Concluding Unscientific Postscript
to
the Philosophical Crumbs

A Mimic, Pathetic, Dialectic Compilation
An Existential Contribution

By

Johannes Climacus

Responsibl e for Publication:
S. Kierkegaard
But really, Socrates, what do you suppose all this amounts to? As I said a little while ago, it is mere scrapings and shavings of discourse, cut up into little bits …

_Hippias Major, § 304a_
Preface

Fate may seldom have so favoured a literary undertaking in accordance with its author’s wishes as my *Philosophical Crumbs*.\(^1\) In doubt and unforthcoming as I am in all matters of personal opinion and self-appraisal, there is one truth I may confidently assert concerning the fate of that little piece: it has caused no sensation, none whatever. Undisturbed, and in accordance with his own motto (‘Better well hanged than ill wed’),\(^2\) the hanged, yes, well-hanged author has been left hanging. No one has asked him, not even playfully and in jest, exactly for whom he was hanging. But that was the wish: better well hanged, yes, better that than by an unfortunate marriage brought into systematic affinity with all the world. Relying on the manner of the piece’s composition, my hope was that it would turn out like this. But in light of the agitated ferment of the times, in light of the constant warnings of prophets, visionaries and speculators, I feared I might see my wish confounded through some mistake. It is always awkward, even for the most insignificant traveller, to arrive at a town just when, in a state of the highest but most diverse expectation – some with cannons drawn up and fuses lit, with fireworks and illuminated placards in readiness, some with the town hall...

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\(^1\) *Philosophiske Smuler eller en Smule Philosophi, SKS* 4 (traditionally translated as *Philosophical Fragments*), published on 13 June 1844 under the pseudonym ‘Johannes Climacus’, with Kierkegaard, as here, accepting responsibility for publication. The work is often referred to in the text as ‘the Crumbs’.

\(^2\) ‘Bedre godt hængt end slet gift.’ Danish rendering of the German translation of the clown’s ‘Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage’ in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. Motto of *Philosophiske Smuler*. 

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ceremoniously decorated, reception committee booted, speakers prepared, some with urgent systematic pen dripping and notebook opened – everyone is awaiting the arrival incognito of the promised one. A mistake can always happen. Literary mistakes of this kind belong to the order of the day.

So, thank heaven it did not happen. With no fuss, no shedding of blood or ink, the piece has remained unnoticed, un-reviewed, unmentioned anywhere. No tinkling of literary bells in its connection has added to the ferment; no scholarly outcry has misled the expectant throng; no warning shout from the outpost has brought the citizenry of the reading world to its feet. Just as there was no hocus-pocus about the project itself, so too has fate exempted it from all false alarms. The author is thus also in the happy position of not, quaque author, owing anyone anything, I mean critics, reviewers, intermediaries, consultants etc., who in the literary world are just like tailors in the civic world, who ‘make the man’: they style the author, position the reader correctly, through their assistance and art a book amounts to something. But the same is true of these benefactors as Baggesen\(^3\) says about the tailors: ‘They kill them again with bills for the creation.’ One comes to owe them everything, without even being able to pay off the debt by writing a new book, for that new book’s significance, if it has any, is again due once more to these benefactors’ art and assistance.

Encouraged by that favour of fortune I now mean to press ahead. With nothing in my way, or any pressing regard to the demands of the times,\(^4\) following solely my inner impulse, I continue as it were to knead the thoughts until to my notion the dough is a good one. Aristotle says somewhere\(^5\) that people now prescribe the absurd rule for narration that it should be rapid, and continues: ‘It is fitting to remember here the answer given to a man kneading dough who asked if he should make it hard or soft: “What, can’t you make it good?”’ The one thing I fear is a sensation, especially the appreciative kind. Although the age is broad-minded, liberal, and speculative; although the sacred claims of personal liberty have their cherished and applauded spokesmen, it nevertheless seems to me that the matter is not grasped dialectically enough. For otherwise one would not repay the strenuous exertions of the elect with noisy jubilation, hip-hip hurrahs at midnight, torchlight processions and other distracting encroachments on personal liberty. In lawful things

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\(^3\) Jens Baggesen (1764–1826), Danish writer.
\(^4\) For the source of this expression see the translator’s introduction.  
\(^5\) Rhetoric, 1416b29–32.
everyone should be allowed, it seems only fair, to do as he likes. The encroachment occurs only when what one person does puts another under an obligation. Thus any expression of disapproval is permissible since it imposes no obligation on the life of another. If the mob brings a *perēat*\(^6\) on a man, it does not interfere with his freedom; he is not urged to take any action, nothing is demanded of him, he can remain sitting undisturbed in his living room, smoke his cigar, occupy himself with his thoughts, joke with his sweetheart, relax in his morning-gown, sleep without a care – yes, he can even be out, since personal presence is in no way required.

Not so, however, with a torchlight procession. If the object of celebration is not at home he must return at once. If he has just lit a fragrant cigar he must instantly put it down. If he has gone to bed he must straight away get up, hardly has time to pull on his trousers and must go out under the open sky bareheaded to make a speech. What is true for the prominent with regard to those collective expressions of opinion holds also in more modest circumstances for us humble folk. A literary attack, for instance, constitutes no encroachment on the author’s personal freedom, for why should anyone not be allowed to express his opinion, and the object of the attack is still free to go on with his work, fill his pipe, let the attack go unread, etc. An expression of approval is on the other hand far more questionable. A criticism that ushers you out of the literary realm is no encroachment, but a criticism assigning a place within it is worrisome. A passer-by who laughs at you puts you under no obligation at all; he becomes, on the contrary, your debtor for having given him something to laugh at. The parties remain free to pursue their own ways, unhindered by an intrusive or binding mutuality. A passer-by who stares at you defiantly, as much as to intimate that you are not worth taking his hat off to, puts you under no obligation at all; on the contrary, he relieves you of having to do something, from the inconvenience of tipping your hat. An admirer, on the other hand, cannot be so easily got rid of. His tender courtesies soon become so many liabilities laid on the unfortunate object of admiration, whose life, before he realizes it, labours under heavy taxes and duties, even were he the most independent of men. If one author borrows an idea from another without naming his source, and makes something absurd out of the borrowed idea, he makes no encroachment

\(^6\) Latin: let him die, death to…
on the other’s personal rights. If he mentions him by name, however, perhaps even with admiration as the one to whom he owes, yes, that wrong-headed notion, he creates a most embarrassing situation. Grasped dialectically the negative is therefore no encroachment, only the positive. How strange! Just as that freedom-loving nation, the North Americans, have invented the cruellest punishment, silence, so too has a liberal and broadminded age invented the most illiberal forms of pestering: torchlight processions in the evening, popular demonstrations three times a day, hip-hip hurrahs for the great, and similar lesser annoyances for humble folk. The principle of sociality is precisely illiberal.

The present offering is again a piece, proprio Marte, proprio stipendio, propriis auspiciis. The author is proprietor in so far as he is the private owner of the crumb he does own; but otherwise he is as far from having bonded tenants as from being one himself. His hope is that fortune will smile on this little project once again and, above all, avert the tragicomedy of some or other prophet in deep earnest, or a rogue as a joke, going off and making the age believe that it is something, and then running off, leaving the author stuck with it like ‘the pawned farmer’s lad’.

J. C.

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7 Part of a nineteenth-century penal system developed in Auburn, NY, in which inmates worked by day and were kept in solitary confinement at night with silence enforced at all times.

8 Latin: of my own accord, at my own expense, at my own risk. The expression occurs in rearranged form in the first line of the Preface to Philosophical Crumbs.

9 Reference to a comedy by the Dano-Norwegian dramatist and playwright Ludwig Holberg (1684–1745), its title usually translated as The Pawned Farmer’s Helper (1726).
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2. The existing subjective thinker is, in his existence-relation to the truth, just as negative as positive, has just as much of the comic as he essentially has of pathos, and is constantly coming to be, i.e., striving.

3. Lessing has said: accidental historical truths can never become evidence of eternal truths of reason, also that the transition whereby one will build an eternal truth on historical reports is a leap.

4. Lessing has said: If God held all truth in his right hand and constant striving in his left, he would choose the latter.
   a. There can be a logical system.
   b. There can be no system for life itself.

Section Two  The subjective problem, or how subjectivity must be for the problem to appear to it

Chapter 1  Becoming subjective: what would there be for ethics to judge if becoming subjective were not the highest task set for a human being; what must be set aside on a closer understanding of this; examples of thinking directed towards becoming subjective.

Chapter 2  The subjective truth, inwardness; truth is subjectivity. Appendix: Glance at a contemporary effort in Danish literature.

Chapter 3  Actual, ethical subjectivity; the subjective thinker
   § 1. Existing; actuality.
   § 2. Possibility higher than actuality; actuality higher than possibility; poetic and intellectual ideality; ethical ideality.
   § 3. The simultaneity of the individual moments of subjectivity in the existing subjectivity; the simultaneity as contrasting with the speculative process.
   § 4. The subjective thinker – his task, his form, i.e., his style.

 Appendix

Glance at a contemporary effort in Danish literature.

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Excerpt

More information
Chapter 4 The problem of the *Crumbs*: how can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?

Section 1 For orientation in the plan of the *Crumbs*

§ 1. That the point of departure was taken in paganism, and why

§ 2. The importance of a preliminary agreement about what Christianity is before there can be talk of a mediation of Christianity and speculation; the absence of an agreement favours mediation, while its absence also makes mediation illusory; the coming of the agreement prevents mediation

§ 3. The problem of the *Crumbs* as prefatory not to Christianity but to becoming a Christian

Section 2 The problem itself

The individual’s eternal happiness is decided in time through the relation to something historical, which is moreover historical in such a way that it includes in its composition that which according to its nature cannot become historical and must consequently become so on the strength of the absurd

A The element of pathos

§ 1. The *initial expression* of existential pathos: the absolute orientation (respect) towards the absolute τέλος, actively expressed in the reshaping of existence – aesthetic pathos – mediation’s deception – the medieval monastic movement – relating at one time absolutely to one’s absolute τέλος and relatively to what is relative

§ 2. The *essential expression* of existential pathos: 

*sufering* – fortune and misfortune as aesthetic life-view in contrast to suffering as religious life-view (elucidated in the religious address) – suffering’s actuality (humour) – suffering’s actuality in the latter connection as the mark of an existing person relating to an eternal happiness – the illusion of religiousness – trial – the basis and meaning of suffering in the former connection: dying to immediacy yet remaining in the finite – an edifying divertimento – humour as the incognito of religiousness
§3. The decisive expression of existential pathos is guilt – that the investigation goes backwards instead of forwards – the eternal recollection of guilt is the highest expression of the relation of guilt-consciousness to an eternal happiness – lower expressions of the consciousness of guilt and corresponding forms of atonement – self-imposed penance – humour – the religiousness of hidden inwardness

Intermediate clause between A and B

B The dialectical aspect

§ 1. The dialectical contradiction that is the break: expecting an eternal happiness in time through a relation to something else in time

§ 2. The dialectical contradiction that an eternal happiness is based on something historical

§ 3. The dialectical contradiction that what is historical here is not something plainly historical but formed of what can be historical only against its nature, accordingly on the strength of the absurd

Appendix to B The retroactive effect of the dialectical element on the pathos in sharpening pathos and the moments simultaneously present in this pathos

a. Sin-consciousness
b. The possibility of offence
c. The pain of sympathy

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Appendix: Understanding with the reader

A first and last declaration by S. Kierkegaard

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