

Stream 1: The Crisis of the Danish Golden Age and its Modern Resonance

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Description: Despite their many interesting debates and polemics, the leading figures of Golden Age Denmark were in agreement about the fact that their age was in a state of crisis. They believed that the quick pace of change since the Enlightenment had led to a sense of alienation from traditional values and ways of thinking. This produced uncertainty that resulted in different forms of relativism, subjectivism and nihilism. The poet-philosopher, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, dramatically announced the great cultural crisis of the day in his treatise *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age* from 1833. According to Heiberg, people in his generation had lost their belief in truth and beauty in any deeper sense. Likewise, in 1837 the classicist and philosopher, Poul Martin Møller followed this line of thinking in his influential article “Thoughts on the Possibility of Proofs of Human Immortality,” in which he claims that modern scientific and naturalistic thinking has undermined the traditional belief in the immortality of the soul. In this context he too explores the movement of nihilism that he believes characterizes the age. In 1842 the theologian Hans Lassen Martensen published an article entitled “The Present Religious Crisis,” where he argues that much of the uncertainty in religion is the result of the work of, among others, the German theologian David Friedrich Strauss, who argued that Christianity was a form of myth. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard treated the idea of a cultural and religious crisis in a number of his famous works, such as *The Concept of Irony*, *Either/Or*, *A Literary Review of Two Ages*, and *The Moment*. Many of the texts from the Golden Age strike the reader as profoundly modern since they seem to anticipate key characteristics of the crisis of the 21st century. In keeping with the conference theme—Nordic Connections: Old and New—we invite papers focused on the Danish Golden Age and its philosophical, literary and artistic heritage that explore the theme of crisis and examine the resemblances between the perils and crises of the Danish Golden Age and those of our own.

