



Travel Grant for a long stay abroad

Date of the application

Scientific field Humanities

DETAILS OF THE STAY

Foreign host institution, date and location of the stay

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Foreign host institution</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Country</i>
1 February 2020	31 July 2020	University of Copenhagen	Kopenhagen	Denmark

Motivation multiple periods:

Head of the receiving research unit

<i>First name</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Current occupation</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Joakim	Garff	Director	The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre

Mode of transport

Car

FUNDING

Will the current salary or fellowship be retained?

Yes, I will maintain my current salary.

Other funding

I have not received any funding at the moment, nor do I have any other requests pending.

MOTIVATION AND PUBLICATIONS

Added scientific value of the participation

My stay at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre (SKRC) is conceived as part of a joint PhD between the Free University of Brussels and the University of Copenhagen. As such, it is related to my dissertation research in the context of FWO project G010518N. Unfortunately, however, there is no travel credit available for this stay, hence this application. My stay will contribute to the theoretical relevance of my research and align my objectives more closely to the major directions and conceptual trends in current Kierkegaard studies. The SKRC is a leading institution in this area, as it embodies both a monumental tradition in Kierkegaard studies and an innovative focus on collaborative research.

The envisaged scientific value will be mainly theoretical in nature, as it bears on the existential themes central to Kierkegaard's series of pseudonymous works. In summary, I build on the philosophy of Kierkegaard in order to address a number of existential-ethical issues related to selfhood and individual self-realization in the current Internet-driven culture of immediacy. As we become ever more attached to mobile devices and Internet services that coordinate most of our everyday activities, I propose that the sustained intervention of networked ICTs in our 'tele-existence' calls for a renewed desire to discover, commit to and become what we are; that is to say, an authentic manifestation of the existential-ethical direction of the self, and of the self's relation to itself, to others and to the world.

Drawing on both classical and contemporary philosophy of technology, I advance the idea that our technologically mediated relations to the world establish a culture of 'immediate connectivity' and 'connected immediacy'. First, this entails that, in some way or another, we are always connected. To a certain extent, then, our immediate activities and interactivities constitute a new sense of immediacy in which experiences are accelerated to the 'real time' of instantaneous interaction and transmission. Second, what we decide to do and who we decide to be on the Internet folds into our actual lives and identities. As to the consolidation of these two elements in the culture of immediacy, I consider how the sociocultural roles of networked ICTs determine the conditions for the individual construction of selfhood. In tune with Kierkegaard, the latter is conceived as the existential-ethical task of technologically mediated existence.

The overall aim of my stay is twofold:

First, and most substantially, I intend to benefit from and contribute to Kierkegaard research, in particular with regard to his philosophy of existence. This will enable me to further familiarize myself with Kierkegaard's work and to enrich the conceptual scope of my research. A publication is envisioned, co-written with the Centre's director, Prof. dr. J. Garff.

One of the objectives is to seek out a way to incorporate the religious outlook in Kierkegaard's work into a philosophical approach of my own, without 'betraying him with interpretations' – as so many commentators have. A theological analysis is important to make sense of the role of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works in the dialectical structure of his authorship. As part of the Faculty of Theology, I believe the SKRC offers unique opportunities and exchanges in this regard. In particular, the section of systematic theology boasts a unique expertise in the fields of aesthetics, ethics, (self-)identity and theology. The historical archives and collections at the SKRC, crucially based in Kierkegaard's native town, will also allow me to gain more insight into the historical, biographical and intellectual context of Kierkegaard's work.

Aside from the subject of theology, I will mainly focus on the philosophical dynamics of Kierkegaard's existential dialectics in order to think about selfhood in the present age of new media and networked ICTs. On this subject, I will show how existential-ethical thought remains a relevant conceptual foundation for analyzing the existential conditions of contemporary selfhood.

Finally, Kierkegaard's existential philosophy is related to his media theory and social critique. With regard to the latter, I will re-evaluate Kierkegaard's rather conservative views of mass media and the public in light of the more pragmatic and sanguine approaches in current philosophy of technology. Such a re-interpretation of Kierkegaard, one that takes into view the contrast between nineteenth century mass media and the instantaneous transmission and reception of information in the Internet revolution, is deemed both innovative and necessary. I am convinced that the outcomes of

this part of my research in particular will lead to new ideas, which will in turn contribute to the knowledge and expertise of the SKRC.

Second, I aim to hone my skills and broaden my scientific network. Collaborations with SKRC staff members are key to strengthening my academic and scientific position.

Motivation for the choice of host institution and the three main publications in the last five year published by the host research group.

Next, I will motivate how and why my stay at SKRC covers the value and aims introduced in the previous section.

The SKRC is dedicated to historical and systematic Kierkegaard research and fosters a world-class environment for local and international researchers to work on their own projects while also participating in ongoing debates, lectures, seminars and other events arranged by the Centre. The programmatic offer includes project seminars where research projects are reviewed and workshops in which one or more seminal texts are read and discussed in depth. With a focus on both the historical reconstruction (reception) and practical relevance (interpretation) of Kierkegaard's philosophy today, the activities of the SKRC are well matched with and highly relevant to my research.

The bulk of the Research Centre's output focuses on the many themes or, better still, 'tensions' in Kierkegaard's texts, between freedom and nature, individuality and sociality, thinking and belief, identity and formation, and history and time. These themes, in turn, relate to the most basic elements in human existence such as anxiety, despair, joy, faith, and so on. In exploring these notions, the Centre not only deconstructs their place in Kierkegaard's existential dialectics (the stages of the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious), but also seeks to understand his broader views on the purpose and meaning of human existence.

The SKRC maintains a wide variety of resources. These include key journal articles and books, available via an online database, as well as the Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter (SKS), which is the complete edition of all of Kierkegaard's published works and unfinished writings such as his journals, notebooks and letters. The renowned Kierkegaard Library contains the latest literature on Kierkegaard, as well as a collection of works that reconstructs Kierkegaard's own library.

Moreover, the Centre welcomes scholarly contributions such as monographs, peer-reviewed articles, proceedings and dissertations in all traditions of Kierkegaard studies. The Kierkegaard Research Yearbook (KSYB) is an international journal dedicated to articles, while monographs are published in the Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series (KSMS). Furthermore, the Centre features articles that explore the work and influence of Kierkegaard in a systematic manner in a multi-volume publication series called Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (KRSSR). Finally, in collaboration with the Danish Søren Kierkegaard Society, the SKRC publishes Kierkegardiana, a Scandinavian language journal dedicated to Kierkegaard's work.

Among the Centre's many publications, I will briefly mention three.

Kierkegaard's emphasis on a 'Christian' solitary subjectivity, in contrast with an 'ethical' relational intersubjectivity, has led critics to believe that since existential isolation seems to be unavoidable, Kierkegaard's ethical stance must be amoral. According to Verstrynge (2016), however, Kierkegaard's existential ethics is not so much amoral as it is indirect. Sure, all humans stand alone (existential

separation), but this isolation also involves a shared concern for one another (ethical togetherness). What subjects share, then, is an ethical demand that paradoxically cannot be shared, and which indirectly drives the subject towards an infinite concern for the other.

In her article (2017), Welz introduces the topic of indirect communication in order to discuss the aesthetic, ethical, and religious aspects of Kierkegaard's existential approach. Notably, she elaborates on the opposition between the aesthetic and ethical stages and criticizes Kierkegaard's reductionist view of aesthetics.

A third and final work of interest is Kierkegaard's Existential Approach (Grøn, Rosfort & Söderquist, 2017). This book is part of a series that dives into Kierkegaard's existential legacy. In order to do so, the authors look into Kierkegaard's very concept of existence, and tackle his reception in Heidegger's (early) existential analytic, Gadamer's existential hermeneutics, et cetera. Reviews such as these are important in order to (re)consider Kierkegaard's relevance today.

Finally, both the Centre's administration and the university's International Staff Mobility services will provide practical assistance, e.g. with registration, desk and work-space allocation on the campus, library access and participation in the various activities described above. I also intend to take Danish language courses (Studieskolen) during my stay.

References:

Grøn, A., Rosfort, R., & Söderquist, B. (Eds.). (2017). Kierkegaard's Existential Approach. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Verstrynge, K. (2016). On Separation as the Condition for All Existential Ethics. Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, 2016(1), 99-120.

Welz, C. (2017). The Voice of Conscience, Kierkegaard's Theory of Indirect Communication, and Buber's Philosophy of Dialogue. Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, 2017(1), 363-378.

Work plan

In addition to any academic tasks, my research activities will proceed in three phases, each corresponding to a work package outlined below.

1. Work Package 1: Refine and finalize the literature review of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings and related works

Feb 2020 (1 month). Research activities will revolve around the finalization of my reading of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, Journals and secondary literature, with a focus on his philosophy of existence. Active and substantive discussions with the director and members of the SKRC will be central to this WP.

2. Work Package 2: Establish a philosophical-existential framework based on WP 1

March – May 2020 (3 months). Analysis of WP1 in order to establish a philosophical-existential framework. This framework will have its conceptual roots in Kierkegaard's notion of immediacy and new immediacy, but it will also draw from literature in recent and classical philosophy of technology, as well as from media theory and sociology.

Dissemination: one publication in the high-ranked Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook.

3. Work Package 3: Finalize WP2 / preparation of empirical research design

Jun – Jul 2020 (2 months). With the finalization of WP2, at the end of my research stay, I will start to lay out the groundwork for an empirical study of experiences of online selfhood, and the related existential-ethical task of mediated existence. The actual study will be conducted in the three final years of the PhD project, following my stay.

Methodologically, to understand how one experiences the culture of immediacy, I will prepare an interpretative phenomenological analysis, which is most suited as a method to draw results from semi-structured interviews and diary studies. With this analysis, I will attain contextual and descriptive accounts of the research participants' individual and social worlds, in order to interpret how the participants attach meaning to the context of immediacy and connectivity.

Three main publications in the last five years

Unfortunately, I am unable to provide three highly ranked publications at the moment, only one.

Mathé, J. J. (2018). The Anthropocene as Event. In M. Campbell (Ed.) *Glimpse: Publication of The Society for Phenomenology and Media*, 19, 47-53. doi: 10.5840/glimpse2018195

However, I do foresee at least one publication (article) in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, based on my research stay. I have already started the preparation of this article, in which I will re-evaluate Kierkegaard's work in relation to the culture of immediacy. As mentioned in the section on scientific value, my stay will contribute to a better elaboration of the Kierkegaardian concepts of immediacy and selfhood, concepts that are central to the intended article. To be more specific, I will discuss and translate these concepts from Kierkegaard's theological frame of reference to the rather secular context of our contemporary information society; that is to say, in the context of three interrelated shifts: a shift from mass communication to mass self-communication, the virtual-as-extraordinary to the virtual-as-ordinary and, finally, from a detached online selfhood to a hybrid selfhood.

HEAD OF THE RESEARCH UNIT

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Research unit	LW/ETHU
Current occupation	Professor/Director (100%)
Location	Brussel (Belgium)