



Kierkegaard and the Quest for Unambiguous Life: Between Romanticism and Modernism: Selected Essays

George Pattison

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This book looks at Kierkegaard with a fresh perspective shaped by the history of ideas, framed by the terms romanticism and modernism. 'Modernism' here refers to the kind of intellectual and literary modernism associated with Georg Brandes, and such later nineteenth and early twentieth century figures as J. P. Jacobsen, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Ibsen (all often associated with Kierkegaard in early secondary literature), and the young Georg Lukacs. This movement, currently attracting increasing scholarly attention, fed into such varied currents of twentieth century thought as Bolshevism (as in Lukacs himself), fascism, and the early existentialism of, e.g., Shestov and the radical culture journal *The Brenner* (in which Kierkegaard featured regularly, and whose readers included Martin Heidegger). Each of these movements has, arguably, its own 'Romantic' aspect and Kierkegaard thus emerges as a figure who holds together or in whom are reflected both the aspirations and contradictions of early romanticism and its later nineteenth and twentieth century inheritors.

Kierkegaard's specific 'staging' of his authorship in the contemporary life of Copenhagen, then undergoing a rapid transformation from being the backward capital of an absolutist monarchy to a modern, cosmopolitan city, provides a further focus for the volume. In this situation the early Romantic experience of nature as providing a source of healing and an experience of unambiguous life is transposed into a more complex and, ultimately, catastrophic register. In articulating these tensions, Kierkegaard's authorship provided a mirror to his age but also anticipated and influenced later generations who wrestled with their own versions of this situation.

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