

Kierkegaard in Copenhagen Seminar: *The Sickness unto Death*

Øresund Summer University - 2007

The aim of this seminar-style course is to become acquainted with Søren Kierkegaard's influential book on philosophical anthropology, *The Sickness unto Death*. We will read *The Sickness unto Death* with an eye to Kierkegaard's understanding of the conditions the modern person faces when attempting to define "self." Unlike other nineteenth-century attempts to define the self as a substance or thing, Kierkegaard's pseudonym, Anti-Climacus, introduces a concept of self understood in terms of relationships – relationships to self, history, other human beings, and God. Similarly, we will examine Anti-Climacus' concept of "sin," defined as a refusal to be oneself. Sin can thus be understood as an individual's uncritical acceptance of a concept of self that is culturally defined, or an equally problematic concept of self that is "created" by an individual in a process of continual reinterpretation. Finally, we will discuss how *The Sickness unto Death* fits into Kierkegaard's authorship more generally.

Place: Købmagergade 42-44
Auditorium 11
Copenhagen K

Time: July 2 – August 6, Mondays, Wednesdays & Thursdays.
13:15-15:15.

Main Text: Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness unto Death* (1849).

The seminar will be conducted in English and we will refer to Alastair Hannay's translation of *The Sickness unto Death* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989). Readers of Danish, however, should read Kierkegaard's *Sygdommen til Døden* in the original Danish, (*Søren Kierkegaard s Skrifter*, vol. 11, Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2006). Some reading material will also be passed out in class.

Course Coordinators:

K. Brian Söderquist, Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen.
Richard Purkarthofer, Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, Copenhagen.

Requirements:

- a) Active class attendance (75 % attendance as documented in the attendance record).
- b) Familiarity with a reading list of 1,200-1,500 pages.
- c) A written paper of 12-15 pages (2400 characters per page, including spaces), based on 500-750 pages of literature.

Course Outline

Week 1:

1. *Mon. July 2*, Introduction and Orientation.

Reading: “Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Anthropology, in Ten Minutes” (handout).

2. *Wed. July 4*, The Modern Situation and The Lost Self

Readings: “The Unhappiest One,” pp. 217-230, (Danish: *SKS 2*, 213-223) and “Diapsalmata,” pp. 17-43, (Danish: *SKS 2*, 25-52) from *Either/Or* (handout).

3. *Thurs. July 5*, *The Concept of Anxiety*: Anxiety, Spirit, and the Fall.

Reading: *The Concept of Anxiety*, pp. 25-51, (Danish: *SKS 4*, 332-356) (handout).

Week 2:

4. *Mon. July 9*, *The Concept of Anxiety*: Anxiety of Evil, and Anxiety of the Good.

Reading: *The Concept of Anxiety*, pp. 111-136, (Danish: *SKS 4*, 413-437) (handout).

5. *Wed. July 11*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part One”: The Self as a Synthesis.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 35-51, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 113-137).

6. *Thurs. July 12*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part One”: The Self as a Synthesis.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 52-72, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 138-157).

Week 3:

7. *Mon. July 16*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part One”: Not to Want to be a Self – Weakly.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 73-91, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 157-175).

8. *Wed. July 18*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part One”: To Want to be a Self – Defiantly.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 92-105, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 175-187).

9. *Thurs. July 19*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part Two”: Despair is Sin.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 106-120, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 188-201).

Week 4:

10. *Mon. July 23*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part Two”: Despair is Sin.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 121-137, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 201-216).

11. *Wed. July 25*, *The Sickness unto Death*: “Part Two”: Despair is Sin.

Reading: *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 138-165, (Danish: *SKS 11*, 217-242).

12. *Thurs. July 26*, The Restless Spirit of Comparison

Reading: “What We Learn from the Lilies in the Field and the Birds in the Air” from *Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits* (1847).

Optional Reading, Sartre on the look of the Other, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 276-292.

Week 5:

13. Mon. July 30, Silence and Worship

Reading: *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air* (1849) (Danish: SKS 11, 5-48).

14. Wed. August 1, To Be Present to Oneself in Joy

Reading: *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air* (1849) (Danish: SKS 11, 5-48).

15. Thurs. August 2, Who Can Understand Suffering and Standing Alone, before God.

Reading: "The High Priest" "The Tax Collector" "The Woman Who Sinned" (1849).
(Danish: SKS 11, 243-280).

Week 6:

16. Mon. August 6 She Loved, She Forgot herself, She Found Forgiveness

Reading: "The High Priest" "The Tax Collector" "The Woman Who Sinned" (1849).
(Danish: SKS 11, 243-280).

Final Paper Due August 31.

Bibliography Suggestions:

Louis Dupré, *Kierkegaard as Theologian* New York: Sheed and Ward 1963, (229 pages).

Patrick Gardiner, *Kierkegaard*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988.

Arne Grøn, *Subjektivitet og Negativitet*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1997 (443 pages).

Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard and Philosophy*, London: Routledge 2003, (257 pages).

Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaard's Psychology*, trans. by Bruce Kirmmse, Pittsburgh:
Duquesne University Press, 1978 (522 pages).

George Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Crisis of Faith*, London: SPCK, 1997 (145 pages).

George Pattison, *Kierkegaard as Philosopher*, Chesham: Acumen, 2005 (205 pages).

Robert Perkins (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary to Sickness unto Death*, Macon:
Mercer University Press 1995.

Richard Purkardhofer, *Kierkegaard*, Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 2005 (123 pages).

Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2003 (695 pages).

Pia Soltoft, *Svimmelhedens Etik*, Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2000 (399 pages).