

Philosophy in Review



Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, Bruce H. Kirmmse, Joel D. S. Rasmussen, Vanessa Rumble, and David D. Possen, (Eds.), "Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks Volume 11: Part 2, Loose Papers, 1843-1855"

Stuart Dalton

Volume 42, Number 1, February 2022

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1087997ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087997ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

University of Victoria

ISSN

1206-5269 (print)

1920-8936 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Dalton, S. (2022). Review of [Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, Bruce H. Kirmmse, Joel D. S. Rasmussen, Vanessa Rumble, and David D. Possen, (Eds.), "Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks Volume 11: Part 2, Loose Papers, 1843-1855"]. *Philosophy in Review*, 42(1), 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087997ar>

Copyright © Stuart Dalton, 2021



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, Bruce H. Kirmmse, Joel D. S. Rasmussen, Vanessa Rumble, and David D. Possen, (Eds.). *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks Volume 11: Part 2, Loose Papers, 1843-1855.* Princeton University Press 2020. 784 pp. \$150.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780691197302).

This is the final part of the final volume of a rather monumental project. *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks* is a complete English translation of the journals, notebooks, and assorted papers that were found in Kierkegaard's apartment after his death in 1855. Volume 1 of this series was published in 2007, and now 13 years later the project is complete. Unlike all previous editions of Kierkegaard's posthumous papers, this edition is completely unabridged and it also does not impose any organizational scheme on the texts, attempting instead to reproduce these texts exactly as Kierkegaard left them. Volumes 1-10 include the entirety of Kierkegaard's 61 bound journals and notebooks, while the 2 parts of volume 11 are dedicated to all the loose papers that were found in Kierkegaard's apartment. Volume 11 part 1 contains the papers from the years 1830–1843 (the year Kierkegaard published *Either/Or*); part 2 contains the papers from the rest of Kierkegaard's life, from 1843 up to his death in 1855.

The papers in Volume 11 part 2 are organized first chronologically into an 1843-1852 group and an 1852-1855 group because Kierkegaard moved in 1852 to his final apartment in Copenhagen. As part of that move he organized and made some notes about some of the loose papers he had accumulated up to that point. Within those two chronological groups an attempt has been made to organize the papers into meaningful groups using the catalog created by H.P. Barfod, who worked on the collection between 1865 and 1875. A 'paper' in this collection can be any length: some of the papers are short aphorisms of barely a paragraph and others are lectures, sermons or articles that are several pages long. Any titles in quotation marks are titles that Kierkegaard himself gave to a document or group of documents (e.g., 'Loose Papers from '48 that Lay in the Bible Case'); any titles that are not in quotation marks are simply an attempt by the editors to generalize concerning the contents of a particular group of papers. In several cases a group of papers is labeled 'miscellaneous' or 'minor items' because there is no overarching theme or idea that unites them.

Here is a complete list of the loose papers included in volume 11 part 2:

1843-1852

Paper 305: The Earthquake

Paper 306: Probationary Sermon

Paper 307 - Paper 308: Concerning 'In Vino Veritas'

Paper 309 - Paper 314: Minor Items from the 1840s

Paper 315 - Paper 317: Projected Writings



Paper 318: Decision to Become and Author

Paper 319 - Paper 326: On Godly Eloquence and on Aristotle's Rhetoric, et al.

Paper 327 - Paper 338: 'Minor Pieces' from before 1848

Paper 339 - Paper 340: '*Berlin*, May 5th-13th, '46'

Paper 341 - Paper 344: 'Encomium to Autumn'

Paper 345 - Paper 349: On *Corsaren*, Town Gossip, Gruntvig, *Dansk Kirketidende*, et al.

Paper 350 - Paper 363: Draft of Occasional Discourses on Death

Paper 364 - Paper 371: 'The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethical-Religious Communication'

Paper 372 - Paper 377: On Rosenkilde, Mynster, Goldschmidt, et al.

Paper 378 - Paper 380: An Apology

Paper 381 - Paper 384: Invitation to Lectures on the Writings and to a Subscription to
Installments of 'Edifying Reading' et al.

Paper 385 - Paper 399: Miscellaneous Jottings, Ideas, and Drafts, 1848-1850

Paper 400 - Paper 420: 'Loose Papers from '48 that Lay in the Bible Case'

Paper 421 - Paper 423: "'Let Not the Heart in Sorrow Sin.'" 7 Discourses'

Paper 424 - Paper 430: "'The Story of Suffering"! Christian Discourses'

Paper 431 - Paper 432: 'In *Adresseavisen*'

Paper 433: 'The Income Tax—The Temporary'

Paper 434: "'The Shepherd"—"The Hired Hand"'

Paper 435 - Paper 439: Drafts of Two Sermons

Paper 440 - Paper 446: Miscellaneous, 1843-1852

1852-1855

Paper 447 - Paper 469: After the Final Change of Address

Paper 469 - Paper 550: Toward the Battle with the Church

Paper 551 - Paper 591: During the Publication of *The Moment*

Since these papers are organized chronologically, this one volume offers a compressed view of the development of Kierkegaard's thought in the 12-year period between 1843 and 1855. Kierkegaard was not terribly concerned about maintaining a strict chronological order when he wrote in his bound journals and notebooks—often jumping back and forth from one journal or notebook to another and sometimes writing in many of them more or less simultaneously. He also made it a regular practice to return to entries he had made in his journals and notebooks to add later thoughts, comments, and revisions. Nevertheless, it is possible to put the 3 different groups of bound journals or notebooks in a rough chronological order. There was a set of 10 journals labelled by Kierkegaard AA through KK (with no II); this was followed by a collection of 15 notebooks that were not labelled or numbered by Kierkegaard but that were later numbered 1–15 by the editors of Kierkegaard's papers according to the order in which he wrote in them; and finally, there was a series of 36 journals labeled by Kierkegaard NB1–NB36. The NB journals are the easiest to organize chronologically since in those journals Kierkegaard himself dated the cover of the journal or the first entry. Because of this we know that the first journal of the NB series was begun on 9 March 1846 and the last journal in that series was started on 13 December, 1854. Consequently, we can determine that the bound journals and notebooks that represent the 12-year period between 1843 and 1855 include all of the 36 NB journals and at least some of the journals and notebooks from the first two groups that are not quite as easy to date. This means that the time period covered by the loose papers collected in volume 11 part 2 is also covered by roughly eight other volumes (3-10) in *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*. That's one interesting and valuable feature of this volume: it offers something like a compressed overview of this whole 12-year period of Kierkegaard's thought.

This 12-year period was the time when Kierkegaard wrote almost everything for which he is now famous. He finished *Either/Or* in 1843, and then went on to write and publish 26 more books before he died at age 42 in 1855. He also wrote numerous articles and pamphlets during this period and also several books that were not published during his lifetime. The editors divide Kierkegaard's loose papers into two main groups—prior to 1843 (volume 11 part 1) and after 1843 (volume 11 part 2)—because these two groups have a decidedly different character. The loose papers prior to 1843 include many attempts to summarize and comment on other people's ideas in the form of lecture and reading notes. When he was not summarizing other people's ideas Kierkegaard's own thinking in that first group of papers is exploratory and wide-ranging as he considered all the options that were available to him. From 1843 on the papers are much more tightly focused and clearly related to Kierkegaard's own ideas and his own published (and unpublished) writing. After 1843 it's clear that Kierkegaard has found his vocation. He now thinks of himself as a writer and the notes in the loose papers from this period are usually easy to connect to his published work or his plans for more published work.

As with any volume of Kierkegaard's journals and posthumous papers, the philosophical value of these texts may not be immediately obvious. The loose papers collected in this book include some texts that have become almost canonical in accounts of Kierkegaard's biography. For example, the first paper that opens the book called 'The Earthquake' is a very succinct and very

famous summary of how and why Kierkegaard felt compelled to inherit his father's gloomy vision of life. There are no biographies of Kierkegaard in which these dramatic lines are not given a very prominent place: 'It was then the great earthquake occurred, the terrible upheaval that suddenly thrust upon me a new infallible law for the interpretation of all phenomena. It was then I suspected that my father's great age was not a divine blessing but rather a curse; that our family's remarkable intellectual abilities existed only in order that we could tear one another apart; I felt the stillness of death spreading over me when I saw in my father an unhappy person who would survive us all, a monumental cross on the grave of all his own hopes' (3-4).

One reason so many biographers have found Kierkegaard's life to be irresistible catnip is that Kierkegaard wrote such enticing and powerful analyses of his own experience. A document like 'The Earthquake' almost makes it impossible not to write a biography about Kierkegaard. There are also several groups of papers in this volume that focus on what Kierkegaard perceived to be his mistreatment at the hands of the satirical newspaper *The Corsair*—another defining event in every Kierkegaard biography that has ever been written—and the papers in the last three sections provide many details concerning what motivated Kierkegaard's 'attack upon Christendom' and how that attack so completely absorbed his attention at the end of his life. Texts such as these are obviously relevant to Kierkegaard's biography, but there are several ways in which the loose papers collected in this volume shed light on philosophical questions as well. I'll highlight a few of these.

The first concerns an argument for nihilism that Kierkegaard developed in the last years of his life. I noted earlier that the loose papers in this volume correspond chronologically with at least eight volumes of journals and notebooks, which makes this book something like a compressed overview of that whole period of his astounding literary productivity. The loose papers included in this concluding volume of *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks* cover a slightly longer time period than the journals and notebooks. Kierkegaard began writing in his last NB journal on 13 December, 1854 and it's generally agreed that he stopped writing in this journal by 28 December, 1854. But Kierkegaard lived almost another full year after this date, dying on 11 November 1855. In this last year of his life Kierkegaard mounted his 'attack upon Christendom' first through a series of 21 newspaper articles, and then with ten issues of his own publication called *The Moment* each of which contained between five and ten more articles, all attacking official, institutional Christianity. Though Kierkegaard stopped writing in his journal during this last period of his life, there are many loose papers from this period. These papers are collected in the last section of this volume, 'Paper 551-Paper 591: During the Publication of *The Moment*.' Kierkegaard's last written words, on 25 September, 1855, are recorded here. Kierkegaard collapsed in the street a few days later, and on 2 October 1855 he was taken to the hospital, where he died 41 days later. What follows are just the first two paragraphs of those last written words, not the complete entry (which is rather long), but it's enough to capture the spirit of the text:

This Life's Destiny, Understood from a Christian Point of View

This life's destiny is to be brought to the highest degree of weariness with life.

The person who, brought to this point, is able to maintain—or is helped by God to be able to maintain—that it is God who, out of love, has brought him to this point: he, understood from a Christian point of view, has passed life’s examination, is ripe for eternity. I came into existence through a crime. I came into existence against God’s will. The guilt—which in a sense is not mine, even though it makes me a criminal in God’s eyes—is to give life. The punishment corresponds to the guilt: to be deprived of all lust for life, to be led to the most extreme degree of weariness with life. Human beings want to tinker with the Creator’s handiwork, if not by creating the human being, then at any rate by giving life. “You shall surely come to pay for this, because the destiny of this life—though by my grace, for it is only to those who are saved that I show this grace—is to lead you to the highest degree of weariness with life.” (405)

The thoroughly exhausted and nihilistic worldview that Kierkegaard summarizes here is truly stunning, especially since it was written by someone who is universally celebrated as one of the founding voices of existentialism, which is supposed to be all about unmasking and overcoming nihilism in all of its many forms. Kierkegaard ended his life believing not just that his existence was an error, but that it was actually a crime. The version of anti-natalism that Kierkegaard embraced at the end of his life eclipses even Schopenhauer’s arguments about the vanity of human existence, which would be quite an impressive accomplishment for anyone but especially for one of the founding fathers of existentialism. How is that even possible? I think that’s a truly fascinating question which should be investigated by anyone interested in Kierkegaard’s philosophy or in existentialism generally, and this volume facilitates such an investigation. The movement toward nihilism at the end of Kierkegaard’s life is evident in this compressed selection of assorted loose papers just as it’s evident in Kierkegaard’s final NB journals, so the reader has the opportunity to study closely how Kierkegaard’s general theory of subjective truth is able to accommodate this particular subjective truth: that ‘this life’s destiny is to be brought to the highest degree of weariness with life.’ That’s one example of the philosophical value of this volume.

Many of the groups of papers in this volume are so eclectic that the editors could not do anything other than label them ‘miscellaneous’ or ‘loose papers’ or ‘minor pieces,’ but the reader may not agree that all of these texts are minor. For example, in the section labeled ‘Minor Items from the 1840s’ there is a piece of dialogue between a schoolteacher and a ‘low comic figure (a sort of happy-go-lucky fellow)’ who travels about recruiting new members for the Temperance Society, but is not himself temperate. The Temperance Society compensates him for his recruiting work by giving him an unlimited bar tab (26-27). This same character reappears later in a group of papers labeled ‘Miscellaneous Jottings, Ideas, and Drafts, 1848-1850,’ but now he has been promoted to the rank of ‘priest’ in the Temperance Society, and he explains at length to the puzzled schoolteacher how he accomplishes the feat of preaching with great eloquence and passion the very opposite of what he actually does (167-70). The evolving story of the hard drinking and highly successful recruiter for the Temperance Society was far from a minor item for me. Another wonderful dialogue is tucked inconspicuously into a section called simply ‘Projected Writings.’ This is a conversation between Hegel and Socrates, who are hanging out together in the

Underworld. Hegel walks over to Socrates to complain about something he just read in Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* but they never manage to discuss whatever was bothering Hegel because they can't agree on how to begin. Hegel insists that he always begins with nothing, while Socrates insists that beginning with nothing is either beginning with something, or else perhaps not beginning at all; but Hegel replies that he must have begun because after all he did complete 21 volumes. It is a truly delightful discussion, even though it never manages to get started, and I personally would have loved to see this discussion that cannot find a way to begin expanded into a full book, perhaps even 21 volumes.

In those sections that are miscellaneous and eclectic every reader will have the joy of discovering hidden gems like those. Other sections of this volume have a very precise focus that came from Kierkegaard himself. In my opinion the most remarkable of these is Paper 364 - Paper 371: 'The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethical-Religious Communication.' This is a collection of notes and drafts that all focus on questions concerning indirect communication. Kierkegaard gathered these papers together himself and wrapped them up in a packet. The title of this group of papers is the title that Kierkegaard himself wrote on the cover of that packet. All the papers in this packet are densely written, with many comments and addenda scribbled in the margins. You can feel the intensity of the investigation that is taking place on these pages. All the questions and themes of indirect communication that Kierkegaard explored in so many other places are all gathered here under one roof, so to speak. It looks like the brainstorming session that led to the more complete, elaborate, polished and sometimes indirectly communicated arguments about indirect communication that Kierkegaard presented in his published works such as *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. This section is a marvelous resource for anyone who wants to understand why Kierkegaard believes that indirect communication is so essential in matters of subjective truth, and also the many tactics and strategies of indirect communication that he used in his writing. Other groups of papers that are essentially like packets of documents focused on a single theme, even if Kierkegaard didn't actually tie them up in a little bundle as he did with this group of papers, including the last two sections in the book, which all deal with the 'attack on Christendom' that was Kierkegaard's singular focus at the end of his life.

This is a remarkable book which is a fitting conclusion to this remarkable series. All the aspects of Kierkegaard's thought that make him such a fascinating and challenging philosopher are on display in this final volume of his posthumous papers.

Stuart Dalton, Western Connecticut State University