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## Chapter 6

### **Kierkegaard's Virtues? Humility and Gratitude as the Grounds of Contentment, Patience and Hope in Kierkegaard's Moral Psychology**

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In recent years, a growing body of work has connected Kierkegaard with discussions of the virtues. While some have objected to this move,<sup>1</sup> I think this scepticism can legitimately be resisted, provided we understand what connecting Kierkegaard with the virtues does - and does not - necessarily commit us to. Robert C. Roberts has perhaps been the most powerful advocate of the idea that Kierkegaard can profitably be read as exploring various character traits that we should not balk at calling “virtues.”<sup>2</sup> Roberts sees Kierkegaard as part of a tradition he labels “virtuism,” which emphasises such features as our having a common human nature or *telos*, and developing enduring character traits that hinder or help in the pursuit of that *telos*. Such traits – which are something we are, rather than just something we do or passively undergo - are dispositions to act, feel, perceive, etc. in particular ways. An excellent trait – a virtue – tends to be endorsed, confirmed and consolidated by the choices of the one possessing it. These traits operate not in isolation, but are interconnected in various ways, such that they tend either to support or undermine each other (virtue tending to beget virtue, and vice to beget vice). Virtues (or vices) tend to make for (or fail to make for) the well-being of their possessor, and to an extent that of their associates. And finally, “virtuists”

are committed to ethical and spiritual education or “upbuilding,” including the formation of proper concerns and dispositions to emotions, perceptions and actions.

We should perhaps distinguish such “virtuism” from “virtue ethics” as that term is often used, for at least two reasons. First, as Roberts himself notes, the traits in question are not necessarily “ethical” in any narrow sense that would exclude such spiritual qualities as hope or faith.<sup>3</sup> Second, Kierkegaard’s interest in virtues obviously does not arise from seeing “virtue ethics” as an approach to solving theoretical problems in ethics more promising than deontology or consequentialism.<sup>4</sup> (This view constitutes what has been called ‘routine’ as opposed to ‘radical’ virtue ethics, Kierkegaard having more in common with the latter.<sup>5</sup>) As Gregory Beabout has noted, this distinguishes both Kierkegaard and the classical virtue tradition from “virtue ethics” as that term is often used in contemporary parlance.<sup>6</sup> Rather, both Kierkegaard and the classical virtue tradition aim primarily at “upbuilding.”

A further distinction to be made between Kierkegaard and several key thinkers in the mainstream tradition of “virtuism” is that some of the latter (such as Plato and Aquinas) see virtues as being perfections of specific faculties. Thus Aquinas, for instance, sees faith as a perfection of the intellect, and love as a perfection of the intellectual appetite of the will. But for Kierkegaard, virtues are features of the whole person, and it is the whole person who needs to be “built up.”<sup>7</sup> Secondly, consider the possible worry that virtues are often thought of as *achievements of an individual*, such that sin – and its roots in the human will – is overlooked.<sup>8</sup> But there is no obligation to view virtues in such a way. In Augustine’s critique of pagan virtue, for instance, the criticism is not of virtues *per se*, but of the aspiration to self-sufficiency.<sup>9</sup> Anyone who achieves what “virtuism” calls a virtue could quite consistently hold that this is not their own achievement, but rather a gift of which they are merely a steward, responsible for using it for good. As I have suggested elsewhere, concerns about meritoriousness can be avoided if such a person operates with what Mark Tietjen has

suggested as a working definition of virtues according to Kierkegaard: “*dispositions to be achieved by works that one must strive to do in response to God’s grace, with the help of God’s grace.*”<sup>10</sup> This central focus on grace derails the tacit assumption of the proud person who thinks that divine favour results from his own merits. In summary, therefore, I think it is quite reasonable to describe as “virtues” the spiritual qualities I shall focus upon in this essay.

But if such qualities are interconnected, how do they hang together, for Kierkegaard? Part of the answer is obvious, insofar as most such “Kierkegaardian virtues” are either expressions of, or in some other way related to, faith. But can we say more than this? In this paper, inspired by an approach taken by Roberts in his *Spiritual Emotions*, I explore the prospects for understanding three such notions—the contentment beyond anxiety that Kierkegaard sometimes calls ‘joy’, patience and hope—as rooted in underlying attitudes of *humility* and *gratitude*. I explore what kind of humility and gratitude is in play, before going on to consider how these attitudes might support that species of *contentment* that seems integral to several of Kierkegaard’s discourses on the lilies and the birds. How, in turn, might this give rise to *patience* and *hope*, and of what sort? The paper thus seeks to sketch something of the internal dynamics of the relations between several virtue--terms including how, for Kierkegaard, they are all rooted in an image of God as the One who forgives.<sup>11</sup>

### **I. Humility and gratitude as a “moral project”**

I propose approaching Kierkegaard’s discussion under the heading of humility and gratitude “as a moral project,” to borrow Roberts’ phrase.<sup>12</sup> Roberts’ task is to outline a background against which he can usefully unpack several “emotion--virtues.” He understands emotions as “concern--based construals.” Construals, insofar as they have “an immediacy reminiscent of sense perception. They are impressions, ways things appear to the subject; ... not just judgements or thoughts or beliefs.”<sup>13</sup> They differ from other construals in being based on the

subject's *concerns*: their desires, aversions, interests, and so on. So, for example, fear is the construal of its object as threatening in some way. As we shall see, this allows for a view of emotion-virtues as, *inter alia*, certain *ways of seeing* that can be encouraged by cultivating certain *ways of looking*.<sup>14</sup> The view of “humility as a moral project” is a key part of the background against which Roberts discusses six “fruits of the spirit”—contrition, joy, gratitude, hope, peace and compassion—all of which he treats as Christian “emotion-virtues.” I want to explore whether some similar picture will ground Kierkegaard’s discussion of some other virtue--terms.

### *Humility*<sup>15</sup>

On the face of it, humility seems a plausible central candidate, given Kierkegaard’s repeated focus on such notions as “dying to the self” and “self-denial.” I have argued elsewhere that Kierkegaard in places overeggs the importance of self-denial, on occasion failing to distinguish between humility and self-abasement, and that this can deafen us to a gentler Kierkegaardian voice that has much of “upbuilding” value to say to us.<sup>16</sup> One of the places in which this voice is perhaps clearest is the 1847 discourses on the lilies and the birds (the second part of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*). I think we can better understand what is valuable about the “dying to the self” talk by asking, first, how might this be an expression of humility? And second, humility of what sort?<sup>17</sup>

Whatever it turns out to be, Kierkegaard sees humility as necessary for faith and Christian practice. Indeed, the intriguing phrase “humble courage [*Ydmyge Mod*]” used to describe the faith of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* (FT, 41/SKS, 4 143), reappears in *The Sickness Unto Death* as that which is needed to be able to bear the offence of Christianity’s incarnational claims (SUD, 85/SKS, 11 199). Similarly, in *For Self-Examination* humility is presented as central to being able to accept the doctrine of salvation by grace alone: “your life

should express works as strenuously as possible; then one thing more is required—that you humble yourself and confess: But my being saved is nevertheless grace” (FSE, 17/SKS, 13 46). Moreover, this humility is in a sense an attitude of *divine imitation*: in the *Postscript*, for instance, humility is presented as how love has expressed itself in “the form of the absolute difference” between God and humanity, and we are called to imitate this in loving our neighbours (CUP, 492/SKS, 7 446). *Works of Love* goes on to discuss loving acts in terms of a *mutual humbling that is nevertheless not humiliating*, thanks to the dexterity of love:

The one who loves humbles himself before the good, whose lowly servant he is, and, as he himself admits, in frailty; and the one overcome does not humble himself before the loving one but before the good. But when in a relationship between two people both are humbled, then there of course is nothing humiliating for either one of them. (WL, 340/SKS, 9 335)

Robert Puchniak has suggested that humility (as Kierkegaard understands it) makes it possible for one to suffer patiently; deepen Christian faith; experience peace; and love others.<sup>18</sup> He adds that “[i]f one is overly troubled by the thought of one’s insignificance or is too preoccupied with worldly status, genuine humility will be impossible.”<sup>19</sup> There is surely something right about this, but as with self-denial, I think to talk of our “insignificance” is potentially misleading. Hence the need for our questions: how should we best think about humility? Does this show us to be “insignificant”? Is this the best way to construe what becoming “nothing” before God means in this context, or should we construe it in a different way?

In addressing these questions, I turn first to Kierkegaard’s 1847 discourses on the lilies and the birds. They serve as a commentary on Matthew 6: 24-34 (part of the Sermon on

the Mount), a passage that so intrigued Kierkegaard that he returned to it on numerous occasions.<sup>20</sup> Part of the message here seems to be the possibility of opposing potentially overwhelming, debilitating worry with a certain kind of contentment that Kierkegaard sometimes labels “joy” [*Glæde*].<sup>21</sup> This is especially true of those many cases where we ourselves are the ultimate cause of our worries.<sup>22</sup>

Kierkegaard describes the lilies and the birds as our “divinely appointed teachers” and the discourses go on to consider what they teach (UDVS, 157/SKS, 8 258).<sup>23</sup> The theme of the first discourse is “to be contented with being a human being” and both it and the biblical passage on which it reflects address *the worried* (UDVS, 159, 162/SKS, 8 261-2). The first thing we are to learn from the lilies and the birds is their *silence*,<sup>24</sup> through which we humans might learn a kind of positive self-forgetfulness that counteracts the destructive self-centredness and self-absorption that is, for Kierkegaard, at the heart of so many human ills. Kierkegaard argues that the distressed person can achieve this by contemplating the lilies and the birds and in so doing at least temporarily forgetting himself—and yet he, “unnoticed ... learns something about himself” (UDVS, 161-2/SKS, 8 261). What does he learn?

Kierkegaard’s overall argument here is for a parallel between the beauty or value of a lily and that of a human being (UDVS, 165/SKS, 8 265). The sheer wonder of being alive, and of being human, is typically forgotten through the “worried inventiveness of comparison” (Ibid.). *Comparison* now becomes a crucial theme in the discourse, and the kind of damaging self-focus that it encourages inspires one of the most moving passages in the discourse literature, on “the worried lily.”

In this parable, the life of a beautiful, carefree lily is complicated by the arrival of a small bird. Instead of delighting in the lily’s beauty, the bird stresses its difference (its freedom of movement) and—worse still—waxes lyrical about the beauty of other lilies it has encountered on its travels. It typically ends its chatter with the remark that “in comparison

with that kind of glory the lily looked like nothing—indeed, it was so insignificant that it was a question whether the lily had a right to be called a lily” (Ibid.). But note – for this will become important - that Kierkegaard *rejects* the bird’s claim of the lily’s insignificance.

The lily becomes worried, and its self-doubts disturb its previously carefree existence. Its static life starts to seem restrictive and, influenced by the bird’s destructive chatter, it starts to feel *humiliated*, wishing it was a Crown Imperial, which the bird has told it is the most gorgeous of all lilies, envied by all others (UDVS, 168/SKS, 8 267). Now comes a subtle twist in the tale. The lily convinces itself that its desire is not so unreasonable, since it is not “asking for the impossible, to become what I am not, a bird, for example. My wish is only to become a gorgeous lily, or even the most gorgeous” (UDVS, 168/SKS, 8 267-8).

Eventually, the lily confesses its worries to the bird, and together they hit upon a solution. The bird will peck away the soil restricting the lily to its spot, uproot it, and together they will fly to where the most gorgeous lilies grow, in the hope that with the change of location, the lily might succeed in realising what it has convinced itself is its full “potential.”

Such ambition is the root of its destruction: once uprooted, of course, the lily withers and dies. The moral Kierkegaard draws is that while the lily is the human being, the “naughty little bird” is “the restless mentality of comparison, which roams far and wide, fitfully and capriciously, and gleans the morbid knowledge of diversity” (UDVS, 169/SKS, 8 268). While the diversity it notes between human beings is not a falsehood, “the poetic”—a mixture of truth and untruth—“consists in maintaining that diversity ... is the supreme, and this is eternally false” (UDVS, 169/SKS, 8 269). The problem arises from stressing the *diversity* that results from the spirit of comparison more than our *common humanity*.<sup>25</sup> Relatedly, the lily’s key mistake seems to be to fail to recognise its earthbound nature; to refuse to be what it was intended to be (UDVS, 170/SKS, 8 269). Hence Kierkegaard concludes:

if a human being, like the lily, is contented with being a human being, he does not become sick with temporal worries, and if he does not become worried about temporal things, he remains in the place assigned to him; and if he remains there, then it is true that he, by being a human being, is more glorious than Solomon's glory.  
(Ibid.)

Human freedom is *rooted*. From the lilies, we can learn a certain kind of *self-acceptance*: to be contented with being a human being; and recognise that *our common humanity transcends the diversity between us*.<sup>26</sup> We can already start to see how the *contentment* being offered in these discourses is rooted in humility; gratitude to God; and placing all one's worries on God. But talk of our "insignificance" does not do justice to what Kierkegaard wishes us to glean here: as we saw, *that the lily (and thus the human being) is insignificant is explicitly rejected*. Somewhat counter-intuitively, to say that I am "nothing" is *not* to say that I am insignificant.

I suggest that Roberts' account of humility sheds further light on this. Rejecting some familiar accounts of non-virtuous "humility"—Uriah Heep's deviously strategic display of "being 'umble" for personal advantage in Dickens' *David Copperfield*; the excessive self-abasement of some medieval monastic literature—Roberts claims that humility as he wishes to valorise it is "a transcendent form of self-confidence"<sup>27</sup> (in a sense to be explained shortly). In line with our discussion above, such humility stems from a worldview in which everyone is viewed as ultimately equal.<sup>28</sup> This enables us to transcend the demands of the "restless mentality of comparison" in which we live in perpetual anxiety about how we compare to others. (Yes, you once won the Booker Prize, but are those smart young novelists a generation younger than you now about to eclipse your achievements? Yes, I have abased myself before all and sundry, but insofar as I have to admit that I took a certain pride in this self-abasement, should I not be abasing myself all over again for that?) This is not anxiety as



the gateway to freedom, but anxiety as the tool of an endlessly competitive—because comparative—ego. Is a key part of what we should understand by “dying to the self” a dying to this competitive ego, and the self-obsession that it sponsors? Roberts suggests that such humility is consistent not only with self-confidence but also “initiative, assertiveness, and self-esteem.”<sup>29</sup> If by self-esteem he means self-acceptance, I agree. Such humility is “a psychological principle of independence from others” – I don’t need to best them in order to feel at ease with myself – “and a necessary ground of genuine fellowship with them.”<sup>30</sup> The ideal here, which Roberts discusses in the context of raising a child in a healthily loving environment, is as follows: “This implicit and inarticulate sense of his own worth, if carried into adulthood by becoming articulated in a definite life view, would *be the radical self-confidence that Christians call humility*: a self-confidence so deep, a personal integration so strong that all comparison with other people, both advantageous and disadvantageous, slides right off him.”<sup>31</sup> He has a sufficient sense of his own worth neither to be distressed by the fact that others are in several respects ahead of him in the “games of life,” nor to take a sense of glee in the respects in which he is himself ahead.<sup>32</sup> Such an attitude manifests both a humility rooted in considering our common humanity as more important than the differences highlighted by “comparison,” and a self-acceptance that enables one to keep anxiety or worry in its place.<sup>33</sup>

Roberts suggests that such humility is not an emotion *per se*, but rather “an emotion-disposition—primarily a negative one, a disposition *not* to feel the emotions associated with caring a lot about one’s status.”<sup>34</sup> Such a person’s sense of self-worth does not depend upon any kind of ranking (in terms of money, power, intelligence, etc.). Insofar as such a person resists what Roberts calls “a spiritually cannibalistic appetite,”<sup>35</sup> he resists the snares of the “spirit of comparison” against which Kierkegaard warns.<sup>36</sup>

Roberts draws two important implications from this. First and most obviously, in order to cultivate such a virtue, we would require a view that requires us to see our neighbours as our valued equals (rather than “the competition”). And second, it requires some alternative basis for our self-acceptance than success in competitive ranking or the esteem of others. Christianity, in which our ultimate value derives from being loved by God, provides such a worldview (though not, as Roberts notes, uniquely so).<sup>37</sup> The same self-confidence described above is, he suggests, the “psychological structure of the kingdom of God,” in which we are each aware of being so surrounded by love that the kind of comparison and competitiveness that induce such worry do not impact upon our self-evaluation.<sup>38</sup>

### *Gratitude*

Gratitude seems a fairly natural companion virtue to humility as sketched above.<sup>39</sup> Most of Kierkegaard’s references to gratitude are to be found in signed works and journal entries rather than pseudonymous writings.<sup>40</sup> In the signed works, the focus tends to be on how Christians are to be grateful for temporal gifts, whereas in the journals the focus is more specific: on the Christian’s gratitude for the forgiveness of his sins, and how such gratitude should be the spur towards imitation of Christ. A famous 1851 journal entry puts this clearly:

“*Christianly* the emphasis does not fall so much upon to what extent or how far a person succeeds in meeting or fulfilling the requirement, if he actually is striving, as it is upon his getting an impression of the requirement in all its infinitude so that he rightly learns to be humbled and to rely upon grace ... infinite humiliation [in the sense of “learning to be humbled”] and grace, and then a striving born of gratitude—this is Christianity” (JP, 1 993/SKS, 24, NB 22: 122).<sup>41</sup>

This quote alone suggests how humility and gratitude are central (and both rooted in the God who forgives). Corey Tutewiler gives a plausible account of the basic (Lutheran)

logic of this picture. “Infinite humiliation” relates to consciousness of my own sin, which I am unable to atone for through my own works or merits. “Grace” is the forgiveness of my sins, which taken seriously inspires an extraordinary feeling of gratitude, which is the catalyst for my “striving” and imitation of Christ. As Kierkegaard puts it in another journal entry, “Imitation or discipleship does not come first, but ‘grace’; then *imitation follows as a fruit of gratitude*, as well as one is able” (JP, 2 1886/SKS, 24, NB 22:52, my emphasis). “Works” are then simply a “stronger expression of gratitude” than the merely verbal giving of thanks (JP, 4 4524/SKS, 24, NB 22: 122). For all that Kierkegaard is on this point a card-carrying Lutheran, “works” needs to be stressed to a complacent Christendom that, lacking Luther’s anguished conscience, has signed up to the doctrine of *sola gratia* justification in such a way as to let themselves off the hook of bothering with “works” at all (Ibid.).<sup>42</sup> In further journal entries, Kierkegaard claims that “Christ has desired only one kind of gratitude: from the individual, and as practically as possible in the form of imitation” (JP, 2 1518/SKS, 25, NB 30: 7; see also JP, 2 1892/SKS, 24, NB 22: 144). In this way, Tutewiler notes that gratitude for Kierkegaard is both “causal and consequential.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, as well as being the consequence of grace (akin to the joy that results from receiving a gift), it is the “cause” of—it might be better to say catalyst for—imitation and works. Tutewiler also describes gratitude for Kierkegaard as a “disposition of receptiveness.”<sup>44</sup> But again, I think Roberts can help shine further light on this.

In a discussion of the virtuously grateful person, Roberts argues that such a person is disposed to see the loving motive in her benefactor, and to discount the less noble.<sup>45</sup> This is rooted in humility. Roberts’ chief literary example of humility is Esther Summerson in Dickens’ *Bleak House*, and—supporting my general hypothesis as to the importance of connecting humility with gratitude—it is to Esther that he returns in discussing the virtue of gratitude. Gratitude *qua* virtue “has a kind of generosity built into it, a generosity in

attributing motives.”<sup>46</sup> (We might think of this as a manifestation of how love presupposes love in the other, *à la Works of Love*.) But Roberts makes a second point, which interestingly suggests *how* such humility can be a source of strength that bears its fruit in gratitude. Consider two views of dignity. In contrast to the person whose sense of dignity requires “constant maintenance and defense”<sup>47</sup>—such as he who tends to see slights where none were intended—Esther’s sense of dignity (a view of herself as a creature loved and forgiven by God) is more secure. Her “generous disposition to see the best in givers’ motives and to overlook their foibles is possible because she does not feel that she needs constantly to be defending or re-establishing her dignity.”<sup>48</sup> This is “*dignity as a creature and as a fellow-creature ... the sense of one’s own importance [an importance shared by all one’s neighbours] that derives from and is qualified by thinking of oneself as fundamentally a recipient of grace*”; that one’s very life is a divine gift. This gloss on dignity in terms of an importance that each individual shares is a useful corrective, I submit, to the kind of focus on humility and gratitude that talks about them in terms of our “insignificance.” Central to this is a particular way of seeing: in line with his view of emotions as concern-based construals, Roberts presents gratitude as a kind of *seeing* which we can practice by *looking* (such as for blessings in adversity).<sup>49</sup> The secure sense of dignity that stems from construing oneself as loved and forgiven by God gives rise to gratitude, and disposes Esther both to see—and actively look for—the best in people and the world.<sup>50</sup>

Both *immediate seeing* and *active looking* are important here. On one level, things tend to *strike* the grateful person as undeserved gifts. Yet on another level, man cannot live on such ecstatic epiphanies alone. So not only must grace always be *actively chosen*,<sup>51</sup> this needs to be done in *repetition*: there is typically an element of continual struggle needed to maintain such a way of seeing. So in this sense, both humility and gratitude are indeed moral *projects*.<sup>52</sup>

## II. Contentment, joy, patience and hope

Next, I want to consider the implications of the above for the kind of contentment Kierkegaard sometimes calls “joy”, patience and hope. The dignity we just discussed typically expresses itself in a kind of contentment we already encountered in our discussion of the lilies and the birds. I want now to connect this both to Paul’s mention of contentment in his letter to the Philippians and to Kierkegaard’s discussion of joy.

### *Contentment and Joy*

Joy [*Glæde*] is a central concept for Kierkegaard.<sup>53</sup> To the Anglophone reader, the etymological link to the English word “glad” is worth noting, as in English “joy” is potentially misleading. The word “joy,” to my ear, has a certain *effervescence* that is not, as far as I can see, a necessary requirement for what Kierkegaard means by his usage of the term.<sup>54</sup> I submit that we might better understand joy or gladness as stemming from addressing one’s worry through grace.<sup>55</sup> And it is in this sense similar to what Paul (or his NIV translators) means by *contentment*, when in his letter to the Philippians, he writes:

I am not saying this [that is, giving thanks] because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil 4: 11-13)

If we are honest, I think this will at first strike most of us as an extraordinary claim. Content in *any and every* situation?<sup>56</sup> Yet Paul clearly roots this claimed ability in his faith. The ideas

expressed a few verses earlier<sup>57</sup>—how to deal with anxiety, and how the peace of God may be attained—are central to Kierkegaard’s discussions of joy, particularly in the lilies and birds discourses. Hence my suggestion: one way joy can be understood is as *the feeling of liberation from the power that worry has over us*. Depending on the circumstances, this might either be a feeling of effervescent ecstasy, or a quieter sense of relief and rest combined with a sense that one has been graced with the ability to persevere whatever life throws at one. In the latter kind of case, just as earlier we considered humility as primarily a “negative” disposition—a disposition *not* to feel certain emotions—perhaps joy (or contentment) can be seen as a “negative” disposition in the sense that it is a disposition *not* to let the cares, sorrows and vicissitudes of life overwhelm you.<sup>58</sup> As Paul implies, and I think Kierkegaard agrees, such a disposition would be rooted in faith, humility and gratitude. This freedom from worry—achieved by casting all our sorrow upon God (WA, 41/SKS, 11 45)<sup>59</sup>—is what enables creatures like us, who understand ourselves at least partially as temporal beings, to live contentedly in “today”: not denying the burdens of “tomorrow,” but not overwhelmed or debilitated by them.<sup>60</sup> Kierkegaard seems to rank qualitatively different kinds of joy, from the relatively superficial joy of the aesthete – regarded as self-deceptive (EO II, 252/SKS, 3 240) - to the “unconditional joy” embodied in the lilies and the birds from whom we can learn to be *properly* joyful.<sup>61</sup> In the lilies and birds discourses, joy is explained as being “present to oneself,” which in turn is unpacked as “truly *to be today*” and to view as irrelevant “tomorrow” (WA, 38-9/SKS, 11 42-3).<sup>62</sup> The joy that the lilies and birds teach puts “the whole emphasis on: *the present time*” (WA, 39/SKS, 11 43). In a related discourse, “The worry [*Bekymring*] of self-torment,” Kierkegaard describes “the next day” as—“the grappling hook [*Entrehagen*] with which the huge mass of worries seizes hold of the single individual’s little ship” (CD, 72/SKS, 10 81, translation adjusted); thus “if a person is to gain mastery over his mind, he must begin by getting rid of the next day” (CD, 71/SKS, 10 80). The

*silence* that the lily and bird also teach human beings is explicitly linked to *forgetting oneself and one's plans* (WA, 19/SKS, 11 24).<sup>63</sup> What makes this possible, on this account, is the kind of joyful “self-confidence” that is rooted in trust in God, He upon whom all sorrows can be cast (WA, 41-2/SKS, 11 45).<sup>64</sup>

But joy need not be otherworldly. On Kierkegaard's view, one can legitimately take a religious joy in the world; take joy in the “good and perfect gifts” bestowed upon us. Life itself; the changing of the seasons (WA, 39-40/SKS, 11 43-4); erotic love (EUD, 43/SKS, 5 419); and even wealth are mentioned amongst these goods (CD, 32/SKS, 10 43). Yet what really matters is what he calls “unconditional joy” as manifested by the lilies and the birds, who fundamentally *are* joy and are thus best placed to teach it (WA, 36-8/SKS, 11 40-2). The lilies and birds' joy is a matter of being freed from regret about the past and worry about the future. Again, one way of achieving this—as in some forms of stoicism—is to rid oneself of desire, cultivating passionless detachment. But Kierkegaard is again critical of this, associating such an attitude—“wanting to kill the wish”—with animality and describing it as “spiritual suicide” (UDVS, 100/SKS, 8 203). The lilies and birds, present as they are to themselves, teach us to cast all our sorrows upon God; their message for human beings is “worshipfully to dare to believe ‘that God cares for you.’ The unconditional joy is simply joy over God, over whom and in whom you can always unconditionally rejoice” (WA, 43/SKS, 11 46). Elsewhere this is connected with “the only joyful thought,” namely that each of us is loved by God (UDVS, 274/SKS, 8 370). Thus we can see that this joy or contentment is meant to follow from the sense that God loves us and forgives our sins. Perhaps it is to be thought of as an expression of our *gratitude* for this.

*Patience and hope*

In what space remains, I want briefly to suggest how patience—the cultivation of which is made easier by such contentment as sketched above—is related to the hope that Kierkegaard calls “expectancy” [*Forventning*]. Both are exemplified by Simeon and especially Anna, figures briefly mentioned in Luke’s gospel.<sup>65</sup> Kierkegaard picks up from his predecessors<sup>66</sup> the significance of Anna’s fidelity to the memory of her dead husband as well as to God, throughout a long widowhood following a relatively short marriage.<sup>67</sup> This twin fidelity schools her in patience, perseverance and hope, and the 1843 and 1844 discourses in which she appears make much of these themes.

Though surprisingly underdiscussed, once one starts to look for it, the centrality of hope in Kierkegaard’s thought is hard to exaggerate. He describes all life as being “one nightwatch of expectancy” (EUD, 206/SKS, 5 207). Similarly, the *Works of Love* deliberation “Love hopes all things” tells us that “the whole of one’s life should be the time of hope” (WL, 251/SKS, 9 251). There Kierkegaard defines hoping as to relating oneself in expectancy to the possibility of the good (WL, 249/SKS, 9 249). We are concerned here not merely with hope that arises episodically, but rather a hopefulness that is a “formed disposition of the person of faith.”<sup>68</sup> All this recalls the 1843 discourse “The expectancy of faith.”

There, Kierkegaard views the ability to occupy oneself with the future as “a sign of the nobility of human beings” (EUD, 17/SKS, 5 27). Our ability to project ourselves imaginatively into the future is something which separates us from the animals (or the birds...)—but as we have already seen, it is precisely this that threatens us with worry about “the next day.” Faith has already been presented in this discourse as “the only power that can conquer the future,” which we by now might suspect relates to these worries (EUD, 16/SKS, 5 25).<sup>69</sup> And sure enough, Kierkegaard goes on to add that this battle with the future is really a battle with oneself, insofar as the only power the future has over us is that which we give it (EUD, 18/SKS, 5 27). One conquers the future—that is, one’s worries about “tomorrow”—by



means of something constant, “the eternal.” But the “eternal power in a human being” (EUD, 19/SKS, 5 28) is precisely faith: trust in the eternal God, treated as our lodestar. And faith expects “victory,” interpreted as that God is working all things together for good.<sup>70</sup>

Strikingly, Kierkegaard claims that one important contrast between the hope or expectancy of the person of faith, and alternative notions of hope, is that genuine hope cannot be disappointed (EUD, 23/SKS, 5 32; cf. WL, 262/SKS, 9 261). How can this be? He explains it thus:

There is an expectancy that the whole world cannot take from me; it is the expectancy of faith, and this is victory. I am not deceived, since I did not believe that the world would keep the promise it seemed to be making to me; my expectancy was not in the world but in God. This expectancy is not deceived; even now I sense its victory more gloriously and more joyfully than I sense all the pain of loss. (EUD, 24/SKS, 5 32)

Consider this in light of the 1844 discourse in which Kierkegaard glosses being victorious as *God* being victorious (in line with the Lutheran idea of one’s “centre of gravity” being transferred to God).<sup>71</sup> Such hope is not mere wishing—it *expects* victory (which it construes as *God’s* victory). But what makes it unshakable? Crucial here is the distinction Kierkegaard makes between such hope and one way of not having faith, namely expecting *something particular* [*noget Enkelt*]. He claims: “not only the person who expects absolutely nothing does not have faith, but also the person who expects something particular or who bases his expectancy on something particular” (EUD, 27/SKS, 5 35).

I suggest that we can best understand Kierkegaard’s meaning here by connecting what he says about hope with what Jonathan Lear has called “radical hope.”<sup>72</sup> Lear’s key exemplar of radical hope is Plenty Coups, the last chief of the north American Crow Nation who

according to Lear manifested this hope in the context of the impending collapse of the entire civilisation and way of life the Crow had hitherto known. In brief, such hope is radical insofar as one “needed some conception of—or commitment to—a goodness that transcended one’s current understanding of the good.”<sup>73</sup> (Compare the New Testament idea that “everything is new in Christ.”) Lear imagines Plenty Coups reasoning as follows:

God ... is good. My commitment to the genuine transcendence of God is manifest in my commitment to the goodness of the world transcending our necessarily limited attempt to understand it. My commitment to God’s transcendence and goodness is manifested in my commitment to the idea that *something good will emerge even if it outstrips my present limited capacity for understanding what that good is.*<sup>74</sup>

It is this attitude of extreme openness to the future that makes such hope “radical,” and that differs from hope for “something particular.” Significantly, John Macquarrie notes this as a feature of hope in both the Old and New Testaments. Macquarrie remarks that human promises tend to be “sufficiently specific” to know whether or not they have been kept. However, he adds,

no such simple criteria seem to operate when we are thinking of the promises of God. His basic promise is to give us more abundant life. But we cannot specify the conditions of such a life in advance. It is only in the unfolding of history and the actual deepening of human life that we can say whether the promise is being fulfilled. This could well mean that it is fulfilled differently from the way we had at one time expected, for our expectation could be framed only in terms of what we had

experienced up to that point, whereas the fulfilling of the promise might bring with it something new.<sup>75</sup>

To bring us full circle, *such hope is a manifestation of humility*, not only in the sense that it has transferred the centre of gravity from self to God, but also because it recognises the limits of one's imaginative capacities *qua* finite creature. We have here both an *ethical and an epistemic humility*.<sup>76</sup> What such hope amounts to, in part, is a commitment to a goodness beyond its understanding. This sounds like what it means to “cast all one's worries upon God;” to turn the whole situation over to God in faith, trust and hope (cf. CD, 77/SKS, 10 86).

So how is hope—which is always about the future—compatible with what Kierkegaard says about getting rid of “the next day,” that is, the future? The answer, I think, is simply that one is urged to limit one's tasks to the challenges of today, and that the attitude one should take towards the troubles of tomorrow is one of faithful and trusting hope.<sup>77</sup> In this sense, perhaps casting all one's worries upon God is simply another term for hope.

All this makes a difference to the connected account of patience. Such hope or “expectancy” is not a natural disposition but a “hard won achievement,” an achievement won “in patience.”<sup>78</sup> Anna's patience amounts to a persistence in sustaining an attitude of expectant hope in the face of tribulations that militate against it.<sup>79</sup> Her faith makes her especially resilient; fulfilment can never come too late and so there is no need for impatience. And note that this is itself a concern-based construal: Anna construes the coming of the Messiah as so important that nothing could constitute “waiting too long” for it (EUD, 215-6/SKS, 5 215-6). Note, though, that this connects with a more general point about our having both a temporal and eternal nature. Because the self is what it is through being *acquired* (in

part through lived, *repeated*, self-choice as self-receptivity), it is never “completed” in time. And this simply underlines the importance of hope.<sup>80</sup>

### **III. Summary**

In light of the question of how various virtue-terms discussed by Kierkegaard hang together, I have tried to offer a preliminary sketch of how contentment beyond worry, patience and hope are rooted in dispositions of humility and gratitude, which are in turn, for Kierkegaard, rooted in a picture of God as the One who forgives. Cultivating the dispositions of humility and gratitude is for Kierkegaard part of a moral project necessary for faith and Christian practice. The 1847 discourses on the lilies and the birds invite us to be contented with being a human being: here our common humanity is judged more important than our differences, and I have suggested reading the “silence” the lilies and birds teach as silencing the ceaseless demands of the comparative and competitive ego. But this is not the same thing as teaching that we are “insignificant,” a view that is explicitly rejected. I have suggested that such a view of humility dovetails nicely with Roberts’ account of humility as a kind of “self-confidence” which transcends the comparative ego; judges others as valued equals (rather than “the competition”); and derives a sense of self-acceptance from being valued, loved and forgiven by God. Such humility is inextricably linked to a gratitude that is both consequential upon grace and a catalyst for “works” and the imitation of Christ. I connected this gratitude with a certain generosity of spirit in relation to others that is itself rooted in humility and a sense of dignity or self-worth that is not dependent upon competitive ranking, thereby suggesting that humility is a source of strength that bears its fruit in gratitude. I then tried to sketch the implications of this for contentment, patience and hope. Contentment—one dimension of Kierkegaardian joy—I treated as a feeling of liberation from the power that worry has to

overwhelm us. The key to achieving this is seeing ourselves as “eternal” as well as temporal beings. This further impacts upon patience and hope, conceived of in terms of trust in the eternal God. Such hope is “radical” in the sense that what “the good” amounts to may outstrip our capacity, at any given point, to conceptualise it. In this way we come full circle, insofar as such hope is one manifestation of both epistemic and ethical humility.<sup>81</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Bruce H. Kirmmse, “Kierkegaard and MacIntyre: possibilities for dialogue,” in *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre: essays on freedom, narrative and virtue*, eds. John J. Davenport and Anthony Rudd (Chicago: Open Court, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> See Robert C. Roberts, “The virtue of hope in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*,” in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003); “Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein and a Method of Virtue Ethics,” in *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*, eds. Martin J. Matustik and Merold Westphal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and “Existence, Emotion and Character: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, eds. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also C. Stephen Evans and Robert C. Roberts, “Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, eds. John Lippitt and George Pattison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, “The virtue of hope,” p.184n6.

<sup>4</sup> It seems clear to me that there are deontological, teleological and virtues-based elements in Kierkegaard’s thought.

<sup>5</sup> David Solomon, “Virtue ethics: radical or routine?,” in *Intellectual Virtue: perspectives from ethics and epistemology*, ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For a brief yet helpful discussion of Kierkegaard in light of this distinction, see Mark A. Tietjen, *Kierkegaard, Communication and Virtue: authorship as edification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 130-4.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory R. Beabout, “The silent lily and bird as exemplars of the virtue of active receptivity,” in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Without Authority*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), pp. 138-9.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion on this, see Beabout, “The silent lily and bird,” especially pp. 141-2.

<sup>8</sup> I suspect that it is ultimately some such worry that underlies Kirmmse’s scepticism about the very idea of talk of Christian virtues, and his insistence that it is *faith* rather than virtue that Kierkegaard offers as Christianity’s response to sin (Kirmmse, “Kierkegaard and MacIntyre,” p. 198).

<sup>9</sup> This point is made by Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: the legacy of the splendid vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Mark A. Tietjen, “Kierkegaard and the classical virtue tradition,” in *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 27 no. 2, p. 163. (For further discussion on this general point, see John Lippitt, *Kierkegaard and the Problem of Self-Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 6-7.) Tietjen offers an effective response to Kirmmse, as well as a fuller account of the prospects of thinking of Kierkegaard in light of the virtue tradition, both here and - in a slightly revised form - in *Kierkegaard, Communication and Virtue*, pp. 117-34.

<sup>11</sup> In this sense, I think my view differs somewhat from Roberts’, who sees hope, humility and gratitude (amongst others) as “auxiliary” to faith and love in Kierkegaard. See Evans and Roberts, “Ethics,” pp. 224-5. By contrast, I see these virtues as part of the very structure of Kierkegaardian faith and love.

<sup>12</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: a psychology of Christian virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 78-93.

<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: an essay in aid of moral psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> In a similar way, I would argue that Kierkegaard’s is to a significant extent a “vision” view of love (cf. Troy Jollimore, *Love’s Vision* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011]), that warrants comparison with Iris Murdoch and Jollimore under this aspect. For more on this, see my “Love’s Perception: Søren Kierkegaard,” in

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*The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Love*, eds. Christopher Grau and Aaron Smuts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> My focus here on humility is, I believe, consistent with the brief coda in support of a qualified notion of pride that I offered in *Kierkegaard and the Problem of Self-Love*, pp. 181-9. I still think that the Christian tradition's worries about pride have led to several healthy babies being thrown out with the bathwater. But the precise relationship between the kinds of pride and the kinds of humility that I consider to be both commendable and compatible is a topic beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>16</sup> See Lippitt, *Kierkegaard and the Problem of Self-Love*, especially chapters 6-8.

<sup>17</sup> On the varieties of humility, see Robert C. Roberts, "Gratitude and humility," in *Perspectives on Gratitude: an interdisciplinary approach*, ed. David Carr (London: Routledge, 2016), and "Learning intellectual humility," in *Intellectual Virtues and Education: Essays in Applied Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Jason Baehr (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Robert B. Puchniak, "Humility," in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 15, Kierkegaard's Concepts, Tome III: Envy to Incognito*, eds. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart (London: Ashgate, 2014), especially p. 174.

<sup>19</sup> Puchniak, "Humility," p. 174.

<sup>20</sup> In fourteen discourses in all: the three in Part 2 of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*; seven in *Christian Discourses* (Part 1, 'The Worries of the Pagans'); the three in *The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air: Three Devotional Discourses* (in the collection known in English as *Without Authority*); and one in *Judge for Yourself!*

<sup>21</sup> On the intriguing history of the concept of joy, including its importance in Luther and post-Reformation thought, see Adam Potkay, *The Story of Joy: from the Bible to Late Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also *Kierkegaard and Joy*, eds. Edward F. Mooney and Carson Webb, forthcoming.

<sup>22</sup> Such a case is astutely diagnosed and offered such a Kierkegaardian therapy in Matias Møl Dalsgaard, *Don't Despair: Letter to a Modern Man*, trans. Patrick Stokes (London: Pine Tribe, 2014). Within Kierkegaard's corpus, see especially the discourse 'The worry [*Bekymring*] of self-torment' in *Christian Discourses* (CD, 70-80/SKS, 10 79-88).

<sup>23</sup> The next few paragraphs are developed from Lippitt, "What can therapists learn from Kierkegaard?," in *Therapy and the Counter-Tradition: the edge of philosophy*, eds. Manu Bazzano and Julie Webb (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Kierkegaard returns to this theme in later discourses on the lilies and the birds (see WA, 1-45, especially 1-20/SKS, 11 7-48, especially 7-25).

<sup>25</sup> This seems to speak to all kinds of issues about "status anxiety." As the psychotherapist Rollo May later put it, in a book influenced by Kierkegaard, "We are no longer prey to tigers and mastodons but to damage to our self-esteem, ostracism by our group, or the threat of losing out in the competitive struggle. The form of anxiety has changed, but the experience remains relatively the same" (*The Meaning of Anxiety*, revised edition, [New York: Norton, 1977], p. xiv).

<sup>26</sup> It is worth noting here that Kierkegaard's focus is on the common lilies of the field, not those "rare plants" raised by a gardener and "looked at by experts" (UDVS, 162/SKS, 8 262).

<sup>27</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 83.

<sup>29</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 83. Does this mean there are no grounds for comparing ourselves with others? After all, I have known friendships between students that seem to be based in part on a healthy competition between them. I don't say that this is *necessarily* problematic (though I suspect it might very easily become so). What would be key to its remaining healthy, I believe, would be that one's overall, "global" sense of one's value does not derive from the kind of success that is the heart of what the competition is about.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 90, my emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> Someone who most decidedly lacks this particular virtue is an acquaintance of a relative of mine, an elderly lady who enjoys checking the death announcements in the local paper in order to see how many more people of her own generation she has managed to outlive.

<sup>33</sup> For a further account of humility that well complements the one discussed here, see Joseph Kupfer, "The moral perspective of humility", in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 84 (2003), pp. 249-269. The four dimensions of this "moral perspective of humility" are: a recognition of one's radical dependence on others (e.g. that our achievements are never ours alone); a focus on the morally exemplary that helps keep our "technical" (e.g. professional, academic or sporting) achievements in perspective; a recognition of and focus on the infinite nature of the ethical demand, such that even for the morally exemplary, there is always more to be done; and an orientation towards things of value in the world apart from their instrumental value to ourselves. The upshot of this is that humble people are disposed not to dwell upon themselves. For a more detailed discussion of this in

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relation to Kierkegaard, see my “Joy beyond worry: on learning humility from the lilies and the birds”, in *Kierkegaard and Joy*, eds. Mooney and Webb.

<sup>34</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 88. I take it that Kupfer’s position, not discussed by Roberts, could serve as a gloss upon this point.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 88.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts extends this view in a later paper (Roberts, “Learning intellectual humility”). See the discussion of humility as a “family of lacks” and the idea that the most perfect humility does not *aim* at humility.

<sup>37</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 90. This “self-confidence” puts me in mind of the attitude Kierkegaard sometimes calls “jest” [*Spøg*], which often accompanies his discussions of the crucial category of “earnestness” [*Alvor*]. For more on this, see my “Jest as humility: Kierkegaard and the possibility of virtue”, in *Humor, Comedy, and Laughter in 19th-Century Philosophy*, eds. Lydia Moland and Allen Speight (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> Kupfer, “The moral perspective of humility,” pp. 260-3, also makes this connection.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Corey Benjamin Tutewiler, “Gratitude,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 15, Kierkegaard’s Concepts, Tome III: Envy to Incognito*, eds. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart (London: Ashgate, 2014), p. 125. He notes that the main pseudonymous exceptions are the second volume of *Either/Or* and the *Postscript*.

<sup>41</sup> For more on this theme, see FSE, 152-4/SKS, 16 202-3, where Kierkegaard compares “the unconditioned requirement” to a weight which, if I had to lift it myself, would crush me. However, he claims, the gospel’s intention is precisely the opposite: humbled by the requirement, and responding in faith and worship, I become “light as a bird,” “the thought of God’s grace” (FSE, 153/SKS, 16 203) lifting me up in a way that the thought of my own deeds never could. This “lightness” seems to me one way of describing that sense of “self-confidence” rooted in God that we drew on Roberts above to gloss as a feature of Christian humility.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. David Coe, “Asceticism,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 15, Kierkegaard’s Concepts, Tome I: Absolute to Church*, eds. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart (London: Ashgate, 2013), p. 107.

<sup>43</sup> Tutewiler, “Gratitude,” p. 127.

<sup>44</sup> Tutewiler, “Gratitude,” p. 127.

<sup>45</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 142.

<sup>46</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 142.

<sup>47</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 141.

<sup>48</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 142.

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions*, p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> However, this perhaps only begins to capture the radical nature of Kierkegaard’s view of gratitude, if we take seriously the implications of the *Postscript*’s claim that we cannot just give thanks to God for what we *know* to be a good, since this would amount to “transforming God in likeness to me” (CUP, 178/SKS, 7 164). A fuller discussion of thankfulness for all things would need to consider the first three of the *Four Upbuilding Discourses* of 1843 (EUD, 109-158/SKS, 5 113-158), but such a discussion is beyond the scope of the present article.

<sup>51</sup> George Pattison suggests that this applies both to the grace offered “in the God-relationship of creation” and – more decisively – “in the Christ-relationship of redemption” (“The Joy of Birdsong, or Lyrical Dialectics,” in *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Without Authority*, ed. Robert L. Perkins [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007], p. 125).

<sup>52</sup> I don’t think this is inconsistent with talking in terms of construals *qua* impressions, since as Roberts explicitly suggests, one can work at aiming to see things in a particular way, perhaps to rediscover the way one has previously been struck. As an example from Kierkegaard, consider the 1850 journal entry in which he discusses how a person who lacks a *concrete impression* of God’s love can nevertheless cling on to the *thought* that God is love, and claims that this is part of a “rigorous upbringing” in faith that will eventuate in a concrete God-relationship (CA Suppl. 172-3 (JP 2: 1401)/Pap. X 2 A 493). This sounds precisely like a *looking* that aims hopefully at an eventual *way of seeing*.

<sup>53</sup> The most substantial discussions all involve the lilies and the birds: in UDVS, CD and the 1849 discourses on the lilies and the birds in WA. See also Benjamin Miguel Olivares Bøgeskov, “Joy,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 15, Kierkegaard’s Concepts, Tome IV: Individual to Novel*, eds. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart (London: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> I do not mean, of course, that everything Kierkegaard puts under the heading of *Glæde* can be described as contentment – and there are passages where this sense of joy (in response to a specific religious experience) does seem more effervescent. See for instance the discussion in George Pattison, *Kierkegaard’s Upbuilding Discourses: philosophy, literature and theology* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 56-7.

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<sup>55</sup> I develop this claim in more detail in Lippitt, “Joy beyond worry: on learning humility from the lilies and the birds.”

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Paul’s admonition to give thanks in all circumstances at 1 Thess 5: 18, Kierkegaard’s version of which idea we touched upon in note 49 above.

<sup>57</sup> “Rejoice [Dan: *glæde sig*] in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4: 4, 6-7)

<sup>58</sup> This quieter sense comes out in “The joy of it” discourses in Part Two of *Christian Discourses*.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 5: 7.

<sup>60</sup> I have offered a parallel argument about self-forgiveness (as not necessarily excluding self-reproach, but rather not allowing self-reproach to become debilitating) in Lippitt, *Kierkegaard and the Problem of Self-Love*, chapter 8.

<sup>61</sup> Bøgeskov, “Joy.”

<sup>62</sup> Kierkegaard puts it starkly: “What is anxiety [*Angest*]? It is the next day.” (CD, 78/SKS, 10 87).

<sup>63</sup> George Pattison glosses this “acquired originality” (WA, 38/SKS, 11 42) that the lily and bird teach as “a return to our original self-being ... the being-present-to-oneself-in-the-moment that is the essence of joy” (Pattison, “The Joy of Birdsong, or Lyrical Dialectics,” p. 122).

<sup>64</sup> One way of living for “today,” it might be thought, is in the old saying “Let us eat and drink, because tomorrow we shall die” (1 Cor 15: 32; Isaiah 22: 13). But Kierkegaard rejects as fake the joy such hedonism might appear to commend (particularly if we add merry-making to the list). Far from transcending worries about “tomorrow,” such an attitude is entirely within the grip of “tomorrow”: the remark “echoes with the anxiety about the next day, the day of annihilation, the anxiety that insanely is supposed to signify joy although it is a scream from the abyss. He is so anxious about the next day that he plunges himself into a frantic stupor in order, if possible, to forget it” (CD, 77/SKS, 10 86). Thus what appears to take pleasure in “today” is in fact firmly in the grip of “tomorrow”—and so its claim to be enjoying today rings hollow.

<sup>65</sup> Luke 2: 22-40.

<sup>66</sup> Especially Hermann Olshausen, who here follows Calvin more than Luther; see Lee C. Barrett, “Simeon and Anna: Exemplars of Patience and Expectancy,” in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, Vol. 1, Kierkegaard and the Bible, Tome II: The New Testament*, eds. Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart (London: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 4-7.

<sup>67</sup> Since the legal custom of the time left her free to remarry, we should note that this was a freely chosen, giving love (cf. Barrett, “Simeon and Anna,” p. 11).

<sup>68</sup> Roberts, “The virtue of hope in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*,” p. 187. On the importance of hope at times of spiritual trial, in the face of anxiety and potential despair, see Kierkegaard’s early sermon at JP 4: 3915/*Papier*, III C 1.

<sup>69</sup> A key theme of this discourse is faith’s ability to conquer the anxieties engendered by doubt.

<sup>70</sup> Kierkegaard’s text here glosses victory as “that all things must serve for good those who love God” (EUD, 19/SKS, 5 28), an echo of Romans 8: 28.

<sup>71</sup> “One who prays aright struggles in prayer and is victorious—in that God is victorious,” the last of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. On the “centre of gravity” point, see Daphne Hampson, *Kierkegaard: exposition and critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 22.

<sup>72</sup> I have recently argued that such hope is at work in the Abraham of *Fear and Trembling*; see Lippitt, “Learning to hope: the role of hope in *Fear and Trembling*,” in *Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling: a critical guide*, ed. Daniel W. Conway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), from which some of the material in this section is derived.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Lear, *Radical hope: ethics in the face of cultural devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 92.

<sup>74</sup> Lear, *Radical hope*, p. 94, my emphasis.

<sup>75</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1978), p. 53.

<sup>76</sup> As Lear puts it of Plenty Coups, “There is no implication that one can glimpse what lies beyond the horizons of one’s historically situated understanding. There is no claim to grasp ineffable truths. Indeed, this form of commitment is impressive in part because it acknowledges that no such grasp is possible” (Lear, *Radical hope*, p. 95). Compare here Kierkegaard’s 1850 journal remark that “the concept of the absurd is precisely to grasp the fact that it cannot and must not be grasped” (JP 1: 7/Pap. X 2 A 354).

<sup>77</sup> Consider here the image of turning one’s back on ‘the next day’ just as a rower turns his back to the direction of travel (CD, 73/SKS, 10 82).

<sup>78</sup> Barrett, “Simeon and Anna,” p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Barrett, “Simeon and Anna,” p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Pattison, *Kierkegaard’s Upbuilding Discourses*, p. 50.



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<sup>81</sup> An earlier version of this article was presented as an invited keynote paper at a workshop on “Kierkegaard and Ethical Theory” at the University of Antwerp in February 2015. I am grateful to the organizers, Rob Compaijen and Johan Taels, and to the other participants for discussion on that enjoyable occasion.