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Kierkegaard: A Transitional Figure from German Idealism to Existentialism

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Existentialism is usually understood as a twentieth-century school of thought made famous by figures such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. Søren Kierkegaard is often hailed as the father of existentialism or categorized as an existentialist *avant la lettre*. During his lifetime German Idealism was still an active philosophical movement with contemporary thinkers such as Schelling, Schopenhauer and Trendelenburg. Thus from the perspective of the development of the history of philosophy from the school of German Idealism to that of existentialism, Kierkegaard occupies a special position (Stewart 2003, pp. 618–622). His first-hand acquaintance with, for example, Schelling and members of the Hegel school gave him an intimate familiarity with the key doctrines, methodologies, and insights of this school. His criticisms of it, for example, as being overly abstract and neglecting the lived experience of the individual were frequently echoed by the later existentialists.

In the present article, I wish to argue that, due to the special historical position that he occupied, he can be seen as representing *in persona* the transition from German Idealism to existentialism. Despite the fact that he is usually

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categorized as a member of the existentialist school, there are clear elements of his thought that can be traced back to the German idealists even though he develops them in his own unique manner. He thus represents an important transitional figure in the history of philosophy who defies unambiguous classification. The implication here is that the traditional view of him as a straightforward existentialist or as a forerunner of existentialism is one-sided and misses an important dimension of his thought.

A word of caution is in order here at the start. Historians of philosophy who try to make sense of entire periods and long stretches of time invariably have recourse to certain labels. Given the difficulty of their task of summarizing a large number of heterogenous ideas from many diverse thinkers, this is an understandable and even necessary procedure. It seems to make sense to categorize different thinkers as belonging to the one or the other school of thought. However, with the assignment of individual thinkers to large rubrics a distortion occurs which one needs to be wary of. Obviously no complex or original thinker can be reduced to a simple label. While every undergraduate *knows* that Kierkegaard was an existentialist, the Danish philosopher of course never conceived of himself in this manner. He did not define himself in terms of a school of thought that would only be readily identifiable a century or so after his death. There is thus a kind of anachronism that arises from associating him with the existentialist movement, strictly speaking.

Moreover, even on its own terms, existentialism itself is so diverse, that during its heyday, there was dispute about what exactly it stood for. It proved impossible to identify the key doctrines that were shared by all its theorists. Many thinkers who were commonly associated with the movement explicitly rejected the label. Thus the idea of existentialism as a coherent or circumscribable body of thought seemed impossible. Rather, the term simply came to designate loosely a number of thinkers who were occupied with common themes, such as freedom, alienation, and anxiety.

Although Kierkegaard has traditionally been associated with existentialism, recent scholarship has called this into question (Stewart 2011c; Söderquist 2015). While there can be no doubt that the later exponents of existentialism such as Heidegger (McCarthy 2011; Thonhauser 2011), Sartre (Hackel 2011), de Beauvoir (Green and Green 2011), and Camus (Stan 2011) were in some ways inspired by Kierkegaard and appropriated some of his ideas, it is unclear whether he would accept the directions in which they took his thought. Indeed, the very point that Sartre identifies as the defining dogma of the school (Sartre 1948, pp. 26–30), namely, the rejection of essentialism, would be problematic for Kierkegaard (Hong 1997, p. 8). Sartre's most extensive direct statement on Kierkegaard was his essay "Kierkegaard: The Singular

Universal" (Sartre 1979, pp. 141–169). However, this piece is overly focused on some clichés concerning Kierkegaard's biography and offers considerably less philosophical substance than one would wish and expect. Given all of this, it would be prudent to proceed with caution and refrain as much as possible from bandying about labels. Instead, we would like to be as specific as possible in determining which ideas Kierkegaard found valuable in the thought of the German idealists and which ones he was keen to dismiss or criticize.

With regard to Kierkegaard's association with existentialism, a historical note should be added. His work became known outside Denmark only around the turn of the century when German translations began to appear (Schulz 2009). At that time he was studied by German writers and theologians long before existentialism became a household word. When existentialism began to establish itself as a school during the Second World War and immediately thereafter, it was exposed to criticism from different sides. Its spiritual leaders such as Sartre and Camus reacted by trying to legitimize the movement by showing that it was something genuinely philosophical. They thus highlighted figures from the past, such as Kierkegaard, and dubbed them forerunners of their school.[1] Although there are many reasons to call this claim into question, most historians of philosophy have simply followed this categorization of Kierkegaard uncritically despite the fact that it was somewhat ideologically motived at the time. Most commentators presumably thought that if the existentialists themselves said that they were influenced by Kierkegaard, they must have known what they were talking about. Surely they knew their sources better than anyone else. This general claim, however, prevented historians of ideas from investigating the matter further in order to determine precisely what the points of influence were. There can be no doubt that the association of Kierkegaard with existentialism played an important role in the reception of his thought and served to make him better known internationally than he had ever been before (Stewart 2009, pp. 431–450). However, there was also a downside to this since some of the dubious views of the school, such as Sartre's irrationalism or relativism, were immediately ascribed to him (MacIntyre 1981, pp. 39–43). This caused a backlash in Kierkegaard studies, as scholars rushed to defend him and portray him as a thinker who still values and respects the power of human reason (Evans 1992; Bogen 1961). All of this leads us too far away from the task at hand, but suffice it to say that the association of Kierkegaard with existentialism is a far more complex issue than is usually assumed.

In what follows I will pursue my task by first exploring Kierkegaard's explicitly demonstrable reading and use of the leading figures of the German idealist

movement. This will help us to identify specifically which strands of their thought he found either valuable or worthy of criticism. Then in the next section I will try to determine what, if any, elements of idealism as such can be found in Kierkegaard's thought. I will argue that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Kierkegaard is committed to some form of idealism to some extent.

1 Kierkegaard and the Individual German Idealists

Kierkegaard read German fluently, and German culture in many different areas, such as literature, criticism, theology, had a profound influence on him (Stewart 2019). He had an extensive interest in Germanophone philosophy and was familiar with the writings of the leading German philosophers from the past, such as Leibniz (Løkke and Waaler 2009), Jacobi (Rasmussen 2009), and Lessing (Thompson 2009). Moreover, Kierkegaard was engaged in a wide range of discussions surrounding German philosophy and theology in his own day (Stewart 2011b). He refers to the works of thinkers, such as Philipp Marheineke (Schulz 2007b), Carl Daub (Stewart 2007g), Johann Eduard Erdmann (Bitter 2007), Karl Rosenkranz (Schulz 2007a), Franz von Baader (Thulstrup 1982; Koslowski 2007), I. H. Fichte (Rosenau 2007; Schreiber 2013), Heinrich Gustav Hotho (Barfoed 1967; Grage 2008), David Friedrich Strauss (Pattison 2007), Ludwig Feuerbach (Czakó 2007), and Bruno Bauer (James and Moggach 2007). It is not possible to treat all of these figures here, nor it is necessary since not all of them are necessarily counted as belonging to the tradition of German Idealism, strictly speaking. Instead, I will confine myself to an overview of Kierkegaard's reading and use of the main idealist philosophers from this time.

Although much of the early research in Kierkegaard studies cast him as an opponent of most any form of systematic German philosophy (for example, Thulstrup 1967), more recent studies have demonstrated that his philosophical interests included all of the main thinkers traditionally associated with German Idealism (Gyenge 1996; Hühn 2009; Fremstedal 2015; Stewart 2007c, 2015b; Hühn and Schwab 2013).[2] This conclusion is clearly vindicated when we gain an overview of the many concrete examples of the positive influence that these figures exerted on Kierkegaard.

1.1 Kant

Kierkegaard's relation to Kant has been explored in some detail in a handful of works in the secondary literature (Green 1992, 2007; Fendt 1990; Phillips and Tessin 2000; Kosch 2006; Stern 2012; Fremstedal 2014). While there is of course some debate about key issues, there is a general consensus that Kant played an important role especially with respect to Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* and "Purity of Heart" from *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. Much of the literature thus focuses on the connection between Kant and Kierkegaard in the field of ethics (Verstrynge 2004; Knappe 2004; Rapic 2007; Benbassat 2012).

Kierkegaard owned copies of Kant's key works, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Critique of Judgment*, as well as the first three volumes of the collected edition of *Immanuel Kant's vermischte Schriften*, and there is evidence that he was familiar with other Kantian works as well.[3] However, Kierkegaard only quotes directly from *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?," and *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the latter of which might also be a quotation from the article "Perpetual Peace" (Green 1992, pp. 9–31). The degree to which Kierkegaard was apparently inspired by Kant goes well beyond the relatively few explicit references to him that can be found in the Kierkegaardian *corpus*. Ronald M. Green has referred to this as Kierkegaard's "hidden debt" to Kant (Green 1992, p. xviii). Green suggests that there was some kind of anxiety of influence at work, and Kierkegaard was thus reluctant to acknowledge explicitly the full extent of his use of Kant.

It has been pointed out that Kierkegaard seems amenable to Kant's critique of the metaphysical approach to religion (Fremstedal 2015, p. 41). Kant argued that it is impossible to know the objects of religion such as God and immortality since they transcend human experience. Kant can thus be said to defend a subjective approach to religious belief, which he claimed does not constitute objective, theoretical knowledge (*Wissen*) but instead represents faith (*Glaube*), that is justified on subjective, practical (moral) grounds (cf. the Canon of Pure Reason). In works such as the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard also performs his own critique of the faculty of reason, by defining and circumscribing the realm of what he calls "objective knowing," that is, the sphere of science and discursive thought. Contrary to the tradition of Christian apologetics, he claims that nothing that comes from the sphere of objective knowing can have any relevance for Christian faith. While there is no exact pendant in Kant to Kierkegaard's special notion of subjective faith, it

might be argued that the Dane was inspired by an appreciation of the limits of human reason as determined by Kant.

Along these same lines, in the *Philosophical Fragments* (*SKS* 4, pp. 242–252/*PF*, pp. 37–48), Kierkegaard's criticism of the proofs for the existence of God might well be taken to have had their point of departure in Kant, who is known for his famous analyses of these traditional proofs in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and other texts. Kierkegaard hails Kant for his "honest" approach to the limitations of human knowing (*SKS* 6, p. 142/*SLW*, p. 152) in contrast to the overly enthusiastic views of the Hegelians. In a journal entry Kierkegaard also refers to Kant's doctrine of radical evil, which he criticizes for not understanding the nature of the paradox as a category (*SKS* 20, pp. 88–89; NB:125/*KJN* 4, p. 88). In another journal Kierkegaard likewise criticizes Kant's conception of autonomy (*SKS* 23, p. 45, NB15:66/*KJN* 7, pp. 42–43). There are thus a number of scattered references to individual points in Kant that can provide the basis of a general interpretation, but much of the work is left to the interpreter.

1.2 Fichte

It has also been argued that Kant's successor Johann Gottlieb Fichte was an important figure for Kierkegaard (Kangas 2007; Fremstedal 2015, pp. 44–46; O'Neill Burns 2017), although direct references to him in Kierkegaard's *corpus* are rare. Kierkegaard owned a copy of Fichte's collected works, edited by the philosopher's son Immanuel Hermann Fichte.[4] Unfortunately, Kierkegaard gives no extended or systematic assessment of Fichte's philosophy, and so scholars have tended to try to focus on conceptual similarities in their thought.

The longest sustained account of Fichte in Kierkegaard's writings comes in *The Concept of Irony* (*SKS* 1, pp. 308–321/*CI*, pp. 272–286). Here the Danish philosopher follows Hegel by seeing Fichte as the forerunner of Romantic thinkers such as Friedrich von Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Solger. They are said to have appropriated Fichte's theory of subjectivity for their own purposes. Specifically, they have taken his abstract analysis out of its original context in epistemology and have applied it in the context of concrete life in the actual world. This results in the views of Romantic irony which are universally critical of bourgeois life and contemporary ethics in society. Here Kierkegaard again follows Hegel and criticizes Fichte's theory of the self, the I = I, as overly abstract. According to Kierkegaard's view, Fichte's conception of the self-positing ego is merely an abstract principle that lacks all content. This criticism is

repeated in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (*SKS* 7, p. 180/*CUP1*, p. 197).[5]

Kierkegaard also refers critically to Fichte's theory of repentance (*SKS* 4, p. 421/*CA*, p. 118; *SKS* 6, p. 438/*SLW*, p. 476). But a closer examination of the matter seems to suggest that this is not a reference to Fichte's own work but rather a somewhat misleading presentation of it by Kierkegaard's Danish contemporary Hans Lassen Martensen (Kangas 2007, pp. 73–74). Perhaps more significant is Kierkegaard's reference to Fichte in *The Sickness unto Death* (*SKS* 11, p. 147/*SUD*, p. 31). The passage in question seems to show an appreciation of Fichte's theory of subjectivity. According to Fichte's conception, the infinite imagination produces not just the forms of thought (as in Kant) but also the matter. Kierkegaard seems receptive to this idea of what he calls "infinitizing reflection" (*SKS* 11, p. 147/*SUD*, p. 31).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the problem of the proper beginning of philosophy was a key issue that exercised a number of thinkers. This was an especially acute issue for the systematic philosophers in the tradition of German Idealism since it was natural to ask where the proper starting point was for any system. As is well known, Fichte attempted to establish such a foundational point with the self-positing ego, the I = I. With regard to this analysis, connections have been drawn to Kierkegaard's unpublished work *Johannes Climacus or De omnibus dubitandum est* (O'Neill Burns 2017). Kierkegaard portrays the naïve student Johannes Climacus contemplating the arguments of philosophers about this issue, and his use of terms such as "immediate consciousness" can be seen as an echo of Fichte's argument.

1.3 Schelling

The importance of Schelling for Kierkegaard has been the subject of quite varying opinions (Gyenge 1996; Olesen 2003, 2007; Kosch 2006; Hennigfeld and Stewart 2003). One of the best-known episodes of Kierkegaard's reception of German Idealism is his attendance of the lectures of Schelling in Berlin in 1841–1842 (Stewart 2007b, pp. 641–678; Basso 2007). Kierkegaard's notes to Schelling's lectures appear in his *Notebook 11* (*SKS* 19, pp. 305–367, Not11:1–42/*KJN* 3, pp. 303–366). These notes are often used as the point of departure for considerations of Schelling's influence on Kierkegaard. But, as is evinced by the books in his library, Kierkegaard was also clearly familiar with Schelling's written works from the different periods, and so the question of influence cannot be confined to the Berlin lectures.[6] On the whole, there is no detailed account of Schelling's philosophy in Kierkegaard's works, and thus, as

was the case with Fichte, commentators are left to try to speculate about their relation based on scattered individual passages.

It is not easy to assess the importance of Schelling's Berlin lectures for Kierkegaard since Kierkegaard's notes are generally confined to recording what Schelling said. They thus represent Schelling's thought and not Kierkegaard's own. With regard to these lectures, it has been argued that Schelling's emphasis on actuality and his criticism of Hegel's philosophy for abstraction was a key point of inspiration for Kierkegaard (Stewart 2011d). However, despite his initial enthusiasm, it was precisely on this point that Kierkegaard became disappointed with Schelling since as the lectures progressed, it became abundantly clear that Schelling's notion of actuality was as abstract as anything found in Hegel. Kierkegaard thus felt duped by being misled by Schelling's use of the term, a point which is referred to in *Either/Or* (*SKS* 2, p. 41/*EO1*, p. 32).[7]

The two published works in Kierkegaard's *corpus* that refer to Schelling most often are *The Concept of Anxiety* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. With regard to the former Kierkegaard alludes to Schelling's Berlin lectures and the distinction made there between negative and positive philosophy (*SKS* 4, p. 328n/*CA*, p. 21n). Schelling uses the term "negative philosophy" as a part of his critical campaign against Hegel. A consistent point of criticism in Kierkegaard's work is what he refers to as movement in logic. This is usually taken to be a reference to Hegel's dialectical analysis of the categories in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard discusses this briefly, and in this context he refers to Schelling (*SKS* 4, p. 337n/*CA*, p. 30n). These references seem a bit *ad hoc*, but the more substantive point for the theme of Kierkegaard's work is the issue of freedom and hereditary sin (*SKS* 4, pp. 363–64n/*CA*, p. 59n; see also *SKS* 4, p. 416/*CA*, p. 114; *SKS* 4, p. 437/*CA*, p. 136). Schelling was of course known for his early work, *On Human Freedom*, which Kierkegaard seems to draw on. It will be noted that this work belongs to the early Schelling and not the Schelling of the Berlin lectures.

The references to Schelling in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* are generally confined to the issue of the concept of intellectual intuition. Kierkegaard refers to this concept from Schelling as a point of contrast with Hegel's speculative method (*SKS* 7, pp. 102–103/*CUP1*, p. 105; *SKS* 7, p. 139n/*CUP1*, p. 150n; *SKS* 7, p. 306/*CUP1*, p. 335; *SKS* 4, p. 319/*CA*, p. 11). But Kierkegaard (or if one prefers, his pseudonymous author) is critical of both notions. Here Lessing's image of a leap is hailed as a more appropriate understanding of Christian faith than what can be found in the epistemology of either Schelling or Hegel.

1.4 Hegel

Of the German idealists, it was clearly Hegel who interested Kierkegaard the most. There are considerably more references and allusions to Hegel in Kierkegaard's writings than to any other German philosopher. During Kierkegaard's time there was in Denmark a quite extensive reception of Hegel's philosophy (Stewart 2007a, b; Czakó 2012), and his writings are full of references to different figures, such as Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Hans Lassen Martensen,[8] who played a role in this. While Kierkegaard has traditionally been understood as a rabid Hegel critic (Thulstrup 1967), recent research has demonstrated a more positive relation (Taylor 1980; Grøn 1997; Stewart 2003, 2007e). The most convincing connections have been made between Hegel and the thought of the young Kierkegaard. Early works such as *From the Papers of One Still Living*, *The Concept of Irony*, and *Either/Or* demonstrate clear signs of a positive Hegelian influence. In this context one can also mention the many references to Hegel in the early journals (Stewart 2007e, pp. 98–100). In his library Kierkegaard owned copies of most of the volumes of the influential collected works edition of Hegel's writings that appeared after Hegel's death in 1831 (Hegel 1832–1845).[9] Kierkegaard also made use of the works of many of Hegel's students and followers. For example, when he was in Berlin, he attended the lectures of Karl Werder on Hegel's *Science of Logic* (Stewart 2007f).[10]

The earliest mention of Hegel in a published work by Kierkegaard appears in his first short monograph *From the Papers of One Still Living*. Here he discusses the issue of the beginning of philosophy, which was thematized above in connection with Fichte. There the young Kierkegaard describes the attempt to make a presuppositionless start to philosophy:

> If we meet this phenomenon in its most respectable form, as it appears in Hegel's great attempt to begin with nothing, it must both impress and please us: impress us, in view of the moral strength with which the idea is conceived, the intellectual energy and virtuosity with which it is carried out; please us, because the whole negation is still only a movement inside the system's own limits, undertaken precisely in the interest of retrieving the pure abundance of existence. (*SKS* 1, p. 17/*EPW*, p. 61)

The obvious reference here seems at first glance to be Hegel's attempt to determine the most basic category with which the system can begin. As is well known from the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, he begins with the category of pure being, which then is negated by

nothingness and then dialectically sublated in becoming, thus forming the first dialectical triad of the logic. In this account the young Kierkegaard has nothing but praise for this aspect of Hegel's thought and indeed his methodology in general (see *SKS* 1, p. 20/*EPW*, p. 64). It has been suggested that some of this praise can be conceived as directed towards Johan Ludvig Heiberg, who was interested in promoting Hegel's philosophy in Denmark (Stewart 2007a, pp. 123–134). Heiberg was a powerful figure in Danish cultural life, and for a time the young Kierkegaard courted his favor.

Kierkegaard's master's thesis, *The Concept of Irony* is clearly the work where he makes the most extensive use of Hegel (Stewart 1999, 2003, pp. 132–181; 2007b, pp. 564–634; 2011a). Citing extensively the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, the *Philosophy of Right* and Hegel's review of Solger's posthumous writings, Kierkegaard makes no attempt to hide his use of Hegel, who was a key source of inspiration for his main theme of the development of irony in the thought of Socrates and German Romanticism. In his analysis of irony in both of these contexts, Kierkegaard closely follows Hegel's accounts. The young Kierkegaard is thus clearly appreciative of Hegel as a historian of philosophy.

Hegel interprets Socrates as a key figure in the development not only of Greek philosophy but of Greek culture in general. While Greek life had long been dominated by a blind obedience to custom and tradition, Socrates enjoined his fellow Athenians to use their critical reason to investigate the world. This inevitably led to conflicts with traditional values and ways of thinking. This struck many people as something threatening since this new principle seemed to undermine everything that Greek life was based on. Most importantly, according to Hegel, Socrates introduced the principle of subjective freedom. Instead of blindly obeying what had been handed down by family or tradition, the individual had the right to decide for himself based on his own judgment.

It is in this context that Hegel interprets Socrates's *daimon*, the voice in his head that serves as his guide by warning him against doing certain things (*SKS* 1, p. 211/*CI*, p. 162). Hegel claims that the *daimon* represents the first inkling of the recognition of the value of subjectivity and individuality. In contrast to the oracles which were public, the *daimon* was an individual divinity that spoke only to Socrates. This implied that there was something divine in the human being. But the fact that the *daimon* spoke exclusively to Socrates struck his fellow Athenians as sacrilegious.

Kierkegaard follows Hegel in his analysis of Socrates as introducing a new principle into Greek life. For this reason, he quotes Hegel,[11] referring to Socrates as "the founder of morality" (*SKS* 1, p. 268/*CI*, p. 225). By

"morality" here he means the subjective right of the individual, which stands in opposition to what Hegel refers to as *Sittlichkeit* or the traditional ethical life of the community. This was a defining feature in Kierkegaard's subsequent thought. In *The Moment* Kierkegaard says explicitly that he made use of Socrates as a model for his own work (*SKS* 13, p. 405/*M*, p. 341; Himmelstrup 1924; Kloeden 1991; Daise 1999; Howland 2006; Stewart 2015a). This might seem surprising at first glance since Kierkegaard is known as a Christian thinker, and it would be fair to ask why he would take a pagan thinker as his model. The key is found in the fact that Socrates represents for Kierkegaard the principle of subjectivity. Although Socrates lived before Jesus, he developed a model for the importance of the individual subject that Kierkegaard developed in his subsequent writings in connection with Christian faith. Given this, in the context of Kierkegaard's development, the importance of *The Concept of Irony* as a work should not be underestimated (Söderquist 2007, pp. 201–230).

The issue of Socratic irony is the key in Kierkegaard's analysis. As is well known, Socrates went around Athens asking people about whatever they claimed to have knowledge about. By means of his questioning, he showed that in fact they did not know the things that they claimed but instead were confused. They had accepted certain beliefs uncritically and then, when exposed to critical questioning, were compelled to admit that they were in error. In order to draw out people, Socrates assumed a posture of ignorance, claiming to know nothing. He then humbly asked his interlocutor to teach him what he wanted to know. This flattered the vanity of people and motivated them to tell Socrates what they thought they knew. Socratic irony can be found in his purported claim to ignorance and his flattery of his interlocutor as someone who is in possession of knowledge.

We can see in Socratic irony a key source of inspiration for Kierkegaard. Like Socrates's interlocutors, Kierkegaard's fellow Danes claimed to be in possession of knowledge, specifically knowledge of Christianity. Kierkegaard, however, believed that what they thought they knew about Christianity greatly diverged from what was actually written in the New Testament. In fact, what passed for Christianity in Denmark was an utterly confused distortion of the actual teachings of Jesus. Kierkegaard thus made use of Socrates's irony to feign a posture of ignorance, claiming not to know himself what Christianity really is. But then at the same time he, again following the Socratic model, pointed out what he perceived to be the contradictions in the image of Christianity presented by his contemporaries. Thus Kierkegaard appropriated Socratic irony as a methodological tool for his own program.

The second part of *The Concept of Irony* concerns the use of irony in the German Romantic writers. Here again Kierkegaard closely follows Hegel's critical account, giving brief treatments of Fichte, Friedrich von Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck and Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger. These thinkers also claimed to be inspired by Socratic irony which they used to criticize bourgeois values. Instead of issuing their criticism directly, they believed that they could undermine bourgeois thinking more effectively by ironically seeming to go along with it. In this way they could subtly criticize any idea, belief, tradition, custom, or institution that they found reactionary. Hegel never missed an opportunity to criticize the Romantic authors as relativists who rejected any form of objective truth and who thus undermined their own position in a way that was entirely antithetical to true philosophical thinking. Kierkegaard is perhaps slightly more forgiving, but he too rejects Romantic irony as indiscriminate. He writes, "But just as the irony of the Schlegels had passed judgment in esthetics on an encompassing sentimentality, so Hegel was the one to correct what was misleading in the irony. On the whole, it is one of Hegel's great merits that he halted or at least wanted to halt the prodigal sons of speculation on their way to perdition" (*SKS* 1, p. 302/*CI*, p. 265). Kierkegaard sees Romantic irony as unjustified in the following sense. Socrates used irony in a specific historical context in order to introduce and develop the legitimate principle of subjective freedom. By contrast, the Romantics use irony in a flippant and arbitrary manner in order to criticize whatever they like. There is no deeper historical value or mission in their use of irony.

At the end of the work, Kierkegaard tries to sketch his own conception of the appropriate form of irony in his own time, which he dubs "controlled irony" (Stewart 2008a, 2012). By this he means that irony should be used not indiscriminately as in the case of the Romantics but rather in a controlled manner. It can be applied effectively in specific cases when one is combatting, for example, corrupt institutions or hypocritical individuals. This use of irony still follows the Socratic spirit and can be used in different contexts as a tool for reform.

After his dissertation, Kierkegaard's interest in Hegel continued. From 1841 to 1842 he read Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* (Stewart 2007e, pp. 127–131). Heiberg had developed a theory of dramatic genres, which seems to have interested Kierkegaard. This is perhaps the reason why Kierkegaard's reading is particularly focused on Hegel's analysis of drama. As with his use of Hegel in *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard is keen to appropriate specific ideas for his own writing. He thus makes use of Hegel's interpretation of Sophocles's tragedy *Antigone* in his next book, *Either/Or* (1843). In the chapter "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic of Modern

Drama," Kierkegaard has his aesthetic author rewrite Sophocles's text in order to make it into a modern drama (Stewart 2003, pp. 218–225; Rancher 2014). Here he can be seen as taking up again the main motif of his interpretation of Socrates as the founder of inwardness and subjectivity. In his rewriting of the tragedy, Kierkegaard tries to portray the conflict of the work not as something external, between the family and the state, but rather as something internal, that is, in the mind of Antigone herself.

Kierkegaard refers to Hegel again in another chapter of the first part of *Either/Or*. Specifically, Hegel's figure of the so-called unhappy consciousness from the "Self-Consciousness" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is mentioned in connection with the figure Kierkegaard refers to as "the unhappiest one," in the chapter of the same name (*SKS* 2, pp. 215–216/*EO1*, p. 222). Kierkegaard's author proposes a contest to determine who is the most unhappy person ever to have lived, and in this context he refers to Hegel's representative of religious alienation.

Presumably at around the same time as he was working on *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard wrote a satirical work entitled *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus dubitandum est*, which he left unfinished. This work satirizes elements of student life at the University of Copenhagen during the time when Hegelian philosophy was a hot trend. In this work, Kierkegaard makes use of the "Consciousness" chapter from Hegel's *Phenomenology* (*SKS* 15, p. 56n/*JC*, p. 169n). According to Hegel's analysis, we empirically perceive individual things in the world. These all have the characteristic of being particulars. We thus wish to capture these things to confirm our knowledge of them, and the primary way in which we do this is by means of language. We say that this is a house or a tree, etc. But Hegel notes that in these statements a shift takes place. We perceive particular things, and this is what we mean or intend to describe. But the moment that we verbalize this, the particular character of the thing is lost since the words we use are always universals. He writes, "Immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality" (*SKS* 15, p. 55/*JC*, p. 168). The word "house" can in principle refer to any house at all and not just the specific one that I mean. It is thus futile to think that I can capture the particularity of the empirical world in this manner. Kierkegaard seizes on this and, following Hegel, points out the contradiction that appears in consciousness between the awareness of the particular and the attempt to describe it with a universal.

Although Kierkegaard did not develop this idea in any depth here in *De omnibus*, it can be argued that he did make use of it later in *The Sickness unto Death*, where he sketches a series of forms of despair. In that analysis he

describes what he calls "spirit" as being characterized by contradictory categories, which stand in a dialectical relation to one another, such as infinity and finitude or eternity and temporality. The finite and the temporal represent the empirical world of particulars that we perceive with the senses. By contrast, infinity and eternity represent the world of names, ideas or universals that we think. Since humans are beings that both perceive and think, we always have both elements in our minds in some way. Although Kierkegaard does not refer to Hegel explicitly in *The Sickness unto Death*, this can be seen as an echo of Hegel's original analysis from the *Phenomenology*.

There are very few direct references to Hegel after *Either/Or*.[12] From this it seems clear that Kierkegaard's main study of Hegel's primary texts took place during his years as a student and immediately thereafter from around 1838 until 1843. However, this is not to say that Hegel's ideas are absent from his mind after this time. As in the case just mentioned with *The Sickness unto Death*, it is possible to identify specific Hegelian ideas that continue to motivate and inspire Kierkegaard even later.

The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) is often hailed as Kierkegaard's philosophical *magnum opus* and his *tour de force* with regard to his critique of Hegel. This is, however, a more complicated matter than it might appear at first glance. What is deceptive here is that Kierkegaard constantly refers to speculative philosophy and to Hegelians, but he almost never mentions Hegel himself explicitly in this text. It has been argued that this can be explained by the fact that these references are best understood to refer to specific figures in the Danish Hegel reception and have little to do with Hegel's actual works (Stewart 2003, pp. 448–523). In any case, there can be no doubt that in general Kierkegaard made a careful study of many of Hegel's writings and was inspired by many aspects of his thought. Although it might seem somewhat counterintuitive, his polemical relation to the Danish Hegelians is largely a separate issue.

1.5 Schopenhauer

In Kierkegaard's general reception of the German idealists, Schopenhauer stands out as a special case in many respects (Davini 2007; Cappelørn et al. 2011). As noted, it was during his years as a student and during the first half of his authorship up until 1846 that Kierkegaard, generally speaking, read the works of the German idealists and was engaged in their thought. By contrast, he only discovered Schopenhauer quite late, that is, in 1854. By the time he read Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard had already clearly developed his own ideas

and agenda, and so there was little room left for new influence in the way there had been many years earlier when he was reading Hegel and Schelling for the first time. Another idiosyncrasy of Kierkegaard's use of Schopenhauer is that this comes exclusively in his journals (specifically the journals *NB29*, *NB30*, *NB32*, and *NB35*) and never in his published writings.

In general, Kierkegaard seems quite receptive, lauding Schopenhauer as "an important writer" (*SKS* 25, p. 352, NB29:95/*KJN* 9, p. 356).[13] He believes that Schopenhauer's criticism of Christianity might well be valuable (*SKS* 25, pp. 389–390, NB30:12/*KJN* 9, pp. 393–394). Looking at what Kierkegaard writes about him, one might be tempted to conclude that it was more Schopenhauer's eccentric character than his philosophical thought that was attractive to Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's assessment of Schopenhauer tends more towards a character analysis than a philosophical discussion.

Kierkegaard clearly found in Schopenhauer a kindred spirit. This is counterintuitive since one might think that Schopenhauer's brazen atheism would immediately alienate him. Indeed, Kierkegaard himself acknowledges this: "despite total disagreement, I have been surprised to find an author who affects me so much" (*SKS* 25, p. 352, NB29:95/*KJN* 9, p. 356). But instead Kierkegaard identified with Schopenhauer as something of a loner and an outsider to the academic world. Although in contrast to Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer did briefly hold an academic position, he was, like Kierkegaard, independently wealthy and was thus not dependent on such a position for his livelihood. Kierkegaard praises Schopenhauer's independence of character in this regard (*SKS* 25, p. 355, NB29:95/*KJN* 9, pp. 358–359). Kierkegaard shared with Schopenhauer a rejection of the mainstream university philosophy of the day. Kierkegaard also points out similarities in his writing to Schopenhauer's style (*SKS* 26, p. 233, NB32:137.a/*KJN* 10, p. 236). Instead of seeing Schopenhauer as a source for new ideas, Kierkegaard finds in him a confirmation of some of his own views and opinions.

1.6 Trendelenburg

The tradition of German Idealism is often thought to have ended with Schopenhauer, but recent work has rightly pointed out that in fact this tradition continued well into the second half of the nineteenth century, albeit in a less illustrious form (Beiser 2013). This tradition of late German Idealism includes the philosopher Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, who played an important role for Kierkegaard (Come 1991; Dietz 1992; Purkarthofer 2005; González 2007). It might be easy to dismiss this connection, were it not for Kierkegaard's

strikingly positive appreciation of Trendelenburg. Uncharacteristically, Kierkegaard openly acknowledges his use of Trendelenburg (*SKS* 20, p. 93; NB:132/*KJN* 4, p. 92; *SKS* 19, p. 420, Not13:55/*KJN* 3, p. 418). This has given rise to the question of exactly what it was in Trendelenburg's thought that Kierkegaard found so attractive.

Trendelenburg's logic or metaphysics seems to have been the main area of interest for Kierkegaard. In the auction catalogue of his library there are two works by Trendelenburg that are particularly relevant, namely, the two-volume *Logische Untersuchungen* from 1840 (Nun et al. 2015, no. 843) and *Die logische Frage in Hegel's System: Zwei Streitschriften* (Nun et al. 2015, no. 846). The former might be regarded as Trendelenburg's *magnum opus*, which contains an extended criticism of Hegel's philosophy which Kierkegaard was attentive to (Beiser 2013, pp. 27–68). The latter was a short work, which simply collected two of Trendelenburg's previously published articles. The word *Streitschriften* refers to the fact that these articles were polemical responses to some of the critics of *Logische Untersuchungen*.

Kierkegaard seems to take Trendelenburg to represent a contrastive approach to logic to that of Hegel. Trendelenburg thus appears in Kierkegaard's critical analysis of the dialectic method, which involves a movement from one category to the next (*SKS* 7, pp. 106–107/*CUP1*, p. 110). Similarly, Trendelenburg is mentioned in connection with a discussion of the transitions in Hegel's logic and the role of the concept of existence (*SKS* 7, p. 274n/*CUP1*, p. 301n).

As was noted above, Kierkegaard idolized Socrates and regarded him as a model. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, this positive disposition is extended to Greek philosophy in general. In that context, Greek philosophy is contrasted to the German philosophy of the day (*SKS* 7, p. 175/*CUP1*, p. 191; *SKS* 7, p. 302/*CUP1*, p. 331; *SKS* 7, p. 304/*CUP1*, p. 333; *SKS* 7, pp. 280–283/*CUP1*, pp. 308–311). While Greek philosophy keeps sight of the existential dimension of life and the lived experience of the individual, modern German philosophy loses itself in abstractions and tedious academic games. In the contrast of different approaches to philosophy, Kierkegaard regards Trendelenburg as working in the spirit of the ancient Greek philosophy (*SKS* 7, pp. 106–107/*CUP1*, p. 110).[14] In a draft Kierkegaard writes "The Greek sobriety is seldom found in the philosophers of our day, and exceptional ingenuity is only a mediocre substitute. Good comments are to be found in Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*; but Trendelenburg was also shaped by the Greeks" (*Pap.* VI B 54.21, 150/*JP* 1, 199). Kierkegaard thus takes Trendelenburg to have managed to avoid the traps of abstraction and to keep his focus on existence.

There are thus numerous mentions of the individual German idealists in Kierkegaard's works. Scholars have pointed out many points of influence from them on Kierkegaard. He uses the German idealists like he uses his other sources as points of departure for his own reflections. He finds in them ideas and insights that he can use for his own program. This means that he does not simply make use of them uncritically. Thus, characteristic of Kierkegaard's use of them is a mixed positive and critical appropriation.

2 Idealism in Kierkegaard's Thought

Given the many direct and indirect references to the German idealists in Kierkegaard's work as outlined in the previous section, it seems absolutely irrefutable that the tradition of German Idealism exercised an influence on the development of Kierkegaard's thought on any number of different points. The open question, however, remains about whether or not he was influenced by the doctrine of "idealism" itself in the one form or another. Does Kierkegaard's thinking evidence elements of idealism as such? Some scholars have argued that Kierkegaard was an idealist or at least that some elements of idealism can be identified in his work (Gyenge 1996; Stewart 2003; Binetti 2015; O'Neill Burns 2017). While this still must probably be regarded as a minority view, it has been gaining increasing support in recent years. While this interpretation runs against the mainstream of Kierkegaard studies today, it in fact has a longer tradition. Indeed, it can be traced back to Adorno's influential criticism in *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (Adorno 1933). There Adorno argued that, despite his intentions, Kierkegaard ended up as an exponent of German Idealism. This is an important issue, since if this could be established, then it would represent a much more substantial link between Kierkegaard and existentialism, on the one hand, and the tradition of German Idealism, on the other.

It has been argued that idealist elements in Kierkegaard can be found in his most Hegelian text, *The Concept of Irony* (Stewart 2011a; Söderquist 2007, 2012). Specifically, Kierkegaard's attempt to give a historical account of the development of the notion of irony closely resembles Hegel's speculative philosophy of history. As is well known, for Hegel, the driving force in history is not the material conditions, class conflicts, or technological innovations but rather an idea, specifically the idea of subjective freedom (Hegel 2011). He argues that it is possible to trace the development of the idea from the ancient cultures, where it was unknown, up to his own day, when it had become a dominant principle. The key is that freedom is not a thing but rather an idea.

Kierkegaard can be seen to follow this in his methodological considerations in *The Concept of Irony*. He explains that he wants to investigate how the idea of irony appears in changed forms in the different historical contexts of ancient Greece (in the philosophy of Socrates) and modern Europe (in the work of the German Romantics). The difficulty in giving a philosophy of history (or even a straightforward history) is of course to examine the vast number of phenomena and actions that constitute history and then to try to give them some general meaning or *logos*. There is thus always an empirical element and an ideal one. The challenge is to find some abstract explanation principle or idea that does justice to all of the phenomena. Kierkegaard recognizes this and discusses it in his introductory comments. He makes a plea for finding the right balance between the empirical phenomena and the ideal structure proposed by philosophy (*SKS* 1, pp. 72–73/*CI*, pp. 10–11). He claims, like Hegel, that ideas can be seen in their historical instantiations and can be traced in their development: "Concepts, just like individuals, have their history and are no more able than they to resist the dominion of time" (*SKS* 1, p. 71/*CI*, p. 9). Thus there can be no doubt that Kierkegaard recognizes irony as an idea that is embodied in concrete actions in the world. In this sense his idealism sounds very much like that of Hegel, who claims exactly the same thing with regard to the idea of subjective freedom. Both thinkers clearly believe that these ideas have some kind of truth and reality.

A parallel to this can be found in Kierkegaard's *Johannes Climacus or De omnibus dubitandum est*, where, as noted above, Kierkegaard draws explicitly on Hegel's account of "Sense Certainty" from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*SKS* 15, pp. 51–59/*JC*, pp. 161–172).[15] Here Kierkegaard distinguishes between the realm of empirical experience and the realm of ideas or "ideality." Like Hegel, Kierkegaard discusses the tension between these two spheres. Most importantly, he follows Hegel in seeing the necessary dialectical relation between them. Once again, this reveals precisely Hegel's notion of the Idea, which is, on the one hand, a thought, but, on the other, something instantiated in the real world.

Along the same lines, it could be argued that Kierkegaard's analysis of the concept of "anxiety" displays some of the same characteristics of idealism. In his work of the same name, he analyzes different examples of anxiety which all fall under the concept or idea of anxiety. This seems to imply once again that there is an overarching idea, which is embodied concretely in the thought and actions of specific individuals in the real world. But the fact that it is an idea, like the idea of irony, does not undermine its importance.

Kierkegaard's famous notion of "repetition" can also be regarded as evidence for his idealism (Glöckner 1998; Eriksen 2000; Kemp 2015). A

repetition involves the comparison of two events that resemble one another. The individual events themselves are, to be sure, particulars, which belong to the realm of empirical experience. However, to put the two together and grasp the one as a repetition of the other requires an act of thought. The concept of repetition is thus an idea that abstracts from some aspects of the empirical experience and focuses on their similarity.

The Sickness unto Death is known for its famous analysis of the stages of "despair": despair as lacking finitude, as lacking infinity, as lacking necessity, as lacking possibility, etc. These are intended to be variants of the general concept or idea of despair. Once again these are embodied by specific individuals in their real lives, and so there is an empirical element involved. However, the key is *the idea* of despair itself that encompasses all of these variants. This can be seen as another clear idealist element in his thinking. For however much Kierkegaard wants to emphasize the concrete experience of anxiety and despair in the lives of concrete individuals, there seems no escaping the fact that these are ideas in his presentation and analysis, and that it is important for him to define them as ideas.

One might also argue that Kierkegaard's concept of "the moment" reveals exactly the same features of being both an empirical particular and a universal at the same time (McDonald 2014). Every second of our lives could be experienced as a moment, but we can only understand these as individual discrete moments since we have the general concept or idea of the moment in our minds. Kierkegaard frequently plays on this duality, referring to the moment as both something temporal and something eternal.

It has also been argued that the key term "spirit" (*Aand*) from this work can best be interpreted as a form of idealism (Binetti 2015, pp. 29–31). According to Kierkegaard's account, spirit always contains contrary pairs of concepts that exist in a dialectical tension. This is, however, an idea or thought. This idea does not define any particular person, but *qua* idea defines human beings in general.

Readers are familiar with the reflections of the young Kierkegaard in the summer of 1835 as he contemplated the direction of his life. In his *Journal AA* he writes the famous words, "What I really need is to be clear about *what I am to do*, not what I must know….It is a question of understanding my destiny, of seeing what the Deity really wants *me* to do; the thing is to find a truth which is a truth *for me*, to find *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*" (*SKS* 17, p. 24; AA:12/*KJN* 1, p. 19).[16] It is interesting to return to this passage and read it in the context of the question of idealism since this text is almost invariably understood to be a statement of Kierkegaard's budding existentialism. What is striking here is that Kierkegaard *does not* say that he wants

to have a particular concrete experience that will serve as the direction of his life. On the contrary, he says that he is searching for *an idea*. This seems to imply that for him an idea has some deeper reality or status than simply transitory empirical particulars.

But what was this idea? When we see this in the context of his later thought, it might be argued that this was the idea of Christianity itself. As is well known, he had a different conception of this from his contemporaries, who, he believed, suffered from the illusion of a watered-down version that eliminated the difficulty and radicality of what he referred to as New Testament Christianity. This is, of course, a major issue both in Kierkegaard's effort to get his fellow Danes to reflect on their religious beliefs and in his attack on the Danish State Church. While, to be sure, he believed that Christianity also involved an aspect of concrete practice and a specific kind of life in imitation of Christ, nonetheless it is difficult to escape the fact that there is also an idea at work here. In other words, the kind of Christian ethics or life that he wants to promote is clearly grounded in an idea of what Christianity is, and this idea stands in contrast to other competing ideas, such as the version preached by those whom he regards as the corrupt pastors of the Danish Church. This structure of an abstract idea that is embodied or realized in concrete action mirrors exactly Hegel's notion of the Concept or the Idea. It is a unity of the universal (the thought or idea) and the particular (the concrete action in the world). This is usually taken to be the basic structure of Hegel's idealism, and so if this same structure is also present in Kierkegaard, the conclusion can only be that he too is an idealist at least in some regard. Thus we should not be misled by his rhetoric about rejecting abstraction and focusing on existence and actuality (Stewart 2010, pp. 94–119; 2011c). Clearly, his point is that precisely the focus on our concrete empirical condition must be informed by ideas, not least of all the idea of Christianity.

It might be objected that Kierkegaard's idealism is not something explicitly stated or argued for in his texts. This can be explained by the fact that his general project was only in part philosophical. In other words, while the German idealists all conceived of themselves primarily as philosophers and were at pains to present philosophical arguments and defend philosophical positions, this was not the case with Kierkegaard. His self-image was more that of a religious writer than as a philosopher (Hannay 1997, 2000; Stewart 2003, pp. 640–652). His project concerned inspiring his fellow Danes to a deeper conception of Christian faith and religiosity. When we see his work from this perspective, it is hardly surprising that he does not try to formulate a philosophical theory of idealism in any explicit way. But this is not to say

that elements of such a theory are entirely absent. Indeed, as noted here, they are evident for those who care to see them.

There is a tendency in the research to emphasize Kierkegaard's rejection of abstraction and his focus on the concrete lives and concerns of individuals (Stewart 2010, pp. 94–119). A part of this involves a criticism of idealism for dwelling in abstractions and losing touch with the real world. For many years this idea served to calcify the picture of Kierkegaard as a hardened anti-Hegelian. This picture is often accompanied by an emphasis on Kierkegaard's conception of subjective faith in contrast to any form of objective approach (Stewart 2011c). However, with examples like the ones just outlined, it seems clear that the criticism of idealism and abstraction is overstated. In fact, it seems that there are clearly identifiable elements of idealism in Kierkegaard's thought itself.

In *The Sickness unto Death* (and many of his other works as well), Kierkegaard is critical of people who dwell too much in the real world (characterized by finitude, temporality, necessity) at the expense of the world of thought and imagination (characterized by infinitude, eternity, possibility). It will be noted that this latter world is that of ideas. Kierkegaard has a sustained criticism of the unthinking bourgeois philistine (*Spidsborger*), that is, the person who is focused entirely on the realm of immediacy, concerned with the trivialities of daily life. Such a person lacks self-reflection and is unable to see what is truly valuable. Kierkegaard criticizes this mindset for complacency with regard to Christian faith. Given this, it seems clear that there is some idealist element in Kierkegaard's conception of Christian religiosity.

Kierkegaard thus occupies a special place as a transitional figure between the broad traditions of German Idealism and existentialism. In a sense he can be seen as having one foot in both camps. This would seem to suggest that the initial assumption of a radical break between German Idealism and existentialism is mistaken.

Notes

1. This appears most clearly in Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (Sartre 1948, p. 31). See also Sartre's essay, "Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal" (in Sartre 1979, pp. 141–169) and Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus 1991, pp. 23, 25, 26, 39–41).
2. See also the collections Stewart 2007c, d, 2008b. Mention should also be made of the pioneering work by Wilhelm Anz (1956).

3. The books that Kierkegaard owned are listed in *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015). Here the following works by Kant are listed: *Critik der Urtheilskraft*, 2nd edition, Berlin: F. T. Lagarde 1793 (entry no. 594); *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, 4th edition, Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch 1794 (entry no. 595); *Immanuel Kant's vermischte Schriften*, vols. 1–3, Halle: Rengersche Buchhandlung 1799 (entry nos. 1731–1733) [vol. 4, Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius 1807]. See also Green's useful overview of Kierkegaard's sources in this respect (Green 1992, pp. 9–31).
4. *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015) lists *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke*, vols. 1–8, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Berlin: Veit und Comp. 1845–1846 (entry nos. 489–499); *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's nachgelassene Werke*, vols. 1–3, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Bonn: Adolph Marcus 1834–1835. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*, new edition, Berlin: Voss'sche Buchhandlung 1838 (no. 500).
5. This criticism appears several times in this text: *SKS* 7, pp. 114, 177, 314/*CUP1*, pp. 117, 193, 306.
6. *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015) lists the following works: Victor Cousin, *Victor Cousin über französische und deutsche Philosophie*, trans. from French by Hubert Beckers, with a preface by Schelling, Stuttgart and Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung 1834 (no. 471); *F. W. J. Schelling's philosophische Schriften*, vol. 1, Landshut: Philipp Krüll 1809 (no. 763); Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des academischen Studium[s]*, 3rd unchanged edition, Stuttgart and Tübingen: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung 1830 (no. 764); Schelling, *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Princip der Dinge. Ein Gespräch*, 2nd unchanged edition, Berlin: G. Reimer 1842 (no. 765); Karl Rosenkranz, *Schelling. Vorlesungen, gehalten im Sommer 1842 an der Universität zu Königsberg*, Danzig: Friedrich Samuel Gerhard 1843 (no. 766); *Schelling's Erste Vorlesung in Berlin. 15 November 1841*, Stuttgart and Tübingen: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung 1841 (no. 767).
7. See also the reference to Schelling in connection with aesthetics in the second volume of *Either/Or*: *SKS* 3, p. 135/*EO2*, p. 136.
8. Martensen was seen as a promoter of German speculative thought in general. See, for example, his participation in the contemporary debate on speculative mysticism that also played an important role in German Idealism (Šajda 2009, 2012).
9. *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015) lists the following works by Hegel: *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. Karl Ludwig Michelet, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832, vol. 1 of *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols. 1–18, ed. Philipp Marheineke et al., Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832–1845 (no. 549); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832, vol. 2 of *Hegel's Werke* (no. 550); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Grundlinien der*

Philosophie des Rechts, oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse, ed. Eduard Gans, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1833, vol. 8 of *Hegel's Werke*, vols. 1–18 (no. 551); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 1–3, ed. Leopold von Henning, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1833–1834, vols. 3–5 of *Hegel's Werke*, vols. 1–18 (nos. 552–554); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's vermischte Schriften*, vols. 1–2, ed. Friedrich Förster and Ludwig Boumann, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1834–1835, vols. 16–17 of *Hegel's Werke* (nos. 555–556); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vols. 1–3, ed. Karl Ludwig Michelet, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1833–1836, vols. 13–15 of *Hegel's Werke* (nos. 557–559); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophische Propädeutik*, ed. Karl Rosenkranz, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1840, vol. 18 of *Hegel's Werke* (no. 560); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, vols. 1–3, ed. Leopold von Henning, Carl Ludwig Michelet and Ludwig Boumann, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1840–1845, vols. 6–7.2 of *Hegel's Werke* (nos. 561–563); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Nebst einer Schrift über die Beweise vom Daseyn Gottes*, vols. 1–2, ed. Philipp Marheineke, 2nd revised edition, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1840, vols. 11–12 of *Hegel's Werke* (nos. 564–565); *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, vols. 1–3, ed. Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1835–1838, vols. 10.1–3 of *Hegel's Werke* (nos. 1384–1386).

10. Kierkegaard's notes to Werder's lectures appear in *SKS* 19, p. 245, Not8:50/*KJN* 3, p. 239; *SKS* 19, p. 246, Not8:52/*KJN* 3, p. 239; *SKS* 19, pp. 278–282, Not9:2–9/*KJN* 3, pp. 274–278; *SKS* 19, p. 415, Not13:50/*KJN* 3, p. 413. He also owned a copy of Werder's book *Logik*. *Als Commentar und Ergänzung zu Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik. Erste Abtheilung*, Berlin: Veit und Comp. 1841 This work appears in *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015) as entry no. 867.
11. Kierkegaard refers to Hegel's account in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where one reads, "…it was in *Socrates*, that at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the principle of subjectivity—of the absolute inherent independence of thought—attained free expression. He taught that man has to discover and recognize in himself what is the right and good, and that this right and good is in its nature universal. Socrates is celebrated as a teacher of morality, but we should rather call him the *inventor of morality*" (Hegel 1944, p. 269).
12. For example, in *Fear and Trembling* (*SKS* 4, pp. 148–149/*FT*, p. 54), *Practice in Christianity* (*SKS* 12, p. 96/*PC*, p. 87).
13. See also *SKS* 25, pp. 389–390, NB30:12/*KJN* 9, pp. 393–394; *SKS* 26, pp. 141–142, NB32:35/*KJN* 10, pp. 140–141.

14. Trendelenburg authored and edited works on ancient philosophy. *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library* (Nun et al. 2015) lists *Erläuterungen zur den Elementen der aristotelischen Logik, zunächst für den Unterricht in Gymnasien* Berlin: Bethge 1842 (no. 845). (ed.) *Platonis de ideis et numeris doctrina ex Aristotele illustrata*, Leipzig: Vogel 1826 (no. 842). (ed.) *Elementa logices Aristotelicae: in usum scholarum ex Aristotele excerpsit, convertit, illustravit*, [new revised edition], Berlin: Bethge 1836 (no. 844). (ed.) *Aristotelis de anima libri tres. Ad interpretum græcorum auctoritatem et codicum fidem recognovit commentariis illustravit*, Jena: Walz 1833 (no. 1079).
15. See Stewart 2003, pp. 268–288.
16. It should be noted that it has been argued that it is a mistake to interpret this passage as a genuine self-reflection since this comes from what was a draft of an unfinished epistolary novel that Kierkegaard was supposedly writing. This is, however, a broader question that cannot be taken up in this context, but suffice it to say that this view has by no means met with general acceptance. See Fenger 1980, pp. 81–131.

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