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Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries

The Culture of Golden Age Denmark

Edited by
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The Foundation for the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
at Copenhagen University
is funded by The Danish National Research Foundation.

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Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed
bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <<http://dnb.ddb.de>>.

ISBN 3-11-017762-5

ISSN 1434-2952

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Printed in Germany

Disk conversion: OLD-Satz digital, Neckarsteinach

Cover design: Christopher Schneider, Berlin

Kierkegaard and Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark

By JON STEWART

Works on the history of philosophy often tend to paint in broad strokes. Tidy, yet distorting categories are used to characterize long periods in the history of ideas. One such category which is frequently applied to much of nineteenth century European philosophy is "Hegelianism." There is a tendency to regard the so-called Hegelians as second-rate minds, the idea being that these thinkers simply popularized and promulgated Hegel's thought without adding anything new or original of their own. This, however, misunderstands the nature of the Hegelian schools, which were constantly developing on the basis of new interpretations of Hegel's thought as well as changing social and political circumstances. Thus, the Hegelian schools cannot be seen as simply a banal repetition of Hegel's own ideas. Instead, the Hegelians in both Germany and Denmark were highly original thinkers in their own right who responded to the most important intellectual and socio-political challenges of their day. Moreover, they applied the basic principles of Hegel's philosophy to new problems, issues and fields, often in quite original ways with novel results.

Hegel's philosophy reached Denmark in the mid-1820's and found there a full spectrum of commentators from zealous advocates to bitter critics. The goal of this article is to sketch briefly (1) the main personalities involved in the reception of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark and (2) their biographical relation to Kierkegaard. Although the thinkers to be examined here can be designated as "Danish Hegelians," one must avoid regarding them as a homogeneous group since this expression is a rough and ready category by means of which a handful of thinkers with a certain family resemblance can be classified. However, one must bear in mind that each of them interpreted and reacted to Hegel in his own way based on his own education, intellectual interests and goals. Thus, it would be a mistake to

assume that the figures that made up the movement of Danish Hegelianism all thought alike or that they made up a sort of political party or social club with some measure of solidarity. On the contrary, there was a great deal of internal strife among the Danish Hegelians about the proper interpretation and use of Hegel. Like their German counterparts, the Danish Hegelians can best be characterized not by their unanimous agreement on some specific issue but by the internal disagreement about various aspects of Hegel's thought. When discussing these thinkers, one must thus resist the urge to regard them as uncritical parrots of Hegel (despite the fact that they are often portrayed as such).

I. The Proponents of Hegel in Golden Age Denmark

Probably the leading exponent of Hegelianism in Denmark was the philosopher, poet, literary critic, and dramatist Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860).¹ Heiberg was a many-sided genius who played an extremely important role in Danish intellectual history during the Golden Age. He came from a family of intellectuals and from an early age knew personalities, such as the poet Adam Oehlenschläger (1779-1850) and the physicist Hans Christian Ørsted (1777-1851). He graduated from the University of Copenhagen in 1817 with a degree in Spanish literature.² From 1819-22 he lived in Paris, studying French drama. Later he went to Schleswig-Holstein, then a dukedom belonging to the Danish crown, where he taught at the University of Kiel from 1822-24. There for the first time he came into contact with Hegel's thought through the Professor of Philosophy, Johan Erik von Berger (1772-1833).³ After having read some of Hegel's works him-

¹ For more detailed accounts of Heiberg's life and work see the following: Henning Fenger *The Heibergs*, tr. by Frederick J. Marker, New York: Twayne Publishers Inc. 1971. Harald Høffding "Heiberg og Martensen" in his *Danske Filosofer*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag 1909, pp. 129-137. Johanne Luise Heiberg *Et liv genoplevet i erindringen* vols. 1-4, 5th revised edition, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1973. Morten Borup *Johan Ludvig Heiberg* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1947-49. Paul V. Rubow *Heiberg og hans skole i kritiken*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1953.

² Johan Ludvig Heiberg *De poëseos dramaticæ genere hispanico, præsertim de Petro Calderone de la Barca, principe dramaticorum*, Copenhagen 1817. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter* vols. 1-11, Copenhagen 1861-62; vol. 11, pp. 1-172.)

³ See Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Autobiographiske Fragmenter" in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 11, pp. 498ff.

self, Heiberg became so taken by them that he made a journey to Berlin in 1824 in order to meet the philosopher personally. There he attended Hegel's lectures and met with some of the leading intellectual figures in Berlin.

Inspired by Hegel, Heiberg wrote in his native Danish a treatise entitled, *On Human Freedom*, which he published in the same year.⁴ This treatise, which Heiberg claimed to be the first work in Danish on Hegel's philosophy,⁵ attempted to employ a Hegelian methodology in order to treat the free will controversy, then reigning in Copenhagen, surrounding the claims of the Professor of Medicine, Frantz Howitz (1789-1826).⁶ Heiberg, by quoting and referring frequently to Hegel's main works, effectively introduced him into Danish philosophy. This initial work was followed quickly by another short monograph, this time written in German, entitled, *Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet*.⁷ This work treated concepts such as necessity, probability, and contingency from a Hegelian perspective. It was taken as another declaration of Heiberg's affiliation with Hegel's philosophy.⁸

During this same period from 1824-25 Heiberg worked on a book in German entitled, *Grundlinien zum System der Ästhetik als spekulativer Wissenschaft*,⁹ where he attempts to work out a theory of aesthetics based on Hegel's speculative system. Regrettably, he never published this work since he was unable to bring it to a satisfactory completion. It is interesting to note that the composition of this study antedated the publication of Hegel's posthumous *Lectures on Aesthet-*

⁴ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Om den menneskelige Frihed. I Anledning af de nyeste Stridigheder over denne Gjenstand*, Kiel 1824. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 1-110.)

⁵ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Fortale" to *Prosaiske Skrifter* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 1841-43; vol. 1, p. xiv. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter* vols. 1-11, Copenhagen 1861-62; vol. 10, p. 590.)

⁶ See Oluf Thomsen *F.G. Howitz og hans Strid om Villiens Frihed*, Copenhagen: Levin og Munksgaard 1924.

⁷ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet. Als Einleitung zu einer Theorie des Zufalls*, Copenhagen 1825. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 11, pp. 325-359.)

⁸ Anonymous [Frederik Christian Sibbern] "*Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet. Als Einleitung zu einer Theorie des Zufalls*. Von Dr. J.L. Heiberg. Kopenhagen. Verlag von C.A. Reitzel. Druck von H.F. Popp. 1825. 30 Sider med Titelblad og alt" in *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende for 1825* no. 44, p. 691.

⁹ See "Heiberg an Hegel," February 20, 1825 in *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg* vols. 1-5, ed. by Morten Borup, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1947-50; vol. 1, pp. 162-163. See Morten Borup *Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 139.

ics, which appeared from 1835-38.¹⁰ In preparing his manuscript, Heiberg made use of lecture notes taken by friends who were present at Hegel's courses.¹¹

By writing in German Heiberg hoped (in vain, as it turned out) to obtain an academic position at a German or Prussian university. He returned to Copenhagen in 1825 and authored a series of theatrical works for the Royal Theater, where he obtained a permanent post in December of 1828. This allowed him the luxury of returning to philosophy and to Hegel. In 1830 Heiberg was appointed as Lecturer in Logic, Aesthetics and Danish Literature at the newly founded Royal Military Academy,¹² the closest he ever came to a university position in philosophy. In 1832 he published as a textbook for his students there his *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic*.¹³ This work is largely a paraphrase of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. It employs Hegel's dialectical methodology and in large part follows the structure of Hegel's text. It was the first major work on Hegel's logic in the Danish language and was the forerunner of a whole series of books by Danish scholars on the same subject that would appear over the next several years.

Heiberg's most important attempt to introduce Hegelianism in Denmark appeared in 1833 in the form of a short treatise under the title, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*.¹⁴ This work appeared as a pamphlet and was an invitation to a series of philosophical lectures which were to be based on Hegel's philosophy. The work caused a great controversy, above all for its statements about

¹⁰ The three volumes of Hegel's aesthetics appeared for the first time as a part of the first edition of Hegel's collected writings, which was published between 1832 and 1845 by Hegel's friends and students. *Vorlesungen über Aesthetik* vols. 1-3, ed. by Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Berlin 1835-38; vols. 10-1, 10-2, 10-3 in *Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe* vols. 1-18, Berlin 1832-45.

¹¹ See "Heiberg an Hegel," February 20, 1825 in *Breve og Akstykke vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 162-163.

¹² See Flemming Conrad Smagen og det nationale. *Studier i dansk litteraturhistorie-skrivning 1800-1861*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag 1996, pp. 150-179. Morten Borup *Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 14-17.

¹³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik. Som Ledetraad ved Forelæsninger paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, Copenhagen 1832. (Reprinted as *Ledetraad ved Forlæsninger over Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik ved den kongelige militaire Høiskole* in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 111-380.)

¹⁴ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, Copenhagen 1833. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 381-460.)

religion. Heiberg analyzes what he perceives as the crisis of his age. He claims that religion and art have lost their once central importance in contemporary life and have been replaced by relativism and nihilism. He thus sees his age as in a period of crisis which is in the process of forming itself towards a new world-view. For Heiberg, Hegel's philosophy alone can provide the framework with which the contemporary chaos of thought can be overcome. Only it offers a viable and stable truth in the face of the waves of relativism, alienation and nihilism. Only it can unite the various spheres of human life and activity and bring them into a unitary whole by seeing what is necessary in all of them. Like Hegel, Heiberg relegates religion to a secondary role behind philosophy, claiming that while religion grasps the truth of the world only in terms of concrete particulars, thus mistakenly taking the particular for the universal, philosophy grasps the universal or the essential as it is in itself. No doubt due to its controversial nature, this work had a popular appeal and introduced Hegel to a general public beyond trained academics.¹⁵

In 1835 Heiberg published his *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course at the Royal Military College*,¹⁶ which was more ambitious than his previous work on logic, although it is considerably shorter. Here Heiberg makes a general case for the truth of idealism, claiming that universal categories of thought underlie all transitory experience. He tries to demonstrate that all human experience ultimately must refer back to thought. Given that thought is the basis of all experience, logic, as the discipline that examines the forms of thought, must be foremost among the sciences. In this work Heiberg picks up on some of the main motifs from *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. He claims that only the abstract categorial structure of thought, can provide the stability which is lacking in the chaotic present age.

In 1837 Heiberg published the first number of a journal under his direction called *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*. This review, to which Kierkegaard had a subscription, was conceived by Heiberg as a forum for Hegelian philosophy in Denmark. There is evidence that Kierkegaard originally planned to publish in this journal his book-review of the novel by Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75), *Only a Fid-*

¹⁵ Henning Fenger *The Heibergs*, op. cit., pp. 132-134.

¹⁶ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Cursus paa den kongelige militære Høiskole*, Copenhagen 1835. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 461-516.)

der;¹⁷ the review was eventually published as an independent monograph under the title *From the Papers of One Still Living*. Although Heiberg's journal saw only two numbers, it was profoundly influential and occasioned much controversy. In the second number of *Perseus*, which appeared in August of 1838, Heiberg published an article entitled, "The System of Logic."¹⁸ This text contains the first twenty-three paragraphs of a Hegelian system of logic and thus overlaps with the first part of his aforementioned *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic*. This article was a response to criticisms of the pretensions of Hegel's logic to begin without presuppositions with the category of pure being. In 1839 Heiberg was involved in a debate concerning another aspect of Hegel's logic. Bishop Mynster had written an article entitled, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism," in which he criticized Hegel's principle of mediation and his critique of the law of excluded middle.¹⁹ Heiberg responded to this with an article entitled, "A Remark on Logic in Reference to the Right Reverend Bishop Mynster's Treatise on Rationalism and Supernaturalism," which defends the Hegelian principle of mediation against Mynster's criticisms.²⁰ This debate attracted much attention, and many of Copenhagen's leading intellectual figures were involved in it.

Heiberg's Hegelianism focused primarily on two themes which for him were closely bound together: logic and aesthetics. His interest in applying Hegelian philosophy to aesthetics clearly comes from his long-standing interest in poetry and drama. He found in Hegel's system a way to understand these art forms as representing a higher philosophical truth. He wrote and lectured on logic several times, and all of his works on logic freely make use of examples from the arts. He indicates that his *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic* and his "The System of Logic" are intended to provide the

¹⁷ See Johnny Kondrup "Tekstredigelse" to *Afen endnu levendes Papirer* in SKS K1, 68-72. See also Henning Fenger *Kierkegaard: The Myths and their Origins*, op. cit., pp. 138-141.

¹⁸ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Det logiske System" in *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee* no. 2, 1838, pp. 1-45. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 113-166.)

¹⁹ Jakob Peter Mynster "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 1, 1839, pp. 249-268. (Reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter* vols. 1-6. Copenhagen 1852-57; vol. 2, pp. 95-115.)

²⁰ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "En logisk Bemærkning i Anledning af H. H. Hr. Biskop Dr. Mynsters Afhandling om Rationalisme og Supranaturalisme i forrige Hefte af dette Tidsskrift" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 1, 1839, pp. 441-456. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 167-190.)

background for his theory of aesthetics.²¹ He clearly gives aesthetics a more central role in his philosophical thinking than Hegel does.

Moreover, he had no qualms about making emendations to Hegel's system to suit his own purposes. In his works on logic, he makes slight changes, for example, altering the initial triad – being, nothing and becoming – from Hegel's original scheme, grouping together being and nothing as the first category, with becoming as the second, and adding determinate being (*Tilværen*) as the third.²² Thus, while Heiberg generally follows Hegel's sequence, he weights the individual categories somewhat differently. Likewise, in his response to Oehlen-schläger,²³ he, apparently unknowingly, diverges from Hegel's ordering of the poetic arts (presumably since he did not have Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* at his disposal): while Hegel placed epic first, as the immediate form of poetry, and lyric second as mediated, Heiberg treats lyric as immediate and epic as one of three forms of romantic poetry, which are all mediated.²⁴

Heiberg was able to exercise a considerable influence on the Danish-speaking public since he was one of the leading public figures in diverse aspects of Copenhagen's intellectual and cultural life throughout the 1820's and '30's. It would be a distortion to think of him merely as one of the Danish Hegelians since his intellectual activity went far beyond merely promulgating Hegel's philosophy. He was an elegant spokesman for Hegel's philosophy due precisely to the fact that he was able to put it in a comprehensible and attractive form. In a letter dated from 1843, Nikolai Fogtmann (1788-1851), Bishop of

²¹ See Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Det logiske System" in *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee* no. 2, 1838, p. 3. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 115-116.): "The author allows himself to present herewith the first contribution to the working out of a long nourished plan, namely to expound the system of logic.... Furthermore, he has the goal with the present exposition and its continuation to clear the way for an aesthetics, which he for a long time has wished to write, but which he cannot send out into the world without ahead of time having given it the support in logic upon which it can rest."

²² This deviation from Hegel was criticized by Adler in his review of the work. Adolph Peter Adler "J.L. Heiberg, Det logiske System, a) Væren og Intet, b) Vorden, c) Tilværen, i *Perseus* Nr. 2, Kjøbenhavn 1838" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 3, 1840, pp. 474-482.

²³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Svar paa Hr. Oehlenschlägers Skrift: 'Om Kritiken i Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post, over Væringerne i Miklagard'" in *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post* nos. 7-8, 10-16, 1828. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 194-284.)

²⁴ See Henning Fenger *The Heibergs*, op. cit., p. 136.

Aalborg, writes the following to Mynster: "The most important support for Hegelianism among us [in Denmark] is without doubt Prof. Heiberg because he is clever and knows how to give everything that he treats a smooth and shiny appearance."²⁵

It is difficult to evaluate the degree to which Heiberg can properly be considered a Hegelian or even the degree to which he considered himself one. On the one hand, in his earliest Hegelian period immediately after meeting Hegel in Berlin he seems to reject the notion that he is a follower of Hegel. He writes the following in a letter *à propos* of his recently published work *On Human Freedom*:

I have indeed in this treatise drawn attention to Hegel, without whom a controversy of this kind does not seem to me to be able to take place, but it has not been my intention to declare myself a Hegelian. (I have, moreover, quite a lot against all *-ians*, regardless of what first name they put before this, their family name, which an etymologist perhaps might think to derive from "*asinus*.") My presentation is, as far as I know, quite my own and even different from Hegel's, at least in the method, although indeed in the main point it is in agreement with the Hegelian thought.²⁶

From this it is clear that Heiberg does not want to claim the title "Hegelian" and indeed is critical of those who do. Moreover, the many deviations from Hegel's works that Heiberg allows himself suggest that he regards himself as an independent thinker inspired by, but not a slave to, Hegel. On the other hand, in his "Autobiographical Fragments" written in 1839, Heiberg describes his encounter with Hegel's philosophy in almost evangelical terms. He recalls how, upon his return trip from Berlin after meeting Hegel, he suddenly grasped the essence of the Hegelian system in a kind of revelation:

While resting on the way home in Hamburg, where I stayed six weeks before returning to Kiel, and during that time was constantly pondering what was still obscure to me, it happened one day that, sitting in my room in the König von England with Hegel on my table and in my thoughts, and listening at the same time to the beautiful psalms which sounded almost unceasingly from the chimes of St. Peter's Church, suddenly, in a way which I have experienced neither before nor since, I was gripped by a momentary inner

²⁵ "Letter from Bishop Fogtmann to Mynster, Aalborg, 1843" in *Af efterladte Breve til J.P. Mynster*, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1862, p. 227.

²⁶ See "J.L. Heiberg til H.C. Ørsted," March 25, 1825 in *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 164-165. In the same letter Heiberg expresses reservations about his own aptitude and disposition for presenting Hegel's philosophy to others: "But with what concerns me, I dare not give myself credit for a sufficient knowledge of this system to discharge such a difficult task, and I likewise do not know how far I would be successful in an undertaking of this kind since I feel a greater inclination to present my own ideas than to set myself into a foreign train of thought so completely, which would be necessary for this." Ibid., p. 167.

vision, as if a flash of lightning had illuminated the whole region for me and awakened in me the theretofore hidden central thought. From this moment the system in its broad outline was clear to me, and I was completely convinced that I had grasped it in its innermost core, regardless of however much there might be in the details which I still had not made my own and perhaps will never come to make my own.²⁷

Moreover, the fact that Heiberg felt obliged to defend Hegel against the criticisms leveled by Mynster and others seems to speak for his Hegelianism as being a part of his self-understanding. Finally, in Copenhagen at the time it seems to have been generally known that Heiberg was a Hegelian. Given these ambiguities in his relation to Hegel, the label "Hegelian" cannot be applied to Heiberg without some qualifications.

Kierkegaard's relation to Heiberg was by no means transparent. Despite his later criticisms, Kierkegaard seems in fact to have been something of a follower of Heiberg for a period.²⁸ As a student, he read Heiberg and seems to have been anxious to win his approbation and to be accepted into the Heiberg circle of aesthetics and criticism.²⁹ In his student days Kierkegaard published articles in Heiberg's influential journal *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*³⁰ and is said to have attended soirées at Heiberg's home.³¹ Their relationship seems nonetheless to have been a rather formal one. Since Kierkegaard did not cultivate a deeper friendship with Heiberg, he was not obliged later to temper or qualify his criticism. What seems particularly to have turned Kierkegaard against Heiberg was a short book-review of *Either/Or* that Heiberg wrote in his journal *Intelligensblade*,³² in which he criticized the work in a rather dismissive manner. From this point

²⁷ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Autobiographiske Fragmenter" in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 11, p. 500. (Excerpts from and paraphrases of this text were originally published in Christian Molbech *Dansk poetisk Anthologie* vols. 1-4, Copenhagen 1830-40; vol. 4, pp. 243-300, p. 275.)

²⁸ See Henning Fenger *Kierkegaard: The Myths and their Origins*, tr. by George C. Schoolfield, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1980, pp. 135-149. Sejer Kühle "Søren Kierkegaard og den heibergske Kreds" in *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift* series 12, vol. 2, 1947, pp. 1-13.

²⁹ See H.P. Holst's Letter to H.P. Barfod, September 13, 1869 in *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁰ For an account of the significance of this journal, see Henning Fenger *The Heibergs*, op. cit., pp. 118-141.

³¹ Recounted in Henrik Hertz's diaries in *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., p. 218.

³² Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Litterær Vintersæd" in *Intelligensblade* vol. 2, no. 24, March 1, 1843, pp. 285-292.

on Kierkegaard had nothing but scorn for Heiberg. Under the name of the pseudonymous editor of the work, Victor Eremita, he first published a polemical response to this review with the title, "A Word of Thanks to Professor Heiberg."³³ In another article in his journal *Urania*,³⁴ Heiberg discussed briefly Kierkegaard's *Repetition* and once again evoked his anger. After writing drafts of different responses,³⁵ Kierkegaard settled on the idea for his work *Prefaces*, which was his most extended polemic against Heiberg.

The affectation and zeal of Heiberg's Hegelian revelation evoked Kierkegaard's satire. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes Climacus satirizes the account, quoted above, which he describes as Heiberg's miraculous conversion to Hegelianism, referring to him as "Dr. Hjortespring": "But I have no miracle to appeal to; ah, that was Dr. Hjortespring's happy fate! According to his own very well written report, he became an adherent of Hegelian philosophy through a miracle at Streit Hotel in Hamburg on Easter morning...an adherent of the philosophy that assumes that there are no miracles. Marvelous sign of the times!"³⁶ Kierkegaard had no patience for Heiberg's unqualified enthusiasm for Hegel and constantly made it the object of satire.

After the dispute had calmed down somewhat, Heiberg and his family remained important for Kierkegaard. In 1846 Kierkegaard published a lengthy book-review of a novel entitled *Two Ages*, which

³³ In *COR*, pp. 17-21 / *SVI* XIII, 411-415. *Fædrelandet* no. 1168, March 5, 1843.

³⁴ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Det astronomiske Aar" in *Urania*, 1844, pp. 77-160. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 9, pp. 51-130.)

³⁵ Namely, "Open Letter to Professor Heiberg, Knight of Dannebrog from Constantin Constantius" in *R*, Supplement, pp. 283-298 / *Pap.* IV B 110-111, pp. 258-274. "A Little Contribution by Constantin Constantius, Author of *Repetition*" in *R*, Supplement, pp. 299-319 / *Pap.* IV B 112-117, pp. 275-300.

³⁶ *CUPI*, p. 184 / *SKS* 7, 169f. See also "Hired waiters presumably are not needed. – Yet all is not thereby past – Heiberg himself is a diplomat, before that miracle in Hamburg, where through a miracle he gained an understanding of and became an adherent of a philosophy that (remarkably enough) does not accept miracles" (*FT*, Supplement, p. 324 / *Pap.* IV B 124, in *Pap.* XIII, p. 364). Also in his journals he writes, "Who has forgotten the beautiful Easter morning when Prof. Heiberg arose to understand Hegelian philosophy, as he himself has so edifyingly explained it – was this not a leap? Or did someone dream it?" (*JP* 3, 2347 / *Pap.* V C 3). In the *Concept of Anxiety* he writes, "The system is supposed to have such marvelous transparency and inner vision that in the manner of the *omphalopsychoi* [navel souls] it would gaze immovably at the central nothing until at last everything would explain itself and its whole content would come into being by itself. Such introverted openness to the public was to characterize the system" (*CA*, p. 81 / *SKS* 4, 384).

was published by Heiberg and authored anonymously by Heiberg's mother, the gifted Thomasine Christine Gyllembourg-Ehrensvärd (1773-1856), who was one of Denmark's leading novelists of the day. In 1847 Kierkegaard published a series of articles under the title, "The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress," which was about Heiberg's wife, Johanne Luise Heiberg (1812-90), who was a celebrated actress in Copenhagen's theater scene.³⁷ Thus, even though the polemic with Heiberg faded in time, Kierkegaard continued to be interested in the Heiberg circle throughout his life.

The second important spokesman for Hegelianism in Denmark was the theologian Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-84). Although his zeal was clearly more moderate than Heiberg's, Martensen must be counted as one of the most important sources about Hegel's philosophy for his fellow countrymen. One must be particularly careful not to regard Martensen as an uncritical Hegelian, although this is the picture that Kierkegaard paints of him. It must be stated that Martensen did not regard himself as a Hegelian *per se* and in fact offered many criticisms of Hegel throughout his career. In any case there can be no doubt about the fact that he was extremely important for the reception of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark.

Martensen was born in Flensborg, the son of a German mother and a Danish father, and thus learned the German language and culture from his earliest childhood.³⁸ He lived in Copenhagen from 1817 to 1834 and received his degree in theology from the university there in

³⁷ See Johanne Luise Heiberg *Et liv genoplevet i erindringen*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 172-176.

³⁸ Of singular importance for the details about Martensen's life is his autobiography: Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1882-83. See also the following: Skat Arildsen *Biskop Hans Lassen Martensen. Hans Liv, Udvikling og Arbejde*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1932. See also Harald Høffding "Heiberg og Martensen" in his *Danske Filosofer*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag 1909, pp. 137-146. Josepha Martensen *H.L. Martensen i sit Hjem og blandt sine Venner*, Copenhagen: J. Frimodts Forlag 1918. C.I. Scharling (ed.) *H.L. Martensen. Hans Tanker og Livssyn*, Copenhagen: P. Haase & Søn's Forlag 1928. Jens Holger Schjørring "H.L. Martensen" in his *Teologi og filosofi. Nogle analyser og dokumenter vedrørende Hegelianismen i dansk teologi*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1974, pp. 27-35. For an account in English see Jens Holger Schjørring "Martensen" in *Kierkegaard's Teachers (Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 10), ed. by Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag 1982, pp. 177-207. See also the Introduction by Curtis L. Thompson in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, tr. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997, pp. 1-71.

1832. Kierkegaard knew Martensen from his early student days. In Summer Semester 1834 Martensen was his teacher at the University of Copenhagen for private tutorials on Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube*.³⁹ That same year Martensen traveled to Germany in order to learn more about Hegel and German philosophy. Naturally enough, he first journeyed to Berlin where Hegelianism was still thriving.⁴⁰ There he made the acquaintance of Philipp Marheineke (1780-1846), who was the dominant figure on the scene. In a letter from Berlin dated December 20, 1834, Martensen describes as follows the current state of Hegelianism: "Hegel's philosophy still attracts the greatest interest in philosophy circles in Germany despite its many bad disciples and the many attacks which have been made on it. I do not think that it has been surpassed yet; one must fight against it until one either overcomes it or is oneself overcome by it."⁴¹ From Berlin he continued on to Heidelberg where he met with the Hegelian theologian, Karl Daub (1765-1836), who tried to employ Hegel's dialectical methodology to further the ends of Protestantism. Martensen went on to Tübingen and met David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74), whose *Das Leben Jesu* had just appeared and was causing much controversy. The next stop on his tour was Munich where he attended Schelling's lectures and made the acquaintance of the speculative theologian Franz von Baader (1765-1841). Martensen continued to Vienna and eventually to Paris where he met Heiberg, in whom he found a friend and ally in philosophical matters.⁴²

After these extensive travels, Martensen returned to Copenhagen in 1836 to formulate his own views on Hegelianism and speculative philosophy. He was appointed Lecturer of Systematic Theology at the University of Copenhagen, later becoming a full professor in 1840. During this period, Martensen seems to have been quite enthusiastic about Hegel's philosophy of religion, praising Hegel for recognizing the conceptual necessity of religious thought. In 1836 in

³⁹ See JP 4, 3843-3844 / Pap. I C 20, in Pap. XII, pp. 126-131. See also Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 78.

⁴⁰ See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 85ff. See also Martensen's letter to H.C. Ørsted from December 20, 1834 in *Breve fra og til Hans Christian Ørsted* vols. 1-2, ed. by Mathilde Ørsted, Copenhagen 1870; vol. 2, pp. 134-140.

⁴¹ "Letter to H.C. Ørsted" from December 20, 1834 in *Breve fra og til Hans Christian Ørsted*, ed. by Mathilde Ørsted, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 135.

⁴² See Johanne Luise Heiberg *Et liv genoplevet i erindringen*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 281-282. See also Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 218-227; vol. 2, pp. 24-39.

the journal, *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, Martensen reviewed Heiberg's aforementioned *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course at the Royal Military College*.⁴³ There he gives a generally positive assessment of Hegelian philosophy, claiming that it is the greatest philosophical achievement of the modern age. He nonetheless criticizes certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy of religion, criticisms to which Kierkegaard was attentive.⁴⁴ In 1837 Martensen completed his dissertation, written in Latin, which was entitled, *On the Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness*.⁴⁵ There he criticized the notion of autonomy which he saw as characteristic of modern thought such as Hegel's.

At the University of Copenhagen in Winter Semester 1837-38 Martensen gave a course entitled "Introduction to Speculative Dogmatics," which Kierkegaard attended.⁴⁶ The lectures continued through Summer Semester 1838 and Winter Semester 1838-39.⁴⁷ In these lectures he developed a philosophy of religion with some affinities to Hegel. In Winter Semester 1838-39 Martensen gave a survey of German philosophy under the title, "Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy from Kant to Hegel." Among Kierkegaard's journals and papers there are notes to this course written in someone else's hand.⁴⁸ These lectures were popular and evoked much academic discussion and even controversy. It was the success of Martensen's lectures that occasioned Heiberg to declare that Hegel's philosophy had finally become a *causa victrix* in Danish intellectual life.⁴⁹

⁴³ Hans Lassen Martensen "Indledningsforedrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Coursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole. Af J.L. Heiberg, Lærer i Logik og Æsthetik ved den kgl. militaire Høiskole" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* vol. 16, 1836, pp. 515-528.

⁴⁴ See Niels Thulstrup *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, tr. by George L. Stengren, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Hans Lassen Martensen *De autonomia conscientiae sui humanae in theologiam dogmaticam nostri temporis introducta*, Copenhagen 1837. Danish translation: *Den menneskelige Selvbevidstheds Autonomie*, tr. by L.V. Petersen, Copenhagen 1841. English translation: *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology in Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, tr. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997, pp. 73-147.

⁴⁶ SKS 19, 125-143, Not4:3-12. A complete list of Martensen's lectures can be found in Skat Arildsen *Biskop Hans Lassen Martensen. Hans Liv, Udvikling og Arbejde*, op. cit., pp. 156-158.

⁴⁷ SKS 18, 374-386, KK:11. See also *Pap.* II C 27-28, in *Pap.* XIII, pp. 3-116.

⁴⁸ *Pap.* II C 25, in *Pap.* XII, pp. 316-331.

At this time Martensen also betrayed his allegiance to Hegelianism with his lectures on moral philosophy, which he later published. In 1839 he, like Heiberg, defended Hegel's critique of the law of excluded middle against Bishop Mynster's criticism.⁵⁰ He argued that the principle of mediation was the principle of Christianity since the doctrine of the incarnation could not be understood without it.

Martensen was a charismatic figure who attracted many students. In the journals from 1849, Kierkegaard, looking back on his student days, describes Martensen as creating "quite a sensation"⁵¹ at the University of Copenhagen. Martensen's popularity among the students earned him not merely Kierkegaard's animosity but also attracted much attention in the Danish intellectual community generally.

Martensen's lectures brought him into the public eye and functioned as a sort of forum for the general debate about the legitimacy of the introduction of Hegelian philosophy into theological questions.⁵² As a result of his promulgation of Hegel's doctrines among the students, he quickly became the object of public criticism by an anonymous critic in *Kjøbenhavnsposten*.⁵³ Critics harped on the fundamental differences between Hegel's speculative philosophy and Protestantism, which they claimed were ultimately incompatible. For a time Martensen made an attempt to defend himself against these criticisms and tried to maintain a Hegelian position. As late as 1841 he published a work entitled, *Outline of the System of Moral Philos-*

⁴⁹ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Fortale" to *Prosaiske Skrifter* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 1841-43; vol. 1, p. xv. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter* vols. 1-11, Copenhagen 1861-62; vol. 10, p. 591.)

⁵⁰ Hans Lassen Martensen "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme og principium exclusi medii i Anledning af H. H. Biskop Mynsters Afhandling herom i dette Tidsskrifts forrige Hefte" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 1, 1839, pp. 456-473.

⁵¹ *PF*, Supplement, pp. 226-227 / *Pap. X 2 A 155*, p. 117. Translation slightly modified.

⁵² See Henning Fenger *The Heibergs*, op. cit., pp. 139-140. Carl Henrik Koch *En Flue på Hegels udødelige næse eller om Adolph Peter Adler og om Søren Kierkegaards forhold til ham*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag A/S 1990, pp. 27 ff.

⁵³ See the anonymous criticism: "Nogle Træk til en Charakteristik af den filosofiske Aand, som for Tiden findes hos de Studerende ved Kjøbenhavns Universitet" in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* vol. 14, no. 25, January 26, 1840, pp. 97-99. Martensen's response: "Philosophisk Beskedenhed i *Kjøbenhavnsposten*" in *Fædrelandet* vol. 1, no. 50, January 29, 1840, pp. 259-261. The anonymous rejoinder: "Philosophiske Suffisance i *Fædrelandet*" in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* vol. 14, no. 31, February 1, 1840, pp. 121-124. Martensen's response "Erklæring" in *Fædrelandet* vol. 1, no. 56, February 4, 1840, pp. 315-316. The final article, "Sidste Indlæg: Sagen contra Lector Martensen som Mandatarius for Hegel & Comp" in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* vol. 14, no. 41, February 11, 1840, pp. 161-163.

ophy,⁵⁴ which bears a decidedly Hegelian stamp.⁵⁵ But in 1842, however, he experienced a crisis as a result of new publications by some of the left Hegelians who were unapologetically critical of religion and Christianity in particular. Ludwig Feuerbach's *Wesen des Christentums*⁵⁶ and Strauss' *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*⁵⁷ claimed to be furthering Hegel's philosophy, yet the Danish theologian could recognize in their positions nothing of his own notion of Christianity. When this anti-Christian tendency began to emerge in certain forms in Denmark,⁵⁸ Martensen felt obliged to modify his position, lest he be associated with the radicals. In 1842 he openly criticized Strauss and took a stand on the side of orthodoxy in an article, "The Present Religious Crisis."⁵⁹ Moreover, at the end of 1842 he refused an invitation from the German philosopher and theologian Eduard Zeller (1814-1908) to submit an article for the newly founded journal, the *Theologische Jahrbücher*, in which Strauss was also involved. At the beginning of 1843 he refused a similar invitation from Marheineke to join a philosophical society dedicated to Hegel's thought.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Hans Lassen Martensen *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, Copenhagen 1841. English translation: *Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy*, in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, tr. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997, pp. 245-313. See the review: Peter Michael Stilling "Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System, udgivet til Brug ved akademiske Forelæsninger af Dr. H. Martensen. Reitzels Forlag, 109 S. 8°. Kjøbenhavn 1841. (Priis 1 Rbd.);" in *Theologisk Tidsskrift, Ny Række* vol. 7, 1843, pp. 88-115.

⁵⁵ See the discussion in Bruce H. Kirmmse *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1990, pp. 172-175.

⁵⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Leipzig 1841.

⁵⁷ David Friedrich Strauss *Die christliche Glaubenslehre* vols. 1-2, Tübingen 1840-41. Danish translation: *Fremstilling af den christelige Troeslære i dens historiske Udvikling og i dens Kamp med den moderne Videnskab* vols. 1-2, tr. by Hans Brøchner, Copenhagen 1842-43.

⁵⁸ See Jens Holger Schjørring's mention of "the examination scandal" and "Frederik Andreas Beck" in his article "Martensen" in *Kierkegaard's Teachers*, ed. by Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, op. cit., p. 192. See Leif Grane "Det Teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925" in *Københavns Universitet 1479-1979* vols. 1-14, ed. by Leif Grane et al.; vol. 5, *Det Teologiske Fakultet*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1980, pp. 366-367. S.V. Rasmussen *Den unge Brøchner*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1966, pp. 16-26. See also Harald Høffding "Hans Brøchner" in his *Danske Filosofer*, op. cit., pp. 196-206.

⁵⁹ Hans Lassen Martensen "Nutidens religiøse Crisis" in *Intelligensblade* vol. 1, no. 3, 1842, pp. 53-73.

⁶⁰ For an account of both of these episodes, see Jens Holger Schjørring *Teologi og filosofi. Nogle analyser og dokumenter vedrørende Hegelianismen i dansk teologi*, op. cit., pp. 27-35.

Martensen's Hegelian period did not impede his professional advancement. Even during the controversy regarding Hegel's principle of mediation he remained on the best of terms with Hegel's critic, Bishop Mynster. In a letter dated June 18, 1839, Mynster writes: "Moreover, yesterday I had a long philosophical discussion with Martensen; naturally, regardless of this dispute, we are the best of friends."⁶¹ In 1845 Martensen became a royal chaplain despite relatively scant experience in preaching. In 1849 he published his best-known work on theology, *Christian Dogmatics*,⁶² which cannot be considered straightforwardly "Hegelian," although it is clearly a piece of systematic theology with some Hegelian strands. By this time Martensen's initial burst of enthusiasm for Hegelianism had clearly waned, and he had backed off considerably from its most provocative aspects.⁶³

Martensen was never a full-fledged devotee of Hegelianism,⁶⁴ and the issue of how Hegelian he was after the entire course of his intellectual development remains open. In his autobiography Martensen denies that he was ever a Hegelian at all. He explains his goal as a teacher of Hegel's philosophy as follows:

I had to, if possible, get [the students] enthused about Hegel, and yet I had to oppose him and bring them to oppose him. Whether I always succeeded in this to the same degree I must leave undecided. But I can assert with certainty that all the way through I have maintained my theonomic standpoint in contrast to Hegel's autonomic, that the intuitive view of faith and revelation was for me the *principal* thing in contrast to the autonomic in Hegel. I could not agree with a thinking which wanted to produce its own content. I sought only a *second-order* reflection on that which is given in revelation. When it is often said that during this my initial period at the University I was a representative of Hegelianism, then this is a most uncritical assertion which totally ignores my explicit and justified declarations in my dissertation, and which has been refuted by each of my literary works.⁶⁵

One should, of course, be wary of taking autobiographical statements made years after the fact at face value, but nonetheless there is some

⁶¹ "Mynster to his eldest son Joachim," June 18, 1839 in *Nogle Blade af J.P. Mynster's Liv og Tid*, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1875, p. 404. See also p. 69.

⁶² Hans Lassen Martensen *Den christelige Dogmatik*, Copenhagen 1849.

⁶³ See Helweg's assessment: Hans Friedrich Helweg "Hegelianismen i Danmark" in *Dansk Kirketidende* vol. 10, no. 51, December 16, 1855, pp. 827-828.

⁶⁴ One author tells us, "Martensen, apart from a brief period around 1833-34 was not actually a Hegelian, but rather he wanted to use Hegel's method to create a speculative theology." Leif Grane "Det Teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," op. cit., p. 363.

⁶⁵ See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 4-5. Quoted from *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, tr. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, op. cit., p. 8. See also vol. 2, pp. 5-7. See vol. 1, pp. 146-147 where Martensen says that he broke with Hegel.

support for Martensen's claim. In a letter from as early as 1836 Martensen indicates that he is no longer satisfied with the "autonomic principle" of Hegel's philosophy, which is precisely the criticism he recalls in his autobiography almost a half a century later.⁶⁶ In a part of his review of *Perseus*, Sibbern portrays Martensen not as a Hegelian but rather as one of the great critics of Hegel.⁶⁷ In a letter from 1839 Mynster notes that Martensen was "not nearly such a strict Hegelian as Heiberg."⁶⁸ Even during the period when Martensen had the most success among the students, it is not clear that he was universally regarded as a Hegelian. In a letter from 1841, Fogtmann writes to Mynster in a way that implies that he distances Martensen from the real Hegelians: "I have recently read much in Prof. Martensen's theological writings and have found a great interest in them. He is certainly, as Your Holiness once remarked, a true Christian theologian, who is not bound by Hegelian formulations."⁶⁹ This seems to indicate that Martensen was not generally regarded as the most convinced or dogmatic Hegelian at the time.

Moreover, Martensen did indeed offer criticisms of Hegel in each of his works which have been designated as "Hegelian." Martensen was also critical of the subordination of religion to philosophy in Hegel's thought and was more interested than Hegel in the concept of a personal God.⁷⁰ He also criticizes Hegel's philosophy for dismissing as unscientific anything that cannot be reduced to its categories. At the end of his "Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy from Kant to Hegel," he offers a number of criticisms of Hegel's philosophy and notes some of the leading contemporary critics. He enumerates three points which to his mind remain unanswered in Hegel: the notion of 1) a personal God, 2) a personal Christ, and 3) the immortality of the individual.⁷¹ With these points of divergence, one can see

⁶⁶ "Letter from Martensen to Sibbern," March 19, 1836 in *Breve fra og til F.C. Sibbern* vols. 1-2, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel 1866; vol. 1, pp. 181-183.

⁶⁷ See Frederik Christian Sibbern "Perseus, *Journal for den speculative Idee*. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1, Juni 1837. Kjøbenhavn. Reitzels Forlag. XIV og 264 S. 8. Priis 1 Rbd. 84 Skill. – (Med stadigt Hensyn til Dr. Rothes: *Læren om Treenighed og Forsoning. Et speculativt Forsøg i Anledning af Reformationsfesten.*)" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* vol. 20, 1838, Article VIII pp. 405-449. See especially p. 406.

⁶⁸ "Mynster to his eldest son Joachim," June 18, 1839 in *Nogle Blade af J.P. Mynster's Liv og Tid*, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1875, p. 404.

⁶⁹ "Letter from Bishop Fogtmann to Mynster, Aalborg, 1841" in *Af efterladte Breve til J.P. Mynster*, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1862, p. 221.

⁷⁰ See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 103ff.

⁷¹ *Pap.* II C 25, in *Pap.* XII, p. 328. See also p. 331.

that Mynster's assessment seems to be correct: Martensen's Hegelianism was more qualified and less zealous than Heiberg's.

Despite this, it does seem that Martensen was at least perceived to be a Hegelian by some people. Otherwise it would not make sense for the aforementioned Eduard Zeller to solicit his work in the service of a Hegelian journal or for Marheineke to invite him to become a member of a Hegelian society.⁷² Moreover, his response to the anonymous critic in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* has the look of a Hegelian. Although Martensen is, of course, at pains there to defend himself against the charge that he has corrupted the students at the University of Copenhagen, he is also quite anxious to defend Hegel's philosophy against both misunderstanding and criticism.

Kierkegaard's criticism of Martensen is more aggressive than his criticism of Heiberg due perhaps to the fact that Martensen was only a few years older than Kierkegaard and thus was regarded as more of a threat by him.⁷³ While Heiberg was perceived as a mentor, Martensen was perceived as a rival. In many journal entries Kierkegaard compares himself and his work with that of Martensen. As was noted above, Kierkegaard in his student days attended Martensen's tutorials and apparently was at that time favorably impressed by the command of German philosophy and theology that Martensen displayed. However, Kierkegaard seems to have lost much of his respect for him when Martensen returned from Germany in 1836 and began to advocate Hegelianism and proclaim that he had gone beyond it. In his journals Kierkegaard writes,

Some teach that eternity is comic, or more correctly, that in eternity a person will perceive a comic consciousness about the temporal. This wisdom we owe especially to the last three or four paragraphs of Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Here [in Denmark] it has been presented in one of the journals by Professor Martensen. Although the professor, after his return [from Germany], and since his first appearance in the *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, has invariably assured us that he has gone beyond Hegel, he certainly did not go farther in this case.⁷⁴

⁷² Jens Holger Schjørring *Teologi og filosofi. Nogle analyser og dokumenter vedrørende Hegelianismen i dansk teologi*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁷³ For Kierkegaard's relation to Martensen see M. Neiiendam "Martensen, Mynster og Kierkegaard" in C.I. Scharling *H.L. Martensen. Hans Tanker og Livssyn*, op. cit., pp. 94-127.

⁷⁴ CA, Supplement, p. 207 / *Pap.* V B 60, p. 137. Translation slightly modified. See also CA, Supplement, p. 213 / *Pap.* V B 72.33: "The whole wisdom of the superiority of the comic we owe to the three or four last paragraphs in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, although it has also been presented with bravura by one who long since has gone beyond Hegel; and while he astonished women and children with his discourse, he would not as much as intimate that it was Hegel's." See also *JP* 6, 6947 / *Pap.* XI 3 B 57, p. 107: "Professor Martensen 'goes further' – that is to be expected of Prof. M."

This claim of “going beyond Hegel” is one that Kierkegaard returns to again and again throughout his career. Expressions like this seem to have been common during this period.⁷⁵ In his autobiography, Martensen recalls, “I had to lead my listener *through* Hegel; we could not stop with him, but rather, as was said, we had to go beyond him.”⁷⁶ This expression seems to refer to the then recent sequence of famous German philosophers, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, who displaced one another in succession. Each new philosopher started from the premises of his predecessor and reworked them in a new, original manner, thus incorporating and surpassing the previous system. In this way each of these philosophers was said to “have gone beyond” his predecessor. After Hegel’s death the question that resounded during the 1830’s was who would pick up the torch and go beyond Hegel.⁷⁷ In his memoirs one of Martensen’s students, the later priest and author Johannes Fibiger (1821-97) describes the way in which one regarded the intellectual task of the age: “One had to imitate [Hegel’s philosophy] and bring it even further; one was supposed to build one’s own system and go beyond Hegel and become the great man of the scholarly world.”⁷⁸ Kierkegaard was critical of Martensen and others for their pretensions to have unseated Hegel and to have assumed the role of his successor in this distinguished series of thinkers.

As has been noted, Kierkegaard became increasingly incensed by what he perceived as Martensen’s base attempt to profit from Hegel’s genius. Kierkegaard speaks positively of Hegel in this regard and negatively of his parrots and emulators. He writes, for example, “Those who have gone beyond Hegel are like country people who must always give their addresses as via a larger city; thus the addresses in

⁷⁵ See commentary to “*at gaae videre*” in SKS K4, 259-260.

⁷⁶ See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 4.

⁷⁷ See Frederik Christian Sibbern “*Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1, Juni 1837. Kjøbenhavn. Reitzels Forlag. XIV og 264 S. 8. Priis 1 Rbd. 84 Skill. – (Med stadigt Hensyn til Dr. Rothens: *Læren om Treenighed og Forsoning. Et speculativt Forsøg i Anledning af Reformationsfesten.*)” in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* vol. 19, 1838, Article I, p. 313; Sibbern *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, op. cit., p. 31: “Few seem to be aware that to correctly make use of the great content discussed here [sc. of Hegel’s philosophy]...one must go beyond it.”

⁷⁸ Johannes Fibiger *Mit Liv og Levned som jeg selv har forstaaet det*, ed. by Karl Gjellerup, Copenhagen 1898, p. 73.

this case read – John Doe via Hegel.”⁷⁹ Many years later he writes in his journals, naming Martensen explicitly, “Professor Martensen...is only an insignificant thinker and essentially only a reporter and correspondent for German thinkers and professors.”⁸⁰

Another reason for Kierkegaard’s animosity was a straightforward jealousy. In 1837 Martensen published an article on a new version of *Faust* by Nicolaus Lenau,⁸¹ a pseudonym for the Austro-Hungarian poet Niernbsch von Strehlenau (1802-50). The article appeared in Heiberg’s review, *Perseus*, and in a sense served to make Martensen the protégé of Heiberg and to give notice to the academic community that he was the up and coming young scholar in Danish intellectual life. Kierkegaard himself had tried to get into the good graces of Heiberg and his circle, but he was quickly displaced by the new academic star, Martensen. What was worse, the theme of *Faust* was one that fascinated Kierkegaard in particular at that time. In his early journals one finds many long discussions of it, and it seems clear that he was planning a manuscript of some kind on it.⁸² He was thus startled and upset when Martensen’s article appeared since it undercut his own plans for a study of the subject. He became bitter and envious of Martensen’s success,⁸³ and this initiated a lifelong enmity on Kierkegaard’s part, an enmity which, it should be noted, was reciprocated by Martensen. Kierkegaard’s criticism became all the more bitter when he saw Martensen’s lectures become popular.

During his most productive period of work between 1843 and 1846, Kierkegaard often caustically criticizes Martensen’s positions without

⁷⁹ JP 2, 1572 / SKS 18, 109, FF:176. In an apparent reference to Martensen from 1836, Kierkegaard writes, “The Hegelian cud-chewing involving three stomachs – first, immediacy – then it is regurgitated – then down once more; perhaps a successor master-mind could continue this with four stomachs etc., down again and then up again. I do not know whether the master-mind understands what I mean.” JP 2, 1566 / Pap. I A 229.

⁸⁰ Pap. X 6 B 103. See also JP 3, 3034 / Pap. X 2 A 117. CUP1, p. 195f. / SKS 7, 180f. JP 2, 1570 / SKS 17, 50, AA:40. JP 2, 1573 / SKS 17, 262, DD:141. JP 2, 1576 / SKS 18, 14, EE:26. JP 2, 1738 / SKS 19, 375, Not12:7. JP 6, 6460 / Pap. X 1 A 588.

⁸¹ Hans Lassen Martensen “Betragtninger over Idéen af Faust med Hensyn paa Lenaus *Faust*” in *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee* no. 1, 1837, pp. 91-164.

⁸² JP 5, 5100 / SKS 17, 18-30, AA:12. JP 2, 1177 / Pap. I A 88. JP 2, 1178 / Pap. I A 104. JP 4, 4387 / Pap. I A 122. JP 1, 795 / Pap. I A 150. JP 2, 1671 / Pap. I A 154. Pap. I A 274. SKS 18, 78, FF:19. SKS 17, 205-207, CC:14-18. JP 5, 5077 / Pap. I C 46. JP 2, 1179 / SKS 19, 94, Not2:7. JP 5, 5110 / Pap. I C 61. JP 5, 5111 / SKS 19, 94f., Not2:10. JP 5, 5160 / Pap. I C 102. JP 3, 2703 / SKS 17, 104-106, BB:14. Pap. I C 114.

⁸³ See JP 5, 5225 / Pap. II A 597. See also JP 2, 1183 / SKS 17, 49, AA:38. JP 5, 5226 / SKS 18, 83, FF:38.

mentioning his name as, for example, in the *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.⁸⁴ From journal entries it is clear that Kierkegaard felt slighted by some of Martensen's remarks in the Introduction to his *Christian Dogmatics*.⁸⁵ In his autobiography, Martensen describes Kierkegaard's animosity thus:

In the beginning his [Kierkegaard's] relation to me had been friendly, but it assumed an increasingly hostile character. He was moved to this in part by the differences in our views and in part by the recognition I enjoyed from the students and the public, a recognition which he clearly viewed – nor did he attempt to conceal it – as an unjustified overestimation...I was now chosen to be the object of his attack, and he sought to disparage me, my abilities, and my work in many ways. He sought to annihilate and extinguish every bit of activity that emanated from me.⁸⁶

Kierkegaard remained a critic of Martensen until the end of his life. His journals from the years 1849-50 are full of criticisms of Martensen's *Dogmatics*.⁸⁷ In Kierkegaard's attack on the Danish Church in the last year of his life, Martensen, then having been elected Bishop of Zealand, was the target of much of his critique. Indeed, it was Martensen's eulogy to his predecessor Mynster, in which he said that the deceased bishop had been a witness to the truth, that set off Kierkegaard's campaign of criticism in the first place.⁸⁸ Kierkegaard's animosity towards Martensen stayed with him his whole life and lies behind much of his anti-Hegelian polemics.

Another important, yet generally forgotten, figure in the movement of Danish Hegelianism is the philosopher and theologian Rasmus Nielsen (1809-84).⁸⁹ Nielsen is particularly important since he at

⁸⁴ See Arild Christensen "Efterskriftens Opgør med Martensen" in *Kierkegaardiana* no. 4, 1962, pp. 45-62.

⁸⁵ *Pap. X 6 B 113*, p. 143. *JP 6*, 6636 / *Pap. X 6 B 137*. Martensen mentions this in his autobiography: *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 146.

⁸⁶ Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 140. Cited from *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., pp. 196-197. Translation slightly modified.

⁸⁷ *Pap. X 6 B 103-193*, pp. 129-193.

⁸⁸ See "Was Bishop Mynster a 'Truth-Witness?'" and the others articles in *The Moment*: "Var Biskop Mynster et 'Sandhedsvidne,' et af 'de rette Sandhedsvidner' – er dette Sandhed?" in *Fædrelandet* no. 295, December 18, 1854; *M*, pp. 3-8 / *SVI XIV*, 5-10.

⁸⁹ For accounts of Nielsen's life and thought see the following: V. Klein, and P.A. Rosenberg (eds.) *Mindeskrikt over Rasmus Nielsen*, Copenhagen: Det Schønbergske Forlag 1909. Eduard Asmussen *Entwicklungsgang und Grundprobleme der Philosophie Rasmus Nielsens*, Flensburg 1911. P.A. Rosenberg *Rasmus Nielsen. Nordens Filosof. En almenfattelig Fremstilling*, Copenhagen: Karl Schønberg's Forlag 1903. Harald Høffding *Danske Filosofer*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag 1909, pp. 184-195.

least for a period was Kierkegaard's friend at a time when Kierkegaard was long since alienated from Heiberg and Martensen. He was educated in Viborg and began his studies in theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1832. In 1840 he defended his dissertation, *The Use of the Speculative Method in Sacred History*.⁹⁰ Nielsen worked as *Privatdocent* until 1841 when he received the professorship in philosophy that was vacant after Poul Martin Møller's death. He became *professor ordinarius* in 1850 and enjoyed an impressive university career that lasted until 1883, a year before his death.

At the beginning of the 1840's Nielsen was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Hegel's philosophy. He was awarded the professorship at the same time as Martensen, and the two together represented the younger generation on the faculty. Together they promulgated the latest philosophical ideas above all from German thought. In 1841 Nielsen published a biblical commentary, animated perhaps in some small measure by a Hegelian spirit under the title *Paul's Letter to the Romans*.⁹¹ He wrote two works on logic, which bear a remarkable resemblance to Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The first was his *Speculative Logic in its Essentials*,⁹² which appeared in four installments from 1841-44; the second was the *Propaedeutic Logic* from 1845.⁹³ These works were accompanied by public lectures and were doubtless intended as textbooks for his auditors. He also published a work on Church history which shows signs of Hegel's influence.⁹⁴

The relationship between Kierkegaard and Nielsen is extremely complex.⁹⁵ At least three distinct stages can be discerned: an original alienation, a rapprochement and even friendship, and finally a revived hostility. During Kierkegaard's years as a student, he regarded Nielsen, like Martensen, with great suspicion. When Sibbern encouraged Kierkegaard to apply for an academic position at the University of Copenhagen, Kierke-

⁹⁰ Rasmus Nielsen *De speculativa historiae sacrae tractando metodo*, Copenhagen 1840. In Danish as *Om den spekulative Methodes Anvendelse paa den hellige Historie*, tr. by B.C. Bøggild, Copenhagen 1842.

⁹¹ Rasmus Nielsen *Pauli Brev til Romerne*, Copenhagen 1841.

⁹² Rasmus Nielsen *Den speculative Logik i dens Grundtræk*, Copenhagen 1841-44; 1. Hæfte 1841, pp. 1-64; 2. Hæfte 1842, pp. 65-96; 3. Hæfte 1843, pp. 97-144; 4. Hæfte 1844, pp. 145-196.

⁹³ Rasmus Nielsen *Den propædeutiske Logik*, Copenhagen 1845.

⁹⁴ Rasmus Nielsen *Forelæsningsparagrafer til Kirkehistoriens Philosophie. Et Schema for Tilhørere*, Copenhagen 1843.

⁹⁵ See Helge Hultberg "Kierkegaard og Rasmus Nielsen" in *Kierkegaardiana* no. 12, 1982, pp. 9-21.

gaard expressed reservations, stating that he did not feel adequately prepared. Hans Brøchner recounts the exchange in his recollections:

Once he [Kierkegaard] told me that Sibbern had suggested he apply for a position as a lecturer in philosophy. Kierkegaard had replied that in that case he would have to insist on a couple of years in which to prepare himself. "Oh! How can you imagine that they would hire you under such conditions?" asked Sibbern. "Yes, of course, I could do like Rasmus Nielsen and let them hire me unprepared." Sibbern became cross and said: "You always have to pick on Nielsen!"⁹⁶

When Nielsen got wind of this, he refused to be a reader on Kierkegaard's dissertation committee, even though Sibbern asked him personally and even though he would have been the logical choice.⁹⁷

This animosity between Kierkegaard and Nielsen lasted until 1846 when a rapprochement was effected between the two men.⁹⁸ After reading *Philosophical Fragments* and other works, Nielsen became more and more interested in Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity. He made overtures towards Kierkegaard, and the two entered into a friendship, with the older Nielsen taking on the role of something of a follower of Kierkegaard. Brøchner reports that during this time Kierkegaard had a generally positive assessment of Nielsen: "At a later point, when Nielsen had allied himself with Kierkegaard, he [Kierkegaard] spoke of him with more interest and acknowledged his talents. Once he said: 'Nielsen is the only one of our younger authors of this general tendency who may amount to something.'"⁹⁹ During a period in 1848, when Kierkegaard was convinced that his death was imminent,¹⁰⁰ he conceived of Nielsen as his eventual literary executor.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Hans Brøchner "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard" in *Det Nittende Aarhundrede, Maanedsskrift for Literatur og Kritik*, March, 1876-77, § 21. English translation cited from *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., p. 235.

⁹⁷ See Carl Weltzer "Omkring Søren Kierkegaards Disputats" in *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, Sjette Række, ed. by J. Oskar Andersen and Bjørn Kornerup, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1948-50, p. 286.

⁹⁸ For an account of the relation between Kierkegaard and Nielsen during this period, see Thulstrup's "Martensen's Dogmatics and its Reception" in *Kierkegaard and the Church in Denmark (Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana*, vol. 13), by Niels Thulstrup, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag 1984, pp. 191-197.

⁹⁹ Hans Brøchner "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard" op. cit., § 21. English translation cited from *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., p. 235.

¹⁰⁰ *Pap.* IX A 178.

¹⁰¹ *Pap.* X 6 B 102. See the account in *Skriftbilleder. Søren Kierkegaards journaler, notesbøger, hæfter, ark, lapper og strimler*, by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff and Johnny Kondrup, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad 1996, pp. 30-42, 64-65, 69.

The period of familiarity between the two men lasted until 1849. In that year Nielsen published his lectures on the life of Christ in which he criticized speculative philosophy along the same lines as Kierkegaard.¹⁰² In the same year Nielsen published a joint review of Kierkegaard's *Postscript* and Martensen's *Christian Dogmatics*.¹⁰³ It was in particular this review that alienated Kierkegaard. As in the work on the life of Christ, Nielsen presented a number of Kierkegaard's positions as if they were his own.¹⁰⁴ Yet what was worse in Kierkegaard's eyes was the fact that Nielsen's overt and straightforward criticism of Martensen demonstrated an ignorance of the strategy of indirect communication, which was of course so essential for Kierkegaard. This occasioned him to distance himself from Nielsen.¹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard's comments about Nielsen after this period are generally negative, although in the final number of *The Moment* he writes, "The only one who on occasion has said more or less true words about my significance is R. Nielsen."¹⁰⁶ After Kierkegaard's death, Nielsen continued to remain true to what he perceived to be Kierkegaard's views. He edited a volume of Kierkegaard's articles¹⁰⁷ and authored other essays on his person and his work.¹⁰⁸ From the late 1850's to his retirement in 1883, Nielsen was profoundly productive, penning a number of books on, among other things, philosophy, religion, art.

Another important advocate of Hegelianism in Denmark was the priest, Adolph Peter Adler (1812-69).¹⁰⁹ Adler was almost the same age as Kierkegaard, and his father, like Kierkegaard's, belonged to the *nouveau riche* in Copenhagen's high society. Adler began his studies in theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1832. In 1837 he traveled abroad to Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France. In Germany he was

¹⁰² Rasmus Nielsen *Evangelietroen og den moderne Bevidsthed. Forelæsninger over Jesu Liv*, Copenhagen 1849.

¹⁰³ Rasmus Nielsen *Magister S. Kierkegaards Johannes Climacus og Dr. H. Martensens Christelige Dogmatik. En undersøgende Anmeldelse*, Copenhagen 1849.

¹⁰⁴ *Pap. X 1 A* 343.

¹⁰⁵ *Pap. X 6 B* 83-102. See *LD* pp. 208-210 / *B&A* 1, pp. 228-230.

¹⁰⁶ *M*, p. 345 / *SVI* XIV, 354.

¹⁰⁷ Rasmus Nielsen *S. Kierkegaard's Bladartikler, med Bilag samlede efter Forfatterens Død, udgivne som Supplement til hans øvrige Skrifter*, Copenhagen 1857.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. Rasmus Nielsen "Om S. Kierkegaards 'mentale Tilstand'" in *Nordisk Universitet-Tidskrift* vol. 4, no. 1, 1858, pp. 1-29.

¹⁰⁹ For Kierkegaard's relation to Adler see: Carl Henrik Koch *En Flue på Hegels udødelige næse eller om Adolph Peter Adler og om Søren Kierkegaards forhold til ham*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag A/S 1990. Leif Bork Hansen *Søren Kierkegaards Hemmelighed og Eksistensdialektik*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Forlag 1994.

able to familiarize himself with Hegel's thought. He returned to Denmark in 1839, and on the basis of his studies abroad he wrote his dissertation, *The Isolated Subjectivity in its Most Important Forms*,¹¹⁰ which he completed in 1840, a year before Kierkegaard's dissertation. His official opponents at the oral defense were Sibbern and Martensen. Directly thereafter in Winter Semester 1840-41, he gave lectures on Hegel's philosophy which became the basis for his book, *Popular Lectures on Hegel's Objective Logic*.¹¹¹ This work was an important source for Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel's logic and the object of criticism in *The Concept of Anxiety*. In addition, Adler wrote reviews of the works on speculative logic by Heiberg and Rasmus Nielsen.¹¹² After his dissertation, Adler was appointed priest on the Danish island of Bornholm in 1841. Up until this point he had been a full-fledged Hegelian.

While many Danish intellectuals in the 1830's and '40's experienced a Hegelian period and then later came to reject Hegel due to one reason or another, this rejection was nowhere so dramatic as in the case of Adler. After his appointment as priest Adler claimed to have experienced a revelation, and this event marked his turn away from Hegelianism. He purported to have been visited by Christ personally in December of 1842. According to the account that Adler gives in the Preface to his collection, *Some Sermons*,¹¹³ Christ came to him one evening while he was writing and dictated sacred verses to him. Moreover, he was commanded by Christ to destroy his writings on Hegel's philosophy. Needless to say, these claims, once made public, were a great embarrassment to the Danish Church, which after some inquiries suspended and ultimately fired the priest. Adler continued to write on a number of other topics, but his days as a Hegelian and as a controversial public figure were over after this episode.

Kierkegaard knew Adler personally: they attended the same school at the same time, and both studied theology at the University of Copenhagen, Kierkegaard starting in 1830 and Adler a year later.

¹¹⁰ Adolph Peter Adler *Den isolerede Subjectivitet i dens vigtigste Skikkelser*, Copenhagen 1840.

¹¹¹ Adolph Peter Adler *Populaire Foredrag over Hegels objective Logik*, Copenhagen 1842.

¹¹² Adolph Peter Adler "J.L. Heiberg, Det logiske System, a) Væren og Intet, b) Vorden, c) Tilværen, i *Perseus* Nr. 2, Kjøbenhavn 1838" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 3, 1840, pp. 474-482. Adolph Peter Adler *En Anmeldelse, egentlig bestemt for Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, Copenhagen 1842.

¹¹³ Adolph Peter Adler *Nogle Prædikener*, Copenhagen 1843, pp. 3-4. See A, Supplement, pp. 339-340.

Kierkegaard followed closely the controversy surrounding Adler's suspension and dismissal by the Church. In Hans Brøchner's recollections of Kierkegaard, he recounts how after the revelation Adler came to visit Kierkegaard some time in the latter half of 1843.¹¹⁴ Kierkegaard was so taken by Adler that he planned a book on him which he began work on in the summer of 1846. This so-called *Book on Adler* was never published, perhaps out of respect or personal feeling for Adler, and was found among Kierkegaard's papers and eventually published posthumously. What fascinated Kierkegaard was what he perceived as the obvious contradiction between Adler's Hegelianism and his revelation, and this constitutes the centerpiece of Kierkegaard's analysis.

I have mentioned here the most important advocates of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark, but it would be misleading to give the impression that Danish Hegelianism consisted only of these few personalities. Indeed, there were a host of other thinkers in Denmark in the 1830's and '40's whose names were associated with Hegelianism at one time or another, names such as Carl Weis (1809-72), Peter Michael Stilling (1812-69), Andreas Frederik Beck (1816-61), Carl Emil Scharling (1803-77), Christian Fenger Christens (1819-55), Rudolf Varberg (1828-69), Ditlev Gothard Monrad (1811-87), and the brothers Frederik Christian Bornemann (1810-61) and Johan Alfred Bornemann (1813-90).

There is a tendency in Kierkegaard scholarship to convey the idea that Hegelian philosophy represented the scholarly *status quo* at the time and that the Danish academy was dominated by Hegelians. This is indeed sometimes the impression that one receives when reading Kierkegaard himself. But from the very presence of the critics, which constitute the subject of the next section, it is clear that Hegelianism never enjoyed a position of undisputed hegemony in Danish intellectual life. Moreover, apart from Heiberg, one cannot really speak of full-fledged Hegelians, let alone an intellectual community dominated by them. Indeed, while Heiberg exercised a great influence for a time in literary and dramatic criticism, he never held a university position in philosophy. As one intellectual historian concludes, "In spite of Heiberg's efforts, Hegel did not catch on in Denmark."¹¹⁵ A number

¹¹⁴ Hans Brøchner "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard," op. cit., § 20. English translation cited from *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., pp. 234-235.

¹¹⁵ Leif Grane "Det Teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," op. cit., p. 363. See also Skat Arildsen *Biskop Hans Lassen Martensen. Hans Liv, Udvikling og Arbejde*, op. cit., p. 163.

of Danish intellectuals passed through a brief Hegelian phase, but these phases were usually fairly short-lived, and the individuals involved never formed an organized or coherent school. Thus, one can hardly speak of Hegelianism as being a dominant school in Denmark during this or any other period. This said, I pass now from the advocates of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark to the critics.

II. The Critics of Hegel in Golden Age Denmark

After Heiberg, Martensen and others had introduced Hegel into academic life in Denmark, a handful of anti-Hegelians rose up in opposition to the new trend. Just as those thinkers usually assigned to the category "Hegelians" are not to be conceived as uncritical, unoriginal parrots of Hegel, so also those assigned to the category of "anti-Hegelians" cannot be said to have rejected Hegel's thought entirely. On the contrary, many of the so-called Hegel critics themselves experienced a Hegelian period. Moreover, many co-opted specific aspects of Hegel's thought in their mature views, even while criticizing other aspects. Thus, one must be cautious about the use of these general categories.

Among those usually classified as anti-Hegelian was Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785-1872), a jurist and philosopher at the University of Copenhagen.¹¹⁶ Sibbern was an interestingly ambivalent figure. He was profoundly influenced by German thought and from the earliest days had a number of essentially Hegelian proclivities, such as the desire to overcome traditional dualisms, e.g. freedom and necessity, individual and state, etc. But despite these seemingly Hegelian views, Sibbern is usually numbered among the Hegel critics in Denmark. He is particularly important because of both his personal relation to Kierkegaard and his role as the towering figure on the Danish philosophical scene of the day.

After completing his doctoral dissertation in Copenhagen in 1811, Sibbern made an extended trip to Germany where he came into contact with the leading minds of the age. At this time Hegel had yet to achieve any great reputation, and Fichte and Schelling were regarded as the major figures in the German philosophical milieu. Sibbern

¹¹⁶ See Harald Høffding "Frederik Christian Sibbern" in his *Danske Filosofer*, op. cit., pp. 97-117. Jens Himmelstrup *Sibbern*, Copenhagen: J.H. Schultz Forlag 1934. Poul Kallmoes *Frederik Christian Sibbern. Træk af en Dansk Filosofis Liv og Tænkning*, Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaards Forlag 1946.

returned to the University of Copenhagen in 1813 to assume a professorship. This was the beginning of a long and distinguished university career that would last until 1870. During his career he published major treatises on every area of philosophical inquiry.

Despite the fact that Sibbern has been consistently categorized as a Hegel critic, there are many signs, particularly in his early works, that indicate that he had a rather favorable opinion of Hegel's philosophy. For example, as early as 1822 (i.e. two years before Heiberg's *On Human Freedom* purportedly introduced Hegel into Denmark), Sibbern in his *On Knowledge and Enquiry* refers to Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* by way of illustration.¹¹⁷ Moreover, he alludes to the *Science of Logic*, calling it "both profound and penetrating."¹¹⁸

In 1825 Sibbern anonymously reviewed Heiberg's treatise on contingency.¹¹⁹ At the time Sibbern was already an established professor of philosophy, whereas Heiberg was just beginning to write philosophical works. This review, like *On Knowledge and Enquiry*, does not give the impression that its author is an anti-Hegelian. Sibbern briefly alludes to Heiberg's earlier treatise, *On Human Freedom*, in order to indicate its continuity with the work under review. The point of continuity is that both works are written from a Hegelian perspective:

The author shows himself in the present work, just as in the previous one, to be a resolute follower of Hegel's philosophy. He is not intimidated but perhaps rather attracted by its difficulty and has read his way well into it. We also believe him to be in a position to be able to give some excellent contributions to elucidate these speculations, which certainly deserve to be studied and pursued, and to make them more attractive than they are in Hegel's own difficult, rough, and rather unhappily expressed language.¹²⁰

The tone here is indicative of the measured criticism of the review. Sibbern alludes to Hegel's difficult style but unhesitatingly agrees that his philosophy is worthy of careful consideration. Moreover, it is clear that Sibbern welcomes Heiberg's attempts to explain Hegel's philosophy and to make it better known. In the body of the review Sibbern explicitly lauds Heiberg for his use of Hegel's speculative methodology. This short review, which shows a very positive disposition

¹¹⁷ Frederik Christian Sibbern *Om Erkjendelse og Granskning. Til Indledning i det akademiske Studium*, Copenhagen 1822, p. 21.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹¹⁹ [Anonymous] Frederik Christian Sibbern "Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet. Als Einleitung zu einer Theorie des Zufalls. Von Dr. J.L. Heiberg. Kopenhagen. Verlag von C.A. Reitzel. Druck von H.F. Popp. 1825. 30 Sider med Titelblad og alt" in *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende for 1825* no. 44, pp. 689-702.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 691.

towards both Heiberg and Hegel himself, stands in sharp contrast to Sibbern's later criticism.

In the series of articles published in 1829-30 under the title *Philosophical Review and Collection*, Sibbern quotes and refers to Hegel on a couple of occasions.¹²¹ In one passage he defends Hegel against unjust criticisms. It would be a mistake, he says,

to condemn Hegel on account of his dry, indeed graceless language and his difficult presentation without respecting the truly great value which lies in it and which in truth has naturally enough been very attractive to the speculative minds of the day, both the older and the younger ones, especially the latter, who in the richest period of the inner development of the Idea are entirely correct to find something as stimulating, as refreshing and delightful in the most abstract movements in the speculative train of thought as in poetry's soul-elevating, -expanding, and -liberating effects.¹²²

Here as in the review of Heiberg's treatise on contingency, Sibbern refers to Hegel's difficult style, but, while criticizing this style, he clearly is positively disposed towards the actual content of Hegel's thought. Needless to say, this encomium does not square with Sibbern being a tireless critic of Hegel.

In 1838 in the *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, Sibbern published a long review of the first number of Heiberg's aforementioned Hegelian journal, *Perseus*.¹²³ This work represents one of the major documents in the history of the Danish Hegel reception. In a letter Sibbern indicates that the long review was intended not just as a criticism of Heiberg's journal but as a general assessment of Hegel's philosophy.¹²⁴ Sibbern's reputation as anti-Hegelian comes primarily from this work. This review, which was longer than Heiberg's journal, was later in part republished as a monograph under the title, *Remarks and Investigations Primarily Concerning Hegel's Philosophy*.¹²⁵ In it Sibbern takes issue with any

¹²¹ Frederik Christian Sibbern *Philosophiskt Archiv og Repertorium* vols. 1-4, Copenhagen 1829-30; vol. 1, p. 5, pp. 25-26fn.

¹²² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 116.

¹²³ Frederik Christian Sibbern "Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1, Juni 1837. Kjøbenhavn. Reitzels Forlag. XIV og 264 S. 8. Priis 1 Rbd. 84 Skill. – (Med stadigt Hensyn til Dr. Rothes: *Læren om Treenighed og Forsoning. Et speculativt Forsøg i Anledning af Reformationsfesten.*)" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* vol. 19, 1838, Article I, pp. 283-360; Article II, pp. 424-460; Article III, pp. 546-582; 20, 1838, Article IV, pp. 20-60; Article V, pp. 103-136; Article VI, pp. 193-244; Article VII, pp. 293-308; Article VIII pp. 405-449.

¹²⁴ "Letter from Sibbern to Zeuthen," September 12, 1837 in *Breve fra og til F.C. Sibbern*, ed. by C.L.N. Mynster, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 192-193.

¹²⁵ Frederik Christian Sibbern *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser, fornemmelig betreffende Hegels Philosophie, betragtet i Forhold til vor Tid*, Copenhagen 1838.

number of things in Hegel's philosophy, i.e. his logic, his philosophy of religion, and his general philosophical methodology. Sibbern is particularly critical of Heiberg's criticism of what the latter believed to be the sad state of philosophy in Denmark and of the concomitant belief that Hegel's philosophy was urgently required to improve the situation.

As was mentioned, for all his anti-Hegelianism, Sibbern remained a somewhat ambivalent figure. For example, he had a notion of the harmony of the universe or the idea of God which corresponds rather straightforwardly to what Hegel called "absolute knowing" or "the absolute Idea." Moreover, he shared with Hegel an organic conception of the world and the notion of a developmental progression of concepts. Given Sibbern's many positive statements about Hegel and their profound agreement on many issues, one is led to the conclusion that what has been taken as his criticism of Hegel is in fact in large part a criticism of Heiberg. As was noted, Sibbern's only real anti-Hegelian treatise, indeed the one work from which he received the reputation for being anti-Hegelian, is his review of Heiberg's *Perseus*. But this work is primarily a criticism of Heiberg. While, to be sure, Sibbern indicates his disagreement with Hegel on individual points, he is careful to point out to the reader that Heiberg's presentation of Hegel is often incorrect and that Hegel's own position is much more reasonable than that presented by Heiberg. Sibbern calls Heiberg a dilettante in philosophy¹²⁶ and writes in the very first article of the review, "Indeed, I would hope that no one will make Professor Heiberg's Hegelian statements the foundation for his judgment of Hegel's philosophy. That would be to run the risk of doing a great injustice to Hegel."¹²⁷ The tone of this clearly indicates a respect for Hegel, despite whatever philosophical differences Sibbern might have had with him. Given Sibbern's early positive statements about Hegel and his later negative ones about both Hegel and Heiberg, one can perhaps infer that Sibbern, like Kierkegaard was particularly incensed at Heiberg's evangelizing for Hegelianism. That this comes to expression in a critical review of Heiberg's journal is no accident since the journal was intended as an organ for the promulgation of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark.

¹²⁶ Frederik Christian Sibbern "Perseus, *Journal for den speculative Idee*. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, vol. 19, 1838, Article I, p. 290. *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹²⁷ Frederik Christian Sibbern "Perseus, *Journal for den speculative Idee*. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1," op. cit., p. 335. *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, op. cit., p. 53.

Kierkegaard knew Sibbern personally and, as a young man, seems to have been on good terms with the popular teacher. Indeed, for a time Kierkegaard was a regular guest at the Sibberns' home. Sibbern seems also to have played the role of a sort of chaperon, at times accompanying Kierkegaard on his visits to Regine Olsen.¹²⁸ With respect to intellectual matters, Sibbern acted as mentor to him during the years of Kierkegaard's studies. Kierkegaard attended many courses which Sibbern offered on various subjects.¹²⁹ Sibbern was the first reader on Kierkegaard's dissertation committee and in this capacity advised the young candidate on the work. During his stay in Berlin, Kierkegaard wrote a letter to Sibbern which evinces both familiarity and warmth.¹³⁰ Although in time Kierkegaard became estranged from Sibbern,¹³¹ he seems to have shared his mentor's criticisms of Hegel. Indeed, many of Sibbern's criticisms of Hegel in the review of *Perseus* prefigure Kierkegaard's own. Nonetheless there were differences; for example, Kierkegaard clearly came to reject Sibbern's speculative approach to philosophy and did not share with Sibbern the search for a unity or harmony in the universe.

Also classified among the Hegel critics was Poul Martin Møller (1794-1838),¹³² a poet and professor of philosophy at the University of Christiania (today Oslo) and later, from 1830, in Copenhagen. Like Sibbern, Møller cannot properly be classified as a Hegel critic without qualification, for he was, even more so than Sibbern, ambivalent towards Hegel.¹³³ Like many intellectuals in Denmark, Møller experi-

¹²⁸ See *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit. 1996, p. 37.

¹²⁹ Valdemar Ammundsen *Søren Kierkegaards Ungdom. Hans Slægt og hans Udvikling*, Copenhagen: Universitetsstrykkeriet 1912, pp. 77-107.

¹³⁰ *LD*, p. 55 / *B&A* 1, p. 83. Cf also *LD*, p. 49 / *B&A* 1, pp. 71-73. *LD*, p. 51 / *B&A* 1, pp. 75-77. See also Hans Brøchner "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard," op. cit., § 35. English translation: *Encounters with Kierkegaard*, tr. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, op. cit., p. 241.

¹³¹ See *JP* 6, 6196 / *Pap.* IX A 493. *Pap.* VI B 201. *Pap.* X 1 A 446.

¹³² See F.C. Olsen "Poul Martin Møllers Levnet" in Møller's *Efterladte Skrifter* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 1839-43; vol. 3, pp. 1-115. Vilhelm Andersen *Poul Møller, hans Liv og Skrifter*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1894. Ludvig Daae "Fra Poul Møllers Liv som Professor i Christiania" in *Historiske Samlinger*, ed. by Den Norske Historiske Kildeskriftkommission, vol. 3, no. 1, 1908, pp. 1-20. Johannes Brøndum-Nielsen *Poul Møller Studier*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag 1940.

¹³³ For Møller's relation to Hegel, see Arne Löchen "Poul Møller og Hegels Filosofi" in *Nyt Tidsskrift, Ny Række* 3. Årgang, 1894-95, pp. 447-456. Uffe Andreasen *Poul Møller og Romanticismen*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1973, pp. 17-43. Vilhelm Andersen *Poul Møller, hans Liv og Skrifter*, 3rd edition, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1944, pp. 302-316, 359-372. See Harald Høffding "Poul Møller" in his *Danske Filosofer*, op. cit., pp. 119-121.

enced a period in which he was infatuated by Hegel. He made a study of Hegel during his time in Christiania, and it was when he returned to Copenhagen in 1830 that his pro-Hegel period can be said to begin. During this time he and Heiberg seem to have been generally regarded as Denmark's foremost representatives of Hegelianism.¹³⁴ Indeed, one commentator from the period suggests that Møller was the first Hegelian in Denmark.¹³⁵

Møller's course from 1834-35, published posthumously under the title *Lectures on the History of Ancient Philosophy*, is written in a Hegelian tone. For example, in his Introduction he calls the history of philosophy, "the history of human consciousness."¹³⁶ There he lauds Hegel as follows: "With extraordinary genius and unusual learning, Hegel strove to grasp reason's eternal history in the actual development of philosophy and has executed this plan...with a strength with which no other has executed it."¹³⁷ Predictably these lectures owe much to the first volume of Hegel's posthumous *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, which appeared in 1833.¹³⁸

But later Møller came to reject Hegel. Critical elements are already present as early as 1835 in Møller's review of Sibbern's work *On Poetry and Art*.¹³⁹ The break was complete with his long article in 1837, "Thoughts on the Possibility of Proofs of Human Immortality."¹⁴⁰ This work was a response to the discussions among the Ger-

¹³⁴ See Frederik Ludvig Bang Zeuthen *Et Par Aar af mit Liv*, Copenhagen 1869, p. 44.

¹³⁵ Hans Friedrich Helweg "Hegelianismen i Danmark" in *Dansk Kirketidende* vol. 10, no. 51, December 16, 1855, pp. 825-837, and December 23, 1855, pp. 841-852. See pp. 826-827.

¹³⁶ Poul Martin Møller "Forelæsninger over den ældre Philosophies Historie" in Møller's *Efterladte Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 284.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

¹³⁸ The three volumes of Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* appeared for the first time as a part of the first edition of Hegel's collected writings, which was published between 1832 and 1845 by Hegel's friends and students. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* vols. 1-3, ed. by Karl Ludwig Michelet, Berlin 1833-36; vols. 13-15 in *Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe* vols. 1-18, Berlin 1832-45.

¹³⁹ Poul Martin Møller "Om Poesie og Konst i Almindelighed, med Hensyn til alle Arter deraf, dog især Digte-, Maler-, Billedhugger- og Skuespillerkonst; eller: Foredrag over almindelig Æsthetik og Poetik. Af Dr. Frederik Christian Sibbern, Professor i Philosophien. Første Deel. Kiøbenhavn. Paa Forfatterens Forlag, trykt hos Fabritius de Tengnagel. 1834" in *Dansk Literatur-Tidende for 1835* no. 12, pp. 181-194; no. 13, pp. 205-209. (Reprinted in Møller's *Efterladte Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 105-126.)

¹⁴⁰ Poul Martin Møller "Tanker over Mueligheden af Beviser for Menneskets Udødelighed" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* vol. 17, Copenhagen 1837, pp. 1-72, 422-53. (Reprinted in Møller's *Efterladte Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 158-272.)

man Hegelians regarding the question of whether or not Hegel had a doctrine of personal immortality. Friedrich Richter (1807-56), in *Die Lehre von den letzten Dingen*,¹⁴¹ argued that Hegel denied the immortality of the soul as a mistaken belief, whereas the right Hegelian Karl Friedrich Göschel (1784-1861) argued that in fact proofs for the existence of God could be derived from Hegel's philosophy.¹⁴² Other leading figures such as Immanuel Hermann, the younger, Fichte (1797-1879) and Feuerbach were also involved in the debate. It was around this issue that the schools of right and left Hegelianism separated and took form. In the article Møller claims that nowhere in Hegel's philosophy can one find a doctrine of the personal immortality of the soul which is in harmony with that taught by Christianity. He thus argues, contrary to the right Hegelians, that Hegel's philosophy is not consistent with Christianity. Further, he argues, in a way that anticipates Kierkegaard, that speculative philosophy remains incomplete since it consists only of abstract concepts which cannot take account of individual experiences, which remain outside the system.

Møller's rejection of Hegel in this article was regarded by Heiberg, his comrade-in-arms, as an act of treason against Hegel's philosophy. In an article in the first number of *Perseus*, Heiberg refers to Møller anonymously as a deserter.¹⁴³ In response to Heiberg's comment, Sibbern in his review of *Perseus*, claims that it was impossible for such an active and original thinker as Møller to remain a Hegelian

¹⁴¹ Friedrich Richter *Die Lehre von den letzten Dingen*; vol. 1, *Eine wissenschaftliche Kritik aus dem Standpunct der Religion unternommen*, Breslau 1833; vol. 2, *Die Lehre von jüngsten Tage. Dogma und Kritik*, Berlin 1844.

¹⁴² Karl Friedrich Göschel *Von den Beweisen für die Unsterblichkeit der menschlichen Seele im Lichte der spekulativen Philosophie*, Berlin 1835.

¹⁴³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "Recension over Hr. Dr. Roth's *Treenigheds- og Forsonings-lære*" in *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee* no. 1, 1837, p. 33. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 41-42.) "I might add I know well that this utterly simple solution to the task will not satisfy everyone, in particular those who are interested in the most recent fermentation in philosophy. But it has still not been shown whether the striving, which is in itself laudable, among these most recent men of this movement, that is, their striving after progress beyond the present circle of philosophy, is not unwittingly a regress; whether the system, which they just left, does not contain what they now are looking for outside it, in which case they would have gone over the stream after water. Yet it does not seem that these deserters would ever come to make up their own corps; for their goal is too indeterminate, for if they also could name something or another for which they are searching, for example, a future world-view, then they cannot say anything about the way which leads there, but it is just that which is at issue in philosophy, which cannot be served by having its property on the moon."

for long.¹⁴⁴ In a footnote in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard himself describes Møller's relation to Hegelianism: "Poul Møller, when everything here at home was Hegelian, judged quite differently...for some time he first spoke of Hegel almost with indignation, until his wholesome, humorous nature made him smile, especially at Hegelianism."¹⁴⁵

Kierkegaard attended Møller's lectures and was by all accounts fond of him. He was attracted by Møller's poetical side and by his love for the Greek and Roman classics. It was Møller's interest in irony which apparently in part inspired Kierkegaard to write on the same theme for his dissertation.¹⁴⁶ Møller's premature death in 1838 robbed Denmark of one of its potentially greatest minds and Kierkegaard of an important mentor and ally. In 1844 Kierkegaard dedicated *The Concept of Anxiety* to his memory.¹⁴⁷ According to some biographers,¹⁴⁸ it was Møller's criticism of Kierkegaard's general polemical attitude, that helped the young Kierkegaard out of what has been regarded as his period of perdition between 1836 and 1838. In a draft of the dedication to *The Concept of Anxiety*, Møller is referred to as "the mighty trumpet of my awakening."¹⁴⁹ Scholars have noted that Møller's influence on many aspects of Kierkegaard's thought has been profound,¹⁵⁰ and it seems almost inconceivable that Møller's assessment of Hegel was not important for Kierkegaard's developing views.

¹⁴⁴ Frederik Christian Sibbern "Perseus, *Journal for den speculative Idee*. Udgiven af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Nr. 1," op. cit., Article I, p. 336. Frederik Christian Sibbern, *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁴⁵ *CUP* 1, p. 34 fn. / *SKS* 7, 41 fn.

¹⁴⁶ Among Møller's posthumous works there is a fragment entitled, "On the Concept of Irony," which was written in 1835 and published in the second edition of his posthumous writings. Poul Martin Møller "Om Begrebet Ironie" in *Efterladte Skrifter* vols. 1-6, ed. by Christian Winther, F.C. Olsen, Christen Thaarup and L.V. Petersen, Copenhagen 1848-50; vol. 3, 1848, pp. 152-158. Socratic irony is also treated in his "Forelæsninger over den ældre Philosophies Historie" in *Efterladte Skrifter* vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 1839-43; vol. 3, pp. 363ff. See *SKS* 17, 225-226, DD:18.

¹⁴⁷ See detailed account in H.P. Rohde "Poul Møller" in *Kierkegaard's Teachers*, ed. by Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup, op. cit., pp. 91-108. See also Frithiof Brandt *Den unge Søren Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaards Forlag 1929, pp. 336-446.

¹⁴⁸ Frithiof Brandt *Den unge Søren Kierkegaard*, op. cit., p. 432. Walter Lowrie *Kierkegaard*, London: Oxford University Press 1938, pp. 143-149.

¹⁴⁹ *CA*, Supplement, p. 178 / *Pap.* V B 46.

¹⁵⁰ E.g. Poul Lübcke "Det ontologiske program hos Poul Møller og Søren Kierkegaard" in *Filosofiske Studier* vol. 6, 1983, pp. 127-147.

One of the most important and the most consistent of the Hegel critics in Denmark was the theologian and Bishop Jakob Peter Mynster (1775-1854).¹⁵¹ Hegel's philosophy never occupied a central place in his thought, but Mynster did play an important role as a critic of some of Hegel's Danish followers. Mynster was awarded his degree in theology at the extraordinarily young age of nineteen. He then worked for some years as a private tutor, during which time he read the German philosophers, Kant, Schelling and Jacobi. In 1802 he became a pastor and received his first parish in a rural town in southern Zealand. In 1811 he was awarded a prestigious position as curate in Copenhagen's Cathedral Church of Our Lady. Thus, by the time the issue of Hegelianism reached Denmark, Mynster was already an established priest and theologian.¹⁵² Unlike the other Danish scholars mentioned here, Mynster was of the same generation as Hegel himself and thus experienced first-hand the rise of Hegelian philosophy.

He seems to have been suspicious of the new intellectual trend from the very beginning, even if he only spoke out on the subject later. In his autobiography he describes the new movement and his reaction to it as follows:

Philosophy had been dormant in Germany for many years; now with Hegel it was again brought to life, but in a form in which it did not attract me at all, regardless of the extraordinary talents the originator had. Since Hegel's appointment in Berlin, his philosophy had become regarded as the end all, and the arrogance of his followers knew no limits. I was indeed convinced that it would not last long, but I was disappointed in the expectation that it would all be over with Hegel's death, for on the contrary it only really began to be dominant then.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ For Mynster's biography and thought see the following: Jakob Peter Mynster *Meddelelser om mit Levnet*, ed. by F.J. Mynster, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1854, 1884. O. Waage *J.P. Mynster og de filosofiske Bevægelser paa hans Tid i Danmark*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1867. C.L.N. Mynster (ed.) *Nogle Blade af J.P. Mynster's Liv og Tid*, Copenhagen 1875. C.L.N. Mynster *Nogle Erindringer og Bemærkninger om J.P. Mynster*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag 1877. Niels Munk Plum *Jakob Peter Mynster som Kristen og Teolog*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad 1938. Jens Rasmussen *J.P. Mynster. Sjællands Biskop 1834-1854*, Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag 2000. Bruce Kirmmse "Piety and Good Taste: J.P. Mynster's Religion and Politics" in his *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, op. cit., pp. 169-197.

¹⁵² For an account of Mynster's view of Hegelianism see O. Waage "Hegelianismens Fremkomst i Danmark og Mynsters Forhold til denne Retning" in his *J.P. Mynster og de filosofiske Bevægelser paa hans Tid i Danmark*, op. cit., pp. 104-117.

¹⁵³ Jakob Peter Mynster *Meddelelser om mit Levnet*, op. cit., 1884, p. 239.

Here Mynster indicates his irritation with Hegel's followers, while admitting his admiration for Hegel himself. But generally he seems to regard his own role as something of a spectator to the whole matter.

Mynster's anti-Hegelian polemics began with an article from 1833 entitled, "On Religious Conviction,"¹⁵⁴ in which he took issue with Heiberg's *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. Mynster concentrated his critique on Heiberg's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion, criticizing Heiberg for reading Hegel as a secular thinker. Thus, the criticism is ultimately of Heiberg's interpretation of Hegel and not of Hegel himself. Mynster quotes Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in order to show that to Hegel's mind Christianity is still true and influential, contrary to Heiberg's claims. (This provides an instructive example for the difficulty of assigning the various thinkers to the one or the other side of the Hegel debate. Here the purportedly anti-Hegelian Mynster defends Hegel's philosophy of religion against the claims made by the purportedly pro-Hegelian Heiberg.) Shortly after this debate, in 1834 Mynster was appointed bishop and spent the rest of his life in this service.

Mynster, who was of course personally acquainted with both Heiberg and Martensen, was the instigator of the aforementioned debate about Hegel's criticism of the law of excluded middle. The debate began in 1839 with the publication of his article, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism,"¹⁵⁵ in which he responds to the claim of the Hegelian, Johan Alfred Bornemann, that rationalism and supernaturalism are antiquated standpoints.¹⁵⁶ In his initial response Mynster concentrates on demonstrating that the positions of rationalism and supernaturalism are in fact still relevant in contemporary theology. At the end of his article he notes that the two views, being opposites, cannot both be antiquated at the same time since if the one were antiquated then the other would then be prevailing. Thus, unless the law of excluded middle is no longer valid, then at least one of these views must still be alive and well. In this context Mynster refers to Hegel's criticism of the law of excluded middle and his claim that opposites can be medi-

¹⁵⁴ Jakob Peter Mynster "Om den religiøse Overbevisning" in *Dansk Ugeskrift* vol. 3, no. 76-77, 1833, pp. 241-258. (Reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter* vols. 1-6, Copenhagen 1852-57; vol. 2, pp. 73-94.)

¹⁵⁵ Jakob Peter Mynster "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 1, 1839, pp. 249-268. (Reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 95-115.)

¹⁵⁶ Johan Alfred Bornemann "Af Martensen: *de autonomia conscientiae. Sui humanae*" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 1, 1839, pp. 1-40. See p. 3.

ated. Mynster does little more than sketch Hegel's position and note his disagreement with it, and with this the article ends.

This article evoked the responses, mentioned above, from Heiberg and Martensen, who felt called upon to come to Hegel's defense. In 1842 Mynster took up the issue again in what purported to be a review article of two related works about the issue by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841)¹⁵⁷ and the younger Fichte.¹⁵⁸ Mynster's article, later for the sake of simplicity given the title, "On the Laws of Logic,"¹⁵⁹ examines in detail the laws of identity, contradiction and excluded middle in order to evaluate Hegel's criticisms. Mynster criticizes the Hegelian principles of mediation and *Aufhebung*, which eliminate strict distinctions, such as that between rationalism and supernaturalism in theology. He makes a defense of the Aristotelian law of excluded middle against Hegel's criticism.

Despite what seems to be a fundamental disagreement with Hegelianism, Mynster never dedicated a large portion of his energy to combatting it.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, he did not view himself as a major critic of Hegel. In his autobiography he describes his overall relation to Hegelian philosophy as follows:

[Hegelianism] was the one aspect of the age which left me cold and showed me how little I, as long as this trend lasted, could expect to find an entry with my scholarly efforts, which in no way would fit with the prevailing tone. I felt neither the inclination nor the ability to step forth to battle against the Hegelian philosophy. I only engaged in a few skirmishes, which, however, were perhaps not wholly without effect. Thus, in 1833 on occasion of a remark by Heiberg, I wrote an article, "On Religious Conviction" (*Dansk Ugeskrift* III, 241); but it did not evoke any further treatises. Only several years later in 1839 when, on occasion of a remark by another author, I wrote "Rationalism, Supernaturalism" (*Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* I, 249) did Heiberg and Martensen come forth as opponents, which again occasioned me, albeit after a few years, to write a book-review, "On the Laws of Logic" (*ibid.* VII, 325).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Johann Friedrich Herbart *De principio logico exclusi medii inter contradictoria non negligendo commentatio, qua ad audiendam orationem...invitat*, Göttingen 1833.

¹⁵⁸ Immanuel Hermann Fichte *De principiorum contradictionis, identitatis, exclusi tertii in logicis dignitate et ordine commentatio*, Bonn 1840.

¹⁵⁹ Jakob Peter Mynster "De principio logico exclusi medii inter contradictoria non negligendo commentatio, qua ad audiendam orationem...invitat. Jo. Fr. Herbart. Gotttingae 1833. 29 S. 8^o, *De principiorum contradictionis, identitatis, exclusi tertii in logicis dignitate et ordine commentatio*. Scripsit I.H. Fichte. Bonnae 1840. 31 S. 8^o" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* no. 7, 1842, pp. 325-352. (Reprinted as "Om de logiske Principer" in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 116-144.)

¹⁶⁰ For Mynster's view on Hegelianism see Leif Grane "Det Teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," op. cit., p. 360.

¹⁶¹ Jakob Peter Mynster *Meddelelser om mit Levnet*, op. cit., (1884), pp. 240-241.

It is perhaps something of an overstatement to cast him in the role of an outspoken Hegel critic, especially given the fact that his anti-Hegelian *corpus* amounts to only three essays, and by far the better part of these is directed against Heiberg and Bornemann. What is, however, characteristic of Mynster's position *vis-à-vis* Hegel is his consistency. Unlike most of the other thinkers mentioned here, Mynster never had a Hegelian period but rather seems to have rejected Hegel's philosophy from the beginning and never to have substantially modified his opinion.

Kierkegaard knew Mynster from his earliest childhood and was confirmed by him in 1828.¹⁶² His father was moved by Mynster's sermons, which he attended regularly. Kierkegaard himself also went to hear Mynster and seems to have maintained a favorable opinion of him until 1838 when his father died. There is evidence that individual analyses in *Either/Or*, *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* are intended to support Mynster's position in the debate about the principle of mediation. Throughout the years Kierkegaard became more and more estranged from Mynster, who embodied for him the prototypical representative of the official Church of Denmark, which in his view departed greatly from the Christianity of the New Testament. Despite this estrangement, Kierkegaard remained on more or less cordial terms with Mynster throughout his life, often paying him visits and sending him his newly published works. Kierkegaard's criticism was tacit during Mynster's lifetime, but when Mynster died in 1854, neither politeness nor discretion remained to temper it any longer. In the article entitled, "Was Bishop Mynster a Witness to the Truth,"¹⁶³ Kierkegaard begins his public criticism of Mynster which became increasingly bitter in a series of essays.

III. Kierkegaard and the Danish Hegelians

The gallery of personalities and events mentioned here is important for an understanding of Kierkegaard's picture of Hegel since he followed the debates in Denmark surrounding Hegelianism in conjunction with or in lieu of reading the primary texts. Thus, the picture that

¹⁶² LD, p. 4 / B&A 1, p. 4.

¹⁶³ "Var Biskop Mynster et 'Sandhedsvidne,' et af 'de rette Sandhedsvidner' – er dette Sandhed?" in *Fædrelandet* no. 295, December 18, 1854; M, pp. 3-8 / SVI XIV, 5-10.

he received was largely shaped by these discussions which were in the public eye at the time. Figures such as Martensen and Heiberg are thus of crucial importance for Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel since it was their interpretation of Hegel and their discussion of the consequences of Hegel's philosophy that Kierkegaard became familiar with. Often what Kierkegaard criticizes as "Hegelian" is in fact a specific appropriation or misappropriation of Hegel by people like them. Likewise, the criticisms put forth by Sibbern, Møller and Mynster, by pointing to controversial issues in different aspects of Hegel's thought, offered a model of critique for the young Kierkegaard. Thus, an appreciation of the context of the debate about Hegelianism in Denmark that reigned in Kierkegaard's time is imperative if one wishes to understand correctly Kierkegaard's view of Hegel and if one is not to assume uncritically that what he says about Hegelian philosophy, as he knew it, is the same as what is to be found in the writings of Hegel himself.

In his article, "Hegelianism in Denmark" from shortly after Kierkegaard's death, Hans Friedrich Helweg (1816-1901) lists the common set of names associated with Danish Hegelianism. Somewhat surprisingly, Kierkegaard plays a central role in his account. Helweg notes the ambiguity of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel as follows: "I have heretofore not mentioned S. Kierkegaard in this overview of Hegelianism in Denmark, and yet he stands in the most intimate relation to it, although one can indeed be in doubt about whether one should say that he belonged to it or rather that he rejected it, and to what extent the end of his life was in accordance with the beginning of his career."¹⁶⁴ Here Helweg correctly notes that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel and Hegelianism is not an easy matter to form a final judgment about. It is ambiguous, contradictory and deeply differentiated. Moreover, Helweg implies that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel changed over the course of his life. This is in accordance with the thesis of Helweg's article, namely, "Hegelianism came to an end in Kierkegaard, and yet he never completely rejected Hegel."¹⁶⁵

At first Helweg's comments might strike one as unexpected since one is accustomed to thinking of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel as being one that is wholly unambiguous, i.e. as being wholly negative. But after this brief account of the reception of Hegel's philosophy in

¹⁶⁴ Hans Friedrich Helweg "Hegelianismen i Danmark" in *Dansk Kirketidende* vol. 10, no. 51, December 16, 1855, p. 829.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 829.

Denmark, one can see that this history of reception is itself full of ambiguity. On the one hand, it is almost impossible to assert without qualification that anyone, even Heiberg, Hegel's most enthusiastic follower, was straightforwardly a Hegelian. So-called Hegelians, such as Martensen, rejected the label with some justice. For virtually all of the purported Hegelians, the period of their pro-Hegel affiliation was short-lived, and, as they matured intellectually, they came to reject Hegel's philosophy. On the other hand, the purported critics of Hegel, such as Sibbern, were profoundly influenced by certain aspects of Hegel's thought. Many of the critics, such as Møller, themselves had a Hegelian period. Even the most consistent anti-Hegelian, Mynster, admits that he has great respect for Hegel himself, although he disdains the excesses of some of Hegel's followers. Given all this, it is highly misleading to speak of Hegel advocates and Hegel critics as if these were two straightforward and unambiguous categories. Instead it is better to speak of the general discussion of the reception of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark and to resist the urge to place the individual figures into neat categories, which are invariably misleading.

The ambiguity in the reception of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark can be used as a clue for understanding Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. Given that most of the leading names in Danish intellectual life of the period were all quite taken with Hegel's philosophy for a period and then came to reject it as their thought developed further, it seems quite plausible that Kierkegaard as well could conceivably have experienced the same development. His own teachers and mentors, Heiberg, Møller and Sibbern were all highly influenced by Hegel; it seems almost inconceivable that this positive influence would not also have been formative for Kierkegaard. Later when some of these thinkers came to reject Hegel, their criticisms were carefully studied by the young Kierkegaard, who then reformulated them in accordance with his own intellectual agenda. It is thus conceivable that Kierkegaard too came to reject the Hegelian trend in the same manner as the others. All of this points to a development in his thought and not to a single static relation to Hegel.