This is lecture six for the course Contemporary Theology I. In our last lecture, I began a study of different themes in existentialist philosophy. I’d like to complete that study in this lecture and then move on, specifically, to look at the philosophy and theology of Søren Kierkegaard. We won’t, of course, get all of Kierkegaard in this one lecture, but we at least want to begin with him. But before we turn specifically to our lecture for today, let’s ask the Lord’s blessing upon our time together.

Father, again, we thank you for the privilege of study. We just pray that you would guide our thoughts as we reflect on these themes in existentialist philosophy, and Lord, as we do reflect on these themes we come to understand better where contemporary men and women are in their thinking and why they think what they do. Father, help us to both understand and be able to come up with biblically-based answers that will minister to people in our day. Help us then, Lord, in our time together in this lecture for it’s in Christ’s name we pray it. Amen.

In our last lecture I noted a number of the different themes in existentialism, but I pointed out at the end that there were still several more that I wanted to deal with. And the first one that I want to turn to is what the existentialists have to say about God. Now, a lot depends on the existentialist whom you’re reading. For example, some existentialists like Nietzsche and Sartre omit God altogether. Nietzsche, for example, believed that the revolution in values that he was encouraging could never be carried out so long as there was still belief in a transcendent being. In addition, as long as the transcendental realm was thought to be there, then there was always going to be a devaluation of the temporal earthly realm and, of course, Nietzsche didn’t want that to remain. You see, the idea throughout much of western thought has been that what we find in our world, in this sphere of existence, has a certain amount of reality, but the real world is the world that’s not seen. Oftentimes we talk about a person as the real person...
and we refer to that not in terms of his physical body but of his spirit. Well, if you think in those kinds of terms, that the real world is a world which is not seen, then that very definitely devalues the importance of this world in which we’re living. And, if you’re going to place an emphasis on this world, making something out of it, transforming values, transforming reality, then of course you have to have an emphasis on this world. And Nietzsche just felt that if you believed in God, that tended to make you think that the real world, the world that counted at least, was the world that we couldn’t see. And so, talk of the transcendental realm had to be removed.

Sartre, on the other hand, believes that we must exclude God from the equation but he has a slightly different perspective on why. For Sartre, mankind in the human situation is faced with the anguish of the existential situation, and the anguish, of course, involved the idea that we’re going to die. There’s nothing we can possibly do about it. We didn’t ask to be born, but we’re here and we can’t avoid dying and the fact of it is that nobody knows what this life actually means. There’s no sense to it, and that creates tremendous anguish, tremendous fear. Now, any attempt, Sartre believed, to try to remove yourself from this sense of anguish, from this sense of the absurdity of existence, from this basically pessimistic outlook on life by saying that ultimate value resides in God and that God will in fact make sense of all of this somehow or other, any attempt to bring meaning to life, in other words, by pointing to God, well, Sartre thought that that was a weak evasion of what our situation actually is. In fact, he said that anyone who would try to become optimistic, if we may put it that way, by appealing to God was really handling the human situation with deliberate bad faith, he called it. Instead, what one needs to do is to recognize the truth of the human situation. Don’t try to mask over it or to make it look more rosy than it should be by appealing to a god out there, but realize what human existence actually is, take full responsibility for becoming an authentic self on your own, and go after life that way. Well, obviously if someone believed that there was a god out there who made sense of all of this, then that would be acting in bad faith. This will never do for Sartre, and so Sartre said we can’t believe in God.

On the other hand, there are existentialist thinkers beginning with Søren Kierkegaard who not only believed that God existed but they even demanded that one believe in God’s existence. For Kierkegaard, authentic existence or, if you will, existence at its highest level involves not only choosing a god to believe in but,
as a matter of fact, it involves choosing the Judeo-Christian God and passionately holding on to Him in faith. God, Kierkegaard believed, is the only ultimate answer to man’s existential dilemma, the dilemma of how man can possibly use his freedom to become an authentic self. In other words, for Kierkegaard, as with the other existentialists, we have freedom to become ourselves, to make choices, but one of the things that man has to do and the only way that man can become an authentic self, is to use that freedom to choose God. Now, for someone like Kierkegaard then, the problem with Christianity and with belief in God is that people have ignored their personal relations to God and they’ve become entrapped in the external aspects of religion. People have felt that they are Christians just by the fact that they were born in a certain country which is nominally Christian or that they have been raised in a certain church or raised in a certain family. And Kierkegaard wants to say all the time that such things as these external things have absolutely nothing to do with being a Christian. Kierkegaard likes to say that one never is a Christian. One is always becoming a Christian. But you can see then that belief in God is very important for Kierkegaard even though he didn’t have an awful lot of use, as we’re going to see, for the Hegelianized form of Christianity that he found in his own Denmark.

Well, I should add one other thing about existentialists who did believe in God and what they thought about this. I have to add that no existentialist who believed in God did so because of a set of rationalistic proofs that he thought demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt or even with high probability that God existed. Not only do the existentialists base their belief on something other than rationalistic proofs, they’re not impressed by these proofs at all. If you were to say to an existentialist you believe in God, now can you give me an argument for that, the existentialist might look at you rather strangely. Arguments don’t really fit the bill. If you were to come to him and say well I think I have some arguments and some evidence which will prove even more fully than anything you’ve seen before that God exists, the existentialist wouldn’t be impressed. Likewise, if you had a set of proofs or arguments that demonstrated a high probability that there was no God, the existentialist would not be impressed by that either.

Well, let me turn, if I may, to another topic. We’ve been talking about what existentialists thought about God and think about His existence. Let me turn now to another important
theme in existentialist thinking, namely their emphasis on subjective thought and subjective truth. A common view among existentialists is that there is no knowledge independent of a knowing subject, and as a result of this view, they are not interested in pure abstractness of thought without any regard to the specific knowing subject who is thinking this. So, again, you can see here somewhat of a slap at Hegel, the idea of spinning out this system of ideas that just sort of stands there independent of the person who’s thought it. That kind of approach to knowledge is not one that interested the existentialists. Instead, knowledge is not an end in itself, but it proceeds from and terminates in the question what does this thought or this knowledge mean to me, the knower, the existing thinker. Now it’s in this sense that the existentialists mean that truth and thought must be subjective. Oftentimes when we think of the word subjective we tend to define it as meaning arbitrary or unfair or based on emotion rather than on reason and argument. That’s not what the existentialist thinkers mean when they say that we need to focus on subjective truth. The existentialist thinkers would agree that the person who believes or thinks something does have his reasons, he has thought about this, but the point that the existentialist wants to emphasize is that this is his own thought. It’s not something that he is disinterested in, that he is distanced from so that it’s out there and it has nothing to do with him.

Well, Søren Kierkegaard has distinguished, for example, three different types of thought. He talks about, on the one hand, abstract thought. He talks also about pure thought. And then he talks about existential thought. And I think in seeing the difference between these three kinds of thought, we can get a better idea and a further understanding of what the existentialists mean when they focus on subjective thought and subjective truth.

For Kierkegaard, abstract thought or objective thinking is the approach that is used by the natural sciences and by math and by logic. Now, these approaches to things yield reliable knowledge about the essential aspects of thing, but they do not attain to actual existence. There’s no math program or problem that you can work, there’s no problem in logic that you can work that will actually tell you what it’s like to exist as an individual. Likewise, when you study the natural sciences, you may be able to discourse about one process or another process, but there’s nothing in all of that that will tell you what it’s like for an individual to be involved in the act of existing. So, none of these kinds of thought that are involved in abstract thought or objective thinking actually
attain to actual existence and they don’t involve the personal relationships of the knowing individual to the thing known. I can hardly talk about having a personal acquaintance with the number two and with the plus sign and the number four and the equal sign when I say that I know that two plus two equals four. That’s purely a proposition. That’s purely a fact that I know, but I surely don’t have any personal relationship to that. Well, that’s abstract thought. What about pure thought?

Pure thought winds up creating an abstract system of all reality. It winds up identifying systematically thought and being. Now, Kierkegaard in particular would never allow such a thing to happen in regard to an explanation of all of reality because for Kierkegaard this sort of thought, pure thought, leaves out the essential qualities of existence; that is the essential qualities of what it means to be an existing individual. It especially leaves out freedom to do anything whether it be something novel or something that is commonplace. Now it’s this kind of thought, in particular, this pure thought, that so typified Hegel and his approach to philosophy that Kierkegaard so vehemently rejects. Well, abstract thought or objective thinking, pure thought, and then existential thought.

In James Collins’s book *The Existentialist* he has, I think, a helpful explanation of what existentialist thought involves, and I’d like just to cite him. He says, “In order to gain some insight into existence or the disposition of man’s freedom, another avenue is needed. Kierkegaard is more successful in describing what existential thinking is not than in specifying its positive features. It is not merely an extension of abstract thought since it does not labor under the two limitations mentioned above, the kinds of limitations you find with abstract thought and pure thought. It does attain, somehow, by reflection to the existential act, and it does include the relationship of the knower to what he knows. In fact, existential knowledge is constituted precisely by the manner in which the meditative individual relates himself to the aims of existence. Existence is not predicated of things but of persons in their moral dispositions. Existential truth for Kierkegaard is a moral and religious state of being rather than a purely cognitive perfection. It rests on the attempt to shape one’s conduct in accord with what one knows about the purposes of freedom. At its maximum it is the true or upright state of being fully committed to search for eternal happiness.” You can see that with existential thought the individual is very, very much involved in what it is that he seeks to know. Well, when I get to Kierkegaard and begin
discussing some of the major themes in Kierkegaard a few lectures down the road, we’ll get a much fuller understanding of what Kierkegaard, in particular, means by truth as subjectivity and why he was so emphatic in urging this particular idea.

Let me turn now to another theme though in existential thinking. I want to look at the attitude of existentialist thinkers toward philosophy and philosophers. And there are several things that I can say here. For one thing, I can say that they typically take what we might call a personalist approach to philosophy. What I mean by this idea of a personalist approach to philosophy is that the philosopher is opposed to working within some kind of all-encompassing system as if the main outlines of reality had already been worked out and the job of the philosopher is simply to fill in the gaps. You can see here again the slap against Hegel. You don’t accept a particular way of doing philosophy or a particular set of beliefs. Instead, you try to go on your own and solitary way. The point then for a philosopher is not to go over the tried and true and maybe fill in a few gaps in what is understood as the right way to understand philosophy and all of reality, but instead the point for a philosopher is to set out on an uncharted course. And frankly, that’s one of the reasons that it is so difficult to make generalizations about existentialist philosophy that will cover all existentialists. They go on their own solitary way, and as a result of that, each one likes to bring his own nuance, his own variation to the topics that he discusses.

Well, each philosopher then must be prepared to go his solitary way and take sole responsibility for his own views just as he is supposed to and each person is supposed to use his freedom to take responsibility for his own life. This approach to philosophy, of going your own way, taking responsibility for your own views, is just one of many examples that one might look to as to what it means to become an authentic individual. You go your own way. Well, in addition, existentialists emphasized philosophizing rather than philosophy. Now, let me explain what I mean here. This approach to things goes back to the Greek view that philosophy is not so much a body of doctrine but instead it is first and foremost a habit of mind, a way of approaching things. It’s an intellectual virtue that demands personal involvement of the individual thinker. So, rather than looking at a body of ideas, philosophy is to be seen as a way of approaching life, a way of thinking of things. One other thing that I can say about the existentialist approach to philosophy (and philosophers) is that existentialists, as you might suspect, are very, very much anti-system. Now, it should be
obvious that these philosophers want to avoid setting forth some system that tries to concretize and capture what it means to exist. Kierkegaard himself, at one point, said that a logical system of human existence is impossible. You can’t capture what it means to be an existing individual by some set of propositions that are laid out as a philosophical system.

Well, so these people are really against the idea of looking for some system of philosophy, but there is a certain equivocation, if I can put it that way, on the way they use the term system in their thinking. It is one thing, for example, to object to Hegel’s attempt to put everything into a system and to equate pure thought with all of reality. But it’s another thing to slip into the view that the mind is incapable of giving a coherent, generalized explanation of reality. Now, those are two different notions of system. On the one hand you have the idea of a system being an all-encompassing set of ideas that is equivalent to reality. On the other hand you have system as meaning a conception of reality that puts together, in a coherent way, a bunch of ideas. Now, the existentialists tend to oscillate between those different senses of system in such a way that one wonders at times: well, which sense of system are they really rejecting. And at times you get the impression that they’re rejecting system in both senses and, as a result of that, there have been many thinkers who have thought, well, really these existentialists are basically saying we should be irrational. We should not think at all in coherent terms, or at least we should not feel that it’s possible to think of reality or any portion of it in coherent terms. Well, I will leave that one to your further study as to whether you think the charge of absolute irrationalism and irrationality is justified, but you can see that these thinkers really don’t like the idea of trying to tie things down in terms of some overarching system that incorporates all of reality in the way that Hegel had done. There’s a view that reality is ongoing so you can’t capture it, but there’s also a view within existentialist philosophy that life is too fragmented to make a lot of sense of it and an overarching scheme or a conceptual hole.

I think that as you reflect upon this emphasis, this anti-system emphasis in existentialist thought, and realize that existentialist thought has been very significant in the 20th Century, you begin to understand somewhat better, I think, why it is that so few modern theologians, at least non-orthodox modern theologians, have even attempted to write what we would call a systematic theology. There just seems to be a belief that it’s not really possible to look out at the world and put what you see into a coherent whole-world
view. Well, there’s a further thought for you to pursue, namely the idea of why it is that there have been so few systematic theologies written even in non-orthodox circles in the 20th Century.

Let me turn as I wrap up this discussion of different themes in existentialism to one more theme that I think has been at the root in many senses of a number of the things that I’ve said, namely the view that thought and existence are to be viewed as dialectical. And when I use the term dialectical here I’m using it in Hegel’s sense of that word. And the point here is that life is made up of contradictions, of things that appear to be one way but they’re also another way. And the truth or the actual nature of existence, if you will, is to be seen ultimately in the conjunction of the contradiction. If you see only one side or another side of it rather than seeing both sides and seeing them together you aren’t entirely going to get the picture. Now, I’ve pointed out along the way, especially in the last lecture where we saw most of the themes in existentialism that I’m bringing to you, I pointed out where a number of these themes point to one side of an idea and then the other side of an idea and put them together. You remember, for example, that we noted that death as viewed by the existentialists is to be seen as the ultimate negation of existence, but at the same time it is to be seen as constitutive of life. And we talked about how that happens, and yet we have to realize that this is an existence which is constituted that inevitably leads toward the death which helps the existing subject to constitute life. Now, I realize as you reflect on that sentence that it may sound like I’m going back and forth and back and forth between opposite ideas, and indeed I am and that’s precisely the point in existentialist thinking, that if you simply look at one idea rather than the other idea, rather than seeing both of them together, you’re not gonna get the total picture. Now, you may say but now wait a minute, I thought you have been trying to tell us that existentialist thinking is deliberately anti-Hegelian. Indeed I’ve said that, and we’ve seen a number of places and we’ll see more places where it’s anti-Hegelian. But I also want you to see that at the same time that existentialist thinkers have rejected a number of ideas from Hegel, they have also adopted other ideas. And of course that’s a very Hegelian thing to do, to both reject and accept certain ideas at one and the same time. Well, this idea then that life is dialectical, that thought is dialectical, that you have to see the various sides of an idea before you understand it and that you have to hold all the contradictions together is something that we’re going to see repeatedly as we proceed through various existentialist theologians. And I do mean theologians because a
number of contemporary theologians have basically attempted to wed Christian ideas and Christian vocabulary to existential philosophy. Well, that concludes my basic survey of general themes and existential philosophy.

Let me turn now to our first theologian that I wanna look at it in more depth, namely Søren Kierkegaard. Søren Kierkegaard lived from 1813 to 1855. As you can see he didn’t really have a very lengthy life but it was a very productive one in terms of the things that he wrote, in terms of the things that he stood for. Now, as you look at the printed materials that have come with this course, you will note that right at the outset I have printed for you a chart, and this is a chart that comes from a book edited by Jerry Gill entitled *Essays on Kierkegaard*. And the title of the chart is “The Life and Works of Søren Kierkegaard,” and I will leave to your perusal that particular chart. It divides his life into different periods. It talks about key events in his life, and it also sets forth for you the various works that are associated with the different periods in his life. What I would like to do is to turn, at this point, and look at some of the major events in Søren Kierkegaard’s life, and then also talk about some of the major influences. Now you may wonder why we are going to spend this much time on this man’s life and the key influences. We probably aren’t going to do that on other theologians, and you’re surely right, we won’t be doing that in regard to all of the people that we study. But there is a very special reason for doing it with respect to Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard in terms of his writing is very, very much influenced by the events of his life, and there are certain events in his life that you find as the basis of the number of things that he writes and a good portion of his thinking. And so, I think it’s important to understand these influences if we’re going to get a better handle on what Kierkegaard actually says. So for the remainder of this lecture at least, I want to focus on some of the key events and influences in Kierkegaard’s life.

Well, first of all, I think we should note that he was born on May 5th, 1813. You see that in the chart from Gill’s book as well. He was born in Copenhagen. Then I’d like to move a little bit further down the road to what turned out to be, I think, significant in his life, the period from 1830 to 1834. During that period a number of his family members died. For example, on September the 10th, 1832 his sister died. On September the 21st, 1833, just a little bit over a year later, his brother died. And then one year later in 1834, his mother died in July and then another sister in 1834, long about December died. Now, as you can imagine, all of these
deaths in his family left a deep impression upon Kierkegaard and they added to the general sense of melancholy that his father and Kierkegaard himself had, and they also helped to underscore a certain belief that the family was living under some horrible curse. In a few moments I’ll explain something more about that sense of impending doom. But you can imagine having so many of your family members die within such a short period of time would be extremely depressing and add to a basic sense of melancholy and pessimism toward life.

Then note that in 1835 there is an event that occurs in Kierkegaard’s life that is referred to often as the great earthquake. This particular event marked Kierkegaard’s breach with his father and the beginning of his walk, he would say, down the path of perdition. Now, as Walter Lowrie tells the story, and Walter Lowrie has written an extremely readable, extremely fine biography of Kierkegaard entitled A Short Life of Kierkegaard, as Lowrie tells it, Kierkegaard learned about this time of some of his father’s deep, dark secrets. And one of those secrets was that his father was rather prone to sensuality. In fact, his father was so much prone to that that when his father married Kierkegaard’s mother she was already pregnant by Kierkegaard’s father. But there was an even more devastating secret that was involved in Kierkegaard’s father’s past, and it was something that had happened when Kierkegaard’s father was a mere youth. His father, as a boy, tended sheep on the Jutland Heath there in Denmark. And he suffered an awful lot from hunger and from cold and from loneliness as he did his duties as a shepherd. Lowrie says this about what happened, and I quote Lowrie, “Once in his desperation,” and he’s talking here, of course, about Kierkegaard’s father, “Once in his desperation he stood upon a hummock, lifted up his hands to heaven and cursed the Lord God who, if He did exist, could be so hard hearted as to let a helpless, innocent child suffer so much without coming to his aid. But the memory of this curse in his childhood never left the boy, the man, the patriarch. And seeing that God’s grace from that very moment showered temporal blessings upon him so that instead of tasting the divine wrath he was overwhelmed with riches, marvelously gifted children, universal esteem, then solemn anxiousness and dread gripped his soul most deeply. God did exist and he had cursed this God. Was not this the sin against this Holy Spirit which never can be forgiven? It was for this cause the old man’s soul continued in anxious dread. For this reason he beheld his children condemned to the silent despair. For this reason he laid upon their shoulders in tender years the sternest requirements of Christianity. For this
cause he was a prey to temptation and in constant conflict of soul.” It’s a rather vivid picture that Lowrie gives of this experience in the life of Kierkegaard’s father and how it continued to hang over Kierkegaard’s father throughout his life. Well, not only did it hang over his father, but once Kierkegaard learned about it, it became a great burden that he bore throughout the rest of his life. Lowrie says that it is unlikely that at the time of the great earthquake, Kierkegaard’s father actually told him about this incident of cursing God. Lowrie instead surmises that what Kierkegaard was probably told was more likely about his father’s sensuality. Now he may also have overheard some rumors about this other incident, but Lowrie thinks that basically what he heard was about his father’s sensuality. And you can imagine living in a household where Christianity was so heavily emphasized, when the rules were so sternly laid out and applied, this would be very, very difficult then to find out that your father who was a stern disciplinarian had himself very blatantly broken the rules. Well, regardless of when Kierkegaard’s father told him the story of the curse, Kierkegaard seemed aware of that story and he seemed aware that there was some impending doom that enshrouded the family as a whole. Probably as he grew older, even perhaps at this time of the event known as the great earthquake, he became more aware of exactly what happened. At any rate, in light of the strict upbringing by his father and his great love and respect for him, you can see how such revelations would have absolutely devastated someone so sensitive and introspective as Kierkegaard.

Well, let me move on then to 1838. There is in his journals in May of that year, an entry that speaks of indescribable joy. Now 15 days prior to this entry, Kierkegaard had celebrated his 25th birthday and he had become reconciled to his father who had confessed his sin to his son and had asked his son for forgiveness. Later on in that same year, actually August, his father died but he died clearly reconciled to his son. Now it’s not clear whether this experience of indescribable joy was Kierkegaard’s conversion experience to a deeper religious life. Kierkegaard himself never seemed to treat it that way nor did he really suggest that there was any specific moment when such a turn took place. Nonetheless, this event, whatever exactly it was, seems to have been a very important experience for him.

Well then let me move on to 1841. This marks the time period of his engagement and separation from Regine Olsen. Kierkegaard first met this young lady in 1837 when she was only 14 years old. Now Lowrie sets forth the details in the book in Kierkegaard’s own
words of their tempestuous relationship. Kierkegaard claimed that it was Regine who made him a poet and actually in some of Kierkegaard’s works, specifically Fear and Trembling and his work entitled Repetition, Kierkegaard’s relationship with Regine is right at the heart of each of those works.

Then in 1846 we have the affair of the Corsair. Now the Corsair was a newspaper there in Denmark and as you look at Lowrie you have a full explanation of what this affair was all about, but he makes it very, very clear that, as Lowrie does, that through this whole affair Kierkegaard became a laughingstock among his countrymen.

Then in 1848 we have a journal entry that speaks of Kierkegaard’s metamorphoses. As Lowrie explains, it was after this point, after 1848 that Kierkegaard was enough at peace with himself that he no longer felt he needed to speak with indirect communication. In his earlier works he had tried to make his point indirectly rather than blatantly saying what he thought. But all of this was preparatory to his later attack on the state church in Denmark. Before he could do that he had to become comfortable enough with who he was and clear enough about what God wanted him to do that he was no longer afraid to state plainly what was on his mind and heart. Now, Lowrie claims that it was during the next few years that Kierkegaard became an exclusively religious writer and produced what Lowrie calls Kierkegaard’s three greatest works. The Point of View being one of them, and, in that work, Kierkegaard explains what he was trying to do in his earlier works. A second work: The Sickness Unto Death. And a third work, Training in Christianity. And Lowrie thinks these are the three greatest of Kierkegaard’s work.

Well, 1852 through 1855. In 1852 through 1854 Kierkegaard reflected upon the attack he was about to make against the established church. The key catalysts in this attack were the death of Bishop Munster of whom Kierkegaard was very critical and the naming of Professor Martensen of whom Kierkegaard was even more critical as his successor. Kierkegaard launched his attack specifically in 1855 and, as Lowrie suggests, this was all somewhat ironic since Kierkegaard had been so conservative in his support of both the church and the state of Denmark up to that point. But he saw serious problems with the church, and he had a thesis. His one thesis was that Christianity no longer exists. By that he meant that it no longer exists in Denmark’s established church. Instead what was going on was something that was very, very far from biblical Christianity. Well, he not only believed that
this was what was happening in Denmark, but he believed that God had called him to speak out against what he saw happening in his native land. Even though he figured that this attack would ultimately cause him to lose his friends and even his life, he felt that he had to go ahead with it. On October 2nd, 1855, right in the midst of the controversy with the established church, Kierkegaard was hospitalized and then he died on November 11th, 1855, just a little bit over a month after he was put in the hospital.

Well, in all of this I think we get the picture of a man who was deeply religious, very sensitive, and highly introspective. Kierkegaard was unquestionably brilliant, but it seems fair to say that he probably took himself far too seriously and he thought himself far more important than he should have. Had he not done so, however, and had he not been such a prolific writer, we would not have benefited by what he taught us about the self, about what it means to exist, and about our relationship to God.

Well, next lecture I want to turn to look specifically at the major influences on Kierkegaard’s life. In particular, I want to point to his relationship with his father, his relation with Regine Olsen, and then his reaction to Hegelian philosophy. Those turn out to be the major influences on his life. That’s where we'll pick it up next time, and then we’ll begin to look at some of the specific works of Kierkegaard.