

# "I AM A FRIEND OF DIFFICULTIES" OR KIERKEGAARD AGAINST "THE COTERIES"

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"No, it is the cultivated and well-to-do class, if not the aristocrats, then at any rate the aristocratic bourgeoisie – they must be targeted, that is where the prices in the salon must be jacked up"<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Let us start by raising a few questions.

The first question has to do with street names. Copenhagen does not have a single square, boulevard, avenue, or street with the name "Søren Kierkegaard Place," "Søren Kierkegaard Street," etc. Not even in dignified Frederiksberg, where all sorts of literary nobodies have been immortalized, can one find so much as a Søren Kierkegaard Parking Lot. Of course, one could attempt to explain away this problem by pointing out the unfortunate fact that "Kierkegaard" also means "cemetery." But apart from this, what can account for this lack of geographical appreciation of Søren Kierkegaard? He is, after all, Denmark's only world-class philosopher, and with Hans Christian Andersen, Niels Bohr, and perhaps Karen Blixen, he is certainly one of the very few Danes who is actually well-known outside of Denmark (fig. 74). Why has Copenhagen neglected and belittled one of its most world-famous scions?

And then some religious questions? Is Denmark a Christian country? And in any event, what does an adjective like "Christian" mean when it is used in conjunction with a noun like "Denmark" or "country?" Does Denmark have a State Church? An "established church?" If a "People's Church" isn't a State Church, then what is it? What is the relation between "the people," "the Danish people," and "the church," "The Danish People's Church?" If the church is really the People's Church, and the church is Christian, doesn't that mean that the people must obviously be a Christian people? Can one be a Dane, a real Dane, a member of "the Danish people," if one is not a member of the People's Church? And this is not only a matter of a few thousand Jews, reformed Christians, and Catholics (and, more recently, Muslims). The

question is whether there is a Danishness which exists quite apart from Christianity.

And what is the relationship between an inherited body of cultural material, a society's collective continuity, and the existence of an individual person in the present?

The above questions can best be answered in connection with one another.

## II. SØREN KIERKEGAARD AND THE GOLDEN AGE

The Golden Age was profoundly conservative. It was the response of the Danish cultural elite to the approach of modernity, to the inevitable arrival of the new mass society, to the faceless anonymity of a market economy and a democratic polity. The Golden Age evinced a belief that despite these changes, modernity's dangers could be navigated by steadfastly keeping faith with the depth and integrity of the human personality. To this extent, Søren Kierkegaard was in step with the Golden Age.

But in emergencies – and there were emergencies – the conservative old cultural hierarchy had to take refuge in compromise solutions. Uncomfortable situations had to be covered with a veil of ambiguity, sometimes even with hypocrisy and lies. But etiquette and good form, the appearance of continuity with the old order, had to be maintained regardless of the cost. And here Søren Kierkegaard was out of step.

Kierkegaard's work signified a break with the collective continuity called the Golden Age. He referred to himself as "reckless" [*hensynsløs*]. Today we would call him brazen and provocative. He was specifically provocative toward the elite – the cultivated circles, or what he called "the coteries" – who guided officially Christian Denmark in his times. And he has never been forgiven for his conduct. And this is why there is no Søren Kierkegaard Boulevard in Copenhagen – precisely because he was taken *seriously*. (And it will be an unfortunate omen if one or another public thoroughfare comes to be named

after him. It will mean that his provocativeness has been forgotten and that he has become domesticated and has therewith lost his capacity to awaken offense.)

Just listen to Kierkegaard's reply to our above-mentioned question about Christian countries, the People's Church, etc.:

All this business about Christendom, Christian states, countries, a Christian world, State Church, People's Church, etc. is removed from reality by the power of imagination. It is an imaginary construction, and from a Christian point of view, it is such a corrupting form of imagination that the fitting motto is: Imagination is worse than pestilence.<sup>2</sup>



FIG. 74. Wilhelm Marstrand (1810-1873): Caricature of Søren Kierkegaard, undated. Pencil and pen. 300 × 135 mm. Frederiksborgmuseet, Hillerød. Inv. no. A 5714.

And:

You common man! ... For the sake of God in Heaven and by everything that is holy, there is one thing I implore you to do: Avoid the pastors, avoid them, these disgusting creatures, whose way of making a living is to hinder you from even becoming aware of what true Christianity is, and in so doing to transform you – befogged with nonsense and illusions – into what they understand by a true Christian: a paying member of the State Church, the People's Church, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Not only was he convinced that the Danish Church (whether it was called the "State Church" or the "People's Church") was an un-Christian deception, he was also equally convinced that this deception owed its continued survival to the leading "coteries" of the Golden Age. In his journals from 1848 Kierkegaard sets forth his views about the importance of cliques and coteries in Denmark:

I [have] taken careful aim at the untruth in the coterie, at the illusion, etc. My tactic has always been to sow discord in the coteries.... The great coterie is: Mynster, Heiberg, Martensen, and company.... I am fighting for the individual, and it is true that the kingdom of Denmark has been and remains the most barren ground for this, because here everything is coteries.... Even if I abandoned all of my ideas, abandoned my own view of Christianity or the cause of which I am essentially a part – nonetheless, merely to have extirpated all the coteries in Denmark, if it were possible, would be a great service to the country.<sup>4</sup>

The attack on the Church toward the end of Kierkegaard's life was thus the implementation of Kierkegaard's final frontal assault on the principal coteries of Golden Age Denmark. And it is therefore not surprising that, in letter written to her husband in 1855 (i.e., during Kierkegaard's attack), Johanne Luise Heiberg could characterize Kierkegaard in passing with just three words: "the faithless beast."<sup>5</sup> Of course Kierkegaard was faithless when viewed through the eyes of the Golden Age elite: He had seen through the illusory religiosity of his times – and had called attention to it.

In fact, Kierkegaard's accusations against the cul-

tivated elite were generally on the mark. Particularly in matters concerning the relation between Christianity and culture, the Golden Age was characterized, if not by a conspiracy, then at any rate by a suspiciously close sort of solidarity.

In what follows we will investigate a signal instance in which the Golden Age elite managed to preserve the “coterie” at the expense of religion (and simple honesty), and in so doing we will see something of the Golden Age tendency to make compromises.

### III. OEHLenschLÄGER, MYNSTER, AND THE JESUS-NATURE POEMS

In 1805, the poet Adam Oehlenschläger published his major collection *Poetiske Skrifter* [Poetical Writings] (fig. 75). The most well-known piece in the *Poetical Writings* is *Aladdin*, but the collection also included a cycle of poems entitled *Jesu Christi gientagne Liv i den aarlige Natur* [The Life of Jesus Christ Repeated in the Annual Cycle of Nature]. It immediately becomes clear to any reader that the “Christianity” in these poems is actually Oehlenschläger’s pure and simple romantic pantheism. A few lines are sufficient to point out the tendency in the work:

Every spring, when the fogs disappear,  
The little child Jesus is born again.  
The angel in the air, in the grove, in the brook,  
It is our Savior! It is he!  
Therefore Nature, in chaste beauty,  
Is joyfully clad in the green of Hope.

Shepherds, young and innocent,  
Study the sky in the clear night,  
And suddenly God’s angels sail into the field.  
They hover and tremble in the moonlight,  
Singing: “Today a Savior is born  
Of the womb of spring, of the chaste Mary!”<sup>6</sup>

Oehlenschläger’s Jesus-Nature poems were immediately attacked as heretical (which they quite clearly were!) by Bishop N. E. Balle, Primate of the Danish State Church.<sup>7</sup> Despite the spectacular success of his first collection of poetry, *Digte* [Poems] (1802), the ambitious young Adam Oehlenschläger was still vulnerable and was very concerned about the official



FIG. 75. Johan Ludvig Lund (1777-1867): Portrait of Adam Oehlenschläger, 1809. Oil on canvas. 49.5 × 41.5 cm. Frederiksborgmuseet, Hillerød. Inv. no. A 50.

ecclesiastical reaction to the Jesus-Nature poems. But Oehlenschläger had very good connections, and he could make use of them. He was engaged to Christiane Heger, who was the younger sister of Kamma (Heger) Rahbek. This meant that the important and very influential literary critic K.L. Rahbek was Oehlenschläger’s future brother-in-law. Of at least equal importance was the fact that Oehlenschläger’s circle of friends included such people as the brothers Hans Christian and Anders Sandøe Ørsted (the latter had married Oehlenschläger’s sister in 1802), as well as the very promising young theologian Jacob Peter Mynster, then at his first parish in Spjellerup in southern Zealand. Mynster would prove particularly useful in the present situation.

As mentioned above, despite Oehlenschläger’s growing popularity, there was a danger that criticism such as that which could be expected from Bishop Balle could hinder his career. In the early part of the summer of 1805, Oehlenschläger and his Copenhagen circle of friends decided to ask Mynster to review Oehlenschläger’s newest collection of poetry. No mention was made of the Jesus-Nature poems, but it was clear that Mynster’s review – which was, of course, to be a positive one! – was to deal principally

with those poems, because that was where Oehlenschläger lay open to attack, and that was where Mynster, as an up-and-coming theologian with a reputation for brilliance and profundity, could be of greatest assistance. But in June 1805, apparently in reply to a letter he had received, Mynster wrote from Spjellerup to Kamma Rahbek in Copenhagen:

I have certainly wanted to review him, but I also see that it would both be difficult for me to find time for it now, if I am to work on my sermons, and that *I can scarcely review him in such a way that both of us and the matter are well-served by it.* ... Will you please thank Oehlenschläger sincerely on my behalf, and tell him that if I do not review him – and I have not yet given up the will to do so – he must by no means think that it is out of indifference toward him, toward poetry, or toward his poems. If I do not write a review, it will be only because I have been denied the clarity of internal light which I need in order *to be able to do it, and that I thus ought not to do it.*<sup>8</sup>

The most striking passage is surely that in which Mynster states that he finds himself unable to review Oehlenschläger “in such a way that both of us and the matter are well-served by it.” In other words, Mynster will not write anything unless he can produce something which is profitable both to Oehlenschläger’s career as a daring and innovative romantic poet *and* to his own position as the representative of a new sort of piety which was profound, personal, and “orthodox.” The demands of the new romantic poetry and the neo-orthodox, anti-rationalistic view of Christianity would have to be satisfied simultaneously. And this would be difficult to achieve without a shallow compromise or even outright duplicity.

But the cultural circle in Copenhagen continued (and indeed increased) its pressure on Mynster. On July 8, Kamma Rahbek wrote the following to Mynster:

I must not forget to tell you that the greetings I gave “the unconverted Adam” (that is what we are calling him nowadays) on your behalf were not entirely pleasing to him. He has asked me repeatedly if I really couldn’t get you to review him – but I dare not plague you further.<sup>9</sup>

And two days later, Oehlenschläger himself wrote to Mynster:

As far as I could make out, you have half abandoned your decision to review me, which would hurt me very much, for I must confess to you that I believe that you are the only person in the Kingdom of Denmark (including Norway) capable of doing this. If my entreaty is capable of anything with you, do not give it up. It doesn’t have to be so lengthy, you know. A couple of strong words by a reasonable man can keep a good deal of gossip off the streets.... It always has a good effect and it impresses the crowd when they hear that there are *many* people who are of the same opinion. It is generally the *duty* of the few who live together in this benighted age to join together into a league and act with united strength, each according to his conviction and his character.<sup>10</sup>

The situation is very clear. It is the quite definite wish of the cultural elite that Mynster “impress the crowd” with “a couple of strong words” and thus “keep a good deal of gossip off the streets.” Furthermore, Mynster is flattered with the information that he is “the only person in the Kingdom of Denmark (including Norway) capable of doing this.” Here, from the innermost circle of the Golden Age elite, we are presented with an unambiguous appeal for support and solidarity, regardless of the personal convictions of the individual involved.

On July 19, Mynster answered his friend Oehlenschläger and revealed his doubts about the Jesus-Nature poems:

To the unconverted Adam, Good Friend! ... Thanks especially for your poems, which have brought me much joy. It will not surprise you that part of what is in the poetry is not entirely according to my lights, but you will learn *how much* is in accordance with my views if, God willing, I write about them.... It will be particularly difficult for me to say anything reasonable and profitable about the Jesus poem, for I do not possess a philosophy of Christianity, not even fragments of one, that I would need for such a purpose. As soon as I can I will tear myself away from what I am now doing and try what I can.<sup>11</sup>

Here Mynster once again protests that he will have a difficult time writing anything which is both “reasonable” (i.e., truthful, according to Mynster’s own innermost conviction) and “profitable” (i.e., for Oehlenschläger’s cause). How can Mynster help his friend and cultural ally Oehlenschläger without being untrue to himself and breaking faith with his own understanding of Christianity? Mynster is in a terrible bind. But when he excuses himself by saying that he does not even possess “fragments of a philosophy of Christianity” which he could use as guidance in writing a review of “the Jesus poem” – this is simply untrue – untrue, that is, if Mynster’s posthumously published autobiography, *Meddelelser om mit Levnet* [Communications about My Life], is to be trusted. In that work Mynster writes that *two years earlier*, that is, in the summer of 1803, “there took place in my inner life a ‘breakthrough’ which was as definite and sudden as has ever taken place in any person’s soul.”<sup>12</sup> And this breakthrough, he tells us, was the beginning of his growth and development as a Christian. Thus, by the summer of 1805 Mynster had at any rate significantly more on which to base his review than he was willing to admit to Oehlenschläger.

But Mynster was also very reluctant to disappoint his circle of friends in Copenhagen. On July 19, simultaneously with his letter to Oehlenschläger cited above, Mynster wrote to Kamma Rahbek, telling her that his friends must not give up hope of receiving something from him: “I have not abandoned the intention of reviewing his poems.”<sup>13</sup> Six weeks later, on August 27th, Hans Christian Ørsted also wrote to Mynster, reminding him of his “intention”:

For the sake of the good cause, I hope that you follow through on your intention [to review Oehlenschläger]. I am already happy about it, in the expectation that your review will lead to others, and that the Good thus will gain one more friend who *loudly* defends its cause.<sup>14</sup>

Once again it is made clear to Mynster that his friends in Golden Age Copenhagen are depending upon him to come to Oehlenschläger’s rescue by helping to shape public opinion “for the sake of the good cause.” Despite the pressure that had been brought to bear on Mynster, and despite the fact that

he had actually experienced a religious “breakthrough” some two years earlier and was thus quite capable of forming a judgment concerning Oehlenschläger’s Jesus-Nature poems, the matter dragged on. During the latter part of the summer, the Rahbeks twice visited Mynster at his manse in Spiellerup, and it is clear from subsequent correspondence that the matter of the Oehlenschläger review was on the agenda during these visits. The summer of 1805 became autumn, and in early October Kamma Rahbek wrote Oehlenschläger, informing him of her most recent negotiations with Mynster:

I send you many greetings from Job. . . . When he was raising so many difficulties about it, I suggested that he should only really write about one single poem, ‘Jesus’, but he insisted that that was impossible unless he wrote an entire philosophy of Christianity. I can very well appreciate that he doesn’t think it an easy thing to review you, and I also have faith that he will acquit himself well with this work, but I cannot stand the fact that it is taking so long.<sup>15</sup>

Here it is made patently clear that the attention of the cultural elite was focussed on the Jesus-Nature poems and *only* on those poems, concerning which, precisely because of their obvious pantheism, Mynster had his greatest misgivings. And, of course, it was also precisely because of this same pantheism that Oehlenschläger and company had great need of support from this “orthodox” pastor.

Finally, later in October, Mynster gave in and sent K. L. Rahbek his review of Oehlenschläger’s *Poetical Writings*. Mynster’s review was itself written in verse (the better to avoid dealing unambiguously with specific points in Oehlenschläger’s work), and, as expected, it dealt exclusively with one particular part of Oehlenschläger’s large, two-volume collection, “The Life of Jesus Christ Repeated in the Annual Cycle of Nature.” A few lines from Mynster’s poetical review are sufficient to indicate its tendency:

**To Adam Oehlenschläger**

Whoever, free from the slavery of life,  
Knows how to look undisturbedly within himself  
Will also see in Nature the flame  
Which burns everywhere with holy splendor.

.....

Though above all there is one legend on earth  
Which draws all hearts toward it.

.....

It is a wonderful and holy story  
Well worth being honored among men.  
To awaken them from their lazy torpor  
It must continually be recalled,  
from generation to generation.

.....

That was your message, singer,  
when you raised your eye  
Gladly to the splendor of the spring!<sup>16</sup>

Mynster’s review-poem speaks for itself. He had finally managed to find a way to write a review “in such a way that both of us and the matter are well-served by it.” Mynster carefully and consistently chose to interpret Oehlenschläger as a more or less orthodox Christian, and the reader of his review cannot see the least hint of any of the scruples with which Mynster had struggled.

As a reward for having compromised his Christian conscience, Mynster was named a first-class member of the inner circle of the Golden Age. In October 1805 Mynster received K. L. Rahbek’s thanks: “Thank you for the poetic review of ‘the unconverted’ which you sent.” Furthermore, Rahbek explains, despite the fact that his [Rahbek’s] own literary point of view is quite different from Oehlenschläger’s, he has decided to write yet another review of his future brother-in-law’s work, and here again, for reasons which are frankly rooted in cultural politics rather than in aesthetics and literary criticism: “In the absence of others and in fear of worse, ... perhaps a favorable review by a man who does not share Oehlenschläger’s creed in other respects might not serve Oehlenschläger poorly at the present moment.”<sup>17</sup> This was the sort of mutual cohesiveness which typified the coteries of the Golden Age.

Mynster had had the tact not to send a copy of his poetical review directly to Oehlenschläger, who was now living abroad with the support of a travel fellowship from the government, which was favorably disposed toward him. Nonetheless, in late October Oehlenschläger received a copy of Mynster’s poem from Kamma Rahbek: “The enclosed poem will please you.”<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, Oehlenschläger thanked

Mynster indirectly, via his fiancée Christiane Heger, for “the splendid poem from Job,” and told her of his “happiness in having delighted so noble and unusually profound a nature as Job Mynster’s.” Oehlenschläger’s letter continues, “Have Karen Margarethe [Kamma] greet him, and have her tell him that I regard the revelation of this poem to my soul as one of the greatest joys I have encountered in the world.”<sup>19</sup> Here the youthful and quite insecure theologian received his certificate of membership in the innermost circle of the leading coterie of the Golden Age. Shortly thereafter (November 15th) Oehlenschläger asked Kamma Rahbek to greet Mynster and to thank him on his behalf: “Thank Mynster fervently for his beautiful poem.”<sup>20</sup> She did so not long afterwards and did not skimp on flattery. She then (December 8th) reported back to Oehlenschläger that “it pleased him [Mynster] unspeakably much that *you* were pleased with what he had done, and he believes that what you have said to him is much more than he could ask for.”<sup>21</sup>

Finally, almost two years later (1807), Oehlenschläger thanked Mynster directly and once again emphasized in no uncertain terms that Mynster was one of the Golden Age’s “rare few”: “Thank you now, personally, for your beautiful poem to me! It has caused me profound joy. One of the greatest rewards an artist has is that the noble, rare individuals in his time know and treasure him. I think that one of my greatest joys will be to associate with you when I return home and to count you among my best friends.”<sup>22</sup> Thus was the ambitious but troubled Mynster rewarded for his support for Oehlenschläger at a very critical juncture.

But did Mynster actually believe that Oehlenschläger embraced anything like the “orthodox” Christianity he himself stood for? Scarcely. In 1806 he wrote to Kamma Rahbek concerning Oehlenschläger’s poem *Hakon Jarls Død* [The Death of Hakon Jarl], which ends:

The varied throng of ancient gods  
Disappears and will never again come to the  
North.  
Instead of the august memorials of sacrificial  
groves,  
One finds but churches and cloisters.  
Only here and there



tion," which he had had a significant part in passing:

When in 1848 Denmark performed the daring feat of transferring power to the entire people, it was not in order to place the guidance of the state in the hands of unenlightened common peasants, even less to turn it over to self-serving and devious demagogues. It is the talented, the cultivated, and the well-to-do who in every civilized society have the dominant voice in the guidance of public affairs, and all that equality can require and can do is to make it as easy as possible for every talented person to acquire cultivation and wealth, and thereby respect and influence.<sup>32</sup>

## VI. CONCLUSION

These were the big guns of the conservative mainstream of the Golden Age: in the first generation, the poet Oehlenschläger and the theologian Mynster; and in the second generation, the poet Heiberg and the theologian Martensen. But if, according to Søren Kierkegaard, they constituted nothing less than a self-satisfied mutual admiration society, which found it convenient to call upon the name of Christianity; and if (again, according to Kierkegaard) neither Grundtvig nor Lehmann was a serviceable alternative; that is, if neither the Golden Age's conservative mainstream nor either of the two groups which were its principal opponents, the Grundtvigians and the liberals, were acceptable – then what could Kierkegaard offer to his times instead?

At this point it is useful to present a brief and necessarily simplified schematic overview of the complex mosaic of Golden Age culture and to situate Søren Kierkegaard within this schema. The complexity of Golden Age cultural phenomena can perhaps be best simplified by posing two questions, one concerning *history*, and one concerning *culture*.

The "history" question could be phrased as follows: How important is history in determining one's attitude toward the most important things concerning one's existence here and now? That is, are world-historical developments of great significance to the manner in which one interprets the meaning of one's life in the present? For our purposes there are two important alternative answers to this "history" question: 1. Yes, world history, in general, and our nation-

al history, in particular, are of decisive significance for who *I* am in the present. I will label this position "romantic." Or, 2. No, history is not of major significance for who *I* am in the present, and in any event, it is impossible to know whether history has any "meaning" at all in this sense. I will label this position "agnostic."

The "culture" question could be phrased as follows: What is culture and who are the bearers of culture? Once again, for our purposes there are two important alternative answers to this "culture" question: 1. Culture is a lofty, primarily literary sort of cultivation, a heritage, a treasure which must be maintained and protected by an elite group of the cultivated, so that it can be passed on intact to the next generation of cultivated people. I will label this position "mandarin." Or, 2. Whatever culture is, it is only worthy of the name "culture" if it is equally accessible to *everyone*; culture is *every person's* inheritance and property and has nothing to do with elitist notions about "cultivation." I will label this position "democratic."

If these two questions are made to serve as the two axes in a square diagram, it will be seen that the various possible pairings of the two sets of alternative answers group themselves into four fields, each representing a basic Golden Age cultural position.

		HISTORY	
		romantic	agnostic
CULTURE	mandarin	Golden Age Mainstream: Oehlenschläger, Mynster, Heiberg, Martensen et.al.	liberalism
	democratic	Grundtvig	Kierkegaard

The conservative *Golden Age mainstream* (Oehlenschläger, Mynster, Heiberg, Martensen, et al.) was *romantic* in its view of history and *mandarin* in its view of culture. The *liberals* present a less clear-cut profile, but at least a sizable proportion of them took their stand on Enlightenment principles, and this

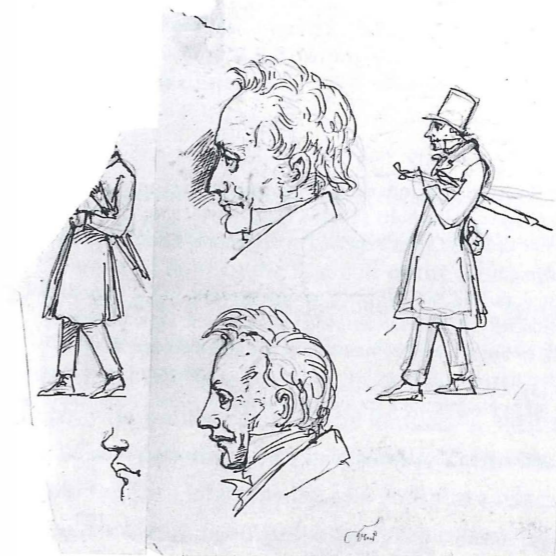


FIG. 76. Wilhelm Marstrand (1810-1873): *Sketches of Søren Kierkegaard and his father(?)*, undated. Pencil and pen. 209 x 205 mm. Private Collection.

included a scepticism about any ultimate significance of history, i.e., an *agnostic* position on the meaning of history. But despite their parliamentarism, these liberals, stemming as they did from the urban elite class, had a fundamentally *mandarin* view of culture. The case of *Grundtvig and his followers* is fairly clear-cut: They were *romantic* in their view of history and *democratic* in their view of culture. It will be noted that each of the two major groups – the liberals and the Grundtvigians – who constituted the principal alternatives to the regnant conservative mainstream of the Golden Age were nonetheless in agreement with that mainstream on one or the other of the two questions that have been posed regarding history and culture. There is a fourth possibility in our diagram, however. This would be in the diagram field diagonally opposite the field in which the conservative Golden Age mainstream is situated, and thus *diametrically opposed* to the mainstream's romantic view of history and its mandarin view of culture. This position of radical opposition to the Golden Age mainstream would offer an *agnostic* answer to the question of the meaning of history and a *democratic* answer to the question regarding the nature of culture. This is a good description of the views of *Søren Kierkegaard*, who was an *absolute* opponent of the Christian cultural synthesis put forward by the coteries who dominated Golden Age Denmark.

Kierkegaard made known his strong opposition to the elitism of the Golden Age as early as 1846 in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. His insistence upon *equality* was the motivating force behind his falling-out with the Golden Age, and it formed the core of his understanding of Christianity:

While [faith] can be grasped and held fast by the most simple person, it is only all the more difficult for the cultivated person to attain. O, wonderful, inspiring Christian humanity: That which is highest is common to all people.<sup>33</sup>

And Kierkegaard explains his chosen task as follows:

[S]ince . . . cultivation and all that sort of thing have made it so extremely easy to be a Christian, it is certainly proper that the individual, to the best of his limited abilities, should attempt to make it difficult. . . . [T]he more cultivation and knowledge, the more difficult it is to become a Christian.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Christianity is made more difficult, but Kierkegaard loves difficulties, especially for cultivated people – and he includes himself in this group:

I am a friend of difficulties, especially those with this humorous characteristic: that the most cultivated person, having been through the greatest of exertions, comes essentially no further than the simplest person can come.<sup>35</sup>

This egalitarian, anti-elitist position was characteristic of Kierkegaard from 1846 all the way until his death, and it was one of the cornerstones of his attack on the Church, in which he mounted a furious assault on the cliques and coteries of the cultivated elite. It is fitting to close with Kierkegaard's last word to his Golden Age contemporaries (and to us), from the final, posthumous issue of his *Moment*:

You common man! I have not cut off my life from yours. You know it, I have lived in the streets and am known by everyone. Moreover, I have never amounted to anything and am possessed of no class egoism. So, if I belong to anyone, I must belong to you, you common man.<sup>36</sup> (fig. 76).

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer* [Søren Kierkegaard's Papers], ed. P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr and E. Torsting, 2nd augmented ed. by N. Thulstrup, index by N. J. Cappelørn (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968-78) [hereafter "*Papirer*"], X1 A 135, p. 102 (1849).
2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Samlede Værker* [The Collected Works of Søren Kierkegaard], ed. A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg, and H. O. Lange, 3rd revised ed. by Peter P. Rohde (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962-64) [hereafter "*SV*"], vol. 19, p. 216 (*Øieblikket* [The Moment] no. 7).
3. *SV*, vol. 19, p. 324 (*Øieblikket* no. 10).
4. *Papirer*, IX A 206, pp. 103f. (1848).
5. *Fra det heibergske Hjem. Johan Ludvig og Johanne Luise Heibergs indbyrdes Brevveksling* [From the Heiberg Home: The Correspondence Between Johan Ludvig and Johanne Luise Heiberg], ed. Aage Friis, (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz's Forlag, 1940), p. 346; letter of July 9, 1855.
6. Adam Oehlenschläger, *Jesu Christi gientagne Liv i den aarlige Natur* [The Life of Jesus Christ Repeated in the Annual Cycle of the Seasons] in *Poetiske Skrifter* [Poetical Writings] (Copenhagen, 1805), vol. I, p. 421.
7. See N. E. Balle's sermon, "Bispevielse i Frue Kirke: 10de Søndag efter Trinit. d. 18. Aug. 1805" [Episcopal Consecration in the Church of Our Lady: 10th Sunday after Trinity, August 18, 1805] in *Theologisk Maanedskrift for Fædrelandets Religionslærere*, ed. Lorenz Nikolai Fallesen, vol. 6 (July-December 1805), pp. 300f. and 309. Oehlenschläger is not mentioned by name in Balle's criticism, but his Jesus-Nature poem is the unmistakable target: "But are we supposed to think that the story of Jesus is to be defined as a painting of the various transformations of Nature? It can only depict, not narrate – a gold mine for poets, but not a spring from which to draw the concepts of true religion. Oh God! What perversions!" (p. 309).
8. *Breve Fra J. P. Mynster* [Letters from J. P. Mynster], ed. C. L. N. Mynster (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1860), p. 68; emphasis added in the first emphasized phrase.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
10. *Breve fra og til Adam Oehlenschläger. Januar 1798 - November 1809* [Letters to and from Adam Oehlenschläger: January 1798-November 1809], ed. H. A. Paludan, Daniel Preisz, and Morten Borup, vol. I (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1945), pp. 93f.; emphasis in original.
11. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 95; emphasis in original.
12. J. P. Mynster, *Meddelelser om mit Levnet* [Communications about My Life], 2nd printing (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1884), p. 154.
13. *Breve Fra J. P. Mynster*, p. 72.
14. *Af efterladte Breve til J. P. Mynster* [From Extant Letters to J. P. Mynster] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1862), p. 12; emphasis in original.
15. *Breve fra og til Adam Oehlenschläger. Januar 1798 - November 1809*, vol. I, pp. 126f. Perhaps in view of his long-suffering nature (and/or as a recognition of his profound religiosity), Jacob Peter Mynster's Golden Age allies had assigned him the nickname "Job".
16. J. P. Mynster, *Blandede Skrifter* [Miscellaneous Writings], vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1853), pp. 349-53.
17. *Af efterladte Breve til J. P. Mynster*, p. 13.
18. *Breve fra og til Adam Oehlenschläger. Januar 1798 - November 1809*, vol. I, p. 147.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 155.
20. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 171.
21. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 192; emphasis in original.
22. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 185f.
23. Adam Oehlenschläger, "Hakon Jarls Død eller Christendommens Indførsel i Norge" [The Death of Hakon Jarl or The Introduction of Christianity into Norway] in *Digte* [Poems] (Copenhagen: 1802).
24. *Breve Fra J. P. Mynster*, p. 85.
25. *Af efterladte Breve til J. P. Mynster*, p. 19; emphasis in original.
26. J. P. Mynster, *Betragtninger over de christelige Troeslærdomme* [Observations on the Doctrines of the Christian Faith], 2nd printing, vol. I (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1837), p. 24.
27. J. P. Mynster, *Kirkelige Leiligheds-Taler* [Occasional Ecclesiastical Addresses], vol. II (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1854), p. 397.
28. H. L. Martensen, review of J. L. Heiberg's *Nye Digte*, in *Fædrelandet*, no. 400, January 12, 1841, col. 3224; the entire review took up almost all of nos. 398-400 (January 10-12, 1841).
29. *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg* [Letters and Documents Concerning Johan Ludvig Heiberg], ed. Morten Borup, vol. II (1825-1839) (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1948), p. 298; letter by J. L. Heiberg to H. L. Martensen, dated March 5, 1838, written on the occasion of one of Martensen's reviews of Heiberg's work.
30. H. L. Martensen, *Leilighedstaler* [Occasional Addresses] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1884), pp. 403 and 406.
31. N. F. S. Grundtvig, "Nyaars-Morgen" [New Year's Morning] (1824) in *Værker i Udvalg* [Selected Works], ed. Georg Christensen and Hal Koch, vol. VII (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1941), pp. 373f.; emphasis in original.
32. Cited in P. Munch, "Embedsstanden" [The Civil Service Class], in Institutet for Historie og Samfundskøkonomi, ed., *Fra Stænder til Folk* [From Estates to People] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1943), pp. 16f.
33. *SV*, vol. 9, pp. 246f. (*Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift* [Concluding Unscientific Postscript]).
34. *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 79 (*Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*).
35. *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 269 (*Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*).
36. *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 324 (*Øieblikket* no. 10).