

# Narrative, Identity and the Kierkegaardian Self



University of Hertfordshire

Friday 4-Saturday 5 November 2011

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## Conference Programme

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## Conference Venue

The conference will be held at the University of Hertfordshire's de Havilland Campus, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. [Click here for a full campus map.](#)

- Sessions on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November will be held on the first floor of the Maclaurin Building (in the Boardroom, Central Committee Room and Woburn Room).
- Sessions on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November will be held in the M-block and N-block of the main de Havilland campus building.

## Transport

The University of Hertfordshire is located in Hatfield, approximately 25 miles north of London.

### *Getting Here by Air:*

- From Heathrow Airport, take the Piccadilly Line to Kings Cross, change to a Stevenage or Peterborough train to Hatfield, and then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus. Alternatively, catch the Heathrow Express to Paddington, then catch the underground (Hammersmith and City Line, eastbound) to Kings Cross, change to a Stevenage or Peterborough train to Hatfield, and then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus.
- From Stansted Airport, take the Stansted Express to Liverpool Street, then catch the underground (Circle, Metropolitan or Hammersmith and City lines, westbound) to Kings Cross, change to a Stevenage or Peterborough train to Hatfield, and then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus.
- From Luton Airport, catch the Brighton or London St Pancras train from Luton Airport Parkway to St Albans, then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus.
- From Gatwick Airport, on weekdays you can catch a train directly to St Albans and then catch the 601 or 602 bus to Hatfield. Alternatively, catch the Gatwick Express to Victoria Station, then the underground (Victoria line, northbound) to Kings Cross, change to a Stevenage or Peterborough train to Hatfield, and then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus.

### *Getting Here by Rail:*

- From London, catch a Stevenage or Peterborough train from Kings Cross to Hatfield (takes approximately 30 minutes), and then a 607, 620 or 621 bus to the de Havilland Campus. Alternatively, catch a Bedford train from St Pancras to St Albans and then take a 601 or 602 bus to the de Havilland Campus.
- From other destinations within the UK, consult the [National Rail Journey Planner](#).

### *Getting Here by Road:*

- The de Havilland Campus is situated on St Albans Road West, on the western edge of Hatfield. If using a SatNav, enter the postcode AL10 9EU for the de Havilland Campus.
- If you require on-campus parking, please email [p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk](mailto:p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk) before Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October.

## **Accommodation**

There are a number of hotels in Hatfield in close proximity to the de Havilland campus:

- [Beales Hotel](#) (Comet Way, Hatfield, AL10 9NG), located next to the de Havilland campus, offer a special rate for conference attendees of £85 per night for the Friday and Saturday nights, and £115 for the Thursday night.
- [Ramara Jarvis](#) (St. Albans Road West, Hatfield, AL10 9RH) is located across the road from the de Havilland Campus.
- [Travelodge](#) (Hatfield Business Park, Comet Way, Hatfield, AL10 0XR)
- [Premier Inn Hatfield](#) (Comet Way, Lemsford Road, Hatfield AL10 0DA)
- [The Hangar Hotel, Hatfield](#) A David Lloyd property, Hatfield Business Park, Hatfield, AL10 9AX
- [Mercure Hatfield Oak Hotel](#) (Roehyde Way, Hatfield AL10 9AF) - within walking distance of the College Lane campus, from where you can catch a shuttle bus to the de Havilland Campus
- [Garden Village Bed and Breakfast](#) (Holme Road, Hatfield Garden Village AL10 9LF )

Some options in nearby towns:

- [Quality Hotel St Albans](#) (232-236 London Rd, St Albans AL1 1JQ)
- [White Hart Hotel](#) (23-25 Holywell Hill, St Albans AL1 1EZ)
- [Comfort Inn St Albans](#) (Ryder House, Holywell Hill, St Albans AL1 1HG)
- [Fleuchary House](#) (29 Upper Lattimore Rd, St Albans AL1 3UA)
- [BB St. Albans](#) (13 Windermere Avenue, St Albans, Hertfordshire)
- [Best Western Homestead Court](#) (Homestead Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 4LX)
- [Premier Inn Welwyn Garden City](#) (Stanborough Road, Hertfordshire AL8 6DQ)
- [The Fairway Tavern](#) (Old Hens Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 2ED)

## Conference Papers

Due to the large number of papers scheduled, a reading length of **30 minutes** for all papers, followed by 15 minutes of discussion, will be strictly adhered to.

Given the necessity of running parallel sessions (meaning not everyone can attend every paper), presenters are invited to consider distributing their papers to attendees in advance of the conference. If you would like to do so, please email your paper to [p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk](mailto:p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk) for distribution to registered attendees by Wednesday 2nd November.

## Registration and Fees

The fee for conference registration is £50 (waged) or £30 (student/unwaged). This includes a 'hot fork buffet' lunch on both days as well as coffee, tea etc. Single-day registration is available at £25/£15.

Please complete the registration form and return to [p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk](mailto:p.stokes2@herts.ac.uk) no later than **Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October**.

## Conference Dinner

You are warmly invited to join us for the conference dinner on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm. Dinner will be held at [Veer Dhara](#) (North Indian and Punjabi-style cuisine) in nearby St Albans. The restaurant is located at 81 St Peter's Street, St Albans (if coming from Hatfield, catch the 601 or 602 bus and alight at the St Peters Street stop). Cost is £22.95 per person, excluding drinks (pay on the night). Please let us know by 31<sup>st</sup> October if you would like to join us for dinner and if you have any dietary requirements.

## Schedule

Friday 4th November (All sessions take place in the Maclaurin Building)				
9:45-10:15	Outside Boardroom	Registration		
10:15-10:30	Boardroom	1. John Lippitt & Patrick Stokes (University of Hertfordshire) <i>Welcome and Introduction</i>		
10:30-11:15	Boardroom	2. John J. Davenport (Fordham University) <i>'Narratives,' Narrative Realism, and Levels of Narrative Connection in Kierkegaardian Selves</i>		
11:15-11:30	Coffee			
11:30-12:15	Boardroom	3. George Pattison (University of Oxford) <i>The End: Kierkegaard's Death and Its Implications for Telling His Story</i>		
12:15-1:15	Lunch			
1:15-2:00	Central Committee Room	4a. Lisa Grover (University of the Witwatersrand) <i>Narratives and the Self</i>	Woburn Room	4b. Walter Wietzke (Fordham University) <i>Narrativity and Normativity: A Reply to "Reason in Ethics Revisited"</i>
2:00-2:45	Central Committee Room	5a. Alfonso Munoz Corcuera (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) <i>Ontology of the Self</i>	Woburn Room	5b. Matias Møl Dalsgaard (University of Aarhus) <i>Non-Narrative Protestant Values</i>

2:45-3:15	Tea			
3:15-4:00	Central Committee Room	6a. Roman Altshuler (SUNY Stonybrook/Marymount Manhattan) <i>Teleology, Narrative, and Death</i>	Woburn Room	6b. Daniel Conway (Texas A&M) <i>Pseudonymity and Narrative Self-Creation: The Case of Johannes de silentio</i>
4:00-4:45	Central Committee Room	7a. Jeremy Allen (Fordham University) <i>Abstract Freedom and Narrative Identity: Hegel and Kierkegaard on the Self</i>	Woburn Room	7b. Jeffrey Hanson (Australian Catholic University) <i>Marrying the Ideal and Actual: Kierkegaard's Religious Aesthetic and the Self</i>
4:45-5:00	Break			
5:00-5:45	Boardroom	8. Anthony Rudd (St Olaf College) <i>Kierkegaard's Platonic Teleology</i>		
7:00pm	Dinner – Veer Dhara, 81 St Peters Street, St Albans			
<b>Saturday 5th November</b> (All sessions take place in the de Havilland Campus Main Building)				
10:00-10:45	M135	1a. Michael J. Sigrist (George Washington University) <i>Narrative, Aspect and Selfhood in Kierkegaard's The Concept of Anxiety</i>	M139	1b. Leslie Howe (University of Saskatchewan) <i>Perfect Persuasion: Seduction, Intersubjective Narrative, and Selfhood in Kierkegaard</i>
10:45-11:30	M135	2a. Michael Strawser (University of Central Florida) <i>Kierkegaard and the Phenomenology of Selfhood</i>	M139	2b. Bojan Blagojevic (University of Niš) <i>What Is It Like to Be A Seducer?</i>

11:30-12:00		Coffee		
12:00-12:45	N106	3. Kathy Behrendt (Wilfrid Laurier University) <i>Regarding the End</i>		
12:45-1:45		Lunch		
1:45-2:30	N106	4. John Lippitt (University of Hertfordshire) <i>Forgiveness and the Rat Man: Kierkegaard and 'Narrative Unity' Revisited</i>		
2:30-3:15	N106	5. Patrick Stokes (University of Hertfordshire) <i>Having the Time of Our Lives: Narrative Holism and the Moment</i>		
3:15-3:30		Tea		
3:30-4:00	M135	6a. Laura Llevadot (University of Barcelona) <i>Making Truth: The 'T' of Confession in Kierkegaard and Derrida</i>	M139	6b. Thomas Grimwood (University of Lancaster) <i>Kierkegaard's Demonic Narratives</i>
4:00-4:45	N106	7. Marya Schechtman (University of Illinois at Chicago) <i>Getting Personal: Persons, Selves, and Narrative</i>		

## Paper Abstracts

**Jeremy Allen (Fordham University)**

***Abstract Freedom and Narrative Identity: Hegel and Kierkegaard on the Self***

Are narrative conceptions of the self consistent with any strong form of free will? While contemporary scholars such as Nozick and Kane have developed strong versions of free will, the point of departure for this paper is Hegel's account of abstract freedom (and identity) in the *Philosophy of Right*. He construes this in terms of the "I=I" which is an obvious point of contrast with the formula for Spirit in the *Phenomenology* – "the I that is We and the We that is I". The former insists upon no self-exposition at all insofar as narrative framing always involves some sort of limitation. The latter involves preexisting, narrative elements to which an individual must conform, for instance, taking a post, starting a family, and being a good patriot. Once more, the former rejects narrativity as a basis for identity and the latter emphasizes the narrative elements of history and culture as constitutive of the identity of the individual.

Hegel's account of the *parochial, non-narrative self* is particularly relevant to the topic of narrative identity and self-constitution in Kierkegaard because SK's continued rejection of socially conditioned identity is often understood as an endorsement of self-enclosed individualism – what I am in this context calling, parochialism. Nevertheless, the rejection of sociality as the basis for normativity does not leave SK and his view shipwrecked on the island of Cartesian solipsism. This is a false disjunction, one that beckons to a consideration of Kierkegaard's view of narrative identity divorced from the pretenses of both of the aforementioned models of identity. I shall argue that he rejects both of these models and, by the time of the second ethic, uses *indebtedness* as a master narrative concept, a concept that finds its source in neither the individual nor society, but in God or, more generally, Transcendence. In light of this analysis, I shall conclude that narrative conceptions of the self are generally inconsistent with strong forms of free will, especially those that seek to overcome any sort of limitation

**Roman Altshuler (SUNY Stonybrook/Marymount Manhattan)**

***Teleology, Narrative, and Death***

Heideggerian approaches to personal identity have been largely neglected as viable players in the personal identity literature, even relative to other types of phenomenological accounts that emphasize the minimal, experiential self. This neglect is unfortunate, because a teleological view of personal identity such as the one we find in Heidegger provides us with a way of avoiding the excesses of Parfitian reductionism without falling back on the existence of a "further fact." Many Heidegger commentators, however, have obscured the advantages of the account by saddling it with misinterpretations that make it appear unviable as an account of personal identity. First, it is widely held that Heidegger's account of personal identity is a version of the narrative account. Second, it is commonly held—both by detractors and defenders—that Heidegger's view implies that death is an a priori necessity. Here I argue that the first claim is wrong, because it is based on the mistaken assumption that human existence is teleologically characterized by an end or completion. If this is mistaken, in turn, we can see that death is not an a priori feature of such existence. The telos of existence, in Heidegger's view, is the whole self, not its conclusion. This alteration in the interpretation of Heidegger's account allows the teleological view to ground narrative theories without being subsumed by them; at the same time, it allows us to avoid the charges raised by Galen Strawson against narrativists, by showing that even a Strawsonian view can be subsumed into a teleological category, if not into a narrative one. My interpretation of Heidegger, then, allows for the development of a theory of personal identity that is teleological, thus avoiding the problems associated with continuity, further fact, and phenomenological accounts, and yet diverges from the usual form taken by teleological theories, namely, narrative.



### **Bojan Blagojevic (University of Niš)**

#### ***What Is It Like to Be A Seducer?***

In his essay “The Absolute Particular: Individuality and Religion after Kierkegaard,” Günter Figal starts by comparing Kierkegaard’s thought to Thomas Nagel’s famous question. By taking up the problem of the aesthetic individual, I will use the two diaries presented in *Either/Or* – “The Diary of the Seducer” and “Diapsalmata” – to argue that the two types of seducers portrayed (seducer-1, Don Juan, and seducer-2, Johannes) are in fact not aesthetic individuals. Don Juan is not capable of a life-narrative for he lacks the power of recollection, which serves to unify events and perceptions of those events into an experience. Thus he cannot be an individual, but serves only as an ideal type, in total contrast with the fully-developed ethical individual. Johannes the Seducer, on the other hand, is the first character to provide an account of his life-style, to tell a story of himself. But at the same time, Victor Eremita gives a different narrative of him in his short preface to “The Diary.” By contrasting these narratives, we will argue that Johannes’ existence is not aesthetic, but demonic. By denying not the substantive principles of “good” or “right” but their universal and objective validity, he already falls into the realm of the ethical. To argue for this case, I will use Theunissen’s analysis of Kierkegaard’s concept of self and despair that shows how the theory of existential spheres in fact presents stages of a process through which a self alienates itself from its proper structure, presented by Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*.

### **Daniel Conway (Texas A&M)**

#### ***Pseudonymity and Narrative Self-Creation: The Case of Johannes de silentio***

In this presentation, I wish to draw attention to Kierkegaard’s use of the literary device of pseudonymous authorship for a specific diagnostic purpose—namely, to compile a psychological profile of a particular kind (or type) of modern subject. Kierkegaard’s recourse to this device allows him to multiply the focal points available to him for recording and presenting myriad reflections of the spiritual crisis that grips late modern European culture. In particular, or so I wish to claim, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms represent second-order reflections of this crisis, wherein the accurate diagnosis of this crisis is seen—though not by the pseudonyms themselves—to manifest and feed this crisis rather than to address or alleviate it. Invariably, moreover, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms deceive themselves about their relationship to the crisis they claim to diagnose. Rather than establish their distance from (or immunity to) this crisis, their shared capacity for hyper-rational analysis and abstract diagnosis confirms their immersion in this crisis. That they are able to detect the spiritual failings of others is evidence *not* of their success in leading spiritually enriched lives, but of their failure to avoid the pandemic spiritual poverty they both expose and decry.

For example, Kierkegaard employs the figure of Johannes *de silentio*, the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, to dramatize the enduring purchase of morality on the lives of educated, progressive, worldly, high-functioning, and seemingly self-possessed modern agents. Even as he belittles those who cling to morality as children clutch their security blankets, Johannes unknowingly demonstrates the extent of his own investments in the ethical sphere of existence. Despite his avowed intention to weigh the merits of a “teleological suspension of the ethical,” for example, Johannes is in the end able to do no such thing. As he reaches the limits of this thought-experiment, in fact, he reflexively relaxes into the comprehensive totality of the ethical universal. As we shall see, the universal validity of the ethical law not only ensures the comfort, stability, and efficiency of the bourgeois society to which he belongs, but also allows him to express his resentment for Abraham and anyone else who genuinely (as opposed to half-heartedly) attempts to “go further.” Johannes thus exemplifies a psychological type that Kierkegaard associates with a (bourgeois) culture in which one is encouraged to limit one’s sense of spiritual flourishing to the attainment and celebration of petty advantages over others.

**Alfonso Munoz Corcuera (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)**

***Ontology of the Self***

Despite having abandoned the idea of an inner essence to embrace a narrative conception of personal identity, most theorists of the narrative self continue to look into our minds, into our inner mental life in search of an answer. They look for the mechanisms by which different aspects of our mental life are presented as a narrative unity. Postures like Dennett's, who claim that *we* are the story that *we* ourselves tell, have thus a problem of circularity: How can *we* build ourselves as a narrative if *we* did not exist before? And if *we* did not exist before, who started the story? The answer he gives makes us to distinguish between the concepts of "self" and "human being", so that the real human beings we are generates our fictive narrative selves.

But this response creates a problem as important as the one it was trying to solve, since it is not clear how a fictional element can be as important as it is in our lives and how it can have the effect it has in reality. For Dennett this is because we are a special kind of fiction, different from the kind of fiction that a literary character is (*Consciousness Explained*, 1993: 410-411). Meanwhile Velleman is more expeditive, and acknowledges that by living according to this fiction, it becomes reality (*Self to Self*, 2006: 203-223). However it is unclear what kind of ontology lies behind any of these two positions. In what kind of world there are different kinds of fiction? How can fiction become reality?

In the paper I propose I will develop an ontology that allows us to maintain a narrative conception of personal identity in the line of thought defended by Dennett and Velleman. At the same time, clarifying the ontological status of the self, we will be able to solve another problem that fictionalizing the self brings to their theories. The one that made Schechtman to propose her "Reality Constraint" (*The Constitution of Selves*, 1996: 119:130): How can we distinguish between the real Napoleon and a man who claims to be Napoleon?

**Matias Møl Dalsgaard (University of Aarhus/SKC)**

***Non-Narrative Protestant Values***

"Selfhood and the good, or in another way selfhood and morality, turn out to be inextricably intertwined themes." This is the underlying idea or assumption in Charles Taylor's investigation of modern identity in *Sources of the Self*. An understanding of the development, maintenance and success of individual selfhood needs to reflect the 'picture of the good' that a particular self is living by, is the claim. This understanding of selfhood, which I shall also in this paper adhere to, has made readers of Taylor (and Taylor himself) link Taylor's thought to today's broad trend of thinking self and selfhood in terms of narrativity. But what if the particular 'picture of the good' that a self is living by is essentially non-narrative? What if the notion of the good within a certain ethic-historical tradition does exactly deny the individual the kind of self-telling that is usually considered valuable within narrative conceptions of selfhood?

I shall argue that given Kierkegaard's affiliation with and appropriation of the Christian-Lutheran tradition his view of the good has such a character that successful or authentic selfhood should not be understood in terms of narrativity or self-telling. It might very well be a part of human life that we tell and live by stories or narratives. But the Christian-Lutheran tradition adds a tension or dialectic to such tendencies by insisting that ultimately life and life's worth is not subject to human judgement or thought. Life (or God) judges the human being, not the other way around. Authentic selfhood thus becomes a matter of willing one's life unconditionally rather than of telling or knowing one's life.

I shall establish this argument by discussing 1) How a biblical God who's thoughts and ways are not the human thoughts and ways, i.e. a God who calls for 'blind' obedience, in early Christianity leads to the notion and problematising of human will. The will, not the thoughts, words or narratives of the human being, becomes the problem in this tradition. 2) How the Lutheran rejection of good works radically re-emphasizes the biblical view that God and the human being are not on the same plane, i.e. that the human being has no intellectual or practical means of justifying himself before a God whose thoughts and ways are not human. 3) How Kierkegaard places himself in this tradition of human non-foundation or uncertainty. I shall point to Kierkegaard's insistence upon paradox or the absurd or infinite. And I shall point to his work on the will and how he uses non-grounded (or non-narrative) phenomena like joy, courage and love as examples of the good will.

### **Thomas Grimwood (Lancaster University)**

#### ***Kierkegaard's Demonic Narratives***

A recurring figure throughout Kierkegaard's aesthetic works, and one that is often overlooked or downplayed, is that of the 'demonic'. Far from being a simple remnant of religious superstition, in many senses Kierkegaard prefigures Tillich's observation that the depth of the demonic lies in its dialectic between creative and destructive power, and as such remains a constituent part of the modern self. Kierkegaard introduces demonic figures (usually in the form of over-emphasised representations of characters already known to the reader) at specific points in his work, which point to the risks of miscommunication, self-absorption and failure that accompany a narrative conception of the self. This underlies Kierkegaard's challenge, in books such as *Stages on Life's Way*, to the very possibility of representing the authentic 'truth' of thought without succumbing to ambiguity, error or failure. This paper argues that while much work has been done on Kierkegaard's mode of narrative discourse as a successful form of 'indirect communication', far less has been done on the formative role of miscommunication and error in his work.

Using case examples from *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Stages on Life's Way*, the paper argues that the demonic aspect of Kierkegaard's work bears a specific relationship to the integration and conditioning of the 'narrative self' with the technologies of repetition and reproduction (from writing in pen and ink to the mechanics of the printing press). The demonic, in this sense, seems to show a self conditioned through its modes of communication; in a way that very much precludes Arthur Kroker's argument (1992) that, while the early modern self is identified primarily as a Lockean 'possessive' self, the late modern self is 'possessed' by the creative structures and techniques of subjectivity that define it. As such, Kierkegaard's demons are not simply a reversal of his more well-known narrative of the self's journey to authentic or religious truth. Rather, the demonic narrative is one that highlights mis-reference and ambiguity as a formative feature of the reproduction of the self as a narrative identity.

### **Lisa Grover (University of the Witwatersrand)**

#### ***Narratives and the Self***

In this paper I address the argument that the self is constituted by a narrative. I resist this conclusion by developing a different account of self-narratives. The argumentative aim of this paper is to construct an argument that places narrative as important for understanding oneself yet not constitutive of the self, an option hitherto largely ignored. The standard debate centres upon whether or not the telling of a narrative is necessary for selfhood. My argument advocates a neglected third option whereby narrative is not essential for the existence of the self, but is essential for a certain sort of understanding of the self. I instead argue that narratives are about independently existing selves, drawing upon the work of

Kierkegaard whose position similarly implies that the self is independent from any narrative of the self. However, I reject the claim that the best way of developing such an account is to argue that there are two types of 'self'. Secondly, I argue that nonetheless narrative is important for understanding the self, rejecting the claim that the narrative has to be of life as a whole and instead arguing that narratives about parts of a life have significance for self-understanding. The argument that the self is constituted by a narrative depends upon an assumption that a narrative is necessarily form-finding. I reject this necessary condition, yet defend the position that narratives are central to our understanding of selves because of the emotional knowledge that can be gained from a narrative that cannot be gained from mere causal chronologies. Finally, I argue that although narratives about parts of a life are important, they only partially explain the self. To fully explain and understand the self we should seek to link these episodes together into a coherent narrative whole.

**Jeffrey Hanson (Australian Catholic University)**

***Marrying the Ideal and Actual: Kierkegaard's Religious Aesthetic and the Self***

This paper accounts for the contrast Kierkegaard draws between classical poetics, which takes an actual reality and idealizes it, thus fashioning an aesthetic object from the material of the actual, and a religiously informed aesthetics, which shapes a new ideal that is tempered by and responsive to the intractable elements of the actual and helps guide human selfhood according to a normative ideal informed by revelation. The contrast is illustrated by Johannes de Silentio's use of the major narratives in Problem III of *Fear and Trembling*; in every case Silentio explicitly opposes his use of Scriptural, classical, and fairy tale narratives with the use to which they would be put by "poets," who are wedded to an aesthetic ideal: just as a story has a coherent logic to it, so too we think of our own lives as a story we are writing for ourselves with a certain organic development to it, an almost fated necessity of one inevitability leading to the next, and finally a happy ending. This ideal in Silentio's words "contradicts itself as soon as it is to be implemented in actuality." The life of a self does not unfold as a series of fortuitous eventualities that lead smoothly to a happy conclusion. A new religious ideal can be fashioned after this harsh realization has been made and furnishes a way for the self to move forward with a guiding normative vision. Silentio's tales in their revised forms then serve an educative function: to tutor our spontaneous reactions to reality and cultivate in us a sensitivity to story that never treats story as *merely* story but instead as the means of an absolute identification between the story's hearer and its subject. What results is a greater sense of self that is not modelled on narrative per se but is helpfully informed by narrative logic.

**Leslie Howe (University of Saskatchewan)**

***Perfect Persuasion: Seduction, Intersubjective Narrative, and Selfhood in Kierkegaard***

While Kierkegaard employs narrative extensively, he is as much essentialist as existentialist: the self we must become comprises relations that set a decisive boundary to possible self/self-narrative. Against this background, the significance of narrative for development of the self in Kierkegaard, especially the intersubjectivity of self-narratives, is analysed with particular reference to *The Seducer's Diary*. This work purports to be an extended narrative of the Seducer himself, but in a more profound sense fails to be so as he is neither a self nor gives us more than an ironic self-account. The Seducer's narrative is not of himself but of his reconstruction of the narrative of another by careful manipulation of her own attempt to construct a self-account. Although Johannes emphasises the importance of Cordelia's freedom for the final act, he meticulously designs to alter her self so that she will choose none other than what such a self as he has designed would choose and perceive itself as justified in so doing. Moreover, Johannes situates himself as the author of Cordelia's narrative but it is also crucial to his project that she tell it back to him

as her own—as, for the time being, it seems to her to be. Thus, the seduction is a project of intersubjectively creating or masking oneself in another in order to have the other act out the narrative in one's place, in a manner in which one is oneself for some reason unable or unwilling to do. While the motivations of a seducer in constructing such a narrative appear evident (though less than we suppose), those of the seduced are much more opaque, as the seduced is not simply deceived. For Kierkegaard, the explanation lies in the anxious unknowing consent to aesthetic rather than free existence; in effect, a flight from responsibility for self constitution within specific normative boundaries.

**Laura Llevadot (University of Barcelona)**

***Making Truth: The 'I' of Confession in Kierkegaard and Derrida***

Contemporary thinkers as renowned as Heidegger and Foucault did not waver in linking confession, both as a literary genre and western spiritual practice, to the question of domination. In his analysis of book X of Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, Heidegger pointed out the necessity of deconstructing confession for being a metaphysical act of the self-fabrication of the *ego* (the Appendix includes the title: *Zur Destruktion von Confession X*). The fabrication of truth which occurs during confession is understood by Heidegger as a practice of domination and a manipulation of the "I" analogous to the technical mastery of the world which operates modern Metaphysics. Meanwhile Foucault in *Technologies of the Self* ("Christianity and Confession") (1980) places confession within the discursive practices which are used towards the control, constitution and mastery of the Self in disciplinary societies. According to his argument, in such societies confession cannot act as much more than a subtle but very precise form of interiorizing power through generating knowledge about oneself. Psychoanalysis can be understood from this perspective, that is as the secularized form and medical criterion that confession has assumed in contemporary society.

Yet, is it necessary to consider confession as a practice in the control and creation of identity? When instead of emphasising the question of truth, confession is thought of in terms of its link with forgiveness, it emerges as a practice which can be conceived of in post-metaphysical terms. We believe that this is precisely Kierkegaard and Derrida's endeavour: they attempt to think about the dimension of the ethical or the religious-ethical event of confession which takes place through a request for forgiveness. Hence, Kierkegaard's 1845 examination, *On the Occasion of a Confession*, looks less to confession and the veridiction of one's own sins and more to the necessity of "wonder" and "transformation". When Kierkegaard states in his text: "(the seeker) is not to look for the place where the object of his seeking is, (...) but the seeker must be changed so that he himself can become the place where God in truth is" (TDIO, 23), he touches upon something which is alluded too by Derrida under the name "visitation." Confession is not so much a narrative production of identity realized by telling the truth of an event as it is an exercise in transformation and in opening up to truth as visitation, or, as the otherness which emerges to break the self-identity of the self. As Derrida writes in *Composing "Circumfession"*: "For the truth to be *made* as an event, then the truth must fall on me –not be produced by me, but fall on me, or visit me. That's visitation" (2005, 23).

In order to articulate a definition of confession as an act of transformation and opening of the Self to otherness, my paper will carry out a comparative examination of some fundamental reasons behind Kierkegaard's "occasional discourse", *On the Occasion of a Confession*, and Jacques Derrida's confessional text, *Circumfession*.

**Michael J. Sigrist (George Washington University)*****Narrative, Aspect and Selfhood in Kierkegaard's The Concept of Anxiety***

What it means for a person at one time to be identical to another at an earlier or later time can be asked of any object. I call this the 'Substance Model' of selfhood.

Time figures in debates on the Substance Model primarily in terms of its tensed properties (with disagreements about personal identity, for example, often informed by whether one believes in time's passage.). I contrast the Substance Model with an 'Event Model.' There are many types of events—rainstorms, jogging, winning a game of chess, building a house—each of which is reflected in English by aspect—indefinite, durative, punctual, and telic, for example. This paper looks to recent philosophical and linguistic theories of aspect in order to construct an Event Model of selfhood. I argue that one such early model in fact is found in Kierkegaard, especially *Philosophical Fragments* and *The Concept of Anxiety*. Specifically, I argue that anxiety for Kierkegaard results from a relation to time that is best understood through aspect rather than tense, and further, that this is how time is conceived in narrative. Aspect is partially marked in English by the perfect and imperfect forms. Aspect implies tense insofar as no perfect action can be in the present (I cannot now walk). But similarly (at least for achievement or resultative actions) most facts about a present action expressed in the present progressive are not factive until the future (it is only now a fact that I am winning at chess if, in the future, I win the game; otherwise, right now I am losing). In other words, no *present* facts of the matter about what I am now doing are settled until the future when that action is completed (perfect), but as I cannot know the future now I do not know what I am doing, which is a central feature of anxiety. I argue that selves, like actions, are individuated by aspect, and that aspect is the form of temporality presupposed by narrative.

**Michael Strawser (University of Central Florida)*****Kierkegaard and the Phenomenology of Selfhood***

In this two-part paper I shall question phenomenology's position on selfhood. First, I shall examine the claim made in recent works by Dan Zahavi that the phenomenological tradition unanimously affirms that the core self is to be found in pre-reflective consciousness. Is this admittedly modest view of the self accurate? Is it reasonable to identify a core self in pre-reflective consciousness while also speaking of a narrative self in reflective consciousness? I shall argue that the notion of the minimal self as first-person subjective givenness is problematic in important ways. Second, following the recent attention given to Kierkegaard as phenomenologist, I shall ask how Kierkegaard relates to the phenomenology of selfhood. Rather than moving directly to this topic, however, I shall argue that we must first consider Kierkegaard's phenomenology of love before we can consider what we might call his phenomenology of selfhood. In order to approach the phenomenology of love we must take into account Jean-Luc Marion's groundbreaking work *The Erotic Phenomenon* and see whether Kierkegaard invokes the erotic reduction and what this tells us about the self. On this matter we need look no further than Kierkegaard's earliest focused deliberations on love in *Three Upbuilding Discourses* of 1843 where the first two discourses are devoted to the theme "Love Will Hide a Multitude of Sins." An analysis of these discourses together with a reflection on the same theme in the later *Works of Love* of 1847 will show that within the erotic reduction one erases both sin and self. But what can we maintain about the self-erased? Is it the narrative self that is erased? Is this self erased by another self, one defined by love, and shall we take this to be the core self? Does this lead to a paradox of phenomenological selves in Kierkegaard's writings?

**Walter Wietzke (Fordham University)**

***Narrativity and Normativity: A Reply to "Reason in Ethics Revisited"***

Both John Davenport and Anthony Rudd argue that narrative accounts of selfhood establish some of the important requirements for normative agency. They hold that the normative claims that distinguish the ethical (and perhaps the religious) stage from the aesthetic can be cast in terms of a higher level of narrative unity. I argue to the contrary that these conceptions of narrative selfhood end up being irrelevant to their motivating concerns.

I first review the question that is (or should be) at the crux not only of their analyses, but of Kierkegaard's own work: that is, why should any agent be obligated to live by the claims of the ethical? For Davenport and Rudd's arguments to go through in this case, narrative accounts have to presume at least the following: (1) that for an outside observer such as the aesthete, there must be a formal, structural feature to ethical narratives that is entirely missing from aesthetic ones; and (2) that this formal feature is sufficient for the aesthete to be motivated by the claims of the ethical. As I argue, however, neither account of narrative selfhood shows these to be true.

Part of the problem with Davenport and Rudd's analyses is that A is too specific of a target. Despite accurately recognizing A's vulnerability (i.e., his self-deception) to certain narrative critiques, for narrative accounts to have general value in explaining normative agency they should also apply to aesthetic life-views different from A's. Yet in both narrative accounts the socio-cultural practices that support aesthetic life-views can display a narrative unity that supports the formal features presumably reserved only for ethical selfhood, thereby precluding the kind of normative transition these formal features were thought to facilitate. In short, narratives do not enable the normative work to which they aspire.