

EXISTING THINKER AS HERMENEUTIC THINKER? SØREN KIERKEGAARD'S CRITIQUE OF THE OBJECTIVE THOUGHT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ODO MARQUARD'S HERMENUTICS

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In my article I attempt to introduce a trailblazing juxtaposition of two philosophers whose ideas interweave in most inspiring way. I see Kierkegaard's revolutionary approach to communicating and defining truth as the beginning of the modern philosophy of language and meaning. It leads to an evolution of understanding the time of human life, the anthropology of human knowledge, and to the final repudiation of the objective truth that we are witnessing in modernity. Marquard, whose thought is deeply rooted in Kierkegaard's oeuvre, gives us a great synthesis of modern thought. Kierkegaard's and Marquard's shared concern for the human condition and aligned aloofness for the arrogance of pure reason enable the reader to see them as different soldiers fighting the same battle. Therefore Marquard's ideas serve as an inspiring filter to interpret Kierkegaard once again as a genius of anticipation and a source of timeless insight into modernity.

Keywords: existence, anthropology, time, absolute reason, objective thinker, subjective thinker, hermeneutics, communication

For hermeneutics is a way of holding fast
where one cannot hold fast

O. Marquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle*

ODO MARQUARD: HERMENEUTICALCHILD OF THE EXISTENTIAL THOUGHT

Who is the so-called hermeneutic thinker? The notion itself, paraphrasing for the need of this article the notion of Kierkegaard's subjective thinker, serves to underline some aspects of Kierkegaard's thought. To justify such paraphrase, I shall sketch certain elements of Odo Marquard's explorations. Marquard's reflection, while defining the modern understanding of hermeneutics in an intriguing way, gives also a useful and inspiring perspective on Kierkegaard's ideas. The place of Kierkegaard in Hermeneutic project is well explored and also creatively evolved, especially since Caputo's book *Radical Hermeneutics*¹. Since, as Roy Martinez says, the basic motif of radical hermeneutics is "the effort to restore life to its original difficulty"², my reflections will be

¹ J. D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics. Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987.

² R. Martinez, *Kierkegaard's Place in the Hermeneutical Project*, "Laval théologique et philosophique", vol. 49, 1993, p. 295.

definitely connected with this moral and existential perspective on Hermeneutics and far from its tradition of being merely “the art of understanding particularly the written discourse”³. Even if the classically hermeneutical emphasis was stressed so much more over the written discourse than moral life, the meaning of the individual engagement and passionate involvement was there from the beginning. It expresses itself in the high importance of artistic interpretation indicating a will to understand in Schleiermacher work⁴ or in the special significance, that individualization of the question had had for Gadamer⁵.

What links Kierkegaard’s and Marquard’s interests in the first place is their intellectual involvement in the condition of living human beings in certain society and time rather than the condition of the Philosophy. Whereas Kierkegaard’s undertaking strives toward God relationship and Marquard’s toward human relationship, it is surprising how much of the intellectual path they can share. Their prose is a passionate, self-engaging philosophical pedagogy, multidimensional and artistically written. Marquard calls his genre “transcendental belles lettres”⁶. Their works can be perceived as an attempt to provoke individual thinking and self-responsibility demanded by life’s finitude. To carry out further the parallel between Kierkegaard’s and Marquard’s reflections I will exploit ideas contained in following books: Climacus’s ideas from *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* and Marquard’s concepts found in two collections of essays: *Farewell to Matters of Principle* (1981) and *In Defense of the Accidental* (1986).

Marquard’s reflection touches upon several problems which were very dear to Kierkegaard. Firstly, the idea of the absolute truth and its critique, and, most of all, the existential meaning of that idea. Secondly, the idea of communication that would *remain* communication while resigning from the path of rationality connected with the absolute truth and its restricted, rigorous language. And third question, being the consequence of the former two: how to *think* the incommensurate or even contradictory truths in philosophical language *beyond* the options of skepticism and resignation. Marquard’s hermeneutical perspective helps to see Kierkegaard not only as one of the few exceptional geniuses of European thought, but also as a breakthrough in a certain tradition, a tradition that leads from Socrates, through Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Hermeneutics to contemporary thinkers like Odo Marquard.

The idea of hermeneutical thinking and its existential meaning appears in Marquard’s thought in several contexts. One of them is an observation of the certain noble roles that philosophers have lost and forcible mental changes they have to undergo in

³ F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism, And Other Writings*, trans. and ed. A. Bowie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

⁵ H.-G. Gadamer, *Was ist Wahrheit?*, [in:] *Kleine Schriften*, Bd. 1–4, Mohr, Tübingen 1967/1979, vol. 1.

⁶ O. Marquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle*, Oxford University Press, New York–Oxford 1989 [1981] (abbreviated *Farewell...*), p. 8.

consequence of this loss. That brings out the situation of the modern thinker himself, much more in the sense of the reflecting human being than an academic philosopher.

While describing the crucial moment in his mental development as a thinker, Marquard writes: “I feel, and I began to feel then, that one should seek ongoing dealings, in philosophy, only with such ideas as one also thinks of during the difficult situations in life, and which, if need be, one can live one’s whole life long. That does not exclude, as I learned chiefly from Kierkegaard and Heine, the search for light and pointed formulation. Far from being the opposite of seriousness, esthetic play in composition and formulation are an external form that it takes: the form that takes seriousness so seriously that it finds it necessary to make seriousness more bearable”.⁷

The fragment alone, with its expression of gratitude for Kierkegaard, along with the deep understanding for the role of the formulation and its connection with seriousness and existence, suggests how much in common will Marquard’s thought have with his above-mentioned teacher. But the importance of the parallel does not lie in the similarity. On the contrary: it lies in recognition that such *distant* reflections can unite in the common understanding of the capacities of human cognition and propose solutions, *named* skeptical or transcendental, but meeting each other in much the same thinker’s attitude.

Significantly, according to Marquard, his own understanding of the hermeneutics is not a *novum*. It is one of the oldest paths in philosophical thinking, but also the one that does not break off in the tangle of modern pluralism of truths and vocabularies. On the contrary, it rather serves as a helping trail in it. But this skepticism has a peculiar form and character. It does not bring doubt or deconstruction. While basing on psychoanalyses and the critique of modern culture and society, it reveals the primal mechanisms of cognition, about which philosophers, pursuing *The Sense and The Ultimate Answer*, had long forgotten.

In the essay *On the Dietetics of the Expectation of Meaning: Philosophical Observations* Marquard proposes a resignation from the absolutistic claims of the reason, based on the understanding of the human mortality and finiteness⁸. That “constructive resignation” is precisely the definition of the skeptical hermeneutics. The title of one of his paragraphs sounds almost too Kierkegaardian: *The Indirectness of Sense or Meaning and the Nonsense of Aiming Directly at Sense or Meaning*⁹. To explain clearly what Marquard means here we have to consider further his definition of the hermeneutics.

What is the question hermeneutics itself answers? According to Marquard it is “a replay to human finitude”¹⁰. All absolutisations, claims German philosopher, of the human being and philosophy, obedient to Hegelian well known postulate calling to get rid of accidental elements in philosophy, crumble under those two words: *vita brevis. Every*

⁷ *Id.*, *Farewell...*, pp. 7f.

⁸ *Id.*, *In Defense of the Accidental*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991[1986] (abbreviated *In Defense...*), pp. 47f.

⁹ *Id.*, *In Defense...*, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Id.*, *Farewell...*, p. 113.

program of absolutisation is a philosophy of the life after death, which leaves the philosophy of life before death unanswered¹¹. The thinker wanting to make a man an absolute is obviously Kierkegaard's "fantast", who "fancies to make himself to be *sub specie aeterni*", one who "must avail himself precisely of the explanation of how the eternal truth is to be understood in the category of time by someone who by existing is himself in time, something the honored professor himself admits, if not always, then every three months when he draws his salary"¹². Marquard repeats it with his natural sense of humor: "To get rid of what is accidental would mean, for example, to get rid of philosophers; but without philosophers [...] there would be no philosophy, so that in the end one would rid philosophy, in the name of philosophy"¹³.

No matter how we deny it, human accidentality and finitude still demands understanding – and it is hermeneutics that undertakes this task without "cheating" on our finitude by escaping into different forms of the absolute text or, using Kierkegaard's expression, the objective knowledge. One may object to comparing the notion of human finitude with Kierkegaard's notion of existing as *infinity* of inwardness. But the way Marquard uses it encourages such reflection: both finitude and existence stress out human time structure versus the idea of objective truth. Both ideas focus on cognitive humility and emphasize the role of individual engagement and interpretation. *Vita brevis* – if we want to, as Marquard says, "read and let read"¹⁴, we have to neutralize the absolute text, which was truly a reason of too many bloody wars in our history.

In the same essay he presents hermeneutics as an "art of getting out of a text what is not in it"¹⁵. That means the interpretation subordinated to the task of understanding is always an addition, not a subtraction. And that brings us back to Kierkegaard even more than the critique of the absolute thinking and thinkers. Because, that *nothing* emerging from the text in the practice of interpretation is purely existential – it is precisely what our accidental, finite, living being adds to the questionable content of the text. Questionable, because, as an objective reality, it cannot be reached as such, open or read in its pure, *objective* form.

Marquard, quoting Gadamer, emphasizes another important hermeneutic statement here: that understanding is always a reply, an answer to certain question that has to be understood *first*¹⁶. That conviction opens space for the role of engagement (passion!) as necessary – if not the most important, factor in understanding. I would interpret it this way, because assimilation of the question is much more difficult than assimilation of an answer; difficult in the sense of necessity of individual engagement. Since the answer carries usually the form of self-contained, finished sentence or system, Kierkegaardian

¹¹ *Id.*, *In Defense...*, p. 115.

¹² S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong, 2 vols, Princeton 1992, p. 192.

¹³ O. Marquard, *In Defense...*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *Id.*, *Farewell...*, p. 126.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112; see also H.-G. Gadamer, *Was ist Wahrheit?*, [in:] *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 1–4, Mohr, Tübingen 1967–1979, vol. 1.

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hated *result*, the answer is an opposition: it is an open doubt, a movement of *will to know* that seeks its justification in our individual mind. In the first chapter of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre sees it as a form of waiting expectation – a motion that reveals an ontological, not theoretical relation.

But the hermeneutical, as Marquard calls it, *conciliatory* understanding of the text, transports the weight of the argument to the literary level – that is, in his opinion, the discovery of a nonabsolute text and a nonabsolute reader¹⁷. He calls it pluralizing literary hermeneutics in opposition to singularizing, dogmatic one.

Now: that claim seems to put an end to the line of thinking that is leading us back to Kierkegaard. Literary level, in Marquard's opinion the clue to stop a long going war around an absolute text, seems to take us back to *theoretical* level, radically cutting off the existential one. But the notion of “the literary” is based on differentiating the outward and inward text, not the subjective and the objective. “Literary” thus does not mean “objective” – on the contrary, it means open for interpretation. And interpretation involves subjectivity and living individual. So, maybe, the literary level finally means the *How*, the form in which the existential has to somehow present it in words. Just like existing thinker sees the incommensurability of the truth and direct expression and uses the humorous and artistic form to avoid direct communication¹⁸, the literary form respects the same incommensurability in its refutation of the absolute text. Therefore, transporting the weight of the argument to the literary level would not mean transporting the *whole* problem there. It only means that *outward, in words*, it can only be a literature – the decision, and the adjudication lies in the existential.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE SIDE OF THE CRITIQUE OF OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE:
KIERKEGAARD'S ROLE

The intention of sketching the above “shortcut” through Marquard's hermeneutics was to prepare the reader for a next step; my attempt to show how certain Kierkegaard's ideas have laid the foundation for this particularly modern understanding of hermeneutics.

Kierkegaard's genius crowns some peculiar path philosophical language has taken through centuries: from discovering, in ancient Greece, the ability to express the Abstract, to the point where this ability – the well formed, matured philosophical language of XIX century sort of started eating its own tail. That was the moment when – in Kierkegaard's mind, in Nietzsche's mind and many others later, that philosophical language began to be perceived as imprisoning in cruel and tragic manner what is most important: the existence, the ethics, the life. But what I find worth underlining here is not the negative side of the story – meaning the revealed impassability, the gap discovered between the objective (what we have *learned to call* the objective) and the motion of the self. The hermeneutic point of view gives this critique an optimistic and inspiring perspec-

¹⁷ O. Marquard, *Farewell...*, p. 122.

¹⁸ S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding...*, p. 500–505.

tive. For Kierkegaard showed that there is a way of coming back to existence, a real way of *coming back to things* –and Husserl’s words here would be just a mockery of his amazing achievement.

What I also would like to draw attention to by formulating the mentioned perspective is another problem, a very intimate one. I think most of Kierkegaardian scholars suffer from being torn apart between their academic function, which is doing constantly something that was Kierkegaard’s favorite subject of mockery: writing dissertations and giving papers about him, and their personal agreement that the sense of reading him lies somewhere very elsewhere, in our own existence. Bringing to light his achievement in history of thought as rather the start for many turning points in philosophy and culture than as a voice in ontological or metaphysical discussion I see as softening our academic guilt we feel before him. I would like to consider how Kierkegaard’s idea of indirect communication, while dealing with a problem of communication of the becoming as the structure of truth and the self, also tells us something about capacity of freeing ourselves from the cage of objectifying philosophical language. This is where the notion of the literary level could be useful. That much “smaller” freedom, not the existential, but philosophical one – the hermeneutic freedom of transporting the argument to the literary level, although it should be considered only a periphery of the Kierkegaard’s interest, almost a leftover of his mission, it still can remain a valuable trophy for philosophy.

Kierkegaard’s attempt designates the great moment in history of thought–prepared in some ways already by Kant and Schleiermacher. A moment in which the written text becomes an invitation rather than an object, and philosophical culture gets ready to pick up a challenge of thinking in that direction. It is a beginning of modern hermeneutics.

While deconstructing the definition of truth, he also revealed something about the philosophy itself in historical meaning. He gave us much more gain than he probably intended to – in the sphere of the outward, the speculative, game of words that goes on even if it covers the deepest existential movement underneath. How did it happen?

The language of Greeks could use dialectic of being and not being at the same time only to proof skepticism. For Socrates the abyss between the Book and the Truth was impassable. Kierkegaard carefully builds a bridge there, a fragile, hanging, swinging bridge – but holding on conviction, that the book, the *written* language could also be *alive* – that, cunningly used, it can provoke a dialog of inwardness, a dialog that resurrects worlds from their grave of objectification.

Climacus thinks that in the world of spirit instead of time measured by clocks and space to travel in the eternity reigns. Eternity thus gives the shape of our self–perception. It cannot be described as journey, in which we leave one place we can name and go to another–because the traveler, the self, changes every moment of the way¹⁹. Therefore, if we want to analyze the self in language, we rather have to describe what it is *not*, focus on *how it differs* from the other objects and also how different is the *way* we choose trying to describe it.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

So we are back with Kierkegaard's *How*. But the phenomenon I want to emphasize here is, as I have said before, less noble than the idea of truth as subjectivity itself. I want to focus on, if I can put it this way, more technical *how* of indirect communication: the idea of expressing the difference between being and becoming not "in worlds", but rather "with the aid of words".

We know that Kierkegaard's intention was not to create an alternative definition of the self or the truth in academic sense. It was not, because his ambitions were not philosophical or academic. But *because* it was so, because he did focus on critical reflection in purely theoretical parts of his work – meaning the critique of objectivity, because he was *not* interested in taking part in official academic Hegelian discussion, he reaches much further and his perspective goes above the philosophy as a whole. The critique of objectivism is double-bladed here. It rejects the possibility of conceptualization of the self as an object, but also, it refuses the idea, that the thinking subject can objectively conceptualize reality as such. Kierkegaard's line of thought is known: the philosophical mission of reducing the whole cognitive process to abstraction cannot be completed – because removing the subject of cognition beyond that process makes the subject a fantastic being, as Kierkegaard puts it, a creation of alchemists or sorcerers²⁰.

First we have to acknowledge the abyss between the realm of the objective and the realm of motion of existence: only then we can at least sense the possibility of that hanging bridge I have pictured above and consider our abilities to cross it. What is very important: it all doesn't mean Kierkegaard *refuses* that existing subject has an ability to abstract from oneself: on the contrary – he does see this ability in a way anticipating the Sartre's conception of existence. Since what he does see is the vanishing time structure of this abstraction: the fact, that precisely abstracting from oneself takes form of subject–object relation. It can never be held, nail down to a statement, line in book, or a thesis²¹.

The "poor existing person", as Kierkegaard says, even realizing the difficulties, still not only exists, but still *asks* about truth, asks about himself. And his reflection sees two separate worlds; one of objectivity, that gave birth to the question of what, the question of being – and another, of the self in motion of becoming. And between them the precipice of the total difference lies unconquered, because, precisely, the self *is* tantamount to this precipice.

But those moments, that realizing the difficulty of the problem and its nature tell us the deepest secret of our intellectual history. Being as much as becoming shapes our vision of the self. Without the question of *what*, rooted deep in our self–preservation instinct, born in simply naming the environment, the question of *how* would not emerge. And Kierkegaard's subtle question of *how* is still a child of that primitive dialectic of what you could name and what you could only *show*. Centuries after this primitive dialectic occurred, the powerful kingdom of objective logic wanted to devour the whole

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²¹ *Ibid.*

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reality—and, in a way, it succeeded in philosophy. We have built an impressive castle and it turned out we have locked ourselves outside leaving the key still inside. At least for several centuries of European thought.

Then Kierkegaard has showed that our power over this kingdom was indeed fictional – but most of all he argued that it did not get us any further in our search for our identity and for God.

Let's try to look at the story of philosophical language from two points of view. First: we have discovered abstract language to be able to speak the truth, the being – that is one. Here we have paid the price of neglecting that “poor existing self”, of removing it from the field of interest of philosophy. Second: we have *invented* abstract language to be able to *stop* the flow of becoming and we succeeded! We *are* moving targets to ourselves, as Ed Mooney puts it, but only thanks to the “freezing” power of the language of objectivity we can see that mad game of hide and seek our self is playing with our perception. We *can* actually stop the time, touch immortality in those moments of, as I did in unrefined way put it, glimpses of having eyes in the back of our heads.

Kierkegaard probably wouldn't be interested in praising the indirect communication in this manner – his interest laid in inwardness, and communicating it, however described in a fascinating way in *The Postscript* had secondary meaning. It was a tool, not a goal itself. But it appears he have seen the purely philosophical meaning of the subjective truth theory. When he writes about truth as “An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness”²², Kierkegaard uses the word *objective* not only in provocative or paradoxical way. He consciously reverses an order of cognition to show how uncertainty could be not the beginning but the hardest achievement. It's not only hard because of its “unnatural”, *reversed* order of gaining the uncertainty instead of knowledge. It is so hard because it has to be “held fast with the most passionate inwardness”—only that “held fast” contact with the inward structure of the consciousness allows us to let go the passion for the objective, which is, in a way, letting go of the language, the culture, religion as we know it. They cannot keep the roles of the trustful guidelines anymore. The consequences are massive. They teach us not only about the uncertain nature of the objective, but that all those libraries we have built, all those philosophical books mean so little in the inward journey. The objective lies *outside* the libraries; in reaching that point of uncertainty that not only asks but most of all *tells* us something final about the self. Climacus says that subjective truth can be true even if we are wrong about an object of our knowledge, but our striving is true²³. What, then, does the striving bring to this object?

It brings something that is not there: and *that* is precisely Odo Marquard's definition of the hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is an “art of getting out of a text what is not in

²² *Ibid.*, p. 203.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

it”²⁴. While we cannot be objective, cannot discover the absolute text, we have to dedicate all our attention to interpretation – which is discovering the nonabsolute text and nonabsolute reader. But hermeneutics just *eliminates* the absolute truth from the text, while Kierkegaard sees it in the “objective uncertainty held fast with the most passionate inwardness”. Kierkegaard, taking step back into inwardness as most important determinant, leaves the problem of relativism for the scholars. But he doesn’t leave the problem of skepticism for them at all. Objective uncertainty is not skeptical. It is not the result of the appraisal of the cognitive capabilities of the subject, but it is a fruit of the highest engagement in self knowledge as a value *totally* independent from all outward directives: religious as well as ethical or philosophical.

In Kierkegaard’s thought reaching that point of objective uncertainty takes a lifetime – and we cannot think about it as a result, because we don’t *reach* any goal here, it is a dynamic stage in life. It does *take* a lifetime no matter when and how we reach it, because it has to be kept, *held fast*, and brought to life all over again. It requires not only intellectual, but psychological, and, most of all, spiritual preparation. Its material is a real stretch of a lifetime, including the resignation that has to destroy a person so he can be born again. The result is not only an ontological statement and a denial of possibility of objective description of existence, but it is also an idea that there is *no time* for objective reflection (that’s an issue Marquard explores beautifully in *In Defense of the Accidental*). We can understand this statement in its most banal meaning: life is way too short for an argumentation sufficient for objectivity, but also—there is no time, because the self is simply *not there* – time is not its natural environment. Facts, objects, animals “live” in time. But the consciousness does not share their static structure. What is then our natural environment? It’s a moment. It is an eternity.

But we also live in a story—a story of our life, our past, future, memories, history, fairy tale, evolution. All those stories build our world – we cannot detach ourselves from them. It is so, because we learn our language from the world of objects living in time, and only later we discover that this language does not fit or picture in any way the structure of existence. It was simply not made for it. So we seem to be forever torn apart: between our eternal nature and the nature of expression. Understanding of those facts that emerges from Kierkegaard’s thought and clear the way for hermeneutic thinking seem to me to be one of the greatest steps toward a truly human understanding of the world.

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²⁴ O. Marquard, *Farewell...*, p. 111.

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Zusammenfassung

Existenzdenker als hermeneutischer Denker. Søren Kierkegaards Kritik des objektiven Denkens in der Perspektive der Hermeneutik von Odo Marquard

Im Artikel schlage ich eine innovative Gegenüberstellung der Ideen von zwei Philosophen vor, die sich auf eine überraschende und sehr inspirierende Weise verflechten. Ich schildere, wie die Reflexionen von Kierkegaard zur Evolution der Bewusstmachung der philosophischen Anthropologie (und vor allem der Zeit des menschlichen Lebens und der Möglichkeit des menschlichen Wissens) und zur endgültigen Ablösung des objektiven Wissens führen, was wir gegenwärtig erfahren. Die Synthese der Moderne von Marquard ist im Werk Kierkegaards tief verwurzelt. Beide Philosophen teilen gemeinsam die Sorge um die Kondition des Menschen und die Abneigung gegen die Arroganz der absoluten Vernunft. Im Artikel verwende ich die philosophischen Ideen von Marquard als einen Interpretationsschlüssel, der erneut in Kierkegaard ein Genie der Vorwegnahme und der überzeitlichen Einsicht in die Moderne erkennen lässt.

Schlüsselworte: Existenz, Anthropologie, Zeit, die absolute Vernunft, der objektive Denker, der subjektive Denker, Hermeneutik, Kommunikation

Streszczenie

Myśliciel egzystencjalny jako myśliciel hermeneutyczny. Sorena Kierkegaarda krytyka myśli obiektywnej w pespektywie hermeneutyki Odo Marquarda

W artykule proponuję nowatorskie zestawienie myśli dwóch filozofów, których idee splatają się w zaskakujący i niezwykle inspirujący sposób. Pokazuję, jak refleksje Kierkegaarda prowadzą do ewolucji rozumienia antropologii filozoficznej (a przede wszystkim czasu ludzkiego życia i możliwości ludzkiej wiedzy) i ostatecznej detronizacji wiedzy obiektywnej, której świadkami jesteśmy współcześnie. Marquardowska synteza nowoczesności jest głęboko zakorzeniona w dziele Kierkegaarda. Obaj filozofowie dzielą wspólną troskę o kondycję człowieka i niechęć do arogancji absolutnego rozumu. W artykule używam filozoficznych pomysłów Marquarda jako świeżego klucza interpretacyjnego, pozwalającego po raz kolejny dostrzec w Kierkegaardzie geniusza antycypacji i ponadczasowego wglądu w nowoczesność.

Słowa kluczowe: egzystencja, antropologia, czas, rozum absolutny, myśliciel obiektywny, myśliciel subiektywny, hermeneutyka, komunikacja

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