

## Kierkegaard and Religion

No thinker has reflected more deeply on the role of religion in human life than Søren Kierkegaard, who produced in little more than a decade an astonishing number of works devoted to an analysis of the kind of personality, character, and spiritual qualities needed to become an authentic human being or self. Understanding religion to consist essentially in an inward, passionate, personal relation to God or the eternal, Kierkegaard depicts the art of living religiously as a self through the creation of a kaleidoscope of poetic figures who exemplify the constituents of selfhood or the lack thereof. The present study seeks to bring Kierkegaard into conversation with contemporary empirical psychology and virtue ethics, highlighting spiritual dimensions of human existence in his thought that are inaccessible to empirical measurement, as well as challenging on religious grounds the claim that he is a virtue ethicist in continuity with the classical and medieval virtue tradition.

Sylvia Walsh is the author of *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode* (2009), *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (2005), and *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics* (1994); translator of *Kierkegaard's Discourses at the Communion on Fridays* (2011) and *Fear and Trembling* (Cambridge, 2006); and co-editor of *Feminist Interpretations of Kierkegaard* (1997). She directed a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College Teachers on Kierkegaard and served as president of the Søren Kierkegaard Society, co-chair of the Kierkegaard, Religion and Culture Group in the American Academy of Religion, and advisory board member of International Kierkegaard Commentary.

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# Kierkegaard and Religion

*Personality, Character, and Virtue*

SYLVIA WALSH

*Stetson University*



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## Abbreviations

- BA *The Book on Adler*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)
- CA *The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. and trans. Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)
- CD *Christian Discourses* and *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997)
- CI *The Concept of Irony* together with “Notes on Schelling’s Berlin NSBL Lectures,” ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989)
- CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to “Philosophical Fragments,”* 2 vols., ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)  
*Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- DCF *Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, trans. Sylvia Walsh (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011)

- EO 1, EO 2 *Either/Or*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)
- EPW *Early Polemical Writings*, ed. and trans. Julia Watkin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- EUD *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, ed. and trans. Howard H. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- FPOSL *From the Papers of One Still Living*. In *Early Polemical Writings*, ed. and trans. Julia Watkin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- FSE *For Self-Examination [and] Judge for Yourself!*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- FT *Fear and Trembling*, ed. C. Stephen Evans and Sylvia Walsh and trans. Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)  
*Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)  
*Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Books, 1985)
- IKC: CA *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985)
- IKC: CD *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Christian Discourses and The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007)
- IKC: EO 1, EO 2 *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or, Parts I and II*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995)
- IKC: CUP *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments,"* ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997)
- IKC: EUD *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003)



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- IKC: FSE/JFY *International Kierkegaard Commentary: For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002)
- IKC: FT/R *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995)
- IKC: PC *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004)
- IKC: PF/JC *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994)
- IKC: PV *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Point of View*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010)
- IKC: SUD *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Sickness unto Death*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987)
- IKC: TA *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984)
- IKC: WA *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Without Authority*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006)
- JC “Johannes Climacus or De omnibus dubitandum est.” In *Philosophical Fragments* and “Johannes Climacus,” ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- JFY *Judge for Yourself!* In *For Self-Examination* [and] *Judge for Yourself!*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- JP *Søren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers*, 7 vols., ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1, 1967; 2, 1970; 3 and 4, 1975; 5–7, 1978)

- KJN *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, 11 vols., gen. ed. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1, 2007; 2, 2008; 3, 2010; 4 and 5, 2011; 6, 2012; 7, 2014; 8, 2015)
- PC *Practice in Christianity*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- PCCP *Philosophical Crumbs, or A Crumb of Philosophy*, trans. M. G. Piety (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- PF *Philosophical Fragments*. In *Philosophical Fragments* and "Johannes Climacus," ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- PV *The Point of View*, "The Single Individual," *On My Work as an Author*, "Armed Neutrality," ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)
- R *Repetition*, trans. M. G. Piety (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Repetition*. In *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983)
- SKP *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 2nd enlarged ed., ed. Niels Thulstrup, with index vols. 14–16 by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968–78)
- SKS *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup, and Alastair McKinnon, published by Søren Kierkegaard Forskningscenteret (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997–2011)
- SLW *Stages on Life's Way*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988)
- SUD *The Sickness unto Death*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)
- TA *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and The Present Age. A Literary Review*, ed. and trans. Howard

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- TDIO V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)  
*Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)
- TM “*The Moment*” and *Late Writings*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998)
- UDVS *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)
- WA *Without Authority*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)
- WL *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)