

Report Minerva Scholarship Fund

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Thanks to a generous scholarship of the Minerva Scholarship Fund, I was able to spend my June 2023 at the Hong Kierkegaard Research Library at St. Olaf College, Minnesota, USA.

The Hong Kierkegaard Library is one of the world's leading institutions for research related to the 19th-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, and the world's official repository for his work. I had received an offer to conduct research there as a guest scholar, which was a very exciting opportunity for me as an undergraduate. Within the context of my BA studies at the Liberal Arts and Sciences programme at Leiden University College, my interest in philosophy more generally and Kierkegaard specifically had gradually developed and intensified. I was intrigued by Kierkegaard's often seemingly paradoxical and self-conflicting views, which spoke of a complexity of human existence that I had not found addressed in such a way by any of the other thinkers I had encountered so far. In particular, it was the question of what social implications the existential thought of Kierkegaard might have that I wanted to devote more time and research to. While Leiden offered various opportunities to get more acquainted with the thought of Kierkegaard, conducting research at the Hong Kierkegaard Library was a whole new level of specialisation and expertise. A comparable programme that offers such fantastic opportunities for undergraduate research does not exist within the Netherlands or other places in Europe. Among other things, the Special Collections of the library contain manuscripts and notes by Kierkegaard that are not available anywhere else in the world, and upon my stay at the library, I was granted the time, material, and professional assistance necessary to complete my project.

During my research stay, I participated in a study group led by Kierkegaard scholar Prof. Anna Söderquist that met daily for close reading and discussion of Kierkegaard's works. Besides that, I also attend talks given by other researchers staying at the library. These lectures granted me a direct insight into the current state of research on Kierkegaard, and interacting with more advanced Kierkegaard scholars from around the world benefitted the quality of my research enormously. I also made many new friends that I am still in touch with. The funding granted by Minerva further allowed me to take part in a Danish language course specifically offered for those interested studying Kierkegaard, which will be very helpful for future research.

Besides these activities, I spent most of my time at St. Olaf working on my own research project, which was concerned with the social and contemporary implications of Kierkegaard's thought on the self and subjectivity, precisely, with the question what it means to be a human being. As such, it worked on the intersection of existential philosophy and critical theory. I analysed and criticised the currently prevalent model in philosophical anthropology, namely neoliberal selfhood, from a Kierkegaardian perspective, arguing that it is an impoverished model to understand being human.

In the end, the paper I wrote was accepted by the peer-reviewed journal *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* and will be published in their 2024 edition. My time at St. Olaf was incredibly meaningful and worthwhile — personally as well as professionally — and I am very grateful for the financial support that made this possible.

