

# Adorno's Reception of Kierkegaard: 1929-1933

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Theodor W. Adorno provided one of the most fascinating and at the same time most problematic readings of Kierkegaard in the twentieth century. Adorno's study, titled *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*<sup>i[i]</sup> (*Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*), provoked two of the most important issues of Kierkegaard scholarship: the relationship between the aesthetic and religious life possibilities put forth in the heterogeneous writings of Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms, and the question of the extent to which a critical theory of society is made manifest in these writings. But there are many reasons why Adorno's *Kierkegaard* cannot be construed as a convincing interpretation of the writings in Kierkegaard's Collected Works, and needs to be seen rather as a confrontation with something else.

Adorno's *Kierkegaard* must be viewed within the philosophical and historical contexts of the time and place in which it was conceived.<sup>ii[ii]</sup> It was written and rewritten between the years 1929 and 1933.<sup>iii[iii]</sup> First published in 1933 in Germany, the book appeared in bookstores on February 27, "the day that Hitler declared a national emergency and suspended the freedom of the press, making his transition from chancellor to dictator."<sup>iv[iv]</sup> In the "Note" appended to the second and third editions of *Kierkegaard*, Adorno himself makes reference to the fate of his first publication of the book. He writes:

The final version appeared in 1933 in the publishing house of J.C.B. Mohr in Siebeck, on the very same day that Hitler became Dictator. Walter Benjamin's review appeared in the *Vossische Zeitung* one day after the anti-Semitic boycott, on April 2, 1933. The effect [*Wirkung*] of the book was from the beginning on overshadowed by political evil. While the author had been denaturalized, the book was, however, not forbidden by the authorities and had sold very well. Perhaps it was protected by the censors' inability to understand it. The critique of existential ontology which the book works out was meant at the time of its publication to reach the oppositional intellectuals in Germany (GS2, 261).<sup>v[v]</sup>

The weight of the historical events which the book was forced to carry was nonetheless an external burden. But there is another burden which, although also strongly related to the external political and historical events of the time, is internal to the text itself. It is this internal burden that I want to consider, for it brings to light the real aim behind Adorno's book.

Adorno's vigorous emphasis on the necessity of incommensurable individual experience and the role of preserving its sensuous concreteness – his call to save the 'particular' and to strive for the 'nonidentical,' as he writes in his later work, *Negative Dialectics*<sup>vi[vi]</sup> – can be seen clearly in the *Kierkegaard* text. But it is evident that, after having examined the arguments Adorno presents against Kierkegaard, his claims have less to do with Kierkegaard than with a desire to read something else into and against Kierkegaard. Adorno's claims are related more to his fervor against the onslaught of the totalitarian manifestations of his day, and the loss of individuality with its distinct experiential contents that was the consequence of these manifestations. That this was one of the aims behind the project is indicated in Adorno's remark, quoted above, that "the critique of existential ontology... was meant to reach the oppositional intellectuals in Germany" (*ibid.*).

A large part of Adorno's claims in *Kierkegaard* can be understood as his indictment of the German intellectual movement of the early part of the twentieth century which had appropriated much of Kierkegaard's religious and philosophical thinking. This appropriation took on two forms: dialectical theory and existential philosophy. In his

*Gutachten* [letter of evaluation] of Adorno's work, Paul Tillich, the supervisor of Adorno's study of Kierkegaard, writes:

Kierkegaard stands in the center of the theological just as much as of the philosophical discussion of the present. Evidence of this is, among other things, the quickly accumulating literature on him. From the theological side he has moved into the forefront through the so-called dialectical theology; from the philosophical side through the so-called existential philosophy (GW 11, 337).<sup>vii[vii]</sup>

Because of the strong link between dialectical theology and existential philosophy, and because all interpretations of Kierkegaard until this time were from biographical, theological, or psychoanalytic/ psychological perspectives, Adorno's attempt at a *purely* philosophical interpretation was a most important undertaking.<sup>viii[viii]</sup> However, once one considers the tools with which Adorno carried out his study, namely the problematic translations of Kierkegaard into German at that time, as well as Adorno's problematic method of dealing with these translations, it becomes clear how far away Adorno is from the more credible translations and interpretations of the Collected Works of Kierkegaard we have today.

Not all Kierkegaard's works had been translated into German at the time Adorno was writing his study. The first Collected Works in German was published between 1909 and 1922,<sup>ix[ix]</sup> and includes fifteen books assembled into twelve volumes. (For a comparison, the next Collected Works in German, published in 1950-1969 and in 1979-1986), consists of thirty-six works printed in twenty-six volumes.<sup>x[x]</sup>) It is well documented that the quality of the translation for the first German Works is highly problematic. Martin Kieffhaber describes the situation as follows:

Kierkegaard is indisputably a "Virtuoso of the Danish language." He has justifiably said of himself: "I am proud of my mother language, whose secrets I know-this mother language, which I amorously handle as a flute player does his instrument." This makes translation admittedly difficult. His fine irony frequently thrives on usually untranslatable wordplay and associative ulterior motives. Another factor to consider is the particular problematic of translation between two languages which are closely related to one another. With all criticism of the translation it is this factor which is to be charged. Grave deficiencies of the Schrempf and Gottsched edition lay, above all, in Kierkegaard's difficult philosophical texts and short works. It is therefore no surprise that, as already mentioned, this edition received little attention in the early reception and research. The translators were obviously overwhelmed by the deft syntax of Kierkegaardian dialectic, such that they made fairly considerable abridgements and inserted chance formulations (Kieffhaber, 26.)<sup>xi[xi]</sup>

The appearance of the Collected Works in German was a breakthrough for Kierkegaard scholarship, since until that time Kierkegaard remained a relatively unknown figure internationally. Paul Tillich has commented that Kierkegaard was until the 1880's in Germany still fully unknown.<sup>xii[xii]</sup> Theodor Haecker wrote in 1925 that to his knowledge Kierkegaard was at that time still fully unknown to English, American, and French audiences, with the exception of one line published about Kierkegaard in a large Pascal study.<sup>xiii[xiii]</sup> Hannah Arendt likewise wrote in a newspaper article published in 1932 that: "Even as short a time as twenty-five years ago – fifty years after his death – Kierkegaard was hardly known in Germany."<sup>xiv[xiv]</sup> Although there had been a few works published in German before the appearance of the first Collected Works, these other works were known mainly to the theological circles in Germany and limited therein.<sup>xv[xv]</sup>

The figure of Emanuel Hirsch played a significant role in the circumscription of Kierkegaard scholarship within the field of theology in Germany. He has been named as one of the leading Kierkegaard experts of his generation,<sup>xvi[xvi]</sup> and had published the

second Collected Works of Kierkegaard in German that for a large part of the mid-twentieth century was the reliable Kierkegaard source.<sup>xvii[xvii]</sup> But he had also been claimed as the leading theologian in relation to the ideology of the 'German Christians' in the early part of that century.<sup>xviii[xviii]</sup> Hirsch wrote his influential three volume study of Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard-Studien*, from 1930 to 1933, precisely during the time in which he was energetically engaged with National Socialism.<sup>xix[xix]</sup> Heiko Schulz has recounted the implications of Hirsch's Kierkegaard interpretation in these *Studien*:

Hirsch's interpretation consistently ignored not only the late writings of Kierkegaard but also forged a most fatal bond to National Socialism, in which the risk character [*Wagnis-Charakter*] of the relation to God in the leap to political decision was recoined for the fascist ideology, completely ignoring the despicable human implications.<sup>xx[xx]</sup>

Schultz also refers to the "most dubious (and, by the way, after 1945 unteachable) 'Germanification' [*Verdeutschung*] of Kierkegaard" that Hirsch carried out not only in his *Kierkegaard-Studien*, but also in his later translations of Kierkegaard for the second published Collected Works in German.<sup>xxi[xxi]</sup> This is supported by Alastair Hannay and Gordon Marino, where they write, "Emanuel Hirsch, whose influential German translations reflect personal political leanings, tried to weave Kierkegaard into the tangled web of an existence theology adapted to National Socialism."<sup>xxii[xxii]</sup> The strong connection between the National Socialistic Hirsch and the early scholarship of Kierkegaard in Germany, referenced by Adorno in his letter essay, "Kierkegaard noch einmal" ["Kierkegaard One More Time"],<sup>xxiii[xxiii]</sup> gave very strong impetus to Adorno's rejection of Kierkegaard.<sup>xxiv[xxiv]</sup>

From the philosophical side of Kierkegaard appropriation during this time, the most problematic case to Adorno was Martin Heidegger. This appropriation likewise bore connections to National Socialism.<sup>xxv[xxv]</sup> In *The Origins of Negative Dialectics*, Susan Buck-Morss makes mention of "the Kierkegaard revival of the twenties [which] moved from theological circles (cf. Karl Barth) to philosophy, when Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger 'emancipated' his [Kierkegaard's] existentialism from its religious context."<sup>xxvi[xxvi]</sup> In "Kierkegaard noch einmal," Adorno indicts the transformation of Kierkegaard's philosophy by both Jaspers and Heidegger into an 'anthropological ontology'.<sup>xxvii[xxvii]</sup> Heidegger is the most representative example of the way in which dimensions of Kierkegaardian philosophy had been used for ends that were antithetical to Adorno's position, both intellectually and politically.<sup>xxviii[xxviii]</sup> In the lecture given for his entrance into an official academic post, which was delivered while he was writing his *Habilitationsschrift* on Kierkegaard (the manuscript for the lecture is dated 1931; while the Kierkegaard study, as mentioned, was written and rewritten during the years of 1929-1933),<sup>xxix[xxix]</sup> Adorno outlines and criticizes the relationship of Heidegger to Kierkegaard.<sup>xxx[xxx]</sup> The state of academic philosophy is lamented in this lecture, and Adorno attributes its downfall both to Heidegger alone and to Heidegger's use of Kierkegaardian philosophy. In many ways, Heidegger was the philosophical character representative of this Kierkegaard movement Adorno most despised and held most responsible both for the philosophical errors and political evil of the times.<sup>xxxi[xxxi]</sup> One need only read Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity* to note the extent to which Adorno's detestation of Heidegger blocked Adorno's capacity for coherent argumentation against him.<sup>xxxii[xxxii]</sup>

Of course, 'coherent' is not a trait one would assign to Adorno's writing even at its best moments. But the lack of coherence in Adorno's writing can be divided into two categories: There is a clearheaded and strenuously organized *anti*-coherence, which refuses to be able to be sifted into repeatable and systematic arguments. This demands a great deal of interpretation on the part of the reader because it includes so many different kinds and levels of arguments, interwoven and embedded intermittently within one another, such that none of the pieces can be understood outside the context of the

line or paragraph in which they appear. This characterizes the most brilliant and thought-provoking of Adorno's thinking. The other category of a lack of coherence in Adorno's writing is embodied by a less clearhanded *non*-coherence, saturated by Adorno's agitation and extreme dissatisfaction with the object of his critique. In this noncoherence the main thrusts of his arguments are often repeated without the sensitivity that his anticoncoherence maintains. And without a proper relation to the object at hand. By this I mean that he often, in his fits of noncoherence, disobeys his own principle of the inextricability of context – so crucial to an understanding of his own work – and takes features of the object or characteristics of the philosophical work at hand outside the environment and rules of definition through which they were created. This has clearly been the case with his book on Kierkegaard, and it is most evident in his elimination of the roles of pseudonymity and irony in Kierkegaard's writings. Adorno construes this as the most effective way to fight against what he conceives as the 'magical incantation' [*Zauberspruch*]<sup>xxxiii</sup><sup>xxxiii</sup> inherent in Kierkegaard's writings which, to Adorno's mind, not only led to fascistic appropriations of Kierkegaard but also indicates a fascistic core in Kierkegaard's thinking itself.

Despite the fact that Adorno's *Kierkegaard* falls into the lesser of the two categories of Adorno's writing, and that it offers one of the weakest *inhaltlich* [content-based] arguments against the multifarious writings of Kierkegaard, the book has proved to stimulate arguments and research about Kierkegaard to this day. It is frequently cited as one of those studies with which any scholar of Kierkegaard still needs to reckon, and this is even more the case if one takes seriously the early political connections of some of the first receptions of Kierkegaard outside his native land without which there might not be any Kierkegaard research today.

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<sup>i</sup>[i] Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, volume 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997); hereafter GS, followed by the volume number. In English: *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); hereafter K.

<sup>ii</sup>[ii] I do not here want to 'restore' Adorno's *Kierkegaard* to the exact context in which it was written and received, but rather outline the methodological and historical situation of Kierkegaard research, interpretation, and reception at the time of Adorno's writing of the book. This is meant as a background forum for understanding Adorno's vehement rejection of the religious philosopher. For an excellent review of the philosophical and historical situation against which Adorno was writing his *Kierkegaard*, see Christian Henning, *Der Faden der Ariadne, Eine theologische Studie zu Adorno* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993).

<sup>iii</sup>[iii] Adorno's *Kierkegaard* served as his *Habilitationsschrift*, the second dissertation required for promotion to university professor in Germany. This was Adorno's second *Habilitationsschrift*, the first on Kant and Freud having been rejected by Hans Cornelius in 1927. See Adorno, "Der Begriff des Unbewußten in der transzendentalen Seelenlehre," in GS 1, pp. 79-322. The Kierkegaard study was approved by Paul Tillich, and Adorno became promoted to University Professor thereby. See Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 268 n. 22.

<sup>iv</sup>[iv] See Robert Hullot-Kentor, editor's introduction to Adorno, *Kierkegaard*, p. xi.

<sup>v</sup>[v] This is my translation of the German.

<sup>vi</sup>[vi] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum Press, 1995).

<sup>vii</sup>[vii] The citations presented from this text are my translation of the German. Paul Tillich, "Gutachten Über die Arbeit von Dr. Wiesengrund: Die Konstruktion des Ästhetischen bei Kierkegaard," in *Gesammelten Werke*, vol. 11 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 337; hereafter GW, followed by the volume number.

<sup>viii</sup>[viii] *Ibid.*, pp. 337-338.

<sup>ix</sup>[ix] The books which comprise the first Collected Works in German, which was used by Adorno for his study, include: *Either/Or I and II, Fear and Trembling, Repetition, Stage's on Life's Way, The Concept of Angst, Philosophical Fragments, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, The Sickness Unto Death, Practice in Christianity, The Point of View of My Work as an Author, Two Upbuilding Discourses* (1843), *on My Effectiveness as an Author, For Self-Examination, and The Moment. Kierkegaard, Gesammelte Werke*, 12 volumes, trans. Hermann Gottsched and Christoph Schrempf, ed. Eugen Diedrichs (Jena, 1909-1922).

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<sup>x[x]</sup> Kierkegaard, *Gesammelte Werke*, 36 vol. Trans. and ed. Emanuel Hirsch et al. (Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs Verlag 1950-69 and Gütersloh, 1979-86).

<sup>xi[xi]</sup> This is my translation. Martin Kiefhaber, *Christentum als Korrektiv* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1997), p. 26.

<sup>xii[xii]</sup> Tillich, *GW* 4, p. 147.

<sup>xiii[xiii]</sup> See Theodor Haecker, "Søren Kierkegaard," in *Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), p. 19. Haecker had likewise written in his study of 1913: "Das Deutsche Reich had etwa 65 Millionen Einwohner, selbst der entschiedene Pessimist kann nicht glauben, daß unter so vielen Menschen nicht einige jener, Einzelnen' sein sollten, die sich Kierkegaard zu seinen Lesern gewünscht hat. Aufmerksam werden müssen aber auch aus purem Pflicht- und Anstandgefühl all jene Philosophen und Kritiker der Zeit, die sich mit Fragen des geistigen Lebens, der Ethik, der Religion, des Christentums beschäftigen, denn daß 60 Jahre nach dem Tode Kierkegaards, Bücher und Broschüren über diese Dinge erschienen, obne daß eine einzige die Bekanntschaft mit dem Werke Kierkegaards verrät..." Haecker, *Søren Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* (Munich: Verlag J.F. Schreiber, 1913), pp. 5-6.

<sup>xiv[xiv]</sup> First published in German in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, No. 75-76, January 29, 1932. Republished as "Søren Kierkegaard," in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 44.

<sup>xv[xv]</sup> These first few individual publications included *The Moment*, published in 1861; *For Self-Examination* in 1862; *Practice in Christianity* in 1878; and *The Sickness Unto Death* in 1881, *Works of Love* in 1890, as well as Kierkegaard's late writings, which were published under the title *Kierkegaard's Attach on Christianity* in 1896. Heiko Schulz has written that familiarity with Kierkegaard's works in Germany did remain limited to the theological circles until the appearance of the Collected Works. See Schulz, "Die theologische Rezeption Kierkegaards."

<sup>xvi[xvi]</sup> See R.P. Eriksen, *Theologen unter Hitler*, p. 40, cited in Kiefhaber, p. 16.

<sup>xvii[xvii]</sup> Hirsch had both translated and edited this Collected Works. See footnote 25. Hirsch had also been one of the two translators of another edition of Kierkegaard works, published in two volumes in 1971 in Düsseldorf and Cologne.

<sup>xviii[xviii]</sup> Kiefhaber, *ibid.*

<sup>xix[xix]</sup> *Ibid.* See Emanuel Hirsch, *Kierkegaard-Studien* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann, 1933).

<sup>xx[xx]</sup> This is my translation of Heiko Schulz, "Die theologische Rezeption Kierkegaards in Deutschland und Dänemark," in *Kierkegaard Studies, Yearbook 1999*, eds. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and Hermann Deuser (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), p. 229.

<sup>xxi[xxi]</sup> *Ibid.*, see note 22 on p. 289.

<sup>xxii[xxii]</sup> Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, eds. Hannay and Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>xxiii[xxiii]</sup> Adorno, "Kierkegaard noch einmal," in *GS* 2, p. 244: „Besiegelt wurde das, als ihn in Deutschland vor 1933 der Nationalsozialist Emanuel Hirsch in Generalpacht nahm: Sieg als Niederlage.“

<sup>xxiv[xxiv]</sup> This is not to say that Hirsch was the only important theologian to research and appropriate the thinking of Kierkegaard in Germany. But he was, unfortunately, the first of such significance. A very good counter example, however, is the figure of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who used Kierkegaard's philosophy precisely in his opposition to National Socialism. Roger Poole writes, "Every thinker who falls under Kierkegaard's sway does so for his own reasons. Kierkegaard's effect on theologians has usually been because of the existential nature of his own theological thinking... One important theologian, whose life was brutally cut short by the Nazis in 1945, was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose *Letters and Papers from Prison* introduced to the world the idea of 'religionless Christianity'. Early influenced as an academic theologian by Kierkegaard, Bonhoeffer later had reason to come to understand the existential or lived nature of Christianity when he was imprisoned in 1943 for his resistance to Hitler and for his involvement in a plot on his life. His taking on of the secular authorities of his time, his deliberate entry into the political events of his own Germany, unheard of for a Lutheran pastor, was deeply indebted to that Kierkegaard who had found it his duty in his own time to enter into conflict with the whole established Danish Church." Poole, "The unknown Kierkegaard: Twentieth-century receptions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, pp. 53-4. See, cited therein, Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971). The issue of whether Kierkegaard's philosophy of its own accord lends itself to fascistic appropriations, especially to that of the Protestant theologians in the early part of the twentieth century in Germany, is outlined well by Martin Kiefhaber in *Christentum als Korrektiv*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>xxv[xxv]</sup> I do not here want to enter into the discussion of whether Heidegger's philosophy was itself bound up with the political movement of National Socialism. This debate is a library unto itself and is outside the scope of this short article. What is important here is the fact that Adorno had interpreted Heidegger as having contributed not only to the downfall of philosophy, but to that which prepared the way for fascism or was itself fascistic.

<sup>xxvi[xxvi]</sup> Buck-Morss, p. 269 n. 25.

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<sup>xxvii</sup>[<sup>xxvii</sup>] Adorno, “Kierkegaard noch einmal,” GS 2, p. 242.

<sup>xxviii</sup>[<sup>xxviii</sup>] Fred Dallmayr has written: “Adorno’s opposition to Heidegger, in any event, does not seem to have been grounded (primarily) on this issue [Anti-Semitism] – given that many of his criticism were formulated prior to Heidegger’s overt political involvement. Needless to say, Adorno’s antagonism was greatly deepened and intensified by Heidegger’s pro-Nazi affiliation; there can also be no doubt that the episode (understandably) overshadowed all subsequent relations and that Adorno at least partially blamed Heidegger for the disasters occasioned by the regime.” Fred Dallmayr, *Life-world, Modernity and Critique: Paths between Heidegger and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 54. See also Hermann Mörchen, *Adorno und Heidegger: Untersuchung einer philosophischen Kommunikationsverweigerung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981); quoted in Dallmayr, *ibid.*

<sup>xxix</sup>[<sup>xxix</sup>] See “Editorische Nachbemerkung” in GS 1, p. 383; and “Notiz“ in GS 2, p. 261.

<sup>xxx</sup>[<sup>xxx</sup>] See “Die Aktualität der Philosophie,” GS 1, pp. 325-344. In English: „The Actuality of Philosophy,“ in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O’Connor (Malden MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 23.

<sup>xxxi</sup>[<sup>xxxi</sup>] See Mörchen, *Adorno und Heidegger*, insert before title page: „Die Schuld derjenigen Repräsentanten des Geistes, die das Hochkommen Hitlers mit ermöglicht haben, weil sie die Notwendigkeit des Widerstands nicht oder zu spät erkannten, ist noch keineswegs aufgearbeitet. Adorno verstand seinen Kampf gegen Heidegger als ein Stück dieser Arbeit...“ This is similar to George Lukács’s rejection of Kierkegaard for the same reason, namely that what he conceived as Kierkegaard’s ‘irrationalism’ contributed to fascism. See Lukács, *Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Darmstadt und Neuwied, 1962); in English: *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. Peter Palmer (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1981).

<sup>xxxii</sup>[<sup>xxxii</sup>] Adorno, *Jargon der Eigenlichkeit*, GS 6, pp. 413-526; in English: *Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>xxxiii</sup>[<sup>xxxiii</sup>] Adorno’s concern in reducing the texts of Kierkegaard and of his pseudonyms into what they can render literally is described by Adorno himself as a fight against the “dangerous power” of “fascination” one falls under when reading these texts. In *Kierkegaard* he writes: “Fascination is the most dangerous power in his work. Whoever succumbs to it by taking up one of the imposing and inflexible categories he inexhaustibly displays; whoever bows to its grandeur without comparing it with concretion, without ever investigating if it is adequate to concretion, has fallen under its dominion and become the servant of a mythical realm” (K, 11/GS 2, 19). This realm is, according to Adorno, “ruled by magical incantation [*Zauberspruch*]” (*ibid.*) as well as a “logical immanence in which everything must find its place” (K, 11/ GS 2, 20). The apparent freedom of Kierkegaard’s poetic tools is at bottom of Adorno’s critique a magical force of compulsion, which comprises an order of predetermination. One of the strongest devices of Kierkegaard’s magical incantation according to Adorno is the pseudonymity.