

the determination and the limit of every thing: this is the good' (98).

The *Isha Upanishad* too gestures to the veiled face of God. Agamben does not acknowledge this Upanishad in his works till date. Had a Hindu theologian from a developing world made this elision, then she or he would be called a plagiarist. Colebrook and Maxwell also do not credit Vedanta while studying Agamben. Yet, all the while Agamben is moving towards his *Karman* (2017) which is very Hindu in tone and quotes the Shaiva agamas. Thus Agamben's refusal to acknowledge Hinduism in his earlier works is especially jarring while Claire Colebrook and Jason Maxwell may be too entrenched in white academia to bother with a religion from a poorer nation rendered poor by the aggression of their ancestors.

Nonetheless, the ingenuity of Agamben lies in his disjuncture from the works of materialists like Michael Hardt (b. 1960) and Antonio Negri (b. 1933) whose 'Spinozist Marxist project' stresses on immaterial labour ... [now] subjected to external technologies of production. New communicative systems have enabled the possibility of a new self-forming humanity [unlike Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' during the European Renaissance]. Sovereign power has now been rendered immanent. ... But Agamben has quite a different conception of Spinozist immanence that is not about the sovereign split between 'power to ...' and 'power over' becoming humanity's own. Whereas Marxism generally regards the world as that which is negated or labored upon in order for humanity to become conscious of itself, and whereas Hardt and Negri [in their book *Empire*] see the process of global immaterial labor as one in which humanity produces itself through itself (by communally affecting itself in a mode of positive expression and creation), Agamben's Spinozism is far more passive and ... is a surrender to *not* owning one self, and an openness to one immanent life that is not subject to the sovereign mode of recognizing a properly human political being at the expense of an abandoned bare life (144).

Claire Colebrook and Jason Maxwell's book is timely but in the final analysis, is a heresy of paraphrase so feared by Cleanth Brooks (1906–94)

in his *The Well-Wrought Urn* (1947). Agamben's poetry in the sense of poetry so defined by Agamben himself and quoted at the beginning of this review, should remain veiled since Agamben's is a literature of replenishment, to quote the American novelist, John Barth (b. 1930).

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Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks, Volume 9: Journals NB26–NB30

Søren Kierkegaard
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Kierkegaard's *Journals* are endlessly entertaining and illuminating. Volume 9's value lies in insights that are precisely worth our time since they are unsettling.

Kierkegaard's observations about the press now appear to be so true that one needs to quote him at some length:

I [Kierkegaard] have shown that the view of the 'daily press' that has prevailed up until now entirely misses the point. The press has been understood as follows: the major premise is that the daily press is good; the minor premise is that it sometimes causes injury by being misused to propagate lies and evil, etc. What I am aiming at, however, is this: the daily press is evil, especially with respect to minor matters, simply and solely on the basis of the power of dissemination. In minor matters it is an entirely disproportionate means of communication, and in this respect it is a kind of lunacy that tends to turn society into a madhouse, just

as, e.g., laying a railroad track back and forth, up and down, over a terrain the size of a square mile would be a kind of madness and, far from benefiting people, would confuse everything. No, dissemination is an evil in and of itself. ... Very few people could bear the monstrous publicity engendered by the sort of dissemination that is at the disposal of the press, and certainly least of all when the press is used to point things out in this way. ... Even the most thick-skinned man would need superhuman powers to be capable of bearing the press directed at him like this for a long period of time, infiltrating the smallest details of his life. Such dissemination is an evil in and of itself (432–3).

Today's press is no longer a press dominated by newspapers and journals. We read news through apps and more often than not, through good old gossip on social media. The distinction between news, edited and worthy of reflection, and slander are erased now. All news has become now the proverbial 'bad news'. News has become the lowest common denominator of the dissemination of ideas precisely because what goes by the textual register 'news' is a very ephemeral, topical unidimensional claptrap about nothing which really matters in the long run. This leads to what Kierkegaard sees as insane and inane anarchy for if one knows God, then one knows that the medium is not the message; cannot ever be any message. The medium through which God speaks is rooted in the ethical. It is this ethical which will later occupy Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95) and even, Alasdair McIntyre (b. 1929):

The medium, the sole medium, through which God communicates with 'humanity', the only thing he will talk about with humanity, is: the ethical. But in order to speak ethically of the ethical (and if one does not speak of it ethically, it is not the ethical—and on the other hand, God must, after all, surely be assumed to be the master of speaking ethically of the ethical) it is necessary that everything else be absolutely relegated to the level of infinite unimportance. Stick to the point, stick to the point, is the watchword, stick to the point—that is, stick to the ethical. If the people who are being addressed call an apple a pear—well, who cares? There is really no time to waste time by informing them, bien, the ethicist also calls an apple a pear, for he is just as able to speak

of what occupies him infinitely: the ethical (187).

The dystopic situation that Kierkegaard wrote of is more relevant today when we do not want to pause and think for ourselves but would rather be excited by paid news. We do not want to philosophise and engage with the hard questions of philosophy, but rather we want to be endlessly entertained. It is easier this way. Unlike self-proclaimed puritans and other censor-mongers, Kierkegaard throughout his works stresses the need for the freedom of the press as earlier John Milton (1608–74) did in his polemical tract *Areopagitica* (1644). Kierkegaard's theories about communication and the press should find place in all Media Studies's courses.

With this volume under review and other volumes in this series published by the Princeton University Press and the Søren Kierkegaard Research Center at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, we have enough material in English which can be used for fashioning morally responsible journalism which is once again marked by ethical concerns. Most extant theories of mass communication are amoral and therefore, need the foundational morality that is to be found within the works of Kierkegaard. The editors and translators of these *Journals* have done something impossible—they have written volumes which will eventually open up Kierkegaard studies as an independent domain in its own right. The quoted passage above makes a strong case against kangaroo trials by social media trolls.

A[ugustine] indeed did incalculable damage. The entirety of Christian doctrine has, over the centuries, sought support in him—and he has confused the concept of 'faith'.

A[ugustine] quite simply revived the Platonic-Aristotelian understanding, the whole Greek, pagan, philosophical understanding of faith—and this has been his contribution to Xnty [Christianity], in roughly the same way as Saxo Grammaticus, according to Peer Degen's explanation, enriched the Latin language by introducing, for example, such formulations as 'a dun-colored horse', *equus blakkatus* (437). Then Kierkegaard goes on to point out the following about Augustine:

Nor is it true, as is so often said, that Augustine was a thinker 'who feared no [logical]

consequences'. For example, it is reported that, as a consequence of assuming the necessity of baptism for salvation, he argued for the eternal damnation of small children.

Yes, but let us pause and look more closely. Augustine says: they go to hell—but to the mildest hell. Great God, and this is supposed to be a thinker, a thinker of eminent and fearless consistency, yet one who makes use of such nonsensical categories: the *mildest* hell. This is indeed rubbish, and it is rather proof that A[ugustine] was in no way a thinker, or at least not a thinker in the Greek sense, in the Socratic sense (438).

While it is generally believed that Western Christian civilisation is founded on St Paul of Tarsus (c. 5–67 CE) on the one hand and on St Augustine of Hippo (345–430 CE) on the other; Kierkegaard sees through Augustine's speculations which have been mistaken for eternal verities. St Augustine did not think of himself as infallible; for he practised theology. He indeed wrote for the masses. Kierkegaard thus has this scathing remark about Augustine and his acolytes:

Mediocrity likely became infatuated with this nonsensical category, and it is also as if made for mediocrity, for being admired by the mediocre (438).

It is with this observation on mediocrity in mind that we must assess the obsessive nature of Hannah Arendt's (1906–75) devotion to Augustine and later of Jean Francois Lyotard's (1924–98) involvement with St Augustine of Hippo. Arendt and Lyotard then should be seen as strictly theological modernists and not as philosophers who inaugurated postmodernism in the human sciences. John D Caputo (b. 1940) too comes under scrutiny if we are to read Caputo's edited anthology of essays in *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession* (2005). Kierkegaard on Augustine challenges everyone from Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) to Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). Now we know why Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) veneer as a gentleman-philosopher cannot be sustained even though Heidegger wrote a lot. After all, Heidegger is mediocrity personified being another hero-worshipping acolyte of Augustine. Kierkegaard on respectability will further clarify why we should be weary of those who conform; in this case of those who approach

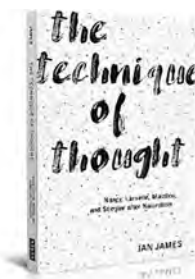
Augustine's writings without circumspection:

For to be a respectable man in an evil world in such a way that the evil world regards him as a respectable man is eo ipso to be disrespectable in one way or another. And to conceal oneself as best one can in order to be permitted to live well in an evil world is to be an accomplice and to evade service to the good (321–2).

After reading volume 9 of these *Journals*, one wonders whether the great names in Western philosophy in the last century deserved to be called great since they philosophised too historically and left out the eternal from their futile tosses and turns in their world-famous philosophy departments. While unbeknownst to all, once upon a time in Denmark an anonymous man saw through our goat-feet dance on the antic hay.

While St Augustine focussed on Christ; we now focus on Augustine. Let this not befall Kierkegaard's corpus. Kierkegaard writes in all his works of God and God's love (68–71). It will be doing injustice to Kierkegaard for he lived for Christ alone, if we focus too much on his writings. It is like studying the works of Acharya Totaka (8th century CE) without understanding his devotion to his guru, Acharya Shankara. Without referring to Acharya Totaka's guru Acharya Shankara, all learned tomes on the deeds and writings of Acharya Totaka will be insufficient exegeses. Similarly, without studying Jesus Christ, all studies of Kierkegaard will be incomplete. Perhaps, Kierkegaard did not study St Augustine as he should have. Then perchance he would not have railed against St Augustine. In the final analysis; Kierkegaard on Augustine as found in the volume under review is somewhat immature.

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Nancy, Laruelle, Malabou,
and Stiegler after Naturalism**
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