

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard

Overview

This course seeks to convey a general understanding concerning the thoughts of Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard. In particular, emphasis is given to the concept of truth.

Course Expectations

(Students must fulfill *all* expectations in order to receive two units to pass the course.)

Attendance - Students are expected to have no more than two unexcused absences.

Paper - Students are expected to write one five-page final paper on selected topics discussed in the course.

Participation - Students are expected to be prepared with assigned readings and engage in interactive discussions.

Course Materials

Course materials will be provided throughout the semester. These materials will include handouts of assigned reading for the following week, as well as other resources which are helpful toward a better understanding of the thoughts of Kierkegaard. These assigned readings will consist in short passages from selected works by Kierkegaard, as indicated for each week. However, students are encouraged to venture beyond assigned course material, especially the works in the following list which will be covered throughout the semester:

Recommended Readings:

1. Kierkegaard, Søren. Philosophical Fragments; Johannes Climacus. trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong. Princeton: Princeton Press, 1985
2. Kierkegaard, Søren. Concluding Unscientific Postscript to *Philosophical Fragments* (Volume I; Volume II optional). trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong. Princeton: Princeton Press, 1992

Schedule

Part I — *Introduction*

1. Overview • Historical Background • Who is Kierkegaard?
2. The Concept of Truth • The Concept of Selfhood • The Concept of Existence

Part II — *Speculative Truth*

3. The Concept of Untruth (Part I) — Can Truth Be Learned?
Philosophical Fragments: I - Thought-Project
4. The Concept of Untruth (Part II) — Can Truth Be Taught?
Philosophical Fragments: II - The God as Teacher and Savior (A Poetical Venture)

5. The Concept of Untruth (Part III) — Can Truth Be Lived?
Philosophical Fragments: III - The Absolute Paradox (A Metaphysical Caprice);
Appendix - Offence a the Paradox (An Acoustical Illusion)

Part III — Objective Truth

6. The Concept of Truth (Part I) — Learning Truth
Philosophical Fragments: IV - The Situation of the Contemporary Follower
7. The Concept of Truth (Part II) — Receiving Truth
Philosophical Fragments: Interlude - Is the Past More Necessary than the Future? Or Has
the Possible, by Having Become Actual, Become More Necessary than It Was?
8. The Concept of Truth (Part III) — Living Truth
Philosophical Fragments: V - The Follower at Second Hand; The Moral

Interlude — Truth and Self

9. An Attempt Toward Truth (Part I) — Contemplation
Johannes Climacus: Pars Prima - Johannes Climacus Begins to Philosophize with the Aid
of Traditional Ideas
10. An Attempt Toward Truth (Part II) — Contradiction
Johannes Climacus: Pars Secunda - Johannes Tries to Think **Propriis Auspiciis** [On His
*Own Behalf], **De Omnibus Dubitandum Est***

Part IV — Subjective Truth

11. The Concept of (Un)Truth (Part I) — Becoming Ethical
Concluding Unscientific Postscript: [Part Two, Section II] Chapter I - Becoming
Subjective: What ethics would have to judge if becoming subjective were not the
highest task assigned to a human being; what must be disregarded in a closer
understanding of this task; examples of thinking oriented to becoming subjective
12. The Concept of (Un)Truth (Part II) — Becoming Inward
Concluding Unscientific Postscript: [Part Two, Section II] Chapter II - Subjective Truth,
Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity; Appendix - A Glance at a Contemporary Effort
in Danish Literature
13. The Concept of (Un)Truth (Part III) — Becoming Passionate
Concluding Unscientific Postscript: [Part Two, Section II] Chapter III - Actual Subjectivity,
Ethical Subjectivity; the Subjective Thinker
14. The Concept of (Un)Truth (Part IV) — Becoming ~~Religious~~ Christian
Concluding Unscientific Postscript: [Part Two, Section II] Chapter IV - The Issues in
Fragments: How Can an Eternal Happiness Be Built on Historical Knowledge?

Part V — Conclusion?

15. Kierkegaard as a theologian?