

The text as 'seduction' by Kierkegaard

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Otherness of 'text'

At this type of congress on Kierkegaard, each of us presents different interpretations of Kierkegaard. So also in this conference, a large number of Kierkegaard-interpretations have been presented, and from now on the same situation will continue. I have great wonder at this kind of situation. 'I have come to suspect the assumption' that 'we can read a text with an open mind and be trusted to quote it impartially' and I have come to have wonder whether the interpretations which we present may not in the end be misinterpretation. 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 it reflects us. 'Our unconscious presuppositions and present interests' are reflected in this mirror. Kierkegaard's favorite phrase from Lichtenberg: 'this kind of work is like a mirror. When an ape looks into it, the face of an apostle does not look out of it', should not be understood as pejorative. Instead rather it expresses the real relation between works and readers. One writer Alastair McKinnon accounts for this feature by saying that it arises 'because we are wicked as because our limited and finite minds are incapable of grasping a text in its entirety.' A. McKinnon says he is 'acutely pained and embarrassed by these difficulties,' and he has 'attempted to develop some simple computer and statistical routines designed to enable us to see what is actually happening in a text'. I wish the solution were this easy, but indeed I imagine Kierkegaard intended to cause the difficulties by which McKinnon was embarrassed.

The text appears before us as a sign or a symbol. We try to read out its meaning. But it is unavoidable that the decipherment is done diversely. And then we feel angst for this diversity. So we are trapped in an attempt to try to pin down the original meaning of the text. Because many other readers also search for monosemy (one meaning of a sign), they too are caught by the temptation. But it is unavoidable that the text continually appears as *das Andere* for the reader. In other words, the text rejects final interpretations. If there would be some kind of common 'code' the text and the reader could reflect each other and there would be no otherness between the two. If there is such a common code between them, there are two alternatives. On the one hand, otherness of the text will stand out, and in this situation the reader needs to make a certain movement toward the text. On the other hand, if there is directly common code, and yet the text want to communicate some message to the reader, then the text has to make a certain movement toward the reader. This movement on the part of the text is what we may call the movement of 'seduction'. The reader is lured by the seduction and tries to grasp its meaning, and then the reader presents many kinds of interpretation, but it is unavoidable that the interpretation of the text generates misinterpretations. On the other hand, these interpretations may generate new meanings. For example, when I read Kierkegaard's text from the standpoint of Buddhism, then, I have a possibility to present other interpretations than those which are presented only in a Christian context. Moreover, I have a possibility to discover myself in a new context. Thus in this situation of the text as seducer, we have always not only the possibility of misinterpretation, but also the possibility of creative interaction with the text.

Because of the style of Kierkegaard's works, the text often appears as otherness without a commensurable code with the reader. Kierkegaard has a strategy that he, on the one hand, sometimes provides the code key in order for deciphering the text (cf. the stage-theory of existence, or his own point of view to his works); on the other hand, he often omits any key for interpreting the text and leaves the text in an open situation (cf. his use of pseudonym).

For example, we can find the following description in his "The Concept of Irony": 'the reality □\$B!L□(Ba kind of text, I suppose □\$B!M□(B relates itself to the subject in a double way, namely, partly as the givenness which he cannot reject, partly as the task which wants to be realized by him.'(SV 1, 288) (cf. S. Shakespeare, Japanese translation, p.12) And the title 'Either-Or' already has an association with term 'seduction'. This book is usually interpreted as a call for decision making, asking that the reader choose either the code of an aesthetic view point of life or the code of an ethical view point of life. In order that the reader can make this decision, the aesthetic reader must at first break from the code in which he lives, be lured from the frame work, and come to be interested in the choice 'either-or'. If the word 'seduce' has the original meaning of movement to depart from the main subject, then the Chinese character □\$BM6OG□(B means the movement to lure someone out from a certain frame work. Both words refer to the same state of affairs. But we must not forget that the reader is allowed not to choose either way.

Kierkegaard's concept 'edifying' also reflects the same circumstances from the other side, namely the ethico-religious side. It is needless to say that the concept of 'edifying' belongs to the sphere of education. In other words, the movement of education belongs to the same sphere as the movement of seduction. The Japanese word 'Oshie' (to teach) has the meaning to guide or lure another person into one's own way of being. Education has two aspects; partly that we lead children to the right way, partly that children grow up independently. The essence of education lies, in the end, with children, not with the teachers, as we can see it in Socrates' midwifery. If the commandment of God not to eat prohibited fruits is really God's intention, then Adam cannot help obeying the command. But in the end Adam did not follow it.

The essence of indirect communication appears typically in the sphere of seduction. When I communicate something to others who do not use the same code, the method should become indirect. In this case the way how I should communicate it to them becomes a decisive matter. "How" I do this is typically by deceiving others into the truth. 'We must not be deceived by the word 'deception'. We can deceive others for the sake of truth. Furthermore (as we remember the case of Socrates), we can deceive them into truth.'(SV XVIII, 104) I may also express this in Buddhist terms. The 'how' is 'upayajñana'(the wisdom or knowledge of using skilful means for saving others) by which mankind is led to the truth. We can find the phrase in "Genji Stories", 'in order to evoke spiritual awakening, he conceals his charity and he uses such an upaya.' But even in this case of upaya, we already interpret and translate the 'how' ethico-religiously.

Otherness of Existence as a text

'In his "Last Declaration" appended to the Postscript, Kierkegaard writes of his desire to read anew "the original text [Urskrift] of individual human-existence relationships"'. Steven Shakespeare gives a comment on this phrase, as follows : 'This vocabulary of reading and texts is not accidental. We are being invited to consider existence as itself textual, language-like.'

We cannot explain existence with language in its entirety. Otherness of existence means this inexpressibility by language. But existence, on the other hand, is not communicated to us, if it is not expressed with language.

This situation of existence has a similar structure to the one of the text. The relationship between existence and language is ambiguous, and Kierkegaard's text will leave this ambiguity open.

Existence cannot be expressed with language, so it cannot be communicated directly. We 'cannot resist spilling out words upon words in order to communicate the

incommunicable.' Kierkegaard's text is an example of this situation. The same state of affairs appear in Zen-Buddhism, which has a principle of not expressing the reality with language and also spills out words upon words.

How should we understand this inexpressibility of existence by language? Does this imply that 'the direct reality' cannot be grasped by concepts? Furthermore, does it mean the impossibility to systematize 'Tilvearelse'? Indeed we can understand it partially in this way, but I want to present a little other way to grasp it. On the concept of existence or being, for example, Heidegger developed his own idea of being on the basis of German expression of being: es gibt, and Levinas criticized Heidegger on the basis of French expression of being: il y a. If the two thinkers present their understanding of being on the basis of their concrete languages, then, surely, I, using Japanese language, may develop my understanding of being on the basis of Japanese. In truth, Japanese language has several words to express being (For example, the word for the being of living things and that of non-living things are different. The Japanese word 'arigato', which means "thank you", literally means "the difficulty of being", and expresses the thanks that I 'am' now in this way. Japanese also differs from English expression. In English: I have a wife is expressed in Japanese 'For me wife is'. In Japanese the word be is used in the case that the word have used in English. If Japanese is a "be-language", then English is a "have-language".

The above mentioned example does not show that being is as it is, but shows that the concept of being in itself is used to express the relation between the thing or activity expressed in some discourse and the subject who speaks. The expression of being in itself is the expression of 'how' to grasp the relation. In other words, I suppose, the concept of being in itself is not constative, but performative. The statement of being can be understood as an act of the subject and the expression of a relation. This idea, I suppose, give a hint how to treat the problem of existence of 'I' and being of God.

Kierkegaard's rejection of the argument for the existence of God illustrates how discourse about the being of God has a performative character. This is true of his reference of almighty power of God. And Kierkegaard explains human existence with the words "spheres" or "stages". In this account existence is a relation, attitude, or performance. Kierkegaard aims to make us realize through the inexpressibility of existence that it is not only by understanding, but also by performance that we read out existence as a text.

If the existence is this 'I' who live as a single individual, then this 'I' is self-referential activity which is as itself a performance. The subject of the sentence of the first person, namely, I, does not necessarily use or appear as a separate word. In Japanese, usually, the subject of sentences do not appear; only the act (predicate or verb) is described. We can understand the subject through the context of the discourse. In old Greek or Latin the subject of verbs also does not always appear. This means that when my activity is realized as real, it is not necessary to refer to the I who realizes the activity. One Japanese philosopher says therefore that the word 'I' is performative sentence.

Seduction and the monosemy of interpretation

Because the ambiguous movement of seduction is unavoidable, the one who is conscious of the essence of seduction often comes to emphasize the difference. In the movement of seduction we always feel some purpose, and we want to interpret this purpose in some way. So we a seducer is demanded to offer a certain guide, or imply a 'right' interpretation against the diversity. In the case of religious truth, the communication of it give rise to the movement of seduction, but because it is the truth, it cannot allow arbitrary interpretations. Therefore it cannot but show the way to the truth in some way. Nevertheless it is up to the seduced to follow the way or not. This mutual dialectical movements is determinative for the style of Kierkegaard's works and his terminology.

The Greek word "peirasmos" and the Latin word "tentatio" each have two main meanings.

'tentatio:

trial, affliction, temptation; has two senses; (1) tentatio seductionis, seductive temptation or trial of temptation, behind which lies the purpose of Satan or another evil agent to draw an individual into sin., and (2) tentatio probationis, probative □\$B!J;n\$_\$k!"\$?\$a\$9!";n83E*\$J!"N">Z\$N!">ZL@\$9\$k!K□(B temptation, or affliction of probation, also called dokimasia, which comes from God and has for its intention the testing and strengthening of an individual believer's faith and obedience. Tentatio probationis is distinguished also from the castigaciones paternae (q.v.)□\$B!L□(Bpaternal castigations□\$B@^]#!"D(2|□(B limited, temporal punishment, inflicted on believers by God as Father, which have the effect of drawing them away from sin and saving them from the fate of eternal punishment. These punishments are also referred to as paideia.□\$B!M□(B and paideia, which teach believers the true path in life through cross and suffering.' (Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms. Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology, Richard A. Muller, Baker Book House, 1985)

Kierkegaard develops this duality of peirasmos with the difference of "Anfaegtelse" and "Fristelse". "Anfaegtelse" is a determination within the sphere of religious suffering within the sphere of the God-relationship. "Fristelse" consists in the sphere of ethical relationships, and when the maximum for the individual is his ethical relation to reality,"Fristelse" is his highest danger. In the case of Fristelse those who friste are lower, and in the case of Anfaegtelse higher. But there is no other stronger ethico-religious dilemma than when the voice of duty, the ethical, becomes "Anfaegtelse". Kierkegaard was fascinated by this kind of contradiction.

To repeat, Kierkegaard pointed out that we have no interpretive key to grasp directly this kind of dilemma, and yet he presented the key in his own indirect way. The style of his writing is based on his grasp of language and his understanding of religion. And the key word to understand his strategy is seduction.

The posture of the subject in the situation of seduction is basically 'by other' or 'to other'. When the direction is not adequate to otherness and unstable, we cannot but stand on guard. On the other hand, when the direction is adequate to otherness, the state that being is as itself being appears.

The term to express the adequacy to otherness is the concept of transparency. In this case the image of mirror is used. That is, the self becomes transparent to reflect the activity of God on the self. But the transparent reflection of God's activity corresponds to the infinite concern on the part of the subject. The absolute passivity and the absolute activity correspond each other. Here no interpretation or translation intervenes.

'Only he whose being has been so shaken that he has become spirit by understanding that everything is possible, only he has anything to do with God. That God's will is the possible makes me able to pray.'(SV XV, 97: SUD)

This situation of faith corresponds to the absolute other power of Shin Buddhism in Japan. Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, had a clear consciousness of his situation that he had no truth in himself and he continued to deny his own power and absolutely entrusted himself with Amitabah's power and realized that the power of his praying of Amidah Chant comes from Amitabah's power.