

HOW CAN SCHEMA THERAPY HELP US UNDERSTAND KIERKEGAARD'S BREAKING UP OF HIS ENGAGEMENT

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received: 6. 6. 2023;

revised: 14. 10. 2023;

accepted: 19. 11. 2023

Summary

Background: Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is a great Danish philosopher and the father of existentialism. An essential part of his writings, often under pseudonyms, dealt with his broken engagement, reflecting his doubts and ambivalent feelings. The motives behind the breakup initiated by the philosopher are complex and hard to decipher.

Subject and methods: This article is an attempt to better understand Kierkegaard's seemingly controversial psychological motives behind this unhappy love story, by applying the conceptual model of schema therapy. The main subjects of the investigation are two biographies on Kierkegaard written by Georg Brandes and Joakim Garff as well as Garff's book centered on Kierkegaard's fiancée. While it would be scientifically unfounded to establish any diagnosis of mental disorder based on these materials, it may be possible to point out certain psychological patterns, which can help us understand why the philosopher broke off the betrothal and why he was ruminating on it for so long afterwards. The method of choice for the investigation is schema therapy, which is applicable for the analysis of complex psychological problems. The present study can be considered as a form of psychobiographical investigation focused on a specific event in a historical figure's life.

Results: The thoroughness and objectiveness of the biography written by Garff, and Kierkegaard's extraordinary inclination to psychological insight and description, made the available material sufficient for a retrospective schema therapy-based conceptualisation. By the help of this systematic approach, one can gain a deeper understanding of how Kierkegaard's seemingly contradictory feelings, thoughts and acts were influenced by his early maladaptive schemas, schema modes and coping styles, and how they interconnected with each other.

Conclusions: Schema conceptualisation can be an applicable psychobiographical method, as long as there is quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient study material available.

Keywords: Kierkegaard – schema therapy- early maladaptive schema -coping style – psychobiography

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INTRODUCTION

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard's unhappy love story is unique. It was he himself who destroyed his fiancée's and his own future happiness. The task to examine the causes and motives behind the course of events is challenging and has been attempted a couple of times. The available explanations, while grabbing part of the truth, do not feel psychologically wholesome. The aim of this investigation is to shed more light to the psychological background of this sorrowful love story through the lens of psychobiographical method.

Up-to-date clinical relevance

Since the 1990s – following the success of narrative psychology – the renaissance of psychobiography in personality psychology can be observed (Kőváry 2018). In his article, Kőváry draws attention to the beneficial effects of the application of psychobiography in the training of

psychologists, that could bridge the gap between academic research training – mostly based on positivism and “hard sciences” – and clinical training- based on phenomenology, structuralism and methodological hermeneutics. Ponterotto et al. (2015) also highlight the value of incorporating psychobiography into psychology curriculums. Psychobiography could also be useful during training in a specific psychotherapeutic method (like schema therapy). Carlson (1998) suggests that psychobiographies can be means of theory development by using the data obtained by the in-depth study of the finished life of an outstanding individual.

The original motive behind this present investigation was to better understand a specific psychological phenomenon, often seen in clinical practice: the prolonged grief after the loss of a romantic relationship. In the case of a deceased significant person, through the first person and third person accounts from different sources, we can obtain more data than in a clinical situation, and we can unfold more interrelations, without ethical problems (Kőváry 2018, Löffler-Stastka et al. 2021). We could also draw a comparison between this posthumus

psychological investigation and a medical postmortem examination: in both cases it can be easier to find the root of a problem with less ethical and temporal limitations. The obtained results afterwards can promote the understanding and treatment of clinical cases.

Kierkegaard's unhappy love story

Kierkegaard proposed to Regine Olsen in September 1840, and already the next day he realized he had made a mistake (Garff 2017). In August 1841, he sent back Regine's engagement ring and in October 1841 he broke up the engagement. Kierkegaard calls this period "the reign of terror", a "frightfully agonizing time...to have to be so cruel and then to love" as he did (Garff 2017). Regine's worried father was begging Kierkegaard not to leave her, but Kierkegaard took up the role of a "first class scoundrel". Allegedly, he did it to make it easier for Regine to stop loving him.

There are different explanations, why Kierkegaard broke off the betrothal. According to Garff (2005), the philosopher realized that he had already been engaged with God in a young age, and by this explanation he resolved his inner conflict between his attraction to Regine and his self-denial originating from father's strict moral laws. Gyenge (2001) believes Kierkegaard realized that he was unfit for such a commitment as marriage, because he was unable to chain his life to anyone. Brandes (2013) indicates that Kierkegaard was happier sitting alone and thinking about Regine than when she was there, and she became superfluous from the moment he had received the decisive impression of her. According to Brandes (2013), the philosopher turned to his doctor to ask whether a "disproportion in his constitution between the physical and the spiritual could be removed" so that he could marry. When the doctor doubted that he took the decision not to. Kierkegaard viewed this problem as his "thorn in the flesh", "the expensive purchase, for which God in heaven has sold me a spirit power that seeks its equal among fellow livings". Kierkegaard escaped from the contempt against him in Copenhagen to Berlin, where he began working on *Either/or* (1992), including *The Seducer's Diary*, which gives such a convincing psychological description of a seducer, that makes it difficult to believe that it was just a pretense for the break-up. He wrote to his friend, Boesen: "I am not leaving Berlin and rushing to Copenhagen in order to be bound by new ties. No, I need my freedom" (Garff 2005). In August 1843, Regine became engaged to Johan Frederik Schlegel, whom she married in November 1847 (Garff 2017). The philosopher felt that she had broken the pact they had made with each other and felt hurt that now she was happily married. Later, he comforted

himself that his rival could not replace him: "... this girl is an instrument he does not know how to play. She is capable of sounds that [only] I knew how to summon forth" (Garff 2017). Kierkegaard remained fixated on Regine for many years. He wrote extensively about her, and many of his works were inspired by her. They often met during their walk, which Kierkegaard suspected was not a coincidence. They greeted each other speechlessly, until the day of the Schlegels' departure to the Danish West Indies in March 1855 (where Regine's husband had been appointed as governor). Kierkegaard passed away in November the same year. On his deathbed, he confessed to Boesen that it was the right thing that Regine got Schlegel, while he only disturbed things and made her suffer a lot (Garff 2005). In his will he named Regine as his heiress, making it clear that for him "an engagement was and is just as binding as a marriage" (Garff 2005).

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The main subjects of the investigation are the biographies of Kierkegaard written by Georg Brandes (2013) and Joakim Garff (2005) as well as Garff's book centered on Regine Olsen (2017). The applied method can be considered as a form of psychobiographical investigation. Psychobiography is a qualitative idiographic research method that analyzes the lives of historical individuals by applying psychological theories to their biographies. Its goal is to better understand the motives behind some of the subject's actions and decisions. Although the traditional and best-known method of the field is psychoanalysis, McAdams (2005, Kóváry 2011) encourages the use of different theories of personality psychology. It can rely on a single theory, or on multiple theories representing the same or different schools of psychology (Ponterotto 2015). The integrative approach, comprehensive nature, universal validity and structuredness of schema therapy makes it a reasonable choice of method for a psychobiographical investigation. According to Allport (1942), the psychological use of personal documents (e.g. autobiographies, diaries, letters, or expressive and projective productions)- which is part of the method utilized in this study- is also a method in its own right and the "critical tests of science are met by personal documents properly handled".

In the present investigation, the three above mentioned books, consisting first person documents – Kierkegaard's letters, diaries, philosophical writings, drawings – as well as third person documents – letters, memoirs from Regine, family members and contemporary figures, caricatures, poems and articles from the contemporary press- were thoroughly read through by the author and

systematically searched for convincing, repetitive and unanimous confirmation or ruling out of the 18 Early Maladaptive Schemas, as well as related schema modes and coping styles (Young et al. 2003). Due to the limited space, only a few of the confirmative documental sources are cited in the article.

Schema therapy

Schema therapy is applicable for the investigation of complex psychological problems. (Young et al. 2003). The four main categories in the Schema Therapy model: Early Maladaptive Schemas, Schema Domains, Coping Styles and Schema Modes. An Early Maladaptive Schema (EMS) is “a pervasive pattern, comprised of memories, emotions, cognitions and bodily sensations regarding oneself and one’s relationships with others, developed during childhood or adolescence, elaborated through lifetime, and dysfunctional to a significant degree” (Young et al. 2003). Maladaptive schemas result from unmet core emotional needs in childhood: secure attachment to others; autonomy, competence and sense of identity; realistic limits and self-control; freedom to self-expression; spontaneity and play. Early life experiences precipitate the formation of schemas. Temperamental traits also play relevant roles. Originally, there have been described five categories of schema domains: Disconnection and Rejection; Impaired Autonomy and Performance; Other-Directedness; Overvigilance and Inhibition; Impaired Limits. This five-schema domain model has been assumed to have strong empirical support but that is not the case. Clinical observations and empirical investigations of EMSs by different investigators over the decades from many parts of the world have resulted in a strong trend towards four groups of the 18 EMSs rather than five (Hoffart et al. 2005, Bach et al. 2018, Louis et al. 2020). The newly proposed four categories of core emotional needs are: Connection and Acceptance; Healthy Autonomy and Performance; Realistic Standards and Reciprocity; Reasonable Limits (Louis et al. 2020). The four negative counterparts, derived from second order EMSs are: Disconnection and Rejection; Impaired Autonomy and Performance; Excessive Responsibility and Standards; Impaired Limits (Bach et al. 2018).

A schema is triggered by the frustration of a core emotional need and the individual reacts with a coping style. Coping styles which can be means of survival in childhood can become maladaptive later in life by keeping people stuck in their dysfunctional schemas. The coping style is less stable over time and can be expressed as behavioral, cognitive and emotive strategies. The three basic responses to threat: fight, flight and freeze correspond to the

three coping styles of overcompensation, avoidance, and surrender. Coping styles generally operate unconsciously. Coping styles are labelled as traits (Young et al. 2003) and generally one of these three coping styles tend to be a predominant life-long coping strategy of an individual when schemas are triggered. However, a person may flip into other coping strategies temporarily while maintaining a predominant one. For example, an individual may have predominantly an avoidant coping style (*trait*) but may sometimes flip into a short-term *state*, and thereby overcompensate or surrender. These moment-to-moment temporary states are called schema modes; a complex blend of both schemas and coping styles (Young et al. 2003). Schema modes can be grouped into four groups: Child modes (vulnerable, angry, impulsive/undisciplined and happy), Dysfunctional Coping modes (the Compliant Surrenderer, the Detached Protector and the Overcompensator), Dysfunctional Parent modes (the Punitive Parent and the Demanding Parent) and the Healthy Adult mode. The Healthy Adult mode is the most functional mode in a psychologically healthy adult.

RESULTS OF THE SCHEMA THERAPY BASED CONCEPTUALISATION

Only those maladaptive schemas, coping styles and schema modes are listed below, which were found to be relevant in Kierkegaard’s case.

Disconnection and Rejection

Emotional deprivation

This passage is a description of what Kierkegaard missed: “My father died—then I got another father in his place: God in heaven—and then I discovered that my first father had really been my stepfather and only in an unreal sense my first father....He permits me to weep before him in quiet solitude, to weep away my pain again and again, blessedly consoled in the knowledge that he is concerned for me— and at the same time he gives this life of pain a significance that almost overwhelms me, he grants me success and strength and wisdom in all my accomplishments”(Garff 2005). Kierkegaard’s father was stuck with the view of a merciless and punishing God from the Old Testament, fueled by his bad conscience about cursing God as a child, which he thought was the reason why God punished the family with the consecutive deaths of his children. In their close relationship, the father poured his hopelessness and melancholy over his son, whose basic emotional needs were overseen. Probably the mother was also consumed by her grief. In this environment, the

young Kierkegaard was likely to have been greatly deprived of having his core emotional needs met adequately which then facilitated the development of the schema of emotional deprivation. This means that he never felt receiving adequate love from others who had interacted constantly with him. However, his spiritual qualities led him to a firm belief of a loving and caring God and this need for consistent love and nurturance was partly met through a personal relationship he had with his spiritual being.

Emotional inhibition

Brandes (2013) reports about Kierkegaard's disappointment after the betrothal. He was ashamed that as much as he longed for the young girl when she was not present, he was happier sitting alone and thinking about her than when she was there. The emotional inhibition was mostly typical of his sexuality. Otherwise, he could be playful, charming and amusing. His avoidant coping style was a trait in which he felt uncomfortable expressing his feelings.

Social isolation/Alienation

According to former schoolmates, he was an "odd sort of boy from a strict, strange home that was shrouded in an oppressive darkness". His most remarkable talent was the ability to make his target appear ridiculous (Garff 2005). A journal entry from 1848: "I must bear my punishment throughout my life, remaining in the painful prison of this self-enclosedness, distant in the deeper sense from the society of other people—though mitigated by the thought that God has forgiven me, . . . and so indescribably happy or blessed in the spiritual activity that God has so generously and graciously granted me" (Garff 2005).

Kierkegaard's typical coping style is avoidance: social withdrawal and to put up a false persona that made him seem charming and amusing (Garff 2005).

Mistrust/Abuse

Kierkegaard's father used him as a friend, loading all of his troubles and worries on him. "The entire first part of my life was generally so enveloped in the darkest melancholia and the most profoundly brooding fog of misery" (Garff 2005). It was a great shock for the philosopher to get to know that his father was burdened with what he thought was an unforgivable sin, when he cursed God as a child.

In school, Kierkegaard had the nickname Søren sock and "the choirboy", as he had to wear short trousers and thick wool stockings from his father's shop. The old wound was reopened, when in 1846 in *The Corsair* magazine, caricaturist Peter Klæstrup had depicted the philosopher with one trouser leg a little shorter than the other (Garff 2005). It had exposed him to "abuse by ridicule

and to persecution by foolishness" (Garff 2005). Kierkegaard wrote in his journal in 1849: "Abuse that would have made another person unproductive only made me more productive". Garff (2005) raises the question if he sought out "abuse" to keep himself productive.

Kierkegaard's coping style was avoidance (of confiding in others and self-disclosure), and overcompensation. Regine was mistreated in the process of breaking-off the engagement: Kierkegaard took upon the role of a scoundrel. He was also very harsh in his crusade against the church.

Defectiveness/Shame

Brandes (2013) cites Kierkegaard's depiction of himself as a child: "frail and weak, almost in every respect denied the conditions to be considered as a whole person, compared to others, melancholic, mentally ill, in many ways deeply and finally wrecked. He felt flawed inside. He also refused Christian 8th invitation: "I am as if a housewife knew, she could make the most expensive pancake, but she had no plate to carry it on: my spirit is good enough, but I lack the body's plate". Brandes (2013) assumes that Kierkegaard was proud and felt that from the moment he wanted to open his insides, he was destined to be a victim of pity, the thought of which he could not endure, and then resorted to pretense and deception.

His coping style is avoidance: hiding shameful feelings from others. Most of his feelings were formulated under pseudonyms. He sometimes flipped into an overcompensatory schema mode by behaving in a critical or superior way toward others.

Impaired Autonomy and Performance

Dependence/incompetence

Kierkegaard considered himself as very capable both in school and at his work. On the other hand, he lived from the money he had inherited from his father and never had a real job. He had a lavish lifestyle "solely in order to keep me productive on this enormous scale" (Garff 2005).

His coping style was to avoid everyday responsibilities, like work or family life.

Subjugation

His father condemned and suppressed sexuality, which had a profound effect on the philosopher.

One of his pseudonyms, Johannes Climacus states: "Indeed, I never wanted to be Napoleon, but rather to be one of the two chamberlains who opened the flute door for him, bowed deeply and said: "The Emperor!" (Brandes 2013).

Kierkegaard has been raised both by his father and his school to be submissive (coping mode: surrender). He

turned to the opposite when he took up a fight against the Danish church (coping mode: overcompensation).

Abandonment/instability

Between the age of 6 and 25, he has lost 5 of his siblings, his mother and father. Before he turned 25, he felt like “a galley slave chained to death; every time life stirs, the chain rattles and death makes everything wither away – and it happens every moment” (Garff 2005). Kierkegaard never mentioned his mother in his writings. It was his way of reacting to sorrow and abandonment, that he was silent instead of showing weakness.

His coping style was to avoid intimate relationships. He could not imagine himself being totally open in a relationship, and he had only one close friend: Emil Bosen. He was afraid of giving up his freedom and binding himself to another (Garff 2005). He wrote in 1837: “Oh, how I feel that I am alone—Oh, a curse upon that proud satisfaction in standing alone” (Garff 2005).

Vulnerability to Harm or Illness

Kierkegaard and his father shared the belief that none of the father's children will live longer than 34 years. The philosopher was so convinced of this that he had to check his birth records when he turned 34.

His “thorn in the flesh” stood in the way of his getting married, and he was frail and weak from childhood. It cannot be excluded that Kierkegaard suffered from temporal lobe epilepsy (Garff 2005). Garff cites accounts from different sources about Kierkegaard's powerful attacks. As he also points out, hypergraphia can be a symptom in temporal lobe epilepsy (Waxman & Geschwind 1974). It was at that time a legitimate reason according to Danish Law to dissolve a betrothal (Garff 2005). “I have my thorn in the flesh, as did Saint Paul, so I was unable to enter into ordinary relationships. I therefore concluded that it was my task to be extraordinary, which I then sought to carry out as best I could” (Garff 2005).

His coping style was to hide his vulnerability. He asked witnesses not to tell others about his attacks: “What use is it for people to know what I must bear?” (Garff 2005). He overcompensated his weakness and rationalized that he was extraordinary.

Excessive Responsibility and Standards

Unrelenting standards/Hypercriticalness

As far as strong work ethics concerned, Kierkegaard remained forever grateful to his father and his headmaster, the latter he called “a demigod, a man of Iron” (Garff 2005). Looking back, he was abhorred because of the

unrealistically high religious standards he was forced upon: “Even in earliest childhood I overtaxed myself with notions placed upon me by the melancholy old man, himself already crushed by them—a child quite insanely disguised as a melancholy old man. Frightful! No wonder, then, that there were times when Christianity seemed to me the most inhuman sort of cruelty” (Garff 2005).

His coping mode here is to surrender to the schema: he experienced unrelenting standards imposed onto him by others and their version of Christianity. He was also harsh with his contemporary churchmen and expected them to live up to standards, which he himself could not, either. His unrealistic expectations from Regine were partly the reason why he could not see her as his future wife.

Punitiveness

Brandes (2013) and Garff (2005) speak with horror about the parental failures of Kierkegaard's father, who by his strict parenting crippled his life: suppressed his sexuality, brought him up to a slave morality. The suppressed aggression manifested itself in irony, mistreatment of Regine, attacks against the church. In 1849 he wrote about how God had punished him for wanting to be free and govern things himself (Garff 2005).

Coping mode: surrendered and treated himself and others in a punitive manner, despite having experienced God's forgiveness.

Negativity/pessimism

Kierkegaard writes: “Such elemental melancholia, such an enormous dowry of sorrow, and the most profoundly lamentable fate of having been brought up as a child by such a melancholy old man—and then by means of innate virtuosity, to have been able to deceive everyone, as though I were life and merriment itself—and then, that God in heaven has helped me as he has” (Garff 2005). According to Garff (2005), Kierkegaard's work is characterized by perseverance and continuity, which he thinks is a sign of mental health. Kierkegaard's brother-in-law was very surprised by reading his papers after his death: “Well, isn't that an unpleasant thought, that a person who always seemed so happy was so fundamentally melancholic”. It reveals how good Kierkegaard was at hiding his feelings. Through the passage of time, he got closer to God with whom he experienced a tremendous amount of joy. By time, he was getting closer to life, to himself, and found joy in God.

In 1848 he states: “As a poet and a thinker I have presented everything in the medium of imagination, while I myself lived in resignation. Now life is coming closer to me, or I am coming closer to myself, coming to myself.”

Impaired Limits

Entitlement/Grandiosity

Kierkegaard was a very spoiled child (Garff 2005). Garff (2005) refers to an autobiographical sketch, as Johannes Climacus describes his intellectual development, his father being Our Lord and himself the Lord's favorite while it was as though the world were being created during their conversation". Brandes (2013) cites: "There was once a young man, richly equipped like an Alcibiades, he searched in vain in his time for a Socrates to educate him. Then the Gods heard his prayer, and he himself was transformed into a Socrates". Kierkegaard wrote in 1852 in a grandiose style about himself and Regine: "If I am to involve myself with her, then it must be on the grandest scale, then I want it to be known to everyone, to have her transformed into a triumphant figure who will get the most complete restitution for the stigma of my having broken with her!" (Garff 2017).

In *The Seducer's diary*, he describes how to manipulate a woman to become "erotically intoxicated" (Garff 2005). He wrote in *The Moment* in 1955: "The cause I have the honor to serve is the greatest Denmark has ever had; it is the future of Christianity, and it must begin here....this cause has been served with such zeal, effort, diligence, and selflessness that Denmark has had no cause that resembles it in this respect" (Garff 2005). The poet Ingemann wrote about the philosopher: "In my view, unbounded pride and vanity and a great deal of other baseness peep out through the aesthetic rags and holes with which he adorns himself—and meanwhile he deepens and deepens the gulf between himself (as well as his admirers) and the Christianity he preaches" (Garff 2005).

The Corsair made Kierkegaard into an "object for the assaults of ridicule". He compared it to "the gladiatorial animal combat of pagan times....A martyrdom of ridicule is what I have really suffered" (Garff 2005). It was not typical of him to sacrifice himself for others. It was his wish to be a martyr because of its moral value. Kierkegaard would have called it a self-sacrifice. In fact, he wanted to be known as one who had sacrificed himself for others, which was a form of grandiosity, his entitlement and fantasy – that he wanted others to admire him.

On his deathbed, Kierkegaard said to Boesen: "Everything looked like pride and vanity, but it wasn't. I am absolutely no better than other people, and I have said so and have never said otherwise" (Garff 2005). Perhaps he drew a bit from his healthy adult side acknowledging that he was not more superior than others. However, the way he had come across was different from how he had remembered it to be. This harmonizes with the observation

that people with narcissistic traits can be unaware of their impact on others.

His coping style of avoidant was a trait: he avoided situations where he could have failed or would have been average, he did not get married and did not have a job. Occasionally he flipped into the surrenderer mode (when he boasted about his own accomplishments).

Approval-seeking

In 1836 he wrote: "I have just come from a gathering where I was the life of the party. Witticisms leapt from my tongue, everyone laughed and admired me" (Garff 2005).

His coping mode was to surrender to this schema and impress others when opportunities presented themselves. After he had been ridiculed, he provoked the disapproval of others, flipping into an overcompensatory mode.

Kierkegaard's Early Maladaptive Schemas and typical schema modes

Kierkegaard's most prominent dysfunctional schema modes: the Vulnerable and Lonely Child; the Compliant Surrenderer; the Self-Aggrandizer; the Detached Protector; the Demanding Parent and the Punitive Parent. Although we cannot tell exactly, to what extent, when and how long the negative schemas were active during his life, there were 14 out of 18 EMSs applicable to him. His early environment of being traumatized and severely deprived of his core emotional needs could fit the early environment a person with borderline or narcissistic personality structure would experience. While it would be incorrect to assign a posthumous diagnosis to Kierkegaard, it is safe to say that he probably had accentuated borderline and even more narcissistic personality traits.

DISCUSSION

With the help of the results, we can examine the original question: how can we explain Kierkegaard's controversial acts and feelings connected to Regine Olsen? The reasons are complex, why he decided to break off the betrothal. His "thorn in the flesh" was probably an eligible reason not to marry, but there were more. Due to his losses in childhood, he knew that close contacts were fragile, and his coping style of avoidance and his Detached Protector kept his most intimate relationships at arm's length. His most decisive early relationship with his father was ambiguous, crippling and loving at the same time, it did not enchant him to try a close relationship again – if not with God. His sexuality was also repressed because of his strict upbringing. His feeling of

vulnerability was magnified by the tragedies in the family, and by his father's "vision" about the whole family's extinction. The way he explained his decision to Regine was very weird. Why could he not say the truth: there were many valid and understandable reasons. He thought it was best for Regine if he pretended that he was a scoundrel. As his typical coping style, he was not willing to show his weakness due to his strong detached protector mode. This maneuver cost Regine emotionally a lot. The fact that Kierkegaard was still occupied with Regine after the break-up, shows that he had difficulty navigating between his desires, ambitions, the schemas and coping strategies which he was only partly conscious of -and that he was loyal to her. His reactions after Regine got happily married to another man showed that he still believed he was the most important person to her, which was also a product of his Self-Aggrandizing coping style. One thing is sure: he loved Regine, still on his deathbed he talked lovingly about her, and she remained the most decisive person in his life, beside his father. He suffered a lot, was lonely, but put all his diligence into producing a vast literary enterprise that is hard to find. He was loyal to the end: to his father's remembrance, to Regine and to Christ.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to better understand Kierkegaard's controversial psychological motives behind his unhappy love story, by applying the model of schema therapy. The main subjects of the investigation were the biographies on Kierkegaard written by Georg Brandes and Joakim Garff as well as Garff's book on Regine Olsen. This study can be considered as a form of psychobiographical investigation. The thoroughness of the biography written by Garff and Kierkegaard's psychological insight, made the available material sufficient for a retrospective investigation. This approach helped us better understand how Kierkegaard's contradictory feelings, thoughts and acts were influenced by his schemas, coping styles and schema modes. The limitations of the study that we cannot quantify, in what measure the dysfunctional schema modes were active in his life. There is no doubt that the Healthy Adult mode occupied more as he

matured, especially in relationships that did not threaten him with critique or competition. It is the author's suggestion that schema conceptualization can be an applicable psychobiographical method, if there is quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient study material available.

Outlook

Due to the limited space and the experimental nature of the method that required simplicity and clarity, the study has relied on a singular psychological theory: schema therapy. If time, professional experience and resources allowed, it would be beneficial to examine the same case through the lenses of other psychological and psychotherapeutic schools. From the traditional psychoanalytic view, one could examine: was it Kierkegaard's unresolved oedipal complex that hindered him in taking on a man's role (e.g. pro-creation, protection, provision)? In "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men," Freud (1910/1957) describes men who are interested only in women who belong to another man; this type of man wants to save the woman of his desires, while accepting the right of his rival. Freud explains this behavior by the Oedipus complex. Another theme: Kierkegaard never mentioned her mother in his writings, could it be explained by the dead mother complex described by Green (1986)? This could give an explanation of his narcissistic traits and anxious-avoidant adult attachment disorder- which leads us to attachment theory. Kierkegaard's frequent use of allegory could present rich material for both traditional psychoanalytic and jungian approach- the latter could be a rather suitable method, if one takes Kierkegaard's rich spiritual life into consideration. The application of Erikson's psychosocial model/life-cycle theory (1950) – frequently used as a psychobiographical method – could be also relevant in Kierkegaard's case. The variety of methodological choices are wide, and every new method could contribute to better understanding of the topic.

Ethical Considerations: Does this study include human subjects? NO

Conflict of interest: No conflict of interest.

Funding sources: The author received no funding from an external source.

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