

Contents

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	vii
<i>Notes on the Editor and Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiv
1 Introduction <i>James Giles</i>	1
2 Speculation and Despair: Metaphysical and Existential Perspectives on Freedom <i>Anthony Rudd</i>	28
3 Kierkegaard, Freedom, and Self-interpretation <i>David M. A. Campbell</i>	43
4 Autonomy in Kierkegaard's <i>Either/Or</i> <i>Jörg Disse</i>	58
5 Kierkegaard's Leap: Anxiety and Freedom <i>James Giles</i>	69
6 Freedom and Modality <i>Poul Lübcke</i>	93
7 The Idea of Fate in Kierkegaard's Thought <i>Julia Watkin</i>	105
8 Freedom and Immanence <i>Michelle Kosch</i>	121
9 Indirect Communication: Training in Freedom <i>Peter Rogers</i>	142
10 Self-deception and Freedom in Kierkegaard's <i>Purity of Heart</i> <i>D. Z. Phillips</i>	156

11 Kierkegaard: the Literature of Freedom <i>Michael Weston</i>	172
12 Sublimity and the Experience of Freedom in Kierkegaard <i>George Pattison</i>	185
<i>Index</i>	201

1

Introduction

James Giles

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) stands apart from his contemporaries as a thinker whose radical approach to philosophy set him in a complex and ambiguous relation to the traditions of his time, someone whose prolific writings are being continually re-interpreted. One of Kierkegaard's most significant contributions is his work on the various problems surrounding the issue of human freedom. His reaction against what he saw as the loss of individuality in German idealism as well as his unique views of the human condition provided a new framework in which to deal with the notion of freedom. Yet for all his innovation, his account of freedom has been largely ignored by modern English-speaking philosophers. This, however, has apparently little to do with anything particular to Kierkegaard's account of freedom. For Kierkegaard's ideas have generally been neglected by mainstream English-language philosophy. Kierkegaard was basically unknown to the English-speaking world until the late 1930s when, over 80 years after his death, the first English translations started appearing. This is striking when one considers that as early as the 1890s Kierkegaard's name was already known to Japanese intellectuals and that Japanese translations of his works were being published by 1911. Indeed, Kierkegaard's ideas played an important role in some of the central debates of Japanese philosophy at the turn of the century.¹ But how is it that Kierkegaard's ideas could make it half way round the world to a distant Eastern culture long before they could make it across the Atlantic or even across the North Sea? Although many factors probably account for this, Kierkegaard's distinctly un-Anglophonic approach to philosophy seems one of the most likely ones, an approach that in many ways has more in common with the didactic discourses of Japanese Buddhist thinkers like Dogen, Shinran,

and Hakuin than with the analytic treatises of Locke, Berkeley, or Hume.

Central features of Kierkegaard's approach include his way of presenting his ideas on certain topics – like those on freedom – in the context of other discussions, his refusal to systematize his philosophy, his literary method, and his unique relation to the history of philosophy. Thus, despite the fundamental role played by freedom in his thought, Kierkegaard never wrote a systematic treatise on the nature of human freedom. Rather, he presents his arguments and ideas about freedom while discussing other related issues such as anxiety, despair, faith, ethics, or in the context of a polemic against another thinker. This has the result of leaving those interested in Kierkegaard's ideas on freedom (and other topics) with the difficult task of, as William Barrett puts it, 'garnering, sifting, and trying to systematize the insights he strewn so profusely through his pages'.² Further, his arguments here, as in many other cases, often seem hurriedly written and are often incomplete or unclear. Kierkegaard's reasons for writing in this way have given rise to much debate. Some commentators argue that it is part of a deliberately crafted technique, a form of indirect communication (a term used by Kierkegaard) the purpose of which is to stimulate the reader to explore personally the ideas under discussion and to seek to apply them, or solve the problems to which they refer, in terms of his or her own life. In *On my Work as an Author*, for example, Kierkegaard talks about the idea of 'communication in reflection' whereby the reader is 'prompted to become aware' of certain truths and through indirect communication is 'deceived into the truth' (SV, XVIII, p. 5). Others, however, see Kierkegaard's way of writing as being more of a result of his own psychology. Barrett, for example, says of Kierkegaard that 'he wrote at a breakneck pace, his mind in kind of a feverish blaze, bursting with ideas of which only a darting gleam or glint could be got down on the page. Hence the discontinuities and shifts in so much of his writings'.³

This brings us to the problem of Kierkegaard's literary method, which is, of course, not wholly distinct from the way in which he presents his ideas. There are, however, two other interrelated aspects of Kierkegaard's literary method which stand out as requiring special consideration; these are his use of pseudonyms and his irony. For one of the difficulties besetting the interpretation of Kierkegaard is the fact that most of his important philosophical works are written under pseudonyms, and yet his reasons for doing so are unclear. One of the reasons behind this lack of clarity has to do with the other salient feature of Kierkegaard's

writing; namely, his irony. Kierkegaard's works are shot through with irony, the sophistication and subtlety of which often makes it impossible to decide which remarks are meant to be taken ironically and which are meant to be taken in a straightforward way. Indeed in one of Kierkegaard's first works – entitled, not surprisingly, *The Concept of Irony* – he discusses the notion of an all-pervading irony, or irony as a way of life, in which nothing escapes ironical treatment. Kierkegaard's keen interest in irony thus raises the question of whether one is supposed to understand the pseudonyms in an ironical way, merely one more ironical feature of his writings, or whether there is another reason for their use.

We can begin by noting that in early Kierkegaard scholarship the issue of Kierkegaard's pseudonymity was not seen to have much philosophical importance. Recently, however, various scholars have argued that taking Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms into account is essential for understanding his writings. Claims are even made that the pseudonymous works should not be seen as containing Kierkegaard's ideas. The basis for these claims comes mainly from a section appended to the end of Kierkegaard's final pseudonymous work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. This section, entitled 'A First and Last Declaration', starts off by saying 'For formality and for the sake of order I acknowledge herewith, what in fact can hardly be of interest to anyone, that I am the author, as one says, of . . . ' (SV, X, p. 285). Kierkegaard then lists the pseudonymous books and articles and the pseudonyms attached to them. He then tells us that his pseudonymity or polynymity has not been for casual reasons and that it certainly was not to avoid any legal responsibility – both the printer and the censor at the press knew that he was the author, and, he tells us, he even put his own name as publisher on the title page of *Philosophical Fragments* (one of the pseudonymous works) in order to name a 'responsible person'. His pseudonymity, he then says,

has an *essential* ground in the *production* itself, which for the sake of the lines ascribed to the authors and the psychologically varied distinctions of the individualities poetically required regardlessness with concern to good and evil, to contrition and high spirits, to despair and courage, to suffering and exultation, etc., which is only ideally limited by the psychological consequence which real actual persons in the actual moral limitations of reality dare not permit themselves to indulge in, nor could wish to.

'So', says Kierkegaard, 'in the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have no opinion about these works except as a third person, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader, not the remotest private relation to them' (SV, X, p. 285). 'My wish, my prayer', he tells us, 'is that, if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying from the books, he would do me the favour to cite the name of the respective pseudonymous author' (SV, X, p. 287). It is this last line in particular that many scholars have referred to as the basis for their choice to see the claims of the pseudonyms as being distinct from those of Kierkegaard and to refer to the pseudonym rather than to Kierkegaard when discussing the pseudonymous works. Thus, in a recent essay on Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety*, Gordon D. Marino quotes just this passage and then says 'for reasons that I will not go into, which is by no means to pretend that they are definitive, I am inclined to respect Kierkegaard's wishes and refer the views expressed in his pseudonymous works to the corresponding pseudonyms'.⁴ He then goes on to discuss, not the views Kierkegaard, but rather those of Vigilius Haufniensis (the pseudonym under which Kierkegaard wrote *The Concept of Anxiety*, and which means 'watchman of Copenhagen'). The problem, however, is that the entire text of the 'First and Last Declaration' has something of an ironical flavour to it. And yet, Marino does not consider the obvious possibility that Kierkegaard is being ironical in his remarks about wishing and praying that the names of his pseudonyms be cited rather than his. Of course Marino does say that he has reasons that he 'will not go into' for respecting 'Kierkegaard's' wishes, but since he does not go into them we can have no way of knowing whether they are reasons which enable him to avoid this problem.

One reply here might be that since Kierkegaard appends his own name, rather than that of a pseudonym, to the 'First and Last Declaration', then his comments in that section should be seen as reflecting his own philosophical position rather than being instances of irony. Consequently, to be true to Kierkegaard, we should respect his wish and prayer and avoid associating the pseudonyms' views with those of the name of Kierkegaard. But numerous things count against such a view, suggesting that Kierkegaard's apparent 'wish' is but one more instance of his irony and not meant to be taken in a straightforward way.

First, such a position seems to depend on the view that when Kierkegaard writes under his own name what he says should always be seen as being sincere and representing his real views (or wishes) rather than as being instances of irony. But even a quick perusal of Kierkegaard's non-pseudonymous works, including his journals, will

show this to be false. For here too one will find frequent and obvious uses of irony. Further, it is worth noting that, in response to early public suspicions that he was the real author of various of his pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard published under his own name several articles in which he denies outright being their author (see *SV*, XIII, pp. 398–421). Thus, under his own name, Kierkegaard both claims to be and denies being the author of the pseudonymous works. Consequently, we should not see Kierkegaard's signed declaration as somehow representing his true wishes or as being non-ironical simply because he puts his own name to it.

Secondly, the fact that Kierkegaard, under his own name, says in the last section of a book that he is the author of the book, a book which gives a pseudonym on the first page, immediately calls into question just how 'essential' the pseudonymity really is to the 'production'. Indeed, the very idea of writing under a pseudonym in the same book where one admits one is writing under a pseudonym seems fairly ironical. If Kierkegaard had really wanted to have 'not the remotest private relation' to his pseudonymous works – that is, if he was not merely being ironical in making such a claim – then it is definitely odd for him to have published his 'First and Last Declaration' (especially as part of an apparently 'pseudonymous' work) telling the world that he is their author. A far better strategy would have been simply to say nothing and let his works stand as they were published. If he had done this, then it might have actually been believable that he did not want even the remotest private relation to them. In that case we might have never known who the real author was and Kierkegaard's professed desire to have the pseudonymous authors' names referred to rather than his might have been fully realized – without his having to depend on his readers' inclination to respect his wish and prayer. But as things stand, all of this has an immensely ironical flavour.

Thirdly, his peculiar reason for making known that he is the author of the pseudonymous works also smacks of irony. The reason he gives for admitting he is the author is simply, as we have seen, 'for formality and for the sake of order' (*For en Form og for Ordens Skyld*). But why should Kierkegaard suddenly care about formality and the sake of order? Indeed these are peculiar concerns for someone who seems to delight in informality and disorder. And if the pseudonymity is not for 'casual reasons', why bother revealing the pseudonymity for the apparently casual reasons of formality and the sake of order, especially if one believes that revealing the pseudonymity 'can hardly be of interest to anyone'.

Fourthly, not only does Kierkegaard's name appear on the last page, but it also appears on the first page (below the pseudonym) as the name of the person who has published the book. If one really wants one's book to be pseudonymous, and one really feels it is essential not to have 'the remotest private relation' to the book, then it is also a bit silly to put one's name (even as publisher) on the first page. By doing so Kierkegaard indicates quite clearly that, from the very first page, he wants the reader to see that he has a special relation to the book and, in all likelihood, is even the real author. Of course Kierkegaard tells us that he put his name down as publisher on the title page of *Philosophical Fragments* so that there would be a 'responsible person'. This dubious explanation, however, becomes even more dubious in the case of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, for here he clearly states he is the author in the 'First and Last Declaration'. Consequently, there is no practical reason for him to put his name on the first page, something he also didn't bother to do in the case of the other pseudonyms. In these cases there was apparently no need for a 'responsible person'.

Fifthly, and as though both to underscore the ironical nature of his use of the pseudonym and convince us that the pseudonym is not to be seen as the real author, the pseudonym given – Johannes Climacus – is, like most of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms (Anti-Climacus, Constantine Constantus, Nicholaus Notabene, Hilarius Bookbinder, and so forth), a humorous sounding Latinized name that few Danish readers of the nineteenth century would mistake for the actual name of a real person who might be living and writing in Denmark. And if any of Kierkegaard's readers happened to know that Johannes Climacus was in fact the name given to an obscure Greek abbot of the seventh century, this would even make it more obvious that the name was not meant to be seen as the actual name of the real Danish author. Further, some of the names of the pseudonyms, like Frater Taciturnus and Johannes de silentio, even point to the fact that the real author's name is being kept quiet or silent. If Kierkegaard had really wanted his readers not to suspect there was an author of another name behind the pseudonym, that is, if he had seriously wanted his works to be pseudonymous, then he could have easily chosen a less suspicious and typically Danish name, like Jens Hansen, Hans Jensen, Mette Hedetoft, or some such name.

Sixthly, although Kierkegaard assures us that his use of pseudonyms 'has an *essential* ground in the *production* itself', the reasons given for this 'essential' ground in fact sound quite ironical. These reasons, we have seen, are that the production supposedly required that the author showed no regard to 'good and evil, to contrition and high spirits, to

despair and courage, to suffering and exultation, etc. . . . which real actual persons in the actual moral limitations of reality dare not permit themselves to indulge in, nor could wish to'. But this sounds very much like it is being said with tongue in cheek. For as any reader of the pseudonymous works will know, these works are full of concern and regard for just these issues. Thus in *Either/Or* the pseudonym Judge William shows much regard for 'good and evil', in *The Sickness Unto Death* the pseudonym Anti-Climacus shows deep concern with the notions of despair and courage, and Johannes de silentio, the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, is full of regard for suffering and exultation. Further, if we consider Kierkegaard's works which were written under his own name (that is, under the name of a 'real actual person'), works like the *Upbuilding Discourses*, *Works of Love*, and also his journals (for the posthumous non-pseudonymous publication of which he appointed a literary executor), it is immediately clear that the amount of regard to high spirits, suffering, exultation, and so forth is present to the same degree that it is in the pseudonymous works. It is difficult to find an essential difference here between, say, the non-pseudonymous *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing* and the pseudonymous *The Concept of Anxiety*. And this should not be surprising, for we know that it was only after *The Concept of Anxiety* was written that Kierkegaard at the last minute decided to replace his own name with that of a pseudonym on the book's title page (see *Pap.*, V, p. 101; cf. *Pap.*, V, p. 104). And changing one's own name to that of a pseudonym at the last minute does not sound much like a deliberately crafted technique which has 'an essential ground in the production itself'.

Because of all this, it is peculiar to find a scholar making the claim – which is in fact a popular one – that Kierkegaard has 'contrived by his life to dissociate himself from these [pseudonymous] writings, to deter readers from associating him with the views that the works contain'.⁵ For if he has contrived to dissociate himself from these writings, he has done so in a way that makes sure that he will be associated with them. And, consequently, he has not really contrived to deter readers from associating him with the views in the pseudonymous works.

But if one takes the position that Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms is not for the reasons he gives, or seems to give, in the 'First and Last Declaration', then one is left with the question of why he uses pseudonyms at all. There are many possible answers here. One is that writing under a pseudonym, indeed even a Latinized pseudonym, was a popular practice among Danish authors in Kierkegaard's time. Thus, for example, from 1839 to 1844 the short-story writer and poet Hans Peter Christian

Hansen published various works under the pseudonym of Chr. Comet and later under the pseudonym of Alex Felix. In 1843, the same year as the appearance of *Either/Or*, the theologian Valdemar Thisted published his *Wandering in the South* under the pseudonym of Emanuel St. Hermidad, and later his *The Mermaid* which, like *Either/Or*, contained multiple layers of pseudonymity. Even Kierkegaard's own physician Oluf Bang was publishing volumes of poetry under such pseudonyms as -1-, Dr B-o, and Dr Balfungo (an anagram for Oluf Bang).⁶ Consequently, in using pseudonymity Kierkegaard was at the very least following the contemporary fashion. Another explanation, one which is more psychologically than literally based, is given by Bruce Krimmse. According to Krimmse, Kierkegaard had doubts about his authority to speak on certain issues. The use of pseudonymity therefore allowed him to say what he wished without at the same time having to hold himself to what he had said.⁷ Yet another answer here, one which was suggested earlier, is it is simply part of Kierkegaard's irony, an irony which is engaged in for the sake of irony itself. Thus, in *The Concept of Irony*, while discussing various ways in which irony can appear, Kierkegaard says that 'irony can also show itself when the ironist tries to deceive the outside world concerning himself' (SV, I, p. 267). There is, however, no ulterior purpose to this deception. And this is what distinguishes ironic deception from other sorts of dissimulation. For while dissimulation has a purpose, its purpose has an objective which is distinct from the dissimulation. Irony's purpose, however, 'is nothing other than the irony itself. When the ironist, for example, appears as someone other than who he really is, it might seem that his purpose is to get others to believe this; but his actual purpose is to feel that he is free, but this he is precisely by means of irony. Thus irony has no other motivation than self-motivation' (SV, I, p. 271). This account fits remarkably well with Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms. For in using a pseudonym Kierkegaard 'appears as someone other than he actually is'. However, his purpose is not to get us to believe this – which is why he uses humorous Latinized names which would be difficult to mistake for real names. His purpose is simply to be free, a condition which is inherent in the use of irony. But how does irony make one free? Kierkegaard explains this by saying that when I am aware that someone fully grasps the meaning of what I am saying, then I am bound by what I have said. Further, 'I am also bound with respect to myself and cannot free myself in the moment I wish. If, however, what I say is not my meaning or the opposite of my meaning, then I am free in relation to others and myself' (SV, I, p. 264). This, however, puts the ironist in the peculiar position of not being able

to say what he means whenever he wants to say what he means. One possible solution to this conundrum is for the ironist to 'appear as someone other than he actually is' – in other words, to use a pseudonym – whenever he wants to say what he means, and to reserve appearing as himself – in other words, to write under his own name – for whenever he does not want to say his meaning or wants to say the opposite of his meaning.

This raises a question over the practice of referring to the pseudonyms rather to Kierkegaard when discussing the pseudonymous work, or of having to justify oneself (in a footnote) for referring to Kierkegaard rather than to a pseudonym. And this is a question that needs to be raised. For this practice has become somewhat of a dogma in the Kierkegaard literature. Thus, one frequently finds that a scholar (usually one from the pre-postmodern times) is criticized for saying that Kierkegaard says *p* when *p* is a line from one of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works. Here, says the critic, what the person should have said is, 'Nicholaus Notabene says *p*' or 'Hilarius Bookbinder says *p*', and so on, according to which pseudonym Kierkegaard uses when he says *p*. Strictly speaking, however, these claims are false. For there never was anyone by the name of Nicholaus Notabene or Hilarius Bookbinder who said *p*. If, however, one wants to mention the fact that Kierkegaard employs the pseudonym of Hilarius Bookbinder when saying *p*, then the correct thing to say would be just that, namely, that 'Kierkegaard, under the pseudonym of Hilarius Bookbinder, says *p*'. But if it is true that Kierkegaard says *p* under a pseudonym, then it is equally true that Kierkegaard says *p*. For whether or not he says it under a pseudonym does not change the fact that he says it. One could of course agree here but still hold that although it may be Kierkegaard who is ultimately responsible for what he gets his pseudonyms to say, it does not follow that Kierkegaard agrees with, or means, what he says when he says it under a pseudonym. And this might seem especially the case in those works of Kierkegaard, like *Either/Or*, or *Stages on Life's Way*, wherein at least some of the pseudonyms appear within the work and thus might seem to be like characters in novel. But, as should now be clear, one could also argue for the opposite position; namely, that because Kierkegaard says something under a pseudonym, then he *does* mean it, and it is what he says under his own name that he *does not* mean. If this is in fact what is going on – and Kierkegaard's views on irony clearly support such an interpretation – *and* we want to use Kierkegaard's name only when only referring to his 'real' views, then it seems that we should be doing the opposite of what various modern (or postmodern) com-

mentators recommend. Namely, we should only say 'Kierkegaard says *p*' when he says *p* under a pseudonym, and we should further assume that what he says under his own name is, as he says of the ironist, not his meaning or is the opposite of his meaning. Here, however, we run into a difficulty. For now we have no name to refer to Kierkegaard whenever he speaks under his own name – if, that is, we want reserve using his name (as various modern commentators recommend) only for those instances in which what he says is his own meaning. Perhaps, however, we could invent some such expression and say something like 'Kierkegaard (whose meaning is in fact *not-p* or the opposite of *p*) says *p*' or 'Kierkegaard as ironist says *p*' whenever what Kierkegaard says is said under his own name. This rather confusing state of affairs – a confusion which would have no doubt delighted Kierkegaard – should encourage us to see that the practice of referring to the pseudonyms rather than to Kierkegaard or seeing the views that Kierkegaard puts in the mouths of the pseudonyms as somehow being separate from Kierkegaard's views, cannot be simply justified by being 'inclined to respect' Kierkegaard's apparent 'wish' and 'prayer' and, moreover, is far from the obvious position to take on Kierkegaard's use of pseudonyms.

There is also, as mentioned earlier, the further problem of Kierkegaard's relation to the historical context. Like all philosophers, Kierkegaard is writing during a particular historical epoch while living in a certain geographical location, and was raised and educated in a certain cultural tradition. Thus, there is little doubt that, in one sense, he is a product of and participant in what is known as the Danish golden age that took place in Copenhagen in the early to mid-nineteenth century. These are simply historical facts that can be known without turning to the content of Kierkegaard's writings. However, once we come to the philosophy of Kierkegaard, then the question of to which tradition he belongs is not so easily answered. One of the reasons for this is, again, the nature of his writings, writings which do not aim at sustained, straightforward argumentation concerning a specific philosophical topic or problem. Philosophically, Danish thinkers of the golden age were generally under the influence of German idealism, and in particular, under the so-called dialectical philosophy of Hegel (though German romanticism was also influential). The problem, however, is that although there are plainly Hegelian elements in Kierkegaard's philosophy, Kierkegaard's continuous polemic against Hegel, along with the diverse strands and other influences in Kierkegaard's thought, and his novel interpretation of earlier philosophers, make it exceedingly difficult to tie him into a specific philo-

sophical school or even context. Is he after all just part of the Kantian or Hegelian tradition? Or is he rather a romantic expression of Greek scepticism, a Danish Socrates, or a moral psychologist in the tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas? Is he essentially a Lutheran, an Arminian, or Pelagian, or is he best seen as the founder of modern European existentialism, structuralism, or post-structuralism? It is also worth noting here that although Kierkegaard does not seem to have been influenced by Eastern philosophy, there are nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, clear parallels in his work with Buddhist and other types of Eastern thought.⁸ Because of all this there is much scholarly disagreement concerning Kierkegaard's appropriate philosophical context. And our not knowing where exactly to place Kierkegaard here makes it all the more difficult to know where to place and thus how to interpret his views on freedom, views which, being presented in an inherently ambiguous form, are much in need of interpretation.

If, for example, like Stephen N. Dunning or Stephen Holgate, one sees Kierkegaard as essentially continuing in the tradition of Hegel, a tradition which sees historical events as unfolding in a sort of preordained way while the universal spirit moves of necessity towards absolute knowledge, then it will be difficult to read Kierkegaard as arguing for the view of an autonomous individual whose choices somehow escape the various constraints of the historical situation.⁹ If, on the other hand, one sees the influence of Greek scepticism and subsequent sceptical thinkers like Pascal as playing a more foundational role in Kierkegaard's thought, then one might be inclined to see Kierkegaard as taking a sceptical view concerning questions about human freedom. Although the role of Greek scepticism in Kierkegaard's thought has not received much attention, José Maia Neto has recently put forward a strong case for Kierkegaard's indebtedness to this ancient school of thought.¹⁰ Such an interpretation of Kierkegaard might see him as arguing that the question of whether we have freedom is something we can never fully know, something about which we can only have faith, or perhaps, in Pascal's words, make a wager. Similarly, if one sees Socrates as being Kierkegaard's major inspiration – and again much of what Kierkegaard says about Socrates could lead one to take this position (see Michael Weston's Chapter 11) – then one might well see him as espousing some form of Socratic ignorance with regard to questions concerning human freedom. If, however, like George J. Stack, Robert C. Roberts, or others, one sees Kierkegaard's thought as having its basis in Aristotle's or Thomas Aquinas' philosophy, then one's view of Kierkegaard's account of freedom will probably be favourable to the idea that Kierkegaard

holds a view in which human beings are free but only in a limited way.¹¹ There is, for example, the debate over whether Kierkegaard thought it possible that a person could freely choose to do evil, a debate which has arisen because various of his texts seem to give different answers to this question. Aristotle, however, clearly thought that all people necessarily desire happiness which necessarily excludes the desire for evil. Consequently, any choice of evil could not, for Aristotle, be a fully free choice but must be based on a corruption of reason. Likewise, for Aquinas happiness is 'the good which the will is not able not to will'.¹² It is clear then how an Aristotelian or Thomistic view of Kierkegaard would incline one to the position that Kierkegaard did not think it possible that someone could freely choose evil. Yet another position will be arrived at if one approaches Kierkegaard as a philosopher who stands at the beginning of modern existentialism. For then one will obviously be more disposed to see his views on freedom as in some sense breaking with tradition. This is the view taken by philosophers like Barrett. For Barrett, Kierkegaard's thought signals a central turning point in European philosophy. This turning point, on Barrett's view, has to do with Kierkegaard's unique concept of subjectivity, especially in relation to the notion of subjective truth.¹³ Here the individual, as opposed to objectivity, world history, or universal ethics, takes a place of central importance. Interpreting Kierkegaard in this way fits well with a view of freedom wherein individual choices are seen to be completely free and to occur outside any causal determination. It is of course peculiar that such strongly divergent views could be taken on one philosopher. But as mentioned earlier, Kierkegaard's argumentative style and modes of presentation have aided in giving rise to these disagreements in interpretations.

A good example of how one's view of Kierkegaard's relation to various historical traditions can overtly influence one's interpretation of his views on freedom, despite evidence to the contrary, can be found in Timothy P. Jackson's 'Arminian edification: Kierkegaard on grace and free will'. In this paper, a paper wherein Arminian Christianity is seen to be a major influence on Kierkegaard, Jackson tells us that although he does not expect to settle the free will debate, he does hope 'to situate it theologically by critically examining Søren Kierkegaard's views in light of some significant precursors'.¹⁴ Jackson then sets out to show that Kierkegaard's view of freedom in acquiring faith is 'consistently Arminian' rather than Pelagian or semi-Pelagian (see Chapter 6), that is, that Kierkegaard holds the Arminian view that a person lacks the freedom to acquire faith without the help of God, rather than the Pela-

gian view that it is through the individual's own choice or freedom that he or she comes to have faith. But to arrive at this position, Jackson must openly dismiss passages where Kierkegaard clearly rejects the Arminian view. For example, Jackson quotes a passage from Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers* where he says, 'this is what I am never sufficiently able to emphasize – that to have faith, before there can be any question about having faith, there must be the *situation*. And this situation must be brought about by an existential step on the part of the individual'. That is, it must be brought about by the individual's own choice. Jackson then dismisses this clearly anti-Arminian claim by saying 'but the "existential step" in question is actually a patient running in place, a "dying to the world" that surrenders all hope of earthly happiness'. Although it is not fully clear what Jackson means by saying this, the gist of it seems to be that the existential step Kierkegaard is referring to is, contrary to what Kierkegaard says, of no help in acquiring faith. To convince us then that Kierkegaard's claim here is only a 'flirt with the language of semi-Pelagianism', Jackson cites another passage from the *Journals and Papers* where Kierkegaard says 'man's highest achievement is to let God be able to help him'.¹⁵ But this is not to the point; for nothing in this passage goes against the first passage. That is, the fact that a person's highest achievement might be to let God be able to help him or her is perfectly compatible with the view that faith must still be brought about by an existential step on the part of the individual. Although Jackson concludes that only an 'undialectical' reading of Kierkegaard can make him seem to advocate a view of solitary autonomy, it seems that it is Jackson himself who is giving the 'undialectical' reading.

With this much said about problems inherent in the interpretation of Kierkegaard, let us now turn to the problem of freedom itself. It will be useful here to get a general overview of the various aspects of the problem of freedom as this will give a background against which to see how the following chapters deal with Kierkegaard's approach.

What then is the problem of freedom and how does it arise? We can start by noting that in our daily lives most of us believe that many of our choices, or actions that are a result of our choices, are something that we decide to do or to make; that is, we believe they are free. Thus I freely choose to get up out of bed in the morning, I freely choose to look out the window and check the weather, I freely choose to take the bus, and so on. Of course we accept that there are many things which influence such choices: maybe what sounds like droplets striking the window pane influences me to look out the window, maybe the rainy

weather influences me to take the bus rather than the bicycle, but it is still my free choice to look out of the window and it is still my free choice to avoid the rain by taking the bus. And if my choice to take the bus rather than the bicycle was a free choice, then it seems to follow that nothing caused me to choose to take the bus. That is, I could have done otherwise. For if something caused me to make this choice, rather than only influenced or inclined me to make it, then my choice would merely be the effect of an earlier event, rather than an active choice which I was free to make or not to make. The notion of a cause is one which can be understood in various ways. Descartes, for example, thought of a cause as being something that had a sort of logical necessity to it. That is, if A is the cause of B, then A, by the dictates of reason, necessarily implies B. In other words, it is inconceivable that A might not be the cause of B. Hume, however, argued that there was never any form of necessity as far as matters of fact were concerned. Thus, although A might always as a matter of fact be the cause of B, one could easily conceive of some event other than A, say C, as being the cause of B. For Hume, all that one can say is that A as a matter of fact causes B, not that A as a matter of necessity causes B. Kant, as is well known, tried to find a way between these two positions by arguing that although the relation between a cause and its effect is necessary, the necessity is what he calls a synthetic rather than analytic necessity. In each case, however, if my choice is caused by an earlier event, then it seems that my choice is the result of the earlier event (either of necessity or simply as a matter of fact) and is therefore not something that I can freely change. In other words, given the occurrences of the earlier causal event, I could not have done otherwise. Consequently, the view that my choice is completely free in this sense rules out the idea that anything might have caused my choice to happen. The view that our choices or acts are free in this uncaused way is often referred to as libertarianism.

We also, however, typically believe that every event has a cause: the moisture in the clouds is the cause of the rain, the rain landing on me is the cause of my getting wet, my getting wet is the cause of my feeling cold, and so on. But if every event has a cause, then, since choices are also events, it seems that my choices must also have causes. But now there appears a problem. For how can it be maintained that choices are free if they are really the result of earlier events? If my choice is the effect of an earlier cause, then it seems that my choice is no more free than the movements of a piece of wood drifting upon the waves: both are merely the effects of earlier causes. To this it could be replied that if choices have causes the cause of the choice must be the person, or

more properly speaking an event within the person, who made the choice. Thus the freedom of one's choices is preserved because although they may be caused, the cause is the person or an event within the person and not something over which the person has no control. But to this one could easily reply by asking the question: 'What caused the person to make the choice he did?' And if all events have causes, then it follows that there will also be a cause here. In other words, my choice seems to end up being one more event in the chain of cause and effect. One conclusion that appears to follow from this, a conclusion which is central to the view known as determinism, is that human choices or actions are therefore not free.

One apparent problem with this view is the claim that all events have causes. For some modern physicists have argued that there is evidence to indicate that at the sub-atomic level certain events are uncaused. This is not a new idea and is one which was postulated by the ancient Greek atomists. The later Hellenistic philosopher Epicurus argued that these uncaused atomic 'swerves' were even the basis of free will; for here we have an event which stands outside the causal chain, much like choices do. The difficulty, however, is that it is not clear how such uncaused events at the micro-level have any significant impact on the causal story at the macro-level. For it to be accepted that these uncaused sub-atomic events somehow lie at the basis of uncaused human choices, it would first have to be shown how these micro level events are significantly connected to the macro level events of the firing neurons and other electro-chemical events in the brain that are the basis of choices and action. Although various attempts have been made to show such a connection might occur, there is much disagreement over whether there is any evidence to support these accounts.¹⁶ Further, even if it could be shown how a choice's not being caused is related to a sub-atomic event's not being caused, there still remains the problem of showing how this demonstrates that choices are free. For if a choice is something which has no cause, then, it might be argued, it appears to be a truly random event. For an event's being uncaused seems to imply that it occurs in a haphazard way. But a choice that is random or haphazard is one which occurs beyond my control. Such a choice – or rather apparent choice – hardly seems to be something which can be called free. This problem is discussed in Chapter 5.

The idea that choices have causes is further supported by looking to the way in which choices are often explained. For if we consider the question of why someone makes the choices he or she does, we find ourselves often referring to certain causes in order to explain the

choices. Thus, in answer to the question of why someone chose to play the piano, it might be pointed out that her mother played the piano, that she was praised for doing so, or that most of her friends were doing so. In each case reference is being made to events which are suggested as possible causes of the person learning to play the piano. Of course one might consider such events to be more like influences that merely inclined her to make certain choices rather than like causes that inevitably drove her to make those choices. In other cases, however, it might seem more difficult to accept such a view. Consider the case of someone who at an early age turned to a life of crime. In trying to explain such behaviour people often point to the person's deprived childhood, poverty, parental neglect or abuse, drug addiction, and so forth. Such events are often seen to be instrumental causes which made the person choose a criminal lifestyle, rather than mere influences which only inclined him that way. Here, it might be felt, the person's criminal acts and choices were clearly an effect of earlier events. But if it is allowed that the choices in such a case have causes, why should it not be allowed that choices in all cases have causes, especially when this fits with the more general view that, at least at the macro level, all events have a cause?

One way of avoiding this dilemma would be simply to accept that we have no freedom and reject our belief to the contrary as an unfounded illusion. This position is argued for by Robert Blatchford in his book *Not Guilty* (1913). But such a solution is one which, for various reasons, is hard to accept. First, it seems to fly in the face of what many people would feel to be the direct experience or feeling we have of our own freedom (see Chapter 12). This experience, which presents itself in the moment of choice, is the awareness that I am freely choosing under my own accord and that nothing is forcing me to make the choice I am making. It is the awareness that a certain state of affairs is being brought about solely through my ability to choose. This experience might well be an illusion, but for many people the experience is strong enough to preclude an acceptance of the determinist view and to suggest instead that there must be something wrong with determinism.

A further reason for not wanting to accept the view that freedom is an illusion is that the belief in freedom is the basis of our belief that we are in control of our own lives, that we play an active part in charting the course that our lives are to take, rather than merely drifting like a piece of wood on a sea of causes. This belief enables us meaningfully to set about making plans, organizing our lives, and pursuing the goals which we have chosen. For there seems to be something definitely odd,

if not contradictory, about sitting down to make a decision, one whose result I believe is dependent on nothing but my completely free choice, and yet at the same time believing that my freedom is an illusion and that every event in my life is the result of forces beyond my control.

Yet another reason for wanting to hold on to the belief in freedom is that it the basis of the view that we are morally responsible for our choices or actions. The notion of responsibility has naturally a wide application. We can say, for example, that the waves are responsible for which way a piece of wood is drifting, or that a tree which fell over and struck Jane is responsible for her death, or that Mark is responsible for John's death. One of the important differences between these three cases, however, is that while they are all cases in which the concept of responsibility is applicable, only in the last case does the question of moral responsibility arise. For to be morally responsible for an action is to have freely chosen the action. It is not possible that the waves freely chose to send the wood in a particular direction, nor is it possible that the tree freely chose to fall over and strike Jane dead. It is possible, however, that Mark freely chose to bring about John's death. This is because while Mark is the sort of entity that is capable of making choices – that is, an intelligent and sentient being – waves and trees are not. Still, the fact that Mark is responsible for John's death does not necessarily mean that he is *morally* responsible for John's death. For it might be the case that, without choosing to do so, he accidentally fell off the balcony on to John and thus struck him dead, much like the tree which, without choosing to do so, fell on to Jane. However, to be morally responsible for John's death, in the sense of being responsible for his murder, Mark must have freely chosen to bring about John's death. That is, Mark must have freely chosen to cause John's death by, say, deliberately jumping off the balcony on to him, shooting him, running him down with a car, or some such thing. The reason I say 'in the sense of being responsible for his murder' is because moral responsibility is something which is often allowed to admit of degrees. Thus if Mark did not chose to kill John but still killed him by running him down, and the reason he ran him down was because he was trying to read a book while driving and so did not see John, then Mark would still be held morally responsible for John's death. His responsibility here, however, would probably be seen to be less than in the case of murder. The reason that he was nevertheless *morally* responsible would be because even though he did not freely chose to kill John, he still freely chose to engage in unsafe driving practices which both clearly could have led to someone's death and in fact were the cause of John's death.

Finally, it is the belief in freedom, along with the related notion of moral responsibility, which underpins our notions of praise and blame, and the related notions of reward and punishment. For the reason that we praise or blame and reward or punish a person for an action is because we believe that the person freely chose to do the action. We do, of course, often use praise, blame, reward, and punishment in a more instrumental way as, for example, when we want to condition behaviour, especially that of a child or even an animal. Here we might use praise as a form of reward to get a child or animal to repeat a desired behaviour. And in such a case we might not be concerned about whether the behaviour was free or even be inclined to see it as not being free. But in most cases it seems that praise is reserved for acts that are seen to be freely chosen. If John saves Jane's life by freely deciding to pull her out of the way of the falling tree, then he might well be praised for his action. If, however, he saved her by accidentally bumping her out of the way, then it seems his action is not something that should be praised. This is because such an instance is merely a case of cause and effect with no free or active choice on the part of John. But if this is true, then for those who reject the idea of freedom it seems that praise, in this non-conditioning sense, is never appropriate. For it seems as inappropriate to praise John for a so-called 'choice' which is little more than an effect in a causal chain than it does to praise him for accidentally bumping Jane out of the tree's downward path. In both cases the choice was not free. And the same seems to apply *mutatis mutandis* to the kindred concept of blaming someone for a choice. Here we also see the connection between the issue of freedom and the idea of ethics. For ethics involves the question of what I ought to choose or what I ought to value. But raising the the question of what I ought to choose seems to depend on the assumption that I *am* free to choose. For what is the point of trying to discover what choice I ought to make if I am not free to make that choice? (See Chapter 7.) It could be argued that this discovery somehow might *cause* me to choose what I ought to do, but for this to have any ethical significance, it seems it must be the case that I am free to choose to discover what I ought to choose.

The problem of freedom, however, does not disappear with the solution to the problem of whether choices are free or determined. First, some philosophers do not see these two options as being mutually exclusive. The view that choices are both free and caused, a view known as compatibilism, takes various forms. The main idea, however, seems to be that the concept of a free choice or action implies simply that the choice was neither compelled nor hindered.¹⁷ Thus, if I chose to take

the bus and nothing compelled me to do so – no one, for example, hypnotized me into choosing the bus, or grabbed me and threw me on to the bus – then my choice to take the bus is free. The problem then becomes one of deciding whether the concept of freedom employed here is adequate to explain the experience or feeling of freedom which was mentioned earlier. One might also wonder whether such a concept of freedom is adequate to underpin the ideas of responsibility, praise and blame, and ethics. Again, philosophers are in much disagreement here.¹⁸

Secondly, even if we do reject the idea of freedom and accept determinism, there still remains the question of how we are to understand its various implications. For example, does determinism imply simply that each of my choices has a cause, or does it imply the more all-encompassing view that every event in my life is the result of an ancient series of events which has taken place in exact accordance with the laws of physics, a view which seems to imply that every event in my life was in some sense destined to occur in the way it did aeons before it actually happened. This is the well-known view of Pierre Simon La Place, who, in his *Analytic Theory of Probability* (1820), said that if he knew enough he could predict the entire course of events in the universe. This view suggests the idea of a predeterminism or fatalism in which one's life takes a predetermined or fated direction from which one is hapless to escape. Of course the idea of a predetermined direction seems to suggest the idea that there is something – perhaps God or the Fates – which plans out the course one's life is to take. But one could always ask whether the laws of physics do not amount to the same thing, at least as far as being 'hapless to escape' is concerned. For in either case whatever happens was destined to happen long before it did. Thus, on this view, my decision to take the bus today was not merely an event that had a cause, it was an event which was destined to happen from the beginning of time. Such an idea has a more ominous ring to it than does the simple determinist view. For here the living of my life seems to be much like the viewing of a film wherein the development of the story and every occurrence within the story is already down on the film long before the film is viewed. Some people, however, feel that determinism must amount to the same thing. For if every event has a cause, then it seems that each event has an ancient ancestry and so, in principle, could have been predicted millions of years before it took place. If one accepts such a view of life, what should one's reaction be? Must it be one of anxiety and despair, or might one also find comfort in the view that everything is 'unfolding as it should'. Or does it even make

sense to speak of an appropriate reaction since one's reaction is also beyond one's control? This problem is discussed in Chapter 7.

Other problems appear for those who reject determinism in favour of libertarianism. One such problem is found in the question of whether all choices are free or whether only a particular sort of choice is free? Might it be, for example, that although we have the possibility for free choice, this is only exercised in those instances when we thoroughly consider the various options before us and then actively and with full awareness definitely make a choice? If this were the case, then it would seem to be that many of our daily choices, those which are made without much awareness – perhaps a choice about which chair to sit in or which shoe to tie first – are not rightly to be considered free choices, or even choices. Or again, one might be led by this view to see freedom as being something which admits of degrees: some choices being fully free, others being mostly free, mostly unfree, or completely unfree. Or, to take a slightly different position, it might be argued that only choices which have definite moral content are free. On this view choosing whether to risk my life for another would be considered a free choice, but choosing to tie my left shoe first would not. C. A. Campbell, whose ideas are discussed in Chapter 5, argues for this view, claiming that it is only in the exercise of moral effort that free will can be said to occur.

Accepting that we have freedom also gives rise to the problem of our psychological relation to our freedom. For although freedom is something which, in one way, we plainly desire, it is also something which, in another way, we are afraid of. This problem, which brings us to the psychological or existential dimension of the problem of freedom, a notion discussed in Chapter 2, is a problem which is explored by the psychoanalyst Eric Fromm in his well-known book *Escape from Freedom*. Here Fromm analyses the ways in which people adopt certain 'mechanisms of escape' – authoritarianism, destructiveness, or automaton conformity – in order to avoid the frightening encounter with freedom.¹⁹ One obvious reason for such a desire to escape freedom is that, as mentioned, freedom carries with it the burden of responsibility. For to have freely chosen something is to be responsible for having chosen it. And yet, if it is a self-serving choice which injures others or a choice which conflicts with one's other deeply held values, then it might well be a responsibility which is more than one wants to bear. This ambivalent relation to freedom, an ambivalence which gives rise to anxiety, often leads to our engaging in self-deception. For in such cases we can often make the choice that we want to make, and yet deceive ourselves into thinking that the choice was not really free, that something compelled

us into making it, that it was somehow an accident, and, consequently, that we are not responsible for the choice or its consequences. This way, we get what we want while trying to convince ourselves that we are not responsible for those consequences which we do not want. But now the question that demands an answer is: how is self-deception possible? The deception of others is simple enough to explain. Here one merely withholds the truth from the other person and says or implies that another state of affairs is true. But in self-deception things are not so easy. For here one is withholding the truth from and lying to oneself. But to withhold the truth from oneself one must first know what the truth is, otherwise how could one withhold it? But if one knows what the truth is, then in what sense can one be said to be withholding it from oneself? And how can one lie to oneself when one knows that one is lying? A related problem here, one which is also tied to the question of degrees of freedom, is that of whether engaging in self-deception somehow renders one less free. Does the fact that one is lying to oneself about not being free actually make one less free? Does it hinder one from seeing and thus making other choices? Or is one just as free in a case of self-deception as in other situations, with the only difference being that one is pretending not to be free? These and related problems are discussed in Chapter 10.

Most of these problems surrounding the question of human freedom – the problems of freedom versus determinism, uncaused choices, responsibility, praise and blame, freedom and ethics, the nature of the experience of freedom, the response to fatalism, degrees of freedom, anxiety over freedom, self-deception, and so forth – are all problems which Kierkegaard addresses in one way or another. The difficulty, however, as mentioned earlier, is that he does not always present his answers to these problems in a straightforward or easily accessible way. The purpose of this book is therefore to present, explore, and appraise Kierkegaard's ideas on the nature of freedom in such a way as to make his ideas accessible for further philosophical research. However, one of the consequences of Kierkegaard's distinctive style – his way of presenting his ideas in diverse contexts, his refusal to systematize his philosophy, his literary method, and his unique relation to the history of philosophy – is that giving an exegesis and appraisal of his work here is ineluctably tied to a highly interpretive process, which in turn has the consequence that philosophers dealing with Kierkegaard's account of freedom will tend to arrive at diverse interpretations of his views, interpretations which will naturally reflect the philosopher's own approach, presuppositions, and understanding. This, of course, applies

more or less to the attempt to understand the ideas of most philosophers. From Heraclitus and Lao Tzu to Nietzsche and Nishida, our interpretations will, for diverse reasons, vary according to who is making them. For Kierkegaard this is particularly true. As Kinya Masugata puts it, ‘when we read the text of Kierkegaard or Kierkegaard as a text, we do not reflect Kierkegaard’s thought in itself as if we were a mirror, but rather the text becomes a mirror and reflects us’.²⁰ Such an account probably goes a fair way to explaining the diversity of views given in the following chapters, where each contributor not only deals with a different aspect of Kierkegaard’s approach to question of freedom, but also engages Kierkegaard’s discussion from a different perspective with different interests and different presuppositions.

This process of interpreting Kierkegaard’s view of freedom begins in the next chapter, where Anthony Rudd turns to Thomas Nagel’s diagnosis of the free will problem as deriving from a clash between objective and subjective viewpoints. Rudd then argues that Kierkegaard’s epistemological writings can be used to show how such problems can be dissolved through a repudiation of the radically objectivist stance. He concludes, however, that there still remains a crucial existential problem of synthesizing the elements of necessity and possibility in our lives, and he considers Kierkegaard’s exploration of the ways in which we may use determinist or libertarian metaphysics in order to blind ourselves to these real problems.

In Chapter 3, ‘Kierkegaard, Freedom, and Self-interpretation’, David M. A. Campbell takes another approach and claims that if a systematic account of Kierkegaard’s view of life-choices – aesthetic, ethical, or religious – is possible, it might start by pointing out that a life-choice is a risk one cannot justify safely, in retrospect or in advance: values are not a preconceived ‘objective’ basis for judgment. Self-interpretation forms a background for judgment and constructs a meaning for one’s life, within one’s limitations, through emotion particular to oneself. It also aims at an absolute meaning one cannot construct. Virtue is then other-regarding, and is an interplay between such feeling and absolute goodness, which has no particular, definable expression. But the ethicist thwarts sense in his life; so does the aesthete, though it is not his aim; while the believer loses a sense of self and meaning in ‘paradox’. All of this implies free decision, which cannot be understood without feeling or, as a mental act, reduced to feeling.

Jörg Disse then takes up the question of autonomy in Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or*. In this work, claims Disse, the conception of autonomy is analysed with reference to four central elements of Kantian autonomy.

First, instead of reason autonomy is realized by an act of absolute choice as an act of absolutely willing one's absolute will, this will being conceived as largely dissociated from reason. Secondly, says Disse, instead of a static dualism of heteronomy and autonomy there is within the aesthetic stage a subtle dialectic from aesthetic heteronomy to the autonomy of the ethical stage. Thirdly, there is no formal law equivalent to the categorical imperative to determine our acts. Autonomy is to be seen within the frame of a strictly situational ethics. Fourthly, the question remains open whether absolute choice is to be considered as an act of free will. Disse's conclusion is that, for Kierkegaard, the notion of autonomy is basically independent from the notion of free will.

In the chapter 'Kierkegaard's Leap: Freedom and Anxiety', I discuss *The Concept of Anxiety* where Kierkegaard gives his fullest account of his notion of the qualitative leap, the human event through which, he tells us, good and evil come into the world. His discussion here points towards the idea of a choice which is free from all determinism. It is an event, says Kierkegaard, that we know through direct experience, which occurs continuously, and that no science can explain. Now although Kierkegaard says that 'no science can go further', he also says that 'psychology comes closest and explains the last approximation'. This is the moment of anxiety which occurs immediately before the leap. Anxiety is then explained as a state in which one is aware of one's freedom, and aware that one both fears and desires the object of choice. Kierkegaard's analysis of anxiety is thus an attempt to focus our attention on the moment in which choice takes place. Kierkegaard's object here is not to prove the existence of free will, for this is something that cannot be done. It is rather to bring us as close as possible to the precipice of choice so that when we look over we will know that no argument is necessary.

In Poul Lübcke's chapter, 'Freedom and Modality', the relationship between freedom and the modalities of necessity, possibility, and reality is examined using Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* and *The Sickness Unto Death*. It is generally acknowledged that the two presentations use different terminology, but it is a question of debate whether they contradict each other. Lübcke argues that the two presentations do not contradict each other but present different aspects of a general ontology of freedom. He also argues that this ontology of freedom shows that Kierkegaard has a libertarian rather than a deterministic understanding of freedom. The philosophical results of this examination are then confronted with the conceptions of sin and faith given in *Philosophical Fragments*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *The Sickness Unto Death*. From here

Lübcke argues that, theologically speaking, Kierkegaard has a semi-Pelagian and synergistic understanding of sin and faith.

Continuing with the theme of the modality of necessity, Chapter 7 pursues the idea of fate in Kierkegaard's thought. Here Julia Watkin starts by pointing out that among the twentieth-century physicists who seek a grand explanatory superlaw or 'theory of everything' are some who see hard determinism as a logical consequence of the existence of such a law. In the nineteenth century, she argues, Kierkegaard viewed Hegelianism as a philosophical system in similar terms. As one committed to a Christianity that espoused human freedom, Kierkegaard attacked what seemed to render freedom only an illusion. In this chapter Watkin shows that Kierkegaard discusses this necessity in terms of fatalism and determinism viewed from different perspectives and following his contemporaries' understanding of these two terms. In accordance with his strategy of indirect communication, he attempts to discuss the individual and its place in existence from different standpoints. Watkin argues, however, that, despite his attempt to be impartial, Kierkegaard is unable to prevent his own commitment to freedom in a Christian context from colouring his exposition of fatalism and determinism. Thus Kierkegaard's psychological presentation of the life of the fatalist and determinist is a negative one. In letting his personal conviction colour his thought, however, Kierkegaard ignores the possibility of other interpretations of fatalism that are positive and provide a position as philosophically consistent as his own.

As was mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why the issue of freedom is important to us is because it seems to be the basis for our notion of ethics. The relation between freedom and ethics in Kierkegaard's thought is explored by Michelle Kosch in her chapter 'Freedom and the Immanent'. Kosch argues here that understanding Kierkegaard's account of the problems of the immanent ethical standpoint as it is defined in *Either/Or* II is central to understanding his position on the issue of freedom of the will. His rejection of the immanent standpoint, says Kosch, is motivated by the insight that such a position must implicitly deny freedom of choice. This is because the definitive commitment of the view – that the moral is the rational – must lead one to deny that moral evil is possible. Kosch concludes by arguing that, for Kierkegaard, only the acceptance of some transcendent source of value – such as that offered by Christianity – is compatible with the affirmation of freedom of choice.

In the next chapter Peter Rogers addresses Kierkegaard's concept of indirect communication and presents a possible explanation for at least

some of the pseudonyms. Here Rogers argues that by characterizing the movements into Kierkegaard's different spheres of existence as acts that adopt a chief good those movements are shown to be free acts. He then argues that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous indirect communication is constructed in such a way so as to encourage and train those free acts. The indirect communication of *Either/Or* thus not only trains the free adoption of the aesthetic and ethical spheres but also, by extension, the possibility of existing in a hidden mezzanine sphere. He concludes by showing how *Fear and Trembling* trains the reader into a third version of free action.

In Chapter 10, 'Freedom and Self-deception in Kierkegaard's *Purity of Heart*', D. Z. Phillips argues that if people are deceiving themselves they do not understand the state they are in and, to this extent, their freedom is impaired. They think they are doing what they are not. Difficulties, however, says Phillips, come from Kierkegaard's general claim that wickedness leads to an inner tension which is self-defeating. On Phillips' account these difficulties affect Kierkegaard's treatment of his notion of obstacles to acquiring purity of heart. Further difficulties in Kierkegaard's position arise from his claim that purity of this kind entails freedom from life's contingencies.

In the next chapter Michael Weston argues that accounts of Kierkegaard's conceptions of freedom tend to fall into two camps. According to one, freedom, as the relation of the individual to the various kinds of life he may lead, leaves the aesthetic, ethical, and religious lives as equal possibilities. According to the other, however, the nature of freedom shows that only one form of life, the religious, may justifiably be chosen. Support for both views can be found within the pseudonymous works, and within the same text, as can their criticism. To understand this contradiction, says Weston, we need to place these views of freedom in the context of the literary strategy of Kierkegaard's writings. The pseudonymous texts, he says, aim to intervene in the illusions of a readership that believes itself to be Christian and so open it to the address of the upbuilding discourses that seek 'to move, to persuade'. When we locate the notion of freedom within the context of the strategy of Kierkegaard's writings as a whole, we can give a sense to a freedom which is an 'inner necessity which excludes the thought of another possibility' (*JP*, I, p. 74).

Throughout this book a recurring theme is Kierkegaard's idea of the experience of freedom. In the concluding chapter, 'Sublimity and the Experience of Freedom in Kierkegaard', George Pattison widens the focus by using the concept of the sublime to explore the full depth of

the implications, including the theological implications, that this experience has for Kierkegaard. Pattison starts by raising the question of whether it is possible to speak at all of an 'experience' of freedom in Kierkegaard's writings, or whether freedom is simply a transcendental presupposition which we can only relate to as if it existed. Although the concept of the sublime is more Kantian than Kierkegaardian, Pattison argues that it has close affinities to Kierkegaard's concept of anxiety and to what Kierkegaard describes as the process of 'becoming as nothing' whereby the individual comes to faith. This is developed in a reading of two texts, taken from *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*, and an examination of storm imagery in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. The sublime, Pattison argues in his conclusion, can contribute to a poetics of faith, where faith is understood as the self's free self-affirmation.

It is thus hoped that the ideas, arguments, and discussions in this book will lead both to a fuller understanding of Kierkegaard's views on the nature of freedom, and to the possibility that Kierkegaard's unique contributions to the problem of freedom might begin to enter the present dialogue.²¹

Notes

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21. I thank George Pattison for his helpful comments on this introduction.

Index

- Abraham, 55, 152–5, 191, 192, 193,
194, 195
absolutism, 33
actuality and possibility, 94–6, 99
 see also necessity, union of
 possibility and actuality
absurdity
 Christianity, 133
 faith, 51–2, 175
 religion, 173
 theological or secular, 189
Adam, 70–1, 104
Agnois: Theology in the Void, 185–6
aesthetic stage, *see* stages of life or
 existence
 see also choice, aesthetic; pleasure,
 aesthetic; value, aesthetic
alloiosis, 93–4
ancient Greek atomists, 15
Andersen, H. C.
 Only a Fiddler, 115
anxiety, 2, 70, 79–89, 108–10, 118,
144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 189
ambiguity, 81
demonic, 85–6
dizziness, 81
evil and good, 84–5
experience of nothing, 87
friendly and mild, 87
phenomenology, 80
psychoanalytic accounts, 87
two views, 81–3
unassuageable, 195
apathy, 58
Aquinas, T., 11, 12
Archelaus, 162
Aristotle, 11, 12, 53, 60, 93–5, 96
astrology, 108
atheism, 39
atonement, 88, 117
Augustine, 54, 104, 185
authenticity, 184
autonomy, 55, 58–67, 125, 128
 heteronomy, 58, 62, 64
 Kantian, 22
 solitary, 13
Barrett, W., 2, 12
Baudelaire, C., 195
Berkeley, G., 2
Blackman, H. J., 56n6
Blatchford, R.
 Not Guilty, 16
Callicles, 162–3
Calvin, J., 39
Calvinistic predestination, 106, 117
Campbell, C. A., 20, 76, 89–90
Cartwright, N., 32
categorical imperative, 58, 68n8, 126
causality
 law of, 143–4
cause
 freely acting, 97
 notion of, 14
choice, 13, 53, 59, 69, 71–85, 89, 90,
123–4, 132, 136, 137, 139, 143
 abstract freedom, 175, 183, 184
 aesthetic, 45, 77
 commitment, 44
 care, 176
 criterionless, 46
 ethical, 45, 77
 decision, 176, 183
 non-random, 142
 occasion, 176
 religious, 45
 see also decision; leap
Christ, 135, 181, 186
Christianity, 106, 109, 113, 116, 121,
133–6, 138, 140, 174–81, 183
 Arminian, 12
 Classical world, 199
 denial, 103, 174
 Hegel, 194
Climacus, J., 6

- communication, 133
 direct, 183
 existential, 176–7, 179, 180–1
 indirect, 2, 68n7, 142–55, 177, 179, 183
 knowledge, 179
 reflection, 2, 177–8
 upbuilding, 178
 compatibilism, 18–19, 28–9
 conscience, 61
 consciousness, 191
 gap, 51
 religious, 194
 cosmology, 194
 materialistic, 190
 Pre-Socratic, 190
 crowd, 54
 see also untruth, crowd

 Danish golden age, 10–11
 death, 102, 159, 170, 182
 decision
 empty abstract, 56
 see also choice, decision; pain,
 decision; phenomenology,
 decision; free will, deciding and
 feeling
 Descartes, R., 13
 scepticism, 31
 desire, 52–3, 58
 chief good, 145
 erotic, 87
 existential, 148
 fear, 80–4
 meaningful life, 142, 145–6, 148,
 149, 151, 153
 despair, 2, 37, 64, 98–9, 109, 113,
 118, 142, 144, 145, 147–9, 172,
 174, 182–3
 choosing or avoiding, 101–3
 courage, 3, 7
 determinism, 15–16, 19–20, 28, 34,
 101, 121, 143
 hard, 111, 118
 rejection of, 34
 soft, 110
 divine assistance, 66
 Dogen, 1
 Don Juan, 46, 52–3

 Dostoyevsky, F.
 Notes from the Underground, 79
 double-mindedness, 157–8, 161, 167
 immorality, 156–8, 161, 170
 see also single-mindedness
 dread, 48
 Dunning, S. N., 11
 duty, 46, 174
 see also leap
Dying we Live, 169

 egoism, 55
 Egyptians, 194
 emotions, 47, 53–5
 see also life-choice; role of emotion
 English-Language philosophy, 1
 Enlightenment, 58
 envy, 157–8
 Epicurus, 15
 see also Stoics and Epicureans
 epistemology, 28, 31–3, 41n9
 see also knowledge
 eternal happiness, 123, 124, 198
 ethical stage, *see also* stages of life or
 existence, ethical
 see also choice, ethical; immanent-
 ethical; passion, ethical; self-
 annihilation, ethical imperative
 ethics, 2, 19, 47, 65, 69–70, 124,
 128–9, 131, 137, 152, 182
 chief good, 142–54
 Hegelian, 125
 imitatio Christi, 133
 Kant's, 58, 124, 125
 Socratic/Platonic, 125, 126
 virtue, 43, 53–4
 see also inwardness, ethics
 eudaimonism, 126, 173
 Eve, 71
 evil, 11, 12, 128, 161
 moral, 125, 126, 131
 radical, 128
 existentialism, 11, 12, 134
 existing individual, 147, 174, 175

 faith, 2, 12, 45, 49, 50, 55, 76, 140,
 151–5, 172, 177, 181, 197
 hero, 191
 inward action, 191

- faith – *continued*
 love, 56
 negative figuring, 189
 poetics, 199, 50
 synergetic, 93, 103
 see also absurdity, faith; grace, faith;
 sublime, faith
 fatalism, 19, 38, 98–101, 106–19
 anxiety, 108, 112, 113
 Greek view, 108
 relation to determinism, 38–9,
 106
 Stoic calmness, 114, 115
 fear, 157
 punishment, 161, 164, 167
 see also desire, fear
 Ferreira, J. M., 73–4
 forgiveness
 synergetic, 103
 Franciscan medieval philosophers, 62
 free action, 142–3
 free will, 53, 56, 65, 88, 91, 121
 anxiety, 79
 deciding and feeling, 53
 denying, 36
 natural feeling, 52
 objective and subjective, 35
 freedom
 chief good, 153
 commitment, 138
 evasion, 172
 feeling, 53
 illusion, 16, 105, 123, 187–8
 lack, 156–7, 160, 167
 loss of, 84, 160–1, 164–5
 moral, 189
 necessity, 50, 69, 73, 123
 purity, 166
 randomness, 89–90
 reconciling with necessity, 35–7
 satisfaction of desires, 162–3
 self, 197
 training, 149–55
 see also choice; free will; irony,
 freedom
 Frege, G., 94
 Freud, S.
 Notes upon a Case of Obsession
 Neurosis, 83
- Fromm, E.
 Escape from Freedom, 20
- Gauguin, P., 44–5
 generosity, 54
 German idealism, 1, 10
 Gestalt shift, 73
 Gestapo, 169
 God, 33, 37, 49–51, 54–5, 66, 96–7,
 103, 106–7, 130, 133, 140, 176,
 181, 185–6, 191, 197–9
 cosmological argument, 97
 deistic, 99
 Divine Ground, 186
 images, 188
 necessity, 111
 theistic, 100
 trusting, 197
 unknown, 48
 witness, 170
 see also self-annihilation, relation
 with God
 good and evil, 3, 7, 59–60, 65, 68n3,
 70, 76–7, 79, 85, 123, 136–8, 161
 see anxiety, good and evil
 good, 78, 124, 161–2, 165, 169, 173
 criterion, 130
 see also good and evil
 grace, 135, 139, 140, 181, 183
 faith, 55–6
 Greek life, 114–15
 see also pre-Homeric Greeks
 Greek tragedy, 114, 194
 Grøn, A., 71, 88
 guilt, 85, 109, 125, 130, 132
 absolute, 59–61, 68n8, 123
 Kierkegaard's own, 172
 volitional character, 45
- Haggard, H. R., 111, 119
 Allan and the Holy Flower, 112
 Hakuin, 2
 Hanney, A., 88
 Hansen, H. P. C., 7
 Hawking, S., 105, 106, 118
 Hegel, G. W. F., 10, 11, 43, 46, 51, 61,
 64, 66, 105, 106, 109, 175
 Phenomenology of Spirit, 61, 194,
 199

- Hegel, G. W. F. – *continued*
 system, 105, 195
see also Christianity, Hegel
- Heidegger, M., 39n22
 inauthenticity, 195
- hermeneutics, 49, 51
see also ontology, hermeneutic
 intentionalist
- history, xii, 66, 97, 123, 175
 history of philosophy, xii
- Hitler, 163
- Holgate, S., 11
- Hume, D., 2, 14, 47, 125, 143
 solipsism, 31
- Iago, 195
- immanent-ethical, 121, 124
- immanent-religious, 121
- incompatibilism, 121–2, 123, 124,
 134
- indeterminism, 34, 101
- individuality, 47, 172
- inductive inference, 72–3
- infinite resignation
see also Religiousness A
- innocence, 87
- inwardness, 144, 146, 148
 ethics, 182
 knight, 191
 religion, 182
- irony, 3–10, 115, 150
 freedom, 8
- Isaac, 55, 152–5
- Jackson, T. P., 12–13
- Japanese Buddhist thinkers, 1
- Japanese philosophy, 1
- Japan's Kyoto School, 185
- Jesus, 50, 170
 Peter's promise, 166
- Jewish law, 188
- Jong, E., 166
- Judaism, 112
- Kafka, F., 195
- Kant, I., 14, 60, 63–4, 67, 94, 126,
 186–9, 194, 68n8
Critique of Judgement (third *Critique*),
 127, 187
- Groundwork of the Metaphysics of
 Morals*, 127
- Religion within the Limits of Reason
 alone*, 67
- second *Critique*, 127
see also autonomy, Kantian;
 categorical imperative; Kantian
 tradition; ontology, Kantian
- Kantian tradition, 11
- Kierkegaard
The Concept of Anxiety, 4, 7, 69, 76,
 93, 101, 108, 110, 112, 116, 125,
 128, 129, 131, 137, 173, 185
The Concept of Irony, 3, 8, 38
Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 3,
 6, 31, 66, 68n4, 71, 72, 90, 118,
 123, 137, 146, 148, 173–4, 175,
 177, 179, 180
Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses,
 185–6, 196
Either/Or, 7, 9, 59–63, 65–7, 68n4,
 68n8, 75, 77, 79, 107, 108, 119,
 122, 128, 140, 142, 149, 150,
 151, 152, 160, 190, 193, 199
 English translations, 1
Fear and Trembling, 7, 70, 87, 88,
 129, 142, 152, 154, 155, 191,
 192, 193, 199
 Japanese translations, 1
Journals and Papers, 13, 79, 173,
 175, 184
 literary method, 2–10
On my Work as an Author, 2
Philosophical Fragments, 3, 6, 93,
 97, 98, 101–2, 122, 133, 135,
 139, 173, 180
 philosophical methodology, 28
Practice in Christianity, 179, 181
Purity of Heart, 7, 50, 156, 161, 166,
 169, 170, 197, 198
 relation to historical context, 10–
 13
The Sickness Unto Death, 7, 31, 36,
 37, 38, 78, 93, 97, 98, 101–2,
 106–7, 113, 125, 185, 198
Stages on Life's Way, 9, 75, 108
Works of Love, 7, 41n9
- kinesis*, 93–4
- King Croesus, 108

- Kjær, G., 111
 knowledge, 49, 51, 61
 see also self-knowledge
 Krimmse, B., 8
- La Place, P. S.
 Analytic Theory of Probability, 19
 Laius, 108
Last Tango in Paris, 166
 leap, 45, 51, 66, 173, 183
 decision, 51, 72–3
 inductive inference, 73
 phenomenology of inner
 awareness, 89
 qualitative, 71–91, 135, 137
 sin, 117
 thought, 73
 leap of faith, 76, 172–3
 Leibniz, G., 77
 Leibnizian universe, 112
 libertarianism, 14, 19, 20, 40, 97,
 101, 103
 Sartre, 38
 liberum arbitrium, 77
 life-choice, 43–4, 48, 51
 role of emotion, 44
 Locke, J., 2
 love, 46, 163, 166, 45–6
 deception, 163
- MacIntyre, A., 46, 58, 147
 madness, 83, 181
 Maia Neto, J., 11
 Malthe-Bruun, K.
 executed by the SS, 169
 Marcel, G., 28
 Marino, G. D., 2, 82, 88
 Masugata, K., 22
 McKinnon, A., 76
 meaningful life, 145–7
 Meinong, A., 95
 metaphysics, 33
 Christian, 109, 118
 empty, 48
 scientism, 32
 Meyer, 106
Meyer's Foreign Word Dictionary, 106
 Mill, J. S., 47
 mind, 51, 59, 188
- Møllehave, J., 116
 moral objectivity, 65
 motivation, 144–5, 151; law of, 143–
 4
 Mozart
 Don Giovanni, 161
 murder, 55
- Nagel, E., 49
 Nagel, T., 22, 28–31, 35, 48–9
 Napoleon, 108
 necessity, 14, 66, 97, 109, 106, 122
 natural, 105
 neo-Hegelian dialectic, 184
 union of possibility and actuality,
 105
 see also freedom, necessity; God,
 necessity
- Nero, 64
 Newton's laws, 32
 Nietzsche, F., 56n1, 195
 perspectivism, 33
 nothing, 80–1
 becoming, 195
 dizziness, 81
 nothingness, 189
- objective truth, *see* truth, objective
 O'Connor, D. J., 89
 Oedipus, 108
 Oluf Bang, 7
 ontology, 50
 freedom, 93, 98
 hermeneutic intentionalist, 43
 Kantian, 97
 oracle, 108, 112
- paganism, 108, 113
 pain, 103, 157
 decision, 173
 paradox, 45–52, 174, 181
 God-man, 175, 180, 181
 paradoxical-religiousness, 122, 130,
 132
 Parfit, D., 102
 Pascal, B., 11
 passion, 47, 51–4, 174–5
 ethical, 134
 patience, 168

- Pelagianism, 12, 104, 117
 see also semi-Pelagianism
 personal identity, 102–3
 personality, 59, 61, 160
 phenomenology
 action, 136
 decision, 137, 173
 duty, 173
 sin, 75
 see also leap, phenomenology of
 inner awareness
 phenomenology of spirit, 172
 philistine-bourgeois, 38–9
 Phillips, D. Z., 176
philosophie der Tat, 192
 Plato, 114, 126, 169
 Apology, 167
 Phaedo, 157
 pleasure, 62, 157, 159
 aesthetic, 191
 see also sublime, pleasure
 possibility
 abstract, 175
 living, 174
 see also actuality and possibility
 praise and blame, 18, 182
 pre-established harmony, 112
 pre-Homeric Greeks, 194
 predeterminism, 19
 Prisoner's Dilemma, 39
 problem of freedom, xii, 13–21
 pseudonymity, 2–10
 psyche, 110, 116
 psychology, 79, 109–10, 116, 117,
 136–7, 194
 human action, 117
 perception, 74
 quantative determination, 72, 89,
 132
 rationality, 126
 reason, 47, 51–2, 53, 59, 173
 ability to adjudicate, 149
 self-activation, 198
 reflection, 148, 151
 objective, 146
 subjective, 146
 see also communication, reflection
 Regina Olsen, 47
 relativism
 post-modern, 33
 religion, 114, 136, 56, 69–70, 172,
 182
 see also inwardness, religion
 religious discourse, 50
 religious experience, 186
 religious life, 47
 religious stage, *see* stages of life or
 existence, religious
 see also choice, religious;
 consciousness, religious;
 immanent-religious; religious life;
 Religiousness A; Religiousness B
 religious studies, 185
 Religiousness A, 55, 121, 124, 129–
 32
 infinite resignation, 174
 Religiousness B, 55, 124, 132–3
 responsibility, 17–18, 19, 20, 85,
 123–4, 132
 moral, 17, 105
 reward and punishment, 18
 Roberts, R. C., 11
 romanticism, 52, 165, 167, 191, 195
 German, 10
 Sartre, J. P., 38, 46
 nausea, 189
 see also libertarianism, Sartre
 scepticism, 33, 136
 Greek, 11
 see also Descartes, R., scepticism
 Schelling, F. W. J., 134
 Schleiermacher, F., 185
 Schopenhauer, A., 195
 Second World War, 163
 seducer, 46
 Seducer's Diary, 108
 seduction, 52
 self, 32, 37, 46, 47, 59, 62, 67, 76,
 113, 118, 160, 173, 174, 182,
 189, 195, 199
 achieved, 196
 appropriation, 197
 discovery, 197
 dissolution, 196
 infinite, 172

- self – *continued*
 loss, 189
 personal and civic, 56
 posited, 186
 reason, 58
see also freedom, self; ontology;
 freedom; problem of freedom;
 selfhood; sense of self
 self-actualization, 63
 self-annihilation, 194
 ethical imperative, 130
 relationship with God, 129, 132,
 182
 self-awareness
 non-cognitive, 61
 self causation, 59
 self-consciousness, 194
 self-deception, 20–1, 39, 86, 163–4,
 199
 self-determination, 58
 selfhood, 36–7, 40, 45, 186
 self-identity, 194
 self-interpretation, 43–4, 48
 self-knowledge, 59, 64, 128, 178
 self-love, 58
 self-transparency, 59
 semi-Pelagianism, 12, 13, 93, 104
 sense of self, 38, 45, 56
 sensuality, 159
 servility, 156–7, 159, 163
 servitude, 161
 Shestov, L., 42n23
 Shinran, 1
 sin, 37, 69–71, 78, 85, 103–4, 109,
 117, 125–6, 129, 131, 172
 against the holy spirit, 103
 hereditary, 70, 86, 88, 125
 semi-Pelagian view, 93, 104
 Socratic notion or definition, 78–9,
 125
 single-mindedness, 157–8, 161
 morality, 156–7, 161, 170
see also double-mindedness
 Socrates, 11, 78–9, 114, 126, 157,
 162–3, 167, 169, 178
 Danish, 11
see also ethics, Socratic/Platonic;
 sin, Socratic notion of definition;
 teacher, Socratic
 solipsism, *see* Humean, solipsism
 Solomon, R., 172–3, 175
 Sophocles
Philoctetes, 112
 Southern California, 158
 Spinoza, B. 39
 spirit, 51, 59, 114, 116, 172
 spirit trial, 82–3
 spiritlessness, 113
 Stack, G. J., 11, 61
Stadie, 75
 stages of life or existence, 59, 75–6,
 174, 176
 aesthetic, 43, 45, 62, 68n4, 142,
 150, 173, 174, 178, 179, 182,
 189
 Epicurean, 64
 ethical, 43, 45, 121, 142, 150, 173,
 179, 183
 post-ethical, 150
 pre-aesthetic, 145, 149
 pre-ethical, 149
 religious, 43, 45, 173, 189
 Stoics and Epicureans, 113
see also Epicurus; fatalism, Stoic
 calmness; stages of life or
 existence, Epicurean
 sub-atomic events, 15
 subjective truth, *see* truth, subjective
 subjective thinker, 148
 subjectivity, 50, 121, 135, 139, 146,
 174
 existential, 135
 sublime, 48–9, 187–91, 193–9
 concept of judgement, 187–8
 faith, 194
 heroism, 193
 Kantian, 25
 mathematical, 188
 pleasure, 188
 primordial experience, 191
 suicide, 100
 Sutherland, S., 57n15
 Symparanekromenoi, 191, 193
 sympathy, 151
 Tahiti, 45
 Taylor, R., 111, 113, 119
Metaphysics, 111

- teacher
 Socratic, 199
 theology, 103, 185
 Thomas, R. S., 165
 'Meet the Family', 165
 Thomte, R., 91n14
 Thrasymachus, 162
Tilstand, 75
 truth, 49, 51–2, 146, 177, 184
 appropriation, 146, 177, 179
 art, 191
 chaos, 191
 Christianity, 179
 deceived, 2
 fatalism, 113
 objective, 52, 146, 176–7, 184
 subjective, 12, 142, 144, 149, 146,
 149, 153, 154, 174
 see also untruth
 University of Cambridge, 105
 untruth, 146, 177
 crowd, 47
 Valdemar Thisted
 The Mermaid, 7
 Wandering in the South, 7
 value, 44, 140, 145, 148, 149,
 189
 aesthetic, 190
 invent, 46
 larger, 48
 spiritual, 189
 van Inwagen, P., 91, 111
 Essay on Free Will, 91
 verification, 34
 view from nowhere, 40, 49
 Weil, S., 166
 West, D., 172–4, 175
 will, 59–63, 126
 Williams, T.
 Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, 159
 willpower, 73
 Winch, P., 167, 169
 Wittgenstein, L., 28, 36, 40, 50, 163,
 167