaard was that his age lacked passion, and that a "pointless chatter" — meaning both the press and modern politics — had infected society and replaced any real action in the world. The "leveling of society" had made it impossible for individuals to make real decisions and act in the world. In the afterword, Haecker offers Kierkegaard's

³⁶ On this point see Heinrich Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt: Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, trans. Marcus Brainard (Chicago, 1998).

³⁷ Schmitt, *Die Militärzeit 1915 bis 1919*, 66.

³⁸ See Chapter 1 for an extended analysis of Haecker's translation and afterword.

worldview as “the only possible salvation for the individual.”³⁹ He claims that Kierkegaard strips the individual down to his “first day” where “he once again stands in his proper place.”⁴⁰ As Schmitt desperately cast about for intellectual moorings for the modern individual, the potency of such claims had for him is easy to understand.

At first glance, the fact that Schmitt emerged from 1915 with a political theory radically prioritizing the state over the individual makes his excitement surrounding Kierkegaard’s text rather confounding. A theory that calls for the submission of the individual to an external authority seems like a betrayal of Kierkegaard’s sacrosanct view of the individual. Without going too far astray, I suggest that this is not the case. Schmitt does not betray Kierkegaard’s view of the individual, but rather replaces the purely theological requirements for becoming a self found in Kierkegaard with secular (though existential) political requirements. Kierkegaard argues that a person only becomes a true individual, a true self, by accepting certain existential truths (namely the unity of the finite and the infinite in their spirit) and by submitting to an external authority (God the creator).⁴¹ Schmitt argues that a person only becomes its truest self by accepting certain existential truths (that ultimate

³⁹ Theodor Haecker "Nachwort," *Der Brenner*, 15 July 1914, 906.

⁴⁰ Haecker, “Nachwort,” 908.

⁴¹ Romano Guardini explicitly attacks Kierkegaard on this point, namely that his dynamic notion of the human self—in which action is required to attain selfhood—makes for a dangerously unstable view of human selfhood. As Peter Sajda explains, Guardini was troubled by Kierkegaard’s “axiological definition of personhood” in which “an individual human becomes person first through his or her ‘ethical-religious stance and disposition,’ and anyone failing morally or religiously is denied the title of *person*.” Peter Sajda, “Between Actualistic Personalism, Qualitative Dialectic and Kinetic Logic” in Jon Stewart, ed., *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources. Vol. 10, Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology, Tome III: Catholic and Jewish Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 56. For an extended analysis of this disagreement, see Stephan Pauly, *Subjekt und Selbstwerdung. Das Subjektdenken Romano Guardinis, seine Rückbezüge auf Søren Kierkegaard und seine Einlösbarkeit in der Postmoderne* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2000).

meaning is found in the state) and by submitting to an external authority (the sovereign ruler of the state). While such connections deserve more in depth examination, the primary point here is that Kierkegaard's influence on Schmitt at this key moment in his life extended beyond the concept of the exception.

Kierkegaard's focus on the existential importance of decision, his theorizing of the power of the exception, and his valuation of the individual according to strict metrics are all evident in Schmitt's ominous version of political decisionism. In Schmitt's hands, sovereignty becomes synonymous with the power to take decisive action, namely, the power to declare a state of emergency.⁴² He longed for a political order that would break through the empty chatter of parliament and take decisive action.⁴³ After the relative stability of the mid-1920s, the Weimar Republic was once again teetering on the edge of radical politics. It was within this context that Küttemeyer found Kierkegaard's "insane recklessness of faith" so disconcerting.

Küttemeyer and *Begriff der Ironie*

Küttemeyer's interest in Kierkegaard was multifaceted and constantly evolving. At the same time as he was completing *Discourses*, Küttemeyer considered taking on Kierkegaard as the topic of his doctoral thesis. Specifically, as he wrote to Jaeger in 1925, he hoped to "make

⁴² In this way Schmitt, the "crown jurist of the Third Reich," theorized Hitler's continual suspension of the Weimar constitutional order. See John McCormick, "The Dilemmas of Dictatorship: Carl Schmitt and Constitutional Emergency Powers" in David Dyzenhaus, ed., *Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 217-251.

⁴³ On this note, see especially Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus* (München: Duncker u. Humblot, 1923)

an analysis of conscience" in Kierkegaard. Max Scheler, with whom Kütemeyer hoped to write his dissertation, doubted the suitability of Kierkegaard for such a task. "This Protestant brooding," Scheler informed Kütemeyer, "and extreme subjectivity simply doesn't make sense for doctoral work."⁴⁴ Kütemeyer gave in and switched his topic to a comparison of Spinoza and Freud. Yet this experience only increased his disillusionment with academia and his interest in Kierkegaard. Later he confessed to Jaeger that he viewed Kierkegaard as an escape from all that he hated about academia.⁴⁵ Three years later he dropped out of the university without finishing his degree.

Kütemeyer had also recently begun translating Kierkegaard's dissertation "Über den Begriff der Ironie. Mit ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates" [*The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*]. Kütemeyer concluded that this text, when properly understood, had the potential to change the entire landscape of Kierkegaard scholarship in Germany. Several times in his letters with Jaeger, Kütemeyer remarked on his progress in translating *Concept of Irony*. "I'm not sure if I mentioned to you," wrote Kütemeyer, "that I recently, with great joy, rediscovered Kierkegaard's dissertation...[I feel] incredible agreement, even in the smallest things; what fun!"⁴⁶ More importantly, he believed that the text challenged the foundations of Kierkegaard scholarship among his contemporaries. "The way in which Guardini, Barth-Gogarten, Schrempf, and Haecker have contributed to a misunderstanding of K[ierkegaard],"

⁴⁴ Kütemeyer reported this conversation in a letter to Jaeger. Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "Cöln-Rodenkirchen, 10.12.25," *TWK*.

⁴⁵ After expressing that he was "fed up with university studies," Kütemeyer writes "I have fled to Kierkegaard in order to escape the demons; I am now translating his *Speeches* for the next volume." Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "Cöln-Rodenkirchen, 10.12.25," *TWK*.

⁴⁶ "Ich weiß nicht ob ich dir schrieb, daß ich mit großer Freude Kierkegaards Doktorarbeit wiederentdeckte, ja wiederentdeckte, als ich jetzt wieder die las; herrliche Übereinstimmung

writes Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "can be traced back to a misjudgment."⁴⁷ Küttemeyer had found his niche.

It was also at this time that Jaeger connected Küttemeyer and Ficker. In a 1926 letter to Ficker, Küttemeyer articulated his deep respect for *Der Brenner* as well as his hopes for participating in its work. In fact, he hoped that the letter might find its way into the pages of *Der Brenner*.⁴⁸ "Next to *Der Fackel*," wrote Küttemeyer, "*Der Brenner* is the only contemporary journal that I recognize as an ally...in the battle with the spiritual tribulations of our time."⁴⁹ Although Ficker chose not to publish his letter, Küttemeyer continued the correspondence, and, in 1927, inquired as to Ficker's interest in publishing his translation of *Concept of Irony* in *Der Brenner*.⁵⁰ Familiar with *Der Brenner*'s financial problems, Küttemeyer stated that he would be willing to forego the customary honorarium if necessary.⁵¹

Ficker responded almost immediately with excitement about the prospect. Unbeknownst to Küttemeyer, Ficker had been interested in publishing *Concept of Irony* for over

auch in kleinen Kleinigkeiten: das war ein Spaß!" Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Köln, Juli 1926," *TWK*.

⁴⁷ "Das, was Guardini, Barth-Gogarten, Schrempf, Haecker zu einem Mißverständnis [Kierkegaards] beigetragen haben, läßt sich auf eine Verkennung." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Milspe, 27.6.28," *TWK*.

⁴⁸ Küttemeyer asked Jaeger's advice as to whether he should write it longhand or type it out and asked him to edit the letter to make sure it would "bring joy to Ficker." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "22.9.26," *TWK*. Küttemeyer's desire to have the letter published also comes up in a later correspondence with Dallago. Dallago to Küttemeyer, "30.Mai.1932," *TWK*.

⁴⁹ "Wenn ich nach Bundesgenossen suchte im Kampfe mit den geistigen Widerwärtigkeiten unserer Zeit, so blieb mir von den heutigen deutschen Zeitschriften neben den *Fackel* schließlich immer nur der *Brenner*." Quoted in Unterkircher, "Der Sumpf," 254.

⁵⁰ Küttemeyer to Ficker, 11.4.27, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der *Brenner*, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

a decade.⁵² Küttemeyer's offer to complete the translation pro bono clearly piqued Ficker's interest. "I believe that I can assure you, despite all the difficulties," replied Ficker to Küttemeyer's offer, "that if you are willing to forego the honorarium, I can push through the publication at the Brenner-Verlag."⁵³ With this assurance in hand, Küttemeyer pressed ahead with his translation.

The timing proved less than ideal as Ficker soon realized that he would not be able to keep *Der Brenner* afloat. He thus had to inform Küttemeyer that, due to financial difficulties, the journal would not be able to publish his translation.⁵⁴ Already deep into the translation, Küttemeyer sent the manuscript elsewhere. The Christian Kaiser Verlag in Munich, known in Kierkegaard circles primarily as the publisher of Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten, showed the most interest. Although Küttemeyer had explicitly hoped to avoid Kaiser due to its association with Barth, no other option was available to him. Küttemeyer accordingly signed a publishing contract with Kaiser for his translation of Kierkegaard's *Begriff der Ironie*, and, in late fall 1929, sent in the final draft for publication.

⁵¹ Küttemeyer to Ficker, May 1927, in *Ludwig von Ficker: Briefwechsel, vol. 3: 1926-1939* ed. Ignaz Zangerle, Walter Methlagl, Franz Seyr, Anton Unterkircher (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1991), 722.

⁵² Soon after Haecker's first Kierkegaard translation for *Der Brenner*, Ficker asked if he would take on Kierkegaard's dissertation as his next project. Ficker to Haecker, 25 September 1914, in *Ludwig von Ficker: Briefwechsel, vol. 1: 1909-1914* ed. Ignaz Zangerle, Walter Methlagl, Franz Seyr, Anton Unterkircher (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1986), 19.

⁵³ "Den Begriff der Ironie habe ich mit großen Interesse zu lesen begonnen. Ich glaube Ihnen versprechen zu können, daß ich trotz aller Schwierigkeiten die Herausgabe im Brenner-Verlag, wenn Sie von einer Honorarforderung absehen, werde durchsetzen können." Ficker to Küttemeyer, *Ficker: Briefwechsel, vol. 3*, 723.

⁵⁴ In a letter to their mutual friend Jaeger, Ficker explained that *Der Brenner* would be closing its doors. He also asked that Jaeger pass on the news to Küttemeyer so that he could look elsewhere for a publisher for *Begriff der Ironie*. Ficker to Jaeger, 11 February 1929, Ludwig

With a flair for ruffling feathers that would only increase in the coming years, Küttemeyer added an afterword to his translation that gave Kaiser pause about honoring the contract. In fact, they initially refused to publish it with the afterword as it stood. Küttemeyer wrote to Ficker for advice on how he should proceed. Including a copy of the afterword, he explained the situation and requested that Ficker let him know "whether he was correct to insist that the Kaiser Verlag stand by their publishing agreement." Ficker read the afterword and "was perplexed." He responded that Küttemeyer should thank God that the Kaiser Verlag had hesitated to publish such an embarrassing piece.⁵⁵ Ficker also sent the afterword on to Haecker, whose response he awaited.

Küttemeyer never replied and instead pushed ahead with negotiations with Kaiser. At one point, Küttemeyer met with an editor at Kaiser who encouraged him to retain the afterword. To Küttemeyer's surprise, this editor was especially pleased with how vehemently Küttemeyer rejected Barthian theology.⁵⁶ Apparently not everyone at the Kaiser Verlag supported the Barth/Gogarten contingent, something that Küttemeyer found as shocking as he did encouraging. Not only did it make him feel Küttemeyer feel more comfortable about publishing with Kaiser, it also made him more confident that he should insist upon the inclusion of his afterword.

von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁵⁵ "Ich las und war perplex. Ich nahm mir Herrn Küttemeyer gegenüber kein Blatt vor den Mund und schrieb ihm, er könne Gott danken, wenn der Verlag Kaiser, der damit sein Ansehen auf das Spiel setzte, sich weigere, dieses Nachwort zu drucken." Ficker to Haecker, 5.IX.1929, *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 144-145.

⁵⁶ "Especially pleasing to [the editor] was the vehemence with which I attacked Barthian theology. Something I would have never dreamed possible I now have confirmed from reliable sources: Salomon Otto from the Chr. Kaiser Publishers is a decisive opponent of dialectical theology." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "4.12.29," *TWK*.

The Kaiser Verlag moved forward quickly with the publication of Kütemeyer's text. After the logjam of negotiations regarding Kütemeyer's afterword, the decision ultimately came down to more practical concerns: Kaiser worried about being scooped by the competition. Just weeks after Kütemeyer wrote to Ficker asking for advice, the Oldenbourg Verlag in Berlin published Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*, translated by Hans Heinrich Schaeder.⁵⁷ Kaiser could no longer lay claim to the first German translation of *The Concept of Irony*. But they could at least publish their version as quickly as possible, and also undercut the competition. As Kütemeyer noted with frustration to Jaeger, Kaiser dropped the price of his translation as a result, thus reducing his share in the process.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, Kütemeyer was pleased to have his work on the bookshelves, especially with his afterword intact.

These simultaneous translations offer a snapshot of the state of Kierkegaard reception at the end of the 1920s. In pre-WWI Germany, Kierkegaard enthusiasts viewed Kierkegaard as a largely unexplored source, leading many like Rilke, Kafka, Kassner and even Haecker to study Danish so as to tap the source itself. By the beginning of the 1920s, *Der Brenner* had succeeded in injecting Kierkegaard into the German-speaking cultural psyche and had largely established itself as the mediator of Kierkegaard in German society. Then Barth, Gogarten and others co-opted Kierkegaard into their unique neo-Orthodox Christianity, using him as a cudgel against the reigning liberal theology of the day. Moreover, alongside the selections in *Der Brenner*, by 1922 Kierkegaard enthusiasts had access to the twelve-volume *Collected Works of Kierkegaard*.

⁵⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Über den Begriff der Ironie. Mit ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates*, trans. Hans Heinrich Schaeder (Berlin: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1929).

⁵⁸ "Kaiser hat der Oldenbourgschen Ausgabe wegen den Preis der meiner Ex. von 8.50 auf 7.50 heruntergesetzt." Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "Göttingen, 21. Juli 29," *TWK*.

Both Küttemeyer and Schaeder called for a change in the treatment of Kierkegaard by their contemporaries. Schaeder hoped to remove Kierkegaard from presentist debates and parse him according to proper academic disciplines. Küttemeyer, on the other hand, felt that the German Kierkegaard industry had largely calcified by the end of the 1920s, forcing the once great scourge of official Christianity to fall in line as one more pious voice in the Christian tradition. He believed, along with Dallago, Arendt, Rilke and others, that Kierkegaard had much to say to his generation. In Küttemeyer's mind, Kierkegaard's dissertation contained the radical potential to redefine Kierkegaard's role in contemporary German culture.

Schaeder shows no interest in making Kierkegaard relevant to contemporary society. In fact, he explicitly distances himself from such an approach. "Kierkegaard, as everyone knows," explains Schaeder, "has won such an immediate meaning for certain branches of contemporary German theological thinking, that due to the attempt to make him relevant—or in order to converse with him, to make him contemporary—the will to understand him historically has been lost."⁵⁹ Schaeder approached the task as the academic historian that he was—his previous text was a study of syncretism in ancient Iran and Greece. For him, *The Concept of Irony* offered an ideal point from which to understand Kierkegaard in his historical context.

Schaeder focuses on the way in which Kierkegaard's dissertation offers a contribution to three historical areas of interest. First, it helps us understand Kierkegaard's intellectual development. Schaeder thus presents this text as a starting point from which to understand Kierkegaard's entire authorship and lifelong battle—soon played out among his

⁵⁹ Schaeder, *Ironie*, V.

pseudonyms — to "come to himself."⁶⁰ Second, it contributes to the history of Socratic reception. Kierkegaard offered Socratic irony as a counter to "eternally absolute negativity" of Hegel's irony. Finally, Kierkegaard's text should be seen as a chapter in the history and critique of Romanticism. Schaeder then concludes his foreword by comparing Kierkegaard's style of prose — which he describes as "musical but not artistic" — to his Danish contemporaries.⁶¹

Kütemeyer also presents Kierkegaard's dissertation as crucial for gaining access to Kierkegaard himself, though he takes a different angle and comes to a different conclusion than Schaeder. As Haecker had done in his conflicts with Dallago, Kütemeyer claims that one should grant more weight to works Kierkegaard published in his own name than those published behind a veil of pseudonymity. Yet while Haecker used this argumentation in order to favor Kierkegaard's more orthodox religious writings and journals, Kütemeyer does so as a means of favoring Kierkegaard's dissertation on irony and his radical attack on the Church in *The Moment*. Kütemeyer argues that the fact that Kierkegaard wrote his dissertation before he had entered into his aesthetic authorship granted it a sort of *Ursprung* purity. Kütemeyer presented the text as a "place of rest and a starting point" from which to understand everything that came after.⁶²

Kütemeyer devotes little space to actually exploring the text he had just praised. He turns instead to larger questions of Kierkegaard's legacy. Namely, Kütemeyer focuses on the connection between Kierkegaard's pseudonyms and Kierkegaard himself and the distortions

⁶⁰ Schaeder, *Ironie*, III.

⁶¹ "Seine Sprache ist nie malerisch, aber immer musikalisch." Schaeder, *Ironie*, VIII.

⁶² Wilhelm Kütemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Über den Begriff der Ironie mit Ständiger Rücksicht auf Sokrates* by Soren Kierkegaard (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1929), 342.

in contemporary views of Kierkegaard resulting from misunderstanding this connection. This was the "misjudgment" Küttemeyer hoped to remedy with this text. The controversy of Küttemeyer's afterword stems from his forceful attempt to shape Kierkegaard's legacy in Germany.

According to Küttemeyer, there was an epidemic in Kierkegaard studies, which he equates to a slap in Kierkegaard's face.⁶³ Kierkegaard clearly delineates between his own views and those of his pseudonyms and asks posterity to do the same. Why then, wonders Kierkegaard, do leading German scholars seem content with ignoring this? Why do they extract theses from "the mouth of an unreal, fictional person" and then analyze and speculate on them as if they represented Kierkegaard's own view?⁶⁴ These people fish around in Kierkegaard's works and construct a piecemeal prophet who will support their respective positions.⁶⁵ He that does so, declares Küttemeyer, is at the very least "a counterfeiter of the most clever sort," and should not be surprised "when he is openly described as such, with all the emphasis, and should accept the guilt, when he is treated as such."⁶⁶ Donning his own prophetic mantle, Küttemeyer declares that those guilty of such sins "will not escape their fate!"⁶⁷

⁶³ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 351.

⁶⁴ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 351.

⁶⁵ "Dort wo Kierkegaard durch den Mund einer unwirklichen, gedichteten Person, in Schalksweisheit einseitig, überspitzt reden will, überspannte forderungen stellen will – analysiert und durch scharfsinnige Ergänzungen Kierkegaards Standpunkt – der garnicht da ist – schärfer herausholt als er selbst es vermochte..." Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 351.

⁶⁶ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 348.

⁶⁷ "Derjenige wird seinem Schicksal nicht entgehen (er wird nicht!)" Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 348.

Although never naming him, Küttemeyer clearly has Haecker directly in his crosshairs.⁶⁸ After tearing through a litany of complaints, Küttemeyer bemoans the worst fact of all: that one who commits all of these crimes can be viewed as "a respected interpreter of Kierkegaard."⁶⁹ Although not denying the intelligence or competence of this unnamed culprit, Küttemeyer attacks his attempt to domesticate Kierkegaard and fit him into a his preferred philosophical tradition. Making it obvious for those familiar with Haecker, Küttemeyer expresses frustration toward those who feel the need to make sense of Kierkegaard through comparisons with the likes of Pascal, Newman and Tertullian.⁷⁰ "These eloquent, glossy, respected interpreters of Kierkegaard," concludes Küttemeyer, "are the most dangerous of his readers."⁷¹

In his reaction to Küttemeyer's afterword, Haecker did little to dispel his image as a curmudgeonly custodian of Kierkegaard's legacy. In a twelve-page diatribe to Ficker—which he hoped to have published in *Der Brenner*—Haecker shared his thoughts on Küttemeyer's afterword.⁷² In addition to his "protestant fury" slight, Haecker claims that Küttemeyer "is hardly a substantial thinker" and simply fails to grasp the "nature and sense of satire and

⁶⁸ That Haecker understood it in this way is made clear by his vehement, ad-hominem response, discussed below.

⁶⁹ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 354.

⁷⁰ Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 355.

⁷¹ "Diese beredeten, glänzenden, berufenen Interpreten Kierkegaards sind die gefährlichsten unter seinen Lesern." Küttemeyer, "Nachwort" to *Begriff der Ironie*, 356.

⁷² As Küttemeyer informed Jaeger, Haecker's letter was not published due to *Der Brenner* shutting down. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "München, 5.4.30," *TWK*.

polemics." Haecker was astonished that the Kaiser Verlag would risk so much by associating with "this lost voice."⁷³

Haecker traces Küttemeyer's radical, and in his view radically false, depiction of Kierkegaard back to two sources: Küttemeyer's youth and his obsession with Kierkegaard's *Das Augenblick*. Haecker had warned against youth starting with *Augenblick*, and points to Küttemeyer as an exemplar of its dangers.⁷⁴ Haecker constantly refers to Küttemeyer as "*dieser junge Mann*" ["this young man"], always adding in hyphens, "I sure hope that he is still young." Küttemeyer is a "young church radical" who Haecker hopes will grow out of his "youthful exuberance." Towards the end of the letter, Haecker finds some comfort in his own journey "from error to truth," and hopes that Küttemeyer will do the same as he matures.⁷⁵

As *Concept of Irony* went to the press, Küttemeyer had more immediate concerns than attacks on his level of maturity. Ostensibly he remained a doctoral student, though one without an advisor or much motivation. Since Scheler's unexpected death in 1928, Küttemeyer had been unable to secure a new advisor. He admitted to Jaeger at the time, "my dissertation rests untouched...instead of [working on it] I prefer to take long walks."⁷⁶ He continued to have problems with his professors. At one point he exclaimed, "any further interaction with

⁷³ Haecker to Ficker, 22 October 1929, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁷⁴ "Denn der ganze jammer kommt daher," wrote Haecker about Küttemeyer's afterword, "daß er mit dem 'Augenblick' angefangen hat." Haecker to Ficker, 22 October 1929, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁷⁵ Haecker to Ficker, 22 October 1929, Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁷⁶ "Mein Arbeit, will sagen Dissertation, ruht fast ganz. Statt dessen gehe ich viel spazieren, meist allein." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "6.7.29," *TWK*.

professors might bring me into danger of suddenly jumping at one of their throats!"⁷⁷ His recently published afterword did not help matters either. He told Jaeger about walking into a meeting with one professor and finding him sitting at his desk with *Begriff der Ironie* in hand. The professor then berated him for using all his time translating Kierkegaard instead of working on his dissertation. Küttemeyer confessed to Jaeger that he was on the verge of completely giving up on the dissertation.⁷⁸

In 1928, Küttemeyer moved to Munich with his friend Werner Trott (1902-1965). Trott, the oldest son of the (last) royal Prussian minister of culture, had dropped out of high school in 1919 in order to become "a worker." He dropped the royal "von" from his name and found employment for a time at a Ford factory in Cologne.⁷⁹ In 1923, Trott received special permission—required due to his lack of a high school diploma—to enroll as a student at the university of Marburg, where he took classes with Heidegger, among others. Trott then transferred to Cologne in 1925, where he became a student of Scheler, whom he described as his "only teacher."⁸⁰ It was in Scheler's seminar that Trott and Küttemeyer first became friends, bonding over both their admiration for Scheler and their frustration with the academic world. When Scheler died unexpectedly in 1928, Trott and Küttemeyer decided it was time to pursue other possibilities.

⁷⁷ "Ein weiterer Verkehr mit Professoren würde mich in die Gefahr bringen, gelegentlich einem an den Hals zu springen." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Göttingen, 21. Juli 29," *TWK*.

⁷⁸ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Briefstempel 26.Juli 29," *TWK*.

⁷⁹ Wolfgang Schwiedrzik, *Träume der ersten Stunde: die Gesellschaft Imshausen* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1991), 51. Schwiedrzik provides the most thorough account of Trott's life available. He also provides a useful sketch of Trott and Küttemeyer's life during and after World War II.

⁸⁰ Schwiedrzik, *Träume*, 51.

Their intention to live as independent writers in Munich proved more difficult than either had imagined. The editors of local papers often rejected their submissions for being overly philosophical. Trott refused to write feuilletons, and thus had trouble getting articles published.⁸¹ Küttemeyer focused his energy mostly on his Kierkegaard translations, yet bemoaned how poorly compensated he was by Kaiser for *Begriff der Ironie*.⁸² The money he received as an advance immediately went toward satisfying debts. In his letters with Jaeger, Küttemeyer constantly asked for help with his rent and employment prospects. Trott even broke down at times and accepted money from his parents, a bitter pill after having sworn off his noble heritage.⁸³

Things seemed to turn around, however, after Küttemeyer made the acquaintance of Alfred Baeumler, by then an established professor of philosophy in Dresden. Baeumler's work at the time focused primarily on Kant, Bachofen, and Nietzsche. In the early 1920s, however, Baeumler had developed an interest in Kierkegaard thanks to his subscription to *Der Brenner*. Beginning in 1924, Baeumler started folding Kierkegaard into his own intellectual universe by writing articles comparing him to Hegel, Kant, and Nietzsche. During this period he began exchanging letters with both Ficker and Dallago, siding with the latter in his spat with Haecker. Baeumler also made a habit of travelling to Innsbruck so as to meet with Ficker and Dallago. During one of these trips Baeumler and Dallago began discussing the possibility of founding a new journal to succeed *Der Brenner*. When it came to possible partners for such an endeavor, Dallago suggested that Baeumler get in touch with Küttemeyer.

⁸¹ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "München, Herbst 1928," *TWK*.

⁸² Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Milspe, 8.3.29," *TWK*.

⁸³ Schwiedrzik, *Träume*, 52.

In March of 1930, Küttemeyer received a postcard from "A. Baeumler. Professor in Dresden." Küttemeyer had not read any of Baeumler's works at the time and only knew of him as the author of a recent article about Dallago in a Munich newspaper.⁸⁴ Baeumler requested that the two men meet in Munich and noted "that I am writing to you from a shared space in our intellectual world."⁸⁵ Küttemeyer later claimed that he knew immediately that Baeumler was with Dallago in Innsbruck. Although uninformed as to Baeumler's intention, Küttemeyer agreed to meet the professor on his way back from Innsbruck to Dresden. At their initial meeting, the two men talked mostly about their mutual friend Dallago. Küttemeyer had been worried about Dallago since he had left *Der Brenner* and was hungry for news about his situation. The mention of Dallago's desire to start a new journal piqued Küttemeyer's interest but Baeumler said nothing about a possible position for Küttemeyer.⁸⁶

The next day, Baeumler showed up unannounced and, as Küttemeyer later recalled, "asked me if I was ready to found a journal with him." Baeumler already had a publisher lined up in Munich and wanted Küttemeyer to serve as the chief editor. Baeumler hoped to include Dallago, Küttemeyer and hopefully Ernst Junger's younger brother, Friedrich Georg Junger as contributors. Küttemeyer also suggested his friends Trott and Jaeger as capable and willing writers. For Küttemeyer, this opportunity seemed like a godsend. He would finally have an outlet, "in which [he] could write about the challenges of the day without concern about the

⁸⁴ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 191.

⁸⁵ "Das unvermutete dieser Zeilen mag der Umstand mildern, daß ich von einem uns gemeinsamen Ort der geistigen Welt an Sie schreibe." Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 191.

⁸⁶ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 191.

supply and demand of the literary market.⁸⁷ Küttemeyer agreed to come on board. He later looked back on this decision as "the beginning of his Baeumler trials."⁸⁸

Küttemeyer immediately encountered difficulties as he tried to move forward with Baeumler's plan. The initial difficulty resulted from Baeumler's insistence that the journal meld the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Although incredulous about such a pairing at first, Küttemeyer eventually saw promise in it, even if from a slightly different angle. Küttemeyer's first task as editor was to explain to the Reinhardt Verlag the feasibility of such a marriage. The subtleties of Küttemeyer's argument failed to persuade Reinhardt and they rejected the project.⁸⁹ It seemed that Küttemeyer's dream of running his own journal would soon slip out of his hands.

Baeumler, however, suggested that Küttemeyer travel to Dresden in order to discuss next steps. With money sent to him by Baeumler, Küttemeyer purchased a ticket for Dresden and spent the next several weeks in the house of his new patron. The two men devoted their time to discussing all the various details for the journal that needed fleshing out. "The question of a printing press, place of publication," recalled Küttemeyer regarding his stay, "price, format, even the color of the paper, all of this was brought up." Baeumler was not deterred by the rejection from Reinhardt. If need be, he assured Küttemeyer, he would simply finance it himself until it got off the ground. The only things already decided upon Küttemeyer's arrival were the title of the journal, *Abgrenzungen* ("Demarcations"), and that Küttemeyer was to work

⁸⁷ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 188.

⁸⁸ "Dies war der Beginn des Baeumlerschen Versuches, mit mir eine Zeitschrift herauszugeben." Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 191.

⁸⁹ "The founding of the journal, as far it concerns me and Baeumler, is completed. The decisive issue now concerns the publisher. Reinhardt backed out, primarily because he can't possibly

from Berlin as the Chief Editor, receiving a monthly salary (100-150 Marks) from Baeumler. With no other job prospects on the horizon, Küttemeyer agreed to the plan and prepared for a move to Berlin.⁹⁰

Küttemeyer had concerns about Baeumler from the beginning. First there was the heavy-handed nature of Baeumler's recruitment. Just two days after meeting Küttemeyer for the first time, Baeumler insisted that he relocate to Dresden to begin work on the new journal. Then there was the opacity of Baeumler's intentions. He never directly addressed the relationship between the proposed journal and *Der Brenner*, something that Küttemeyer felt needed to be clarified.⁹¹ How exactly did Baeumler envision his journal as a successor to *Der Brenner*? Did it have Ficker's blessing? Would they have access to *Der Brenner*'s subscriber list? None of this was made clear at their inaugural meetings. Moreover, Küttemeyer soon came to the conclusion that "there was very little of the spirit of *Der Brenner* about him." The only clear connection was a continued focus on Kierkegaard. Here again, the association made little sense to Küttemeyer, who rather quickly came to the conclusion that "[Baeumler's] position in no way whatsoever corresponded with Kierkegaards."⁹² Küttemeyer began to sense that Baeumler had an agenda behind all of his writings and activities, even if its precise nature remained unclear.

Alfred Baeumler

imagine a synthesis between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Anfang 1930," *TWK*.

⁹⁰ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 192.

⁹¹ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 191.

⁹² Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief: 6. Mai, 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 193. Emphasis in original.

Alfred Baeumler was born in 1887 in Neustadt an der Teufel, then a part of the Austrian Empire. As a student in Munich, Bonn and Berlin, Baeumler studied art history and aesthetics before turning to philosophy. After serving in the Austrian army during World War One, Baeumler completed his studies at the Technical University in Dresden. By 1928 he had secured a position there as an associate professor, becoming a full professor the following year. Like his friend Heidegger in Marburg, Baeumler successfully carved out a niche as both a philosopher and an omnipresent public intellectual, turning out a flurry of popular books on philosophy, writing for the press, and giving speeches across the country.⁹³

Initially, Baeumler's work focused on theories of aesthetics in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel and others. During the 1920s, he followed a philosophical progression—from Kant to Hegel, Bachofen, Kierkegaard and eventually Nietzsche—that mirrored his increasing involvement in extreme right politics. By the time he reached out to Küttemeyer, Baeumler had fully committed himself to developing a coherent philosophical system to undergird his potent nationalist politics. In 1929, Baeumler joined Alfred Rosenberg's recently founded Fighting League for German Culture (*Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*), an anti-Semitic organization focused on restoring German culture by extricating Jewish and liberal influences. After hearing Hitler speak in Dresden the following year, Baeumler decided to devote himself to the Nazi cause.

His initial contribution was a study of Nietzsche entitled, *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* ["Nietzsche: Philosopher and Politician"] (1931). In this instantly controversial text,

⁹³ For an examination of the relationship between Heidegger and Baeumler, see Max Whyte, "The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich: Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism,'" in *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Apr., 2008), 171-194. Whyte explains that Heidegger and Baeumler had become friends in the early 1920s, and that Heidegger actually jockeyed to have Baeumler succeed him at Marburg.

Baeumler coopted Nietzsche for the extreme right in Germany. He argued that one could not understand Nietzsche without grasping his political import. "In the place of bourgeois moral philosophy," explains Baeumler, "Nietzsche put the philosophy of the will to power, i.e., the philosophy of politics." And according to Baeumler, Nietzsche's was a coherent political philosophy. At its center lay what Baeumler called a world-view of "heroic realism." This was a world created by agonistic politics, in which humans are "unexhausted and inexhaustible, creating and bringing forth out of the depths of the unknown, producing figures that come out of the mixing jug of existence according to a law of eternal justice, figures that fight one another, maintain themselves in the struggle or go under."⁹⁴ The *Berliner Tageblatt* stated the obvious by titling their review of the book "Nietzsche as Fascist."⁹⁵

Baeumler soon gained first-hand experience of the agonistic worldview he associated with Nietzsche. In 1931, after Baeumler had sat down with Hitler for an hour-long interview in Munich, the Saxony branch of the Nazi Sturmabteilung (SA) invited him to speak at one of their rallies. As an established university professor and supporter of National Socialism, Baeumler lent such local groups the legitimacy they needed. According to Baeumler, he joined the group for night exercises before the talk when all of a sudden a group of Communists attacked and a street battle ensued. The forty-two year old professor of philosophy later recounted with pride how "a thrown brick shattered a bone in my left hand. After that, I sent

⁹⁴ "Die Welt und den Menschen heraklitisch sehen, heißt für ihn, sie sehen wie sie sind: unerschöpft und unerschöpfbar, aus der Tiefe des Unerkannten schaffend und gebärend, Gestalten erzeugend, die nach einem Gesetze ewiger Gerechtigkeit aus dem Milchkrug des Daseins hervorgehen, sich bekämpfen, in diesem Kampfe sich behaupten oder untergehen. Will man ein Formel für diese Weltansicht, so möge man die heroische Realismus heißen." Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* (Leipzig: Phillip Reclam, 1931), 15.

⁹⁵ Whyte, "Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism,'" 179.

my recently published Nietzsche book to Hitler with a dedication."⁹⁶ Baeumler had found his heroic realists.

Baeumler's increasingly open commitment to National Socialism soon led to an acrimonious fall-out with Küttemeyer. After spending several weeks with Baeumler, Küttemeyer moved to Berlin to lay the groundwork for their new journal. Yet it was precisely during this time that Baeumler began devoting all of his energies to the National Socialist movement. When they reconnected again in Dresden, Baeumler tried to recruit Küttemeyer for a new project. He wanted to build a retreat center in the local mountains, which would serve to congregate and teach "his young people."⁹⁷ Baeumler was more interested in discussing the architectural plans for this lodge than the fact that *Abrenzungen* remained no more than an idea. It became clear to Küttemeyer that Baeumler intended that the journal, provided it ever came into existence, would serve the Nazi movement as well.⁹⁸

Baeumler became increasingly insistent upon Küttemeyer's involvement in Nazi politics, especially after the Nazi electoral gains in September of 1930. Completely consumed with Nietzsche as the prophet of Fascism, Baeumler revised and expanded his vision of a retreat center accordingly. He now wanted to build a series of "guard houses to the gay science," which "as dynamite in the largest cities of Germany would explode the foundation of

⁹⁶ Alfred Baeumler, "Daten im politischen Werdegang des Prof. Baeumlers," undated, ca. 1934: *Bundesarchiv*, Berlin-Zehlendorf, NS 8/136. *Konstanz*, AB 019-03-01. Quoted in Whyte, "Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism,'" 178.

⁹⁷ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 193.

⁹⁸ "[Baeumler] beschäftigte sich damals schon nicht mehr so sehr die Zeitschrift als die im Zusammenhang mit der allgemeinen Entwicklung stark einsetzende Politisierung der Jugend. Es schien mir, als wolle er die Zeitschrift irgendwie in den Dienst dieser 'Bewegung' stellen, besonders aber sein jetzt in den Vordergrund geschobenes Projekt, zur Sammlung und Schulung 'seiner jungen Leute' im Erzgebirge 'ein Männerhaus' zu bauen."

the Republic."⁹⁹ He demanded that Küttemeyer participate in the realization of this idea. At one point, Baeumler even offered to front the money for an SA uniform if Küttemeyer would sign up.¹⁰⁰ When he refused to have any part in Baeumler's political activities, Baeumler cut off all support, revoked his library privileges, and insisted that Küttemeyer repay his debts.

In the midst of their fall-out, Baeumler gave Küttemeyer a copy of his newly published on Nietzsche.¹⁰¹ Previously, Küttemeyer had only read the proofs and had not yet seen Baeumler's introduction. Among other things, the text led Küttemeyer to question what had drawn Baeumler to Kierkegaard in the first place. This was especially baffling considering that Baeumler made it clear he had no stomach for Christianity of any stripe. "One discovers therein," wrote Küttemeyer to Ficker after reading Baeumler's introduction, "that Baeumler views the fight against all forms of Christianity as his duty and disposition, in order to rescue Germanic nature [Germantun] from its downfall." In perhaps the most explicit passage noted by Küttemeyer, Baeumler writes, "What in times past was just sickly, has become today filthy

Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 193.

⁹⁹ "Er war nicht nur damit beschäftigt, Nietzsche politisch dienstbar zu machen und ein Nietzschebuch zu schreiben, sondern auch eine 'Wachstube zur fröhlichen Wissenschaft' einzurichten, als erste jener Stuben, die 'als Dynamit in den größten Städten Deutschlands den Bau der Republik sprengen sollten.'" Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 195.

¹⁰⁰ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "25.4.1931," *TWK*. This in itself was a political statement regarding Baeumler's support for the more radical wing of the NSDAP. As Timothy Brown explains regarding "issues of pay and outfitting" that caused tension between the SA men fighting in the streets and the upper echelons of the NSDAP fighting for parliamentary results: "In the conditions of the economic crisis from the beginning of the 1930s, the SA's financial dependence on local party administrations was a constant source of tension, one that was increasingly interpreted in terms of a lack of respect on the part of the "civilian" party *Bonzen* for the "sacrifices" of the SA." Timothy S. Brown, *Weimar Radicals: Nazis and Communists between Authenticity and Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 60.

¹⁰¹ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Dresden. 11.3.31," *TWK*.

and indecent—it is filthy and indecent to be a Christian today."¹⁰² Baeumler hoped to restore the German nation by burning out the impurities—Christianity first and foremost—that held back the individual German.

Kütemeyer was especially shocked by the contents in light of a letter that Baeumler had sent to Ficker, Dallago, and others explaining their recent fall-out. Among other things, Baeumler explicitly attacked Kütemeyer on the topic of his Christianity. Due to Kütemeyer's "continuous focus on Kierkegaard," Baeumler assumed that he "would be an advocate of true Christianity in opposition to all false Christianity." Baeumler continued that he could not fathom that someone "could follow Kierkegaard without having a relationship to Jesus, or that one could attempt to denude Kierkegaard of his Christianity."¹⁰³ Sarcastically attempting to bridge the gap between these sentiments and Baeumler's Nietzsche book, Kütemeyer suggested, "perhaps Baeumler had recently discovered that Christ was actually an Aryan, of Germanic blood and Nordic race?"¹⁰⁴ In the end, Kütemeyer concluded that this dissonance was symptomatic of an opacity that fundamentally defined Baeumler. Baeumler increasingly saw himself as a "heroic philosopher" in the Nietzschean mold. This primarily meant two things to Baeumler. On the one hand, clear and decisive action, and on the other, oracular writings defined by unresolved, and unresolvable, tensions.

¹⁰² "Was ehemals bloß krank war, heute ward es *unanständig*—es ist unanständig heute Christ zu sein." Quoted in Kütemeyer, "Rundbrief," 189. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰³ "Freilich litt meine Einstellung zu Kütemeyer von Anbeginn unter einem Missverständnis. Wegen seiner anhaltenden Beschäftigung mit Keirkegaard vermute ich in ihm immer einen Anwalt wahren Christentums in Gegensatz zu allem Scheinchristentum. Auf die Idee, dass jemand sich zu Kierkegaard bekennen könne, ohne ein Verhältnis zu Jesus zu haben, das jemand von Kierkegaard also das Christentum zu subtrahieren vermöge, bin ich nicht gekommen." Alfred Baeumler to Ludwig Ficker, "Rundbrief: 18 April, 1931," Teilnachlass Theodor Haecker, 67.717/1, Deutsches Literatur Archiv Marbach.

So why Kierkegaard? While Baeumler clearly sought out Küttemeyer due to the latter's knowledge of Kierkegaard, the idea that he did so due to an attraction to "true Christianity" seems unlikely. Moreover, he envisioned *Abgrenzungen* as a successor to *Der Brenner*, whose "leading light" and inspiration was Kierkegaard. Yet Baeumler recoiled at Haecker's religious, eventually Catholic, interpretation of Kierkegaard.¹⁰⁵ And while Baeumler had recruited Dallago for the new journal largely due to his perspective on Kierkegaard, he showed little to no interest in Dallago's Eastern-oriented spirituality. If not to spur religious reform or open up new realms of spirituality, how did Baeumler envision making use of Kierkegaard? How, in other words, did Kierkegaard fit into Baeumler's program for German renewal?

Baeumler read Kierkegaard for tactics, not content. He had already built his philosophical system of "heroic realism" around Nietzsche.¹⁰⁶ He now wanted to take decisive action in order to spur Germany's renewal, hence his obsession with setting up training centers for young men devoted to bringing down the republic. Baeumler viewed the journal as a different form of intervention, though dedicated to the same end as his other projects. He intended the journal primarily as a vehicle for disseminating his Nietzschean political philosophy. As will become clear below, by 1930 Kierkegaard's main attraction for Baeumler

¹⁰⁴ "Sollte Baeumler inzwischen festgestellt haben, daß Christus doch ein Arier war, germanischen Geblüts und nordischer Rasse?" Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 190.

¹⁰⁵ Baeumler was disturbed by the increasingly "Catholic" tendencies of *Der Brenner* following Haecker's conversion. In response, he cultivated a closer relationship to Dallago—as evidenced in their extensive epistolary exchange—and discussed with him the possibility of starting a new journal free of Haecker's unfortunate Catholic distortion. See Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 278; Ficker, *Briefwechsel: vol.2*, n. 380, 545.

¹⁰⁶ See Whyte, "Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism,'" throughout.

was as a prophet of action.¹⁰⁷ This was the Kierkegaard of *Augenblick* who used his pen as his most powerful weapon against bourgeois society. That Kierkegaard's goal was to restore a pure Christianity was immaterial and easily eclipsed. Of primary importance for Baeumler was the way in which Kierkegaard used the form of a periodical to demolish the structures of his society.

Baeumler envisioned *Abgrenzungen* as a vehicle for expressing a Fascist mentality in a Kierkegaardian manner. That Baeumler was aware Kierkegaard's potential as a cover for political interventions became clear during his fall-out with Küttemeyer. At one point, Baeumler actually accused his former ward of taking just such a utilitarian approach to Kierkegaard's dialectics. Baeumler's complaint was not that Küttemeyer used Kierkegaard in this manner, but rather that he used him for what Baeumler viewed as odious ends. For Küttemeyer, claimed Baeumler, "Kierkegaard's concepts are only a means in order to express a 'communistic' mentality in a contemporary manner."¹⁰⁸ Baeumler was perhaps the first person to read Kierkegaard for political strategy.

As Küttemeyer read his way through Baeumler's corpus, the confusion regarding his worldview gave way to suspicion. In addition to reading Baeumler's Nietzsche, Küttemeyer read his earlier works on Bachofen and Hegel, as well as several articles recently penned for German papers. "It took me nearly a year to realize," wrote Küttemeyer in retrospect, "that Baeumler's originality developed in tune with his opaqueness, that he tied himself ever more

¹⁰⁷ This was the same Kierkegaard who helped inspire the radical Decisionism of Carl Schmitt. See Batholomew Ryan, "Carl Schmitt and Søren Kierkegaard: Zones of Exception and Appropriation," in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources; Vol. 14: Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought* ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 160-177.

¹⁰⁸ "Erst die Ereignisse haben mich belehrt, dass es sich Küttemeyer lediglich um die subjektive Dialektik Kierkegaards handelt, und dass für ihn Kierkegaards Begriffe nur ein Mittel sind, um eine 'kommunistischen' Besinnung zeitgemäss auszudrücken." Baeumler, "Rundbrief."

to the ambiguity of public appearances, which forced him to practice his 'politics' in private.¹⁰⁹ Although Küttemeyer did not explicitly make the connection, his realization here touches on a key component of Baeumler's interest in Kierkegaard. Understanding these characteristics of Baeumler—his opaqueness and public ambiguity, undergirded by secretive private politics—provide the best path to understanding his fascination with Kierkegaard.

A chronological note is in order here. Küttemeyer was living with Baeumler in 1930 and trying to understand him via his writings from the 1920s. As noted above, Baeumler underwent a rather extensive philosophical shift during this time.¹¹⁰ For example, in a 1926 introduction to a series of Bachofen texts, Baeumler attacks Nietzsche's works as ultimately incoherent on the basis of their excessive subjectivity. "It is entirely unclear," writes Baeumler with reference to Nietzsche's fascination with Dionysian abandon, "how an objective structure could arise out of such ecstasy, a subjective process in the participant that will always remain subjective."¹¹¹ Yet by the time Küttemeyer read these texts, Baeumler was devoting his energies fully to the realization of a Nietzschean politics. I believe that Küttemeyer interpreted such a disjunct between Baeumler's public persona (in his writings from the 1920s) and private politics (attempting to build "guard houses to the gay science" in 1930) as evidence of his "secretive politics." There was little that was secret about participating in a street brawl between fascists and communists.

¹⁰⁹ "Ich habe nahezu ein Jahr gebraucht um mich zu vergewissern, daß Baeumlers Ursprünglichkeit sich in der Richtung ihrer Undurchsichtigkeit entwickelte, daß er sich immer mehr auf die Vieldeutigkeit des öffentlichen Scheins festlegte, was ihn dazu nötigte, auch im Privaten 'Politik' zu treiben" Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 193.

¹¹⁰ For a short overview of Baeumler's development from Kantian aesthete to champion of Nietzschean politics, see Whyte, "Heroic Realism," 174-183.

¹¹¹ Alfred Baeumler, "Einleitung: Bachofen, der Mythologe der Romantik," in J.J. Bachofen, *Der Mythos von Orient und Occident*, ed. M. Schröter (München: C.H. Beck, 1926), lxxii.

When Baeumler first encountered Kierkegaard in the pages of *Der Brenner*, he was still casting about for pieces to help him construct his own coherent philosophical system. As Max Whyte writes, Baeumler believed that “the mark of a philosopher was producing a system.”¹¹² By the time of his Nietzsche book, Baeumler had decided that his calling was to elucidate the hidden system of Nietzsche’s thought, focusing especially on its political implications. In a 1931 newspaper article entitled, “Nietzsche – Writer or Philosopher,” Baeumler argues that Nietzsche “had left behind a closed system, no smaller or less significant than that of Leibniz.”¹¹³ But before Baeumler landed on Nietzsche as the foundation of his system, he extracted promising elements from a variety of philosophers.

An example of Baeumler's approach to Kierkegaard can be seen in a series of articles he penned during the 1920s. In his 1924 article, "Hegel and Kierkegaard," Baeumler praises Kierkegaard's concept of "the I (das Ich)."¹¹⁴ Specifically, Baeumler claims that Kierkegaard builds upon the foundation laid by the great father of German nationalism, Gottlieb Fichte. "Only with Kierkegaard," exclaims Baeumler, "do Fichte's incomplete thoughts about das Ich receive life and vitality."¹¹⁵ At the same time, Baeumler appreciates that Kierkegaard reigns in the most extreme tendencies of egoism—a trend that Baeumler feared becoming ever more popular in contemporary philosophy. Kierkegaard does this by first uncovering these

¹¹² Whyte, “Heroic Realism,” 179.

¹¹³ Alfred Baeumler, “Nietzsche—Schriftsteller oder Philosoph,” *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, June 1931, 686.

¹¹⁴ Alfred Baeumler, “Hegel und Kierkegaard,” in *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1937), 54-70. Originally published in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, N. 2, 1924, 116-130.

¹¹⁵ “Erst Kierkegaard hat dem von Fichte unvollkommen durchgeführten Gedanken des Ich wieder zu Kraft und Leben verholfen.” Baeumler, “Hegel und Kierkegaard,” 63.

tendencies so that, "das Ich stands before us in all its enormous, bleak greatness."¹¹⁶ He then grounds *das Ich* in God, imposing boundaries on the ego's subjectivity.

Baeumler's own philosophical stance, however, precluded the laying of such a theological cornerstone. Baeumler's solution becomes evident as he turns to critique the shortcomings of Kierkegaard's concept of *das Ich*. Baeumler found Kierkegaard lacking in one, very telling, regard: Kierkegaard had no sense for community. He had no understanding for the importance of love between individuals, for the way in which love can break through the isolation of the individual. "The self-afflicting sorrow," writes Baeumler, "from which Kierkegaard begins, is absolutely unsocial, that is, without relation to any sort of community." Kierkegaard's philosophy was too isolated, and too isolating. "A belief that breaks down all bridges to the world and from human to human," continues Baeumler, "and sweeps all humanity into the lower sphere of the 'aesthetic,' simply cannot be the final word for a religious man nor for a thinking man."¹¹⁷ According to Baeumler, love is the missing piece that allows for mediation between Hegel and Kierkegaard. By accepting the importance of love, the individual can learn from Kierkegaard while also appreciating the value of community.

By the time Baeumler wrote "Thoughts on Kierkegaard," in 1934, he had found his community in National Socialism.¹¹⁸ He had also fully committed to promoting Nietzsche as the philosopher of National Socialism. In addition to Nietzsche: Philosopher and Politician,

¹¹⁶ "In ungeheurer düsterer Größe steht das Ich vor uns auf." Baeumler, "Hegel und Kierkegaard," 63.

¹¹⁷ "Ein Glaube, der alle Brücken zur Welt und von Mensch zu Mensch abbricht, alle Humanität in die untergeordnete Sphäre des 'Ästhetischen' verweist, kann weder das letzte Wort des religiösen noch des denkenden Menschen sein." Baeumler, "Hegel und Kierkegaard," 65.

¹¹⁸ Alfred Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," in *Studien*, 78-98. Originally published as "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," in *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, 5. Jahrgang, Heft 47, 1934.

Baeumler had written all the afterwords to the extremely popular pocket editions of Nietzsche's works published in 1930 by Alfred Kröner.¹¹⁹ He also promoted Nietzsche in radio addresses, public speeches and articles for the popular press. This focus bled into his ostensible "Thoughts on Kierkegaard," which served more as a comparison of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche than as a monograph on the Dane himself.

While Baeumler maintains his complaints about Kierkegaard's isolation and melancholy, his focus on Nietzsche leads him to emphasize Kierkegaard's role as a prophet of passionate action in the world. "Kierkegaard was the only person of the 19th century," declares Baeumler, "before Nietzsche who took action."¹²⁰ Baeumler finds it interesting that Nietzsche and Kierkegaard seem to follow inverted trajectories: Nietzsche moved from an active intervention in the world to an isolated, introverted denouement, while Kierkegaard began in isolation and introversion before intervening in the world in his final days. For Baeumler, Kierkegaard's "action" was his writings in *The Moment*.¹²¹ This brutal attack on the Danish state church was the culmination of Kierkegaard's life and thought. It is here that Baeumler finds Kierkegaard most valuable and useful for his own day.

Baeumler agreed with those who hoped to denude Kierkegaard of his Christianity, viewing this as the key to accessing his potential in contemporary society. He acknowledged that Christianity had shaped Kierkegaard's thoughts, but argued that it was not integral to them. As others had done before him, Baeumler argued that Kierkegaard's Christianity was

¹¹⁹ The Kröner editions were made possible by the expiration, on 31 December 1930, of Elisabeth Förster Nietzsche's exclusive copyright over all of her brother's writings.

¹²⁰ Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 97.

¹²¹ Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 97.

little more than an unfortunate inheritance of his father's "bleak religion."¹²² As an example of the ultimate insignificance of Kierkegaard's Christianity, Baeumler reminds his reader that Kierkegaard's ideal individual (*Einzelne*), Socrates, was a pagan.¹²³

Having removed the Christian distortion from Kierkegaard, Baeumler argued that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche shared a basic goal: both sought the destruction of bourgeois society. Kierkegaard's "life of a Christian" and Nietzsche's "heroic life," actually "meant something very similar: the anti-bourgeois life."¹²⁴ The equation is simple for Baeumler. Bourgeois life is defined by a lack of action.¹²⁵ In their life and in their writing, both men attacked "the passionless human, that is, the bourgeois."¹²⁶

Kierkegaard also attracted Baeumler for stylistic reasons. Kierkegaard's dialectical method lined up with Baeumler's cagey, secretive approach to philosophizing. Like Kierkegaard, he sought to infuse his writings with a purpose that would be revealed to his readers at some later point. This also seemed to be the more sincere basis of Baeumler's attraction to Küttemeyer. "I did more to support Küttemeyer than any other young man in my environment," wrote Baeumler in a letter from 1931, "because I found in him an extraordinary

¹²² Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 88.

¹²³ Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 93.

¹²⁴ As Brown notes in his study of the shared space between fascist and communist ideology in the Weimar Republic, the "shared contempt for the bourgeoisie...was one of the main features linking radicals of left and right." Brown, *Weimar Radicals*, 11.

¹²⁵ "One can't more accurately describe the system in which the bourgeois lives," explains Baeumler, "than to say: it is a life in which there is ample opportunity for busyness but never for action." Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 96.

¹²⁶ "Der Mensch ohne Leidenschaft, und das ist der Bürger, relativiert die Gegensätze." Baeumler, "Gedanken über Kierkegaard," 92.

dialectical giftedness."¹²⁷ Initially, Küttemeyer interpreted Baeumler's dialectical aspirations as a sign of his patron's open-mindedness.¹²⁸ In the end, however, Küttemeyer concluded that Baeumler had very definite intentions in mind.

Kierkegaard functioned for Baeumler as a purely destructive force. It is within the parameters of his quest to destroy all aspects of the bourgeois Weimar Republic that Baeumler found Kierkegaard useful. And it is in this sense that his pairing of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard makes sense. As Küttemeyer realized at the time, Baeumler believed "that [Kierkegaard and Nietzsche] corresponded in the negative: the culture-, education-, and academic-critique, but in positive matters they are in opposition."¹²⁹ In the late 1920s, all of Baeumler's energies were focused on destruction, and he believed Kierkegaard could be of instrumental use. But as soon as he began focusing on positive actions—in the sense of rebuilding, constructing something for the future—Baeumler had no more use for Kierkegaard. He began focusing exclusively on Nietzsche as the philosophical and political foundation for a new Germany. He lost interest in Kierkegaard, in the new journal, and in Küttemeyer.

Küttemeyer in Berlin

¹²⁷ "Zur Erklärung möchte ich noch bemerken: Ich habe mich für Küttemeyer stärker eingesetzt als für irgend einen andern jungen Mann in meiner Umgebung, weil ich in ihm eine ungewöhnliche dialektische Begabung vorfand." Baeumler, "Rundbrief."

¹²⁸ "I was pleased in particular," wrote Küttemeyer following his stay with Baeumler in Dresden, "that Baeumler had strong sympathies for dialectical materialism, especially for Lenin." Following Küttemeyer's suggestion, Baeumler picked up a book containing letters between Lenin and Gorki. He even suggested a quote therein as a possible motto for their new journal. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "3.5.1930," *TWK*.

After the fallout with Baeumler, Kütemeyer remained in Berlin with Trott. Baeumler had long expressed concern about Trott's influence on Kütemeyer, fearing that Trott was infecting Kütemeyer with the disease of communism.¹³⁰ Indeed, soon after breaking contact with Baeumler, Kütemeyer joined Trott as a member of the German Communist party (KPD). Yet this move seems to have been germinating with Kütemeyer for some time, and for a variety of reasons beyond simply his relationship with Trott. In 1929, Kütemeyer had dinner with Karl Thieme and discussed Thieme's article, "From Kierkegaard to Marx," which had recently been published in *Zeitschrift für Religion und Sozialismus* ["The Journal for Religion and Socialism"].¹³¹ This article likely served as a spring-board for Kütemeyer's own attempt, the following year, to bridge the seemingly impossible gap between the two thinkers.¹³²

According to Kütemeyer, the final catalyst in his decision to join the KPD came during another dinner party in 1931. The group consisted of several communist sympathizers, including a couple that had taken part in the revolutions in Hungary, even hiding Lukács in

¹²⁹ "Baeumler meint, sie stimmten in Negativen: der Kultur-, Bildungs- und Wissenschaftskritik überein, im Positiven seien sie entgegengesetzt (letzteres meint auch Jaspers)." Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "München, 26.3.30," *TWK*.

¹³⁰ After explaining all of the ways that Kütemeyer had wronged him, Baeumler opined that the cause was "the communism passed on to him from his friend Trott." Baeumler, "Rundbrief."

¹³¹ Karl Thieme, "Durch Sören Kierkegaard zu Karl Marx," *Zeitschrift für Religion und Sozialismus*, 1929, Nr. 3.

¹³² Kütemeyer mentioned his essay that focused on Marx and Kierkegaard in a 1931 letter to Jaeger. "It often causes me stomachaches when I remember that I haven't sent back the only copies of my Kierkegaard-Socrates-essays, one of which focuses on Socrates and the historical materialism, the other on Kierkegaard and Marx." Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "19.2.31," *TWK*.

their house for a time. "With this group," wrote Kütemeyer in a letter to Jaeger, "I discussed my thoughts about the Communist Party:

it was a sympathetic, thoroughly humane conversation, [the host] understood me better than I had thought possible in light of my previous experiences with official Communism, much better and it lessened my objections, not only through word and guarantees, but rather due to the way he handled himself in conversation.¹³³

"After this experience," explained Kütemeyer, "my plan became clear: I joined the KPD two days ago and am now searching here in Dresden for a temporary position in the party organization."¹³⁴

With his political commitments in order, Kütemeyer pressed ahead, translating and writing about Kierkegaard. In the same letter as he reported joining the KPD, Kütemeyer mentions his struggle to find a publisher for a new translation of Kierkegaard's journals. Concluding that such collections were simply not in vogue among publishers at the time, he decided to write his own book in which he would "draw strongly upon the material from [Kierkegaard's] journals." For the title, Kütemeyer chose "The End of Christianity." The absence of a question mark, he explained to friends, was intentional.¹³⁵

Kütemeyer was not the first to consider Kierkegaard as a possible ally for communist activities. Thieme had used Kierkegaard to argue against any version of religion that focuses

¹³³ "Mit diesem unterhielt ich mich über meine Bedenken der Kommunistischen Partei gegenüber: es wurde ein sympathisches, durchaus menschliches Gespräch daraus, er verstand mich besser als ich es nach meinen bisherigen officiellen kommunistischen erfahrungen für möglich halten konnte, viel besser und entkräftigte meine Einwände nicht nur durch seine Worte und Versicherungen, sondern durch sein Verhalten im Gespräch selbst." Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "19.4.31," *TWK*.

¹³⁴ Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "19.4.31," *TWK*.

¹³⁵ Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "19.4.31," *TWK*.

more on the afterlife than the present. Kierkegaard proved the absurdity of a religion based solely on the afterlife. "Is it not finally time," asks Thieme, "for the purely secular realization of the promise of Christianity?" Marx offered just such a realization. Moreover, the famous Hungarian communist Georgy Lukács had written about Kierkegaard in his 1910 article, "The Foundering of Form Against Life: Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen."¹³⁶ Granted, Lukács here primarily engages Kierkegaard as a negative foil for his own theory. But he nonetheless helped establish Kierkegaard as a fruitful dialectical partner. Küttemeyer, for his part, was in the midst of taking this even further: he wanted to reimagine Kierkegaard as a proto-communist thinker and rich fount of ideas for the problems facing modern society.

As Küttemeyer became more engaged politically, he made the theoretical shift from focusing on Kierkegaard as a disruptive theological force to offering him as a disruptive political force. In a 1931 letter Küttemeyer mentions a series of essays he had recently penned that examined Kierkegaard's relation both to Marx and, more broadly, to historical materialism. He began showing less interest in deciphering Kierkegaard's personality, and became more interested in what he saw as Kierkegaard's political engagements. "Kierkegaard was always (in his dissertation the least so) mindful of the historical situation," noted Küttemeyer in 1931, "he was also deliberate about intervening in historical life through his every word (that is the sense of the corrective): in *The Moment* he became simultaneously Christian-political."¹³⁷ This melding of the Christian and the political moved to the center of Kierkegaard's attraction for Küttemeyer.

¹³⁶ Georg Lukács, "The Floundering of Form against Life. Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen," in *Soul and Form*, trans. A. Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 28-41. Originally published as "Søren Kierkegaard és Regine Olsen," *Nyugat*, no. 6, 1910, 378-387.

¹³⁷ "Kierkegaard war stets (in seiner Dissertation am wenigsten) auf die geschichtliche Situation bedacht: er war sich auch bewußt, durch jede Äußerung ins geschichtliche Leben

Exactly as Haecker had feared, *The Moment* took central stage in Küttemeyer's Kierkegaard interpretation. It was in *The Moment* that Kierkegaard fully expressed the potency of "the individual (*der Einzelne*)," as well as his rage toward forces arrayed against it. Up until this point, Kierkegaard had focused on indirect communication in his use of pseudonyms and complicated psychological experimentations. In *The Moment*, Kierkegaard dropped any sense of restraint in his attack on Danish state Christianity. There was nothing subtle or indirect, for example, about Kierkegaard's article, "That the Pastors are Cannibals, and in the most abominable way."¹⁵⁸

Küttemeyer fully embraced the anti-establishment bent of *The Moment*, both philosophically and practically. He wanted to live the life of an independent writer, like Kierkegaard free to write and do as he pleased, even if this primarily meant a life of debt and uncertainty as to how he would afford his next meal. He toyed with the idea of finding a stable position in the publishing industry, but ultimately felt that he wasn't cut out for such a quotidian lifestyle.¹⁵⁹ This contrarianism also came out in his involvement with the KPD. In Berlin, Küttemeyer and Trott joined a party cell, the Laubenheimer Platz cell, legendary for its

einzugreifen (das ist der Sinn des Korrektivs) : im Augenblick wurde er gleichsam christlich-politisch." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "15.4.30," *TWK*.

¹⁵⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, "That the Pastors are Cannibals, and in the Most Abominable Way," in *The Moment and Late Writings* trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 321-323.

¹⁵⁹ "Today's society, as I am constantly forced to confront it," wrote Küttemeyer after requesting money from Jaeger, "is so foreign to me that it wouldn't surprise me if there was simply no place for me in it. I fear that I don't have the patience of a Ficker, to spend the entire day editing articles for 200 Marks." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Göttingen, 21. Juli 29," *TWK*.

non-conformist Marxism.¹⁴⁰ Yet even in this group, Küttemeyer stood out for his extreme aversion to institutional power.¹⁴¹ "The two philosophers Werner von Trott and Wilhelm Küttemeyer fascinated me from the beginning," recalled a fellow member, "their Communism was somewhat odd and completely different from the others in the group. They were without doubt rebels against the establishment."¹⁴²

Küttemeyer also harbored a deep suspicion of democracy as a desirable form of government. Mirroring Kierkegaard's suspicions of the 1848 democratic revolutions in Denmark, Küttemeyer felt that democracy crushed the individual. "The existence of an individual in inwardness, as Kierkegaard envisioned," wrote Küttemeyer to Jaeger in 1931, "has become impossible in our day, it is only still possible in times when democracy is on the rise, not when it reigns, that is, when it takes on the inertia of governing."¹⁴³ Not that Communism, at least in its current Bolshevik guise, offered a perfect alternative for Küttemeyer. The recent allegations of Bolshevik persecution of Christians in Russia disturbed

¹⁴⁰ This cell, known as the "artist colony,"—with members such as Arthur Koestler, Ernst Busch, Max Bronstein and Gustav Regler—had a reputation for challenging Communist (Bolshevik) orthodoxy. Schwiedrzik, *Träume*, 53.

¹⁴¹ Not that this tension was unique in the KPD at the time; there was a constant struggle between the authoritarian leadership—oriented toward Moscow—and the more independent minded and often frustrated rank and file. See especially Klaus-Michael Mallmann, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionären Bewegung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996).

¹⁴² "Die beiden Philosophen Werner von Trott und Wilhelm Küttemeyer faszinierten mich von anfang an, ihr Kommunismus war ziemlich seltsam (odd) und vollständig anders als beim Rest der Zelle. Sie waren ganz deutlich Rebellen gegen das Establishment. Aber das würden sie überall sein und waren es wohl auch. Trott wurde mein besonderer Freund." Quote from Tamara Osborn, a Georgian Princess, emigrant, wife of avant-garde pianist Franz Osborn, and member of same KPD cell (Laubenheimer Platz). Quoted in Schwiedrzik, *Träume*, 53.

¹⁴³ Die Existenz eines Einzelnen, wie sie Kierkegaard sich dachte, in Innerlichkeit wird heute unmöglich gemacht, sie ist noch in Zeiten möglich, wo die Demokratie heraufkommt, nicht

him greatly and led him to declare that he "would not go so far, as to stand with the Russians."¹⁴⁴ At the same time, he felt that the disturbing militarism of Western Europe was equally un-Christian, perhaps even more so.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, Küttemeyer felt that the Communist support for the least among us, the proletariat, was "the political expression of pure Christianity." Küttemeyer acknowledged the irony that "the demonstration of Christianity came about via a medium opposed to it," but found it "equally as insane as God on the cross."¹⁴⁶

Küttemeyer hoped to find an organically German version of this "political expression of pure Christianity."¹⁴⁷ Before the original plans fell through, Küttemeyer explained his intention that his journal be a vehicle for exploring such an idea. The guiding question, as he wrote to Jaeger, was, "How exactly can a 'German' politics," (as an analogy to Lenin, who created a Russian romantic politics of the people, unliterary, anti-liberal, anti-Enlightenment, symbolically realistic) be united with Christianity?" His answer: "Nietzsche and Kierkegaard."¹⁴⁸ At the time, Küttemeyer was still wrestling with Baeumler's insistence on combining the two thinkers. At one point he even told Jaeger that he saw "no opposition

wenn die Demokratie herrscht d.h. Regierungsträgheit besteht." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Berlin?, 1930 oder 31," *TWK*.

¹⁴⁴ "Deine Äußerung, man dürfe in der Absicht, das Unberechtigte des christlichen Zeter+Mordio-Geschreis über die Christenverfolgungen in Sowjetrußland herauszustellen, nicht so weit gehen, sich auf die Seite der Russen zu stellen, ist ganz die meine." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "München, 26.3.30," *TWK*.

¹⁴⁵ "'Unsere' Staaten sind christlich," wrote Küttemeyer, "der Kommunismus ist unchristlich, nein, vielleicht nur antichristlich: ist der Ketzer, der Verfolger Christi ihm nicht häufig näher— auch näher gewesen—als der Herr-Herr sager? Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "München, 26.3.30," *TWK*.

¹⁴⁶ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Ende Sept./Anf. Okt., 1930," *TWK*.

¹⁴⁷ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Dresden, 14/15.4.30," *TWK*.

between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche...Kierkegaard is, in certain ways, complemented by Nietzsche, and Nietzsche corrected by Kierkegaard."¹⁴⁹ Yet as soon as Baeumler dropped his support for the journal, Küttemeyer dropped Nietzsche as one of its philosophical beacons.

The Nietzsche Küttemeyer had in mind, the one to be "corrected by Kierkegaard," was the Nietzsche molded and championed by Baeumler. In a 1931 letter to Jaeger, Küttemeyer fretted about the rise of the "reactionary idea of the state." Since Germany "had no strong revolutionary party" capable of holding back the tide, Küttemeyer saw a dark future. Although he tried his hand at active political engagement, Küttemeyer believed that his best method of resistance would be in ink and paper. At the same time as Baeumler worked to convince Küttemeyer that National Socialism embodied true Nietzschean politics, Küttemeyer was working on a new translation of Kierkegaard's journals that he hoped would "balance out Baeumler's Nietzsche."¹⁵⁰

The majority of Küttemeyer's energy, however, remained directed toward finally creating his own journal: a vehicle that would give expression to his unique interpretation of Kierkegaard, and serve as a mouthpiece for him and for his like-minded friends. Yet without Baeumler's support, Küttemeyer faced substantial obstacles. The money he had received from Baeumler, which Baeumler was now demanding be repaid, had been a lifeline. Even with this support, Küttemeyer had barely scraped by, relying on an extended network of creditors in Berlin and elsewhere. Any money he received, say as an honorarium for a translation, he

¹⁴⁸ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Dresden, 14/15.4.30," *TWK*.

¹⁴⁹ "Kierkegaard wird durch Nietzsche in gewisser Weise ergänzt und Nietzsche durch K[ierkegaard] korrigiert." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "München, 26.3.30," *TWK*.

¹⁵⁰ "Mit der Kierkegaard-Auswahl bin ich noch nicht fertig. Ich hoffe aber, daß sie dem Baeumlerschen Nietzsche, auch in Wirklichkeit, die Wage hält." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "19.2.31," *TWK*.

immediately turned over to creditors.¹⁵¹ Recalling days when he could not afford to feed himself, Kütemeyer joked that he was simply getting an opportunity to learn about fasting.¹⁵² Yet even if the godly man shall not live by bread alone, Kütemeyer knew that his journal had more worldly needs. Without his patron, Kütemeyer needed to drum up financial support to get his project off the ground

Three years after the fallout with Baeumler, Kütemeyer succeeded in creating his own journal. The resulting journal bore little resemblance to the original plan as developed by Baeumler and Kütemeyer. *Abgrenzungen* was to be a proto-nationalist attempt at using Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to bring down the Weimar Republic. When the journal finally went to print, as *Der Sumpf* (The Swamp), it was as an unorthodox communist journal using Kierkegaard and Marx to combat the rise of fascism. The story of *Der Sumpf*—its creation, contributors, contents, and demise—is the focus of the final chapter.

¹⁵¹ At one point he mentions handing over his suitcase as collateral for money he owed. Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "Ende April 1930," *TWK*.

¹⁵² Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "(Berlin?), 1930 oder 31," *TWK*.

Chapter Five

From the Mountain to the Swamp: Kierkegaard and *Der Sumpf*

“Hitler”

Heil to you, awakener of sleeping Germans,
of an entire people swarming like teenage
girls!
Like the ancient Romans, our ancestors,
we welcome you with a raised arm – Heil!

Finally, you have provided the brown shirts
that we so long have lacked, hurra!
And we stand now before all racially
foreign
peoples here as Germans – Heil!

Finally, we are allowed again to go four-by-
four
all in step through the streets,
we are allowed again to bellow and march,
and then stand at attention in front of each
other– Heil!

Your powers are miraculous:
when one simply says your name,
everyone immediately grows blond hair,
for many their foreskin even grows back –
Heil!”

Indeed, your name makes the men burn
and the women shudder with devotion,
Let us all name our children Adolf,
For young Willis lies at the Somme –
hurra!

Which Germany should now awaken,
the one that lies asleep in Flanders
or the one that through pillaging
and phrase-mongering fights and
conquers – Hmm?

Which Jews should now perish,
those that gave us Jesus Christ,
or those whom with horror
Rosenberg limns in his myth –bah!

Are we Christians or Ur-Germans?
Are we heading for Valhalla, or to the
eternal city?
Both, my children, for on our flag
stands a cross, with a little crook in it. –
Heil!

Later history will bear witness:
This was the Third Reich,
full of Adolfs, full of heroes,
yet the fourth followed right away –
Heil!

This poem appeared in the Berlin-based journal *Der Sumpf* in June 1932.¹ The actual content of the stanzas in “Hitler” belies its titular topic. It also provides a glimpse of what *Der*

¹ Paul Pasquill, “Hitler,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 133.

Sumpf found truly disturbing in Germany circa 1932. This focus on Hitler and the Nazis was an anomaly in its pages. Outside of one other satirical poem by the same author, the Nazis made no other appearance in the four issues of *Der Sumpf*, which appeared between January and October of 1932. Like so many of their contemporaries, contributors to the journal felt that the Nazis would fall as quickly as they rose. For them, Nazism stood as just one more iteration of a much deeper problem within their society.

The brunt of the joke is not Hitler, but rather the idiotic masses looking to Hitler to give them brown shirts and regrow their foreskin. The implication of the final stanza is that while Hitler and his regime will quickly pass, his followers will remain ready to welcome the next führer. As *Der Sumpf*'s contributors analyzed their society, indeed that of Europe as a

“Heil dir, Wecker schlafender Germanen,
eines ganzen Volkes Backfischschwarm!
Wie die alten Römer, unsere Ahnen,
grüßen wir dich mit erhobnem Arm – Heil!

Endlich hast du uns braunen Hemden,
die wir lang entbehrt, gebracht, hurra!
Und wir stehn vor allen rassefremden
Völkerschaften nun als Deutsche da – Heil!

Endlich wieder dürfen wir zu vieren
gleichen Trottes durch die Straßen gehn,
dürfen wieder brüllen und marschieren,
stillgestanden voreinander stehn – Heil!

Deine Wirkung geht ins Wunderbare:
wo nur einer deinen Namen sprach,
wachsen jedem plötzlich blonde Haare,
manchem wächst sogar die Vorhaut nach –
Heil!

Ja, dein Name macht die Männer brennen
und die Frauen macht er schauernd fromm.
Laßt uns unsre Jungens Adolf nennen,
den die Willis liegen an der Somme – hurra!

Welches Deutschland sollte nun erwachen,
jenes, das in Flandern schlafend liegt,
oder jenes, das beim Beutemachen
und beim Phrasendreschen kämpft und siegt
– Na?

Welche Juda sollte nun verrecken,
jenes, das uns Jesum Christ geschenkt,
oder jenes, traun, an das mit Schrecken
Rosenberg in seinem Mythos denkt? – waih!

Sind wir Christen oder Urganen?
Gehts nach Walhall, gehts zur ewigen Stadt?
Beides, Kinder, denn auf unsern Fahnen
steht ein Kreuz, mit dem ‘s ‘nen Haken hat. –
Heil!

Später wird dann di Geschichte melden:
dieses war das dritte Reich,
lauter Adolfs, lauter Helden,
doch das vierte folgte dann sogleich – Heil!

whole, the most disturbing trend they identified was the loss of the individual — whether lost to mass politics or mass religion. They created *Der Sumpf* in order to combat the forces arrayed against the individual, as well as to awaken individuals to the consequences of losing themselves in any crowd, no matter who stood at its head.

Der Sumpf was also committed to the cause of communism in Germany. But given that it was the first journal founded explicitly on the philosophy of Kierkegaard, and its content was infused with his concepts and writings, its contributors' version of communism was unorthodox in two important ways. First, theirs was a communism of the individual. While they heralded the coming communist revolution, it was not in the name of setting up a dictatorship of the proletariat. Rather they viewed it as the next stage in the liberation of the individual. Second, several of them embraced Kierkegaard's faith in the potential of a purified Christianity, while all shared his disdain for its modern guise. Instead of focusing on Danish Christianity, they attacked fascism, capitalism, and Roman Catholicism as the primary forces destroying individuality. Marx shaped their political strategy and Kierkegaard provided their philosophical ammunition.

This chapter takes *Der Sumpf* as a case study of the ways in which a group of German-speaking intellectuals used Kierkegaard to respond to the chaos of their times. Unlike the protagonists of previous chapters, these men did not focus on translating Kierkegaard. Thanks to the work of *Der Brenner*, and especially the Eugen Diederichs Verlag, the majority of Kierkegaard's texts were widely available in German by 1932. *Der Sumpf* was thus able to take for granted a base level of familiarity with Kierkegaard. Rather than introducing Kierkegaard, *Der Sumpf* reinterpreted his message as relevant for its cause.

This chapter begins in the early 1930s as Wilhelm Kütemeyer attempts to build on *Der Brenner's* legacy while at the same time correcting it with his own journal. Next come the

internal details of the journal: how he secured funding, recruited contributors, decided on a title. The bulk of the chapter focuses on the actual content of *Der Sumpf*'s four issues, demonstrating how Kierkegaard shaped the journal's response to the maelstrom of the late Weimar Republic. *Der Sumpf* fashioned itself as a voice in the wilderness, decrying all the threats to the individual in modern society. In the end, however, its contributors failed to take Nazism seriously enough until it was too late. The chapter concludes by considering how Kierkegaard's philosophy contributed to their misreading of the times.

Building a Journal

In the most absurd episode of Küttemeyer's attempts to break into the publishing world, his friend Werner Trott came up with his own, perfectly anti-bourgeois, fundraising method: selling stolen church goods. While the details of this operation are not clear, we know that Trott traveled to Alfred Baeumler's residence at some point in early 1931, ostensibly to pay a visit to Küttemeyer. Trott asked Baeumler if he would store the stolen items until he could find a way to sell them. His plan was to then use this money to fund his own journal.² Although certainly no defender of the church, Baeumler wanted no part of Trott's scheme. In his *Rundbrief* denouncing Küttemeyer, Baeumler cited the plan as evidence of the disreputable circles in which Küttemeyer ran. For his part, Küttemeyer seemed mildly embarrassed by Trott's actions and annoyed by the complications it brought to his already fraught relationship with Baeumler.³

² It's not exactly clear what type of journal Trott had in mind, but it was a separate project from that of Baeumler and Küttemeyer.

³ Küttemeyer referred to the event as "the Trott situation," and was concerned that it would be a "clear burden" for him as the story got around. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "25.4.1931," *TWK*.

Kütemeyer opted for a more traditional means of raising money. Having lost Baeumler's support in the spring of 1931, he searched for a new patron or patrons to finance the journal. By the fall of 1931, Kütemeyer reported to his friends that he had raised enough support to publish the first issue.⁴ Through Bruno Adler, a professor at the Bauhaus in Berlin and fellow traveler in *Der Brenner* circles, Kütemeyer had come into contact with Hugo Buschmann, a successful businessman and political economist. Buschmann agreed to provide the 5000 Marks necessary to get the journal off the ground.⁵ Kütemeyer hoped to produce the first issue by Christmas.⁶

With the finances for the journal secured, Kütemeyer travelled to Innsbruck to sort out the actual contents of the first issue. Kütemeyer hoped to establish the lineage between his nascent journal and *Der Brenner* and thus began recruiting contributors from the *Brenner* circles. "The primary goal of my trip," Kütemeyer wrote to Jaeger, "was to ascertain how likely it was that previous members of the Brenner group would join me in creating this journal, which had seemed to float just out of reach for so long, but now appeared on the verge of being realized."⁷ In this, Kütemeyer was relieved that Ficker appeared to have taken his side in the recent debacle with Baeumler. At the same time, Ficker was tentative about fully endorsing Kütemeyer's plans, and he refused to pass along the list of *Brenner* subscribers

⁴ Kütemeyer to Friedrich Punt, "14 September 1931," Teilnachlass Wilhelm Kütemeyer, Kassette 2, Korrespondenzen, WK an Friedrich Punt, 43 St., 1931-1933, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁵ Buschmann, who would later be arrested for his involvement in the anti-Nazi resistance movement known as the "Red Orchestra," also expressed interest in writing economic articles for Kütemeyer's journal. Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "(Innsbruck) (August?) 1931," *TWK*.

⁶ Kütemeyer to Friedrich Punt, "14 September 1931," Teilnachlass Wilhelm Kütemeyer, Kassette 2, Korrespondenzen, WK an Friedrich Punt, 43 St., 1931-1933, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

⁷ Kütemeyer to Jaeger, "(Innsbruck) (August?) 1931," *TWK*.

for Küttemeyer's use. Küttemeyer suspected Haecker of souring Ficker's opinion of him. Indeed, Haecker wrote to Ficker during Küttemeyer's visit and expressed his doubts about the latter's attempt to "reconcile Marx and Kierkegaard."⁸ Moreover, Ficker's wife felt that Küttemeyer lacked the sophistication of her husband.⁹

Nonetheless, Küttemeyer felt encouraged after the trip. Not only did he have sufficient finances, he also had a core group of contributors lined up. In addition to Dallago and Trott, Küttemeyer also recruited Friedrich Punt (1898-1969). Punt combined the unlikely skills of a poet and a lawyer, making him an exciting partner for the new venture. Moreover, as a former *Brenner* contributor, Punt deepened the connection to that circle that Küttemeyer so desired.

There was, however, one final problem: the journal still had no name. Küttemeyer could no longer use the title *Abgrenzungen* after his fallout with Baeumler. For months Küttemeyer and Dallago debated the pros and cons of various titles. Their suggestions give a sense of the intentions they brought to the journal. "*Das neue Gesetz* (The New Law) has great appeal to me," wrote Küttemeyer in August of 1931,

yet Dallago has strong objections: it is too arrogant. I've also considered "Habicht," a beautiful mountain in Stubeital (the first glacier), but perhaps that doesn't quite fit for Berlin, for whose mechanical life perhaps "Abgrenzungen" would be the most necessary and dangerous...but here Baeumler would certainly enforce his author's rights.¹⁰

⁸ Ficker was referring to Küttemeyer's article, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," which Küttemeyer had shared with him during the visit. Ficker to Haecker, "8. September 1931," in *Ficker Briefwechsel, Vol. 3*, 205.

⁹ At least this was the impression that Küttemeyer got from their interactions. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "27.8.1931," *TWK*.

¹⁰ "Das neue Gesetz' gefiele mir sehr. Dallago hat allerdings starke Bedenken: es ist zu arrogant. Auch an 'Habicht' (ein Schöner Berg im Stubeital, der erste Gletscher) habe ich gedacht, doch vielleicht geht das nicht für Berlin, dessen machanisiertem Leben vielleicht 'Abgrenzungen' am nötigsten und gefährlichsten wären (da hat aber Baeumler wohl das Autorrecht, das er, ebenso wie Haecker das auf den Titel 'Kritik der Gegenwart' wohl geltend machen würde." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "27.8.1931," *TWK*.

Several months later, Küttemeyer reported that he had narrowed the list to three: *Das neue Brenner*, *Das neue Gesetz*, or *Kommunistische Seelenkritik* (A Communist Critique of the Soul). "It is incredibly difficult," confessed Küttemeyer, "to find a fitting title."¹¹ The first title made clear the lineage into which Küttemeyer hoped to insert his journal. Yet he had recently grown more and more frustrated with the post-war Catholicism and leadership of *Der Brenner*. *Das neue Gesetz* had also lost its luster for Küttemeyer. In addition to Dallago's strong aversion, Küttemeyer felt unenthusiastic about its "judicial appearance."¹² The overtly political nature of *Kommunistische Seelenkritik* rankled Dallago's apolitical nature and was never a live option.¹³ Moreover, Küttemeyer remained uncomfortable with the actual instantiations of communism that he encountered in Berlin and Dresden.

Küttemeyer felt immense pressure to find the right title and fretted about the decision until the last second. Just a week before the first issue was set to print, Küttemeyer remained torn between *Das neue Brenner* and *Kritik der Gegenwart* even while annoyed by the complications surrounding both. Meanwhile, Frau Ficker complained to all who would listen about Küttemeyer "founding a journal on the back of *der Brenner*."¹⁴ And while *Kritik der Gegenwart* referred to a Kierkegaardian text, it was Haecker who had translated it into

¹¹ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "18.10.1931," *TWK*.

¹² Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "18.10.1931," *TWK*.

¹³ Küttemeyer discussed the possibility with Dallago of taking an "unpolitical stance" in the journal, but argued that it was simply not possible. Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "18.10.1931," *TWK*.

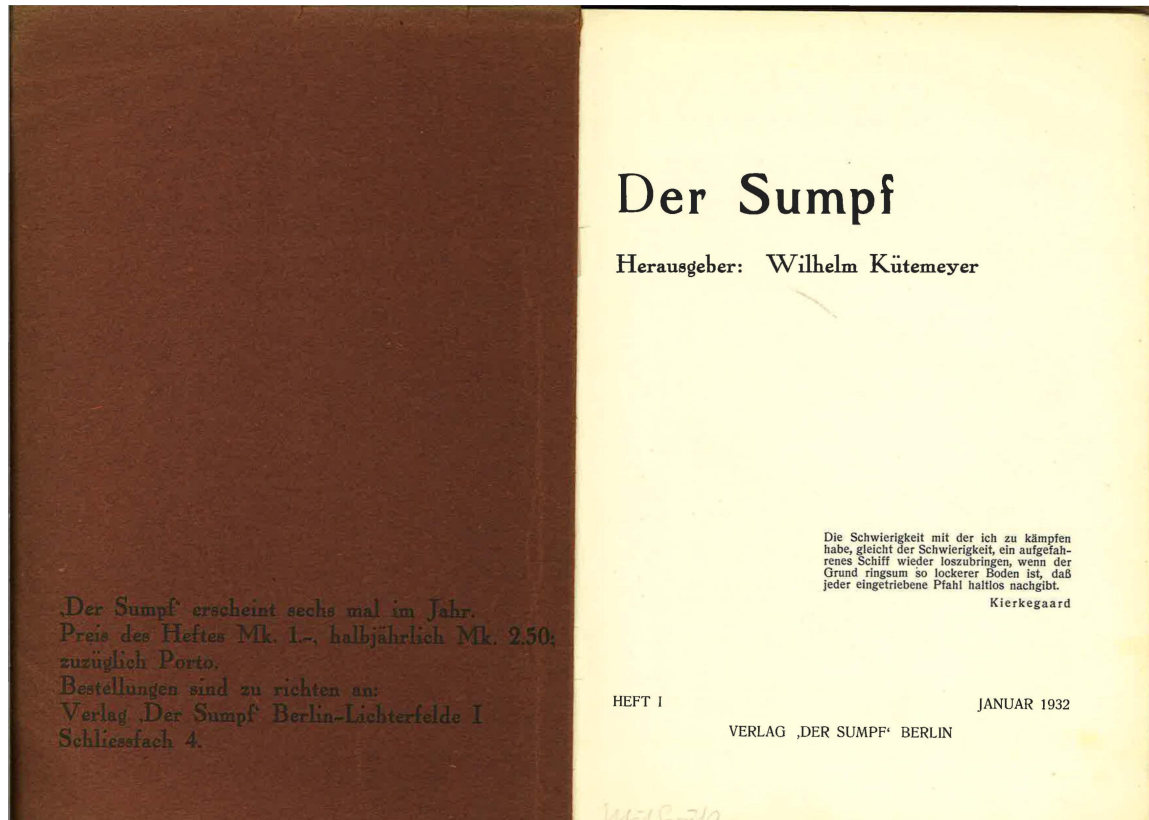
¹⁴ Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "27.8.1931," *TWK*.

German. Considering Haecker's opinion of him, Küttemeyer's concern that he would enforce his author's rights seems reasonable.¹⁵

At the very last moment, just days before printing began, Küttemeyer landed on a completely new title. Instead of *Das neue Brenner*—with its mountaintop associations—Küttemeyer chose *Der Sumpf*, literally "the bog" or "the swamp." As he explained to Jaeger, the inspiration came from the following quote from Kierkegaard: "The difficulty against which I struggle, resembles the difficulty of floating a grounded ship by means of cables fastened to pilings when the surrounding ground is a bog, so that every piling that is driven down gives way and fails."¹⁶ Küttemeyer made this quote the motto of *Der Sumpf*, placing it on the title page of each issue.

¹⁵ Indeed, Haecker had threatened a lawsuit against another translator in 1924 for using "Kritik der Gegenwart." "Natürlich kann jeder [Kierkegaard] übersetzen, der will," wrote Haecker to Ficker when he discovered the translation, "was aber ich nicht dulden kann, ist, daß Daniel den Titel "Kritik der Gegenwart" so einfach übernimmt, denn der ist von mir und keine Übersetzung. Unter diesem Titel darf er die Schrift nicht neu herausgeben, sonst hat er sofort eine Klage zu gewärtigen." Haecker to Ficker, "München, 4 Feb 1924," Ludwig von Ficker Korrespondenz, Schriftleitung der Brenner, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

¹⁶ "Die Schwierigkeit, mit der ich zu kämpfen habe, gleicht der Schwierigkeit, ein aufgelaufenes Schiff wieder loszubringen, wenn der Grund ringsum so lockerer Boden ist, daß jeder eingetriebene Pfahl haltlos nachgibt." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "Berlin-Zehlendorf, 18.11.1931," *TWK*.



(Title page of first issue of *Der Sumpf*, January 1932)

Kütemeyer discovered the titular quote in the article "The Measure of Distance and Thereby in Turn the Actual Difficulty with Which I have to Contend" from Kierkegaard's own journal, *The Moment*.¹⁷ Published from May to September of 1855, *The Moment* represents Kierkegaard's final cri-de-coeur against the hypocrisies of his society, especially its easy blending of state and religion. After years of crafting a subtle and indirect critique through various pseudonyms, Kierkegaard stepped out in its pages from behind the curtain. "Now I speak much more decisively, unreservedly, truly," declared Kierkegaard at the time, "without,

¹⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, "The Measure of Distance and Thereby in Turn the Actual Difficulty with Which I have to Contend" in *The Moment and Late Writings*, 206-213.

however, thereby implying that what I said earlier was untrue."¹⁸ The time had come for Kierkegaard to directly express all the frustration that had built up over the years. Within a month of publishing the final issue, Kierkegaard died on November 11, 1855.

In this article in which Küttemeyer found his title, Kierkegaard exposes how modern Christianity had destroyed the individual: through “indifferentism.” In its guise as a state religion, Christianity had transformed individual faith—what according to Kierkegaard should be a matter of “infinite, personal, passionate interest”—into little more than habitual actions, such as baptism, tithing, and church attendance. To make his point, Kierkegaard examines two very different exemplars of Danish Christianity of his day: Bishop Mynster (1775-1854) and Pastor Grundtvig (1783-1872). Although these two men represented opposite ends of the Danish Christian spectrum—Mynster as the head of the state Church and Grundtvig the founder of a sectarian movement—Kierkegaard dismissed both as symptoms of the same disease prevalent in modern Christianity. “The difficulty is that the entire age has sunk into the deepest indifferentism,” declares Kierkegaard, “what is misleading is that they call themselves Christians and that they are unaware of what indifferentism actually is, or of the most corrupt form of indifferentism.”¹⁹ It is this deep indifferentism that Kierkegaard likens to a bog.²⁰

Kierkegaard's condemnation easily flowed out of its religious bounds and into a broader societal critique—indeed, this lack of separation between society and religion stood at the center of his overall message. The idea of a Christian nation is both nonsensical and

¹⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourselves*, Kierkegaard's Writings, vol. 21, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 215.

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, “The Measure of Distance,” 208.

²⁰ Kierkegaard, “The Measure of Distance,” 209.

dangerous in that it creates the false equivalency between being Danish and being Christian. For him, each individual Christian must decide whether or not to become a true believer. But herein lay Kierkegaard's struggle in the swamp: only individuals could become Christian, but so-called Christian society had annihilated the individual. "They all are," laments Kierkegaard, "the public:

This humaneness, to ask whether an opinion is in itself true, no one cares about; what they care about is: how many have this opinion. Aha! The number decides whether an opinion has physical power, and this is what they care about all the way through: the single individual is the nation — well, there is no individual, every individual is the public.²¹

The significance of associating their new journal with Kierkegaard's *Moment* was not lost on Dallago. "Der Sumpf" with the motto from Kierkegaard is a superb find for a title," wrote Dallago upon hearing the news, "yet it demands much from the content; it is impressive and brave of you to tackle this head-on."²² Küttemeyer had endured much in his devotion to the cause. He then had to beg and borrow — he left the stealing to Trott — to raise the necessary funds. He also managed to pull together a contingent of like-minded contributors and decide upon a name. In November of 1931, Küttemeyer could finally hold in his hands the fruits of their labor.

²¹ Kierkegaard, "The Measure of Distance," 209.

²² "Der Sumpf" mit dem Motto v. Kierkegaard is wohl glücklicher Fund für den Titel; erfordert aber auch sehr viel vom Inhalt; es ist sehr schön u. sehr mütig von Ihnen, die Sache so in Angriff zu nehmen."

Dallago to Küttemeyer, "Arzl, 22.11.1931," Teilnachlass Wilhelm Küttemeyer, Kasette 2, Korrespondenzen, Carl Dallago an WK, 204 St., 1931-1943, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

Kierkegaard in *Der Sumpf*

Der Sumpf was from beginning to end an anti-establishment journal whose primary goal was to criticize the leading authorities of the day. Yet for the most part, its contributors found other social threats more menacing than the Nazis and focused its articles accordingly. In its four issues, Nazism was only mentioned explicitly in Leitgeb's satire and Dallago's periodic reference to Hitler as a less impressive Mussolini. In fact, the wide range of topics presented in *Der Sumpf* makes it difficult to summarize its main goals. Dallago bemoans the power of the Catholic church, citing the evil it has propagated in Italy. Punt looks to Russia for answers to Germany's problems, and those of the West more generally. Küttemeyer builds a case for Kierkegaardian individuality with a Marxist hue. And Trott writes impossibly dense musings on economic nihilism.²³ Following the publication of the third issue of *Der Sumpf*, Leitgeb confessed that he had no idea what the actual goals of the journal were.²⁴

When reading through *Der Sumpf* it is rather easy to forget its supposed Kierkegaardian lineage. Granted, the title page of each issue displayed the Kierkegaard quote from which *Der Sumpf* derived its name, and Küttemeyer and Dallago were explicit about modeling their journal after Kierkegaard. Yet Marx's presence seems much more pronounced in the articles, even if there is an element of resistance to his influence. In what ways, then, was *Der Sumpf* a Kierkegaardian journal? And what might such a moniker even mean? In

²³ Dallago repeatedly complained that he had no idea what Trott was writing, but he liked it anyway. For example, after reading the manuscript for Trott's "The Individual in the Time of Economic Nihilism," he wrote to Küttemeyer, "[Trott's] style is unfamiliar to me and it's often hard for me to follow him, nonetheless he certainly touches on something deeply intimate about personhood..." Dallago to Küttemeyer, "Arzl, 25.1.1932," Teilnachlass Wilhelm Küttemeyer, Kasette 2, Korrespondenzen, Carl Dallago an WK, 204 St., 1931-1943, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv.

1932, arguably the apex of Kierkegaard's popularity in Germany, how did these men interpret his message for their society?

There are three primary ways in which *Der Sumpf* comes across as a Kierkegaardian journal: its association with *Der Brenner*, its contributors, and its content. These themes will be traced out in turn below. The first two are rather straightforward: Küttemeyer had at one point hoped to actually take over *Der Brenner* from Ficker.²⁵ When this plan failed, Küttemeyer pursued the dream of founding *Der Brenner's* successor. In the end, *Der Sumpf* shared six of their seven contributors with the *Brenner* circle.²⁶ The ways in which Kierkegaard influenced the content, however, requires a thorough examination of *Der Sumpf's* version of communism. Kierkegaard's philosophy molded *Der Sumpf's* communism in two key aspects: in its unique focus on the individual (*der Einzelne*) and in its respect for spirituality as a key component of the human experience.

Der Sumpf was to be a modern-day iteration of Kierkegaard's *Augenblick*. This association went deeper than merely inspiring the title and adorning the front page of every issue with Kierkegaard's words. *Augenblick's* sense of desperate rage comes through as well: whereas Kierkegaard railed against the hypocrisy of Danish state Christianity, Küttemeyer and his friends targeted the hypocrisy of the West as a whole. Also, like Kierkegaard, Küttemeyer was also willing to sacrifice personal health and finances in the name of the journal. Without enough funds to hire a publisher for the first two issues, Küttemeyer and his

²⁴ Küttemeyer mentioned Leitgeb's confession that "he has no clear sense as to the overall intention of the [*Sumpf*]." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "(Berlin), 7.7.1932," *TWK*.

²⁵ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 283.

²⁶ The only contributor who had not published in *Der Brenner* or been a part of its group in some capacity was Werner Kraft. After the war, however, Kraft did publish a piece in the 1948 issue of *Der Brenner*.

wife did the printing by hand in their small basement apartment. Doing so in the same space as they cooked and slept led to at least one nasty bout of ink poisoning.²⁷

Although mentioning Kierkegaard only once in all of his articles, Dallago attacks the Catholic Church with all of the zeal (if not quite all the wit) of Kierkegaard's *Augenblick*.

Dallago's first article, "The Catholic Action," bore the subtitle "as overflow of the spiritual forsakenness of a Church, which falsely presents itself as the Church of Christ."²⁸ Pope Pius XI (1857-1939, Pope from 1922-1939) provided Dallago with more than enough grist for his Kierkegaardian mill; Pius' support of Mussolini drew the harshest of Dallago's attacks.²⁹

Dallago warns against a church that so easily cozies up to politicians and the press. "A church which praises the press and views politics as an act of love," concludes Dallago, "has deviated so completely from all that is true Christianity, that—just like any other world power—the only way it can remain in power is through violence."³⁰ Dallago thus continues in the direction he had taken in his final years at *Der Brenner*, carrying out what he saw as Kierkegaard's final message: "The Church must perish."³¹

²⁷ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 289.

²⁸ Carl Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion: als Ausfluß der geistigen Verlorenheit einer Kirche, die fälschlich als Kirche Christi auftritt," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, January 1932, 32-49; "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, April 1932, 85-101.

²⁹ "Der Papst hat von der ersten Stunde an den Faschismus gesegnet und große Hoffnungen auf diese jungen Kräfte gesetzt, die sich zum Glauben der Väter bekennen." Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 40.

³⁰ "Denn eine Kirche, welche die Presse verherrlicht und die Politik als Liebesdienst erklärt, ist so gänzlich abgewichen von allem wahren Christlichen, daß ihr—gleich den Machthabern dieser Welt—um sich durchzusetzen und sich zu halten, wirklich nichts anderes übrig bleibt als sich der Gewalt zu bedienen." Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 94.

³¹ "Die Kirche muss weg!" Carl Dallago, "Die Menschenwerdung des Menschen," *Der Brenner*, Herbst 1923, 155.

Only once did *Der Sumpf* contain a translation of Kierkegaard's writings. In the second issue, from April 1932, Küttemeyer included his translation of Kierkegaard's "*Die zwei Zeitalter: Die Revolutionszeit und die Gegenwart*" ["The Two Ages: The Time of Revolution and the Present"].³² The piece fit well with the overall feel of this issue, which also included a reprint of Friedrich Hölderlin's article, "*Über den Untergang des Vaterlandes*," ["Concerning the Downfall of the Fatherland"] in which he attempts to make sense of a passing order and the emergence of a new one.³³ Leitgeb contributed a fantastical poem replete with visions of hell, flying horses and Amazonian warriors.³⁴ Dallago's two contributions rounded out this prescient sense of crisis. In the first, "Eräugnis aus Österreich" ["Reports from Austria"] he discusses the recent coup attempt in his homeland.³⁵ In the second, "Die katholische Aktion," he describes a vast Catholic conspiracy to overthrow the Austrian republic and then, quoting Dostoevsky, warns of a time when senseless killing and disaster will overtake the world.³⁶ Kierkegaard thus joins the chorus of those prophesying the coming destruction.

Der Einzelne

³² Kierkegaard, "Die zwei Zeitalter: Die Revolutionszeit und die Gegenwart," in *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 69-76. Haecker had also translated a portion of this piece for *Der Brenner* in 1914, which he had titled "Kritik der Gegenwart."

³³ Friedrich Hölderlin, "Über den Untergang des Vaterlandes," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 126-130. The article was excerpted from Hölderlin's philosophical fragment, *Das Werden im Vergehen*, written around 1800.

³⁴ Josef Leitgeb, "Aus einem Tagebuch," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, April 1932, 77-84.

³⁵ Dallago, "Eräugnis aus Österreich," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, April 1932, 67-68.

³⁶ Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," 96.

More than any single text from Kierkegaard, the contributors to *Der Sumpf* drew upon his concept of *der Einzelne* (“the individual”) as they constructed their worldview.³⁷ For Kierkegaard, the *Einzelne* functioned as the sine qua non of his entire philosophy. He dedicated many of his writings to “the single individual” and in “A Word on the Relation of My Work as an Author to ‘the Single Individual,’” Kierkegaard identified the concept as one of the guiding principles of his entire life’s work.³⁸ He defined human beings as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal whose most profound goal was to strive toward the eternal.³⁹ It is only by exercising choice, personal passionate choice, that a human becomes a true *Einzelne*.⁴⁰ For Kierkegaard, this progression represents the Christian message in that God can relate only to individuals, not crowds. “As soon as the category ‘the single individual’ goes out,” wrote Kierkegaard in his journal, “Christianity is abolished.”⁴¹

The leveling effect of the crowd represented the greatest threat to becoming an *Einzelne*. In “The Two Ages,” Kierkegaard describes leveling as the process of subsuming the

³⁷ In the original Danish, Kierkegaard used “en Enkelt” or “den Enkelte.” For the most recent and thorough examination of the role of this concept in Kierkegaard’s philosophy, see Lydia B. Amir, “Individual,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Volume 15, Tome IV: Kierkegaard’s Concepts: Individual to Novel* ed. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 1-8.

³⁸ SKS 16, 94 / PV, 114.

³⁹ Küttemeyer’s version of Kierkegaard’s definition: “Der Mensch ist ein gebrochenes Wesen, ein echter Bruch zwischen Geist und Natur, just deswegen aber ein Individuum oder die Möglichkeit dazu. Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 209.

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard placed such existential emphasis on decision-making that the German law scholar Carl Schmitt appealed to him as he developed his infamous philosophy of “Decisionism.” Schmitt’s Decisionism, a reaction against the moribund state of the Weimar legislature, maintained that the content of any given decision was less important than the act of making a decision. For an overview of Kierkegaard’s influence on Schmitt, see Batholomew Ryan, “Carl Schmitt and Søren Kierkegaard: Zones of Exception and Appropriation,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources; Vol. 14: Kierkegaard’s Influence on Social-Political Thought* ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 160-177.

⁴¹ SKS 22, 103, NB12:103 / JP 2, 1781.

individual into a crowd whereby the individual's uniqueness becomes non-existent. Human beings are afraid to make decisions and thus find safety in numbers. But for Kierkegaard, who famously equated truth with subjectivity, the crowd could only ever produce untruth. Pushing back against the frenzy of the masses in 1840s Europe, Kierkegaard asserted that crowd is always wrong since the crowd precludes individual decisions. All the while, he maintained faith in the ultimate triumph of the *Einzelne*. Kierkegaard believed "the evolution of the whole world tends to show the absolute importance of the category of the individual apart from the crowd which precisely is the Christian principle. But as yet we have not come very far concretely, though it is recognized *in abstracto*."⁴² And the path to becoming a true *Einzelne*, according to Kierkegaard, is to make one's own decisions.

Kierkegaard's focus on the *Einzelne* made him an appealing figure — alongside Dilthey, Bergson, Nietzsche — within the *Lebensphilosophie* ("Philosophy of Life") movement, which was enjoying a resurgence in post-war Germany.⁴³ *Lebensphilosophie* pushed back against purely materialist views of life and championed a metaphysical conception of the individual. Although the operative term in *Lebensphilosophie* was *Persönlichkeit* ("Personality") rather than *Einzelne*, the fundamental focus remained the same: they were both held up as a final refuge for the soul, a fount of inwardness that resisted the depravities of modern society. Siegfried Kracauer's 1913 essay "Über das Wesen des Persönlichkeit," models this easy overlap and even hints at the direction taken by Küttemeyer in *Der Sumpf*. Kracauer complains that

⁴² Sören Kierkegaard, *The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard* ed. Peter Preisler Rohde (New York: Citadel Press, 1960), 102.

⁴³ *Lebensphilosophie* originated as early as the late eighteenth century, seen especially in Friedrich Schlegel's attack on systematic philosophy. It enjoyed a resurgence, and transformation, in the twentieth century thanks largely to the writings of Dilthey, Bergson, and Nietzsche. For a recent article about *Lebensphilosophie* in the Weimar Republic see Nitzan Lebovic, "The Beauty and Terror of *Lebensphilosophie*: Ludwig Kluges, Walter Benjamin, and Alfred Baeumler," *South Central Review*, vol.23, No. 1 (Spring, 2006), 23-39.

socialism remained “outside of man” in its attempt to transform society on a purely rational basis. Arguing that socialism could learn from religion, Kracauer states “Christ strived after the *inner* transformation of a helpless humanity, he turned to the *Einzelnen*, and gave him depth, meaning, value. He raised him above his needs; he gave to humanity a new nobility. That Socialism cannot do.”⁴⁴

Kütemeyer makes a similar argument regarding the *Einzelne* and communism in the first article of *Der Sumpf*, “The Individual and the Church.” He does so, however, in order to trace the origins of communism deep into the history of the West, back to Rome and even Greece. Establishing this arc also helps him to root communism in Christianity in a deeper sense than pointing to the communal living of the early church. He argues that the eternity of the proletariat was an inheritance from the eternal life granted to the *Einzelne* by Christianity. By revising Kierkegaard’s historical narrative, Kütemeyer is able to posit communism as the next chapter in the *Einzelne*’s liberation.

Kütemeyer views communism’s fight for the proletariat as a political application of Kierkegaard’s battle for the *Einzelne*.⁴⁵ Kütemeyer’s biggest complaint against Marx’s ideology, and communism as a whole, is that it fails to understand itself according to this narrative. For Kütemeyer, communism is not the final stage of history. Rather, it is the next stage in the battle for the individual. Absent this larger narrative, contemporary communism had veered off course and placed too much teleological value on its fight against capitalism. Because the world Marx opposed “inextricably linked money and spirit,” he completely dismissed spirit

⁴⁴ Siegfried Krakauer, “Über das Wesen des Persönlichkeit,” in *Werke* 9.1, ed. Ingrid Belke (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 116.

⁴⁵ “Kierkegaard ist der Verräter, den das Christentum nötig hatte. Und Marx gibt diesem Verrat die politische Konsequenz und blutige Spitze ohne welche dem christlichen Staat nicht beizukommen ist.” Kütemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 20.

from his philosophy.⁴⁶ Yet by denuding the individual of spirit, Marx “forces the *Einzelne* to disappear into the masses...much like Hegel forcing [the *Einzelne*] to disappear into the state, thus separating him from the roots of inward independence and thus from the source of life itself.”⁴⁷ Küttemeyer's attempt to reorient the history of communism — connecting it to Greece and Rome, and Kierkegaard — is an attempt to plug it into the more important movement of liberating the *Einzelne*.

Küttemeyer's association between deep historical roots and legitimacy reflects a common trend of his time. Indeed, this mix of modernism and archaism defined some of the most fascinating products of Weimar culture. As Peter Gordon writes when defining his term “archaic modernism”:

Across the spectrum of Weimar culture (and European culture more generally), one may chart a diversely structured mood of rebellion against the values of the enlightened world; many intellectuals yearned for what was more ‘original’ than modernity. But little indicates a thinker’s modernity so much as nostalgia for what is thoroughly un-modern.⁴⁸

Heidegger's privileging of the pre-Socratics as providing superior access to “being,” offers one example. Another can be found in Karl Barth's focus on the “original” Christianity of Paul and desire to recover “the strange new world of the bible” as a condemnation of modern Christianity. On an institutional level, Suzanne Marchand explores the “game of origins” in the contemporary battle for legitimacy between classical scholars and the renegade

⁴⁶ Küttemeyer's views on Marx's radical materialism and antipathy toward the realm of the spirit would likely have been tempered had he access to Marx's “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” also known as the “Paris Manuscripts.” These manuscripts, which reveal the importance of philosophy, specifically German idealism, in the development of Marx's thought, have catalyzed a fruitful reassessment of the view of Marx as a radical materialist. Although written in 1844, the manuscripts were only published for public consumption in Germany in 1932 and the first English translation was in 1959.

⁴⁷ “Solch ein Marxismus läßt den Einzelnen in der Masse, d.h. schlieslich im Publikum untergehen ähnlich wie ihn Hegel im Staat aufgehen ließ und schneidet ih die Wurzeln innerster Selbständigkeit und damit des lebendigen Lebens überhaupt ab.”

Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 18.

⁴⁸ Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 23.

orientalists whose topics of study (Persia, Egypt, Babylon) made the Greco-Roman world appear recent in comparison.⁴⁹ What unites them all is a conviction that revolutionary truth was buried somewhere in the deepest recesses of our history. To recover it meant jettisoning the dead weight of tradition and accessing the primordial truth that had been lost. Like Heidegger with western philosophy and Barth with Christianity, Küttemeyer brought this approach to bear regarding the history of communism.

Trott took a slightly different tack in his contributions to *Der Sumpf*. While he also compares the *Einzelne* with the proletariat, it was not the historical connection between the two that fascinated Trott. Rather, he focuses on the contemporary moment and argues that the *Einzelne* and the proletariat are, for all intents and purposes, one and the same. Trott begins his article “The Economic Age” by expressing concern about the “leveling process” that he found evident both in untrammelled capitalism, and in communist theories of mass revolution.⁵⁰ Tipping his hat to Kierkegaard, Trott describes the exploitative tendencies of capitalism as “an expression of the sickness unto death itself.”⁵¹ Turning to communism, Trott worries that the “tangles of statistics and pallid empirical considerations” might leave a person “cold and alienated.”⁵²

⁴⁹ For a thorough examination of this “game of origins” — and the origin of that phrase — see Suzanne Marchand, “Philhellenism and the Furor Orientalis” *Modern Intellectual History* 1, no. 3, November 2004, 331-358. See also her full-length study of Orientalists in Germany, Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, April 1932, 105.

⁵¹ Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” 104.

⁵² “Die schwere Frage ist, ob die Formeln, die wir uns in der Sphäre der Einzelexistenz bildeten, genügend symbolisches Feuer und genügend Weichheit und Fülle hinter ihrem spröden Schema enthalten, um im Gewirr von Statistiken und blassen empirischen Betrachtungen nicht zu erkalten und zu zerbrechen, sondern die gehörige Leuchtkraft und Schmiegsamkeit besitzen werden, um die mechanischen Produktionsverhältnisse zu erhellen und sich ihnen

Trott concludes his article by considering the proletariat alongside the *Einzelne*. The development of the *Einzelne*, explains Trott, “is characterized by the emancipation from his contingent desires and pains.” His sufferings result primarily from the “leveling” and the “destruction of the environment,” inherent in contemporary society.⁵³ Much the same can be said about the proletariat. His life is also determined by the “contingency of his misfortune,” which is now made inescapable due to the centralization of the means of production. Trott admits that the ultimate goals of the proletariat and the *Einzelne* might diverge somewhere down the road.⁵⁴ But he insists that their immediate goals should be the same. “Both are therefore united in the coming revolution,” declares Trott, “their only goal in life is the overthrow of the reigning order of society.”⁵⁵ Kierkegaard’s *Einzelne* and Marx’s proletariat must storm the barricades together.

Der Sumpf’s attempt to infuse a communist call to revolution with Kierkegaardian ideas yielded a unique version of German communism. While the comparison between the proletariat and the *Einzelne* might have seemed forced at times, it nonetheless points to an important goal of *Der Sumpf*: seeking a communism that had room for the individual, for individualism. Kierkegaard devoted much of his writing to the same cause, though in a different context. For Kierkegaard it was the system-building obsession of Hegel and his ilk that crushed the individual. *Der Sumpf* accused Marxism of much the same. “The *Einzelne* has no place in Marx’s theory,” complains Küttemeyer in his first article, “the actual substance of

einzuschmiegen, damit sie uns nicht aus weltfernen Konstruktionen kalt und fremd anstarren.” Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” 103. Emphasis mine.

⁵³ Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” 105.

⁵⁴ Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” 108.

⁵⁵ “Beide sind also vor der Revolution darin einig, daß sie zu kurz gekommen, und zwar nicht aus privaten, sondern aus politischen Ursachen.” Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” 108.

the individual, which cannot be divided into other relations, simply does not appear."⁵⁶ *Der Sumpf's* revolution was not one of the faceless masses. Rather, it would consist of individuals awakening to their personal roles within the proletariat.

While *Der Sumpf's* Kierkegaardian inflected communism was unique, its focus on the individual was nonetheless a product of its time. More than perhaps any other city in Weimar Germany, Berlin pulsed with a janus-faced fascination with the individual. On one side, the individual seemed threatened at every corner. Fritz Lang's classic film *M*, based in Berlin, tapped into the fear that any one of the nameless individuals populating the city could in fact be a murderer. This element of isolation and fear also expressed itself in the press-fueled fascination with the number of suicides in Berlin, which were viewed as somehow symptomatic of the existential threats of a modern city.⁵⁷ At the same time, Weimar Berlin earned a reputation for its endless possibilities for individual expression. There was a sense that the individual was both more free and more fragile than she had ever been before.

That this level of individualism coincided with the advent of mass politics resulted in some uncomfortable contortions within political parties of left and right. Ideologically, both ends of the spectrum preached a gospel of collectivism over and against modern individualism: on the right it was nation or race, and on the left, class. Practically, however, both realized that the reality of mass politics required appealing to the desires of the masses.⁵⁸ The radical

⁵⁶ "Der Einzelne hat in Marx's Theorie keinen Platz, die in Beziehungen unaufteilbare Wesentlichkeit des Individuums erscheint hier nicht." Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, January 1932, 17.

⁵⁷ For an examination of this phenomenon, as well as a refutation of its veracity, see Föllmer, *Individuality*, 41-46.

⁵⁸ I find Timothy Brown's analysis of the manifold relationship between mass politics and the masses especially helpful here. "It is necessary," writes Brown, "to recognize that political parties or "movements" are only imperfect institutional approximations of social forces and

right, especially the Nazis, did a better job of this than the left, whose ideological fixation on class was less adaptable. It was a short step from the Nazis' fixation on hierarchical classification of nations and races to a classification of individuals. They channeled the societal desire for individualism by championing their own image of "authentic individuals" over against "inauthentic individuals." As Walter Benjamin noted in 1936, fascism succeeded not because it offered the masses subjugation, but rather because it offered them "a chance to express themselves."⁵⁹

The German left proved much less adept at folding individualism into their party platform. Nonetheless, just as they attempted to appeal to some level of nationalism in the early 1930s, the radical left tried to tap into the individualist ethos as well. The "red revues," where agitprop met cabaret, are one example of the communist party responding to the entertainment culture of the time. There were also art exhibits and early attempts at communist films—the latter truly coming into its own only in the German Democratic Republic. As Moritz Föllmer claims, "Communist political culture addressed working-class, and to some extent even middle-class, Berliners as individuals, before trying to convince them that revolutionary solidarity fostered their personal interests and desires."⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the more rigid ideological structure of communism hamstrung their attempts to appeal to individualism. A much more organic expression of the radical left's view can be seen in Siegfried Krakauer's trenchant attacks on Berlin individualism as little more than expressions

pressures; and more, that they do not just mirror but seek to shape and direct, both organizationally and discursively." Brown, *Weimar Radicals*, 7.

⁵⁹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, tran. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 241.

⁶⁰ Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 92.

of false consciousness.⁶¹ *Der Sumpf*'s focus on the *Einzelne*, however, was not a calculated move; it was their *raison d'être*.

Reframing Communism in Germany

Undoubtedly, *Der Sumpf* skewed to the left of the political spectrum. Its chief editor and one of its contributors were active members of the German Communist Party. Punt wrote articles that pointed to the "Russian Example" as a desirable for Western Europe. Even Dallago, fundamentally so apoplectic toward political movements of any stripe, expressed admiration for the Bolsheviks who at least separated politics and religion. He also hoped that *Der Sumpf* would play a part in the fight against fascism, both in Germany and in Italy.

Yet *Der Sumpf* was no mouthpiece for the Communist Party in Germany. Küttemeyer's religious sensibilities and Dallago's political antipathies, for starters, made a clean fit with the German Communist Party impossible. Küttemeyer knew that they would have to stand largely on their own, with no institutional support from the KPD. "My participation in the Communist Party," explained Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "has become hopeless, not in the least because of [*Der Sumpf*], which has frustrated all the prominent members, especially Lukács, and will only continue to frustrate them."⁶² Küttemeyer and Dallago nonetheless hoped to find

⁶¹ For an English language collection of Kracauer's essays from the time, see Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁶² "Meine Tätigkeit in der Kommunistischen Partei ist zwar nahezu hoffnungslos, steht aber, nicht zum Geringsten durch die Zeitschrift, die die prominenten Genossen, insbesondere Lukacz sehr geärgert hat und noch mehr ärgern wird." Küttemeyer to Jaeger, "3.3.1932," *TWK*.

readership among the working class. Realizing that this group likely could not afford to purchase the journal, Dallago suggested possibly loaning copies to workers.⁶³

Der Sumpf sought to reframe the discussion of communism in Germany. First of all, it decried the hypocrisy of the condemnation of communism by the west. For Dallago, nowhere was this hypocrisy more evident than in Pope Pius XI's denunciations of the evils of soviet Russia. Pius' recent treaty with Mussolini—the "Lateran Accords," which established the sovereignty of Vatican City, among other things—undermined any moral high ground he claimed against the Bolsheviks. "It's rather odd," Dallago observes, "that the Pope wants first and foremost to Christianize Russian bolshevism while ignoring the fascist Italian bolshevism that practices its evil on the front steps of the Vatican." He argues that both varieties commit violent atrocities in the name of political necessity. But at least the Bolsheviks don't claim to be doing so under the auspices of a Christian faith. "Bolshevism is most certainly not Christian," acknowledges Dallago, "but it is doubtful that [Bolshevism], which openly declares itself unchristian, does more damage to Christianity than the so-called Christian states."⁶⁴ In a later article, Dallago refers to this type of dissimulation as "the greatest evil."⁶⁵

⁶³ Küttemeyer and Dallago consulted with the Berlin publisher Lambert Schneider to devise a long-term financial plan for their project. This plan centered on the creation of a community of patrons who would agree to contribute twenty-five Reichsmarks a month for two years. In the end, the only person who agreed to sign up under these terms was Buschmann. A handful of other prospects expressed willingness to contribute in much smaller amounts: between 2 and 5 Reichsmarks a month. At the end of their fundraising campaign, they could count on only 40 Reichsmarks a month. The printing costs alone, for one edition, came to over 400 Reichsmarks. Küttemeyer concluded that he would have to print the issues by hand in his basement. Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 289.

⁶⁴ "Wohl ist auch der Bolschewismus gewiß nicht christlich, aber ob er sich, der offen als unchristlich auftritt, mehr gegen das Christliche verfehlen kann als die sogenannten christlichen Staaten, die Papstkirche als Staatskirche inbegriffen, ist zu bezweifeln." Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 46.

⁶⁵ "Diese 'christliche' Volksverhetzung ist das heilloseste, ist das ärgste Übel." Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 88.

Punt takes a slightly different angle in his contributions: he seeks to demystify communism for western Europeans. While Dallago decried the hypocrisy and self-righteousness present in the West's condemnation of Soviet Bolshevism, Punt dismisses the fear of communism as nothing more than a modern superstition. "The man of the Middle Ages," explains Punt, "ascribed the majority of what he did not and could not understand onto a Satan constructed precisely for this purpose, especially when that which was misunderstood ran counter to his valued worldview, habits, and institutions."⁶⁶ Although we may think we have emerged from the so-called dark ages, argues Punt, contemporary European society does the same thing today. Instead of Satan, we have the "so-called Jewish spirit."⁶⁷ And instead of Satanism, we have Marxism (which people conflate with communism and socialism).

Alongside the attempt to demystify communism, *Der Sumpf* also argued for its deeply Western roots. Punt declares that communism and socialism must be distinguished from the "curse-word of Marxism."⁶⁸ He concedes that Marxism contained an element of the "Jewish prophetic ethos and devastatingly precise spirit of a Semite clothed in the fool's garb of German university writing."⁶⁹ But this doesn't hold true for socialism and communism, the historical lineage of which reaches back much further than Marx or Lenin. In fact, as Punt argues in "The State under Inspection," it was actually Plato who first envisioned a society

⁶⁶ "Der Mensch des Mittelalters schob den Großteil dessen, was er nicht verstand und nicht verstehen konnte, einem hierzu eigens konstruierten Satan zu, wenn das Unverständene und Unverständliche seinen positiv gewerteten Anschauungen, Gewohnheiten, Einrichtungen zuwiderlief." Friedrich Punt, "Staaten zu Ansicht," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 153.

⁶⁷ Friedrich Punt, "Staaten zu Ansicht," 154.

⁶⁸ Friedrich Punt, "Staaten zu Ansicht," 153.

⁶⁹ "Marx war allerdings ein Jude und noch dazu ein deutscher Jude, in dessen Werken das jüdische Prophetenethos, der haarscharfe Geist eines Semiten zu ihrem Nachteile verkleidet waren in das Narrengewand deutscher Universitätsschreiberei, und es ist und bleibt richtig daß der Marxismus von Marx stammt." Friedrich Punt, "Staaten zu Ansicht," 153.

built on these ideas. Punt devotes the majority of his article to comparing Plato's conception of the state in *The Republic* with that found in the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. He concludes that "Plato's blueprint was anything but utopian, it was just a couple thousand years too early."⁷⁰ Rather than being some foreign threat, Marxism is simply a variant of the platonic ideal.

Kütemeyer also looks back to the Greeks to explain the roots of communism in his multi-part article "The Individual and the Church."⁷¹ While Punt examined conceptions of the state from Plato to Soviet Russia, Kütemeyer focuses on the concept of the individual within those states. Following Kierkegaard's lead, Kütemeyer explains that "in [Socrates] the entrance of the individual into history is foreshadowed."⁷² In a society where the polis clearly took precedent over the individual, Socrates flipped the equation. "What good does it do a man," Kütemeyer anachronistically imagined Socrates asking, "to gain the entire world and yet damage his life (his soul)."⁷³ The stage was set for the battle between the individual and society.

Kütemeyer explains that when the Romans inherited the Greek political system, they also inherited the struggle between the individual and society. In the early Roman republic, the state remained the highest good and thus the struggle continued in similar form as had been the case in Greece. This all changed, however, when Rome adopted Christianity as the official state religion. On one level, Christianity granted immense value to the individual by

⁷⁰ Friedrich Punt, "Staaten zu Ansicht," 162.

⁷¹ Kütemeyer spread this article across three issues of *Der Sumpf*: Heft 1, Heft 3, and Heft 4.

⁷² "In [Sokrates] deutet sich der Einzug des Individuums in die Geschichte an und seines." Kütemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 141.

⁷³ Kütemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 141.

establishing the eternality of the individual soul.⁷⁴ And yet, there was a tendency within Christianity to devalue the individual life on earth due to the intense focus on the afterlife. Küttemeyer points to the valorization of poverty and suffering as the clearest example of this tendency.

Küttemeyer set up this historical argument before establishing the connection between Christianity and communism. He aims for a more complicated, and ultimately more substantial, connection than the well-worn emphasis on the communist elements of the early Christian community. According to Küttemeyer, the necessary political, economic, even spiritual preconditions for communism first arose in Christianized Rome. Perhaps most important, Küttemeyer argues that “the proletariat owes its existence, as Kierkegaard understood, to political Christianity.”⁷⁵

How does Küttemeyer support this claim? His definition and history of *der Einzelne* is central here. Küttemeyer builds off of Punt’s argument that the individual stepped onto the historical stage with Socrates. Although Socrates invested the individual with great import and more value than the polis, there was no escaping the fact that the individual perished (while the polis lived on). By holding out the promise of eternal salvation to the individual, Christianity offered immunity from this curse. “The Christian was the first to discover,” claims Küttemeyer, “that man can be born again through death into an eternal body.” The individual was now eternal.

According to Küttemeyer, this eternal individual became the proletariat upon the advent of political Christianity. By this Küttemeyer refers to Christianity’s transition from a

⁷⁴ That one could however be constantly reborn to clarity through the death of the living body was first discovered by the Christians." Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 151.

religious sect into a ruling power, a transition that first took place in the Roman empire. This created immediate tensions. As a religion, Christianity valorized poverty. It highlighted an inverse relationship between the pain and suffering of this world and the joy and redemption in the next. “Christianity came into the world as the religion of the poor,” writes Küttemeyer, “and with a polemical view of the vacuity of wealth of every kind.”⁷⁶ This message remained central to Christianity even when it became the official state religion. Yet as a political force, Christianity became invested in keeping the poor in their place—Küttemeyer mentions slavery as the most salient example.⁷⁷ Political Christianity created a system that apotheosized and repressed the poor at the same time. In this way it created the proletariat, a repressed class to whom the future was promised. Marx simply moved that future from heaven to earth.

Religion in *der Sumpf*

More than any other single topic, the mixing of religion and politics receives universal opprobrium from the writers of *Der Sumpf*. Küttemeyer blames political Christianity for the spread of capitalism. Dallago pillories the Pope, and his cozy relationship with fascist dictators, as the best example of the evils of mixing politics and religion. And Punt argues that Christianity had had its chance, and failed, at improving society, and should now disappear.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ “Das Proletariat verdankt seine Existenz, wie Kierkegaard betont, dem politischen Christentum.” Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 147.

⁷⁶ “Das Christentum kam, mit polemischer Sicht auf das Element der Geistlosigkeit im vorherigen Reichtum jeglicher Art, als die Religion der Armen auf die Welt.” Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 147.

⁷⁷ Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, June 1932, 148.

⁷⁸ “Die großartige Unternehmung des Christentums mußte scheitern, sie ist gescheitert.” Punt, “Das russische Beispiel,” 120.

Yet, while Punt and Trott fully embraced the Marxian dismissal of religion as epiphenomenal, Dallago and Küttemeyer did not. Instead, they reserved a Kierkegaardian respect for the potential of faith freed from the strictures of religion. Dallago condemns Roman Catholicism as a distortion of its own message, not as one more example of an opiate of the masses. Likewise, Küttemeyer argues for the manifold importance of grafting certain elements of Christianity onto communism. With their identification of institutions as the fatal disease within Christianity and the *Einzelne* as the needed antidote, *Der Sumpf* follows Kierkegaard in its approach to religious matters.

It is with respect to the Roman Catholic Church that Dallago and Küttemeyer most fully embrace a Marxist view of religion as epiphenomenal. Christianity is the means through which the Pope and his fiefdom pursue the same economic and political ends as the rest of society. "Christianity did not conquer the world because its spirit prevailed," explains Küttemeyer, "but rather because...the world understood that it contained unimaginable business potential."⁷⁹ Küttemeyer continues with a Weberian flourish that searches out the deep affinities between capitalism and Christianity. "The more Christianity spread," declares Küttemeyer, "the more business-minded the world became." Finally this resulted in the modern world, "the time of the unquestioned reign of money, where one controls the spirit with money, though secretly rather than directly."⁸⁰ In Küttemeyer's telling, Christianity had devolved into little more than a vehicle for spreading the blight of capitalism across the globe.

⁷⁹ "Das Christentum hat die Welt erobert nicht weil sein Geist gesiegt und die Gemüter verwandelt hat, sondern weil man es benutzte, weil die Welt verstand daß hier ein ungeahntes Geschäft zu machen sei..." Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 4.

⁸⁰ "Es ist die Zeit der schrankenlosen Herrschaft des Geldes, wo man mit Geld die Geister lenkt, nicht direkt sondern versteckt..." Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 4.

For Dallago, all the missteps and failings of Christianity find their fullest expression in the Catholic Church. "The Roman-Catholic Church, which presents itself as the church of Christ," states Dallago, "is fascist, that says it all."⁸¹ The Catholic Church long ago relinquished "the absolute spiritual power of Christ," in the name of a "reprehensible quest for worldly power." He offers quotes from correspondence between the Pope and Hindenburg as evidence that the Pope is nothing more than a "worldly ruler." How else, wonders Dallago, to understand his "pact with liars and thugs" in fascist Italy? Dallago even accuses the Church of attempting to overthrow the Austrian government in order to set up a Catholic monarchy under Otto von Hapsburg. For like all modern political states, "the Roman church constantly displays its belief that the ends justify the means."⁸²

Yet Marx's outright dismissal of religion as a whole, including Christianity, meant that he could not grasp its integral role in the development of the *Einzelne*. Granted, both Marx and Kierkegaard sought the destruction of Christendom. But Marx did not take Christianity seriously enough, viewing it as a reflection of bourgeois culture and nothing more.

"Kierkegaard's murderous lunge at the throat of the Church," explains Küttemeyer, "is larger and more direct than Marx's attack at the neck of bourgeois society."⁸³ Kierkegaard fought Christendom in the name of Christianity; he understood that Christendom had to perish so that the power of Christianity could be set free. At one point, Küttemeyer likened this to the

⁸¹ "Die römisch-katholische Kirche, die als Kirche Christi auftritt, ist fascistisch. Das sagt alles." Carl Dallago, "Abfertigung," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 3, 185.

⁸² "Die römische Kirche weist noch immer die Betätigung des Grundsatzes auf, daß der Zweck die Mittel heiligt." Dallago, "Die katholische Aktion," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 41.

⁸³ "Kierkegaards mörderischer Sprung an den Hals der Kirche ist größer und unvermittelter als der von Marx an die Gurgel der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft." Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 18.

death of Pan. But whereas Pan died so that nature would lose its mystical associations and become useful to man, the Christian God had to die in order to free the *Einzelne*:

The Christian gods and God, the God of Christianity, must die so that the individual might awaken... and secure for himself the independence and candor, which makes it possible for him to foster a community of men brought together in justice, greatness and strength...an *Einzelne* according to Kierkegaard and Christianity. Out of the collapse of Christian culture, a space will be created for the *Einzelne* who stands on his own according to the essence of true religiosity, in connection with the true whole.⁸⁴

Kütemeyer and Dallago follow Kierkegaard's lead in attacking Christendom for the sake of Christianity. "Kierkegaard recognized," explains Kütemeyer, "that in the course of its evolution Christendom must become its own greatest enemy."⁸⁵ In Kütemeyer's telling, Christianity came into the world and granted eternal life to the individual. First established in Rome, Christendom then conquered the world but along the way lost track of the individual. "The atmosphere of cursed Christian-ness within which Christendom saps Christianity" argues Kütemeyer, "must evolve into a total Christendom of the individual."⁸⁶ While Dallago's broad spiritual interests keep him from identifying Christianity, no matter how pure, as the only hope for the future, he nonetheless values it when practiced honestly. He attacks Roman

⁸⁴ "Der christliche Götze und Gott, der Gott der Christenheit, mußte sterben...damit der Einzelne aus dem Bett der geselligen Unordnung aufsteht und für sich die Selbständigkeit erwirbt und die Freimütigkeit, welche ihn befähigt ein Zusammenleben der Menschen in Gerechtigkeit, Größe und Kraft zu fördern...ein Einzelner im Sinne Kierkegaards und des Christentums....Im Zusammenbruch der christlichen Kultur wird der Raum frei für die Einzelnen die in der Wesentlichkeit wahrer Religiosität, der Verbundtheit mit dem wahren Ganzen, auf sich selbst stehend..." Kütemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 11.

⁸⁵ "Kierkegaard hat erkannt, daß das Christentum im Lauge seiner Entwicklung an sich selbst einmal den größten Feind bekommen mußte." Kütemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 5.

Catholicism not for its Christian message, but rather for its blatant hypocrisy. Whereas the “first Christians were known for living exemplary lives” free from greed and full of love for the least among them, “the Papal Church today lives in a state of spiritual forsakenness, in which the drive to politics takes center stage.”⁸⁷ Neither Dallago nor Küttemeyer wanted a society devoid of religion, but they wanted nothing to do with a religion devoid of individual devotion.

Punt and Trott, however, do not limit the condemnation of Christianity to Roman Catholicism, nor their dismissal of religion to Christianity. Trott ignores religion in his articles “Economic Nihilism,” “The Economic Age,” and “From Nietzsche to Marx.” “It is completely self-evident,” states Trott, “that the central revolutionary problem lies in economics.”⁸⁸ Punt goes on the attack as he describes all faith as a tumor on humanity that needs to be removed.⁸⁹ “Faith is nothing,” continues Punt, “its medicine men are simply weak souls and weak minds.”⁹⁰ After nearly two thousand years of Christianity, Punt felt society was no better off than before. All religions had attempted to incrementally improve society by improving man, and all had failed. It was time for a new approach. In Punt’s view, Soviet Russia stood as the

⁸⁶ “Die Atmosphäre verflüchtiger Christlichkeit, in der das Christentum der Christenheit sich erschöpft, muß sich zu einem vollen Christentum der Einzelnen verdichten.” Küttemeyer, “Der Einzelne und die Kirche,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 5.

⁸⁷ “Was heute der Papstkirche gestaltet, scheint wahrlich eine geistige Verlorenheit zu sein, in der das Finden zur Politik den Hauptplatz einnimmt.” Dallago, “Die katholische Aktion,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 90.

⁸⁸ “Es versteht sich daraus von selbst, daß das zentrale revolutionäre Problem in der Ökonomie liegt.” Werner Trott, “Das ökonomische Zeitalter,” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 102.

⁸⁹ Friedrich Punt, “Aus ‘Luimes,’” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 25.

⁹⁰ “Der Glaube ist nichts, ihr Medizinmänner schwacher Seelen und Köpfe.” Friedrich Punt, “Aus ‘Luimes,’” *Der Sumpf*, Heft 1, 25.

first attempt to create a society without religion. "Europe will follow Russia's example," concludes Punt, "even if not in every aspect."⁹¹

The Rise of the Third Reich and the Fall of *Der Sumpf*

Der Sumpf contained only two articles that took the Nazis as their explicit focus. Josef Leitgeb (1897-1952) penned both articles using the pseudonym Paul Pasquill, "pasquill" being an Italian term for a satirical poem. Indeed, while the rest of *Der Sumpf* decried various existential threats to European civilization—the Roman Catholic Church, Mussolini, capitalism—Leitgeb poked fun. In addition to "Hitler," with which this chapter began, Pasquill also wrote a poem titled "NSDAP." He organized the piece as a political acrostic, with each stanza expanding on one aspect of the Nazi's official name (National Socialist German Worker's Party). Additionally, by using certain stock phrases throughout—such as "Germany awaken, Jews kick the bucket"—Pasquill lends it the feel of a political ceremony, though one that he is brutally ridiculing. Consider for example the second and third stanzas:

Yet we are also strict Socialists:
each has the right with us, to be a grand sheep.
We have been ready for some time, to remove their heads
(in this way our register of voters grows)
yet only the muzzle must remain and the muzzle must scream:

Germany awaken, Jews kick the bucket
Off the Socialists
Heil to their racial conquerors
Industry captains in VI2s!
They are the moneybrokers.
Heil Hitler

⁹¹ "Europa wird dem russischen Beispiele folgen, wenn auch nicht in allem seine Wege gehen." Friedrich Punt, "Das russische Beispiel," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 2, 124.

We are Germans, Heil! And since it is so hard to understand,
 we scream it loudly in everyone's ears.
 Our favorite dish: grilled ashes of peace
 And a little bit of wine from Mussolini's grapes
 And as the dinner prayer, the old bard's chorus:

*Germany awaken, Jews kick the bucket
 Off everyone who isn't blond
 With bombs, revolvers and knives
 Let us improve our noble race!
 We are the transmitters of culture.
 Heil Hitler!⁹²*

This poem appeared in October 1932 in the fourth issue of *Der Sumpf*. A planned fifth issue never materialized. Coinciding with the third issue of *Der Sumpf* had been the Reichstag election of June 1932, when the National Socialists received nearly 40% of the vote to become the largest party in Germany. With their clear communist sympathies and disdain for fascism both domestic and abroad, the contributors to *Der Sumpf* had to prepare for the worst. On February 25, 1933, Dallago wrote despairingly to Küttemeyer that "things are getting worse every day due to Hitler." The latest issue of *Der Sumpf* must be published, wrote Dallago, but

⁹² Paul Pasquill, "NSDAP," *Der Sumpf*, Heft 4, 201.

Doch zugleich sind wir auch strenge
 Sozialisten:
 jeder hat bei uns das Recht, ein groes Schaf
 zu sein.
 Längst sind wir dabei, die Köpfe abzurüsten
 (davon wachsen nämlich unser
 Wählerlisten),
 nur das Maul muß übrig bleiben und das
 Maul muß schrei'n:

*Deutschland erwache, Juda verrecke,
 Sozialisten um die Ecke!
 Heil ihren rassigen Überwindern,
 Industriekapitänen in Zwölfzylindern!
 Sie sind Geldvermittler.
 Heil Hitler!*

Wir sind Deutsche, heil! und weil es kaum zu
 glauben,
 schreien wir es uns und allen laut ins Ohr.
 Unser Leibgericht: gebratne Friedenstauben
 und ein Schöppchen Wein von Mussolinis
 Trauben
 und als Tischgebet der alte Bardenchor:

*Deutschland erwache, Juda verrecke,
 was nicht blond ist, um die Ecke!
 Laßt uns mit bomben, Revolvern und Messern
 unsere Edelrasse vergessern!
 Wir sind Kulturvermittler.
 Heil Hitler!*

he insisted that Küttemeyer “leave *everything out*, that polemicizes with Hitler: you must neither endanger yourself nor allow [*Der Sumpf*] to be seized.”⁹³

Two days later, the Reichstag burned to the ground. No amount of cautionary editing could have changed *Der Sumpf*'s fate. The infamous decree issued the following day, “The Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State,” gave Hitler, among other things, nearly unlimited freedom to suppress publications deemed unfriendly to the Nazi cause. With articles praising Soviet Russia as the future of Europe and lampooning Hitler as an acolyte of Mussolini, *Der Sumpf* fit this bill. In early March, SA henchmen brutally attacked the son of *Der Sumpf*'s publisher and threatened further attacks. Küttemeyer burned the proofs for the final issue when the SA showed up at his door. Days later the Gestapo arrested Küttemeyer and threw him into its soon-to-be-infamous Alexanderplatz prison.

Küttemeyer remained in prison for less than a month. Ironically, it was his involvement with *Der Sumpf* that freed him. The head of the Gestapo at the time, Rudolf Diels, was a *Sumpf* subscriber and took a personal interest in Küttemeyer. He set Küttemeyer free on the condition that he “disappear into the countryside for seven years, and cease with his subversive activities.”⁹⁴ Küttemeyer moved to a small village in the Black Forest and soon thereafter began studying medicine in Freiburg, traveling back and forth on a motorcycle he had purchased. He finished his studies in 1939 and took a position in the Ludolf-Krehl-Klinik in Heidelberg. A year later, Küttemeyer was called up to serve as a military doctor on the Eastern Front. He spent the majority of his time in Wiesloch, at the Brain Injury Military Hospital. Küttemeyer

⁹³ “Der S[umpf] muß heraus, also lasse alles weg, was mit Hitler polemisiert: Du darfst weder Dich in Gefahr bringen noch den S[umpf] beschlagnahmen lassen.” Dallago to Küttemeyer, “25. Februar 1933,” Teilnachlass Wilhelm Küttemeyer, Kasette 2, Korrespondenzen, Carl Dallago an WK, 204 St., 1931-1943, University of Innsbruck, Brenner Archiv. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Schwiedrzik, *Träume*, 77.

used this position to grant medical leave to numerous Nazi opponents, including his old friend Trott.⁹⁵

Each of *Der Sumpf* contributors navigated the years of the Third Reich in a different way. Trott remained active in various resistance circles and, along with his brother Heinrich, even tried to drum up support for a revival of *Der Sumpf* in the late 1930s.⁹⁶ These attempts proved feckless, and both brothers expressed frustration at Ficker and Dallago's political passivity.⁹⁷ Werner and Heinrich survived the war, while their older brother Adam was executed for his involvement in the July 20, 1944, plot against Hitler. Following the war, the Trotts organized what became known as the Imshausen Society: a group of writers, civil servants, politicians and clergy brought together to discuss Germany's future.⁹⁸

Dallago spent the majority of the 1930s and early 1940s trying to make ends meet and take care of his family. Even though pushing seventy years of age, Dallago held a series of positions with the city construction bureau, visiting building sites, writing reports and keeping records. These posts were, however, both temporary and seasonal. When out of work—sometimes for months on end—Dallago survived partly on unemployment payments and primarily on the largess of his friend Ernst Knapp. A successful business man and politician,

⁹⁵ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 294.

⁹⁶ This included meetings with members of the *Brenner* circle in Innsbruck, Ernst and Friedrich Georg Jünger in southern Germany and even with Italian dissident Ignatio Silone in Switzerland. Küttemeyer joined the Trotts in the meeting with Silone. Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 295.

⁹⁷ Küttemeyer shared their frustration when Dallago showed up at a meeting in 1938 with a swastika on his jacket. Küttemeyer expressed his disapproval and Dallago immediately removed it, throwing it into the bushes. Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 297.

⁹⁸ For the most recent examination of this group, see Sean Former, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 187-190. For a book-length examination, see Schwiedrzik, *Imshausen*.

Knapp gave the Dallagos monthly support and even provided lodging for them starting in 1930.⁹⁹

The low point of this period in Dallago's life, however, had nothing to do with finances. In 1940 Dallago's son Enoch was called up for military training in nearby Oberammergau. He shipped off to Crete in 1941 and then finally to the Russian front in 1942. As evidenced in the flurry of letters they exchanged at the time, the Dallagos constantly feared the worst. In March of that year, Dallago successfully lobbied to have Enoch removed from the front, his main argument being that he had already lost two sons in World War One. Two months later, however, Dallago received word that Enoch had died as a result of shrapnel wounds in his abdomen. Nor did the Dallagos' sorrows cease with the end of the war. In 1947, their daughter Helga died from blood poisoning. Less than two years later Carl Dallago suffered a massive stroke. He passed away on the 18th of January 1949, just four days after his 80th birthday.

Leitgeb had a much easier path than his fellow Austrian after the collapse of *Der Sumpf*. He managed to publish numerous books in the 1930s and established himself as a novelist, poet and children's author. The overtly political nature of his *Sumpf* contributions—as Paul Pasquill—faded as the decade progressed. Paramount for Leitgeb was his ability to continue to publish. His focus on poems and children's works reflect an unwillingness to jeopardize this ability with words that might upset the authorities. Following the annexation of Austria to Germany in 1938, Leitgeb even volunteered for the German Army and served as a radio operator in the Ukraine. Upon his return in 1945, he worked as the school inspector for the

⁹⁹ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 299-308.

city of Innsbruck.¹⁰⁰ Not that he escaped the war without tragedy: his 18-year-old son, only recently called up to fight, went missing just months before the war ended.¹⁰¹

Punt remained in Austria and worked as a lawyer in Innsbruck during the 1930s. His association with *Der Sumpf* resulted in complications following the annexation. In 1938, a Gestapo officer appeared at his door and accused him of writing the "Hitler" and "NSDAP" poems under the pseudonym Paul Pasquill. Punt avoided arrest thanks to a family friend who was well acquainted with the local Nazi authorities. Punt eventually began working at the Innsbruck army recruitment office, where he came into contact with members of a resistance movement. These connections resulted in his arrest in April 1945. After being tortured, Punt was sent to an army prison, awaiting execution. At the last minute, an SS guard who was also involved in the resistance helped Punt escape and find hiding until the war ended.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Der Sumpf looked past what they considered the blip of Nazism in order to focus on the next stage in German history: communism. Its contributors wanted a communism imbued with spirit, one not defined by "tangles of statistics and pallid empirical considerations."¹⁰³ It wanted a proletariat populated by liberated individuals and not by the faceless masses. And while honoring Soviet Russia for being the wave of the future, *Der Sumpf* was wary of the tug of its undercurrent, and believed that Germany must find her own way, one rooted in her own

¹⁰⁰ "Leitgeb, Josef," *Deutsche Biographie*, accessed 27 March 2015, <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118571400.html>.

¹⁰¹ Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 294.

¹⁰² Unterkircher, *Dallago*, 294-295.

history and culture. Kierkegaard provided the key ingredient in *Der Sumpf's* version of communism. He provided the spirit and radical focus on the individual. He also provided the connection with German culture via Socrates and Christianity. This was the unique message of *Der Sumpf*, communism injected with Kierkegaardian individualism and, at least in Dallago and Küttemeyer, a Kierkegaardian respect for a purified Christianity.

Kierkegaard served two distinct purposes for the contributors to *Der Sumpf*. First, they used him as a potent philosophical ally in their quest to destroy what was rotten in German society: namely the hypocritical and empty state of Christianity combined with the loss of the individual in capitalist society. Kierkegaard's vitriolic attacks on the Danish state church easily transferred into attacks on western Christianity as a whole. The same could be said for his brutal ridiculing of hypocrisy in nineteenth-century Denmark: *Der Sumpf* found the same hypocrisy throughout its own society. It struggled in the same "swamp" as Kierkegaard had nearly a century before.

Second, *Der Sumpf* employed Kierkegaard as it looked to the future. *Der Sumpf's* contributors believed they had reached the point in history that Kierkegaard had only seen from a distance. Kierkegaard predicted that someday society would devolve to such a point that individuals would turn to him and heed his words. "Today, in the year 1931," wrote Küttemeyer in the first article of *Der Sumpf*, "we stand on the verge of, or perhaps already in the middle of, what Kierkegaard described 80 years ago."¹⁰⁴ The hypocrisy at the heart of society could no longer be ignored. Küttemeyer hoped that the *Einzelne*, to whom Kierkegaard

¹⁰³ Trott, "Das ökonomische Zeitalter," 103.

¹⁰⁴ "Heute in Jahre 1931 stehen wir kurz dafür oder schon mitten darin in dem, wovon Kierkegaard vor 80 Jahren folgendermaßen redete" Küttemeyer, "Der Einzelne und die Kirche," Heft 1, 11.

dedicated his books, would finally break free of society's chains. The *Einzelne* stands as Kierkegaard's key contribution to the program of *Der Sumpf*.

Kierkegaard helped *Der Sumpf*'s contributors call out the hypocrisy of their society. And his prophesy of its impending collapse gave them a sense of orientation as the foundation began to give in. But *Der Sumpf*'s Kierkegaard-inspired faith in the *Einzelne* proved misplaced in the end. As they focused on all the ways that modern society threatened the *Einzelne*, *Der Sumpf*'s contributors failed to respect the pull of ideologies that seemed to demand the suicide of the individual. Although Nazism might attract thugs who enjoyed marching in unison and fighting in the streets, *Der Sumpf* felt it would implode on its own. Nazism was just one more harbinger of the impending collapse of capitalism. *Der Sumpf* believed the individual would reject such crude attempts to force its sublimation into the crowd. Not only did faith in the *Einzelne* contribute to *Der Sumpf*'s failure to take Nazism seriously, it also made collaborating with other communists in Germany nearly impossible. Yet in the end, the subtleties of *Der Sumpf*'s version of communism mattered little. The massive political changes that accompanied its birth ensured that its life would be short.

Conclusion:

“His problems are our problems..”

In a 1920 review article Hermann Hesse argued that Kierkegaard should become required reading for the youth in his country. “Kierkegaard and his best German interpreter and champion, Christoph Schrempf, belong among those spirits,” declares Hesse, “against whom it is endlessly fruitful for our youth to measure themselves.”¹ Yet Hesse knew that Kierkegaard would not have the same immediate appeal as Emil Sinclair, the pseudonymous author of his wildly popular novel *Demian*.² Kierkegaard was more of an acquired taste, the type of author who “stirs up anger in his reader.” Hesse imagines such a reader cursing Kierkegaard for his vanity, anxiety, paranoia and deep angst. “How can such an unpleasant person,” Hesse asks, “express things that cut so damn close to the bone?”³

The reason Kierkegaard should be read in 1920s Germany, claims Hesse, and the reason that readers kept coming back to him in spite of their frustration, is that “his problems are our problems, even if his path need not become ours.” Hesse felt that Kierkegaard’s “yellowed, prude, fundamentally loveless version of Christianity” would not carry much

¹ Hermann Hesse, “Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben,” *Vivos Voco: Zeitschrift für neues Deutschland* vol. 1, No. 10, 1920, 658.

² Even though Hesse was in his mid-forties at the time of writing it, *Demian* had perfectly captured the psychological state of the generation who had come of age in the trenches of World War One. As Thomas Mann wrote in a foreword to the text, “[*Demian*] struck the nerve of the times and called forth grateful rapture from a whole youthful generation who believed that an interpreter of their innermost life had risen from their own mist.” Thomas Mann, “Foreword” in Hermann Hesse, *Demian: the Story of a Youth* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), ix.

³ Hermann Hesse, “Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben,” 658.

appeal in postwar Germany. Rather, what German youth should take from Kierkegaard is “passion of spirit” and “willingness to defend [their] faith against the entire world, against every majority and authority.”⁴ Kierkegaard’s contemporary importance lay in his devastating insight into the hypocrisy of society, in his championing of the individual over decrepit institutions, and in his passionate devotion to his cause.

Hesse’s claim about both the promise and limitations of Kierkegaard’s role for German society captures the essence of Kierkegaard’s reception in the Weimar Republic. The historical actors who have populated my narrative turned to Kierkegaard as a prophetic visionary with much to say about the dire state of their society. The problems that Kierkegaard identified *in nuce* in nineteenth-century Denmark—primarily the loss of individuality in mass religion and mass politics—had fully metastasized in twentieth-century Germany. His problems had become their problems. World War One had propelled them into Kierkegaard’s world. When assessing Kierkegaard’s immense popularity, Hannah Arendt credited the “spiritual- and cultural-historical situation in Germany” as more important than questions about access to his writings. To Arendt, the flood of Kierkegaard translations in the 1920s were a result of Kierkegaard’s popularity more than its cause. The self-confidence of Wilhelmine Germany “left absolutely no crack through which the Kierkegaardian disturbance could press in and shatter the assurance.” “It was only the post-war period,” continues Arendt, “with its propensity for spiritual destruction, that prepared the proper grounds for an appropriation of Kierkegaard.”⁵

⁴ Hesse, “Neue Kierkegaard-Ausgaben,” 659.

⁵ Hannah Arendt, “Søren Kierkegaard,” *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 January, 1932.

Kierkegaard served as an agent of destruction in early twentieth-century Germany. Modris Eksteins describes World War One as “the psychological turning point for Germany,” and the moment when “the urge to create and the urge to destroy changed places.”⁶ This was also Kierkegaard’s moment. His invective against 19th Century Danish society only needed to be altered slightly in order to seem prophetically relevant to early 20th Century Germany. Foremost was the need to distance him from what many saw as his antiquated version of Christianity, which was done by either dismissing it as an unfortunate residue of his upbringing and/or by favoring the pseudonymous over the signed works. Kierkegaard attacked Danish society as fake and hypocritical. By exposing this fact he hoped to recover a space for authentic Christianity. Once unmoored from their Christian anchor, however, Kierkegaard’s writings drifted freely across the Weimar ocean of societal critique, and gave potent voice to all those who felt betrayed by the powers-that-be.

The most exciting recent scholarship on Weimar intellectual history has focused on teasing out surprising connections between seemingly disparate thinkers. Peter Gordon adeptly argues that we cannot understand the mystical, Jewish-inflected, thought of Franz Rosenzweig without granting the influence of Heidegger in its development.⁷ Samuel Moyn does similar work in his study of Emmanuel Levinas and the emergence of the ‘other’ as a central concept in 20th century continental philosophy.⁸ According to Moyn, Levinas’ ‘other’ emerged out of his attempt to work through the thought of both Heidegger and Rosenzweig.

⁶ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 328.

⁷ Peter Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁸ Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Benjamin Lazier shows how a fascination with modern gnosticism and heresy both united the projects of Hans Jonas, Leo Strauss, and Gershom Scholem and represents a key concern of Weimar culture: how to live in a world seemingly marked by God's absence. Corinna Treitel and Suzanne Marchand have both focused on similar strivings toward 'new' religious and spiritual outlets in 1920s Germany.⁹

Against an earlier historiography that emphasized Weimar society as hopelessly balkanized, these works focus on the "shared intellectual horizon" within which so much of that society operated.¹⁰ As I laid out in the introduction, Kierkegaard colored this horizon more than any other single figure. The central goal of my project has been to understand why this was the case. The 'why' question necessitated other questions along the way. Answering the 'how' question led to a mapping out of the primary producers—publishers, editors, translators—who provided access to Kierkegaard. The 'what' question required an analysis of the various presentations of Kierkegaard offered by these producers. It was the 'what' question that opened up the central appeal of Kierkegaard's anti-institutionalism on one side and his focus on the Einzelne on the other.

The 'what' of Kierkegaard's reception was not inevitable. For all of his anti-institutional potency, Kierkegaard nonetheless retained a respect for the traditional orders of society. His enemy was a Christianity that identified itself too closely with these traditional

⁹ Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Suzanne Marchand, "Eastern Wisdom in an Era of Western Despair: Orientalism in 1920s Central Europe" in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Gordon nonetheless lists the relative lack of such studies as a central desideratum in Weimar scholarship: "Scholars have often failed to recognize just how much the leading intellectuals of that time worked within a shared intellectual horizon." Gordon, "Introduction" to *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Peter Gordon and John P. McCormick, eds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2.

orders. Kierkegaard's archetypal "Knight of Faith" was revolutionary primarily in his ability to live in light of eternity while maintaining an outwardly traditional life.¹¹ Granted, Kierkegaard's attacks on cultural Christianity rivaled Nietzsche's in their vitriol, but Kierkegaard was no anti-foundationalist. Where Nietzsche hoped to push over the structure of Western Christendom in order to reveal its utter emptiness, Kierkegaard wanted to remove the structure and return to the solid foundation upon which it was built; a foundation that allows the *Einzelne* to relate to her creator. Moreover, we do not have to speculate regarding Kierkegaard's stance on political revolutions. He watched the 1848 revolutions with fascination as they tore across Europe, often mentioning that year as the most important of his life.¹² Yet he made clear his hope that the significance of the revolution would be felt in the spiritual realm rather than the political.¹³ Kierkegaard aimed at a restoration of (what he envisioned as) New Testament Christianity. Political developments mattered to him only in their spiritual potential.

¹¹ See *Fear and Trembling* for the most extended discussion of the Knight of Faith. Johannes Silentio describes the Knight's ability to cloak his true identity and "to transform the leap of life into a walk, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian—that only the knight of faith can do, and this is the one and only marvel." Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Writings, vol. 6: Fear and Trembling; Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 41.

¹² For an examination of 1848's importance for Kierkegaard—Kierkegaard claims that it was in 1848 that he discovered his concept of the *Einzelne*—see Bruce Kirmmse, "Kierkegaard and 1848," *History of European Ideas*, vol. 20. no. 1-3, 1995, 167-175.

¹³ Kierkegaard repeatedly compared the Reformation to the 1848 revolutions in making this point. Kierkegaard wrote the following to a friend in 1848: "And I am convinced that—just as the remarkable thing about the Reformation was that it looked like a religious movement but turned out to be a political one—so will the movements of our times, which look to be merely political, suddenly reveal themselves to be religious or a need for religion." Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Skrifter: Breve*, vol. 28, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, Finn Hauberg Mortensen (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2009), 400.

Kierkegaard's potency as an anti-institutional prophet in Weimar tells us more about the culture that welcomed him as such than it does about Kierkegaard. There is some truth to the narrative that the Weimar Republic fell because it had no center, because German society was so divided that it imploded. But Kierkegaard's reception displays a surprising amount of unity across German society. The 'why' question then brings us back to the concept of a shared intellectual horizon. His texts served as a nodal point for an entire generation of Germans resolute in their conviction that the structures of their society needed to be replaced. The disunity and uncertainty of Weimar society emerged from the disagreement regarding what should come in its place. Kierkegaard's reception reveals the extent to which German society was complicit in its own demise.

In *Der Brenner*, Haecker and Dallago used Kierkegaard to attack a society they saw as hell-bent on crushing the individuals within it. Haecker updated Kierkegaard's rage against the "leveling of society" for his own time and place, arguing that Kierkegaard's worldview offered "the only possible salvation for the individual."¹⁴ Dallago built upon Kierkegaard's withering critique of cultural Christianity as he called out the hypocrisy of a Roman Catholic Church that supported fascism. With his participation in the creation of Kierkegaard's *Gesammelte Werke*, Christoph Schrempf argued that Germans should completely abandon institutional Christianity. And in the late 1920s, Alfred Baeumler and Wilhelm Küttemeyer deployed Kierkegaard as a philosophical ally for their radical politics. Finally, as the Republic crumbled around them, *Der Sumpf's* contributors folded Kierkegaard into their version of a communist revolution.

¹⁴ Haecker "Nachwort," 906.

Yet none of these interpreters showed interest in using Kierkegaard constructively. That is, when transitioning from attacks on the foundations of society to building a new future, these interpreters left Kierkegaard behind.¹⁵ Haecker believed that while “Kierkegaard’s great existential thesis of ‘truth in subjectivity’ is one of the vital problems before man,” the proper approach to this problem is “not what Kierkegaard thought it to be.”¹⁶ Haecker found more constructive promise in the philosophy of Cardinal Newman and in the traditions of the Catholic Church, hence his conversion to Catholicism following World War One and focus on translating Newman’s works into German.¹⁷

Eugene Diederichs appears to have been an exception in this regard: he wanted to incorporate Kierkegaard within his eccentric program for German renewal. Yet Diederichs was no Kierkegaard scholar, and he never became one. He tasked other men — Hermann Gottsched and, primarily, Christoph Schrempf — with the work of actually presenting Kierkegaard to the German public. In Schrempf’s hands, the *Collected Works* emphasized Kierkegaard’s role as the great scourge of official Christendom. The only way to truly follow Kierkegaard was to leave all institutional religion behind. Once this move had been accomplished, suggested Schrempf, Kierkegaard had little else to offer his reader. Due to his

¹⁵ In this, they each seem to preemptively follow Karl Barth’s advice from a 1963 lecture in which Barth advises theologians to view Kierkegaard as a way station on the path to good theology, but not somewhere they should remain. Karl Barth, “Dank und Reverenz,” *Evangelische Theologie*, vol. 23, no. 7, 1963, p.339. Barth repeated this advice in an essay from the same year, written in honor of Kierkegaard’s 150th birthday. Karl Barth, “Kierkegaard und die Theologen,” in *Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz*, vol. 119, no. 10, 1963, 150-151. For a discussion of these pieces, see Barrett, “Karl Barth,” 16-19.

¹⁶ Quoted in Alexander Dru, “Introduction,” to Theodor Haecker, *Journal in the Night*, tran. Alexander Dru (London: Pantheon Books, 1950), XXVII.

¹⁷ According to Alexander Dru, Haecker “emphasized the finality of conversion, not so much as a break with the past, but as the attainment of a lasting foundation, the starting point in his life and thought.” Dru, “Introduction,” to *Journals in the Night*, XVII.

reliance on Schrempf, Diederichs was unable to use Kierkegaard constructively. In the final product, Kierkegaard only functioned in Diederichs' program as a solvent to clear out the old and make room for the new.

In the late 1920s, Alfred Baeumler sensed that Kierkegaard could be useful in his quest to "destroy the foundations of the Republic."¹⁸ He wanted to create a successor to *Der Brenner* that would recapture the Kierkegaardian fire lost after Haecker's conversion. In this attempt to revise Kierkegaard's image he found ready allies in Carl Dallago and Wilhelm Küttemeyer. In fact, the only thing that united these three men was their deep frustration with contemporary society and belief in Kierkegaard as a potent source of criticism. Yet when it came time to offer suggestions for a new society, the alliance between them quickly fell apart. Dallago looked to his version of eastern spirituality, Baeumler looked to the Nazis, and Küttemeyer to communism.

Der Sumpf offers one final example of both the capaciousness and the limitations of Kierkegaard's reception in the Weimar Republic. The fungibility of ideologies and worldviews associated with this Kierkegaard-based journal speaks to the former. Kierkegaard appealed to aspects of Baeumler's proto-fascism as well as to Küttemeyer's version of communism. Although pulling in seemingly opposite directions, Baeumler and Küttemeyer's ideologies shared at least one primary goal: the destruction of the current order of society. As a devastating critic of modern society, Kierkegaard was the only overlap in their ideological Venn diagram.

The story of *Der Sumpf* hints at Kierkegaard's limitations as well. Kierkegaard's ultimate goal in clearing out the hypocrisy of his society was to create space for the *Einzelne* to

¹⁸ Küttemeyer, "Rundbrief," 195.

relate truly to the creator. As his concept of the Knight of Faith made clear, Kierkegaard did not envision his *Einzelne* as bringing about any great social change.¹⁹ Kierkegaard's philosophy began and ended with the *Einzelne*. When *Der Sumpf's* contributors proposed actual societal changes, they looked elsewhere, namely to Marx, for inspiration. Returning to Hesse's prophesy, Kierkegaard's problems were their problems, but his path was not theirs to follow.

Arendt also noted the dissonance between Kierkegaard's Christian devotion and his immense popularity among her generation. How could a generation drawn to spiritual destruction find sustenance in "one for whom Christianity determined his entire existence?" Arendt believed that the answer lay in Kierkegaard's distillation of all religion and philosophy to one central paradox: how to remain an individual within a system that seems to require the loss of individuality. Kierkegaard attacked both religion and philosophy in the name of rescuing the individual. While the state church concerned itself with societal probity, and the reigning philosophy of his day, Hegelianism, focused on building an air-tight system to explain everything, Kierkegaard "speaks only of himself." He did so because he believed "that which touches on one single human, touches on everything."²⁰

Kierkegaard's interpreters realized that his ultimate goal—of rescuing the individual in the name of a renewed Christianity—was less important than his devotion to rescuing the individual. The ultimate goal could be exchanged for another: a renewed nation, religion, fascism, communism. Kierkegaard's interpreters were united by a desire to radically change

¹⁹ One of the primary characteristics of Kierkegaard's "Knight of Faith," was his/her relative invisibility. According to Kierkegaard, these highest exemplars of his Christianity are only radical in their internal relationship to God, "externally they have a striking resemblance to bourgeois philistinism." Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 38.

²⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Søren Kierkegaard," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 29 January, 1932.

society from the inside out. They believed that the key to seeing their goals realized lay in renewing the hearts and souls of individuals. Their first task in doing so was to clear out the existing order of society, an order stacked against the individual. To this end, Kierkegaard spoke their language. He gave them the philosophical tools to rescue the individual — *mea res agitur*.

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