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Johan Ludvig Heiberg's "On the Principle of the Beginning of History" and Kierkegaard's Critique

Abstract: This article provides an introduction to Johan Ludvig Heiberg's "On the Principle of the Beginning of History" from 1843. The Danish poet, playwright and critic attended Hegel's lectures in Berlin in 1824 and returned to Copenhagen a convinced Hegelian. He spent the next two decades pursuing a campaign to spread the word about Hegel's philosophy in the Kingdom of Denmark. His little-known article on history draws substantially on Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which had been published by Heiberg's acquaintance Eduard Gans in 1837 as a part of the complete works edition of Hegel's writings. Kierkegaard makes Heiberg's article the object of criticism in *The Concept of Anxiety* and a draft of *Prefaces*. In the former he claims that Heiberg's occupation with the beginning of world history trivializes the issue of sin. In the latter he charges Heiberg with plagiarism. The present article introduces Heiberg's article and gives an account of Kierkegaard's criticism.

On September 1, 1843, the Danish poet, dramatist and critic Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860) published an article ostensibly on the philosophy of history, entitled "On the Principle of the Beginning of History," in his journal the *Intelligensblade*.¹ This article can be seen in the context of other works on the same subject in the Danish Hegel reception such as "On the Historical Development

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¹ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 3, nos. 35–36, September 1, 1843, pp. 241–283. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vols. 1–11, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1861–62, vol. 2, pp. 375–415.)

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of the State” by Carl Weis (1809–72),² *Lectures on the Philosophy of History at the University of Copenhagen* by Christian Molbech (1783–1857),³ “On the Development and Present Standpoint of History Writing” by Frederik Eginhard Amadeus Schiern (1816–82),⁴ and parts of *The Isolated Subjectivity in its Most Important Forms* by Adolph Peter Adler (1812–69).⁵ This dimension of the Hegel reception as thus already well established in Denmark before Heiberg’s article. The philosophy of history might appear to represent a new field for Heiberg that is far removed from his usual set of interests, for example, in the aesthetics of genre. However, a closer look reveals that in fact the article overlaps closely with Heiberg’s interests in astronomy and the natural sciences and that the philosophy of history in the strict sense is only a part of the subject. Heiberg uses the opportunity to issue an encomium for the importance of astronomy in human development.⁶ The topic of the article is how it is possible to establish the beginning of history in a way that does not rely on mythology.

I The Influence of Hegel’s Philosophy of History

In this work Heiberg is clearly influenced by Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* that had been published in 1837 by Eduard Gans, with a second edition following in 1840.⁷ During his stay in Berlin in 1824, Heiberg had met Gans

2 Carl Weis, “Om Statens historiske Udvikling,” *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, no. 2, 1838, pp. 47–99. See Jon Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, *The Martensen Period: 1837–1842*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 3), pp. 260–263.

3 Christian Molbech, *Forelæsninger ved Kiøbenhavn’s Universitet over Historiens Philosophie*, vols. 1–2, Copenhagen: Paa den Gyldendalske Boghandlings Forlag 1840–41. See Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, pp. 491–505.

4 Frederik Schiern, “Om Historieskrivningens Udvikling og nærværede Standpunkt,” *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 251–297. See Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, pp. 697–704.

5 Adolph Peter Adler, *Den isolerede Subjectivitet i dens vigtigste Skikkelser. Første Deel*, Copenhagen: Trykt i det Berlingske Bogtrykkeri 1840. Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, pp. 431–448.

6 Heiberg, “Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse,” p. 259. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 393.)

7 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Eduard Gans, vol. 9 [1837], in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols. 1–18, ed. by Ludwig Boumann, Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, Leopold von Henning, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot 1832–45. The second edition from 1840 was edited by Karl Hegel.

personally.⁸ Hegel's famous Introduction seems to be the text that Heiberg uses as his point of departure. Much of the article can be regarded as a kind of commentary to a roughly 10-page section of Hegel's text.⁹ Heiberg begins the work right away with a reference to Hegel:

Older textbooks on world history usually begin their presentations with an account of the creation of the world, for the most part according to the Mosaic tradition, which is sometimes compared with the Indian, Persian, Greek and other traditions. History, however, ought not be confused with poetry; on the contrary, according to Hegel's even stronger formulation, it is and should be *prosaic* since it has actuality rather than fiction as its object and, at least in terms of its subject matter, is an empirical science.¹⁰

Here Heiberg refers to Hegel's statement at the beginning of his account of the large section "The Oriental World" in his lectures: "History is prose, and myths fall short of history."¹¹ Hegel repeats this idea in his remarks about the nature of historiography in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.¹² In the section "The Poetic and the Prose Work of Art," Hegel explains that it lies in the nature of history writing that it be written in prose.¹³ Poetry is suitable for mythological content, whereas prose is required for the subjects of history.

Heiberg invokes a Hegelian principle when he claims that history makes use of individuals to achieve its goals.¹⁴ According to Hegel, history is guided by the providential principle of the Idea, which transcends individuals. But it is only through the action of individuals that history exists. The Idea is thus realized unknowingly through the actions of countless individuals over the centuries. In Hegel this is found most explicitly in his account of world-historical

8 See Jon Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome I, *The Heiberg Period: 1824–1836*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 3), pp. 127–129.

9 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree, New York: Willey Book Co. 1944, pp. 59–63. This translation is based on the second edition that was edited by Karl Hegel in 1840, which is reprinted in *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols. 1–20, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928–41 (hereafter *Jub.*), vol. 11, pp. 95–100. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], pp. 73–78.

10 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 241. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 377.)

11 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 111; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 158. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 136.

12 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Aesthetik*, I–III, ed. by Heinrich Gustav Hotho (1835–38), vols. 10–1, 10–2, 10–3 in *Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*.

13 [Hegel], *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vols. 1–2, trans. by T.M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975, vol. 2, pp. 986–989; *Jub.*, vol. 14, pp. 256–260. *Vorlesungen über Aesthetik*, vol. III, pp. 256–260.

14 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 243. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 379.)

individuals, such as Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great, who pursue their own goals but unknowingly also work in the service of the Idea.¹⁵

Heiberg begins his actual analysis with a discussion of the great flood. He argues that since this myth appears in so many ancient cultures, it must have some basis in fact, and this could be regarded as the beginning of history. Even modern science, for example, geology, seems to support the idea that a great flood did take place. However, while this might be regarded as a fact, it cannot be seen as the beginning of history since it is not concerned with human freedom as such, which is the very basis and criterion for historical development.

Heiberg recalls the importance of states for Hegel's philosophy of history. As is well known, Hegel organizes his lectures on the subject in terms of the world-historical peoples: China, India, Egypt, Greece, Rome, etc. Each epoch has its own character that is determined by a specific people with its specific national character.¹⁶ History thus operates at the level of states, and it is impossible to have history at a time before states exist. Heiberg explains, "For only with states is the proper theater of history prepared since history, as the drama of World Spirit, is a public drama, not a private drama in the circle of a family. Although the state is preceded by family life and the patriarchal condition, families have no history in the strict sense of the term."¹⁷ It is in the state that the individual can act freely, and the principle of subjective freedom can develop. This cannot happen in the family since it is governed by a different principle:

with the concept of family and the patriarchal condition their members cease to count as individuals with free will or as persons, but the existence of these results from mere accident as the universal substance of piety. It is love, which is the spirit of the family, that is, a feeling, something inward. For this reason, the family stands outside the development which first constitutes history, for history, like drama, is a form of *action* and can only come into being on the condition that the inner manifests itself in the outer.¹⁸

As long as individuals are subject to the will of the patriarch or the *pater familias*, they are not free. Since freedom is the criterion for history, it follows that at the level of family life there is no history. Human freedom, that is,

¹⁵ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 53; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 88. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 66.

¹⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 29–33; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 59–63. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], pp. 37–41.

¹⁷ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 261. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 395.)

¹⁸ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 261. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 395f.)

inwardness or subjectivity, is not recognized or outwardly expressed. It will be recalled that Heiberg had recently reviewed Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. Here he might well have in mind the opening lines of the Preface to that work about the inner and the outer.¹⁹ In any case, Heiberg again draws on Hegel's discussion from the Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where it is argued that the pious relations of the family represent something natural and therefore cannot be the proper subject of history, which is governed by Spirit and not nature.²⁰

Heiberg discusses the question of what exactly constitutes history. Drawing again on Hegel's account,²¹ he reasons that history is not just about any given fact or event that happened. Such a conception lacks the principle of Spirit. Instead, history is about events that humans put together in thought. Here he directly invokes Hegel's understanding of historiography:

Whereas the aforementioned concept of history, which expands its limits into the infinite, lacks Spirit, the concept of history that is the richest in Spirit is, by contrast, the one which draws the narrowest limits for it and thereby gives it a determinate organization. *Hegel* in his philosophy of history has emphasized the unity of history and history writing. While everyone agrees there can be no history writing without history, Hegel expands this indisputable proposition with the more striking addition that without history writing, there is no history.²²

Here he refers to Hegel's account of history, which is not simply an account of any accidental and trivial things that have ever happened. Instead, history is a narrative created by an individual who interprets the events and presents them in a meaningful way. Heiberg continues his review of Hegel's position:

He remarked initially in this context that in the modern languages the word "history" unites the objective and the subjective sides: it means both the account of the events and the events themselves, and we must regard this unification of both meanings as being something higher than merely external accident. It is reasonable that the historical narrative begins at the same time as the historical action. Both arise from the same inner, common source, which drives them both forward at the same time.²³

19 *SKS* 2, 11 / *EOI*, 3.

20 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 59; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 96. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 74.

21 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 60; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 97. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 75.

22 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 263f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 397f.)

23 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 264. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 398.)

The first part of this passage is largely a paraphrase of Hegel's account.²⁴ There is an objective side which refers to the external events in the world, and there is a subjective side which refers to the interpretation of the individual historian.

Heiberg goes on to argue that art, science, and religion precede the establishment of states. Humans thus have a cultural history before they have a political history:

It can indeed be said that all world history is nothing other than cultural history, but only when the political idea is consolidated have all the elements of culture received the real foundation upon which they can be gathered into a whole. History, as an idea, thus exists only as political history; what precedes political history is only its preliminary moments.²⁵

The state and its concerns are the proper subject matter of history.²⁶ It is the state that creates the conditions of the development of freedom of the individual. Prior to the existence of the state, there is no reason for the creation of history writing even if there are favorable conditions for it. One element of cultural history is language, and in this regard Heiberg also refers to Hegel's critical view of India:

The high development of the languages in the oldest time, for example, in India, suggests many previous cultural levels, which were necessary in order to achieve such a rich culture [*Uddannelse*], for language is the mirror of thought, and the formation [*Uddannelse*] of language is therefore always in unity with the formation of thought. Hegel has also been attentive to this remarkable phenomenon as well as to others connected with it, for instance, the oldest Indian works of poetry, books of religion and law, but he assumes that this whole culture could have developed in an age which was still without history, both in the objective and in the subjective sense. He says that for anyone familiar with the treasures of Indian literature, it must be striking that this country, which is so rich in spiritual productions that are often very deep, has no history, and thereby contrasts sharply with China.²⁷

This is largely a paraphrase of Hegel's account.²⁸ Heiberg explains Hegel's critique of the Indian caste system which disregards individuality and subjective

²⁴ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 60; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 97. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 75.

²⁵ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 266f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 400.)

²⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 61; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 98. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 76.

²⁷ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 269f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 403.)

²⁸ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 61; *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 98f. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], pp. 76f.

freedom and sees individuals as fixed natural entities. The principle of individual freedom never emerged in India, according to Hegel, and for this reason it has no history writing, despite its high level of cultural development in other areas.

Continuing with his linguistic reflections as a part of culture, Heiberg notes the tendency of languages to become more simplified and morphologically less complex over time. He refers here to Hegel once again: "It is, says Hegel, a strange phenomenon that the more spiritual the development becomes since it, so to speak, drives its indwelling rationality out of itself and gives it an external existence, the more it neglects this elaborateness of the understanding, finds it inconvenient, and makes it dispensable."²⁹ Here he refers to the following argument by Hegel:

It is a fact revealed by philological monuments that languages, during a rude condition of the nations that have spoken them, have been highly developed: that the human understanding occupied this theoretical region with great ingenuity and completeness...It is, moreover, a fact that with advancing social and political civilization, this systematic completeness of intelligence suffers attrition and language thereupon becomes poorer and ruder: a singular phenomenon—that the progress towards a more highly intellectual condition, while expanding and cultivating rationality, should disregard that intelligent amplitude and expressiveness—should find it an obstruction and contrive to do without it.³⁰

There is thus a strange paradox in the fact that languages, such as Sanskrit, that are the most complex, according to Hegel, do not reflect a high level of historical development with regard to the Idea of freedom.

Heiberg hints at a criticism of Hegel's view that history only begins with the creation of political states. He is dissatisfied with the fact that a considerable cultural development can take place prior to the creation of the state itself, yet this does not count as true history. He writes,

It should be clear from this that Hegel is tireless in rejecting all the age-old cultural conditions which could make a claim to begin the history of humanity and that he narrows the scope of that beginning to the political. There can be no doubt that this manner of regarding the issue is justified, particularly when one takes history in its eminent meaning, in which it is in unity with history writing. But it must also be admitted that a history which

²⁹ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 272. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 405f.)

³⁰ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 62f; *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 100. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel, vol. 9 [1840], p. 78.

begins with political history does not begin with the beginning because—as was remarked above—the political in itself is not a beginning.³¹

There is always something that exists before political history, and so it is difficult to regard this as the true beginning. Political history thus seems to be some intermediary stage with something preceding it.

At the end of the article Heiberg offers some rather vague reflections in an effort to point towards a solution to the problem of the beginning of history. He presents two options. With the first, he reasons that since the speculative idea is circular and not linear, the end and the beginning must come together. The final goal of history must already be somehow present at the beginning of history. The end of history is human freedom, but this implies that there was also a state of freedom at the beginning of history, and this is what is represented by the idea of Paradise. But Heiberg argues that this represents a speculative beginning of history and not an empirical one since clearly there is no historical account of the first human beings in Eden.³² For the second view, he refers to attempts in the French research to identify some original religion that is the source of later mythologies. But he also rejects the notion that this idea could constitute the beginning of history, even though it does have the advantage of having some vaguely empirical basis. Heiberg thus ends by indicating that these are the two main pitfalls involved in any attempt to determine the beginning of history. The first takes an idea from the present, that is, about human freedom and tries to transfer it back to some early time. But this is unhistorical since it is ultimately just an idea and not something empirical. The second tries to be more empirically oriented and find something in the earliest empirical record, but this lacks the element of the Idea, which should be the guiding element in real history. In the end Heiberg simply concedes that he is merely offering some reflections for further discussion and does not pretend to have presented any definitive solution to the problem.³³ Heiberg's article can be seen as an important continuation of his previous work on Hegel's philosophy that began two decades earlier in the 1820s.

³¹ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 273f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 406f.)

³² Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 275f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 408.)

³³ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 281f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 414.)

II Kierkegaard's Criticism

While Kierkegaard's relation to Heiberg is well established,³⁴ it is difficult to get a clear picture of his reading of this text in particular. In fact, at first glance, the issue does not seem very promising since a quick word search reveals that Heiberg's article is not mentioned anywhere in either the texts or the commentaries of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, which, as is well known, contains both the published works and the *Nachlass*. No attention has been drawn to Heiberg's article in the secondary literature on Kierkegaard to the best of my knowledge. The question of Kierkegaard's relation to this text thus appears initially to be a dead-end.

However, it seems likely that Kierkegaard would have been interested in this text, given his engagement both with Heiberg and with Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, the latter of which he draws upon explicitly in *The Concept of Irony*.³⁵ Moreover, Heiberg published "On the Principle of the Beginning of History" in the *Intelligensblade*, which he founded and edited. This was the same journal where his dismissive review of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* appeared under the title "Literary Winter Crops."³⁶ This review, which completely changed the complexion of Kierkegaard's relation to Heiberg, appeared only months before Heiberg's "On the Principle of the Beginning of History." One would think that Kierkegaard would thus have wanted to read Heiberg's article, if for no other reason than to find further grist for the mill for his ongoing criticism

34 See, for example, Jon Stewart, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Kierkegaard's Criticism of Hegel's Danish Apologist," in *Kierkegaard and his Danish Contemporaries*, Tome I, *Philosophy, Politics and Social Theory*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 7), pp. 35–76. Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2003, passim. George Pattison, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Kierkegaard's Use of Heiberg as a Literary Critic," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, Tome III, *Literature, Drama and Aesthetics*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 7), pp. 169–187. Mads Sohl Jessen, "Kierkegaard's Hidden Satire on Heiberg's Poetics of the Vaudeville in *Either/Or* and *Repetition*," in *The Heibergs and the Theater: Between Vaudeville, Romantic Comedy and National Drama*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2012 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 7), pp. 161–90.

35 See Jon Stewart, "Hegel's Historical Methodology in *The Concept of Irony*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2011, pp. 81–100. Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, pp. 132–181.

36 Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Litterær Vintersæd," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 2, no. 24, 1 March 1843, pp. 285–292. See Jon Stewart, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg's 'Literary Winter Crops' and Kierkegaard's Polemic," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2020, pp. 325–337.

of Heiberg, which started immediately after the publication of “Literary Winter Crops.” A closer look into the question thus seems to be warranted. I wish to argue that there is in fact good evidence that Kierkegaard knew Heiberg’s article. This evidence can be found in two works, specifically, *The Concept of Anxiety* and *Prefaces*.

A Kierkegaard’s Criticism in *The Concept of Anxiety*

A subtle allusion to Heiberg’s article can be found in the famous discussion of the Fall and original sin in the first chapter of *The Concept of Anxiety*. This fits the time frame very well since Kierkegaard’s book was published on June 17, 1844, which would have given him more than enough time to have read and thought about Heiberg’s article, which, as noted, was published on September 1, 1843. The passage in question from *The Concept of Anxiety* reads as follows:

Innocence is ignorance, but how is it lost? I do not intend to repeat all the ingenious and stupid hypotheses with which thinkers and speculators have encumbered the beginning of history [*Historiens Begyndelse*], men who only out of curiosity were interested in the great human concern called sin, partly because I do not wish to waste the time of others in telling what I myself wasted time in learning, and partly because the whole thing lies outside of history, in the twilight where witches and speculators race on broomsticks and sausage-pegs.³⁷

In order to signal the target of his critique to his readers, Kierkegaard uses precisely the formulation that appears in the title of Heiberg’s article, “Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse.”³⁸ In addition to this allusion to Heiberg’s title, the clear polemical tone of the passage makes it a good candidate for a criticism of Heiberg.

The context fits very well since Heiberg in fact, right at the beginning of his article, brings up the question of the historicity of the Creation and the Fall in Genesis as a possible starting point for history. He rejects attempts to regard these as actual historical events and claims that they belong to the realm of

³⁷ SKS 4, 345 / CA, 38–39.

³⁸ Note that in *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* there is a commentary to “ride omkaps paa et Kosterkaft og en Pølsepind” at the end of the passage (SKS K4, 404), but no commentary to “Historiens Begyndelse.”

myth.³⁹ This is the reason that Kierkegaard satirically writes, "the whole thing lies outside of history, in the twilight where witches and speculators race on broomsticks and sausage-pegs."⁴⁰ Given that all accounts of the beginning of history must per definition fall outside history, they must, Heiberg notes, be regarded as a kind of philosophical presupposition for history. He discusses the story of Creation and the Fall in Genesis as examples of the mythological accounts of the beginning of history:

The Fall is another of the prehistoric presuppositions without which no history could take place, for if evil had not come into the world, then the Idea would not have had to struggle to exist and would have had no struggle to endure and no goal to realize; thus, there would be no plan in the events and no act of Providence. Since knowledge of this struggle, this goal, this plan, and this Providence comprises the essential task of history, insofar as it should be more than a chronicle, it cannot itself begin before the necessary condition for its task has taken place in advance.⁴¹

Heiberg thus follows Hegel in seeing history as a teleological, progressive development that is guided by the achievement of the idea of freedom. For this development to begin, some original condition must be presupposed. Since history is about human freedom it cannot be said to begin before humans have a conception of good and evil. To act freely means making ethical choices. Ethical awareness must thus have arisen before the time of the beginning of recorded history. This is closely related to Kierkegaard's topic in the first chapter of *The Concept of Anxiety*, where he wants to explore the shift from innocence to sin in part in reference to the story of the Fall.

The force of Kierkegaard's or Vigilius Haufniensis' criticism in the passage is aimed against those who make meaningless reflections on the origin of history and include something so important as sin, i. e., the original sin, in these trivialities. Kierkegaard can thus be seen as pointing an accusing finger at Heiberg as one of the "men who only out of curiosity were interested in the great human concern called sin."⁴² According to this view, any serious person must of course take this as an *earnest* question. But Heiberg trivializes it by referring to it only as a side issue in his reflections on the beginning of history, thus failing to recognize the existential gravity of the concept.

39 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 241–243. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 377–379.) See also "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 275. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 408.)

40 *SKS* 4, 345 / *CA*, 39.

41 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 242. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 378.)

42 *SKS* 4, 345 / *CA*, 39.

B Kierkegaard's Criticism in Prefaces

It is important to note that on the same day that *The Concept of Anxiety* appeared, Kierkegaard also published *Prefaces*, which was his main polemical work against Heiberg.⁴³ Here one can find a rather direct reference to “On the Principle of the Beginning of History” in a draft. “Preface II” is critical of writers of books reviews and can clearly be read as another attempt to get back at Heiberg for the negative review of *Either/Or*.⁴⁴ In this Preface, we read the following:

By paying attention to the opinion of the visible reading public and of the usual reviewers, one falls into the most fatuous confusion. I would like to illustrate the confusion with an incident from daily life. A cellar-dweller wanted to rent a cellar from me. Despite his well-known integrity etc., he was not, on a landlord's gold scales, found to be a full-weight renter.⁴⁵

In a draft, which he ended up cutting before the publication, Kierkegaard continues this passage as follows:

Forgive me for betraying a knowledge in spheres where one perhaps hardly suspected it. I freely confess that I am proud of this and pattern myself in likeness to Prof. Heiberg. In *Intelligensblade*, no. 35, especially p. 244, I see that he knows what every theological student knows. It is a pity that he cites his source (Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*); otherwise, I could swear that it was taken from the late Brøchner's notebooks [*Collegier*], where the same passage occurs almost word for word.⁴⁶

Here Kierkegaard's reference to the *Intelligensblade*, no. 35, refers to Heiberg's article. In fact, the page reference refers to the continuation of Heiberg's discussion of the historicity of the events portrayed in Genesis. Here Heiberg examines the story of the ancient flood that appears not only in the biblical version but also in Chaldean, Greek, and Hindu mythology. The appearance of the flood in these different ancient traditions, he claims, gives it a degree of plausibility as an actual event.

⁴³ See Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, pp. 419–447.

⁴⁴ Note that Kierkegaard had responded to Heiberg earlier in his article “A Word of Thanks to Professor Heiberg.” *SKS* 14, 55–57 / *COR*, 17–21 (originally in *Fædrelandet*, no. 1168, March 5, 1843, columns 9373–9376).

⁴⁵ *SKS* 4, 481 / *P*, 17.

⁴⁶ *Pap. V B 80:2 / P*, Supplement, 113–114.

Kierkegaard has Nicolaus Notabene suggest that Heiberg is guilty of plagiarism in his account. Note that, following his usual Socratic strategy,⁴⁷ Kierkegaard does not have his pseudonym accuse Heiberg of plagiarism directly but instead maintains a position of Socratic ignorance on the matter, only pointing out that what Heiberg has written is very similar to a source that is different from the one that he actually references. As Kierkegaard indicates, Heiberg, in a footnote, refers to Georg Benedikt Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*.⁴⁸ Despite this reference, Notabene insinuates that Heiberg's true source is "Brøchner's notebooks." An attempt is thus made to imply that Heiberg is by no means an original, independent thinker but rather an unethical scholar. All of this is entirely consistent with Kierkegaard's general critique of Heiberg during this time.⁴⁹

1 Possible Sources: The Elder Hans Brøchner

Notabene apparently refers to the pastor and theologian Hans Brøchner (1796–1843), who had recently died on August 12, 1843,⁵⁰ hence "the late (*afdøde*)" Brøchner. This Hans Brøchner is not to be confused with his better-known namesake, Kierkegaard's distant relative, who is familiar to readers for his "Recollections of Kierkegaard."⁵¹ Identifying precisely which of the elder

⁴⁷ For Kierkegaard's use of Socrates as a model for argumentation, see Jon Stewart, *Søren Kierkegaard: Subjectivity, Irony and the Crisis of Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015.

⁴⁸ Note that Kierkegaard records the page reference incorrectly, and the footnote in question appears on p. 245 of Heiberg's article and not p. 244, sc. Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 245n. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 380n.) Georg Benedikt Winer's, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vols. 1–2, 2nd completely revised edition, Leipzig: Carl Heinrich Reclam 1833–1838. This work appears in the *Auction Catalogue* as numbers 70–71. See *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard's Library*, ed. by Katalin Nun, Gerhard Schreiber and Jon Stewart, Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate 2015 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 20), p. 4.

⁴⁹ See Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, pp. 419–447.

⁵⁰ See Thomas Hansen Erslew, *Almindeligt Forfatter-Lexicon for Kongeriget Danmark med tilhørende Bilande, fra 1814 til 1840*, vols. 1–3, Copenhagen: Forlagsforeningens Forlag 1843–1853, vol. 1, p. 245.

⁵¹ Hans Brøchner, "Erindringer om Søren Kierkegaard," *Det Nittende Aarhundrede, Maanedsskrift for Literatur og Kritik*, vol. 5, March 1877, pp. 337–374. (English translation in *Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries*, trans. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 225–252.) This better-known Hans Brøchner was born in 1820 and died in 1873. See Carl Henrik Koch, "Hans Brøchner: Professor of

Brøchner's works is at issue is no easy matter. The editors of the *Papirer* edition simply give a very brief biographical blurb of Brøchner but fail to provide any information about what is meant by the "notebooks (*Collegier*),"⁵² thus discreetly overlooking the problem. Hong's commentary to the passage is in part a paraphrase of what the editors of the *Papirer* wrote earlier, but here a guess is wagered concerning the text in question: "Presumably the tutorial materials of Hans Brøchner (1796–1843), who upon graduation (1817) tutored in theology at the University of Copenhagen."⁵³ It is not completely clear what is meant by "tutorial materials" here. Perhaps the idea is that Brøchner used some of his own notes or drafts of possible works in his tutorials, which he never published but were nonetheless circulated among the students of theology. In this sense what Kierkegaard refers to as "*Collegier*" means "*Kollegieabbonnementer*,"⁵⁴ that is, subscription notes from lectures that students took and shared with one another to prepare for their exams. While this was a well-known practice, we have no confirmation of this in the case of these lectures by Brøchner. The proposal thus seems to be mere speculation, which is impossible to verify in the absence of either the handwritten notes or references to them by other authors. In any case, there is no published version of them.

But if Brøchner did publish something along these lines, it should be possible to find it fairly easily. He did not publish very much, and we can simply go through his works chronologically and see if any of them contains the passage Kierkegaard alludes to. Brøchner's entire *corpus* is in Latin. He seems to have had a special interest in the Pauline letters. He has no publication that would immediately seem to fit the context of an account of the beginning of world history.

His first publication, which is a short study of a passage in 2 Corinthians, is entitled *Inquiritur in sensum dicti Paulini 2 Corinth., XII. v. 7, Commentatio*.⁵⁵ On the title page it indicates that Brøchner presented this text as a lecture at Borch's

Philosophy, Antagonist—and a Loving and Admiring Relative," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy*, Tome I, *German and Scandinavian Philosophy*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate 2012 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 11), pp. 245–265.

⁵² *Pap.* V B 80:2, p. 158, note: "Hans B.[røchner], f.[ødt] 1796, død 12. Aug. 1843. Efter theol. Embedsexamen (1817) manuducerede han i Theologi."

⁵³ *P*, Supplement, 191, note 34.

⁵⁴ See the discussion of this in Finn Gredal Jensen's and Niels W. Bruun's "tekstreddegørelse" to the *Journal KK*, SKS K18, 484–488 / *KJN* 2, 593–596.

⁵⁵ Johannes Brøchner, *Inquiritur in sensum dicti Paulini 2 Corinth., XII. v. 7, Commentatio*, Hafniae: typis Bernhardi Schlesinger 1825. This work contains only 23 pages and is more of an article than a book.

College (listed on the title page as "Collegium Mediceum"). The work refers to the following well-known passage: "Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated."⁵⁶ Brøchner provides a review of earlier interpretations of this verse, and then gives his own highly technical account, criticizing some contemporary German commentators along the way. This work makes no mention of Noah or the Flood, which, given its subject, is not surprising.

It might be argued that the "notebooks (*Collegier*)" that Kierkegaard mentions refer to the series of three further biblical commentaries that the Brøchner wrote in Latin and published between 1826 and 1828, under the title *Commentationum de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum*.⁵⁷ These three texts were then collected and published as a single book as *Commentationes de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum*.⁵⁸ As with his first work, Brøchner presented each of the three installments as public lectures at Borch's College.⁵⁹ This new text is referred to as a "*disputats*,"⁶⁰ but it is doubtful that this has the same meaning as its modern usage, that is, a habilitation thesis presented for a higher academic degree that usually follows several years after the PhD. Instead, "*Disputatser*" here seems rather to be "*disputereøvelser*," that is, public exercises in argumentation held at universities, or in this case Borch's College.⁶¹ In this sense these were the same as Brøchner's first publication. As the title indicates, the work is a philological and dogmatic study of the Pauline letter, 2 Timothy. Brøchner meticulously goes through the letter verse by verse and gives his explanations and commentaries. However, once again the story of the flood appears nowhere in this work, which seems completely irrelevant for Heiberg's article.

⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:7, quoted from the Revised Standard Version.

⁵⁷ Johannes Brøchner, *Commentationum de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum. Specimen I*, Hafniæ: typis Bernhardi Schlesinger 1826 (pp. 1–22). Johannes Brøchner, *Commentationum de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum. Specimen II*, Hafniæ: typis Bernhardi Schlesinger 1827 (pp. 23–36). Johannes Brøchner, *Commentationum de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum. Specimen III*, Hafniæ: typis Bernhardi Schlesinger 1828 (pp. 37–50).

⁵⁸ Johannes Brøchner, *Commentationes de Epistola posteriori Pauli ad Timotheum*, Hafniæ: typis Bernhardi Schlesinger 1829.

⁵⁹ On the title page of each installment, it is indicated that the given installment will be publicly defended on a specific day. The first installment in June of 1826, the second in June of 1827, and the third in December of 1828.

⁶⁰ See *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende*, no. 32, 1826, p. 511. The first installment (from 1826) is listed under the rubric "Disputatser holdne for Stipendiet paa Borchs Collegium." In the catalogue of the Royal Library the works is listed as "Kollegiedisputats, Borchs Kollegium."

⁶¹ See the entry for "Disputats" in the well-known online version of the *Ordbog over det danske Sprog*.

The final book published by Brøchner was his *Idea lexicographiæ Novi Testamenti* from 1832.⁶² Apparently Brøchner's *magnum opus*, this text is primarily a critical review of German works on New Testament lexicography. Like the others, the book is not relevant for the question of the beginning of history, and no mention is made of Noah or the flood. With this work the possibilities are exhausted since the elder Brøchner did not publish anything else, according to Erslew.⁶³ This might seem to support Hong's claim that Kierkegaard's reference is to some unpublished "tutorial materials" by Brøchner. But now, this seems even more dubious than before. Brøchner was a New Testament scholar specialized in the Pauline letters. There is nothing at all to indicate that he had any particular interest in Genesis of the story or the flood. But perhaps there is another solution.

2 Possible Sources: Karl Wilhelm Böttiger

It might be argued that Kierkegaard himself confused the two Hans Brøchners, and the reference is actually to the younger Hans Brøchner, Kierkegaard's relative. In this case, the work in question would be Brøchner's Danish translation of the eight-volume *Die Weltgeschichte in Biographieen* by the German historian and librarian Karl Wilhelm Böttiger (1790–1862).⁶⁴ This work was translated by the younger Brøchner and Albert Conrad Lund (1809–?) under the title *Verdenshistorie i Levnetsbeskrivelser*.⁶⁵ The first four volumes were translated by Lund (1840–1842) and the last four by Brøchner (1844–1845). Lund immigrated to New York, and this might have been the reason why Brøchner took over the work.⁶⁶

As the title indicates, Böttiger goes through world history by means of important figures who played a role in it. The course of history is thus illustrated by accounts of their lives. Most important for our purposes is the first volume,

⁶² Johannes Brøchner, *Idea lexicographiæ Novi Testamenti*, Hafniæ: typis excudebant Bianco Luno & Schneider 1832. This work contains 62 pages.

⁶³ Erslew, *Almindeligt Forfatter-Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 245.

⁶⁴ K.W. Böttiger, *Die Weltgeschichte in Biographieen*, vols. 1–8, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1839–43.

⁶⁵ Karl Wilhelm Böttiger, *Verdenshistorie i Levnetsbeskrivelser*, vols. 1–8, trans. by A.C. Lund and Hans Brøchner, Copenhagen: Steens Forlag 1840–45. See Peter Šajda, "Abraham a Sancta Clara: An Aphoristic Encyclopedia of Christian Wisdom," in *Kierkegaard and the Renaissance and Modern Traditions*, Tome II, *Theology*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 5), p. 8.

⁶⁶ Erslew, *Almindeligt Forfatter-Lexicon*, vol. 2, pp. 159f.

entitled *Die alte Geschichte in Biographieen*, Erster Theil, from 1839.⁶⁷ This work begins with an introduction entitled "Introductory Observations," where the author, like Heiberg, ponders the question of the beginning of world history.⁶⁸ Like Heiberg, Böttiger also sees the need to distinguish between actual history and mythology. He acknowledges the problem of providing a biography from the earliest periods of human existence, where the historicity of the figure in question is dubious.⁶⁹ Along the same lines as Heiberg, he claims that the mythological material cannot be regarded as historical or factually certain, but nonetheless it is still valuable since it presumably contains some shadow of history. This is Böttiger's justification for starting with mythical persons.

Böttiger's first "biography" is of Adam as the first human being, where he oddly refers to the story of the Fall as "the first world-historical fact [*Thatsache*]" since it marks the beginning of human free will.⁷⁰ This squares with Heiberg's claim at the beginning of his work, "history's theater is still not ready as long as human freedom has still not awakened, for only with the ability to choose between good and evil, to act according to a plan and with a goal in mind, does the Idea of history enter into the world, making use of individuals for *its* goal as they work for their own goals."⁷¹ Heiberg does not think that the story of the Fall represents a historical fact, but it symbolizes the beginning of human freedom, which in a sense signals the start of human history. Böttiger also dubiously treats the story of Abel and Cain as historical and refers to the murder of Abel as "a new world-historical appearance."⁷² Likewise, he apparently uncritically regards the biblical account of the implausible longevity of Adam as historically factual.⁷³

But then Böttiger passes on to an account of Noah.⁷⁴ Sticking closely to the biblical story, he seems to take the story of the flood and Noah's ark as historical fact. He does not compare this well-known account of the flood with the other traditions as Heiberg does; however, Böttiger's next biography is dedicated to

67 K.W. Böttiger, *Die alte Geschichte in Biographieen*, Erster Theil, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1839.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–8.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

71 Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 243. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 378f.)

72 K.W. Böttiger, *Die alte Geschichte in Biographieen*, Erster Theil, p. 9.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 9–11.

Manu,⁷⁵ whom Heiberg mentions as the Indian pendant to Noah.⁷⁶ However, unlike Heiberg, Böttiger does not mention the flood in connection with Manu.

While Böttiger might seem a better immediate candidate for Heiberg's hidden source than the elder Hans Brøchner, this proposal still leaves much to be explained. The text in question comes from the first volume of Böttiger's work, which was translated by Lund and not the younger Brøchner. So why would Kierkegaard associate the younger Brøchner with this volume when the first of the latter's translations of the Böttiger only appeared with volume 5 in 1844, that is, the same year as Kierkegaard's *Prefaces*? Is it really plausible that he would associate the whole work with the younger Brøchner, who was only the translator, and not with Böttiger himself as the author? Even if one grants this, why would Kierkegaard confuse this translation by the younger Brøchner with something from the elder Hans Brøchner in the first place? Why would he believe that the elder Brøchner was the translator of Böttiger's text and not the younger Brøchner? Given the elder Brøchner's area of research, New Testament Studies, why would Kierkegaard mistakenly assume that he was the Hans Brøchner listed as the Danish translator of Böttiger's work, which concerned a quite different topic? To explain these questions, the defender of this view would need to appeal to pure speculation, and so we are left once again without any clear source that would fit Kierkegaard's characterization in his draft in *Prefaces*.

3 Possible Sources: Winer

Fortunately, I believe that there is a solution that can be clearly demonstrated. In a sense, all the speculation about what mysterious source Kierkegaard actually had in mind is a moot point since Heiberg's reference to Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch* is completely accurate and explains everything.⁷⁷ This work contains all the key elements that Heiberg mentions concerning the different versions of the story of the flood in antiquity. This can be seen clearly in Winer's study of the story in Genesis and its parallels to other ancient traditions. Like Heiberg, Winer claims that there is a historical element in the story of the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–13.

⁷⁶ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 244. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 380.)

⁷⁷ Heiberg's footnote refers to the entry on Noah, that is, "Noach," in Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, pp. 191–197.

flood.⁷⁸ Unlike Böttiger, Winer discusses in some detail the Asian sources of the story of the flood that were taken up by the authors of Genesis.⁷⁹ Also like Heiberg, Winer draws the parallel of Noah and his wife to the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁸⁰ Winer further mentions the Chaldean story of the flood. From these accounts, it is clear that this is Heiberg's main source as he himself indicated with his reference. This can be demonstrated by comparing the key passages. In Heiberg, the first relevant passage reads as follows:

The Mosaic legend's agreement with the Greek Myth of Deucalion is very obvious. But it bears an even stronger resemblance to the Chaldean tradition, according to which the flood occurred during the reign of the tenth Chaldean King *Sisuthros*. He, like Noah, built an ark, in which he took his children and friends and all animals, and several times sent out birds, just like Noah sent out the dove.⁸¹

Compare this with the following account by Winer:

Die bekannteste Parallele zur noachischen Fluth giebt der Deukalionsmythus Ovid. Met. 1, 253sq. Apollod. bibl. 1, 7. 2. Lucian. dea syr. 12. Hygin, fab. 153., in welchem der phocische Berg Parnasus die Rolle des Ararat spielt...Die meiste Aehnlichkeit aber mit der mos.[ischen] Saga hat die chaldäische..., welche die Fluth unter dem 10. Könige der Chaldäer, Xisuthros (Sisuthros) eintreten lässt, denn auch hier ergeht ein göttliches Gebot an X.[isuthros], er baut ein Fahrzeug u.[nd] nimmt nebst seinen Kinder u.[nd] Freunden alle Tiere darin auf, er sendet wiederholt Vögel aus.⁸²

Heiberg's account is virtually a translation of Winer's German text. Heiberg goes on to mention the following detail, "The Phrygian tradition is known from an ancient Roman coin upon which is portrayed a box floating on the water, in which one sees a man and a woman; on the box a bird is sitting, and another comes flying with a branch in its bill, on which the syllable 'NO' is written in Greek letters."⁸³ The "NO" is thus taken to be a form of Noah's name, which

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 193. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Mary M. Innes, London: Penguin 1955, Book I, pp. 35–39.

⁸¹ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 244. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 379f.)

⁸² Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, p. 193.

⁸³ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 244. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 379f.)

thus unambiguously identifies the story. Heiberg's account here is also taken directly from Winer:

Sehr merkwürdig ist auch die für eine phrygische Sage gleichen Inhalts zeugende bildl.[iche] Darstellung auf Münzen der Stadt Apamea (aus der Zeit des Kaisers Septim.[ius] Severus u.[nd] seiner nächsten Nachfolger). Hier erscheint nämlich ein auf den Fluthen schwimmender Kasten, worin ein Mann u.[nd] eine Frau sichtbar [sind]. Auf dem Kasten sitzt ein Vogel, ein anderer aber mit einem Zweige fliegt heran. Dicht dabei steht dasselbe Menschenpaar mit aufgehobener Rechten auf festem Lande. Und auf dem Kasten selbst ist deutlich ΝΩ zu lesen.⁸⁴

Here Heiberg's use of Winer is so obvious that it cannot be doubted. The language of Winer's account and the details of the story leave no doubt. The Roman coin that both Heiberg and Winer refer to is reproduced in a later reference work entitled *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums zur Erläuterung des Lebens der Griechen und Römer in Religion, Kunst und Sitte*.⁸⁵



Fig. 1: ###

Winer notes that on the ark the Greek letters ΝΩ can be clearly recognized (a point which Heiberg reiterates). In this depiction above from *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums* the full inscription of Noah's name is clearly visible, ΝΩΕ. The image is intended to be read from right to left, just like Hebrew.

⁸⁴ Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, pp. 193f.

⁸⁵ A. Baumeister (ed.), *Denkmäler des klassischen Altertums zur Erläuterung des Lebens der Griechen und Römer in Religion, Kunst und Sitte*, II. Band (*Kadmos-Perikles*), Munich and Leipzig: Verlag von R. Oldenbourg 1887, p. 962.

First, we see Noah and his wife on the ark, which is in the water. Then, we see them having arrived safely on dry land and indicating their gratitude to God by pointing to the heavens.

After his account of the connections to the traditions of the Chaldeans, the Phrygians, and the Greeks and Romans, Heiberg also mentions the version of the story of the flood in India: "According to the Indian myth, Brahman ordered the pious *Manu* to build a ship, which he entered with seven holy men and with all kinds of seeds, including those for the animal world. When the flood came about, the ship, led by the divinity himself, landed on the top of the mountain *Himavan*."⁸⁶ This too is more or less a translation of Winer:

Endlich verdient noch die indische Fluthgeschichte...angeführt zu werden. Der fromme Manus erhält von Brahman selbst den Befehl, ein Schiff zu bauen u.[nd] dasselbe mit 7 heiligen Männern u.[nd] Saamen aller Art, worin die Thierwelt mit begriffen, zu besteigen. Die Fluth tritt ein u.[nd] das Schiff, von der Gottheit selbst geleitet u.[nd] beschützt, landet auf einem Gipfel des Himavan.⁸⁷

This example falls into the category of direct translation rather than paraphrase. Heiberg follows the sequence of Winer's exposition, leaving out here and there individual details that are of less interest to him.

This brings us to the key issue of the age of the biblical account of the flood. Is it the most ancient version from which the other traditions have borrowed, or have the biblical authors borrowed it from another tradition? Heiberg continues as follows: "That all these myths did not arise from one and the same source and are merely climatic variations on an age-old theme has been thoroughly demonstrated by modern scholarly investigations. The Mosaic tradition is indeed regarded as being one of the earliest."⁸⁸ It is after this passage that Heiberg gives the footnote reference to Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*. The pendant to this passage in Winer is as follows: "Dass diese Sagen nicht aus *einer* Quelle hervorgegangen, am wenigstens aber (klimatische) Variationen der mos.[aischen] Relation seien, ist jetzt wohl anerkannt, auch verdienen die Gründe Aufmerksamkeit, durch welche v. *Bohlen* (a.a.O. 219) darzuthun suchte, dass die mos.[aische] Saga eine der jüngeren ist."⁸⁹ Winer refers to the work by the German

⁸⁶ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 244. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 380.)

⁸⁷ Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, p. 194.

⁸⁸ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," pp. 244f. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 380.)

⁸⁹ Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, p. 194.

orientalist Peter von Bohlen (1796–1840) *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert*.⁹⁰ Here we can see that Heiberg’s text is a direct translation of Winer, and so it makes perfect sense that he references this here with a footnote. This amounts to almost a full page of continuous text in Winer that Heiberg has paraphrased and translated into Danish without really adding or inserting anything of his own.

Heiberg continues his reflections by considering what can be learned from the geological record about the possibility of an ancient flood:

The actual fact, for which these different accounts give a great probability, receives new confirmation with the important elucidations which geology and natural history have given us concerning our planet’s revolutions in a time preceding all historical accounts. The cockleshells which one finds in such huge quantities on the dry land and even in the parts of the country at the greatest distance from the sea, the fossils of fish and other sea animals which have been excavated from high mountain tops, and the strata in the earth’s crust give proofs of an expansive flood, which brought all these things with itself. Similarly, the fossilized mammoths and fossil bones of elephants found in Siberia and other countries, whose climates would now preclude the existence of these animals, demonstrate, as is well known, the actual existence of a great revolution of nature of the kind which is described in the myth of the Flood.⁹¹

Here again, Heiberg closely follows the account of Winer, who refers to a work of, among others, the French naturalist Philippe-Isidore Picot de Lapeyrouse (1744–1818):

Eine physical.[ische] Untersuchung der Ursachen, welche die grosse Fluth selbst herbeigeführt haben, stellte bereits *P. Picot* in der Museum Hag. I. 165 ff. an. Er führte Alles auf eine gehemmte Axenbewegung der Erde zurück. So viel ist theils nach obigen Sagen, theils nach der innern u.[nd] äussern Geschichte des Erdbodens selbst entschieden, dass die obere Kruste, welche den Erdkörper umgiebt (selbst die höchsten Gebirge nicht ausgenommen), durch eine grosse Fluth gebildet worden sei, deren Allgemeinheit freilich dadurch etwas zweifelhaft gemacht wird (Link Urwelt II. 78 ff.), dass zwar überall fossile Thierknochen, aber nirgends Menschenknochen gefunden worden sind. Die geringe Verbreitung des Menschengeschlechts vor der Fluth und dessen Beschränkung auf Asien, dessen Gebirge noch nicht hinlänglich durchforscht sind, kann jenen Zweifel nicht vollständig heben.⁹²

⁹⁰ Peter von Bohlen, *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erläutert*, Königsberg: im Verlag der Gebrüder Bornträger 1835.

⁹¹ Heiberg, “Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse,” p. 245. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 380f.)

⁹² Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, p. 196.

Here Heiberg's passage is not a direct translation or a loose paraphrase of Winer's text, but it is clear that Heiberg is nonetheless drawing on it and expanding on it with his own knowledge of geology. Both Heiberg and Winer offer some reflections on the possible date of the flood, but their accounts are not really similar.⁹³ Heiberg continues the analysis with his knowledge of the history of astronomy, which Winer does not enter into to the same extent.

III Was Heiberg really a Plagiarist?

Given the foregoing comparison of Heiberg's article with Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*, there can be absolutely no doubt that the latter was the Heiberg's main source for the passages in question about the story of Noah and the flood. Since Heiberg makes no secret of the source of his information but rather references it directly in a footnote, it would seem that he is completely cleared of all charges of plagiarism.⁹⁴

But this was not Kierkegaard's point in the draft of *Prefaces* that we discussed since it will be recalled that his claim was that Heiberg was plagiarizing *from another text* and not from the one that he actually referenced. While, as we have seen, Kierkegaard suggests another possible source, namely, the elder Hans Brøchner, the mystery text appears not to exist, which explains why the editors of the *Papirer* and the *Hongs* were unable to locate it. Let us recall Kierkegaard's words cited above: "It is a pity that he cites his source (Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch*); otherwise, I could swear that it was taken from the late Brøchner's notebooks [*Collegier*], where the same passage occurs almost word for word."⁹⁵ Is it really possible to imagine that there is another text, from "the late Brøchner" or anyone for that matter, that would come closer to the actual wording of Heiberg than that of Winer? The many examples just cited speak for themselves. It can be fairly said that Heiberg takes Winer's text almost "word for word" for an entire page or so. But Kierkegaard's critique implies that this is not Heiberg's real source but rather there is another one

⁹³ Heiberg, "Om Principet for Historiens Begyndelse," p. 250. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 385.) Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studierende, Kandidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger ausgearbeitet*, vol. 2, p. 196.

⁹⁴ With this said, it should be noted that by modern standards one would have expected Heiberg to indicate with quotation marks the use of a direct quotation of some of the passages from Winer that he translates. But his procedure of just indicating the source once fully corresponded to the scholarly standards of the time.

⁹⁵ *Pap. V B 80:2 / P*, Supplement, 113–114.

that comes even closer. This is simply impossible. How can another text be closer than a direct word for word translation?

It is impossible to know what exactly Kierkegaard was thinking here, but in any case his charge of plagiarism against Heiberg is completely unfounded. It might well be that the reason that the passage intended for *Prefaces* ended up a draft that Kierkegaard decided not to use was that, after he wrote it, he himself could not find the actual text that he had in mind. Given this, he then decided to forgo this point of criticism. If he had investigated the matter, it would have been impossible for him to find any text that was closer to the passages in question in Heiberg's article than that of Winer.

The question of Kierkegaard's reaction to Heiberg's text illustrates that we should not be lulled to sleep by the mistaken notion that by the word "Skrifter" (in contrast to "Værker," "Papirer" or "Journaler," etc.) in the title of the edition *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, we have before us everything that Kierkegaard wrote. This mistaken assumption implies that we need only make a word search of this edition, and with that our research is complete. In fact, the absence in *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* of the material that the editors of the *Papirer* edition placed under the category "B" can have great importance for a given research topic like the one explored in this article. If one had simply dropped the matter of Kierkegaard's possible relation to Heiberg's "On the Principle of the Beginning of History" with a negative result of a word search in *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, then the only conclusion to be drawn would be that Kierkegaard had no relation to this text. As we have seen, the reason for this negative result is 1) that the commentators of *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* missed the allusion to Heiberg's article in *The Concept of Anxiety*, and 2) *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* does not contain the material from the "B" category of the *Papirer*, where the draft to *Prefaces* appears, in which Kierkegaard mentions the article with a reference to the *Intelligensblade*. All of this is, of course, not to diminish in any way the monumental contribution which *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* represents and which I am the first to recognize. However, like any edition, it has its own implicit set of limitations, which need to be taken into account in any research program. Thus, a negative result of a word search in *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* is not necessarily the final word.