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(Hrsg.)

# Performativität in der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie



**J.B. METZLER**

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# Inhaltsverzeichnis

<b>1</b>	<b>Einleitung/Introduction</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
	Stefan Lang	
<b>2</b>	<b>Ist das „Ich denke“ der transzendentalen Apperzeption ein performativer Akt?</b> . . . . .	<b>31</b>
	Anton Friedrich Koch	
<b>3</b>	<b>Kant und die Performativität des Denkens</b> . . . . .	<b>43</b>
	Aloisia Moser	
<b>4</b>	<b>Fichte’s Performative Theory of Self-Knowledge</b> . . . . .	<b>57</b>
	C. Jeffery Kinlaw	
<b>5</b>	<b>Performativity and Truth in Fichte</b> . . . . .	<b>79</b>
	Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel	
<b>6</b>	<b>Seele, Bewusstsein, Ichheit. Zu Schellings identitätstheoretischer Auffassung endlicher Subjektivität</b> . . . . .	
	Štěpán Karásek	
<b>7</b>	<b>Sein im Vollzug. Hegels performative Deutung des Absoluten</b> . . . . .	<b>99</b>
	Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer	
<b>8</b>	<b>„Das durchaus originelle jeder ächttragischen Sprache, das immerwährendschöpfrische...“. Hölderlins Performativität</b> . . . . .	<b>113</b>
	Bart Philipsen	
<b>9</b>	<b>Hölderlin’s ‘Celebration of Peace’. A Performative Type of Writing in Poetry</b> . . . . .	<b>129</b>
	Violetta L. Waibel	
<b>10</b>	<b>„Vergleichung des Geists und des Buchstabens“ – Strukturelle Performativität in der Literaturtheorie der Frühromantik (Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Novalis)</b> . . . . .	<b>155</b>
	Manuel Bauer	
<b>11</b>	<b>The Disclosure of Concealment. Søren Kierkegaard and the Three Levels of Authorial Performance</b> . . . . .	<b>171</b>
	Martijn Boven	

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# The Disclosure of Concealment. Søren Kierkegaard and the Three Levels of Authorial Performance

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Martijn Boven

Performativity is a contested concept used in different disciplines and has a wide range of meanings that cannot be easily aligned. Two dominant tendencies are often foregrounded: [1] the linguistic notion of performativity as ‘doing things with words’ that gained prominence in the philosophy of language and literary theory (Austin 1962, Derrida 1972, Felman 1980, Miller 2001), and [2] the dramatic notion of performativity as the creation of meaning through the staging of an embodied performance in front of a concrete audience at a specific time and place (Goffman 1959, Sedgwick 2002, Turner 1987). As Loxley remarks, the relation between these notions of performativity is “best described as asymptotic: an ever-closer proximity without a final, resolving convergence.” (Loxley 2007, p. 140; also see Fischer-Lichte 2005, Parker and Sedgwick 1995) Even though the oeuvre of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) far precedes these developments, the asymptotic proximity between linguistic and dramatic performativity provides a valuable lens to study his texts. Kierkegaard does things with words by turning his works into performances, embodied by pseudonymous author-personae and various (internal) counter-voices. It is this authorial performance that will be the focus of this article.

As I will argue, Kierkegaard’s conception of authorial performance is constituted by an implicit analogy between the actor (embodying aspects of dramatic performativity) and the pseudonymous author (embodying aspects of linguistic performativity). At the heart of it, we will find the problem that underlies Kierkegaard’s philosophical discourse: despite the inescapable iterability of his existential categories, he needs to generate the conditions for genuine novelty; despite the outer manifestation of his philosophy of existence, he can only proceed

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by creating the conditions for the emergence of inwardness. To address this problem, Kierkegaard develops a method of indirect communication that constantly works against itself, generating aporetic devices that ensure the performative structure of the discourse. This indirect method of communication takes on various forms in Kierkegaard's discursive practice.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I will zoom in on the disclosure of concealment that comes to the fore in Kierkegaard's review of a theater piece.

In December 1848, Kierkegaard put the finishing touches on his review "Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio (in the Comic Opera 'Ludovic'): A Recollection and for Recollection [Hr Phister som Captain Scipio (i Syngestykket 'Ludovic'): En Erindring og for Erindringen]." The subject of the review was a singular performance of the Danish actor Joachim Ludvig Phister (1807–1896),<sup>2</sup> who played the role of Scipio, a captain in the papal police, in the Comic Opera *Ludovic*.<sup>3</sup> Kierkegaard considered publishing the review in the Danish newspaper *Fædrelandet*, and even though he decided against it, he did finish the review and signed it under the once-only pseudonym "Procul," Latin for "at a distance."<sup>4</sup>

At first sight, it might seem peculiar to choose the pseudonymous scribble "Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio"<sup>5</sup> to exemplify the role of authorial performances in Kierkegaard's wide-ranging oeuvre.<sup>6</sup> There are two reasons to choose this minor piece rather than any of Kierkegaard's better-known writings. The first reason concerns the topic of the article: Phister's ability to portray Captain Scipio's deliberate attempts to hide his true condition so that the spectator constantly gets a suspicion

<sup>1</sup> Schwab 2012 provides an extensive discussion of Kierkegaard's indirect method of communication in all its aspects. It also includes a brief overview ("Zum Stand der Forschung," pp. 52–68) of how indirect communication has been interpreted.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Phister see Banks 2009, Brandes 1880, Zinck 1896.

<sup>3</sup> The comic opera *Ludovic*, which premiered in Paris on 16 May 1833, was written by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges. The play was translated into Danish in 1834 by Thomas Overskou, who writes about Phister's performance: "For Captain Scipio, the play's comic character, Phister had invented a particularly original grotesque figure," cited in Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 127.2. The play was performed 21 times, mainly in 1834–1837, but also in 1841 (7 performances) and 1846 (1 performance). "Kierkegaard likely saw the performance in 1841," but this cannot be said with any certainty. Kierkegaard 2012b, p. 140. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143.24. Kierkegaard made frequent use of pseudonyms to explore different existential positions. For an overview of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms, see Nun and Stewart 2015. For a discussion of the complications of Kierkegaard's pseudonymity, see Pattison 2019.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the state of the unpublished manuscript and its genesis, see "Manuskriptbeskrivelse [Description of the manuscript]" and "Tilblivelseshistorie [Genesis]" Kierkegaard 2012b.

<sup>6</sup> Westfall (2007, pp. 20–21) argues that *Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio*, has not been authorized and therefore falls outside Kierkegaard's authorship. A sensible approach, given his focus on the Kierkegaardian practice of authorship. I am, however, concerned with the problem of the incognito and the role this plays in Kierkegaard's writing strategies. For this topic, the posthumous review provides some crucial clues. For other accounts of the role of performance in Kierkegaard, see Hughes 2014, Boven 2019.

of it, even though this suspicion is never fully affirmed. I argue that this indirect disclosure of concealment provides a theatrical equivalent of Kierkegaard's method of indirect communication.<sup>7</sup> The second reason is that the review can be seen as an example of an indirect form of communication. Because it is so tiny (17 pages), it is easier to unpack than any of Kierkegaard's more extensive works. As such, it will illustrate Kierkegaard's discursive practice well.

I will develop my argument in three steps. First, I will derive three levels of theatrical performance from *Phister as Captain Scipio*, namely: [1] concealing the actor's personality; [2] directly embodying the life of the fictive characters; and [3] indirectly disclosing the characters' attempts at concealment.<sup>8</sup> As a second step, I will argue that three analogous levels of authorial performance can be constructed to help unpack Kierkegaard's writing strategies. In a third step, I will illustrate this by showing that there are good reasons to believe that Procul, as the pseudonymous author of the review, is also deliberately hiding behind an incognito.

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### 11.1 Three Levels of Theatrical Performance (For The Actor)

The first and most basic level of performance concerns the need for actors to conceal some aspects of their personality. There will always be a gap between the actor's life and the life of the character that that actor portrays. For untrained or untalented actors, it is advisable to keep the gap between themselves and their role as small as possible: coming from a rural area, they play the role of a farm boy or a milkmaid; looking rough, they play the role of a thug; etc. In these cases, only certain elements must be concealed (the character hates flowers, the actress adores them; the character wears elegant suits, the actor prefers casual dresses, etc.). Phister does not need to limit himself like this. All accounts suggest that he was a great actor who could play a wide range of comic roles that were often at odds with his situation. In his portrait of Phister, Brandes remarks that despite his "remarkably uncharacteristic and weak voice," Phister could play roles one would assume to be beyond his skill by inventing "a peculiar voice" for them. (Brandes 1880, p. 288) Here, the concealment goes deeper. This is why Brandes highlights Phister's "ability to transform," which he describes as follows: "voice, attitude, walk, and mannerisms, everything took shape and was united into the personality of a stranger outside of himself, a body-sized mask behind which Phister's individuality disappeared." (Brandes 1880, pp. 287–288)

This already brings us to the second level of theatrical performance: directly embodying the life of a fictive character. By incorporating certain gestures, using

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<sup>7</sup>A somewhat similar point is made by Stock (2014).

<sup>8</sup>A very different argument is made by Martinez (2003) who argues that the review it ultimately concerned with the three stages of existence with Scipio representing the aesthetic, Phister the ethical, and Procul the religious.

specific turns of phrase, emphasizing certain facial expressions, using idiosyncratic body language, and so on, Phister can transform himself into Captain Scipio. As a comedian, it is Phister's task to exploit the comic potential of his role. In the case of Captain Scipio, this comic potential comes to the fore in discrepancies that emerge between: a) the demand of ideality that is placed upon him by the signs of dignity that his function provides, first and foremost, the splendid military uniform that makes the papal police "stand out" (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 132); and b) the banal reality of his life as a civil police officer—his modest duties (e.g., supervising the "drainage of wastewater"), his undignified posture (e.g., "the protruding belly"), his actual condition (e.g., being in a state of "constant intoxication"), the circumstance in which he finds himself ("to clear out a pub where there are only drunken people" while being drunk himself). (Kierkegaard 2012a, pp. 132–135)

Procul analyzes these discrepancies in depth but especially highlights the importance of the splendid uniform, using it sometimes as a metonym, equating the captain with his clothes.

The splendid uniform implies a demand, suggests an idea—the drunkenness completely invalidates it by putting forward the rough side of life, by turning the inner side [*Vrangen*] out. The more splendid the outer side of the uniform is, the stronger the inner side [*Vrangen*] stands out, and yet one sees both sides at once; one sees the splendid uniform—and also that the man is drunk. (Kierkegaard 2012a, pp. 132–133)

There is nothing inherently comic about the splendid uniform of a captain of the papal police, which is even more impressive than other uniforms. However, it becomes comic when the captain, who wears that uniform, happens to be an alcoholic who is in a state of perpetual intoxication. In that case, the splendid uniform starkly contrasts with the rough figure wrapped within it: the alcoholic. The effect is, as it were, that the inner side of the splendid uniform—the rough side that is not to be seen but faces inwards or towards the body and that remains typically hidden—has suddenly become visible. This generates a comic effect.

The two sides of the uniform provide Procul with a perfect image of the tension between the inner and the outer, which plays such an essential role in Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence. Here, it emerges as the comic potential available to the actor. The demand for ideality that is brought forward by the splendid uniform clashes with the impoverished reality of the alcoholic who sits inside that uniform. A lesser talent than Phister would have jumped on this by making the inner and the outer equally visible, directly highlighting the contradiction between them. Playing on the double meaning of the Danish word 'fuld'—"full" and 'drunk'—Procul quickly points out that someone might now get the misleading impression that Phister has conceived the role "far too general." (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 133) After all, it seems to imply that the "full uniform [*fuld Uniform*] and being full in uniform [*fuld i Uniform*]," i.e., being drunk, are shown at the same time. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 133)

As Procul suggests, it is here that Phister's talent stands out: he introduces a third level of the performance in which the two sides, inner and outer, become

so intertwined with each other that it is difficult to distinguish them. At every moment, hints of alcoholism are about to ridicule Captain Scipio's splendid uniform, but this is never affirmed directly, and the spectators remain responsible for drawing their own conclusions. As Procul makes clear, Phister does not exploit the comic potential of the discrepancy between the ideal demand and the banal reality—the military officer and the civil servant, the splendid uniform and the drunk—in a direct way, but “sows discord between these two persons in one,” focusing on Scipio's elaborate attempts to hide the banal reality. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 134) Thus, the quick laugh of immediate comedy is turned into the more subtle and ironic laughter of reflective comedy.

This third level of the performance is needed because Phister cannot directly embody all the relevant aspects of the fictive character but must fall back on indirect means. Captain Scipio is acutely aware of his condition of perpetual intoxication and is very skilled in concealing it. Because of this, Phister can never directly present the contradiction between the splendid uniform and the drunk. He cannot show directly that Scipio is a little bit drunk; he can only create a suspicion of it. Phister must find a balance between concealing the results of Scipio's alcoholism and indirectly disclosing his attempts to conceal it. The aim is not to show the captain's actual condition but to exploit the comic potential of this balancing act. Phister achieves this effect by subtly drawing attention to Scipio's attempts to hide it. This is possible because, in Procul's estimation, Captain Scipio “has completely deluded himself into thinking that he is extraordinarily successful in concealing it—although precisely this, his carefulness in concealing it, will be the clue.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 139)

By subtly highlighting Scipio's effort to hide his actual condition, Phister creates signs of contradiction without directly presenting the contradiction itself. As Proculs says, “The comic subtlety consists in making it manifest telegraphically, in betraying the secret underhandedly, precisely through how the captain conceals the true situation.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 139) Unlike the lesser comedian who goes for a quick laugh, Phister is acutely aware that he cannot portray the captain as a drunk who “staggers and stumbles”; instead, he must perform him as a “respectable man, who in complete secrecy walks with a slight unsteadiness” and who only betrays himself indirectly through a “suspicious stiffness in his posture.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 141) Procul describes this in detail:

Pulling himself and his body together, so to speak, and bending his arms almost like a dancing cavalier, [the captain] puts—the best foot [*det bedste Been*] forward, but he gets no further, cannot wholly carry out this solemn performance, cannot fully reach the position he is striving for. As stated, he puts his best foot forward; however, at the same moment, he must put the other one in front of it—for now, he has made the step—and, therefore, the overall impression is that of a certain instability. And then it starts all over again... Yes, it is done superbly, concealing excellently that he has had a little too much to drink. Yet, it is impossible to keep standing in this position. The next moment, one gets a suspicion, but it will never become more than a suspicion. Now, he has again assumed that position on his best foot; one gets a suspicion: God knows whether Captain Scipio drinks or not. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 141)

This differs from what we saw earlier when the outer and inner sides of the splendid uniform were both visible simultaneously. Phister embodies Captain Scipio so that the incognito of the respectable officer is always firmly in place. Only through certain oddities in his movements—acting as signs of contradiction—does the spectator get an unconfirmed suspicion of the drunk hiding behind this incognito. At no point does the contradiction become manifest directly.

An intriguing shift happens in the second act of the play. For entirely accidental reasons, Captain Scipio is suddenly forced to stop drinking. This creates another challenge for Phister since there is very little difference between the two conditions he must embody in the play: a) being in a state of permanent intoxication through the consumption of too much alcohol; and b) undergoing withdrawal symptoms because of a sudden absence of alcohol. To portray this, Phister needs to exaggerate the oddities in the captain's movements a bit more so that this time, the spectator gets even more of a suspicion that he is drunk. Except, now he is genuinely sober. Previously, the drunk deliberately hid behind the incognito of the respectable (and sober) man; now, the sober man accidentally hides behind the incognito of someone who seems drunk.<sup>9</sup> In a sense, the incognito gets doubled here. Playing a drunk who hides the tension between his splendid uniform and his state of intoxication, Phister needs the incognito of the respectable man and needs to embody it so that there is a suspicious stiffness in his posture. Playing a drunk who inadvertently becomes sober and hides the tension between his splendid uniform and his withdrawal symptoms, Phister needs to add a new layer to the incognito of the respectable man by embodying it in a way that a certain feebleness is added to the stiffness of his posture; Phister thus creates the direct impression that the captain is a respectable man who happens to have just a little bit too much to drink that one day, while indirectly generating a suspicion that he is now hiding his former state of intoxication as well as the withdrawal symptoms that come with his sudden abstinence.

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## 11.2 Three Levels of Authorial Performance (For The Author/Reader)

In the previous section, I have derived three levels of theatrical performance from *Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio*. In general terms, they can be summarized as follows.

[1] *Concealing the traits of the actor's personality that are irrelevant* (gestures, bodily features, character traits, etc.) because they limit the character's comic potential and do not fit the larger context of the play.

[2] *Directly embodying the relevant traits of the character*, exploiting the comic potential that comes to the fore in the tensions between the various elements of the

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<sup>9</sup>See Nelson (2007) for a different reading that compares the review about Phister and "Becoming Sober," a section in Kierkegaard's *Judge for Yourself!* on the Apostles' drunken appearance on Pentecost Day after the descent of the Holy Spirit.



play. The more subtle these tensions, the more refined the comic effect. One could say that it becomes most refined when the character appears as ‘two persons in one’ who are constantly in tension with each other, no matter the overall context or the concrete situation. As it happens, Phister has to play the role of someone who is actively aware of these tensions and tries to hide them, downplaying their contrast. This requires a new approach to the comic.

[3] *Indirectly disclosing concealment* by subtly creating a suspicion that the character constantly tries to hide the true nature of his condition behind a carefully maintained incognito. The incognito also presents ‘two persons in one.’ However, the nature of the incognito is such that these two persons do not appear side by side. Instead, one (the incognito) dominates the other (whoever hides behind this incognito). There is a tension between the two, but it does not manifest itself directly but only comes to the fore as signs of contradiction. These unstable signs generate the suspicion that something is wrong without directly confirming it.

In the remainder of this section, I will develop an analogy between Phister’s conception of acting and Kierkegaard’s conception of authorship. The general structure of this analogy is that the actor Phister relates to the three levels of theatrical performance *as* the author Kierkegaard relates to the three levels of authorial performance. What would that analogy look like? We can specify it as follows:

[A] The actor (Phister)  
*relates to*

- [1] concealing the irrelevant aspects of his personality,
- [2] directly embodying the basic outline of the life of the character (Scipio),
- [3] indirectly disclosing concealment by creating the suspicion that the character (Scipio) is deliberately hiding his actual condition behind an incognito;

*in a similar way as:*

[B] the author (Kierkegaard)  
*relates to*

- [1] concealing the irrelevant aspects of his existence, viewpoints, and conceptions,
- [2] directly embodying the basic outline of the apparent viewpoints and conceptions of the pseudonymous author-persona (Procul),
- [3] indirectly disclosing concealment by creating the suspicion that this pseudonymous author-persona (Procul) is deliberately hiding behind an incognito.

This analogy allows me to project the three levels of theatrical performance on Kierkegaard’s authorship. Initially, this is just an interpretative hypothesis. However, I will show that there is reason to believe that *Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio* can also be read as an indirect disclosure of concealment, illustrating the third level of authorial performance into play. First, let us characterize the three levels of authorial performance in Kierkegaard’s works in somewhat more detail.

We know from *The Point of View for my Work as an Author (Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed)* that Kierkegaard gave a lot of thought to the question ‘What does it mean to be an author?’, especially when that author tries to express a philosophy of existence. In Kierkegaard’s view, ‘being an existential

author' is an act that cannot be separated from one's existence (within which this act emerges) nor from the existence of the readers (addressed by that act). For this reason, existential authors face a double difficulty. On the one hand, they cannot fall back on the abstract and impersonal communication on which the popular press relies, reducing the author to an almost entirely anonymous 'no one' who takes little to no responsibility for what is written. On the other hand, existential authors cannot rely on a direct and unmediated expression of their viewpoints, conceptions, and beliefs, however genuine and enriching they might be. In the first case, the existential aspects of the communication have completely vanished. In the second case, the author's existence is too prominently present and stands in the way of the existence of the readers, who cannot simply copy the views of the author but must develop their own conception of life.

In the wake of this double difficulty, Kierkegaard introduces his method of indirect or reflected communication. On the first level of authorial performance, this reflective communication is achieved by creating a tension between the authorship and the personal existence of the author (as it appears to his contemporaries). In this way, Kierkegaard ensures that the gap between his public persona (whether deliberately created or originated by accident) and the author's persona embodied in the writing becomes big enough to generate a tension between them that confuses who it is that is speaking. The public persona can be distorted by adopting an existence-incognito, e.g., the incognito of a "loafer, an idler, flaneur, a frivolous-bird," etc. (Kierkegaard 2012c, p. 42) The author persona, on the other hand, can be shaped by using an overall pseudonym like Johannes Climacus, and intertextual incognitos like Johannes Climacus' incognito of a thief. (Boven 2019)

The second level of authorial performance comes into play when the outlines of the author-persona are set up. In *Mr. Phister as Captain Scipio*, the pseudonymous author Procul comes across as rather arrogant. Placing himself above the ordinary theater critics of immediacy, he presents himself as a truly reflective critic and one of the few capable of fully grasping the performance of a truly reflective actor like Phister. In his analysis, Procul introduces a series of concepts that seem to act as contradictions: singular (*enkelt*) versus general (*almindelig*); accidental (*tilfældig*) versus essential (*væsentlich*); the immediate (*det Umiddelbare*) versus the reflection (*den Reflexion*). All of these—but especially the central notion of 'reflection'—echo the terminology used by playwright and poet Johan Ludvig Heiberg, who championed Hegel and was one of the leading literary critics in nineteenth century Denmark. In this way, Kierkegaard strongly suggests that his pseudonym Procul is indeed 'a theater critic of the Heiberg school.'<sup>10</sup>

A careful reading reveals, however, that Procul uses these concepts in a completely different way than Heiberg or any other Hegelian would use them. For Heiberg, the reflective stage is not more than a moment in the movement towards something higher: "The basic idea consists in leading the concept in a continuous movement through the three discrete points of the immediate, the reflected

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<sup>10</sup>To paraphrase Pattison (2009), who takes this incognito as Procul's true form.

(or dialectical), and the unity of both (or the speculative).” (Heiberg 1841, p. 373) Although Procul pays lip service to Heiberg’s understanding of the notion of reflection, his ultimate concern is the ‘reflective communication’ that becomes apparent in Phister’s ability to embody Captain Scipio’s attempts to hide his constant state of intoxication. As Klaus Müller-Wille says about one of Kierkegaard’s other reviews: “Again and again he takes up terms and concepts from Heiberg’s writings, which he subtly twists and modifies to arrive at his own perspective.” (Müller-Wille 2022, p. 103)<sup>11</sup> In light of this, it seems likely that Kierkegaard takes on the appearance of a ‘theater critic from the Heiberg school’ in a similar way as that Phister wears ‘the splendid uniform of the captain of the Papal police’; namely, to suggest that the person they embody (Scipio, Procul) is hiding something. This brings us to the third level of authorial performance.

For an author like Kierkegaard, who aims at a philosophy of existence, it will not be sufficient to employ only the first level of authorial performance. To avoid the reader taking over the equally irrelevant viewpoints of his author personae, Kierkegaard needs to widen the gap between his public persona and his author persona. To this end, he constructs disruptive counter-voices or intertextual-incognito’s that split the discourse into two or more contradictory tendencies, the conflict between which can only be resolved by the reader. These contradictory tendencies do not present themselves directly but are marked by indirect signs of contradictions that create a suspicion that something is wrong. Through these signs of contradiction, Kierkegaard ensures that the (existential) categories he introduces in his writings cannot be taken up directly by his readers but will only emerge fully after they work them out on their own account.

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### 11.3 Kierkegaard’s Performance of Procul as a Disclosure of Concealment

As indicated above, there are good reasons to suspect that Procul is hiding behind the incognito of a theater critic from the Heiberg school, resulting in a subtle mockery of this rather pompous critic. This emerges most clearly in the contrast between the first and second part of the opening section. In the first two paragraphs of the review, Procul draws an analogy between the theater critic and the lover. Here, he focuses on the structural similarity between the accidental value of the preferred dress of the beloved (favored by the lover) and the accidental value of the uniform of Captain Scipio (favored by Procul):

The beloved girl indeed owns several and far more expensive dresses than the blue-striped, red-checked, etc., in which the lover perhaps saw her for the first time, and yet this dress retains an exceptional value for him... Indeed, no matter how richly the richest young girl is equipped with dresses, she would scarcely be equipped as richly as Phister’s

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<sup>11</sup>Also see Jessen (2011) and (2012).

repertoire with the most varied and valuable clothes [*Drægter*]. But one of them [i.e., one of these clothes] has a purely accidental value for one spectator, another for another, that is, he is, as it were, in love with it... (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 126)

Earlier, we analyzed the image of the splendid uniform. At various moments in the review, Procul seems to equate the uniform with the role of Captain Scipio. In this light, we must understand this curious remark about the clothes in Phister's repertoire. The analogy can, therefore, be specified as follows. [A] The lover *relates to* [1] the preferred dress of the beloved that has an accidental value for him because she wore it the first time they met and [2] all the other dresses in her wardrobe, just as [B] Procul, the critic, *relates to* [1] the preferred, single performance of Captain Scipio and [2] the entire repertoire of Phister.

Procul's choice to analyze Phister's performance of Captain Scipio, rather than any of his other roles, is based on a preferential logic of accidental value. This preferential logic contrasts sharply with his detached logic of essential value, which Procul claims to rely on in the rest of the review, as evoked by his name (Latin for 'at a distance') as well as his insistence that reflection depends on the infinite distance from the subject on which it reflects. In the process of developing his argument for the detached logic of reflection, Procul explicitly rejects the analogy between the lover and the critic, highlighting their absolute difference:

[Whenever] there is essential reflection... [there is no longer] any sign of the pathology of immediate admiration, no heart palpitations, no blood congestions..., the relation is as infinitely distant as possible, as dignifiedly distant as spirit can be from spirit; yet it is a relation between admirers. (Kierkegaard 2012a, pp. 130–131)

The lover suffers from heart palpitations, blood congestion, and the like, whereas the critic stands at an infinite and dignified distance from the performance under review. The preferential logic of the lover is now rejected as a form of pathological admiration. Instead, a case is made for the detached logic of the reflective critic, which is seen as the proper form of admiration. A distinction is thus drawn between two types of critics: a) the passionate critic whose admiration is structured on the model of the lover, and b) the reflective critic who advocates a genuine admiration, explicitly rejecting the model of the lover. Let us look at the tensions between these 'two persons in one,' starting with the second, more dominant one.

Most dominantly, Procul presents himself as a reflective critic. What does that mean? It means that he wants to live up to the demand that his profession places on him "to take the performance apart in each of its singularities [*dens Enkelthed*], to account for each singularity [*Enkelthed*], and then put it all back together into a whole." (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 129) It means that he commits to a "true admiration" that is entirely detached from the admired performance and comes down to "the perfect understanding, neither more nor less." (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 130) It means that in his understanding of Phister's reflection-performance "nothing incommensurable remains," "the account balances, and for that very reason, there is the infinite distance of ideality" between them. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 130) It means that he believes in complete transparency in which the critic faithfully

strives “to give again [*gjengive*] what he [the actor, Phister] has given [*givet*].” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143) To do this, Procul cannot proceed like the ordinary theater critics “who attend a new play on the first evening it is performed” and only see it this one time. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143) No, to properly judge actors who “have spent months and all their genius, their thoughtfulness, and their diligence to work out the part,” Procul needs the distance of recollection to come to a proper understanding of the play (although there is no indication that he saw it more than once). (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143) He is indeed a reflective critic. What does that mean? It means that he has the misfortune that ordinary people will characterize his “highly reflective individuality” in terms of “pride, maliciousness, chicanery, irony.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 131)

On one side, Procul concurs with the dominant image of the reflective critic, but, like Captain Scipio, Procul has two sides, which is precisely what constitutes the deeper level of communication; Procul is ambiguous. On the other—more marginal—side, it becomes clear that he is not a reflective critic in the sense specified. Here, Procul presents himself as a passionate critic who proceeds by preference. As a passionate critic, Phister’s embodiment of Captain Scipio has only accidental value for Procul, choosing this performance above all others because it “appealed to the author.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 127) As a passionate critic, he describes his relation to Phister in terms of “being in love” while admitting “that all being in love is basically self-love,” fueled by the desire “to have understood a masterful performance completely, or at least in a completely different way than others.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 128) Here, Procul aims “to grasp the singular [*det Enkelte*], to go into the singular [*det Enkelte*],” which stands on its own and is no longer understood as ‘the smallest singularity’ that functions as a constituting element of a higher, reflective totality that is understood fully. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 127) Instead, it concerns the choice of “a completely singular performance [*ganske enkelt Præstation*]” that turns out to be an exercise in indirect communication. (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 127) In fact, by his own admission, Procul is not a critic at all. He is occupied with “completely different tasks than those of theater criticism, which are completely irrelevant to him.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143) He only writes this little article because he can. As such, it is his “obligation (and thus not something irrelevant) to use the rarely allowed and barely allotted spare time (while resting and having fun) to pay off, if possible, a little of the debt that we owe our great stage artists.” (Kierkegaard 2012a, p. 143)

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## 11.4 Conclusion: An Experiment in Indirect Communication

It is fair to say then that Procul, like Captain Scipio, is two persons in one: a) a reflective critic who claims to be able to write a reflective review in which he will reach a complete understanding of the performance and does so from an objective, infinite distance, and b) a passionate amateur who writes reviews in his limited leisure time and gets attached to ‘the singular,’ to ‘a completely singular

performance.’ Like Phister did with the role of Captain Scipio, Kierkegaard sows discord between the two persons within Procul; he does not directly stage the contradiction between them but only lets the tension between them emerge indirectly, by creating a suspicion of pompousness, without ever fully affirming it. At every moment, the accidental preferences of the passionate critic threaten to ridicule the detached objectivity of the reflective critic. However, the reader only gets a suspicion of it; it is never made explicit. Nevertheless, once the reader notices the minor discrepancies, they will act as signs of contradiction. This will allow readers to identify the detached and reflective ‘theater critic from the Heiberg school’ as an incognito that conceals the passionate critic lurking behind it. It will show that Heiberg’s conception of reflection is hollowed out and given new meaning, transforming Heiberg’s Hegelian dialectic of spirit and matter into a dialectic of the singular (*den Enkelte*), matching the dialectic of the single-individual (*‘den Enkeltes’ Dialektik*) as set out in *The Point of View*. (Kierkegaard 2012c, p. 95)

Literary strategies like this invite the readers to approach Kierkegaard’s texts through the lens of the asymptotic proximity between linguistic and theatrical performativity. By staging an unresolved and implicit conflict between ‘the two persons in one,’ Kierkegaard experiments with ways to hold on to the existential insight that the inner is not the outer. As a writer, he needs to rely on the outer, i.e., the inescapable iterability of the words that constitute the materiality of his text. He counters this by multiplying the authorial voice, using incognitos, and generating signs of contradiction. This compensates for the text’s outer manifestation, creating a pseudo-interiority that forces readers to resolve the contradictions and to make them actively responsible for what they take away from the text. As such, the theater review becomes an experiment in indirect communication.

By emulating the theatrical means of performativity that he finds in Phister’s performance of Captain Scipio, Kierkegaard tests out one of the potential writing strategies that will allow him to create the conditions for activating the inwardness of his readers. Within the theatrical dimensions of performativity, this brings him as close as possible to linguistic performativity (conceptualized by Austin and others to address how language constructs reality). By doing things with words, Kierkegaard aims to produce the kind of readers his philosophy of existence requires.

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