

# Søren Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*: The Socratic Seduction of a Young Woman

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## Abstract

In this paper I will present and discuss what I consider to be a new interpretation of Søren Kierkegaard's "The Seducer's Diary". I will demonstrate how the Socratic "maieutic" method isn't only implemented in Kierkegaard's method as the indirect message to the reader, but also to the main character's seduction of the young woman Cordelia. With support from historical literature on 19<sup>th</sup> century society, I argue that Kierkegaard, with the help of the Socratic method, indirectly points out the exclusion of women from intellectual matters and encourages a discussion hereof. I haven't found an interpretation which specifically combines the conception of the female gender in 19th century with the use of the Socratic method exercised by Johannes the Seducer. As far as I know, this interpretation is new and contributes significantly to our understanding of "The Seducer's Diary".

## Introduction

"The Seducer's Diary"<sup>1</sup> is a part of *Either/Or*<sup>2</sup> (1987) [1843] (the original Danish version will be referred to as SV2), Kierkegaard's first pseudonymous work. Throughout the paper, the main character's seduction of Cordelia will be at the centre of our attention. With the support of Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*<sup>3</sup> (1989) [1841] (the original version will be referred to as SV1), I put forth his use of Socrates' "maieutic" method, also known as "midwifery". This inspiration has already been examined to some extent in the secondary literature<sup>4</sup>. In *The Point of View of my Work as an Author*

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<sup>1</sup>Orig. title: "Forførerens Dagbog".

<sup>2</sup>Orig. title: *Enten-Eller*.

<sup>3</sup>Orig. title: *Om Begrebet Ironi*.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance the articles "Kierkegaard's Seductions: The Ethics of Authorship" (Berthold 2005), "Kierkegaard on Indirect Communication" (Broudy 1961) and the books *Svimmelhedens Erik* (Søltoft 2000) and *Søren Kierkegaard's Inspirationskilder* (Bertung 2013). Bertung points out that Socrates appears throughout the authorship, from the beginning to the end (2013: 14).

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**Roman Wölfel**



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