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**Kierkegaard, Don Giovanni, and the Messiah**

**By Martin Winer**

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"If you marry, you will regret it; if you do not marry, you will also regret it; if you marry or do not marry, you will regret both; whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret both."

— Soren Kierkegaard.

Soren Kierkegaard was a tremendous fan of Don Giovanni (aka Don Juan). Kierkegaard pined in regret over his broken engagement with Regine Olsen. He feared that once she saw the rottenness and evil within him, that she would no longer be able to love him. Many of his earlier works were works dealing with faith and coming to grips with his decision not to marry her. Such a person would be interested in the character of Don Giovanni who slept with thousands of women in fear that no one woman would ever love him. Both Kierkegaard and Don Giovanni had a fundamental lack of faith: Not a lack of faith in God, but a lack of faith in humanity. We'll soon see that the two are related however.

What is the fundamental value of faith to begin with? Faith allows the human mind to make decisions in the absence of perfect information and absolute certainty. Faith in its purest form is essential to daily living. How could we board a plane, drive to work or go about our daily business without a certain faith that the odds are in our favour that everything is going to be alright? I'm certain that were Don Giovanni alive today, he'd happily board a plane to fly to his love of the week. He would have faith in the plane ride, which could theoretically cost him his life, but he wouldn't have the faith in the woman to truly love her, even when there is no mortal danger. This irony speaks wondrously of the innate human ability to recognize that the soul is the most precious thing of all. Don Giovanni was a duelist who commonly took risks with his life but never risked to expose his soul.

What then is so pernicious about opening yourself romantically to another human being? Why can't we just open ourselves romantically to one eligible person after the other until something works? While it sounds easy on paper, to be loved by someone is a validation of character. While it's not the only validation of character, it's certainly a potent one. Thus to be unrequited in love is looked upon as an invalidation of character to those unsure of their worth, and for those sure of their worth, it's a reminder

that they are alone in recognizing their value. This is a very painful proposition and it is no wonder that, like a baby crying upon birth, so very many of us wish to return to the womb.

The womb is the solitary human mind. Things make sense in there and even when things are a mess, it's out own mess. Everything is nicely encapsulated there, and it is comfortable, warm and friendly inside. The lengths human beings will go to in order to return and stay in the worm are enormous. Fancy cars and fancy clothes are a way to wrap and obscure the soul. Snobbery and ego are tools so many use to fend off any foreign invaders. Religious zealotry, self-absorption, and seeking the status quo are all opiates against any of out outside world that manages to slip in. The womb however is not where we were meant to be. It quickly leads to a planet of walking encapsulated beings that are so distant, one can easily feel lonely in a crowded room. It leads to a situation of starving amidst a sea of plenty.

If climbing back into the womb is not correct and loving blindly is a sure fire recipe for heartache then, what should we do? This is the second most common philosophical question. The Russian philosopher Chernichevsky wrote a huge work called "Shto Dzelits?" (^What to do?) which begins with "What to do?" and cycles back on itself "thus, what to do?" It cycles without fruition because it attempts to answer a question that can only be answered in actions. Recall that self-absorption in excessive thinking is an opiate: a device of the womb and therefore can't be part of the solution. What actions then must be taken?

- 1) We must itemize everything that represents the womb to us. We must note down everything that we use to escape from the world and others and every device we use to distance ourselves. That's not to say that the womb is always a bad thing: We should be protected against those that would misuse our love, but we must always be cognizant of the shields and devices we use.
- 2) When the time is right, we must be willing to emerge from our womb and embrace another human being. The time is right when you think your love will help that person and that their love is reasonably unlikely to hurt you.
- 3) We must help others who are locked in a womb to recognize what they are doing and help them emerge.
- 4) Our primary mission must be to constantly prepare ourselves to give and receive love.
- 5) We must realize that every time we emerge from the womb we take a huge risk, but it's essential that risk in order to answer the most fundamental philosophical question: "What is this all about"?

What is this all about? It is said that the Jews lost the first temple because of their inability to understand and relate with God. God, however, understood that He's very esoteric and difficult to comprehend and gave the Jews a second chance. The Jews lost the second temple when they started in fighting and weren't able to relate to one another. This was inexcusable and led to the current exile and Diaspora.

The Song of Songs describes the relationship between God and humanity much like that of the relationship between two lovers. If we connect the two ideas we can gather that the loss of the second temple, leading to the current exile was and is much like a lovers' quarrel. God was and is extremely frustrated with us and threw up his arms and is not giving us the `silent treatment'. He's giving us space, or forcing us to take space, for us to come to terms with ourselves much like when sometimes, lovers spend time apart to allow one or the other to come to terms with certain things. My guess is that

God is extremely frustrated and has lost his faith in us to be his partner in love and discovery.

I imagine that He's desperately hoping that we are able to come closer to each other and spread love and understanding across this planet. Each human has a piece of God as we were made in his image. (Baruch Spinoza may have been excommunicated for this notion, but that excommunication was posthumously recanted.) Thus, the more people we love and the more we explore our love with one special person, the more pieces of God we come to terms with. One could suppose that God was extremely frustrated with us, but understood that his love was too intense for us to bear. Thus, he sought to set upon us a task which would allow us to come towards him in steps. The more we love, the more we are love and the more we increase love, the more we approach the notion of God. If we spread love across this planet, God and humanity will be able to leave our respective wombs and take a leap of faith together into the wonders that lie beyond.

Appendix - Kierkegaard's Engagement

Source:

[http://www.meta-religion.com/Philosophy/Biography/Aabye\\_Kierkegaard/aabye\\_kierkegaard.htm](http://www.meta-religion.com/Philosophy/Biography/Aabye_Kierkegaard/aabye_kierkegaard.htm)

Assuming Kierkegaard's diaries and his confessions to his friends are honest, the engagement to Regine was the most difficult year of his life. Kierkegaard seems to have been torn between the idea of a marriage and his need for solitude. After a year, Kierkegaard broke the engagement. Regine attempted to appease Kierkegaard and win his heart, even after his unusual treatment of her, but he rebuffed her advances.

Kierkegaard claimed he wanted to force Regine away from him, so she would marry another man. It is possible he did not think himself worthy. It is also possible he did not want to deal with the emotions associated with romance. Regardless, he tried to be 'indifferent' and drive Regine out of his life. In later years, Kierkegaard called his destruction of the relationship a "self-inflicted wound" that caused him a great deal of misery. If he cared for Regine, as many believe Kierkegaard did, his need to avoid a relationship is not easily understood by most people. Intellectually brilliant, yet emotionally unwilling to deal with ties to others, Kierkegaard wanted to be alone and isolated from much of society. Nothing would tie him to society more than marriage.

Martin Winer is a social scientist by night and a computer scientist by day, running:

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## **That's Not Aunt Mary**

**By John Cali**

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Our thoughts often turn to our families during the holiday season. During the recent holidays, I got to thinking about my mother, Mary. She died in 1988.

## Kierkegaard, Don Giovanni, and the Messiah

In my family's Roman Catholic religious tradition, we had "wakes" when someone died. A wake consisted of displaying the body in an open casket for several days before the funeral mass and burial. Friends and family would come to pay their respects to the dead one and her immediate family.

During my mother's wake, two of my elderly cousins appeared one afternoon together. Giovanni and Giuseppe were brothers, and rather colorful Sicilian characters. They bustled into the funeral home, rushing headlong to the back room of the building.

Kneeling before the casket with bowed heads, they offered a silent prayer. As they rose to their feet, they looked, for the first time, into the casket. After exchanging long, shocked glances with each other, Giovanni finally blurted out, "That's not Aunt Mary!"

Giovanni and Giuseppe had gone into the wrong room. As it happened that day, there were two wakes at the funeral home. The brothers had not bothered to check which room my mother's wake was in.

Later on, we had a large dinner party to celebrate my mother's life, as is the Sicilian custom. And we all had a good laugh at Giovanni's and Giuseppe's colossal blunder.

On a more serious note, I got to thinking later about how often we do the same thing my cousins did. Except we do it in our relationships with live human beings.

How often do we not even bother to look and see who this person before us is? We just plough thoughtlessly and blindly ahead, not caring enough to really look and see.

Chief Joseph

You live in a world today that often seems impersonal and uncaring. A world where the individual seemingly counts for little. Even in your modern world of technology, the marvelous and quick communication your technology affords you often becomes impersonal and uncaring.

We are not criticizing you, friends, for the way you often interact with each other, or fail to. In your hurried and harried lives, it often seems difficult to slow down and take the time, as you say, to smell the roses. Or to get to know a little bit about the sisters and brothers, your fellow travellers, you meet on your daily journey through life.

So we do understand where you are in your lives.

But we also want to say it would behoove you to slow down a bit every now and then. Take some time

to smell the roses. Take some time to peek under the masks of those folks you encounter every day.

You all wear masks. And that's not necessarily a bad thing.

But your masks also keep you from truly connecting with each other, even with those loved ones you see every day, perhaps even those you live with.

## Kierkegaard, Don Giovanni, and the Messiah

It takes only a few moments to ask someone you encounter on your daily rounds, "How are you?" And really mean it -- not just as a hollow, empty greeting -- but as a genuine expression of concern for your fellow traveller.

Just be open to listen, really listen, for a few moments -- and to connect with one another. Or to re-connect.

It won't take a lot of your time, and it will yield rich rewards.

After all, you are all connected anyway. You are all one, even though you live in the illusion of separation.

So take the time to lift the veils of illusion, to look beneath the masks. And to remember the love that binds all of you together.

Then you'll never find yourselves in Giovanni's and Giuseppe's predicament of having no idea who the person before you is.

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Since 1992, John Cali has been communicating with a spirit called Joseph. In one of his many physical lifetimes, this spirit was incarnated as the legendary Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe in what is now Oregon. Email [john@greatwesternpublishing.org](mailto:john@greatwesternpublishing.org) Website [www.greatwesternpublishing.org](http://www.greatwesternpublishing.org) Free newsletter at [chiefjoseph-on@mail-list.com](mailto:chiefjoseph-on@mail-list.com) Private readings with Chief Joseph at [readings@greatwesternpublishing.org](mailto:readings@greatwesternpublishing.org)



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