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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Joy Ibsen. *Here and Hereafter: The Eternity Connection*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015. 253 pp.
Reviewed by Dan Mikel

Here and Hereafter: The Eternity Connection is Joy Ibsen's third book. A Grundtvigian Dane, she has been the editor of *Church and Life*, the publication of the Danish Interest Conference, for over ten years and is the author of *Songs of Denmark* (2005) and *Unafraid* (2009). In 2006 Joy Ibsen received the Danish Heritage Preservation Award from Grand View College (now Grand View University) in Des Moines, Iowa.

Each of Joy Ibsen's books has a different guiding theme. While examining *Songs of Denmark* the reader can once again sing from *A World of Song* with familiar selections such as the lively "The Danish Hiking Song" and the reflective "Evening Star." The reader can live the Grundtvigian life in song. In *Unafraid* the reader encounters straightforward sermons from Joy's father, Reverend Harold Ibsen, accompanied by Joy's insights into their application to our lives today. The combination brings thoughtful messages for all of us.

Her most recent book, *Here and Hereafter: The Eternity Connection*, is a deeply personal book. More than a simple chronological memoir of life events, it is also a spiritual memoir about loss, sorrow, joy, and peace. The author lays her Grundtvigian life bare, challenging readers to examine our own lives and spiritual thoughts and growth. At first glance one might suppose that the subject of death to be the basis of a very grim book. While moist eyes and tears can come to the reader, *Here and Hereafter* is also uplifting. It affirms life.

Death has been a companion throughout Joy Ibsen's life. In *Here and Hereafter*, we read about the death of her grandparents and parents. We are touched by the death of a childhood friend; stricken with grief over the suicide of a college friend; we join the nation in mourning the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King; mourn the death of a very young child of a neighbor and friend; experience the deaths of adult friends; acknowledge the death of a former husband; and suffer the agony of losing a beloved family dog.

Each of the twenty-six "life endings" that the author has experienced and shares with her readers is a self-contained episode. They are united by a common thread, however, which the reader can

quickly discern. The author not only describes the difficult situations she has experienced; she also offers guidance in dealing with them based on that experience. We need to practice forgiveness. We need to become aware of the extraordinary. We should ask ourselves, "What have we given our children, the next generation?" "Is it adequate?" We are urged to tell our own stories, create our own spiritual legacy, and share it.

My first reaction to this book was that Joy has led an unlucky life with so many experiences with life endings. Upon reflection, however, I realized death has been a frequent part of my life as well and I daresay in the lives of almost all readers. The value of *Here and Hereafter* is that the author derives a deeper meaning from her experiences, which, by extension, challenges all of us to do the same.

Joy has combined these experiences in an autobiographical way, so the book is also an earthly memoir of her life. Make no mistake, the primary purpose of *Here and Hereafter* is not to review Joy's life for its own sake, but to see the meaning of the joyful and sorrowful events in Joy's life and, as a result, the meaning of our own lives. There are future life endings and future chapters yet to be experienced. *Here and Hereafter* helps us prepare for their inevitable arrival.

The goal of *Here and Hereafter* seems to be to prompt readers to consider their own spiritual journeys through life and it succeeds at this masterfully. Be prepared to complete reading one chapter and have an overwhelming urge to continue to the next one. It is a difficult book to set aside.

Here and Hereafter is available directly from Joy Ibsen (joyibsen.com) or through amazon.com.

Carol Schroeder and Katrina Schroeder. *Eat Smart in Denmark: How to Decipher the Menu, Know the Market Foods & Embark on a Tasting Adventure*. Madison, WI: Ginkgo Press, 2014.

Reviewed by Samantha Ruth Brown

As a part of the *Eat Smart* series, Carol “Orange” Schroeder and her daughter Katrina Schroeder teamed up to create *Eat Smart in Denmark: How to Decipher the Menu, Know the Market Foods & Embark on a Tasting Adventure*, a guide specific to Denmark that provides visitors an insider view of Danish cuisine. Their book is an informative tool for those interested in traveling to Denmark and exploring Danish food and culture, but it is also useful for Danish enthusiasts interested in the country’s food culture. The book includes a history of Danish cuisine, menu guides, recipes, suppliers of Danish food abroad, and other resources.

Carol Schroeder received her MA in Scandinavian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is best known for running the shop Orange Tree Imports in Madison for over forty years, but she also has translated several books and conducted academic research on Denmark. Katrina Schroeder has worked as a book editor in the past, but is now a trained dietitian working in nutritional counseling in Boston. Both women have extensive experience traveling to Denmark and learning about Danish cuisine, allowing them to provide advice about how to better understand Danish culture and food specifically, but also the New Nordic Cuisine movement more broadly.

The book opens by exploring the history of Danish cuisine. Beginning in the Stone Age, the chapter emphasizes the Danes’ traditional dependence on fish and other shellfish, as well as grains such as rye, barley, and oats. Although potatoes were not produced in Denmark until the early 1700s and pork began to gain popularity much later because of its importance to Danish agriculture and farm cooperative movements in the 1800s, many people perceive potatoes and pork products to be central to Danish cuisine, as illustrated by the selection of *stegt flæsk med persillesovs og kartofler* (fried pork belly with parsley sauce and potatoes) as Denmark’s national dish in 2014. Other iconic dishes such as *æbleskiver* and *wienerbrød* (Danish pastry or “Danishes”) also appeared during this period. While these dishes continue to be popular today, chefs such as René Redzepi of the famous restaurant Noma are looking back at Stone Age and Viking Era

methods to help them emphasize “purity, simplicity, and freshness” in the New Nordic Cuisine movement. This section contextualizes the development of Danish cuisine in relation to the country’s history, discussing the legacy of the Vikings, the Kalmar Union, Denmark’s role in the two world wars, and the decline and revitalization of Danish food in connection with these events.

The following section dives deeper into the major dishes of Danish cuisine, as well as some of individual regions’ particular traditions and notable foods. The authors highlight major foods beloved across Denmark, such as *smørrebrød* (open-faced sandwiches), the *pølsevogn* (hotdog stand), cheese, pork, herring, and ice cream, and then discuss the individual regions and, finally, traditional food for Danish holidays. While many Danes take for granted the specific pairings of food, such as eating shrimp with mayonnaise and lemon on an open-faced sandwich or ordering *guf* and a *flødebolle* on top of their old-fashioned ice cream cone, this section makes these pairings accessible to travelers and those hoping to create a Danish experience at home. It expands on the history of Danish cuisine, by noting, for example, that Hanne Nielsen invented Havarti and Danish blue (*Danablu*) cheese in northern Zealand in the 1870s, the island of Funen is known for its production of marzipan, and Southern Jutland is characterized by their *kaffebord* (coffee table), which started as a way for ethnic Danes to socialize in the region and includes at least fourteen different cakes and cookies. The section concludes by exploring Danish food traditions during holidays, ranging from the dishes served at the various Christmastime celebrations to New Years cod, birthday layer cakes, and the love of fresh strawberries and new potatoes in the spring.

Section three includes a number of recipes, translated into English as well as American or imperial measurements, allowing the reader to bring Danish culture closer to home. These recipes come from respected Danish chefs, such as Claus Meyer, known as one of the fathers of the New Nordic Cuisine movement and for his restaurants and bakeries around Denmark. The recipes offer the perfect opportunity for ethnic Danes abroad to learn more about their heritage and for foodies to experiment with Danish recipes. Among other things, the authors have adapted recipes for hot mulled wine, rye bread, curried herring, meatballs, cabbage, and *æbleskiver*. This section is also accompanied

by a number of pictures of food, chefs, and locations in Denmark discussed in the previous sections.

The remaining chapters in the second half of the book deal with more technical aspects of Danish cuisine. Section four discusses tips for shopping in Denmark, highlighting the newly constructed Torvehallerne market in Copenhagen, which coexists with Danish grocery stores, small specialty shops, and street vendors. Section five offers a detailed list of businesses abroad that sell Danish and other Scandinavian items, beginning with food and specialty shops that include an online or mail-order option and continuing with businesses in different parts of the United States and Canada, as well as more online resources for further research and information. Section six includes useful phrases to use in restaurants and markets, such as *hvad anbefaler du?* (what do you recommend?) and *er denne ret stærkt krydret?* (is this dish spicy?). Section seven begins briefly with a description of Danish eating habits, particularly when they eat, what they eat for each meal, etiquette, and the ubiquitous Danish concept of *hygge*. This is followed by an extensive list of Danish foods, including not only translations, but also a description of the items. One description reads, “Dagmartærte (National Favorite): buttery pastry (*smørkage*) that can be either round or rectangular. Named for Queen Dagmar (1186-1212), the *Dagmartærte* is not really a tart; it belongs to the group of pastries called *wienerbrød*” (90). The eighth and final section includes a list of recommended food establishments across Denmark.

Carol and Katrina Schroeder’s guide is unique in its ability to inform the reader about authentic Danish foodways and how these can be replicated outside of Denmark. Travel guides often focus on restaurants and a small handful of notable foods, but this guide is more comprehensive in its thorough description of Danish foodways at home, supplementary to the restaurant and market recommendations. Not only do Danes not frequently dine out, as noted in the book, but grocery store staples such as rye bread and liver pâté are central to a Danish diet; thus, because of the book, travelers to Denmark will be more confident in their ability to purchase Danish foods in place of more recognizable staples like spaghetti and tomato sauce, as well as saving money.

There are two particular aspects of Danish cuisine that were either missing or limited in detail that should be expanded upon in a later edition of the book. In the same way that a guide about English

cuisine could not avoid discussing the influence of Indian cuisine on its foodways, recognizing the larger influence of particularly Middle Eastern cuisine in Denmark would provide an even fuller understanding of Danish eating habits. The authors address this issue early on in the book, citing their prioritization of traditional Danish foods over the contemporary Danish food landscape. They note, “while we acknowledge that dining options in Denmark have become very international, we also realize that most people already know how to order a pizza, spaghetti, or a taco. Our goal in this chapter is to introduce you to foods that are traditionally Danish” (19). However, the book could also inform American readers about popular dishes in Europe that they are largely unfamiliar with, such as *shawarma*, that also help explain the emergence of dishes such as *boller i karry*. Furthermore, the phenomenon of *lørdagsslik* (Saturday candy), when Danes across the country head to a local candy store to buy *bland selv slik* (pick and mix candy), is absent from the book, yet remains a widely practiced tradition.

Eat Smart in Denmark makes an important and valuable contribution to the literature about Danish cuisine that both Danes and non-Danes can learn from. Its most notable asset is its ability to make Danish cuisine accessible, whether that is to ardent travelers interested in the New Nordic Cuisine movement, Danes abroad who are curious about where they can buy their beloved salty licorice, or persons of Danish heritage who want to learn more and potentially replicate Danish traditions abroad. Each chapter includes extensive descriptions and can be read independently, making the book a great resource for those with a wide range of needs, and I would enthusiastically recommend it.

John Erichsen and Mikkel Venborg Pedersen. *The Danish Country House*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015, 2014. 253 pp., hardbound, illustrated in color and black and white, \$80.00.
Reviewed by Ed Polk Douglas

The stately homes of England, the castles of Scotland, the chateaux of France, the villas of Italy—many of those sites are familiar to lots of Americans, either from travels or coffee table books. But the country houses (*herregaarde* / manors) of Denmark? They are an undiscovered treasure. Amazingly, for a country as small as Denmark (about twice the size of Massachusetts), there are around 700 surviving manors, built between 1500 and 2000; and today, more than a hundred are accessible to the public (in various ways), many of these providing accommodations. A Danish-type “Downton Abbey sojourn” is even possible if one has the means!

For readers who are primarily armchair travelers, *The Danish Country House* (hereafter *TDCH*) is a handsome work that seeks to introduce the topic to English-language readers. It certainly succeeds in reaching that goal, but, despite the many wonderful attributes of the book, there are some decided quirks and omissions. On the other hand, since I have awaited a book like this for about six decades—my first trip to Denmark was in 1958, and there were no such references for Americans then—my overall reaction is to say *tillykke* (congratulations) to all involved in its creation. The authors were eminently qualified for this task—their respective credentials would fill a small brochure—and Roberto Fortuna, the principal photographer, is also a master of his craft.

Manors and manor life in Denmark evoke mixed reactions from most Danes, since, in the past, there was a large divide and occasional conflict between the “haves” and the “have nots.” Whatever remains of manor life in Denmark today has had to evolve considerably to survive into modern times since the country’s population is now eighty-five percent urban. Thankfully, the topic has been of serious study in Denmark since 2000, and in fact, *TDCH* has been described as a distillation of an impressive four-volume work: *Herregården: Menneske, Samfund, Landskab, Bygninger* (Erichsen and Pedersen, editors; Fortuna, principal photographer; Copenhagen: 2004-06, republished in 2009).

At first glance, *TDCH* seems logically organized. Informative prefaces by HRH Henrik, Prince of Denmark, and authors Erichsen and Pedersen are followed by two fine, lengthy essays, “Estates and Society in Denmark, 1500-2000” and “The Danish Nobility, 1536-1919” (Ditlev Tamm); the former introduced me to *Den Danske Atlas* (Eric Pontoppidan and others), a seven-volume work created between 1763 and 1781 whose remarkable engravings of Danish landscapes and buildings include manors.

The body of *TDCH* features brief, heavily illustrated essays on relevant topics—“The House,” “The Layout,” “The Household,” “The Landscape,” and “Modern Living and New Economy.” The back matter includes a list of country houses open to the public (along with websites and a map), the authors’ credentials, an index, and the acknowledgements. The illustrations have informative captions, and tiny maps give the location of each of the approximately one hundred sites discussed. There is a lot of data here, and the text is easily comprehensible, notwithstanding some unfamiliar British English words and phrases. The archival photos of “downstairs life” in “The Household” might be of particular interest to Americans since many of our Danish immigrant ancestors probably had more connections to that part of the manors than to “Upstairs.”

Upon careful study, however, quirks and omissions in *TDCH* appear. The choice of arranging the material thematically, rather than chronologically or geographically, often becomes awkward, with photos of different aspects of one property scattered throughout the book; the Country House List and the index have out-of-order additions at their respective conclusions; and there is no cross-referencing of the illustrations without using the index. Oddly, the country house on the cover, Stensballegaard, Eastern Jutland, is not discussed in the book.

The omissions are more significant: there are no footnotes, nor a bibliography, and, while there are architecture-related comments throughout the text (and captions), there is no essay on this topic (nor on manor house interiors, furnishings, or garden design). At the beginning of the book, the authors mention their decision to eliminate the latter as a focus, for they say that other volumes have done this; but for the English-speaking reader, however, this information may not be readily available. Danish domestic architecture and interior decoration from the heyday of the manor house—1500 to 1900—

might not be internationally influential, but it has a distinct character, and the layperson would have benefited from even a brief essay on stylistic developments.

In summary, *TDCH* is a handsomely produced, intelligently written, beautifully photographed introduction to the topic, perhaps the first in English; hopefully, it won't be the last. While there are relevant architectural and decorative arts facts scattered throughout, the volume is primarily a social history, a fact that will disappoint some (including myself). On the other hand, because Danish manors have been seriously studied from many angles for some time, there is available data which easily could provide a companion volume employing the "aesthetic approach." Could I write that book? Certainly not. Would I like to be involved in its creation? Ja! Ja! Ja!

For readers without access to *TDCH* who desire further information on the topic, the worldwide web provides a number of research avenues. Some of these are: visitdenmark.com; slotte-herregarde.dk; danishgardens.dk; and astoft.co.uk/Denmark. Wikipedia has important data too, under these topics, "Architecture of Denmark," "List of castles and palaces in Denmark," and "List of historic houses in Denmark."

Armen Avanesian and Sophie Wenerscheid, eds. *Kierkegaard and Political Theory: Religion, Aesthetics, Politics and the Intervention of the Single Individual*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2014.
Reviewed by Troy Wellington Smith

In their introduction to this eclectic and provocative volume of essays *Kierkegaard and Political Theory: Religion, Aesthetics, Politics and the Intervention of the Single Individual*, editors Armen Avanesian and Sophie Wenerscheid point out that scholars have only relatively recently begun to contest the image of the great Danish philosopher “as an atomistic individualist” (7). In the United States, this earlier portrayal of Kierkegaard can be traced back to his reception in the inter- and postwar period, in which his philosophy addressed to *hiin Enkelte* (that single individual) was read as a corrective to the top-down ideologies and mass political movements that had thus far devastated the century. But whereas in the postwar period Kierkegaard’s concept of “the single individual” was construed in favor of an apolitical quietism, today—as the subtitle of this collection suggests—contemporary philosophers, such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, have enlisted *hiin Enkelte* in the service of radical, interventionist politics. The articles on Badiou and Žižek, which discuss what the editors call “the *religious turn* in contemporary politico-philosophical thought” (8), will be of interest not just to those on the cutting edge of political theory and philosophy; people with an interest in Danish culture should take note of them, as well, since Kierkegaard is at the center of the paradigm shift the editors describe. Indeed, thanks in part to Žižek’s notoriety, Kierkegaard is again enjoying an upsurge in popularity in the United States and elsewhere, even if some accuse Žižek of misreading Kierkegaard beyond all recognition.

Harald Steffes authored the first essay of the volume, “An Apolitical Apostolic Genius: An Appraisal of Kierkegaard’s political Ethics and an Appreciation of Kierkegaard’s Adoption of Hamann’s Ideas.” Hewing closely to Kierkegaard’s texts and biography, Steffes’s contribution will be perhaps one of the most interesting ones for those who concern themselves primarily with Kierkegaard’s authorship, rather than its many permutations in the philosophies of others. Steffes argues that Kierkegaard—as per his communicational theories—could only approach the political indirectly, as he believed any direct communication would only “provoke irresponsible agitation” (22).

Turning first to the pseudonym H. H.'s *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*, and then later to the Anti-Climacus books (i.e., *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*), Steffes demonstrates how Kierkegaard himself overcame the constrictive binary he had created between the genius and the apostle by reading the works of Johann Georg Hamann.

The next essay, "No genius has an 'in order to:'" Kierkegaard's *Reevaluation of Genius and the Rejection of Philosophy as l'art pour l'art*," is by Hans Stauffacher, and it also focuses directly on *Two Ethical-Religious Essays*. According to Stauffacher, for Kierkegaard, "the self-sufficient systems of transcendental and idealistic philosophy, the justification of which is as purely immanent as their teleology, are nothing but *l'art pour l'art* in the pejorative sense of the term" (49). Contra Žižek, Stauffacher argues that the essay "The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle" does not envision a future apostolic philosophy but rather rejects it out of hand as an impossibility. Like Steffes, Stauffacher locates the later Kierkegaard on the *via media* between the genius and the apostle. Unlike the apostle, he is without authority, but, unlike the genius, he does have an "in order to:" to instruct and aid his reader.

Smail Ropic's essay, "Choosing Oneself as a Process of Emancipation: Kierkegaard and Habermas," locates the social dimension of self-choice in both the Danish philosopher and the German critical theorist. Ropic, however, contests Habermas's assertion that Judge William's letters in the second part of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* represent a religious confession, and he convincingly supports this claim by placing *Either/Or* in the context of Kierkegaard's other writings. Instead, Ropic grounds Judge William in the bourgeois ideology and Right-Hegelianism of his period and reveals how Kierkegaard offers an implicit critique of both, in particular in regards to their callousness towards those in poverty. While Habermas maintains that Freudian psychoanalysis is the only means of uncovering one's ideological biases, Kierkegaard, according to Ropic, offers "a more fruitful notion of ideology" in *Either/Or* that both anticipates and exceeds the merely psychoanalytic (76).

Michael Tilley's contribution, "Radical Individualism or Non-teleological Community: Kierkegaard's Precarious Understanding of Self and Other," defines the Kierkegaardian notion of community as dialectical and non-teleological. This is to say that, since community for Kierkegaard is dialectical, "(a) it develops in time and (b) neither

the individual nor society unilaterally conditions the other" (80). Tilley contrasts the Kierkegaardian model of community with that of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, and then presents Kierkegaard's concept of Christian love as an alternative to a common *telos*. As Kierkegaard's *A Literary Review* attests, Christian love will be essential to forming future communities in a modernity in which a common *telos* often no longer exists.

In "Excessive Subjectivity: The Paradox of Autonomy in Hegel and Kierkegaard," Dominik Finkelde examines what Hegel terms "plastic individuals." Examples of these include Antigone, Socrates, and Jesus. For Hegel, the plastic individual first appears to offer a truth claim that "is unfamiliar and extreme," but then is adopted by the masses to the point at which it becomes habitual, unconscious, and customary (128). For Kierkegaard, Abraham is a plastic individual insofar as his divine mission to sacrifice Isaac places him outside the ethical norms of his community. But whereas the truth claims of Antigone, Socrates, and Jesus are, according to Hegel, subsequently understood and assimilated in the *Volksgeist*, Abraham's divinely-inspired attempted murder, according to Kierkegaard, never is and never can be. Finkelde addresses an often-remarked difference between Kierkegaard and Hegel here, but the considerable sophistication with which he treats the latter means that this essay offers a new perspective on a familiar theme.

Wennerscheid, in her article "The Passage through Negativity: or From Self-Renunciation to Revolution? Kierkegaard and Žižek on the Politics of the Impassioned Individual," traces a link between the Kierkegaardian leap of faith and the Žižekian political act. In short, she argues, "What Žižek ultimately seeks in Kierkegaard . . . is a stance that negates all finite and particular determinations and considerations in order to pass into a new and completely different world" (144). According to Wennerscheid, Žižek contradicts Kierkegaard by finding in Hegel "insight into the openness of reality and to the particular role the single individual plays within it" (158). With Hegel, however, one's inwardness is always already subject to custom, while Kierkegaard's concept of the single individual offers Žižek a means of envisioning a liberation from this symbolic order.

Leo Stan, in his essay "Political Gaps: Slavoj Žižek and Søren Kierkegaard," notes Žižek's curious reluctance to address Kierkegaard as a political adversary, in spite of a tradition on the left of dressing down the Danish philosopher. Stan concludes that Žižek's reading

of Kierkegaard is “particularized by the fortuitous isolation of a tiny cluster of concepts and ideas at the expense of the vast remainder of the entire oeuvre” (169).

Avanessian argues in “Anti-Ironic Politics? The Fundamentalisms of Søren Kierkegaard and Carl Schmitt” that both Kierkegaard and Schmitt take the controversy surrounding romantic irony as a starting point for their respective authorships. Kierkegaard and Schmitt share a “*fundamental* opposition to central pillars of modern democratic theory,” but, Avanessian stresses, this opposition “must be marked off from *fundamentalist* positions” (200). It is in this sense that Kierkegaard anticipates the revolutionary potential of Christianity that would later be underscored by both Badiou and Žižek.

In her article “No Three without Two: Badiou with Lacan with Kierkegaard,” Sigi Jöttkandt offers a psychoanalytic reading of the aesthete A’s review of Eugene Scribe’s play *Les premières amours* in the first part of *Either/Or*. The play illustrates, she argues, the impossibility of “an utterly seamless fusion of the subject and Other” (231), which has political implications in that “the mistake of every fascism or totalitarianism is to think that the whole can be reached, that the One can be fully counted and embodied in the presented situation” (236).

The final essay in the volume, entitled “Modern Life is Comic: Kierkegaard’s Category of Repetition in Kabbalah, Fashion and Marriage as a Negative Political Theology,” is by Johannes Thumfart. He examines Kierkegaard’s novella *Repetition* vis-à-vis Kabbalah, and then the figures of the Fashion Designer and Judge William in *Stages on Life’s Way*, in which he finds “two opposite ways of making sense of the modern absence of totality by using repetition” (241). Lastly, Thumfart notes that while Kierkegaard’s concept of repetition somewhat resembles Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit*, Kierkegaard differs from Hegel in emphasizing the essentially incommunicable, private quality of marriage.

In sum, *Kierkegaard and Political Theory* is a rich and diverse collection of essays. While Scandinavianists and Kierkegaardians will surely find at least some interest in most of them, the majority of contributions to this volume are geared more toward those working in the fields of contemporary philosophy and political theory.