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Kierkegaard, mysticism, and jest: The story of little Ludvig

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Abstract. Throughout his authorship, Kierkegaard appears remarkably uninterested in the tradition of Christian mysticism. Indeed, in the only two places in the authorship where he broaches the topic directly, the discussion is disclaimed in such a way as to suggest that Kierkegaard really has nothing to say about it at all. However, attending to the successive incarnations of the character(s) named "Ludvig" throughout the authorship – an appellation that harbors an especially self-referential dimension for Kierkegaard – the present paper attempts to elucidate what may, with due reservation, be referred to as the mystical element in Kierkegaard's thought. The ultimate yield of this endeavor is a vision of "mysticism" that is more act than thought oriented, and a vision of the author "Kierkegaard" that is more delightful than melancholy.

Key words: kierkegaard, mysticism, jest

> As with certain bird cries, we hear a mystic only in the stillness of the night; for this reason a mystic generally does not have as much significance for his noisy contemporaries as for the listening kindred spirit in the stillness of history after the passage of time.
> Søren Kierkegaard (JP, 3:2796)[1]

> But no well-informed writer has gone so far as to affirm that S.K. actually was a mystic, in defiance of his own assertion to the contrary.
> Walter Lowrie[2]

In the entirety of his writings, Søren A. Kierkegaard has precious little to say, explicitly, on the topic of "mysticism." There is a brief discussion of "Oriental mysticism" [*orientalske Mystik*] in *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (CI, 65–66),[3] an extended discussion and critique of the "mystic's life" [*Mystikers Liv*] in Part Two of *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (EO, 2:241–251),[4] and a smattering of passing references to "mystics," "mysticism," and the "mystical" in the posthumously published *Journals and Papers*.[5] Granting (i) the fact that the dissertation

on irony is a work that Kierkegaard never considered as belonging to the authorship proper, (ii) the pseudonymous nature of *Either/Or*, and (iii) the manifestly underdeveloped nature of the references in his journals, it actually appears that Kierkegaard has said even less about mysticism, in his own voice, than one might initially suppose.[6]

As with most things Kierkegaardian, there are at least two ways of contending with this relative reticence. On the one hand, one may choose to highlight the discussion of mysticism in Part Two of *Either/Or* as the lone extended discussion on the subject in the entire authorship and therefore attribute the view of mysticism espoused in this text to Kierkegaard. Such is the approach effectively adopted by commentators such as Walter Lowrie, Howard Hong and Edna Hong, Winfield E. Nagley, and David R. Law.[7] On the other hand, one may pour through the writings of Kierkegaard in search of themes or remarks readily amenable to one or another working conception of "mysticism," bringing Kierkegaard into the mystical fold by virtue of a favorable or unfavorable comparison and contrast with one or another recognized version of mysticism. Such is the approach effectively adopted by commentators such as Georges Cattaui, C. T. K. Chari, Erling Skorpen, Safet Bektovic, Frits Florin, and Nour Loutfy and George Berguno.[8]

There is however, a third, albeit highly problematic, alternative. Inspired by the work of Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, it is this third alternative that I wish to explore in this paper. In her contribution to *Kierkegaard's View of Christianity*,[9] Thulstrup proposes to delineate Kierkegaard's quest for the essence of Christianity. And although, according to Thulstrup, Kierkegaard's encounter with the writings of the Christian mystics serves essentially as a transition from the writings of the pietists (with which he began) to the writings of the church fathers (in which he eventually found what he was seeking),[10] Kierkegaard dallied long enough with mysticism to afford three important recognitions. First, it is beyond dispute that Kierkegaard was familiar with a fairly wide range of literature in the tradition of Christian mysticism.[11] Second, the fact that Kierkegaard never "fastened" upon mysticism – excepting the discussion in *Either/Or*, conducted under the guise of "Judge William" – is very likely due in large part to the emphasis that certain philosophers had placed upon the mystics as "the forerunners of German idealism."[12] Third, and as a consequence of this dual recognition – that Kierkegaard was familiar with mysticism, yet never wrote about it – Thulstrup proposes a rather remarkable hypothesis: "It is as if the mystical were something holy for him."[13]

Now, to be sure, the mere reluctance to discuss "mysticism" does not a "mystic" make. However, what is often called the "ineffability" of

"mystical experience" does pose something of a recognizably Kierkegaardian problem: How would one go about writing about that about which one cannot write? The answer, as any student of Kierkegaard's writings will quickly attest, is "indirectly." So where exactly might one look for the indirect engagement with "mysticism" in Kierkegaard's authorship? My aim in this paper is to provide an answer to this question. By way of anticipation, the short answer is: the story of little Ludvig.

Throughout his authorship, and among the many characters and psychological constructions generated by the author of authors – not to mention the characters constructed by the psychological constructions, and the characterizations of the psychological constructions afforded by the characters, etc. – Kierkegaard has recourse to the name "Ludvig" on a handful of occasions. There is mention of a "little Ludvig" in Part One of *Either/Or* (EO, 1:35), a "Ludvig Blackfeldt" in Part Two of *Either/Or* (EO, 2:245–246), another "little Ludvig" in *Judge for Yourself!* (JFY, 185–186), a "Ludvig From" in the seventh issue of *The Moment* (TM, 233–236), and a "Ludvigsen" in the eighth issue of *The Moment* (TM, 301–303).[14] By themselves, such appellative coincidences would not command any attention, were it not for the incisive recognition, first posed to the English speaking world by Walter Lowrie – and borne out by both the testimony of Kierkegaard's contemporaries and selected entries in the journals and papers – "that for some reason or another [Kierkegaard] associated the name Ludwig with himself."[15] And while the question remains as to whether or not there is any other or actual continuity between one "Ludvig" and the next, it is worth pointing out that at least one of them, "Ludvig Blackfeldt," is explicitly identified as a "mystic."

Thus, rather than either (a) letting the pseudonymous critic of mysticism have the final say on the matter, or (b) presuming to begin with "mysticism" and "Kierkegaard" already and un-problematically in hand, the present investigation will attempt to take its bearings from the character(s) in the Kierkegaardian corpus explicitly associated with mysticism. In order to facilitate this approach, however, I will begin with a comprehensive account of Kierkegaard's explicit remarks upon "mysticism."

1. Kierkegaard's assessment of "Oriental mysticism" in *The Concept of Irony*

The subject of mysticism first arises in Kierkegaard's dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony*. In his survey of selected Platonic dialogues and the secondary literature associated therewith, a pronounced collision emerges

between the view proposed by Kierkegaard – the position of Socrates viewed as irony – and the view proposed by Friedrich Ast – the position of Socrates, in the *Phaedo* at least, viewed as a kind of Oriental mysticism (CI, 63–64).[16] Kierkegaard is thus led in the defense of his view to distinguish between what he calls the spirit of Oriental mysticism and the spirit of Grecian (i.e., Socratic) irony. Excerpting from the extended series of juxtapositions, Kierkegaard's account of the spirit of Oriental mysticism reads as follows:

> Insofar as I can grasp Oriental mysticism, whatever dying away is to be found there consists in a relaxation of the soul's muscular strength, of the tension that constitutes consciousness, in a disintegration and melancholic relapsing lethargy, in a softening whereby one becomes heavier ... whereby one is ... chaotically scrambled and then moves with vague motions in a thick fog. Therefore the Oriental may indeed wish to be liberated from the body and feel it as something burdensome, but this is really ... in order to become more bound, as if he wished for the vegetative still life of the plant ... It is wishing for the foggy, drowsy wallowing that an opiate can procure ... wishing for an illusory repose in a consummation connected with a *dolce far niente* ... [The sky of Oriental mysticism is] flat and burdensome ... [and] anxiously sink[s] down; its air is ... hazy and close. Therefore the longings to be found here tend ... to evaporate in a deadening lethargy ... [and] to be soaked to softness in vague qualifications ... Thus the Oriental wants to go back behind consciousness. (CI, 65–66)

With regard to this passage and apropos Kierkegaard's disclaimer – "Insofar as I can grasp Oriental mysticism" – Abrahim Khan argues that, if this passage is any indication, Kierkegaard did not grasp Oriental mysticism very far at all.[17] And while it is obviously impossible to say with any certainty, it is likely that Kierkegaard's grasp of Oriental mysticism is derived second-hand from his acquaintance with writers such as Friedrich Ast and Arthur Schopenhauer. Nevertheless, there is an unmistakable continuity that resonates throughout his description of what he wants to call "Oriental mysticism." It is lethargic, soft, heavy, chaotic, vague, thick, vegetative, foggy, drowsy, illusory, hazy, deadening, etc. In other words, it is a tendency toward nothingness.

Irony, according to Kierkegaard, also tends in the direction of "nothing." But the nothing of irony is not the same as the nothing of (Oriental) mysticism, as Kierkegaard endeavors to make clear much later in the dissertation:

> For irony, everything becomes nothing, but nothing can be taken in several ways. The speculative nothing is the vanishing at every moment of the concretion, since it is itself the craving of the

> concrete, its *nisus formativus*; the mystic nothing is a nothing with regard to the representation, a nothing that is just as full of content as the silence of the night is full of sounds for someone who has ears to hear. Finally, the ironic nothing is the dead silence in which irony walks again and haunts (the latter word taken altogether ambiguously). (CI, 258)[18]

Now, whenever one is engaged in an inquiry into the mystical, the mystifying, and the mysterious, there is an understandable temptation to read ever-deeper layers of significance into a text – especially when the author in question makes a point of saying that the mystical is (only) said in silence. In the present case, however, this is a temptation best avoided. Kierkegaard's own understanding of Oriental mysticism appears misguided at best. Moreover, the entire discussion of Oriental mysticism in the dissertation really only serves to highlight by contrast Kierkegaard's view of the Greek spirit of Socratic irony. Accordingly, if there is anything to be made of this treatment of "mysticism," it lies in Kierkegaard's express concern to distinguish the existential positions that he calls "the speculative," "the mystical," and "the ironic" – a concern that may very well have been born primarily of a desire to poke fun at Hans L. Martensen.[19] More than this, it will require a pseudonym (and then some) to say.

2. Judge William's critique of "the Mystic's Life" in *Either/Or*

The next and last explicit discussion of "mysticism" in Kierkegaard's authorship occurs in Part Two of *Either/Or*. The text of *Either/Or* is a veritable labyrinth of authorial personae. The "editor" is one "Victor Eremita" (the victorious hermit), who claims to have discovered the papers that comprise the text hidden in an antique writing desk with the aid of a hatchet wielded in a moment of exceeding frustration (EO, 1:5–6). Based upon considerations of style as well as content, the editor divides the papers into two groups, attributing one to an author he calls "A," and the other to an author he calls "B" whom the reader eventually comes to know as "Judge William" (EO, 1:6–7). The two sets of papers are then published as a two volume set. But as the editor himself may be heard to lament in his "Preface" to the collection, the confusion is only beginning at this point. For, within both sets of papers, there is enclosed a culminating piece attributed to yet another author. In the papers of A one finds "The Seducer's Diary" (EO, 1:301–445) attributed by A to "Johannes," also called "Johannes the Seducer." In the papers of B one finds the "Ultimatum" (EO, 2:335–354) attributed by B to an unnamed "pastor in

Jylland.'' To his credit, the editor suggests that the entire text ''might take on a new aspect if [the papers] were regarded as belonging to one person'' (EO, 1:13). But insofar as ''one author becomes enclosed in another like the boxes in a Chinese puzzle'' (EO, 1:9), determining the identity of this ''person'' presents a predictable series of increasingly compounding difficulties. Suffice it to say – inasmuch as the identity of the ''self'' is principal among the metaphysical queries attendant to any philosophy of mysticism – no one entertains a thought experiment quite like Kierkegaard.

The discussion of mysticism occurs in the second letter written by B, ''The Balance between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality'' (EO, 2:155–333). The central theme of the letter is the meaning of ''choice'' – or rather, as the judge puts it, ''the significance of choosing'' (EO, 2:213).[20] Leading into his discussion of mysticism, the judge frames the matter thusly: ''But what is it, then, that I choose – is it this or that? No, for I choose absolutely, and I choose absolutely precisely by having chosen not to choose this or that. I choose the absolute, and what is the absolute? It is myself in my eternal validity'' (EO, 2:214). But what does it mean to choose oneself absolutely? According to Judge William, Socrates provides the first exemplification of what shall count as an answer: Socrates withdrew from political life, while nevertheless remaining within its multiplicity, in order to act inwardly, thus shifting the emphasis from the sphere of the civic virtues to that of the personal virtues (EO, 2:240). But the error of such a life, according to Judge William, lies in the fact that the ironist chooses himself abstractly, rather than repenting his concrete actuality (EO, 2:240–241). In the language afforded by Plato's *Meno*, it is as if the seeker manages, in remembering the 'truth', to forget him or herself out of the existential equation altogether.[21]

As a more profound example of choosing oneself absolutely, Judge William turns to the mystic, ''for even though a mystic is rarely heard to express himself this way ... if he has not chosen himself absolutely he is not in any free relationship to God, and it is precisely in freedom that the distinctive characteristic of Christian piety lies'' (EO, 2:241). According to Judge William, the movement of a mystic's life consists of the perpetual alternation of ''flat'' and ''luminous'' moments, and hence lacks continuity (EO, 2:242). But in the luminous moments, the mystic has fallen in love with God, and by contemplating God actually comes to revive the lost image of God in reflection – with the resulting shift of emphasis from the personal virtues to the contemplative/religious virtues (EO, 2:242–243). The mystic's life is essentially a life of erotic prayer, substantiated and validated by the moment when the mystic can creep into God by vanishing from him or herself (EO, 2:243).

Subsequent to his portrayal of the mystical life, Judge William launches into his critique. The motivation for the ensuing critique is highly personal, and fully in line with the epistolary nature of B's writings. Judge William wants to "emphasize the falsity in such a life," as it is a life to which his younger counterpart, A, may be particularly prone (EO, 2:243).[22] In an accordingly personal vein, B's critique is deployed on two levels: first, a statement of B's "private judgment" regarding "what it is that really jars [him] in such a life," and second, an attempt "to show the correctness" of this judgment.

With regard to his private judgment, B identifies three problems with the mystic's life: (i) an "obtrusiveness" vis-à-vis the divine, according to which the mystic rejects the actuality into which God has placed him or her; (ii) a "softness and weakness," manifest in the mystic's perpetual need to be experientially convinced of the reality of God's love; and (iii) a "deception of the world" and the other "persons" in it, by virtue of the mystic's choosing the solitude of an inner shrine as over and against the contextual and inter-subjective realm in which persons are actually and ethically constituted as such (EO, 2:243–245).[23] Apropos his identification of this third problem, Judge William writes, quite candidly:

> It is especially as a married man and as a father that I am an enemy of mysticism. My domestic life also has its αδυτον,[24] but if I were a mystic, I would have to have still another one for myself alone, and then I would be a poor husband. Since in my view, which I shall develop later, it is a duty for every person to marry, and since it cannot possibly be my view that a person should marry in order to become a poor husband, you readily perceive that I must have an animosity toward all mysticism. (EO, 2:244–245)

This is really the focal point of B's critique of the mystical life. The existential "isolation" occasioned by, and inherent in, a one-sided (obtrusive, soft, deceptive) devotion to the mystical love of God is incompatible with the judge's "ethical" view, according to which the actual significance of human life is both found and founded primarily in the establishment of (loving) relationships with other human persons. As an example of the extreme to which the isolation of the mystic inevitably tends, B goes on to recall to A the life and death of one "Ludvig Blackfeldt," who "lost himself one-sidedly in a mysticism not so much Christian as Indian," and "ended with suicide" (EO, 2:245). It is on the heels of this touching reminiscence that Judge William sets out to establish the correctness of his personal view of mysticism.

As with the discussion of mysticism in *The Concept of Irony*, however, Judge William's critique of the mystical life in general is introduced with a

significant disclaimer: ''Since I do not have a theological education, I do not regard myself as competent to deal with religious mysticism in greater detail'' (EO, 2:247). Nevertheless, the judge continues, ''this road [mysticism] is not only a dangerous road but a wrong road'' (EO, 2:247). What B is suggesting – by referring to the ''religious'' as a specific differentia – is that ''the mystical'' is a generic rubric. Generically, ''mysticism'' is conceived by the judge as the quest of a spiritual immediacy. But this quest may be further specified as either religious or diabolic. On this point, Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms are in agreement.[25] It is thus mysticism in general to which Judge William is opposed, however ''beautiful'' or ''profound'' or ''earnest'' it may be in the qualified mode of the religious.

Conceived as the quest of a spiritual immediacy, mysticism indeed appears to fall prey to a certain generic and yet compelling line of critique. In the words of Judge William: ''If on the whole the mystic does not esteem actuality, it is not clear why he does not regard with the same mistrust that moment in actuality when he was stirred by something higher'' (EO, 2:247). In other words, if the existential realm of temporality, multiplicity, and corporeality is to be esteemed as somewhat 'less real' than the mystical realm of eternity, unity, and spirituality, it is not at all clear why one experience (the mystical experience) should hold sway over and thus relativize all the rest. To couch the dilemma in a recognizably Kantian fashion: the mystical is either experienced in the phenomenal register – i.e., momentously, distinctly, and sensually – or it is not. If the former, then mystical experience ought to be dispatched to the realm of relative illusion (empirical reality) along with all other phenomenal experience. If the latter, then mystical 'experience' ought to be relegated to the realm of the transcendental deduction – the realm of the abstract, metaphysical, and absolutely other-worldly (i.e., the noumenal realm).

Now, to be sure, there is a recognizable trend emerging in contemporary phenomenology that would contest the veracity or at least the alleged simplicity of the dichotomy alleged in the above.[26] But insofar as Judge William appears committed to both Kantian ethics and Kantian epistemology, his critique of the mystical life follows as a matter of course. The fatal flaw in the mystic life is that the mystic chooses him or herself out of this world – by means of a marvelous metaphysical abstraction – and has no way to choose him or herself back into it. Grounded in a feeling for the real, the mystic makes an enemy of the concrete, existential, and temporal-historical reality out of which this very animosity arises. In other words, the mystic is unable or, what is worse, unwilling to *repent*.[27] For, in order to repent, there must be something concrete, existential, and historical of which to repent. It is this

recognition that really jars Judge William: in the fog of mystical metaphysics, in which and according to which all particularity is dissolved, ethics cannot acquire the least bit of traction.

As an alternative life-view – indeed, as *the* alternative life-view[28] – Judge William proposes that "a human being's dignity lies precisely in this, that he can gain a history," that "what is enviable about human life is that one can assist God" (EO, 2:250). And it is here that the rubber verily hits the road. For, in the first place, the position occupied by the authorial persona of Judge William is, among all the various pseudonymous postures pretended by the author of authors, the one of which Søren Kierkegaard cannot possibly avail himself. It is as a husband and father that Judge William is principally an enemy of mysticism – and Kierkegaard neither is nor was either of these. In the second place, the whole point of the imaginary psychological construction is, as Judge William himself would say, to "take up some life relationships in a little more detail" (EO, 2:277). That is to say, the whole point of the literary pretense is to permit one to sound out certain existential dissonances inaccessible to epochal thinking.

Judge William is thus not so much a caricature of an idealist ethic, as he is the personification of a particular but nonetheless universalizable life-view. And in keeping with his view that subjectivity is constituted, or even constitutes itself, vis-à-vis the realm of inter-subjective relationships, this view itself is only brought to the hither side of articulation by contrasting itself with, and thus relating to, one or another alternative view. Among these views is the view of life called "mystical" by Judge William, and allegedly exemplified in the character of Ludvig Blackfeldt. Thus, mindful of the inescapable differentiae obtaining between the authorial persona called "Judge William" and that of "Søren Kierkegaard," so far as the latter is accessible, the character of "Ludvig Blackfeldt" emerges as the prime candidate to look to in the quest of what may, with due reservation, be called Kierkegaard's view (or personification) of "mysticism."

3. Ludvig, Ludvig, Ludvig

Throughout Kierkegaard's authorship, the name "Ludvig" appears in a handful of conspicuous places. In Part One of *Either/Or* the reader encounters a "little Ludvig." In Part Two of *Either/Or*, a "Ludvig Blackfeldt." In *Judge for Yourself!*, a "little Ludvig" (again) and this same "Ludvig" when he is somewhat older. And in *The Moment* (volume 7, issue 4) a "Ludvig From" and (volume 8, issue 5) a "Ludvigsen." Upon

closer inspection, these appearances marshal themselves – with little pressure and even less remainder – into three pairs, comprised of a younger and an elder "Ludvig" in each case: "little Ludvig" and "Ludvig Blackfeldt" (*Either/Or*), "little Ludvig" and "Ludvig" (*Judge for Yourself!*), and "Ludvigsen" and "Ludvig From" (*The Moment*). As a result, the question as to a possible continuity amongst all of these appearances is effectively raised. What I would like to suggest is that there is in fact a discernible continuity amongst these characters, and that it consists in the delineation of three radically different but nevertheless mutually illuminating existential archetypes that I shall provisionally call (i) the diabolic mystic, (ii) the religious mystic, and (iii) the hypocrite.

4. "Little Ludvig" in *Either/Or*, Part I

The character of Ludvig first appears in one of the Διαφάλματα that lay at the beginning of *Either/Or*, Part One (EO, 1:17–43). According to the editor, these "Diapsalmata" are comprised of "a number of scraps of paper" that "lay loose in the [hidden] compartment" of the writing desk – scraps that the editor collectively titles and places at the beginning of the volume containing the papers of A (EO, 1:7–8).[29] The *diapsalma* in question – the Ludvig scrap – reads as follows:

> How much the same human nature is! With what innate genius a little child can often show us a vivid picture of the larger scale. I was really amused today by little Ludvig. He sat in his tiny chair and looked around with visible delight. Then the nursemaid, Maren, walked through the room. "Maren!" he shouted. "Yes, little Ludvig," she answered with her customary friendliness and came over to him. He tilted his big head to one side a bit, fastened his enormous eyes on her with a certain roguishness and then said quite phlegmatically, "Not this Maren; it was another Maren." What do we adults do? We shout to the whole world, and when it approaches us in friendly manner we say, "It was not this Maren." (EO, 1:35)

If in fact, as Lowrie suggests, the name "Ludvig" functions as a more or less veiled form of self-reference for Kierkegaard, the referent of the name "Maren" is not terribly difficult to ascertain, although there are two prime candidates: Kierkegaard's eldest sister, Maren Kirstine Kierkegaard, who died in 1822 (at the age of 24) when Kierkegaard was 8 years old; and Kierkegaard's maternal grandmother, Maren Lund, who died in 1821 (at the age of 89 or 90) when Kierkegaard was 7 or 8 years old.[30]

And while the significance of the Ludvig scrap certainly extends beyond the sphere of poetized reminiscence, questions as to the autobiographical significance of the scrap are not, as will become evident, therefore irrelevant.[31]

With regard to the substance of the Ludvig scrap, "little Ludvig" allegedly provides something of a microcosmic analogue to a certain aspect of human nature. So what exactly does little Ludvig represent? He shouts to Maren, and when she approaches he refuses her. Pursuant to the suggested analogy, little Ludvig represents the existential gambit of refusing the world with which one is presented. Already as "a little child," Ludvig is saying, "not this world."[32] Such a refusal – conceived as both a withdrawal from and a deception of "this" world – will constitute the central feature of "the mystic's life" according to the analysis forthcoming from A's counterpart in Part Two of *Either/Or*. And if the corresponding chronology of Ludvig's appearances is any indication, it is a relatively small step from ostensibly refusing the world (relative withdrawal) to actually removing oneself from it (absolute withdrawal). Which is to say, at the very least, that there is in fact a discernible continuity between the first two appearances of "Ludvig" in Kierkegaard's authorship.

5. "Ludvig Blackfeldt" in *Either/Or*, Part II

As already mentioned above, apropos Judge William's extended discussion of the mystic life, the character of "Ludvig" next appears as "Ludvig Blackfeldt" in the second letter of *Either/Or*, Part Two. Invoked primarily as a token exemplification of the danger inherent in a "one-sided" devotion to the mystical love of God, to be discussed and dissected accordingly in the hands of Judge William, Ludvig Blackfeldt is also, and more importantly, the author of record of a letter (his suicide note, written to his brother), enclosed within the judge's letter as an accompaniment and appearing in the text as a footnote:

> Most Honorable Mr. Councilor,
> I am writing to you because in one way you are the one closest to me; in another way you are no closer than other people. When you receive these lines, I am no more. If anyone should ask you the reason, you may say that once upon a time there was a princess whose name was Morning Glory or something like that, for this is the way I myself would answer if I could have had the joy of surviving myself. If anyone should ask you the occasion, you may say that it was on the occasion of the great fire. If anyone asks you the time, you may say that it was the month of July, so very special to me.

> Should no one ask you any of these questions, you are to answer nothing.
> I do not regard a suicide as something commendable. It is not out of vanity that I decided on it. On the contrary, I believe in the correctness of the thesis that no human being can endure seeing the infinite. It once appeared to me in the intellectual sense, and the expression for this is ignorance. Ignorance is precisely the negative expression for infinite knowledge. A suicide is the negative expression for infinite freedom. It is a form of infinite freedom, but the negative form. Fortunate is the one who finds the positive.
> With deepest respects,
> Yours faithfully (EO, 2:246*)

The letter, as it appears in the text, is left unsigned.

The attribution of an autobiographical significance to this ''letter'' is not the least bit implausible. With regard to the question of suicide in particular, Walter Lowrie argues at length for just such an attribution on a variety of grounds.[33] What Lowrie does not discuss in this context, however, is the allegation of Judge William that the impetus to suicide was young Ludvig's having ''lost himself one-sidedly in a [kind of] mysticism.'' Such an omission certainly makes sense in light of Lowrie's repeated criticisms of any attempt to think of Kierkegaard as a kind of ''mystic.'' And in this regard, Lowrie may well be in the right. But what Lowrie effectively misses is the unique and telling perspective upon ''mysticism'' afforded, not by Judge William, but by ''Ludvig Blackfeldt'' himself.

Ludvig Blackfeldt is not merely a character mentioned and discussed in passing. He is a discrete authorial persona whose contribution to the authorship (his suicide note) therefore commands as much respect as that afforded to any of the other authorial personae encountered in the authorship. Ludvig Blackfeldt is the author of record of a text, and is recognized as such by at least one other ostensibly discrete authorial persona. Aside from the fact that his contribution is much smaller and tucked away in a footnote rather than being featured as a substantial appendix, it would seem that Ludvig's letter is on a qualitative par with the letter attributed, for instance, to the unnamed country pastor.[34] If this much is admitted, the authorial persona of Ludvig Blackfeldt has secured a hearing.

So what exactly has Ludvig Blackfeldt used his moment in the sun to say? In the first part of his letter, Ludvig offers a series of answers to a limited set of anticipated questions, the significance of which will presumably not be lost on his intended audience (his brother) but which may well be entirely lost on the rest of us.[35] Nevertheless, the prevailing mood

is a kind of palpable ambivalence, with seemingly relevant questions practically reduced to trivial probing vis-à-vis the proposed clandestine responses. And in this regard, young Ludvig clearly manifests what Judge William finds wholly objectionable in the mystic life, namely, a thorough disregard for the significance of inter-personal concern. What Judge William effectively diagnoses in the case of Ludvig Blackfeldt is thus the tragic inevitability of an excessively 'spiritual' form of life. Mystical motivation is the root, isolation the flower, and suicide the ultimate fruit. ''Behold the mystic,'' the judge may as well have said.

In the second part of his letter, however, Ludvig manages to articulate, in his own terms, the rudiments of the spiritually qualified psycho-ontology to which he adheres. And while the leading features of this world-view appear to substantiate the judge's diagnosis, Ludvig suggestively preserves a possibility that the judge is either unable or unwilling to admit. Taking his cue from Socrates, whose parabolic encounter with divine wisdom yielded the rightly infamous proposal of the relative worthlessness of human wisdom[36] – ignorance as the negative expression for infinite knowledge – Ludvig extends the lesson drawn from the sphere of intellectual endeavor to that of endeavor in general – suicide as the negative expression for infinite freedom. Conducted through the spiral of inclosing reserve into the throe of existential despair where the encounter with one's own absolute worthlessness tends to become all-consuming, Ludvig discovers a disturbing application of the ''annihilation of self'' motif. This is all that the judge needs to hear in order to render his verdict. But the real question remains: What is to be made of the final note sounded by Ludvig prior to his departure from the world?

''Fortunate is the one who finds the positive'' – i.e., the positive ''form of infinite freedom.'' Given the little that we know of Ludvig, and mindful of his alleged ''unusual gift for hiding the state of his soul and for giving one passion the appearance of another'' (EO, 2:245), this parting shot is bound to be a source of frustration for any would be interpreter. Moreover, ought one even bother searching for encouragement in such a remark, when the proponent thereof has been both caricatured (in the third person) and characterized (in the first person) as the very epitome of hopelessness? Judge William's answer to this question will of course be an emphatic ''no.''[37] But does the ultimate adjudication of this matter lie within this particular judge's jurisdiction? Given the fact that ''Judge William'' is no less a pseudonym than ''Ludvig Blackfeldt,'' it would appear that the answer to this further question must be an equally emphatic ''no.''

''Fortunate is the one who finds the positive [form of infinite freedom].'' In order to make anything of this cryptic proviso, it is advisable to

recount all that we do know of its equally cryptic provisioner. In this regard, the continuity between "Ludvig Blackfeldt" (in Part Two of *Either/Or*) and "little Ludvig" (in Part One of *Either/Or*) is too striking and instructive to ignore. Already as a "little child," Ludvig is refusing the world with which he is presented – "Not this Maren" – a refusal, according to the author of the "Diapsalmata," that is symptomatically analogous to some facet of human nature. Such a refusal, according to Judge William, is the very hallmark of "the mystic's error" – the error that "lies in the very first movement," and according to which "every distancing from life, every ascetic self-torture, is only a further and proper consequence" (EO, 2:247–248). Accordingly, the character of Ludvig next appears as an older but still "young" man who has managed to lose himself one-sidedly in a kind of "mysticism." The continuity itself is one that Judge William would presumably admit: the roguish little Ludvig becomes the mystic Ludvig Blackfeldt, and the mystic Ludvig Blackfeldt kills himself. However – and Judge William is made to admit this as well – Ludvig Blackfeldt is really only representative of a specific kind of mysticism. What Ludvig Blackfeldt has discovered and embraced is the "negative" form of infinite freedom, the mysticism that is not properly called "religious," the quest of an immediate rapport with the eternal that is characterized by the perpetuity of inclosing reserve and existential despair. By his own admission, by the characterization afforded by Judge William, and according to the appearance of this very rubric throughout Kierkegaard's entire authorship, what Ludvig Blackfeldt has actually discovered is "the demonic." Thus, insofar as it makes sense to view Ludvig Blackfeldt as the vivid representation of a diabolic mysticism, it makes sense to ask what the "positive" alternative might comprise. And while the writings of Kierkegaard contain no direct treatment of this issue, the character of "Ludvig" reappears after a tremendous ellipsis in the authorship and, I will argue, he brings the answer to this question with him.

6. "Little Ludvig" in *Judge for Yourself!*

The character of "Ludvig," exaggerated accounts of his suicide notwithstanding, next appears in the posthumously published *Judge for Yourself!*, a text intended, but never published by Kierkegaard himself, as the sequel to *For Self-Examination* (published in 1851). Ludvig makes his appearance in the second discourse of *Judge for Yourself!*, "Christ as the Prototype," alternatively titled, "No One Can Serve Two Masters" (JFY, 145–209). Readers familiar with Kierkegaard's later writings will immediately

recognize in the alternative title the passage of scripture that serves as the point of departure for the discourse: Matthew 6:24–34, Kierkegaard's ''favorite Gospel'' (JP, 6:6673). As specified in the opening ''prayer,'' the project of the discourse is an elucidation of the dual significance of the one called Jesus Christ as both ''the prototype'' and ''the Redeemer'' (JFY, 147). The discourse opens with a consideration of the teaching of Jesus that ''no one can serve two masters.'' Guided by his commitment to learning the truth from the teacher in whom the professed truth is existentially reduplicated, Kierkegaard directs his attention to ''Christ'' as the living exemplification of the otherwise merely professed truth of the saying that ''no one can serve two masters.'' The discourse is then developed through five relatively specific topical considerations related to the significance of conceiving of Christ as ''the prototype.'' First, Kierkegaard considers ''how [Christ's] life must have been designed ... if it was to express serving only one master'' (JFY, 160–169). Second, Kierkegaard considers ''how it had to fare with [Christ] in this world'' as a result of his serving only one master (JFY, 169–179). Third, and as an alleged reprieve from the ''deadly ... anxiety'' associated with the reception of the call to the imitation of Christ, Kierkegaard considers the teacher's jesting ''diversion'' of attention from himself to ''the lilies of the field'' and ''the birds of the air'' (JFY, 179–186). Fourth, and as a direct consequence of this seemingly whimsical diversion of attention to the lily and the bird, Kierkegaard considers the question as to whether or not the introduction of a ''jest'' on the part of the teacher also renders ''this whole matter of following Christ, of imitation ... a jest'' (JFY, 187–191). Fifth and finally, Kierkegaard considers the historical progression of ''Christianity,'' beginning with the teaching incarnate in the teacher, progressing through alternative means of perversion in the monastic emphasis on works (Christ as prototype) and the Lutheran emphasis on grace (Christ as Redeemer), and culminating in a highly personal confession of his own failure to live up to the teaching and call incarnate in Christ (JFY, 191–209). And while there is admittedly an unprecedented abundance of material with which to struggle in this discourse, the seminal insight, appropriately enough, is vividly represented, on the smaller scale, in the reappearance of ''little Ludvig.''

Having already considered the significance of the diversion on the lily and the bird at some length, and having run into the question regarding the significance of human works – if it is indeed God ''who sows and reaps and gathers into barns'' (JFY, 184) – Kierkegaard introduces his readers, once again, to little Ludvig:

> Think of a child and his parents in relation to him. Every day little Ludvig is taken for a ride in his stroller, a delight that usually lasts an hour, and little Ludvig understands very well that it is a delight. Yet the mother has hit upon something new that will definitely delight little Ludvig even more: would he like to try to push the stroller himself? And he can! What! He can? Yes, look, Auntie, little Ludvig can push the stroller himself! Now, let us be down to earth but not upset the child, since we know very well that little Ludvig cannot do it, that it is his mother who is actually pushing the stroller, and that it is really only to delight him that she plays the game that little Ludvig can do it himself. And he, he huffs and puffs. And he is sweating, isn't he? On my word, he is! The sweat stands on his brow, in the sweat of his brow he is pushing the stroller – but his face is shining with happiness; one could say he is drunk with happiness, and, if possible, he becomes even more so every time Auntie says: Just look at that! Little Ludvig can do it himself. It was a matchless delight. The sweating? No, being able to do it oneself. (JFY, 185)

After suggesting that what little Ludvig represents is the "godly understanding" of what it means "to work," Kierkegaard endeavors to make this point even clearer by recourse to the character of Ludvig when he is no longer quite so little:

> Think of little Ludvig! He has now become an adult and therefore very well understands the true situation – that it was his mother who pushed the stroller. Thus he has another joy from this childhood recollection: remembering his mother's love that could think of something like that to delight her child. But now he is an adult; now he actually can do it himself. Now he is perhaps even tempted to think that he himself actually is able – until that recollection of childhood reminds him how much he is, in a far higher sense, still in the same situation as the child, that when the adult works it really is someone else – it is God who is working. (JFY, 186)

And this raises the very question that lies at the heart of the entire discourse: How will Ludvig relate to himself, and to 'his' work, in this recognition?

In the more recognizably theological terms of the discourse, the question regards the relationship between works (Christ as prototype) and grace (Christ as Redeemer). As the discourse eventually makes clear, Kierkegaard's conception of this relationship – the relationship, by his reckoning, that lies at the core of Christianity – is as follows. The primary and principal call to the would-be follower of Christ is just that: a call to the imitation [*Efterfølgelse*] of Christ. And when the would-be follower is crushed under this unspeakably high requirement – which Kierkegaard

appears to believe is inevitable – the true follower has only one recourse: the confession of one's unconditional failure in this regard. It is then (and only then) that Christ appears to one in the role of Redeemer, offering the gracious gift of forgiveness for this failing. But the administration of divine grace does not repeal the original call to imitation – rather, the gift of grace, if it is gratefully received, reorients and enlivens the recipient in the direction of a renewed quest of the following-after-Christ [*Christi Efterfølgelse*]. That is to say, grace is not an alternative to striving – it is the divine power that enables one to strive. Thus, on Kierkegaard's understanding, the dual significance of Christ as "prototype" and "Redeemer" is not conceived as posing the alternative, either works or grace, but as elucidating a spiritual dialectic in the life of the striving Christian: imitation-confession-imitation, or works-grace-works.

All of this is vividly represented in the character of Ludvig. Apropos his recognition that it is really God who is working, Kierkegaard puts the question thusly: "Do you think that he [Ludvig] will therefore become inactive and lazy and say: Well, if it is really God who is working, would it not be best that I be exempted?" (JFY, 186).[38] Supposing Ludvig to be animated by a godly understanding of what it means to work, Kierkegaard proposes the very opposite: "he becomes all the more industrious, so that he will increasingly understand – what a gracious jest! – that God is the coworker – what earnestness!" (JFY, 186).[39] The category of "jest" [*spøg*] thus emerges – along with its dialectical counterpart, "earnestness" – as an essential component in Kierkegaard's elucidation of the essence of Christianity.[40] In fact, as spelled out even more clearly in a pair of journal entries from 1850 and 1852, the category of "jest" actually serves as the substantial qualification of the second "works" in the dialectic of works and grace.[41]

In their respective contributions to *International Kierkegaard Commentary: For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!*, Lee Barrett, Murray Rae, and David Cain each make a point of highlighting the structure and significance of this dialectic. And while they diverge somewhat on the question as to whether, as Barrett puts it, the "resolution" of this dialectic is "a matter of more nuanced passions" or of "more subtle theological formulae,"[42] all three commentators manifest a comparable conception of the second "works" in the dialectic as involving "an all-encompassing sense of gratitude,"[43] "sheer delight,"[44] and a higher order of "freedom."[45] In other words, what the Ludvig of *Judge for Yourself!* represents is precisely the radical alternative and specific counterpoint to the existential posture of his namesake in *Either/Or*, Ludvig Blackfeldt (characterized by disregard, despair, and the negative form of infinite freedom). "Fortunate is the one who finds the positive,"

laments the latter – to which the former may verily be heard to respond: blessed is the one who has learned how to "jest," for that one "has grasped the meaning of life" (JFY, 183).

This is a Kierkegaard not often met in the secondary literature – a "playful" Kierkegaard, to borrow Cain's characterization,[46] who proposes that all human endeavor, even the most decisive,[47] is best conceived as a kind of joke in which one becomes increasingly engaged in order to "*increasingly* understand" and "*really* come to see that it is God who sows and reaps and gathers into barns" (JFY, 186; emphasis added). In fact, it almost sounds as if the whole point of the joke – i.e., the pious jesting of the individual who is as nothing before God – is to 'get' the joke – i.e., the divine jest of the "God [who] has said to himself: It will definitely delight them much more than continually being pushed in a stroller" (JFY, 185). And if the point of getting the joke is then to further enliven the striving, the works, the imitation – i.e., the jest – there is an unmistakable perpetuity at work in the dialectic. Some might even venture to characterize it as a bit "mystical."[48]

In this vein, a suggestion as to the autobiographical significance of Ludvig's appearance in *Judge for Yourself!* is perhaps in order. Once again, Walter Lowrie beats everyone to the punch. In his translation of *Judge for Yourself!*, Lowrie notes the following, apropos Ludvig's appearance in the text: "If in this passage, as in several others, Ludvig is S.K., then we have here a reference to his mother – an affectionate reference and (psychologists may observe with interest) the only reference he made to her in any of his works, the Journals included."[49] Of course, such a conjecture must remain just that. Nevertheless, the reference bears repeating: "Thus he has another joy from this childhood recollection: remembering his mother's love that could think of something like that to delight her child" (JFY, 186). Whether or not such a reference can be responsibly read as a consciously or unconsciously clandestine recollection of the delight afforded him by his otherwise unmentioned mother, the very fact that Kierkegaard chooses precisely this analogue to illustrate the delight experienced by the one who gets the divine jest is sufficient to suggest that we, the readers, are here treading on some especially significant ground. Before delving any further in this regard, however, there are two more characters named Ludvig with which to contend.

7. "Ludvig From" in *The Moment* 7:4

On May 24, 1855, Kierkegaard published the inaugural issue of a serial pamphlet titled, *The Moment*. On August 30, 1855, the seventh issue in

the series appeared. The fourth article in the issue is titled, "'First the Kingdom of God.' A Kind of Short Story" (TM, 233–236). The story begins:

> The theological graduate Ludvig From – he is seeking. When one hears that a theological graduate is seeking, one does not need a lively imagination to understand what it is that he is seeking – naturally, the kingdom of God, which, of course, one is to seek *first*. But no, it is not that; what he is seeking is a royal livelihood as a pastor, and very much, which I shall indicate by a few episodes, happened *first* before he attained that. (TM, 233)

As Kierkegaard proceeds to unfold the story – which in a certain undeniable sense is quite funny – Ludvig From seeks an abundance of things: attendance at school, passing examinations, attendance at seminary, officially stamped papers, a wife, an official position, better pay for occupying this position, etc. Eventually, Ludvig From, one time "theological candidate," becomes an ordained pastor. And on his first day as pastor, the Gospel for the day and the point of departure for his first official sermon is Matthew 6:24–34, on seeking first the kingdom of God. Thus, according to Kierkegaard's reckoning of the lesson, "at long last the things of this earth are obtained *first*, and then finally last of all a sermon about – first seeking God's kingdom" (TM, 235). This is what Kierkegaard finds satirically repulsive in and about the established order of official Christendom: it lacks in virtually every case "the desirable agreement between the discourse and the life" (TM, 235). In other words, Christendom suffers from a pervasive failure of reduplication – a failure vividly represented in the character named, "Ludvig From," or "Pious Louie."

Once again, Walter Lowrie illuminates the self-referential dimension of this critical appellation. Apropos this story featuring the theological candidate "Ludvig From," Lowrie writes:

> Is it not shocking that S. K. could so soon forget that this was precisely his own case, or at least that he had dallied with such a possibility? The entry last quoted[50] assures us that he had by no means forgotten, and the name of Ludvig wherever it occurs is an indication that he is thinking of himself. This is the disarming trait in S. K.'s criticism, that he was often satirizing himself, or at least the possibilities that he had entertained.[51]

To further allay any doubts in this regard, Lowrie later points out that already in the first discourse of *Judge for Yourself!* – a text that lay complete but unpublished during the composition and publication of *The Moment* –

the reader will encounter what is "substantially ... the story of Ludvig From."[52] The only difference in this 'earlier' version is how the story and its main character are introduced: "Imagine a Bachelor of Theology. Suppose it is I, since I, too, after all, am a Bachelor of Theology. He has already been a theological graduate for some years and has now entered that stage in life where it is said of him: He is seeking ..." (JFY, 110).[53]

Thus, in full accord with Kierkegaard's conception of the nature of "reduplication" and "redoubling" – "in *working* also to *work against oneself* ... like the pressure on the plow that determines the depth of the furrow" (PV, 9*) – the stinging critique of the established order contains a necessarily self-referential dimension. And while the vivid personification of this phenomenon in the character of "Ludvig From" is matchless in its poignant double-devastation – "as if all mockery were not two-edged!" (TDIO, 22) – it is by no means an isolated occurrence. Less than four months later, the reader of *The Moment* is treated to another instance of just such a redoubled critique.

8. "Ludvigsen" in *The Moment* 8:5

On September 11, 1855, the eighth issue of *The Moment* appeared. The fifth article in the issue is titled, "A Picture of Life and A Picture from Life" (TM, 301–303). The "picture of life" reads as follows:

> Take the pupils in a class – which one is the most admired by his comrades? Is it the laziest? No, that is definitely out of the question. Is it the hardest worker? Not that one either. Is it the one with the greatest mental capacity? Not that one either. But if there is one who has the sagacity to know how to cajole the teachers [*gaae Lærerne under Øine*] and do it so subtly that he always gets by with it, always gets good grades, is always at the top of the class, is always praised and singled out – he is the admired one, and why? Because his comrades realize very well that he has a double advantage. He has the advantage, which the lazy pupil also has, that he does not actually work; he has lots of time to play and entertain himself – the lazy pupil, to be sure, also has this advantage, but he of course is punished for it. Then in addition he has the advantage that the diligent pupil has. He is the admired one, and his comrades say admiringly of him: That Ludvigsen, that Ludvigsen, he's a dickens of a fellow [*et Pokkers Menneske*]. "But Fredricksen is still more diligent." What's the good of that? L. always gets just as good grades; so Fredricksen has only one thing more – the bother. "Yes, but Olsen is still a lot smarter." Aw, forget it! That doesn't help him much anyway; he just has a lot of trouble from it. No, Ludvigsen, Ludvigsen, he's a dickens of a fellow. (TM, 301)

On the heels of this ''picture of life,'' Kierkegaard proposes an analogue on the larger scale, which he calls, ''a picture from life.'' Here, the question is not the identity of the most admired ''pupil,'' but of the most admired ''teacher of Christianity.'' But the relationship is the same. The most admired teacher of Christianity, the one who wins the ''adoring admiration'' of the masses, is the one who knows how to ''cajole God'' [*gaae Gud under Øinene*] in such a way that he or she wins the double advantage of seeming to live a pious and saintly life while nevertheless enjoying every possible benefit to be derived from a thoroughly secular existence (TM, 301–302). As with Ludvig From, the basic problem is hypocrisy. In commenting upon this problem, Kierkegaard is nothing if not direct: ''There is nothing to which *God* is so much opposed as hypocrisy ... There is nothing *the world* admires as much as the more subtle and the most subtle forms of hypocrisy'' (TM, 302).

Although it apparently escapes the watchful eye of the biographer Lowrie, this vivid representation of hypocritical cajoling bears the mark of an unmistakable family resemblance: that most admired pupil is, after all, a ''Ludvigsen.'' And while the chronology of treatment is reversed in this case, the relationship between ''Ludvigsen'' and ''Ludvig From'' in *The Moment* is entirely reminiscent of the developmental treatments of the character(s) of ''Ludvig'' in both *Either/Or* and *Judge For Yourself!*. The reader is first introduced to ''Ludvig From,'' already well on his way as a theological candidate; the reader is then introduced to ''Ludvigsen,'' that most admired pupil and ''devil of a fellow'' who serves as the child-analogue of what ''Ludvig From'' eventually becomes, namely, that most admired teacher of Christianity who delivers a smashingly good sermon on ''seeking first the kingdom of God'' after having first sought everything else. The ''picture of life'' (Ludvigsen) thus functions as a prequel to the ''kind of short story'' (Ludvig From), with Kierkegaard ably occupying the role of both ''author'' and ''illustrator.'' But is he not also himself the authored and the illustrated? The relative dearth of references to this family of characters notwithstanding, it seems difficult to answer otherwise than in the affirmative. The implications of this recognition must now be spelled out.

9. An ethical-religious initiation

The present line of inquiry was born of the hypothesis that the relationship between Kierkegaard's activity as an author and the tradition of Christian mysticism may in fact be much more profound than has hitherto been suspected. But, one may still ask, why the bother about this

hypothesis in the first place? Why bother trying to cram "Kierkegaard" and "mysticism" into the same box, especially when there is manifestly still a great deal of work to be done with regard to unpacking the already problematic "Kierkegaard" and "mysticism" boxes themselves? Appropriately enough, this second formulation of the question points directly to the answer that I would like to propose. For, in ascertaining what may be termed "Kierkegaard's view of mysticism," or even "the mystical element in Kierkegaard's thought," one will inevitably be confronted with a refreshing perspective upon both of these otherwise vexing constituents – e.g., a vision of Kierkegaard's authorship in and according to which *delight* plays the main character, and a view of mysticism in and according to which the *unio mystica* is attained in *action*.

Whether or not it deserves (in the last analysis) to be called either "Kierkegaardian" or "mystical" – and a great many melancholy Kierkegaardians on the one hand and contemplative mystics on the other, respectively offended sensibilities in hand, will presumably cry out that it does not – such is precisely the perspective opened up by the reincarnation of "little Ludvig" in the text of *Judge for Yourself!*. And with this recognition, the question as to the qualification of this perspective may now in fact be posed and addressed directly. Put as simply as possible – and with all due respect for Lowrie's suggestion that such a "controversy ... may be nothing more than logomachy"[54] – the question reads: Was Kierkegaard a mystic?

One half of this question reads as follows: Is "Ludvig" really Kierkegaard? Short of becoming embroiled in a fruitless metaphysical disputation regarding the (real) meaning of the word "really," it certainly seems that in all of his appearances the character of "Ludvig" presents the reader with a series of rather intimate personal disclosures, all of which Lowrie manages to tie directly to the individual who otherwise remains concealed behind or within the tremendous labyrinth called "Kierkegaard's authorship." Now, to be sure, there is arguably a bit of "Kierkegaard" in all of the adopted authorial postures – else, where did they come from? And yet – whether it is best conceived as direct or indirect, intended or unintended – the self-referential quality of the Ludvig-characters seems slightly out of character for the author of authors who is otherwise so exceedingly careful to keep himself concealed from view.[55] Which is to say: the answer to this half of the question is a qualified "maybe."

The other half of the question thus reads: Is the "Ludvig" encountered in *Judge for Yourself!* a mystic? Clearly, the "Ludvig" encountered in *Either/Or* (once as "little Ludvig" and again as "Ludvig Blackfeldt") is styled as having fallen prey to a kind of "mysticism," namely, the

diabolic.[56] And if this is all the mysticism that may be found in Kierkegaard's authorship, the reader is well advised to leave the matter alone. At the other end of the authorship, the character of "Ludvig" reappears in *The Moment* (once as "Ludvig From" and again as "Ludvigsen"), this time in the guise of the "theological candidate" and "cajoler" – i.e., the character of the hypocrite. And while it is not rendered explicit, the connection with "mysticism" in this regard is not far to seek. For, within the context of Kierkegaard's critique of the established order of Christendom, the character of the hypocrite is specifically the one who substitutes *talking* about becoming a Christian and *listening to others talk* about becoming a Christian – i.e., *thinking* about becoming a Christian – for the actual activity of becoming a Christian – i.e., the venturing of "a decisive act" (JFY, 191). Such is the accusation that Kierkegaard levels against Christendom – and chief among the accused is Hans L. Martensen, whose way to Christendom ran straight through the mysticism of Eckhart before landing in the speculative idealism of Hegel.[57] And yet, strangely enough, the speculative philosopher-theologian who counts the contemplative mystic as his predecessor is never once lampooned, qua "mystic," by Kierkegaard. The stereotype of the "contemplative mystic" – which could arguably provide for even more hilarity than that of the "speculative theologian"[58] – lays ready to hand, and Kierkegaard never touches it. It is as if Kierkegaard refused to think "mysticism" and "Martensen" in the same thought, despite the fact that the two would have been not only readily associable but readily associated in 19th century Denmark. Indeed, the fact that Kierkegaard never speaks of the former and comes to speak almost incessantly about the latter only serves to further highlight the depth and fortitude of this refusal.

So what of the "little Ludvig" that makes his appearance in the emphatically titled (but posthumously published) *Judge for Yourself!* – is he a "mystic" or not? The answer once again is a qualified "maybe." For, on the one hand, the "Ludvig" of *Judge for Yourself!* is so obviously the presentation of a point-for-point response to the "Ludvig" of *Either/Or* that even if the explicit juxtaposition were entirely fortuitous it would still be difficult to imagine that the implicit correspondence could have escaped the notice of the author of authors.[59] And, on the other hand, the "Ludvig" of *Judge for Yourself!* is no less obviously the presentation of an equally radical alternative to the "Ludvig" of *The Moment* – the former placing emphasis upon action as opposed to thinking or speaking about action, and the latter placing emphasis (via caricature) upon thinking and speaking about action as opposed to action.[60] In both instances, the "Ludvig" encountered in *Judge for Yourself!* is manifestly presented as an alternative to the existential postures epitomized in the "Ludvig" of

Either/Or (i.e., the diabolic mystic) and the ''Ludvig'' of *The Moment* (i.e., the cajoling hypocrite liable to confuse himself with the contemplative mystic). So, is the ''Ludvig'' of *Judge for Yourself!* best conceived as the religious-mystical alternative to these recognizable perversions of religious mysticism, or as an alternative to the mystical altogether? Kierkegaard provides no ready answer to this question.

In an endeavor such as this – an inquiry into the nature of ''mysticism,'' and by extension, the ''mysterious'' and the ''mystifying'' – there is quite naturally a host of opportunities for a legion of confusions. And by insisting that maybe, maybe it makes sense to call Kierkegaard a mystic or to identify the mystical element in his thought, I have perhaps done precious little to ward off such confusions.[61] Ironically, however, the same cannot be said of Kierkegaard, who pens the following in 1850:

> There has been much discussion about the passage in Scripture: All is revealed in the mystery; and a certain speculation has affirmed that it was not profane speculation but in the mystery.[62] In relation to Christianity, I would emphasize another side of the concept *mystery*: the ethical-religious ... It is not an intellectual initiation but an ethical initiation ... to pontificate about it would merely add a little nonsense to all the other nonsense. (JP, 3:2793)

Now, if by ''mysticism'' one means the (nominal) adherence to one or another intellectually baffling metaphysical postulate – e.g., there is no self, but All Is God; there is no time, but All Is Eternity; there is no plurality, but All Is One – then Kierkegaard has precious little use or affection for ''mysticism.'' Such 'epiphanies', Kierkegaard would say – if they do not translate into the register of the ethical-religious – are entirely vacuous and can therefore really only serve the aggrandizement of the thinking self's most preposterous pretensions. However, if by ''mysticism'' one means something along the lines of, not merely 'being drawn up the mountain' (the revelation of truth in mystery), but 'coming back down the mountain' (the ethical-religious side of mystery) – because this is what God does, or rather, this is what God is[63] – then not only is there something ''mystical'' in Kierkegaard's thought, but it is arguably the crowning element in his thought. For, while Kierkegaard never claims to have attained it, and he rarely comes so far as even to advocate it, his life's work is nothing short of a stalwart defense, on a myriad of fronts, of just such a possibility – the possibility of an existence to which he refers simply as ''the extraordinary'' (JFY, 211–213).[64] It is perhaps to Kierkegaard's credit as well that he does not venture to *say* anything more in this regard – leaving the further exploration of this matter to the individual who is actually willing to do so. And in this regard, the question as to whether or

not to call such an existence "mystical," or even "Kierkegaardian," is perhaps ultimately a matter of no consequence – a trifling matter best left to assistant professors – so long as one endeavors, ever jesting with the divine – i.e., jesting in earnest – to "get" that which is graciously given.

Notes

1. References to the English editions of *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 7 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967–1978) and *Kierkegaard's Writings*, 26 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978–2000) will follow the *International Kierkegaard Commentary* system of abbreviation and format. Entries in the *Journals and Papers* are referenced thus: (JP, volume: entry number). Passages in *Kierkegaard's Writings* are referenced by volume (and page number) as follows: CA – *The Concept of Anxiety* (KW VIII), trans. Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (1980); CI – *The Concept of Irony* (KW, II), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1989); CUP – *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (KW, XII), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1992); EO, 1 – *Either/Or, Part I* (KW, III), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1987); EO, 2 – *Either/Or, Part II* (KW, IV), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1987); EPW – *Early Polemical Writings* (KW, I), trans. Julia Watkin (1990) FSE – *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourself!* (KW, XXI), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1990); FT – *Fear and Trembling* (KW, VI), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1983); JFY – *For Self-Examination/Judge for Yourself!* (KW, XXI), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1990); PC – *Practice in Christianity* (KW, XX), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1991); PF – *Philosophical Fragments* (KW, VII), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1985); PV – *The Point of View* (KW, XXII), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1998); SLW – *Stages on Life's Way* (KW, XI), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1988); TDIO – *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions* (KW, X), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1993); TA – *Two Ages* (KW, XIV), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1978); TM – *The Moment and Late Writings* (KW, XXIII), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1998); WL – *Works of Love* (KW, XVI), trans. H.V. Hong and E.H. Hong (1995).
2. Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 170–171.
3. Cf. CI, 16–18, 63–64, 78, 245, 258, 318.
4. Cf. EO, 2:49–50, 320, 322–323.
5. JP, 1:739; 2:1906, 1972, 2274; 3:2794, 2795, 2796, 2797, 3275; 4:4754; 5:5135, 5669.
6. The reader may note with interest that Kierkegaard qualifies something or other (without any substantial elaboration upon the significance of the qualification) as "mystical" on five other occasions in his published writings: the "mystical floating" [*mystisk Svæven*] of the personality of Socrates (CI, 16), the "mystical talk" [*mystisk Tale*] regarding marriage partners becoming one (EO, 1:297), the "mystical hovering" [*mystiske Svæven*] of the knight of faith (FT, 50), the "mystical signs" [*mystiske Tegn*] of erotic love (SLW, 39), and the "mystical suspension" [*mystisk Svæven*] of pure thinking (CUP, 1:313). There is also a reference to Joseph Jakob von Görres' *Die christliche Mystik* tucked away in a footnote concerned with distinguishing between "the demonic" and "spiritual trial," although the pseudonymous author concedes that he "never had the courage to read the work completely

and thoroughly, because there is such anxiety in it'' (CA, 143*) – a strange quip, coming from the author of a book titled, *The Concept of Anxiety*.

7. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 170–172, 562; Winfield E. Nagley, ''Kierkegaard on Liberation,'' *Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* 70 (1959), 47–58; Howard Hong and Edna Hong, ''Mystic, Mysticism,'' in *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vol. 3, p. 827; David R. Law, ''Kierkegaard's Anti-Mysticism,'' *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1993), 102–111.
8. Georges Cattaui, ''Bergson, Kierkegaard, and Mysticism,'' *Dublin Review* (1933), 70–78; C.T.K. Chari, ''On the Dialectical Affinities Between East and West,'' *Philosophy East and West* 3 (1953), 199–221; Erling Skorpen, ''The Philosophy of Renunciation East and West,'' *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971), 283–302; Safet Bektovic, ''The Double Movement of Infinity in Kierkegaard and Sufism,'' *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 10:3 (1999), 325–337; Frits Florin, ''Was Kierkegaard Inspired by Medieval Mysticism? Meister Eckhart's *Abgescheidenheit* and Kierkegaard's *Udsondring*,'' *Kierkegaardiana* 22 (2002), 172–190; Nour Loutfy and George Berguno, ''The Existential Thought of the Sufis,'' *Existential Analysis* 16:1 (2005), 144–155.
9. Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, ''Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers,'' in *Kierkegaard's View of Christianity*, eds. Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels, 1978), 60–80.
10. See Thulstrup, ''Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers,'' 61.
11. See Thulstrup, ''Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers,'' 65–70.
12. Thulstrup, ''Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers,'' 66. Hans Lassen Martensen, for example, participant in the faculty judgment of Kierkegaard's dissertation (and Kierkegaard's eventual cultural nemesis), had published (in 1840) his *Meister Eckhart: A Study in Speculative Theology*, in which the mystic Eckhart is appropriated by and to the project of speculative idealism. See *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 148–243. As pointed out by Thulstrup, the name of Eckhart is (conspicuously) never mentioned anywhere in Kierkegaard's writings.
13. Thulstrup, ''Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers,'' 70. See also Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, ''Lidelsens Problematik hos Kierkegaard og Mystikerne,'' *Kierkegaardiana* 3 (1959), 48-72; *Begrebet Mystik* (Skjern: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1974); ''Kierkegaards Møde Med Mystik Gennem den Spekulative Idealisme,'' *Kierkegaardiana* 10 (1977), 7–39.
14. With the exception of two instances where Louis XVI or Louis XIV is the intended referent (SLW, 397; TA, 42), these are the only five places in the published writings where Kierkegaard utilizes the name ''Ludvig.'' Cf. JP, 3:2987, 3336.
15. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 94; cf. 145–146, 452–453, 483. See also Bruce H. Kirmmse, ed., *Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 207.
16. See Friedrich Ast, *Platon's Leben und Schriften* (Leipzig, 1816).
17. Abrahim Khan, ''Melancholy, Irony, and Kierkegaard,'' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 17 (1985), 67–85.
18. Cf. JP, 3:2797, 3275. The editors of *Kierkegaard's Writings* note: ''The Danish *spøge* means both 'to haunt' and 'to jest'''' (CI, 542n39).
19. See note 12, above, to which the following two items may now be appended: (i) when Kierkegaard petitioned the king for permission to compose his dissertation in

Danish (rather than Latin), he cited two precedents in this regard (Martin Hammerich and Adolph Peter Adler), but pointedly neglected to mention the precedent from the previous year, when this same privilege was awarded to Hans L. Martensen; (ii) in a journal entry in which he anticipates the likely reception of his dissertation – the defense of which was later characterized by one audience member as Kierkegaard's having "played toss-in-a-blanket with the faculty" (CI, xi) – Kierkegaard curtly stipulates, "let me be judged modestly, and without any demands, but I will not be judged by boys" (JP, 5:5484; cf. Isaiah 3:4).

20. Cf. EO, 2:157, 167.
21. Such is the alleged impetus that eventually gives rise to Johannes Climacus' *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy* (PF, 1-111); see also JP, 2:2274.
22. Cf. EO, 2:49–50, 320, 322–323.
23. Cf. JP, 1:739; 2:1972; 3:2794, 2795.
24. The word "aduton" (literally, the "not-entered") occurs in only two other places in the authorship: the book review that precedes the advent of the authorship-proper (EPW, 56), and the book review that precedes the advent of the second authorship (TA, 99). In both instances, Kierkegaard uses the word to refer to the allegedly impenetrable shrine of an author, and is arguably referring to himself (and his authorial shrine) in both instances.
25. Kierkegaard evinces this same ambivalence apropos the related notions of "mystery" (JP, 1:292; 2:1721) and "mystification" (JP, 4:5019). Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985) 426–427.
26. See, e.g., Anthony J. Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming).
27. Cf. JP, 5:5669.
28. On the ethical alternative to the mystical life, see Edward F. Mooney, "Kierkegaard and Self-Reception: Judge William's Admonition," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or II*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 5–31; cf. Michael Plekon, "Judge William: Bourgeois Moralist, Knight of Faith, Teacher," in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or II*, 133–134.
29. With regard to the "Diapsalmata," the editor remarks that he has left their ordering to chance, and has only placed them at the beginning of A's papers because they seem to offer "preliminary glimpses into what the longer pieces develop more coherently" (EO, 1:7–8). Consequently, the editor forestalls any attempt to contextualize one or another of the "Diapsalmata" by recourse to the scraps that happen to lie near it. In a sense, this is an entirely appropriate maneuver on the part of the editor, insofar as the writings attributed to A do share the common feature of being altogether and essentially fragmentary. In another sense, however, and as the editor himself is willing to concede in at least one instance (see EO, 1:8), the allegedly haphazard arrangement of the scraps does not preclude the recognition of one or another remarkable, albeit fortuitous resonance among the scraps thusly arranged. Apropos the Ludvig scrap, the appropriately attuned reader will notice how the preceding scrap ends – "I still prefer to remain silent" – and how the succeeding scrap begins – "My life is like an eternal night" (EO, 1:35). Which is to say, in the ears and eyes of the (in)appropriately disposed and accordingly (ir)responsible reader, the Ludvig scrap happens to emerge betwixt a pronominal appropriation of the inaudible and the invisible, respectively.
30. See also JP, 4:4559 ("Maren's Secrets").

31. In an earlier version of this scrap, the question as to the nature and significance of familial ''recollection'' itself assumes center-stage (see EO, 1:523–524).
32. It is perhaps noteworthy in this regard that the name ''Maren'' constitutes a recognizable variant of the Danish word for ''nightmare.'' As to what one such as little Ludvig may be construed as actually desiring instead of this world, see Vincent A. McCarthy, ''Narcissism and Desire in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, Part One,'' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or I*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 51–72.
33. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 145–146.
34. Cf. Robert L. Perkins, ''Either/Or/Or: Giving the Parson his Due,'' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or II*, 207–232.
35. With regard to the suggested ''reason'' for the suicide: the reference to a ''princess'' almost certainly calls Regine Olsen to mind (cf. FT, 41–50); and ''Morning Glory'' (if that is in fact an acceptable translation of the Danish *Morgenskjøn*) is the name of a plant that flowers each day, with the flower blooming in the morning and dying in the afternoon (it is also a known hallucinogen). With regard to the suggested ''occasion'' of the suicide: ''the great fire'' [*den store Ildebrand*] is possibly a reference to the fire on 25 March 1832, immortalized in a painting by Frederik Sødring in the Bymuseum (I have Robert Perkins to thank for sending me in this direction); but see also the metaphorical deployment of this phrase in the ''Diapsalmata'' (EO, 1:25). With regard to the suggested ''time'' of the suicide: Kierkegaard's mother died in July of 1834.
36. Plato, *Apology* 23a-b.
37. The judge would certainly object to the qualification of the experience in question as ''fortunate,'' as this would tend to suggest that the mystic ''regards himself by virtue of some accidental characteristic as the object of God's preference'' (EO, 2:244).
38. This is in fact precisely the tack taken by Ludvig Blackfeldt when he attempts to exempt himself from the task of existing altogether.
39. Cf. CUP, 1:471–472.
40. In their ''Historical Introduction'' to the texts of *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!*, Howard and Edna Hong propose that the concept of ''jest'' epitomizes the ''substantial continuity'' between the texts of *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!* on the one hand, and the whole of the preceding authorship on the other (FSE/JFY, x).
41. ''Grace is earnestness – my works are only a jest – and so get going, the more animatedly the better, but all the same it is a jest to me and must not mean anything else to me'' (JP, 2:2140). ''Although it is the utmost strenuousness, imitation should be like a jest, a childlike act – if it is to mean something in earnest, that is, be of any value before God – the Atonement is the earnestness'' (JP, 2:1909).
42. Lee Barrett, ''Faith, Works, and the Uses of Law: Kierkegaard's Appropriation of Lutheran Doctrine,'' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2002), 108.
43. Barrett, ''Faith, Works, and the Uses of Law,'' 109.
44. Murray Rae, ''Kierkegaard, Barth, and Bonhoeffer: Conceptions of the Relation between Grace and Works,'' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!*, 162.
45. David Cain, ''A Star in the Cross: Getting the Dialectic Right,'' in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself!*, 328–329.

46. See Cain, ''A Star in the Cross: Getting the Dialectic Right,'' 333–334.
47. ''[E]ven when I am speaking about the greatest decision of my life I cannot be unmindful of the jest'' (TM, 76; cf. SLW, 118; CUP, 1:78, 135).
48. Of course, on the heels of this playful depiction of the significance of human striving as ''jest,'' Kierkegaard immediately returns to his senses, as it were, and re-introduces ''suffer[ing] because one adheres to God ... the true imitation of Christ'' as the specific differentia of essential Christianity (JFY, 187). This, however, does nothing to undermine the (allegedly) 'mystical' flavor of the preceding passages; see, e.g., JP, 4:4754, where a passage from Gerhardt Tersteegen's ''*Von dem Unterschied und Fortgang in der Gottseligkeit*'' is quoted and lauded as ''superb'' by Kierkegaard – a passage in which Tersteegen suggests that the writings of the mystics are generally neglected because they ''demand ... mortification and denial.''
49. Søren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination* and *Judge for Yourself!* and *Three Discourses*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 194n1.
50. ''So I have been willing (or at least had thought) to act shrewdly in order to assure myself first of a position and then publish the works pseudonymously. A capital interpretation of 'Seek first God's kingdom'!'' (JP, 6:6426; cf. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 452).
51. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 453.
52. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 483.
53. The subsequent unfolding of the story (JFY, 110–112) and the lesson that Kierkegaard draws from it (JFY, 112–115) parallel in virtually every respect the ''story'' of Ludvig From as delineated in *The Moment*.
54. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 171.
55. This may be said of the works authored under the name ''S. Kierkegaard'' (in which the personal appropriation of the ''discourse'' in the hands of the individual reader is the order of the day) no less than of those authored under one or another pseudonym. If it be objected that certain of the early pseudonymous works were (allegedly) 'clearly written' so as to be 'decoded' by Regine Olsen (and thus revealing rather than concealing the author), I would only add that this objection raises the question as to the overall conspiratorial flavor of the authorship – a flavor that the author concedes to having only truly tasted in retrospect. The following entry for instance, penned in 1849, is remarkably apropos: ''I take my pen, commend myself to God, work hard, etc., in short, do the best I can with the meager human means. The pen moves briskly [*lystigt*] across the paper. I feel that what I am writing is all my own. And then, long afterwards, I profoundly understand what I wrote and see that I received help'' (JP, 6:6523).
56. Julia Watkin characterizes the existential posture of Ludvig Blackfeldt as ''a pseudomysticism'' (rather than a specific kind of mysticism) because it involves a separation of ''the religious'' from ''the ethical.'' See Watkin, ''Mysticism,'' in *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy*, ed. Jon Woronoff (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 174. But see above, note 25.
57. See above, notes 12 and 19.
58. See, e.g., JP, 2:1972.
59. Indeed, the implicit correspondence bespeaks a concern that lies very near the heart of the authorship. The problem with mysticism (as exemplified in Ludvig Blackfeldt) according to Judge William, is the (allegedly) inescapable isolation toward which mysticism tends, leading individuals to forsake other persons in favor of the quest of a solitary and exclusive relationship with the divine. One must wonder, however, if there is something of a false

dichotomy at work here, the resolution of which may well be found in Kierkegaard's "deliberations" on the nature and significance of "neighbor-love" in the aptly titled, *Works of Love*. The very title of this work casts a significant light upon the existential comportment of one, like "little Ludvig," who is animated by a "godly understanding" of what it means *to work*. For an extraordinarily promising elucidation of the "moral vision" requisite to the navigation of this concern, see the contribution of Patrick Stokes, "Kierkegaardian Vision and the Concrete Other," in the present issue.

60. In this regard, Kierkegaard effectively declares that he is virtually neck deep in the vexed conversation regarding the extent to which and the respect in which "contemplation" shall even count as a kind of "activity." The roots of this conversation reach as far back as Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics* X:8; *Metaphysics* XII:7, XII:9), and are not at all unrelated to the rather prevalent conception of "mysticism" (among philosophers at least) as essentially involving or comprising a kind of 'contemplative activity'.
61. Of course, as Anti-Climacus writes in a passage that is readily applicable to the whole of Kierkegaard's authorship: "If anyone wants to have anything to do with this kind of communication, he will have to untie the knot himself" (PC, 133).
62. The translators of Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers* note: "The Danish translation of I Corinthians 2:7 is quite different from the English rendering in the RSV" (JP, vol. 3, p. 827).
63. See, e.g., I John 4:8, 4:16, and above, note 59.
64. Accordingly, the price of admission to this mode of existence is also rather extraordinary: dying to self, willing to suffer, becoming nothing, etc. – i.e., everything that does or may occur to one in connection with the exceedingly high ideal of a thoroughly integrated imitation of Christ. As to his own personal relationship to this ideal, Kierkegaard writes, in September of 1855: "The only analogy I have before me is Socrates; my task is a Socratic task, to audit the definition of what it is to be a Christian – I do not call myself a Christian (keeping the ideal free), but I can make it manifest that the others are that even less" (TM, 341). Thus, in the end, the conceptual juxtaposition of the "Socratic" and the "mystical" (as evinced in both *The Concept of Irony* and *Either/Or*) returns and provides the framework in and according to which Kierkegaard conceives his "task" as the Socratic defense of a certain "extraordinary" ideality.