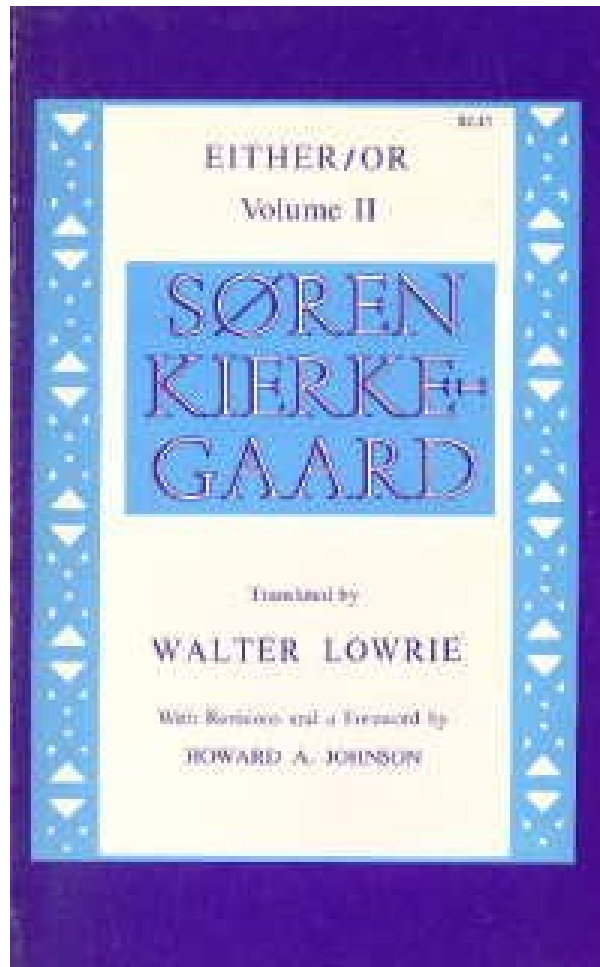
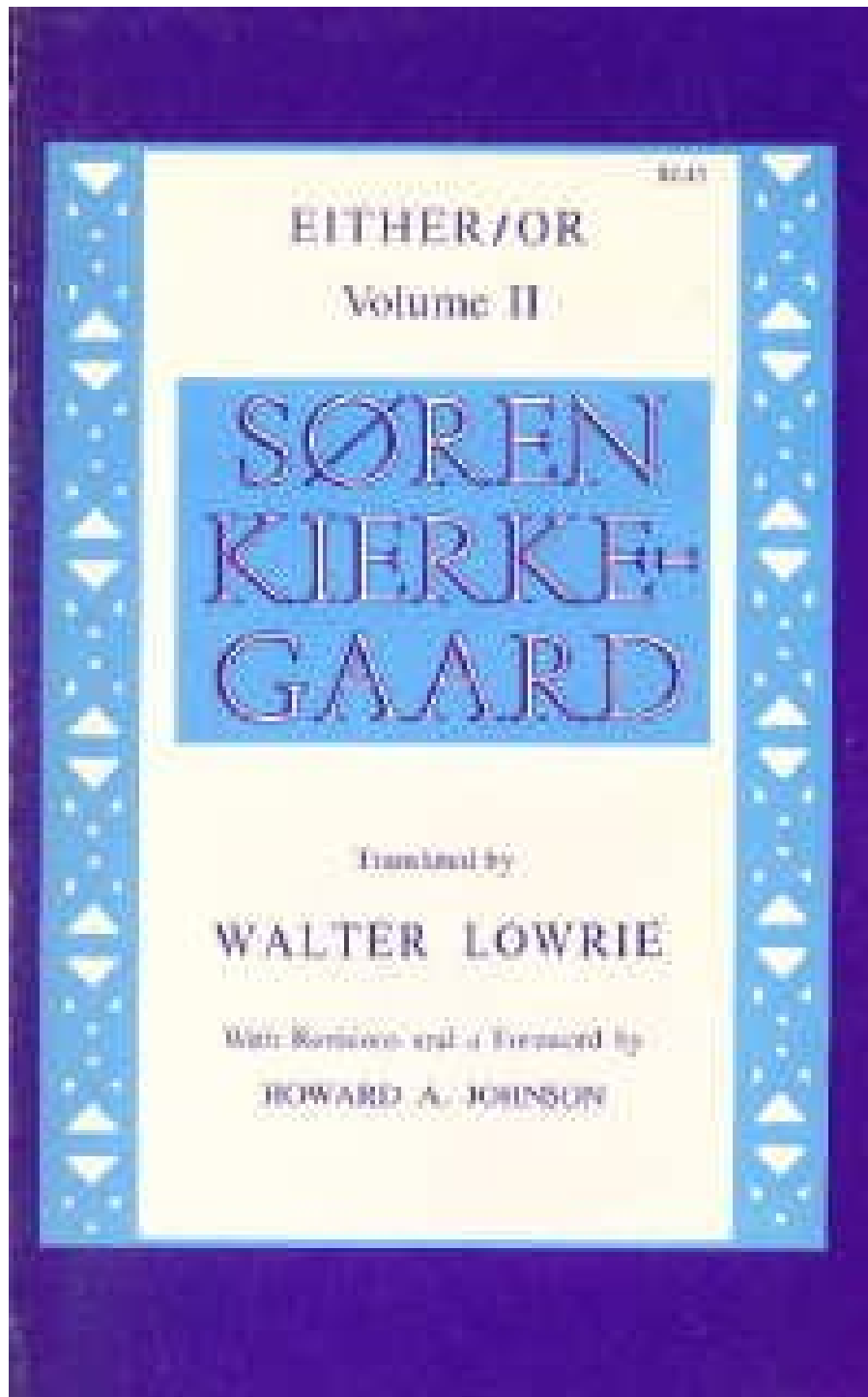


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THE SECOND PART OF ONE OF KIERKEGAARD'S MOST FAMOUS WORKS

By Steven H Propp

Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, and religious author, who was the first existentialist philosopher. He wrote many other books, including Philosophical Fragments, Fear & Trembling; The Sickness Unto Death, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Attack upon Christendom, The Concept of Irony, The Concept of Dread, Christian Discourses, Training in Christianity, The Point of View for My Work as an Author: A Report to History, etc.

The companion volume to this is Either/Or.

Writing as “Victor Eremita” [Kierkegaard wrote the entire book, but pretended that it was the work of two different authors whose papers he had come into possession of], this second volume purports to be written by a civil judge, who attempts to counsel the young author of Volume I.

He states, “You find it aesthetically beautiful that a child is born with pain, and it is a mark of respect for a human being, a symbolic indication of the significance of the fact that a man comes into the world, in contrast to the beasts which, the lower they are in the scale, the more easily they bring forth their young. I may here again lay emphasis upon the consideration that this is proclaimed as the universal lot of mankind; and the statement that a child is born in sin is the profoundest expression for its highest dignity. It is a glorification of human life that all that pertains to it is referred to the category of sin.” (Pg. 93)

He advises the “second author”: “What I have so often said to you, I say now once again, or rather I shout it: Either/or, aut/aut. For a single aut adjoined as a rectification does not make the situation clear, since the question here at issue is so important that one cannot rest satisfied with a part of it, and in itself it is too coherent to be possessed partially. There are situations in life where it would be ridiculous or a species of madness to apply an either/or; but also, there are men whose souls are too dissolute... to grasp what is

implied in such a dilemma, whose personalities lack the energy to say with pathos, Either/or.” (Pg. 161)

He says, “oppositions must first be in existence before I can mediate them. But if the oppositions are there, then there must be an either/or. The philosopher says, ‘That’s the way it’s been hitherto.’ I ask, ‘What am I do to if I do not want to be a philosopher?’ For if I want to be that, I see clearly enough that I, like the other philosophers, shall soon get to the point of mediating the past.... If I were the most gifted philosophical mind that has ever lived in the world, there must be one thing more I have to do besides sitting and contemplating the past... for philosophy mediates the past and has its existence in it, the philosopher hastens back into the past to such a degree that, as a poet says of an antiquarian, ‘only his coat tails are left behind in the present.’ At this point you are united with the philosophers. What unites you is that life comes to a stop.” (Pg. 174)

He points out, “But he who says that he wants to enjoy life always posits a condition which either lies outside the individual or is in the individual in such a way that it is not posited by the individual himself.” (Pg. 184) He suggests, “Doubt and despair ... belong in entirely different spheres, different sides of the soul are set in motion... Despair is a far deeper and more complete expression, its movement much more comprehensive than that of doubt. Despair is precisely an expression for the whole personality, doubt only an expression for thought... One cannot despair at all without willing it, but to despair truly one must truly will it.” (Pg. 216-217)

He counsels, “So, then I bid you despair, and never more will your frivolity cause you to wander like an unquiet spirit, like a ghost, amid the ruins of a world which to you is lost. Despair, and never more will your spirit sigh in melancholy, for again the world will become beautiful to you and joyful, although you will see it with different eyes than before, and your liberated spirit will soar up into the world of freedom.” (Pg. 223)

He explains, “I use the expression that I ‘repent myself out of the whole of existence.’ For repentance is the expression for the fact that evil belongs to me necessarily, and at the same time the expression for the fact that it does not necessarily belong to me. If the evil in me did not belong to me essentially, I could not choose absolutely, I would not be able to choose myself absolutely at all, so I would not myself be the absolute but only product.” (Pg. 229)

But he goes on, “But he who has not infinitely chosen himself---can he say, ‘Now I possess myself, I require nothing more, and to all the changes of the world I oppose the proud thought: I am the man I am’? By no manner of means!... The fundamental error would... lie in the fact that in the strictest sense he had not chosen himself. He had chosen himself maybe, but outside himself... When the individual has grasped himself in his eternal validity this overwhelms him by its fullness. The temporal vanishes from before his eyes.” (Pg. 235)

He asserts, “He who chooses himself ethically has himself as his task, and not as possibility merely, not as a toy to be played with arbitrarily. He can choose himself ethically only when he chooses himself in continuity, and so he has himself as a task which is manifoldly defined.... But when repentantly he chooses himself he is active, not in the direction of isolation but in the direction of continuity.” (Pg. 262)

He concludes, “‘...as against God we are always in the wrong.’ Being in the wrong---can any feeling be thought of more painful than this?... it is edifying to be in the wrong... to wish to be in the wrong is the expression for an infinite relationship; to wish to be in the right or to find it painful to be in the wrong is the expression for a finite relationship! So, then, it is edifying always to be in the wrong, for only the infinite edifies, not the finite!” (Pg. 348, 350)

This is one of Kierkegaard’s most influential books, and will be of interest to anyone studying his

philosophy.

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By Arie

This was a gift - they did like the book - well done!

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