

Søren Kierkegaard's struggle to live at Frederiks Hospital in Copenhagen

It would... not be without interest if one could from present-day knowledge shed light on the nature of illness¹

Søren Kierkegaard was a well-known author when in the autumn of 1855 at the age of 42 and seriously ill he was admitted to Det kongelig Frederiks Hospital in Copenhagen.



Frederiks Hospital in Copenhagen. During his stay Kierkegaard was in a private ward on the first floor of the building to the left.

Behind him he had a comprehensive authorship of 5,000 pages of published volumes and in addition 8-10.000 pages of diary and journal entries².

Kierkegaard made his *début* as an author in 1843 with the pseudonymous, two-volumed work *Either/Or*, and soon



The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). He popularized seeing philosophy and other cultural phenomena in a historical context. He broke with the traditional conception of the subject, since he pointed out that the individual's consciousness is created in interaction

with other individuals, and in so doing he also anticipated modern scientific disciplines like sociology, developmental psychology, communication theory and systems theory. In his library Kierkegaard had many books by Hegel.

afterwards followed works such as *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *Repetition* (1843), *Philosophical Crumbs or a bit of philosophy* (1844), as well as *Stages on Life's Way* (1845).

Kierkegaard's last pseudonymous work was *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846). In this work Kierkegaard clarifies his position regarding Hegel's system of thinking, his theory about the soul (*Geistteori*), where he claims that speculation is not the way to the truth.

The crucial thing is the fervour, the sincerity with which a particular person maintains what he or she considers to be the truth.

Kierkegaard expresses it slogan-wise with the phrase 'subjectivity is the truth'.

As one can read in his *About my Work as an Author* (1851) and *The Point of View of My Work as an Author* (posthum 1859), Kierkegaard is a religious author. His fundamental view of religion is deep-rooted, not only in his works under his own name, as for example *Eighteen Edifying Speeches* (1845), *Works of Love* (1847) and *For Self-Examination* (1851), but also in the pseudonymous works.

That he is a religious author does not mean that he is a devotional author. Kierkegaard does not wish to make Christians of us or tell us how we should conduct our lives.

What he does wish to do is to make us aware that the Christian life is a possibility for existence, as is the case with aesthetics and ethics.

For Kierkegaard one is not a more 'genuine human being' because one is at a religious rather than an aesthetic or ethical stage.

Shortly before he was admitted to the Royal Frederiks Hospital, Kierkegaard issued a number of pamphlets under his own name which he called *Øieblikket* (*The Moment*, no. 1-10; 1855).

Over the years Kierkegaard had been seething inwardly about official Christianity, about Bishop Jakob Peter

The theologian Jakob Peter Mynster (1775-1854). Kierkegaard's father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard (1756-1838), who was a hosier, went to hear him preach and both Kirkegaard and his brother, Peter Christian Kierkegaard (1805-1888) were confirmed by him. After Mynster's death in 1854 criticism of his aristocratic, conservative opinions grew, not least from



Kierkegaard, whose violent attacks on his person and efforts for the predominant state church challenged the opinion in which he was held by his contemporaries and posterity. – “Mynster's Corridor”, where Kierkegaard was buried, was probably named after Mynster's father, Chr. G.P. Mynster (1741-77), who was the director of The Royal Frederiks Hospital.