

## THROWING AWAY LADDERS

Kierkegaard writes: 'The actual difference between men is merely the way in which they talk nonsense. It is universally human to do so.'<sup>87</sup> Wittgenstein writes: "Don't, for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense".<sup>88</sup> The difference between the sort of nonsense these authors themselves cultivate and the sort they see their readers talking is the difference between a self-conscious and an unwitting employment of nonsense. Many commentators have read these works as wishing to enchant us with certain forms of nonsense, as recommending certain forms of nonsense (in one case: the absolute paradox, in the other: violations of logical syntax) as revelatory of certain deep truths.<sup>89</sup> What happens in works such as the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* is not that by means of a certain kind of nonsense we are helped to succeed in grasping certain extraordinary truths – a paradox which requires the crucifixion of the human understanding (*Postscript*), or an insight into that which cannot be coherently stated because it lies beyond the limits of logical thought (*Tractatus*). Rather, what happens is – if the work succeeds in its elucidatory aim – we are drawn into an illusion of occupying a perspective from which we imagine we are able to grasp such an extraordinary truth; we imagine we are able to grasp what certain forms of nonsense are trying to say. From this perspective, we imagine we contemplate the limits of reason, as well as the possibility of our being able to transgress them. It is this (apparent) transgression of the limits of reason that we then imagine imparts to us an insight into the nature of the ethical or the religious. The *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* both actively participate in such a perspective, one from which such a transgression appears possible. The point of drawing us into the illusion of such a perspective is to explode it from within. The only 'insight' these works wish to impart in the end – once the reader has climbed to the top of the ladder – is one about the reader himself: that he is prone to such illusions.

Kierkegaard traces the source of his reader's tendency to hallucinate sense to his reader's inclination to evade all that is 'existentially strenuous' in the religious life. The illusion of sense is generated through conflating aesthetic and religious categories – for example, by trying to construe faith as a matter of ordinary belief. But this conflation, in turn, generates puzzles which are a

welcome distraction. When reflection reveals that no sense can be made of such a construal, one continues to frame the problem in purely objective terms, in terms, that is, that require an increasingly strenuous effort of the intellect. Since no ordinary form of belief seems to suffice to effect the transformation of oneself into a Christian, one assumes it must require some extraordinary form of belief: a form of belief that requires something extraordinary of the intellect – that one strive to believe against the grain of one's understanding, that one attempt to hold fast to the absurd. Climacus is far more dialectically subtle than his imaginary neo-Hegelian philosophical interlocutors, but so he must be if he is to exemplify 'the enduring capacity of a misunderstanding to assimilate even the most strenuous effort at explanation and still remain the same misunderstanding'<sup>90</sup> – where the misunderstanding in question is that of mistaking a subjective problem for an objective one, of converting a practical difficulty into an intellectual one. The *Postscript* participates in such a misunderstanding in order to expose the confusions it involves itself in and to show the reader his own 'enduring capacity' to fall back into these confusions.

This form of authorship (in which the work pretends to endorse a point of view which it ultimately aims to reveal as confused) Kierkegaard freely admits to be a sort of deception of the reader.<sup>91</sup> But it is a special sort of deception. From an ethical point of view, such a strategy of 'deception' is, properly speaking, not a form of deception at all.<sup>92</sup> For its aim is not to deceive the reader as to the truth, but rather to deceive him into the truth:

[F]rom the point of view of my whole activity as an author, integrally conceived, the aesthetic work is a deception, and herein is to be found the deeper significance of the use of pseudonyms. A deception, however, is a rather ugly thing. To this I would make answer: One must not let oneself be deceived by the word 'deception'. One can deceive a person for the truth's sake, and (to recall old Socrates) one can deceive a person into the truth. Indeed, it is only by this means, i.e. by deceiving him, that it is possible to bring into the truth one who is in an illusion. Whoever rejects this opinion betrays the fact that he is not over-well versed in dialectics, and that is precisely what is especially needed for operating in this field. For there is an immense difference, a dialectical difference, between these two cases: the case of a man who is ignorant and is to have a piece

of knowledge imparted to him . . . and the case of a man who is under an illusion and must be delivered from that.<sup>93</sup>

The aim of a pseudonymous work is not to impart a doctrine to the reader but to deliver him from an illusion. The method is to offer the reader something that has the form of knowledge in order to show him that what he is attracted to is only an appearance of knowledge. In a sense, the ordinary aim of authorship has been reversed: rather than striving to teach the reader something he does not know, the aim is to show him that where he takes there to be something to know there is nothing. As Climacus permits himself to say in a footnote about his own work: '[T]he art of *communication* at last becomes the art of *taking away*, of luring something away from someone.'<sup>94</sup> As we saw earlier, the method of the pseudonymous authorship is predicated on the assumption that the route of direct communication is blocked. 'Indirect communication' is Kierkegaard's name for his method of benevolent deception.<sup>95</sup> It is, he claims, the appropriate method of addressing someone who is the victim of an illusion:

Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task, rightly understood, is to remove the illusion – if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication. But direct communication presupposes that the receiver's ability to receive is undisturbed. But here such is not the case; an illusion stands in the way.<sup>96</sup>

In a passage strikingly reminiscent of Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein writes of his own work: 'I ought to be no more than a mirror in which my reader can see his own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, he can put it right.'<sup>97</sup> This remark applies equally to Wittgenstein's earlier and his later work. But the parallel between the *Tractatus* and a Kierkegaardian pseudonymous work goes still further than this shared aim (of wishing to hold up to the reader a mirror in which he can recognise his confusion): both works involve a strategy of 'deception' in Kierkegaard's peculiar sense of the term.

What then does it mean to 'deceive'? It means that one does not begin *directly* with the matter that one wants to communi-

cate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money.<sup>98</sup>

One's sense of the plausibility of the claim that there is a genuine parallel here between the *Tractatus* and a Kierkegaardian pseudonymous work will depend on how one understands the *Tractatus*'s final gesture of revocation. What follows is a brief sketch of how one should read the *Tractatus* if one wishes to take the parallel as seriously as I do.<sup>99</sup>

The Preface and the concluding sections of the *Tractatus* form the *frame* of the text. It is there that Wittgenstein provides us with instructions for how to read what we find in the *body* of the text. In the Preface, Wittgenstein tells us that the idea that we can form thoughts about the limits of thought is *simply nonsense*. The book starts with a *warning* to the effect that a certain kind of enterprise – one of attempting to draw a limit to thought – leads to plain nonsense. In the body of the text, we are offered (what appears to be) a doctrine about 'the limits of thought'. With the aid of this doctrine, we imagine ourselves to be able to both draw these limits and see beyond them. At the conclusion of the book, we are told that the author's elucidations have succeeded only if we recognise what we find in the body of the text to be (simply) nonsense. Wittgenstein writes in 6.54 of the *Tractatus*:

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb beyond them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)

It is significant that Wittgenstein speaks here of 'anyone who understands *me*': we cannot understand his *propositions* (for they are nonsense), but we can come to understand *the author* and what sort of activity he is engaged in – one of showing that we suffer from the illusion of thinking we mean something when we mean nothing. His propositions have succeeded in their aim as elucidations when the reader 'eventually recognizes them as nonsensical'. The aim of the elucidation is to trigger such a recognition. The sign that we have understood *the author* (as opposed to the body) of the work is that we can throw the ladder we have climbed up away. That is to say: we have finished the work, and

the work is finished with us, when we are able to simply *throw* the sentences in the body of the work – sentences about ‘the limits of language’ and the unsayable things which lie beyond them – away.<sup>100</sup> To read the work correctly we need to hold on to something and throw something away. What we hold on to is the frame of the text – the text’s instructions for how to read it and when to throw it away. What we ‘eventually’ throw away is the body of the text – its mock doctrine.

The proponents of what is at present the standard interpretation of the *Tractatus* opt for the opposite procedure: they cling firmly to what they find in the body of the text and throw away the warnings and instructions offered in the frame. Rudolf Carnap was one of the first to hail the book as containing important philosophical insights and to encourage people to simply ignore the concluding sentences of the book as confused. Wittgenstein – in a letter to Moritz Schlick – comments on Carnap’s reading of the *Tractatus*: ‘... I cannot imagine that Carnap should have so completely misunderstood the last sentences of the book and hence the fundamental conception of the entire book’ (my emphasis).<sup>101</sup> Wittgenstein here makes clear that an understanding of the book as a whole depends upon an understanding of its last sentences. It depends upon taking seriously the work’s final injunction to the reader to throw away the ladder he has climbed up. Subsequent commentators have criticised the letter of Carnap’s interpretation (for simply dismissing the last sentences) while retaining its spirit (of wishing to hold on to the doctrine apparently propounded in the body of the work). They claim to take the final sentences of the work to heart – that is, they claim to agree that the sentences in the body of the work *are* nonsense – but they still want to hold on to what (they imagine) the nonsense is trying to say. They conclude that the work has an ineffable doctrine. It imparts an ‘insight’ into the *truth* of certain deep matters – even though, strictly speaking, this truth cannot be put into language. Wittgenstein’s aim in the *Tractatus* is to engage this temptation to imagine one knows what a piece of nonsense is trying to say – one grasps the ineffable ‘it’ to which the words point – in order to enable one to recognise that there is no ineffable ‘it’. This (apparently intelligible) idea of ineffable thought is part of what we are, in the end, to throw away. Carnap is therefore right to be suspicious (and, indeed, on Tractarian grounds) of ineffable thought – a kind of thought which violates the logi-

cal conditions of the possibility of thought. But subsequent commentators are equally right to think that a proper understanding of the work turns on an understanding of its form (and, in particular, its final sentences), on an appreciation of its strategy of authorship. What both sides fail to take seriously is that what we wind up with when we try to draw a limit to thought is not a form of deep and metaphysically illuminating nonsense, but rather – as Wittgenstein explicitly says in the preface to the *Tractatus* – *einfach Unsinn*: simply nonsense. In the Preface (as mentioned at the beginning of this paper) he also writes: ‘Dieses Buch ... ist also kein Lehrbuch’. This book is not a catechism, a doctrinal text. It is not a work which propounds a doctrine. Later he says: ‘Philosophy is not a body of doctrine [*Lehre*] but an activity’ (4.112). He then immediately goes on to say what kind of an activity philosophy is: one of elucidation. What we learn in the penultimate section is that a philosophical elucidation aims to show us that the ‘propositions’ we come out with in philosophy are not propositions: the nonsense we are attracted to is plain unvarnished nonsense – words that do not express thoughts. In Kierkegaard’s parlance, the *Tractatus*’s aim is not one of direct communication (propounding doctrine) but rather one of indirect communication (luring the captive of an illusion away from an appearance of knowledge).

In approaching the *Postscript*, it is equally important to draw a distinction between the frame and the body of the text.<sup>102</sup> The situation is further complicated here by the fact that there are in a sense two frames: an inner and an outer one. The latter is furnished by the final document appended to the work entitled ‘A First and Last Declaration’. This document, unlike the rest of the text, is authored by Kierkegaard himself and it is where he insists that the distinction between himself and Climacus (or any one of the other pseudonymous authors) ‘has an essential ground in the character of the production’, that he (Kierkegaard) has ‘not the remotest private relation’ to what is expressed in the work, that ‘not a single word’ of it is his, and that ‘if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying’ from the work then he should be careful to attribute it only to Climacus and not to Kierkegaard.<sup>103</sup> The inner frame of the work is furnished by two portions of the text, each of which is explicitly indicated to be an ‘appendix’, that is to say, a portion of the text that is appended to – external to – the body of the work. It is in these appendices that the

pseudonymous author (Climacus) provides instructions for how to read his work.

The first of the two appendices is entitled 'A Glance at a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature' and comprises a detailed commentary on each of the other pseudonymous works. It is from these pages that the epigraph to this paper from Climacus is taken. Like our epigraph, a great deal of this commentary pertains to generic features of the pseudonymous authorship as a whole – features such as that (in the works which comprise this authorship) 'there is no dogmatizing', indeed that 'there is no author', that 'a confusing contrast-form' has been employed, and that this 'form of presentation . . . makes it impossible to report the content [of such a work] in an abstract'.<sup>104</sup> But the most pertinent remarks for understanding the design of the *Postscript* are the remarks proffered about Climacus's own earlier book, *Philosophical Fragments* – the book to which the *Postscript* is a postscript. For it is here that Climacus provides not only instructions about how to read pseudonymous works in general, but also how to read a work that is specifically authored by him. The place where Climacus tips his hand most – where we learn most about what kind of an author Johannes Climacus is – is itself positioned outside the appendix, in a sort of an appendix to the appendix, in an extraordinarily long footnote. Here we are treated to a discussion of a review of the *Fragments* which has just appeared in a German theological journal. In the review the reviewer takes the trouble, before turning to both compliment and criticise certain specific features of (what he takes to be) the work's doctrine, to offer a detailed abstract of the book. The reviewer stands here in the same relation to the *Fragments* as Carnap does to the *Tractatus*: he wants to cut through the obstacles presented by the text and extract from the work its philosophical content, without having to worry about the peculiarities of its form (and its warnings that its form is essential to its aim). He wants to get at the substantive philosophical claims of the work and leave aside the literary vehicle through which they are presented. Climacus's comment on the reviewer is similar to Wittgenstein's comment about Carnap: in failing to attend to what the work itself says about how it must be read, the reviewer fails to grasp the fundamental conception of the work as a whole. Climacus's complaint is accordingly directed not at the accuracy of the reviewer's abstract, but at the fundamental misunderstanding concerning his work be-

trayed by the very presence of such an abstract in the review:

The abstract is accurate, and as a whole dialectically reliable, but here is the point: in spite of the accuracy of the abstract, everyone who reads that only is bound to get an entirely false impression of the book . . . The abstract is doctrinizing, pure and unadulterated doctrination; the reader will get the impression that the book is also doctrinizing. Now this is in my view the most distorted impression of the book it is possible to have.<sup>105</sup>

The tone is much shriller than that of the *Tractatus*, but the point is much the same: to understand the book as forwarding a doctrine is to have 'the most distorted impression of the work it is possible to have'. Such an understanding of the book, Climacus goes on to say, fails to realise 'the parody on speculative philosophy involved in the entire plan of the book' – 'the incessant activity of the irony' brought into play through 'the contrast of the form' with the ostensible teaching of the work.<sup>106</sup> These remarks about the *Fragments* raise questions about what sort of book we, as readers of the *Postscript* – another book by Johannes Climacus – have before us.

The second appendix forms the conclusion of the work authored by Johannes Climacus and is entitled 'For an Understanding with the Reader'. Climacus begins this communication by insisting that he is neither a Christian nor trying to become one; but neither does he reject Christianity. Rather, 'he is completely taken up with the thought how difficult it must be to be Christian'.<sup>107</sup> The concern of the book, we are told repeatedly in the body of the work, is to explain what is involved in 'the subjective problem' of Christianity – to explain what it is for someone to become a Christian. Yet according to the doctrine (apparently) propounded in the body of the work, 'only two kinds of people can know anything about it': 'those who with an infinite passionate interest' devote their lives to it and 'those who with an opposite passion, but in passion, reject it'.<sup>108</sup> Thus Climacus – as someone whose relation to Christianity is purely theoretical (who 'is completely taken up with' *thinking* about it) and who has failed to develop any practical relation to it (either positively or negatively) – is an author who, by his own lights, cannot 'know anything about' the matter which his work is ostensibly devoted to illuminating.<sup>109</sup>

Climacus goes on in the concluding appendix to echo points

not unlike those already made in the earlier appendix about the other pseudonymous works, only now they are made explicitly with reference to the *Postscript*. He also insists in these pages even more vehemently than before that to take the work before us as offering us a teaching we can hold on to is not yet to have understood it. We are told that the author of the book has 'no opinion and wish[es] to have none', that 'to quote [the work] appreciatively' or 'to appeal to it as an authority' is to subject it to a form of 'violence': 'for he who thus appeals to it has *eo ipso* misunderstood it'.<sup>110</sup> But it is in his further explication of why any appeal to it in and of itself betrays a misunderstanding of the entire work that the parallel with the *Tractatus* becomes most evident. Climacus elucidates the structure of his own performance through the following mischievous analogy: we are told that the book we are reading is in certain respects like that of certain 'Catholic books, especially those of an earlier age' which have to be completely reinterpreted in the light of their concluding sentences – books in which 'one finds at the back of the volume a note which informs the reader that everything is to be understood' in a particular way (namely 'conformably with the doctrine of the Holy Catholic Mother Church'), however incongruous this final demand might seem to the reader.<sup>111</sup> Only the note that one finds at the back of this volume – that is, the note that one finds oneself at this point reading – is not to the effect that everything in the volume is to be understood in conformity with some particular doctrine. Indeed, that this was not to be the case was already anticipated in the first appendix, when we were told that the greatest possible misunderstanding to which one could subject one of Climacus's works was to understand it as forwarding a doctrine. The note at the back of this volume is rather 'to the effect that everything is so to be understood that it is understood to be revoked'.<sup>112</sup> So the analogy with Catholic books of an earlier age only goes this far: both sorts of books are only properly understood in so far as everything in them is understood in the light of their conclusion. The difference is that in the case of the book before us 'the book has not only a Conclusion but a Revocation'.<sup>113</sup> Climacus then goes on to specify what the reader must come to understand in order to have understood what sort of book it is he is reading. He must:

understand that to write a book and revoke it is something else than not writing it at all; that to write a book that does not

claim importance for anybody is something else than leaving it unwritten.<sup>114</sup>

'Climacus' is the latinized form of the Greek word for ladder.<sup>115</sup> The dialectical ladder of the *Postscript* culminates in the declaration that the doctrine of the work is a pseudo-doctrine – one which the author himself revokes.<sup>116</sup> Within the body of the work we have been prepared for this conclusion in numerous ways. We are offered in its later stages a more and more elaborate attempt to provide the reader with an approach to the incomprehensible – that which, by its very nature, is beyond understanding. Such an approach requires, we are told, 'a crucifixion of the understanding'. This plea within the body of the book on behalf of a renunciation of the understanding comes in the form of a doctrine as to the true nature of Christianity, thus in the form of a teaching that implicitly recommends itself as a form of 'higher understanding'. We are invited to think that we are able to get a 'glimpse' into the nature of something which the human understanding is unable to grasp. Climacus describes his relation to Christianity throughout as that of a 'humourist'. The character of the 'humour' embedded in the structure of the work as a whole comes out into the open more and more in the final pages of the body of the work. Consider, for example, a passage such as the following in which the possibility of getting even a 'glimpse' into the matter (which the work as a whole is ostensibly devoted to illuminating) is rejected (as a self-defeating attempt to penetrate the incomprehensible by trying to smuggle in a glimmer of comprehension):

But there are certain things that enter into some people's heads with more difficulty, and among these is . . . the incomprehensible. . . . [One] cannot resist the fancy that to catch a glimpse [into its nature] is something higher. . . . But the more a person stresses the incomprehensible, if he ends up with glimpsing, the more corruptive is his flirtation, because it all becomes a compliment to himself. Whereas difficulty and incomprehensibility are an obstacle to 'the dull', he is brilliant enough to catch a glimpse into the dark saying. . . . A person relinquishes, as he says, the understanding in order to believe – but then he acquires a higher understanding, an understanding so high that by virtue of it he carries on as a matchlessly brilliant seer.<sup>117</sup>

Kierkegaard's target in the *Postscript* is a certain form of philosophical engagement with Christianity: a form of philosophising which provides its captive with an illusion of attaining a 'higher understanding'. It is an illusion because it furnishes its captive with only an appearance of ethical and religious progress, unaccompanied by significant inner or outer change. Both the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* are directed against certain philosophical efforts to explain the nature of ethical or religious truth (efforts which these works wish to unmask as mystifications of the ethical and the religious) – efforts that explain the ethical and the religious in terms of that which lies beyond the limits of human comprehension or logical thought.

The *Postscript* begins as an attempt to distinguish between 'subjective' and 'objective' problems – to mark out those problems that can be solved simply through an application of one's faculties for rational thought and judgement from those problems progress with which requires a radical modification of one's existence. But it comes to seem as if this task of demarcation presupposes the existence of a category of problem that reason cannot penetrate; it seems as if we need to mark out that which reason can comprehend from that which it cannot. The *Tractatus* begins as an attempt to clarify the logical structure of language. But this seems to presuppose that we be able to draw a limit to thought – to mark out those thoughts that can be accommodated by the logical structure of language from those that cannot. Both works thereby invite the reader to enter into a perspective from which it seems that there is something that reason *cannot* do. It seems as if there is a species of thought in the face of which human powers of comprehension suffer from a kind of impotence. Yet it also comes to seem as if the very philosophical exercise of identifying the limits of thought itself imparts to us a glimmer of comprehension into that which is incomprehensible; itself, it shows us the truth of thoughts which are logically unthinkable and hence incapable of being coherently stated. So through the exercise of clarifying the nature of the ethical and the religious we seem to have achieved a kind of 'higher' understanding. Both works attempt to undo this appearance (of glimpsing something higher by breaking reason's bounds) through the employment of a strategy of authorship that Kierkegaard characterises as a form of 'deception': they attempt to enter into and participate in the philosophical illusion to which they take their reader to be subject in

order to lead him to the point where he is able to recognise it as an illusion. Both works therefore have the structure of a ladder which the reader is invited to ascend in order to reach the point where he is ready to throw it away. The ladder is thrown away not because it has outlived its purpose of conducting the reader into the heights of a higher understanding, but because the reader comes to recognise that its rungs are unable to bear the weight they appeared to support. He comes to recognise that he has been captivated by an illusion of ascent, that the services of philosophy have furnished him with only an appearance of ethical or religious progress.

### THROWING AWAY THE STRATEGY OF DECEPTION

As indicated earlier, Kierkegaard's and Wittgenstein's thought about religion (or, more precisely: their thought about the confusions philosophising about religion occasions) stands in a tradition that runs through Lessing and Kant. The burden of the conclusion of this paper is to argue that there is a sense in which Wittgenstein came to think that the aims of that tradition were not well served by Kierkegaard's methods. Phillips's interest in his article was to show how close some of the parallels are between Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship and the mode of authorship which informs Wittgenstein's later work. The final two sections of this essay, taken together, offer the suggestion that the parallels to the pseudonymous works are actually closer if one takes Wittgenstein's *early* work as the point of comparison and that the transition to the later work represents a departure from a Kierkegaardian strategy of authorship.

Who one thinks the later Wittgenstein was usually depends on who one thinks the early Wittgenstein was: most readings of *Philosophical Investigations* turn on a picture of what the work is rejecting, and it is usually by looking to the *Tractatus* that the picture gets filled in. Anthony Quinton's way of telling the story about the relation between the early and the later work is quite representative of the prevailing orthodoxy in Wittgenstein scholarship:

Although Wittgenstein came to reject most of the particular doctrines of the *Tractatus*, the fact that he spent so much time in the *Investigations* in refuting them, shows that even if the answers of the early book were wrong the questions that they were given to were not. And Wittgenstein did not abandon everything

in the *Tractatus*. In particular, he reaffirmed, if in a new way, the earlier book's *thesis* of the impossibility of philosophy. What had been perhaps the least digestible feature of the *Tractatus*, its *self-refuting contention* that the sentences of which it was composed were meaningless attempts to say what could only be shown and at best a ladder to be climbed up on and then kicked away, took the form in the *Investigations* of the *philosophical theory* that it was no part of philosophy to propound theories.<sup>118</sup> [My emphases.]

The suggestion that the ladder of the *Tractatus* is to be kicked (rather than thrown) away helps to insinuate that we have attained higher ground, and so reinforces the idea that the ladder conducts us to the heights of a higher understanding. On this picture of the relation between early and later Wittgenstein, the *Investigations* refutes the doctrines to which the ladder of the *Tractatus* wished us to ascend – it takes the questions to have been properly framed by those doctrines and seeks to quarrel only with the *Tractatus*'s answer to those questions. But the later work does not represent a complete break: the central thesis of the *Tractatus* is retained, though it matures from a self-refuting contention into a full-blown philosophical theory about the impossibility of philosophical theory. Some progress! With such a conception of the relation between the early and the later work, in order to take Wittgenstein at all seriously as a thinker, one first has to clean him up quite a bit. The guiding principle of this laundering operation is that Wittgenstein's own understanding of what he was doing in philosophy is completely incidental to an understanding of what is important in his work. Quinton therefore goes on to endorse what is in effect Carnap's method of reading Wittgenstein and celebrates its application to the later as well as the earlier work:

In fact, perfectly good sense can be made of most of the sentences in the *Tractatus*, and the *Investigations* . . . is full of large, original, and highly discussable philosophical theories and of arguments in support of them. In practice, even his most loyal disciples treat . . . [Wittgenstein's] passionate revulsion from the idea of himself as a philosophical theorist as an aberration. . . . Historically considered, the two generations of British philosophy who have come under his influence have in effect simply

ignored these self-denying ordinances. Making the exclusions from the body of his utterances that are needed to make the remainder intelligible, they have derived from each of his books a coherent and comprehensive philosophical system.<sup>119</sup>

We have here a recipe for how to read a work by Wittgenstein: 'make the exclusions from the body of his utterances that are needed to make the remainder intelligible' and then from what remains extract 'a coherent and comprehensive philosophical system'. Although usually not formulated with such panache, this is also the standard recipe for how to read a Kierkegaardian pseudonymous work. Climacus anticipates this way of reading his work and treats us to a reading lesson. The second chapter of the *Postscript* offers a careful reading of certain passages from Lessing. The portrait of Lessing that emerges is of a thinker who wishes to intervene in theological controversies without siding with either party to the dispute. Lessing, on Climacus's reading of him, sees a conception of faith as opposed to reason (as represented by Jacobi) and a conception of faith as based on reason (as represented by Mendelssohn) as dialectical twins – the apparent integrity of each is conferred upon it through participation in its quarrel with the other, each feeding on and sustaining the other.<sup>120</sup> Lessing's achievement, on Climacus's portrait of him, lies in his mode of philosophical presentation. Climacus evidently wishes to draw attention to Lessing's form of expression in order to force upon his reader questions about the form of the *Postscript*. Climacus's reading highlights the way in which Lessing achieves a form of expression which resists the reader's temptation to assimilate him to one of the two poles of the dialectic between rationalism and anti-rationalism in philosophy of religion. Rather than seeking to participate in their quarrel. Lessing seeks to help the reader achieve a perspective from which the very terms of the quarrel begin to emerge as suspect. The aim of Lessing's interventions is the undoing of theological polemic. Kant's critical philosophy can in this sense be seen as generalising Lessing's theological practice into a systematic philosophical methodology.<sup>121</sup> Progress in philosophy depends upon a representation of the philosophical struggle that makes manifest to both parties in the dispute that 'those same blows which destroy the structures of the enemy must indeed be equally destructive to any [opposing] speculative structure which . . . [one] may perchance wish to erect':



There is, therefore, properly speaking, no polemic in the field of pure reason. Both parties beat the air, and wrestle with their own shadows, since they go beyond the limits of nature, where there is nothing that they can seize and hold with their dogmatic grasp. Fight as they may, the shadows which they cleave asunder grow together again forthwith, like the heroes in Valhalla, to disport themselves anew in the bloodless contests.<sup>122</sup>

Quinton takes Wittgenstein's repudiation of philosophical doctrine, his reluctance to join in the contest, to be an 'aberration' – one which must be carefully excised from a sympathetic account of his philosophical achievement. But, taken by itself, there is nothing new in the thought that progress in philosophy will come not with the formulation of better answers to the old questions, but rather by accounting for the source of our attraction to the questions – by (to look no further than the opening words of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), for example, showing that 'human reason has this peculiar fate that . . . it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which . . . it is also not able to answer.'<sup>123</sup> The overarching task that guides the tradition formed by Lessing, Kant, Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein (among others) is to show that the disputes in philosophy we are tempted to take sides in are often illusory. Kierkegaard inherits a concern with the dispute which preoccupied Lessing – one in which we are presented with a forced choice between an overweening rationalism and a blind leap as the possible vehicles of religious faith. Wittgenstein inherits Kant's generalisation of the parochial quarrel between reason's enthusiasts and its detractors in the philosophy of religion into a general account of dialectical illusion – represented in its most general form by the dialectic between dogmatism and scepticism – 'an illusion which cannot be avoided, although it may, indeed, be rendered harmless.'<sup>124</sup> But as we move from Lessing and Kant to Kierkegaard, and then on to Wittgenstein, we are presented with an increasingly radical conception of the depth of the illusion to which the parties to such a dispute are subject. In Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, we are subject in our philosophising to an illusion of *sense*, to a failure to mean something by the words we wish to call upon. As we have seen, in both the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus*, the aim becomes to hold up to the reader a mirror in which he can recognise himself as subject to an illusion of this sort.

When Wittgenstein himself criticises the *Tractatus's* mode of philosophical presentation it is not simply (as Quinton suggests) on the grounds that its doctrine is flawed,<sup>125</sup> but on the grounds that its *method* is flawed: it is inherently dogmatic – the work cultivates the impression that things are being dogmatically asserted.<sup>126</sup> This way of putting the criticism is meant to suggest, I take it, that the procedure employed is not well suited to the task of remaining neutral in a dialectical conflict – between reason's pretensions and its disappointments – in which dogmatism represents one of the two poles. The *Tractatus* does, of course, attempt to address this problem. It attempts to insist about its own sentences that they are not meaningful propositions but only elucidations. But Wittgenstein's later criticism of his work seems to be that this declaration will almost always come too late. This criticism of the *Tractatus* is elaborated in the context of commenting on a project of Friedrich Waismann's, entitled quite simply *Theses*,<sup>127</sup> which aimed to provide a systematic presentation of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Waismann attempts to sum up Wittgenstein's thought in the form of a series of theses. But – conscious that this procedure places him somewhat at odds with some of the master's pronouncements – he is careful to begin with several meta-theses that echo Tractarian warnings about the character of the sentences offered in the body of the work:

The only value the following sentences have is that of elucidations. The only value the following explanations have is that of paraphrases. The purpose of these elucidations and paraphrases is the logical clarification of our thoughts. They result not in propositions, but rather in a correct understanding of propositions.<sup>128</sup>

After this preliminary declaration, we are promptly presented with a whole series of dogmatic assertions about the nature of facts, reality, language, objects, etc. It is very unclear how to apply this preliminary declaration to what follows it. What we are offered in the subsequent 'theses', for the most part, certainly appear to be propositions; and it would seem that any enlightenment we can extract from them depends upon our treating them as such. But if they are propositions then they are the kinds of things which can be either true or false, and a question can arise as to



which: there is room for dispute. And, indeed, what could be more likely to occasion dispute than philosophical assertions about the nature of reality, language, and so forth. Wittgenstein comments on Waismann's *Theses* as follows:

As regards your *Theses*, I once wrote, If there were theses in philosophy, they would have to be such that they do not give rise to disputes. For they would have to be put in such a way that everyone would say: 'Oh yes, that is of course obvious.' As long as there is a possibility of having different opinions and disputing about a question, this indicates that things have not yet been expressed clearly enough. Once a perfectly clear formulation – ultimate clarity – has been reached, there can be no second thoughts or reluctance any more, for these always arise from the feeling that something has now been asserted, and I do not yet know whether I should admit it or not. If, however, you make the grammar clear to yourself, if you proceed by very short steps in such a way that every single step becomes perfectly obvious and natural, no dispute whatsoever can arise. Controversy always arises through leaving out or failing to state clearly certain steps, so that the impression is given that a claim has been made that could be disputed. I once wrote: The only correct method of doing philosophy consists in not saying anything and leaving it to another person to make a claim. That is the method I now adhere to.<sup>129</sup>

Wittgenstein's aim in philosophy remains the same, early and late (to lead the reader from latent nonsense to patent nonsense), but his work undergoes a dramatic reorientation in method. The method of both the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* is to make (apparent) assertions and then revoke them in the end, to offer something that has the appearance of a doctrine and then undermine it from within. Such a strategy actively cultivates the appearance of asserting theses in order ultimately to defeat that appearance. In the above passage Wittgenstein offers a criticism of his earlier method and a description of his present method. The problem with his earlier method is that it will continue to give rise to disputes.<sup>130</sup> It gives the appearance – an appearance it will not ultimately be able to defeat – that it moves in a realm in which 'there is a possibility of having different opinions and disputing about a question' rather than in a realm in which (as we saw Wittgenstein put it earlier)

the author 'cannot teach [us] any new truths'. The appearance of a possibility of disagreement comes about through the impression that *something has been asserted*. For the inclination to enter into a dispute 'always arises from the feeling that something has now been asserted, and I do not yet know whether I should admit it or not'. We have here in this passage about Waismann's *Theses* the blueprint for Wittgenstein's later mode of philosophical presentation. The discipline to which he subjects his later writing is the following: as far as possible, avoid the impression that anything is put forward as an assertion; avoid anything the reader might seize upon as the doctrine of the work. This does not mean, of course, that a reader who is determined to find theses will not be able to find theses. As the passage from Quinton above happily informs us, just as one can find that 'perfectly good sense can be made of most of the sentences of the *Tractatus*', so one can also find that 'the *Investigations* ... is full of ... highly discussable philosophical theories.'

That the above passage criticising Waismann's *Theses* forms part of a criticism of the method of the *Tractatus* is made explicit a little further on in Wittgenstein's discussion. He goes on to say: 'In my book I still proceeded dogmatically.'<sup>131</sup> The passage as a whole sounds what becomes a recurring theme in Wittgenstein's later writings: 'I won't say anything anyone can dispute. Or if anyone does dispute it, I will let that point drop and pass on to something else.'<sup>132</sup> Or, again: 'I don't try to make you *believe* something you *don't* believe.'<sup>133</sup> He is in quest of a form of presentation which defeats, at each point at which it might arise, the impression that he is in the business of taking sides on a philosophical issue. The passage about Waismann brings out nicely how Wittgenstein's dissatisfaction with the *Tractatus*'s form of presentation is tied to the most distinctive (and most difficult) feature of his later conception of philosophy. The passage (especially the opening sentence: 'If there were theses in philosophy, they would have to be such that they do not give rise to disputes') clearly anticipates what is perhaps Wittgenstein's most famous description of his practice in the *Investigations*:

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us.

One might also give the name 'philosophy' to what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions.

The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.

If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them.<sup>134</sup>

The standard paraphrases of this final sentence (which abound in the secondary literature) tend to turn it into something which goes either like this: 'in philosophy it is impossible to advance theses', or like this: 'in philosophy one should not advance theses'. In the first case, one is left with the impression that Wittgenstein is telling us there is something we want to do that we *cannot* do; in the second case, one is left with the impression that there is something we can do which Wittgenstein wishes to *forbid* us from doing. What is wrong with the first paraphrase is the impression it invites that there is something determinate we cannot do, as if one were called upon to first grasp what it would be to advance theses in philosophy and then to reject *that* as impossible. (It is not, as it were, the sense of the idea we get when we combine 'advancing theses' and 'philosophy' that is senseless,<sup>135</sup> and it is not as if there were no ways to make sense of talk about 'advancing theses of philosophy'; the question for Wittgenstein is rather whether any philosophically interesting sense can be made of such talk.) The first paraphrase completely leaves out the topic of when it is, and when it is not, 'possible to debate'. It leaves out the pressure in Wittgenstein's remark on the question of when we can (and when we can no longer) make sense of the idea of what a person says remaining open to the possibility of (as Wittgenstein's German says) 'becoming a matter for discussion'. The second paraphrase not only leaves this out, it also leaves out the idea of '*trying* to advance theses' and turns it instead into a matter of now *wanting* to advance theses. It substitutes for the first paraphrase's picture of a clear impossibility its own picture of a clear possibility and then places a prohibition on it.

The epigraphs to this essay are meant to raise questions about how much of a burden Kierkegaard's and Wittgenstein's texts place on their reader – what the costs are of a reader's indolence. In light of the central contention of this paper (that these authors

must be taken seriously as *writers* whose conceptions of philosophy inform how they write), part of the point of quibbling over the standard paraphrases of this sentence (*Investigations*, §128) is to briefly illustrate how much can be lost through a refusal to trust Wittgenstein's writing. The tendency is to drastically underestimate how hard it often is to paraphrase a remark of Wittgenstein's, how much turns on the placement of a remark and its nuances of formulation. (Wittgenstein himself remarks: 'I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*.'<sup>136</sup>) The assumption behind someone like Quinton's approach to Wittgenstein is that (although he is a great philosopher) he is a terrible writer, so we have to clean up his ideas and present them as he would have if only he had learned to write. Indeed, it is striking how little of the secondary literature on Wittgenstein allows itself to proceed, even for a moment, on the hypothesis that either the *Tractatus* or Part I of the *Investigations* is a polished work – a work which comes in the shape that it does for a reason, a work which has been written as clearly as it can be, a work which took its author years to compose and in which the placement of each word has been carefully pondered.

I do not mean to suggest that Wittgenstein's remarks do not admit of paraphrase. After remarking that what he has heard people say about the passage 'leaves out the ideas of "trying to advance" and "not being possible"', Stanley Cavell attempts the following, much happier, paraphrase of §128 of the *Investigations*:

Whatever knowledge philosophizing brings forth cannot be brought out by setting forth a claim; because such a claim could never come into question, i.e., it could never arrive at words: because it is something upon which we have an understanding, i.e. it goes without saying, and only without saying, because we could not understand anyone who claimed it and thereby held it as *possibly* open to question.<sup>137</sup>

What comes out in this paraphrase is a topic this paper does not explore, namely how philosophy for later Wittgenstein aims to bring into view those shared understandings (*Übereinstimmungen* is Wittgenstein's preferred term: forms of attunement) upon which human language and society rest. To touch on this topic (as Cavell's paraphrase also nicely brings out) is immediately to touch on a

related and equally difficult region of Wittgenstein's later thought: the idea that our way into philosophical confusion – the decisive yet apparently innocent moment in the conjuring trick – comes when a truism is called upon to bear the burden of a claim ('and [is] thereby held . . . as *possibly* open to question').<sup>138</sup>

The idea of 'trying to advance theses' in the sentence from the *Investigations* echoes the opening words of the passage about Waismann: 'If there were theses in philosophy, . . . they would have to be put in such a way that everyone would say, Oh yes, that is of course obvious.' This formulation appears at first to countenance the idea that there is something which would count as advancing a thesis in philosophy, but only to go on to make it clear that what one would end up with (once one 'put it in such a way') would not be a thesis – it would be a truism, something concerning which dispute would not arise: 'As long as there is a possibility of having different opinions and disputing about a question, this indicates that things have not yet been expressed clearly enough.' Whatever knowledge we can arrive at in philosophy proves to be a form of knowledge we cannot help but already have. (Hence what we are offered is always only a 'reminder'.) Wittgenstein conceives of philosophy – to borrow a phrase from Wilfrid Sellars – 'as a quest of which the goal is the obvious'.<sup>139</sup>

For Wittgenstein, both early and late, whatever enlightenment philosophy confers cannot be captured in the form of an assertion – in the form of a claim – which can become a candidate for discussion. But his conception of how that enlightenment is to be conferred shifts dramatically. One way of describing that shift is to say that he holds on to (and further refines) Kierkegaard's conception of qualitative dialectic while detaching it from Kierkegaard's strategy of pseudonymous authorship. Wittgenstein's early method was (in Kierkegaard's sense) a strategy of 'deceiving the reader into the truth' – one of leading his interlocutor through an elaborate structure of apparent claims in order to finally round on him. Wittgenstein's later method is to round on his interlocutor at every point, to press at every juncture the question whether the words he is attracted to in his philosophising can be entered as a claim. His later method – which he calls 'the method of perspicuous presentation' – attempts 'to assemble reminders' about what we say so as to further sharpen for his philosophical interlocutor questions about what *he* wants to mean by his words. As we have seen, in this respect his later procedure

parallels that of Kierkegaard's method of qualitative dialectic – one of clearly marking off a concept from one of its neighbours, so as to home in on the moment in our philosophising when our words hover between the two concepts and fail to mean either. For Kierkegaard and for early Wittgenstein, there is the possibility of tracing such moments of emptiness to their common source in a cluster of root-confusions. Thus our predicament (as captives to an illusion) can be rendered visible through the construction of a single large mirror in which the entire etiology of our confusion is depicted. Wittgenstein, as we have seen, comes to distrust this strategy of authorship. But he also recants its underlying conception of the etiology of our confusion. For the later Wittgenstein, the etiology of philosophical confusion is as complicated – and as difficult to survey – as are our lives and our language. So the procedure of uncovering our individual confusions must remain a piecemeal one – one of constructing lots of little mirrors in which the reader can come to recognise himself in each of his moments of being tempted to insist emptily. The burden of recognising the temptations depicted by the text – and the confusions in which they issue – as *yours* remains with you, the reader. But there is no longer a single ladder to climb: the moments must be taken up, as they come up, one by one; and as long as we continue to think and speak, they will continue to come up. For later Wittgenstein – unlike for Kierkegaard – the business of philosophical elucidation is thus no longer directed only to a certain kind of reader, and it is no longer merely a preliminary to the business of the moral or the religious life; because its business is never finished.

## Notes

1. I am indebted to questions raised by participants at the Claremont Conference honouring the appointment of D.Z. Phillips as the Danforth Professor of the Philosophy of Religion, to comments on an earlier draft from Cora Diamond, Paul Franks, Logi Gunnarsson, Martin Stone and Lisa Van Alstyne, and to an unpublished manuscript by M. Jamie Ferreira.
2. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 264–5. One of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors, Johannes Climacus, is here commenting on one of the other pseudonymous works, *Either/Or*.

The context, however, (as I will argue later on) indicates that the point is meant to apply to Climacus's own equally enigmatic performance in the *Postscript* as well.

3. *Culture and Value*, translated by Peter Winch (Blackwell, 1980), p. 77.
4. H.D.P. Lee states in a memoir on Wittgenstein: 'He told me that he learned Danish in order to be able to read Kierkegaard in the original, and he clearly had a great admiration for him.' *Philosophy* 54, p. 218.
5. Maurice O'C. Drury, 'Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein', in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, edited by Rush Rhees (Rowman & Littlefield, 1981), p. 102.
6. I will not review here all the evidence which testifies to the strength and the depth of Wittgenstein's interest in Kierkegaard. This has been undertaken repeatedly by others (see, for example, Charles L. Creegan, *Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard*, Routledge, 1989). Aside from the implicit and explicit evidence throughout the *Nachlass*, the cast of characters who bear witness to Wittgenstein's absorption in and esteem for Kierkegaard include Maurice O'C. Drury, Paul Engelmann, H.D.P. Lee, Norman Malcolm, Rush Rhees, Bertrand Russell, Hermine Wittgenstein, and G.H. von Wright.
7. With respect to this fourth aspect, I have in mind passages such as the following:

We can only convince our interlocutor of his mistakenness in philosophy if he acknowledges what we say as genuinely expressing his feelings – that is, only if he acknowledges the expression that we offer him as genuinely being the correct expression of his feelings. For only if he acknowledges it as such is it the correct expression. (My translation, from p. 410 of the *Big Typescript*; reprinted in *Wittgenstein in Florida*, ed. Jaakko Hintikka, Kluwer, 1991, p. 7).

8. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy*, vol. XVII, eds French, Uehling and Wettstein (University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); reprinted in *Wittgenstein and Religion*, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 1993. References will be from the latter work.
9. As Wittgenstein warns: 'What we say will be easy, but to know why we say it will be very difficult'. *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1932–1935*, ed. Alice Ambrose (University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 77.
10. '[I]n the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have . . . not the remotest private relation to them. . . . One single word of mine uttered personally in my own name would be an instance of presumptuous self-forgetfulness, and dialectically viewed it would incur with one word the guilt of annihilating the pseudonyms. . . . My wish, my prayer, is that, if it might occur to anyone to quote a particular saying from the books, he would do me the favor to cite the name of the respective pseud-

onymous author.' (Concluding *Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 551–2.)

11. Kierkegaard begins the concluding statement appended to the *Postscript* by freely acknowledging that in a purely legal sense he is the author of the pseudonymous works, but immediately goes on to say:

My pseudonymity or polynymity has not a casual ground in my person (certainly it was not for fear of a legal penalty, for in this respect I am confident that I have committed no misdemeanor, and at the time the books were published, not only the printer but the Censor, as a public functionary, was officially informed who the author was), but it has an *essential* ground in the character of the *production* . . .

12. Climacus specifies in the Appendix to the *Postscript* what his reader must understand in order to have understood what sort of book it is he is reading. He must:

understand that to write a book and revoke it is something else than not writing it at all; that to write a book that does not claim importance for anybody is something else than leaving it unwritten. (Concluding *Unscientific Postscript*, p. 548.)

This remark is occasioned by the fact that he has just informed his reader that he revokes the work the reader has just finished reading:

[W]hat I write contains . . . a piece of information to the effect that everything is so to be understood that it is understood to be revoked. (Ibid, p. 547.)

We will come back to these remarks.

13. 'Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.' (*Tractatus*, §4.112). The third sentence of the preface of the *Tractatus* already declares that the work 'ist . . . kein Lehrbuch' – that it is not a work of doctrine.
14. 'A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations' (*Tractatus* §4.112.)
15. 'My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical . . .' (Ibid, §6.54.)
16. 'If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them.' *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Blackwell, 1953, §128). We will return to this passage at the conclusion of the paper.
17. 'My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense' (Ibid, §464).
18. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 201.
19. Josiah Thompson, *Kierkegaard* (London: 1974). Thompson writes:

The pseudonymous authors... are... nonparticipants in life, they are its critics and spectators.... [T]here is an underlying black humour. For finally the joke is on the reader, and the smarter he is, the sooner he realises it.... [T]o see through all the pseudonyms, to recognise that the vision of any one of them is not to be preferred to that of any other, is finally to join Kierkegaard in his cloister. It is to share with him that peculiarly modern laceration – 'I must believe, but I can't believe' – which since his time has become even more painful. (p. 147)

20. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 202.
21. This form of reasoning very clearly informs the whole of Thompson's book, including the passages from Thompson that Phillips quotes. I take up this issue partly because Thompson's book is typical of a great deal of the secondary literature on Kierkegaard in its assumption that an understanding of Kierkegaard's thought depends upon a detailed consideration of – often very intimate features of – his biography.
22. Phillips documents passages from vol. II of *Either/Or* which he says show that 'the dangers of aestheticism... are clearly recognized' by Kierkegaard (AA, pp. 203–4).
23. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 204.
24. The word 'authenticity' is a term which carries a lot of baggage with it in the wake of the subsequent inheritance of Kierkegaard's work, first in Heidegger's writings and then in Sartre's. I do not wish to import all of that freight into the present context. I am simply trying to use the word, for the purpose of summarising Thompson's worry, in the sense that I understand it to have in the title of Phillips's essay. I mean therefore to speak to a question concerning the relation between what someone professes to understand concerning ethical or religious matters and what that individual's life actually looks like – the degree to which those understandings and beliefs can be seen to shape the character of his life.
25. With respect to the task of understanding the character of a given pseudonymous author, Kierkegaard therefore insists (in a final note written in his own, rather than Climacus's, name) that what kind of person he (Kierkegaard) is should be understood to be a matter of indifference with respect to the task of comprehending a pseudonymous work:

So I am in a position of indifference: that is to say, it is a matter of indifference what and how I am, precisely because in its turn the question whether in my inmost man it is indifferent to me what and how I am is for this production absolutely irrelevant. (*Postscript*, p. 552)

26. Kierkegaard fully anticipates that his reader will become fascinated in the author behind the pseudonym and, in particular, by the question what this author's life was like. Hence Kierkegaard immodestly (but, nonetheless, accurately) predicts an eventual explosion of interest in the details of his own – consequently in some respects carefully concealed – biography.
27. That the reader is confronted with a work of this sort is repeatedly hinted at. See, for example, *Postscript*, p. 245n., in a remark which we shall come back to, where Climacus suggests (in commenting on a review of the *Philosophical Fragments*) that the reader will have the most distorted impression it is possible to have of a work he (Climacus) has authored if he fails to notice 'the contrast of the form; the challenging opposition between the experiment and the content;... the unwearied incessant activity of the irony; the parody on speculative philosophy involved in the entire plan of the book.'
28. In his journal Kierkegaard writes: 'I always stand in an altogether poetic relationship to my works, and I am, therefore, a pseudonym.' To say that a work is a poetic creation, in this context, means that the implied author of a pseudonymous work is a literary character – someone who is not to be identified with Kierkegaard. Hence in 'The First and Last Declaration' (a document officially authored by Kierkegaard himself) appended to the *Postscript*, we find the following statement:

What is written... is in fact mine, but only in so far as I put into the mouth of the poetically actual individuality whom I produced, his life-view expressed in audible lines. For my relation is more external than that of a poet, who poetizes characters, and yet in the preface is himself the author. For I am impersonal in the second person, a souffleur who has poetically produced the authors, whose preface in turn is their own production, as are even their own names. So in the pseudonymous works there is not a single word which is mine, I have no opinion about these works except as a third person, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader, not the remotest private relation to them... (*Postscript*, p. 551)

The views expressed in a pseudonymous work are to be attributed not to Kierkegaard but to the literary character who voices them – a literary character who the work as a whole, in turn, brings to life for us. So we have here therefore one sense in which Kierkegaard does not 'directly communicate' any views of his own through such a work.

Such an aesthetic production contrasts for Kierkegaard with any kind of 'direct communication' of which there are two forms which are particularly worth marking off in this context: one form involves what he calls a straightforwardly 'objective relation' between

an author and his communication such as one finds in a work of history, mathematics or science (where the truth of what the speaker says does not depend upon the moral or religious character of the life he leads); and the other form of direct communication involves the sort of 'subjective relation' characteristic of ordinary moral or religious discourse which seeks to edify its auditor.

Those of Kierkegaard's non-pseudonymous works that are explicitly intended as edifying discourses therefore present coherent candidates (in a way that the self-avowedly 'aesthetic works' do not) for an accusation that takes the form of Thompson's original charge of aestheticism. But even then, for Kierkegaard, the real worry behind such a charge (if made against an author who seeks to edify) is one that is primarily of concern to the author: is it presumptuous of him to assume that he is in a position to edify his readers? (This is a question which Kierkegaard thinks should be a matter of relative indifference to the reader. The question as to whether the reader finds edification in the discourse is a question of the relation between the edifying thought and the reader's life. So a certain kind of idle curiosity about how the author lives still constitutes an evasion.) With respect to Kierkegaard's edifying works, Thompson cannot get his charge of aestheticism off the ground for a different reason, for here we are not offered a poetic representation of an imaginary personality but rather we are confronted with an earnest and unadorned communication issued directly from the author's heart. In these works Kierkegaard speaks directly without any aesthetic intermediary. (Indeed, Thompson's entire argument seems to depend on completely forgetting that Kierkegaard ever wrote anything other than pseudonymous works.)

29. Or to put it more precisely: when viewed as a whole, there can be seen to be a pervasive and fully intended 'ambiguity or duplicity in the whole authorship as to whether the author is an aesthetic or religious author.' *The Point of View for My Work as An Author*, trans. B. Nelson (Harper & Row, 1962), p. 10. To simply resolve the ambiguity would be to misunderstand the character of the authorship. For 'if a religious author wishes to deal with [an] illusion, he must be at the same time an aesthetic and a religious author'. (Ibid, p. 33.)

30. The most common version of this incoherence is the following: first, one parrots the claim that certain 'subjective' matters (having to do with ethics and religion) cannot be directly communicated but can only be indirectly communicated; then, one immediately goes on to directly communicate in perfectly objective terms what it is that cannot be directly communicated; and then – compounding one confusion upon another – one goes on to support one's own direct assertion (of the directly incommunicable) by simply quoting something which a pseudonymous author (generally Climacus) directly asserts.

31. This contrasts with the category of the ethical where one's relation to the object is 'interested' and the category of the religious

where the relation is one of 'infinite interest'. A relation is 'interested', for Kierkegaard, if it is tied to the task of forming one's self (into the sort of person one wishes to become) or – to say the same thing in different words – of shaping one's existence (into the sort of life one wishes to lead). Thus a thorough-going aesthete, in Kierkegaard's terminology, would be someone who succeeded in remaining perpetually in search of a self without ever fashioning one. It is an ideal which can only be self-consciously pursued in a spirit of perversity and which can never be attained, because we are – as Kierkegaard is fond of putting it when castigating neo-Hegelian philosophers – always 'weighed down by existence'.

32. Commentators have tended to conflate two different Kierkegaardian distinctions: interestedness/disinterestedness and immediacy/mediacy. The former has to do with a distinction between kinds of categories (subjective v. objective), the latter with a distinction that is drawn within any given category (unreflective v. reflective). This conflation has led to two widespread misunderstandings: (1) the idea that the applicability of the subjective categories (the ethical and the religious) excludes the possibility of reflection, and (2) the identification of the category of the aesthetic with the idea of immediacy. Thus we get a rather uninteresting (but remarkably famous) Kierkegaard: his philosophy of religion is tied to a religious ideal which is hard to distinguish from a form of fanaticism, his philosophy of art is tied to a conception of the aesthetic which only recognises forms of aesthetic appreciation which are available to a pre-linguistic infant, and his critique of neo-Hegelianism collapses into a trumpet-blast for irrationalism.

I confine myself here to diagnosing the source of one strand of this tangle of misunderstanding: the flattening out of the category of the aesthetic (hence making it impossible to see the force of the accusation that modern philosophy tends to confuse aesthetic and religious categories). An attention exclusively to certain portions of volume 1 of *Either/Or* has helped to mislead some commentators into an identification of the aesthetic with the idea of immediacy. This misses the reflective dimension of the aesthetic. Internal to each category are a series of 'stages' which are a function of the character of the 'reflectiveness' with which the subject relates himself to the object (each category having a mode of reflection that is appropriate to it).

The most primitive stage of the aesthetic is, indeed, that of 'immediacy'. In immediacy there is a complete absorption of the self in the object – a complete evacuation of the self and immersion of the self in the object. At this lowest (and, in a sense, purest) stage of the aesthetic, the accent falls totally on the object; the subject plays a purely nominal, spectatorial, role. What has been lost on a great deal of the secondary literature, however, is that this stage (of immediate absorption) does not exhaust the category of the aesthetic; it is only one stage of the aesthetic. In the 'higher' stages

of the aesthetic, in which the subject takes up a more reflective attitude towards the object, there is a sense in which the relation (between subject and object) at issue for Kierkegaard still remains a purely contemplative one. It is still a form of relation in which the subject loses itself in its activity of contemplation. In immediacy, the subject is absorbed by 'actuality'; in the higher stages of the aesthetic he loses himself in 'possibility' – the fascination here is exerted not simply by an object but by various forms of reflection occasioned by the object. The critical feature that the different stages of the aesthetic have in common is that (as Kierkegaard likes to put it) the accent falls on the object rather than the subject – it is a relation that makes no demands on the subject's mode of existence. As Kierkegaard sometimes puts it when drawing the contrast between the categories of the ethical and the religious, the aesthetic is the category in which the subject exists in a state of 'distraction'. The point of grouping complete immediacy and certain forms of 'mediation' (i.e. forms of 'disinterested' reflectiveness) together within a single category is to highlight their common feature: in each case, the subject's attention is directed away from itself and towards the object of its attention.

33. Kierkegaard's thought has been subjected to catastrophic misunderstanding because commentators have failed to realise that the terms 'the objective' and 'the subjective' represent pieces of terminology for distinguishing, given a relation between a subject and an object, the relative priority between subject and object which is appropriate to a given category. A comprehension of these terms in Kierkegaard's vocabulary is only possible through an understanding of his conception of the categories.

Virtually all of the secondary literature on Kierkegaard assumes otherwise. The terms 'subjective' and 'objective' are generally presumed to have roughly the meaning in Kierkegaard's work that they have elsewhere in philosophy – such as they have, for example, in traditional epistemological discussions which distinguish between objective and (merely) subjective forms of *knowledge*. The objective in this sense is that which can be intersubjectively known, the subjective that which can only be known by me. This leads to the unhappy assumption that when Kierkegaard characterises the ethical and the religious as 'subjective' he means that they concern a kind of truth which is (epistemically) private and hence incommunicable (roughly on the model of a traditional empiricist story about the character of immediate experience). Fastening upon the claim that 'that which can be indirectly communicated cannot be directly communicated', this reading goes on to assign much too drastic a sense to talk about that which 'cannot be directly communicated' – one which obliterates the possibility of communication altogether and leaves no room for (a coherent version of) talk about 'indirect communication'. (Thus Kierkegaard is usually saddled with a flagrantly incoherent notion of indirect communication.)

34. We will come back to this topic later. The following provisional

formulation will have to suffice for now: the categories of the ethical and the religious, for Kierkegaard, are not brought into play through the (ethical or religious) nature of the object of one's concern. To be concerned with something in the wrong way is to fail to be concerned with it ethically or religiously. So ethical or religious reflection, in the first instance, is directed not towards the object but towards one's *mode of concern* with an object. We come here upon an important bond in Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein: the rejection of the idea that ethics and philosophy of religion (or theology) represent branches of philosophy that are to be distinguished by their distinct forms of subject-matter (by, as it were, the nature of their 'objects').

35. I emphasise this point because it is a common misconception in the secondary literature to think that Kierkegaard is declaring objective forms of reflection to be intrinsically a source of evil. Thus we arrive at a portrait of Kierkegaard as the quintessential irrationalist who deplores his own intellect. Yet Kierkegaard is quite clear that reflection is a precondition of the full ethical or religious life: '[R]eflection itself is not evil, ... a higher degree of reflection implies greater significance than immediate passion; ... because reflection confers, on the average, a greater capacity for action ...' (*The Present Age*, trans. A. Dru, Harper & Row, 1962; pp. 67–8; see also p. 84). The attack is not on reflection *per se* but on a certain species of reflection:

Reflection is not the evil but rather the evil is that state of reflection which leads to a form of complete *stagnation in reflection*: the evil is a kind of abuse and corruption of reflection which occasions a step backwards from action by transforming the prerequisites for action into strategies of *evasion*. (Ibid, p. 68; I have amended the translation.)

The attack in Kierkegaard is on a form of reflection which subserves a strategy of evasion – a form of reflection that offers the promise of enlightening us as to the nature of the ethical or religious life but in fact prevents us from ever arriving at the performance of a decisive action and hence from properly embarking on such a life. The objection is directed toward that species of ethical or religious reflection that is, as he puts it, 'essentially reflective' – which converts the means to ethical or religious practice into an end unto itself and thereby gradually erodes our capacities for decisive action. What is under indictment therefore is a specific mode of thought, one that pretends to address itself to the ethical and religious life while answering to our desire to evade such a life. It is part of the genius of this mode of reflection (i.e. speculative philosophy), as Kierkegaard sees it, to succeed in offering the reflecting individual the semblance of progress where no genuine movement has been made: the individual's position remains 'unaltered because it is altered only in reflection' (Ibid,



- p. 42). Such a mode of reflection transforms every existential task into 'a feat of dialectics' (Ibid).
36. Evaluative assessment must be carried out in terms that are internal to each of the categories. Kierkegaard thinks that there is a 'qualitative' or 'categorical' difference in, for example, what we mean when we say an action is good (i.e. morally praiseworthy) and what we mean when we say that an argument is good (i.e. logically sound). The goodness or badness of an action turns on the character of a 'subjective' relation – a relation between the subject and the act. (Kierkegaard simply assumes that Kant has properly marked a categorical feature of the ethical in laying down the principle that *mere conformity* with the moral law does not suffice to make an action morally good.) The soundness of an argument, on the other hand, is a purely 'objective' matter. (Conformity with principles of sound reasoning suffices to make an argument sound.) Its soundness does not turn in any way on the (moral or religious) spirit in which it is offered.

The distinction at issue here for Kierkegaard is one that applies not only to moral action (as for Kant) but to moral statements as well. For the significance of such statements, he thinks, is in part a matter of a significance which is conferred upon them through the relation they bear to the life of the speaker. To understand a piece of moral or religious language as simply forwarding a thesis (or a piece of doctrine) is, for Kierkegaard, to understand it in purely 'objective' terms. He wants us to see that in our unreflective talk of ethical or religious 'theses' our ordinary concept of a thesis is under considerable strain:

Would the personality of the one who discovered the thesis become a matter of indifference – after the thesis was discovered, as is the case with mathematical and metaphysical theses? – Would it be of importance to the thesis that people knew the personality of the one who had enunciated it? ... [W]e ... require acquaintance with the personality of the speaker with respect to religious theses, and also up to a point, with respect to an ethical thesis, for anyone could state a religious or an ethical thesis, but it would not necessarily follow that in everyone's mouth it would become a religious or an ethical thesis, unless it were assumed that it makes no difference ... whether it was a person who actually knew himself who said 'Know yourself' ... The thesis, to be sure, would be the same, and yet it would become something else – that is, in the one case it would become a thesis, in the other mere chatter – whereas with respect to a mathematical thesis it makes no difference whether it is Archimedes or Arv who enunciates it, provided only that it is enunciated correctly. ... If a two-year-old child could be taught a mathematical thesis it would be essentially just as true in the child's mouth as in the mouth of Pythagoras. ... [Not so] if we taught a two-year-old child to say these words: 'I believe that

there is a God' or 'Know yourself'. ... Do not religious and ethical truths require something else, or another kind of authority? (*Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, Princeton University Press, 1985; pp. 151–2)

37. This touches on a misunderstanding which is rampant in all of the secondary literature on Kierkegaard. One fails to distinguish (aesthetic, ethical or religious) *modes of existence*, from (aesthetic, ethical and religious) *stages on life's way*, from (aesthetic, ethical or religious) *categories*. The aesthetic mode of existence is an idealisation of a confused mode of existence – it represents the attempt to live only in aesthetic categories. There is a sense in which there is no such thing as a fully coherent life lived only in aesthetic categories. What there is instead is the illusion of the possibility of a coherent life of this form. The ethical mode of existence as idealised in volume II of *Either/Or*, on the other hand, is a representation of an equally confused mode of existence. In volume I of *Either/Or*, we are offered someone who aestheticises the ethical, in volume II, someone who moralises the aesthetic and the religious. Properly attaining the ethical stage in life is a matter of doing neither, rather it is a matter of incorporating ethical categories into one's existence without illegitimately extending their scope of application. The fully flourishing human life on Kierkegaard's picture is one which is simultaneously lived within aesthetic, ethical and religious categories and yet which is free of any confusion between the categories.

In any given context, of course, the application of one of the categories immediately crowds out the other two. But within the context of an entire human life, the presence of a context of appropriate application for one of the categories does not exclude contexts which invite the application of the other two categories (any more than the possibility of an appropriate occasion for detached reflection in a human life excludes the possibility of an appropriate occasion for action).

The secondary literature on Kierkegaard makes a complete hash of everything by insisting on the idea that what Kierkegaard wants his reader to do is choose between three 'incommensurable' kinds of existence (one lived only in aesthetic categories, one lived only in ethical categories, and one lived only in religious categories). This misunderstanding has led to innumerable pseudo-problems – particularly about what criteria are supposed to inform a choice in favour of one of these three modes of existence. (There is also a tendency, popularised by Alasdair MacIntyre, to further project the preoccupations of recent analytic moral philosophy onto Kierkegaard by importing the phrase 'the leap of faith', which arises in a very different context, into this discussion in order to provide a semblance of textual support for the idea that what Kierkegaard teaches is the necessity of forcing from oneself 'a blind choice' in favour of one of these three incommensurable 'value-systems'.) Phillips

inherits some of these misunderstandings in his talk of 'aesthetic, ethical and religious perspectives'. It looks to Phillips as if there is a *conflict* between someone's being able to 'embrace' an aesthetic or ethical perspective and someone's 'thinking he is a Christian'. Kierkegaard's aim, Phillips thinks, is to 'disabuse' someone of the idea that they can have it both ways. (See 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', pp. 204–5.) But there is no conflict here. There is room for all three 'perspectives' in a single life. (I have finessed the issue slightly here: Kierkegaard thinks there is a confusion between aesthetic and ethical categories already in the offing when one talks, as Phillips does, of a Christian as *something one is* rather than *someone one becomes*. But I am going to leave this nuance to one side.) What Kierkegaard does want to disabuse his reader of is the idea that religious categories can have application to a life when it is actually lived in such a way that only aesthetic and ethical categories can gain any foothold in it. It is impossible to understand what Kierkegaard means when he speaks of a 'conflation' (or 'confusion', or 'entanglement') of the categories unless one understands that each category *can* have its own proper domain of application in a human life. There is no incompatibility between this and the claim that there are some lives to which, as they are presently constituted, religious categories do not apply.

More importantly for Phillips's own purposes, one needs to hold on to the idea that all of the categories can have an appropriate context of use within a single human life in order to make out the strength of the parallel between (Kierkegaardian) qualitative dialectic and (Wittgensteinian) grammatical investigation. In falling for the idea that only one set of categories can apply to a human life at a time, Phillips spoils his own best insights into the parallels between Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein. (Is Wittgenstein himself nodding towards such a parallel – between what he himself calls a grammatical investigation and what Kierkegaard calls a demarcation of categories – in *Zettel*, §86? He certainly read enough Kierkegaard to be interested in the parallel.)

38. Though it should be added, most of what the ancients called 'philosophy' falls under the category of the ethical for Kierkegaard. Socrates is his paradigm of the ethical teacher (see, for example, chapter 1 of *Philosophical Fragments*). The ethical teacher's aim is to serve as a midwife who enables us to give birth to our true self. This he does not by imparting a doctrine but by serving as an occasion through which the repression of knowledge – which one cannot help but already have – is undone.

No doubt, Kierkegaard allows himself to operate with a highly stylised and partial characterisation of each, but it is worth being clear about what sorts of polemical purposes his streamlined opposition between the ancients and the moderns is meant to serve. The difference between ancient and modern philosophy is epitomised for him (see, for example, the discussion in *De Omnibus Dubitandum*

*Est*) by the difference between ancient and modern scepticism. The ancient sceptic understood his task (of undertaking to doubt everything) to comprise a strenuous spiritual discipline, the observance of which required the transformation of his everyday existence. The modern sceptic, on the other hand, undertakes the injunction to universal doubt as an intellectual exercise which carries no immediate implications for his practical conduct. To be an ancient sceptic is to be concerned, above all, not with the epistemic status of certain propositions but with living a certain sort of a life. To be a modern philosopher is to be concerned with what can be doubted through a purely intellectual effort, regardless of what can actually be doubted in the context of one's everyday life. As Kierkegaard sees it, the ancients took philosophy to consist in a practical activity (of moulding the self), while the moderns take it to consist in a theoretical activity (of subjecting a set of beliefs to critical scrutiny). For the ancients, philosophy had its telos in the sphere of the ethical (in the practical task of disciplining the passions, shaping the self, and transforming its mode of existence), whereas the moderns (often unwittingly) confine philosophy to the sphere of the aesthetic – specifically, to the sphere of doctrine and the intellectual task of assessing the truth or falsity of various propositions.

The rise of modern philosophy, Kierkegaard believes, has served to reinforce the confusion that becoming a Christian is, above all, a matter of embracing a doctrine rather than expressing a commitment through the character of one's life: 'When Christianity was not a doctrine, when it was one or two affirmations expressed in one's life, God was closer to actuality than when Christianity became doctrine. And with every increase and embellishment of doctrine etc., to the same degree God was distanced' (*Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, eds Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Indiana University Press, 1975), vol. 3, XI A51, p. 414).

39. Now if the charge is one of self-indulgence, Phillips's and Klemke's remarks (see below) are certainly to the point. But, it seems to me, that in suddenly construing the charge of aestheticism to be one of 'aesthetic self-indulgence', Phillips has completely shifted the ground. This way of understanding Thompson's worry would completely destroy the parallel that Phillips himself goes on to develop so nicely between Thompson's charge against Kierkegaard and Holland's worry about Wittgenstein. A charge of mere self-indulgence does not raise the questions of authorship that Phillips himself wants to explore. This suggests that the worry about self-indulgence has to be kept distinct from what Phillips himself (elsewhere in his article) wants the charge of aestheticism to be about.
40. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 205.
41. Quoted by Phillips, 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 205.
42. R.F. Holland, 'Not Bending the Knee', *Philosophical Investigations*, (Jan. 1990).

43. From *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, edited by Rush Rhees (Oxford, 1991), p. 94.
44. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 203. (The quotations are from Holland, p. 20.) I should say that it is by no means clear to me that Phillips has Holland right in taking these thoughts (expressed in Holland's article) to represent conclusions which are endorsed by Holland. Here is the sentence which introduces the central quotation from Holland which Phillips adduces:

That statement of Wittgenstein's, 'I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view,' is paradoxical enough to provoke a response composed of Socratic scepticism together with deflationary diagnosis, on lines like the following: [... then follows Phillips's quotation].

Phillips understands the scepticism and the deflationary animus to represent Holland's own considered attitude towards Wittgenstein's puzzling remark. I take it that the paragraphs which follow in Holland's essay represent an attempt to explore a highly dismissive response to Wittgenstein's remark, partly in order to later compare this response to certain equally dismissive views of A.E. Taylor. But remarks throughout the latter part of the essay (especially on pp. 24, 26, 28) suggest that Holland's own view of Wittgenstein is considerably more nuanced and is not simply to be identified with the earlier exploration of a 'response composed of Socratic scepticism together with deflationary diagnosis'. Part of what obstructs Phillips's view of the dialectical structure of the essay is his assumption that Holland 'endorses A.E. Taylor's view' (p. 206). He seems to have missed the various passages in which Holland rounds on Taylor (pp. 26-8).

Throughout the remainder of this essay, my references to 'Holland' are therefore to be understood as references to 'Holland, according to Phillips' or, alternatively, to 'the sceptical response to Wittgenstein's remark explored by Holland'.

45. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', pp. 212-13.
46. It is something of a mystery to me why Phillips does not draw the parallel conclusion about Kierkegaard and the relation that the knowledge we have of his life bears to a proper understanding of his grammatical investigations. Why the asymmetry in his treatment of this issue with respect to Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein? I wonder if perhaps the key lies in Phillips's feeling that he knows for a fact that Kierkegaard was a religious person - that, as he puts it, Kierkegaard, unlike Wittgenstein, 'responded religiously to the language of Scripture' ('Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 213). (Kierkegaard, however, would want to challenge that Phillips is in any position to know this about the author of the pseudonymous works, and he would

also want to challenge what possible bearing such knowledge could have upon an understanding of one of these works.) The problem here is perhaps also tied to a further asymmetry Phillips believes he sees between Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein: 'Kierkegaard is not simply clearing up grammatical confusions', he is also 'challenging people about the meaning of their lives' (p. 211). We will come to the question of how much of an asymmetry there is here.

47. Hence Wittgenstein in his *Lectures on Religious Belief* says that if someone believes (in the relevant sense) in the Last Judgement: 'It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life' (*Lectures and Conversations*, ed. Cyril Barrett, University of California Press, 1966, p. 54). Such a belief is, he says, with respect to our ordinary practices of justification, 'unshakeable'.
48. It is against the background of this sort of issue (concerning what sort of life the person who calls himself a Christian leads) that one should understand Kierkegaard's incessant remarks about how Christianity is not a doctrine. The connection between these two topics is explicit in the following passage:

Christianity is not a doctrine. . . . Christianity is a message about existence. . . . If Christianity (precisely because it is not a doctrine) is not reduplicated in the life of the person expounding it, then he does not expound Christianity, for Christianity is a message about living and can only be expounded by being realized in men's lives. (*The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. P. Rohde, Citadel, 1960; p. 117)

Wittgenstein writes:

Christianity is not a doctrine, not, I mean a theory about what has happened and will happen to the human soul, but a description of something that actually takes place in human life. . . . I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to change your *life*. (Or the *direction* of your life.) (*Culture and Value*, pp. 28, 53)

It is worth noting here the parallel with Nietzsche as well:

It is false to the point of absurdity to see in a 'belief', perchance the belief in a redemption through Christ, the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he who died on the cross *lived*, is Christian . . . Not a belief but a doing, above all a *not-doing* of many things, a different *being* . . . States of consciousness, beliefs of any kind, holding something to be true for example . . . are a matter of complete indifference . . . To reduce being a Christian, Christianness, to a holding something to be true, to a mere phenomenality of consciousness, means to negate Christianness. (*The Anti-Christ*, §39)

Kierkegaard himself is willing to put the point in the following extreme terms:

God himself is this: *how* one involves oneself with Him. . . . In respect to God, the *how* is *what*. (*Journals*, vol. 2, X A 644, p. 123)

49. He claims that all his reader requires in order to be able to arrive at this discovery is 'some capacity for observation' (*The Point of View for My Work as An Author*, p. 22).
50. Something which might look like a version of Holland's worry can arise here: if Wittgenstein himself is not a religious person, how can he provide a characterisation of what is distinctive about religious concepts which faithfully reflects the role those concepts actually play within the context of a religious life? Maybe he can't. Maybe he will do a better job with some concepts than with others. But, first of all, the measure of whether he has succeeded is the extent to which a religious person (someone in whose life these concepts do play a role) is able to accept the descriptions Wittgenstein offers. No appeal to Wittgenstein's own life (in which such concepts might not play the requisite role) is required. Secondly, it is worth noting that certain religious concepts (that is, certain concepts which mimic the grammar of religious concepts) might play a role in one's life even if one is not a religious person. Consider, for example, a claim Stanley Cavell makes about modernist art in the course of an (unjustly neglected) essay on Kierkegaard:

[O]ur serious art is produced under conditions which Kierkegaard announces as those of apostleship, not those of genius. I do not insist that for us art has become religion . . . but that the activity of modern art, both in production and reception, is to be understood in categories which are, or were, religious. (*Must We Mean What We Say?*, p. 175)

Whether one is prepared to follow Cavell here or not (Kierkegaard, I suspect, would not), must we not be willing to countenance an idea of this general sort – the idea that religious categories can play a role in the life of someone who is not in any conventional sense religious – if we are to make sense of Wittgenstein's remark that he could not 'help seeing every problem from a religious point of view'?

From the claim that the applicability of a religious concept depends upon the character of an individual's life it does not follow that therefore all such concepts only have application to the life of someone who is a 'religious person' in the conventional sense. The fact that, for example, many otherwise thoroughly secular individuals will choose to consecrate their marriage through a religious ceremony might be taken to suggest that (where it is not

simply a case of hypocrisy or philistinism) we here have to do with a concept which such individuals wish to understand not (or not only) – at least, until it's time for a divorce – in terms of, say, legal categories (contract, rights, obligations, infringements, etc.) but, in the first instance, in terms of categories which are recognisably religious (love, charity, trust, devotion, sanctity, etc.). Whether a given relationship is or is not a marriage in this latter sense cannot be determined by consulting the marriage licence. Here we have an example of a way in which individuals who are not (and perhaps do not wish to be) 'religious persons' may still have a felt need for concepts which have traditionally been articulated in terms of religious categories.

If there was ever an author of whom one could say 'He is not a religious person but he cannot help seeing the problems from a religious point of view' then certainly it is Nietzsche. I take Nietzsche (in, for example, his own discussions of the concept of marriage) to be a philosopher who is concerned to argue that, in the wake of the death of God, part of our task lies in determining which religious categories do (and which ones do not) still have fruitful application to the lives we presently are able to lead. It is precisely part of the profundity of the crisis (and the inescapability of the confusion) precipitated by the death of God, for Nietzsche, that we are not presently in a cultural position to simply chuck all of the categories bequeathed to us by the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

51. That is, with the pertinent exception of Kierkegaard.
52. My point, of course, is not to deny that a knowledge of a philosopher's life can helpfully inform our understanding of his thought. I linger over this issue here because various versions of Thompson's and Holland's shared confusion are very widespread. This problem has reached epidemic proportions in the scholarly community with respect to the interpretation of the ethical and religious 'doctrines' of the *Tractatus*. A prevailing assumption is that the work largely remains silent on these matters because, so this very confused story goes, the point of the work is that such matters must be passed over in silence. These are things, we are told, that cannot be said but only shown. But if nothing is actually said about these matters, how are we to know what it is that the work holds can only be shown? In this set of considerations commentators find a rationale for thinking that one has no choice but to turn to an examination of the details of Wittgenstein's life in order to find out the real teaching of the work. According to this rationale, a familiarity with Wittgenstein's (admittedly fascinating) life plays an ineliminable role in the interpretation of the work. It comes to seem as if, taken on its own without biographical supplementation, the work itself is unable to lead the reader to an understanding of its teaching with respect to ethical and religious matters. A proper understanding of the work seems to depend on a proper perspective on the author's life. (Usually beginning from some slogan

- such as 'subjective truth cannot be directly communicated', one finds an almost perfectly parallel rationale in Kierkegaard scholarship for absorbing oneself in his equally fascinating life in order to lay bare that which the work passes over in silence.)
53. *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1932-1935*, ed. Alice Ambrose (University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 97.
  54. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', pp. 200-1. I am going to leave to one side the question of what 'foundationalism' is or how it might bear on our topic. The question seems to me a delicate one. One reason for my being uncomfortable with how Phillips puts the matter here is that it plays into a prevailing assumption that Wittgenstein's thought should be understood as (at least more closely) allied to one of the two sides in a dispute between foundationalists and anti-foundationalists (or realists and anti-realists). But it is hard to see how any straightforward attempt to take sides in such a dispute could avoid committing itself to substantive philosophical theses of an anti-foundationalist (or anti-realist) variety. Such a perception of Wittgenstein's philosophical alliances therefore seems to make unavoidable the conclusion that he seriously underestimates the extent to which his own teaching presupposes a set of significant and controversial theses concerning the nature of truth, knowledge, etc.
  55. *Logic Matters* (University of California Press, 1980), p. 265.
  56. If one understands quietism to itself comprise a substantive metaphilosophical thesis (to the effect that significant philosophical debate is impossible) then, of course, one may start to feel that one does have a tidy little self-mate on one's hands after all.
  57. For an interesting and far more extensive discussion of this question, see Peter Winch's postscript to Norman Malcolm's *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (Cornell University Press, 1994). Malcolm's book itself in large part comprises an (in my opinion, rather unhappy) attempt to answer this question.
  58. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, eds Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Indiana University Press, 1975), vol. 6, X A 383, p. 427; quoted by the editor on p. 160 of *Point of View*.
  59. Two notable exceptions – who do take this little book to heart – are M. Holmes Hartshorne in *Kierkegaard: Godly Deceiver* (Columbia University Press, 1990) and M. Jamie Ferreira in 'The Point Outside the World: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Nonsense, Paradox, and Religion', *Religious Studies* 30:1 (1994).
  60. *The Point of View for My Work as An Author*, pp. 24-5.
  61. *Ibid*, p. 25.
  62. *Ibid*, p. 41.
  63. *Ibid*, pp. 40-1.
  64. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 181.
  65. Part of the point of drawing the distinction between 'Christianity' and 'Christendom' is to open up this avenue of response to an

interlocutor who wants to hold on to certain (perverse) uses of the word. But it is of critical importance that a work such as the *Postscript* is not directed to a reader of this sort.

66. Given what I say here, it would be natural to draw the following conclusion: in so far as the attribution of such a grammatical confusion does not apply to a particular individual, to that extent, he is not a prospective reader of one of the pseudonymous works – he is not part of the audience these works wish to target. Although perhaps rhetorically useful, this remark is actually quite misleading as it stands. It is the correct thing to say as long as one confines one's attention to the overarching motive of the authorship: namely, to destroy the monstrous illusion. If someone is not confused about the categories and does not pretend to be a Christian then he is not part of the monstrosity. Hence this much in the remark is right: to the extent that one has no use for religious categories – that is, one has not only no wish to apply them to one's own life, but no wish to use them at all – to this extent these works have nothing to say to one. It is perfectly possible to live without religious categories. Indeed, Kierkegaard thinks that virtually all of his (purportedly Christian) readers presently lead such a life – this is precisely what he wants to bring home to them.

But Kierkegaard does not think it is possible to live a coherent life without availing oneself of *ethical* categories. He also thinks that, in our compulsively reflective age, we tend to be almost as confused about the ethical as we are about the religious. We are inclined to convert a problem that calls for a form of action into a problem of a different form – into one which calls for interminable reflection. Modern philosophy is to this extent merely a symptom of the age. Kierkegaard thinks we have all become corrupted and we all suffer from an inclination towards intellectual evasion. We all tend to conflate the aesthetic and the ethical: we try to resolve something which requires an effort of the will through an application of the intellect – to mistake what he calls a 'subjective problem' for an 'objective problem'. So – to the extent that we are all children of the present age – the prospective audience of the authorship is: everyone.

67. This region of Kierkegaard's thought represents one respect in which the transition from Wittgenstein's early to his later thought marks a movement increasingly towards (rather than, as we shall see is the case in other respects, away from) Kierkegaard.
68. Climacus remarks in the Introduction to the *Postscript* that it is 'a temptation for the believer' to 'transform faith into something else, into a certainty of a different order, replacing its passionate conviction by ... probabilities and guarantees ...' (p. 15).
69. Lessing's influence on Kant is most evident in his writings on religion, but it is by no means confined to these. In addition to 'What Is Orientation in Thinking' (which is Kant's intervention in the controversy between Jacobi and Mendelssohn as to who is the true

heir of Lessing's thought), see, for example, the distinctions between different kinds of belief drawn in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A820–30/B848–58), and the long footnote in 'On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy' (in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, trans. P. Fenves, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 60–3n) in which Kant distinguishes between ordinary belief (by which 'one understands something intermediate between opinion and knowledge' and the truth of which can be estimated to be more or less probable) and faith (the object of which 'can be judged neither probable nor improbable' because 'it cannot be judged at all'). Given the crucial role such a distinction (between faith and ordinary belief) plays in the Critical Philosophy, there is a sense in which it becomes impossible to determine how much of an influence one should discern in the echo of Lessing one can hear whenever Kant speaks, as he often does in characterising his project, of 'having to surrender the language of *knowledge*' in order to 'have sufficient ground to employ . . . the quite legitimate language of a firm *faith*' (A745/B773).

70. Climacus pays Lessing (what for Kierkegaard is) the highest philosophical compliment: 'he knows how to . . . make the categories stand out more clearly' (*Postscript*, p. 88).
71. Wittgenstein's debt to this region of Lessing's thought comes largely by way of Kierkegaard. (Though in *Culture and Value* (p. 8) he tells us he has been reading Lessing on the Bible.) For example, in his *Lectures on Religious Belief*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between a religious use of expressions such as 'I believe' and a scientific or historic use:

In a religious discourse we use such expressions as: 'I believe that so and so will happen,' and use them differently from the way in which we use them in science.

Although, there is a great temptation to think we do [use them the same way in both]. Because we do talk of evidence, and do talk of evidence by experience.

We could even talk of historic events.

It has been said that Christianity rests on a historic basis.

It has been said a thousand times by intelligent people that indubitability is not enough in this case. Even if there is as much evidence as for Napoleon. Because the indubitability wouldn't be enough to make me change my whole life.

It doesn't rest in an historic basis in the sense that the ordinary belief in historic facts could serve as a foundation.

Here we have a belief in historic facts different from a belief in ordinary historic facts. . . . [T]hey are not treated as historical, empirical, propositions (p. 57).

Who are the intelligent people who said '[I]ndubitability is not enough in this case. Even if there is as much evidence as for Napoleon'? Napoleon's existence was not a possible candidate of

historical conjecture in Lessing's day, but otherwise the passage is straight from Lessing. The original example featured the Napoleon of the ancient world. Here is Lessing:

What does it mean to accept an historical proposition as true? to believe an historical truth? Does it mean anything other than this: to accept this proposition, this truth as valid? to accept that there is no objection to be brought against it? to accept that one historical proposition is built on one thing, another on another, that from one historical truth another follows? to reserve to oneself the right to estimate other historical things accordingly? . . .

We all believe that an Alexander lived who in a short time conquered almost all of Asia. But who, on the basis of this belief, would risk anything of great, permanent worth, the loss of which would be irreparable? Who, in consequence of this belief, would forswear for ever all knowledge that conflicted with this belief? Certainly not I. Now I have no objection to raise against Alexander and his victory: but it might still be possible that the story was founded on a mere poem . . .

If on historical grounds I have no objection to the statement that Christ raised to life a dead man; must I therefore accept it as true that God has a son who is of the same essence as himself? What is the connection between my inability to raise any significant objection to the evidence of the former and my obligation to believe something against which my reason rebels? . . .

[T]o jump with that historical truth to a quite different class of truths, and to demand of me that I should form all my metaphysical and moral ideas accordingly . . . because I cannot set any credible testimony against the resurrection of Christ: if that is not a 'transition to another realm of thought', then I do not know what Aristotle meant by this phrase. (*Lessing's Theological Writings*, ed. Henry Chadwick, Stanford University Press, 1957, pp. 53–4)

The entire first chapter of the *Postscript* is an implicit commentary on this passage and this is later made explicit (p. 88). (The second chapter is explicitly a commentary on a later passage taken from the same essay in which Lessing confesses himself unable to perform the leap of faith.) Climacus takes this passage to furnish a paradigmatic example of 'a confusion of the categories' (pp. 31, 88) and offers the following diagnosis of the confusion by way of an analogy with an embarrassed lover:

Well then, everything being assumed [historically] in order with respect to the Scriptures – what follows? Has anyone who previously did not have faith been brought a single step nearer its acquisition? No, not a single step. . . . Has anyone who previously had faith gained anything with respect to its strength and power? Not in the least. Rather it is that in this voluminous



knowledge, this certainty that lurks at the door of faith and threatens to devour it, he [who previously had faith] is in so dangerous a situation that he will need to put forth much effort . . . lest he fall victim to the temptation to confuse faith with knowledge. . . .

Here is the crux of the matter: . . . For whose sake is it that the proof is sought? Faith does not need it; aye, it must even regard the proof as its enemy. But when faith begins to feel embarrassed and ashamed, like a young woman for whom her love is no longer sufficient, but who secretly feels ashamed of her lover and must therefore have it established that there is something remarkable about him – when faith . . . begins to cease to be faith, then a proof becomes necessary so as to command respect from the side of unbelief (pp. 30–1).

72. Cavell, 'Kierkegaard On Authority and Revelation', op. cit., p. 170.
73. 'You are inclined to put our difference in one way, as a difference of opinion. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion . . . If there is an opinion involved, my only opinion is that this investigation is immensely important and very much *against the grain*.' (*Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. Cora Diamond, Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 103.)
74. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 186.
75. 'For my task is to oppose a given factor wrongly promulgated – so it is not to promulgate something on my own account, rather, I might say, it is to play the role of dissipating the smoke' (*Point of View*, p. 137; I have amended the translation).
76. This is not as modest an aim as perhaps it appears to be. The most proximate and purely negative aim of the authorship is to combat the hypocrisy of Christendom. A frank acknowledgement from a reader that he is not a Christian represents significant progress, however, not only in this purely negative respect, but in two positive respects as well.

First, because enabling someone self-consciously to undertake to live a life that shuns Christian categories is to enable them to lead one kind of religiously honest existence. (To put it in Kierkegaard's terms: such an existence may not be free of despair, but it is free of hypocrisy.) For Kierkegaard – as for Dostoevsky – 'the complete atheist stands on the penultimate step to most perfect faith (he may or may not take the further step), but the indifferent person has no faith whatever except a bad fear' (*The Possessed*, trans. Constance Garnett, Modern Library, 1936, p. 698). From this point of view, atheism (where this is understood as involving a conception of how one should live) is a kind of faith – a form of religiosity – in that it constitutes a decisive response to the question: what sort of role do I want religious categories to play in shaping my life? This is how Climacus puts the point (about what constitutes a genuine relation to Christianity) in the *Postscript*: ' . . .

Christianity is subjectivity, an inner transformation, an actualization of inwardness, and . . . only two kinds of people can know anything about it: those who with an infinite passionate interest in an eternal happiness base their happiness upon their believing relationship to Christianity, and those who with an opposite passion, but in passion, reject it – the happy and the unhappy lovers. . . . [A]n objective indifference can therefore learn nothing at all' (p. 51). The problem with Christendom, with its pervasive confusion of subjective and objective categories, is that it obstructs the possibility of someone entering into either of these relationships to Christianity.

Thus, secondly, even if the effect of Kierkegaard's authorship were only to completely purge Denmark of all the people who wished to think of themselves as Christians, that would still constitute a significant advance. For it would clear the path for someone someday who did wish to become a Christian. In particular, it would allow it to once again become clear that a Christian is not something one simply *is*, but rather someone one must *become*: 'There is really something tragically true in the fact that it would be better if Christianity were not proclaimed at all than that it be done as it is now. . . . [T]he disaster is that people get used to hearing everything without having the remotest notion of doing something' (*Journals*, X A 19, vol. 1, p. 315).

77. Climacus's criticism of Jacobi in the *Postscript* is on the grounds that Jacobi loses sight of the fact that the choice for such a life is one that must be undertaken without assistance: ' . . . when one is to leap, one must be alone about it' (p. 93). Climacus observes that Jacobi's tendency is to try 'to transform the leap into something objective' (ibid). Jacobi offers his philosophy as if it presented terms which helped to make the leap into the religious life seem more attractive and easier, as if it assisted one somehow in performing the task. The contrast highlighted in these pages between Lessing's attitude to the leap and Jacobi's is meant to draw attention to Jacobi's temptation to think that the right philosophical account of faith can help to carry one into the religious life. Jacobi's philosophy aspires to offer assistance where no one can ease the burden of another.
78. Various commentators have wished to call attention to a moral fervour which informs the pages of *Philosophical Investigations*. See especially Stanley Cavell, 'Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture' (in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*, University of Chicago Press, 1987).
79. *Culture and Value*, p. 33.
80. Ibid, p. 34.
81. Rhees, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, op. cit., p. 193. The entire passage from which this remark is drawn – a meditation on the connection between 'lying to oneself about oneself' and what one can hope for from one's writing – is very much to the point.



82. *Culture and Value*, p. 16.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
84. What is wrong in Holland's idea of how an understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy should draw upon his biography should not be taken to imply that one must discard the thought that philosophy for Wittgenstein draws on autobiography. It would be as erroneous with respect to Wittgenstein as it is with respect to Kierkegaard to think that because one need not concern oneself with how the concepts under investigation in his writing figured in Wittgenstein's own personal life, one therefore also need not reflect upon the ways in which those concepts figure in one's own life.
85. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, 1st edn, p. 57. I have amended the translation.
86. 'Authorship and Authenticity: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein', p. 186. Phillips is here quoting Bouwsma.
87. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, eds Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Indiana University Press, 1975), vol. 3, VIII A 110, p. 7.
88. *Culture and Value*, p. 56.
89. It is customary in the secondary literature to understand the crucial difference between kinds of nonsense to lie, therefore, in a distinction between mere nonsense (which signifies nothing) and deep nonsense (which shows that which cannot be said). I criticise this way of understanding the parallel between the *Postscript* and the *Tractatus* in 'Must We Show What We Cannot Say?' (in *The Senses of Stanley Cavell*, eds Richard Fleming and Michael Payne, Bucknell University Press, 1989; pp. 242–83).
90. *Postscript*, p. 223.
91. 'And now I come to an expression about myself which I am accustomed to use of myself . . . The expression I use is, that in relation to the intellectual and religious fields, and with a view to the concept of existence, and hence to the concept of Christianity, I am like a spy in a higher service . . . I have nothing new to proclaim; I am without authority, being myself hidden in a deceit; I do not go to work straightforwardly but with indirect cunning' (*Point of View*, p. 87).
92. Kierkegaard even goes so far as to say we have a *duty* to undertake to deceive the self-deceiver in someone:

Teleological suspension in relation to the truth (i.e. to suppress something for the time being in order that the truth might become plainer) is a plain duty to the truth and . . . a proper use of the [capacity for] reflection man has bestowed upon him. (*Point of View*, p. 91)

Kant writes (in the midst of a discussion on 'man's propensity for self-deception'):

To deceive the deceiver in ourselves, or the tendency to deceive,

is a fresh return to obedience under the law of virtue. It is not a deception, but rather a blameless deluding of ourselves. (*Anthropology*, trans. V.E. Dowdell, Southern Illinois University Press, pp. 37–8)

93. *Point of View*, pp. 39–40.
94. *Postscript*, p. 245n.
95. If one construes an indirect communication as a direct communication then 'the point is missed; then the reader is led into misunderstanding – he gets something more to know . . . but he receives it as knowledge so that he keeps right on sitting in the *status quo*' (*Journals*, vol. 1, VI B 40:45, p. 260).
96. *Point of View*, p. 40.
97. *Culture and Value*, p. 18. Kierkegaard originally uses the analogy of the mirror in connection with the pseudonymous authorship, but Anti-Climacus later goes on to develop the analogy at great length in connection with the reading of Scripture:

What is required in order to look at oneself . . . in the mirror of the Word? The first requirement is that you must not merely look at the mirror, observe the mirror, but must see yourself in the mirror. . . . The second requirement is that in order to see yourself in the mirror when you read . . . you must (so that you actually do come to see yourself in the mirror) remember to say to yourself incessantly: It is I to whom it is speaking; it is I about whom it is speaking. . . . [If it] is for you merely a doctrine, something impersonal and objective, then it is no mirror – an objective doctrine cannot be called a mirror; it is just as impossible to look at yourself in an objective doctrine as to look at yourself in a wall. . . . [I]t takes a personality, an *I*, to look at oneself in a mirror; a wall can be seen in a mirror, but a wall cannot see itself or look at itself in a mirror. (*For Self-Examination*, trans. Hong and Hong, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 25, 35, 43–4)

This is perhaps the place to remark that I do not take what I say in this essay about the structure of the pseudonymous authorship to apply to the works authored by Anti-Climacus. They do not belong to the corpus of what Kierkegaard calls 'the aesthetic works'. His comments in *The Point of View* about the method of indirect communication as employed by the other pseudonyms – as a strategy of deceiving the reader into the truth – are not meant to apply to Anti-Climacus. The reasons for employing the device of pseudonymity in this case lie elsewhere. Kierkegaard is not prepared to say of himself, as Anti-Climacus will say of himself, that he is 'an extraordinary Christian such as there has never been'. Hence the name Anti-Climacus: he is the antithesis – the polar opposite – of Climacus, the pseudonym who repeatedly says of himself that he is not a Christian.

98. *Point of View*, p. 40.
99. In what follows I borrow from my 'The Search For Logically Alien Thought: Descartes, Kant, Frege and the *Tractatus*' (*Philosophical Topics*, Spring, 1993), where I explore such a reading of the *Tractatus* in further detail.
100. I explore what this point involves in more detail in my 'Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder' (in *Yale Review*, vol. 79, no. 3).
101. The letter is dated 8 August 1932; quoted in *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten*, ed. M. Nedo and M. Ranchetti (Suhrkamp, 1983); p. 255. I am indebted to Peter Winch's postscript to Norman Malcolm's *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (op. cit.) for drawing my attention to this letter.
102. I elaborate this distinction with respect to the *Postscript* and explore the parallel with the *Tractatus* much more fully in 'Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense' (in *Pursuits of Reason*, eds Cohen, Guyer and Putnam, Texas Tech University Press, 1993).
103. *Postscript*, pp. 551–2.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 226, 235, 252.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 245n.
106. *Ibid.*
107. *Ibid.*, p. 545.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
109. The 'madness' of Climacus's undertaking in the *Postscript* is briefly hinted at in the penultimate paragraph of the Introduction, directly after the distinction between the objective problem and the subjective problem has first been introduced:

The subjective problem concerns the relationship of the individual to Christianity. To put it quite simply: How may I, Johannes Climacus, participate in the happiness promised by Christianity? The problem concerns myself alone; partly because, if it is properly posed, it will concern everyone in the same manner... So that the posing of the problem cannot be regarded as a presumption on my part, but only as a special kind of madness. (p. 20)

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 546–7.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 547.
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Ibid.*, p. 548.
115. It seems reasonable to assume (as James Allen has suggested to me) that the simile of the ladder is borrowed from the ancient sceptics, who Kierkegaard so greatly admired. Sextus Empiricus, at the conclusion of *Against the Logicians*, writes:

Just as, for example, fire after consuming the fuel destroys also itself, and like as purgatives after driving the fluids out of bodies expel themselves as well, so too the argument against proof, after abolishing every proof, can cancel itself also. And again, just as

it is not impossible for the man who has ascended to a high place by a ladder to overturn the ladder with his foot after his ascent, so also it is not unlikely that the Sceptic after he has arrived at the demonstration of his thesis by means of the argument proving the non-existence of proof, as it were by a step-ladder, should then abolish this very argument (*Against the Logicians*, II, 480–1; trans. R.G. Bury (Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 487–9).

116. What I say here about the *Postscript* (about the entire plan of the work embodying a parody of speculative philosophy) is proposed not as a general formula for how to read all of the pseudonymous works, but only as an account of the structure of the three works involving the persona of Johannes Climacus: *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, the *Philosophical Fragments*, and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. The third of these works makes explicit what is implicit in the structure of the other two: that they have the form of ladders which are to be climbed up, in order, in the end, to be thrown away. Climacus's works (as opposed to the other 'aesthetic works') are designed to engage, exhibit and defeat the form of temptation to evade the demands of the religious life which Kierkegaard sees as characteristically exacerbated by an enthusiasm for philosophy: the temptation to construe (what Kierkegaard calls) an 'existential' difficulty as one which calls for a particularly subtle exercise of the intellect. Thus Climacus is Kierkegaard's philosophical pseudonym: he is meant for the religiously confused reader whose strategies of evasion are supplied by neo-Hegelian philosophy. The other pseudonyms are designed to engage, exhibit and defeat other forms of temptation and evasion. Nevertheless, in so far as they are all directed to ways of aestheticising, moralising or mystifying the religious, they are each concerned with a particular kind of confusion of the categories. In this sense, their elucidatory task is still (now in Wittgenstein's rather than Kierkegaard's sense of the term) of a *philosophical* nature. This task is not effected in each of the pseudonymous works through the same device (e.g. a ladder that is to be thrown away), but they all share a common structure in the general sense that it is left to the reader to put two and two together. They all employ 'a strategy of indirection': each serves as a mirror in which a certain kind of reader (philosopher, aesthete, moraliser, etc.), prone to certain sorts of temptations, can recognise himself. This, of course, is not to say that these temptations are mutually exclusive. Kierkegaard, on the contrary, suspects that most of his readers will be able to recognise different aspects of themselves in each of the pseudonyms.
117. *Postscript*, Hong and Hong translation (Princeton University Press, 1992).
118. 'Contemporary British Philosophy', reprinted in *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations*, ed. George Pitcher (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 9.

119. Ibid, pp. 9–10.
120. I discuss Climacus's reading of Lessing in further detail in 'Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and Nonsense', op. cit.
121. 'What is here in dispute is not the practical interests of reason but the mode of their presentation [*nicht die Sache, sondern der Ton*].' (*Critique of Pure Reason* A744/B772)
122. Ibid, A756/B784.
123. Ibid, A vii.
124. Ibid, A341/B399.
125. This is not to deny that Wittgenstein does also eventually come to think that quite a bit of surreptitious substantive doctrine was smuggled into the *Tractatus* after all.
126. Obviously, Wittgenstein also had numerous other criticisms of his early work. This is not the right place to attempt to undertake a quarrel with the standard picture of the relation between early and later Wittgenstein (according to which the transition in his thought is primarily a shift in doctrine), but it is the right moment to recommend Cora Diamond's attempt to do so in *The Realistic Spirit* (MIT Press, 1991).
127. Appendix B to *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (Blackwell, 1979).
128. Ibid, p. 233.
129. Ibid, p. 183.
130. Rush Rhees writes, in the context of reporting various remarks of Wittgenstein's, that his aim was 'to demolish... the whole idea of philosophical discussion as a contest in which one settles who's right and who's wrong' (*Discussions of Wittgenstein*, Schocken, 1970, p. 42).
131. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, p. 184.
132. *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 22.
133. Quoted by Rhees in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*, p. 43.
134. *Philosophical Investigations*, §§126–8.
135. See *Philosophical Investigations*, §500.
136. *Culture and Value*, p. 24.
137. *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 33.
138. As we have seen, this region of later Wittgenstein's thought parallels a moment in Kierkegaard's thought: the idea that philosophical misunderstandings arise through the mistaking of a categorial triviality (e.g. 'faith excludes doubt') for an epistemological mystery (e.g. 'what kind of evidence would suffice?').
139. I do not mean to suggest that Sellars and Wittgenstein share the same conception of the obvious. Nevertheless, the passage from Sellars from which I have borrowed this phrase does reveal striking similarities (such as the thought that 'the mere occurrence of philosophical dispute entails that at least one of the parties is tangled in a confused formulation') as well as significant differences (such as that Sellars has no trouble with the idea that the obvious – which philosophy is in quest of – can be expressed in the form of assertions; hence Sellars is happy to speak of philosophy as arriving at answers to questions):

[I]n philosophy, as opposed to the factual sciences, the answer to a properly formulated question must, in the nature of the case, be obvious. . . . [T]he evolution of philosophical thought is accurately conceived neither as a series of different answers to the same questions, nor as a series of different sets of questions, but rather as the series of approximations by which philosophers move toward the discovery of the very questions they have been trying to answer all the time. This conception of philosophy as a quest of which the goal is the obvious, is, I believe, a sound one. It is the problems and not the answers that are difficult; and a genuine advance is constituted by the replacement of a confused by a less confused question, where the two are in some sense the same.

. . . [P]hilosophy as an ongoing enterprise depends for its existence on lack of clarity; . . . the mere occurrence of philosophical dispute entails that at least one of the parties is tangled in a confused formulation. This thesis is by no means novel, yet many who subscribe to it conceive of philosophical confusion as confusion the removal of which leaves nothing *philosophical* behind unless it be the score for a repeat performance, so that philosophy *becomes* and never *is*. I have implicitly rejected this view by speaking of philosophical questions and answers. Yet clarification is the significant element in philosophical activity, however its nature be conceived. ('Realism and the New Way of Words', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 8, no. 4, June 1948, pp. 424–5)