

Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources
Volume 6, Tome I

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Kierkegaard and His German Contemporaries

Tome I: Philosophy

Edited by
JON STEWART

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Hegel:

Kierkegaard's Reading and Use of Hegel's Primary Texts

Jon Stewart

Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is one of the great hobbyhorses of nineteenth-century philosophy. The way in which this story has traditionally been told is, however, entirely one-sided. According to the standard view, Kierkegaard rejected every aspect of Hegel's thought and was one of the most virulent anti-Hegelians in the history of philosophy. This view was articulated most clearly in Niels Thulstrup's *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*.¹

In a recent work I have tried to call this view into question in part by means of a study of Kierkegaard's relations to some of the main figures of the Danish Hegel reception.² Kierkegaard's view of Hegel was profoundly shaped by his view of then contemporary Danish Hegelians and by an extensive and quickly growing body of secondary literature on Hegel at the time. The inordinate size of that body of material, both in Danish and in German, makes it an almost inexhaustible field of study. It is not possible in a short article of this kind to treat this material in a way that does it justice. What I wish to do instead is explore Kierkegaard's *direct* relation to Hegel, that is, his relation to Hegel's primary texts in contrast to his *indirect* relation via various Danish or German Hegelians. Thus, I wish to trace as carefully as possible the various references, quotations, paraphrases or allusions to Hegel's works that appear in Kierkegaard's *œuvre*.

I have generally tried to limit myself to passages which clearly and unambiguously refer to Hegel's primary texts. Passages where Kierkegaard uses Hegelian language or methodology will not be dealt with since the absence of a direct citation or quotation makes it difficult to unambiguously identify Kierkegaard's source. Hegelian jargon and motifs were common currency in the philosophical language of the day, and Kierkegaard's occasional use of them may well have been inspired by secondary sources rather than Hegel's primary texts. Thus, while there may well be passages

¹ That is, *Kierkegaards forhold til Hegel og til den spekulative idealisme indtil 1846*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1967. *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. by George L. Stengren, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980. German translation: *Kierkegaards Verhältnis zu Hegel und zum spekulativen Idealismus 1835–1846*, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer 1972.

² Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003.

of this sort which can be interpreted as reactions to or commentaries on specific passages in Hegel, I have omitted mentioning them here unless their actual source in Hegel's primary texts can be unambiguously established.

I will proceed chronologically by tracing the references to Hegel's works that can be found in both Kierkegaard's published texts and in his journals and notebooks. Kierkegaard cites Hegel extensively until 1843, but after *Either/Or* unambiguous references to his primary texts all but disappear. While he owned several of Hegel's primary texts, he does not appear to have made a careful study of them before working on his dissertation. Thus, the actual period of Kierkegaard's use of Hegel's primary texts as sources is surprisingly short, that is, from around 1840 to 1843. This thesis will strike many as counterintuitive since his great polemic with Hegel is usually considered to have reached its culmination in 1846 with the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, but that work evinces no evidence of any renewed study of any of Hegel's primary texts.

On the basis of the texts he cites I will argue that Hegel's influence on Kierkegaard is, generally speaking, quite positive: Kierkegaard makes productive use of a number of analyses in Hegel's primary texts. Further, I wish to argue that Kierkegaard tended to read Hegel in an *ad hoc* fashion. In other words, he never made an exhaustive study of any one of Hegel's works but rather carefully explored individual sections and passages in Hegel's texts which were relevant for his own intellectual agenda. Hegel was thus an important interlocutor and source of inspiration in the development of Kierkegaard's authorship.

I. The Early Journals AA-KK and the Notebooks 1–7

There are scattered references to Hegel in the journals *AA*,³ *BB*,⁴ and *CC*,⁵ but none of these contains quotations or paraphrases of any of Hegel's works and thus evidence no first-hand familiarity with them. In *Journal DD* Hegel appears in a handful of entries.⁶ This journal contains Kierkegaard's reading notes to Karl Rosenkranz's article, "Eine Parallele zur Religionsphilosophie."⁷ In this context Hegel is named twice in reference to his philosophy of religion.⁸ In one of these passages Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is quoted.⁹ While this represents the first direct reference to

³ SKS 17, 19, AA:12. SKS 17, 42, AA:22. SKS 17, 49, AA:36. SKS 17, 49, AA:37.

⁴ SKS 17, 119, BB:25. SKS 17, 121, BB:32.

⁵ SKS 17, 200, CC:12.

⁶ Here one finds Kierkegaard's familiar complaint about people who try to go beyond Hegel (SKS 17, 262, DD:141) and his comparison of Hegel with Johannes Climacus (SKS 17, 277, DD:203).

⁷ Karl Rosenkranz, "Eine Parallele zur Religionsphilosophie," *Zeitschrift für spekulative Theologie*, vols. 1–3, ed. by Bruno Bauer, Berlin: Dümmler 1836–38, vol. 2, no. 1, 1837, pp. 1–31 (ASKB 354–357). See SKS K17, p. 371.

⁸ SKS 17, 220–1, DD:10.

⁹ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 292f. / *Jub.* vol. 2, p. 371. There he quotes the following (which is itself quoted by Rosenkranz): "In this knowledge of himself as the sum and substance of all actual powers, this lord and master of the world is the titanic self-consciousness that

a primary text by Hegel, it is clear from the context that Kierkegaard's information is second-hand since he quotes Rosenkranz's quotation of Hegel. Just after this there is a marginal note with a reference to the concept of pure being in Hegel.¹⁰ Later there is an allusion to what Hegel calls "*Ernsthaftigkeit*."¹¹ These too are based on Rosenkranz's article.

In another passage, in a marginal note Kierkegaard quotes Hegel. There he writes, "just like the Gymnosophists among the Indians: 'Naked Fakirs wander about without any occupation, like the mendicant friars of the Catholic Church; they live from the alms of others, and make it their aim to reach the highest degree of abstraction.' Cf. Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 183."¹² The gymnosophists were ascetic wise men of India, whom Hegel discusses in his lectures. While, it is true, this is a direct quotation from Hegel's posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, it is doubtful that Kierkegaard made a systematic study of this work at this time. The undated marginal entry was most likely added around 1840 or 1841 when Kierkegaard, while working on his dissertation *The Concept of Irony*, had occasion to read these lectures carefully.¹³

Kierkegaard wrote the *Journal DD* from the front and then turned it around and wrote from the back the student comedy, *The Conflict between the Old and the New Soap-Cellar*. The cast of characters includes "A fly who has wisely wintered for many years with the late Hegel and who has been so fortunate as to have sat on his immortal nose several times during the composition of his work, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*."¹⁴ It is generally conceded that this satire is directed primarily against the Danish Hegelians. In any case, this reference to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and

thinks of itself as being an actual living god. But since he is only the *formal* self which is unable to tame those powers, his activities and self-enjoyment are equally monstrous." (*PhS* = Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1977. *Jub.* = *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe in 20 Bänden*, edited by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928–41.)

¹⁰ SKS 17, 222, DD:11.a.

¹¹ SKS 17, 239, DD:50.a.

¹² SKS 17, 266, DD:161.b. Quoted from Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 150 / *Jub.* vol. 11, p. 205. (*Phil. of Hist* = *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree, New York: Willey Book Co. 1944.)

¹³ In a footnote in *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard quotes the following passage from the same analysis in Hegel's lectures: "In the episode Nala, in the poem of Mahabharata, we have a story of a virgin who in her twenty-first year—the age in which the maidens themselves have a right to choose a husband—makes a selection from among her wooers. There are five of them; but the maiden remarks that four of them do not stand firmly on their feet, and thence infers correctly that they are gods. She therefore chooses the first, who is a veritable man." SKS 1, 245n / *CI*, 199n. Quoted from Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 2nd edition, ed. by Karl Hegel, Berlin 1840, p. 185. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 151 / *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 207.

¹⁴ SKS 17, 281, DD:208 / *EPW*, 106.

a later one to Hegel's well-known doctrine of the bad infinity¹⁵ are not enough to support the claim that Kierkegaard studied his works directly at this time.

There are three references to Hegel respectively in *Journal EE*¹⁶ and *Journal FF*,¹⁷ none of which refers to a primary text. The long *Journal JJ* contains several references to Hegel, but no primary text is mentioned or quoted.¹⁸ Hegel makes only a single appearance in the *Journal KK*,¹⁹ in the context of Kierkegaard's reading notes to Julius Schaller's work on Strauss' *The Life of Christ*.²⁰

Notebooks 1–7 follow the pattern of the early journals in that the references to Hegel are second-hand and appear in the context of Kierkegaard's readings of other authors. In *Notebook 4*, for example, Hegel is mentioned in lecture notes to Martensen's *Introduction to Speculative Dogmatics*,²¹ reading notes to Erdmann's *Vorlesungen über Glauben und Wissen*,²² and reading notes to Christian Hermann Weiße's review of Julius Schaller's book on Hegel's philosophy.²³ *Notebook 5* twice mentions Hegel's relation to Schelling and the doctrine of the immanent movement of thought,²⁴ but neither mention offers evidence of any detailed study of his texts.

¹⁵ SKS 17, 295.10–15, DD:208 / EPW, 122. (Translated in EPW as the “spurious infinity.”)

¹⁶ SKS 18, 14, EE:26 / JP 2, 1576. SKS 18, 17, EE:35 / JP 2, 1577. SKS 18, 34f., EE:93 / JP 2, 1578. (While I have consistently referenced JP, many of the quoted passages are my own translations.)

¹⁷ SKS 18, 96, FF:108 / JP 2, 1571. SKS 18, 109, FF:176 / JP 2, 1572. SKS 18, 113, FF:196 / JP 2, 1574.

¹⁸ SKS 18, 193, JJ:165 / JP 5, 5697. SKS 18, 200, JJ:187 / JP 2, 1604. SKS 18, 202, JJ:194 / JP 1, 704. SKS 18, 224, JJ:265 / JP 2, 1605. SKS 18, 225, JJ:267 / JP 2, 1941. SKS 18, 231, JJ:288 / JP 3, 3300. SKS 18, 233, JJ:293 / JP 5, 5768. SKS 18, 235f., JJ:303 / JP 3, 3303. SKS 18, 299, JJ:478 / JP 3, 3327. SKS 18, 302f., JJ:488 / JP 1, 1042.

¹⁹ SKS 18, 324.9, KK:2.

²⁰ Julius Schaller, *Der historische Christus und die Philosophie. Kritik der Grundidee des Werks das Leben Jesu von Dr. D.F. Strauss*, Leipzig 1838 (ASKB 759). See SKS K18, p. 489.

²¹ SKS 19, 127, Not4:4. SKS 19, 128, Not4:5. SKS 19, 136, Not4:9.

²² SKS 19, 145f., Not4:14. Johann Eduard Erdmann, *Vorlesungen über Glauben und Wissen als Einleitung in die Dogmatik und Religionsphilosophie gehalten und auf den Wunsch seiner Zuhörer herausgegeben*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1837 (ASKB 479). See SKS K19, pp. 199f.

²³ SKS 19, 170f., Not4:46. Christian Hermann Weiße, “Die drei Grundfragen der gegenwärtigen Philosophie. Mit Bezug auf die Schrift: *Die Philosophie unserer Zeit. Zur Apologie und Erläuterung des Hegelschen Systemes*. Von Julius Schaller. Leipzig, Hinrichs. 1837,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie*, ed. by I.H. Fichte, vol. 1, no. 1, 1837, pp. 67–114; vol. 1, no. 2, 1837, pp. 161–201 (ASKB 354–357). See SKS K19, pp. 217f.

²⁴ SKS 19, 185, Not5:18 / JP 2, 1593. SKS 19, 185, Not5:21 / JP 2, 1590.

II. From the Papers of One Still Living

In Kierkegaard's first published book, *From the Papers of One Still Living*, from 1838, Hegel is referred to four times in the first few pages, albeit without any clear or direct textual references. On the very first page, Kierkegaard writes the following:

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.²⁵

With this strikingly positive statement, Kierkegaard refers to a point of much discussion at the time, namely the proper, logically justified beginning of philosophy. Here he does little more than simply state his agreement with Hegel's account of this beginning (presumably that given in the *Science of Logic* or the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*). He also goes out of his way to laud the immanent nature of Hegel's dialectical movement, which, of course, lies at the heart of his dialectical and systematic thinking. These highly positive comments must have been quite striking for contemporary readers given that Hegel's philosophy was being discussed quite critically in Denmark at the time. Thus, Kierkegaard's statements here were inevitably taken to be an expression of a party affiliation with the Hegelians.²⁶

Kierkegaard refers to Hegel's account of the beginning of philosophy again in the context of a critical discussion of contemporary literature:

The extraordinary willingness and readiness, the almost gracious obligingness, with which thousands in our own day, as soon as a reasonable word has been spoken, ever stand ready to misunderstand it, has also been in tireless activity here. Its extent can easily be determined by everyone who has observed that the entire recent literature is, on the one hand, so completely preoccupied with prefacing and writing introductions. It has forgotten that the beginning with nothing of which Hegel speaks was mastered by himself in the system and was by no means a failure to appreciate the great richness actuality has.²⁷

²⁵ SKS 1, 17 / EPW, 61.

²⁶ Both H.C. Andersen and Henrik Hertz, upon reading this work, took Kierkegaard to be a Hegelian. Andersen writes, *From the Papers of One Still Living* was "somewhat difficult to read because of the Hegelian heaviness of expression." Hans Christian Andersen, *Mit Livs Eventyr*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1855, p. 198. (Reprinted in Andersen's *Samlede Skrifter*, vols. 1–15, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1876–80, vol. 1, p. 188.) See *Encounters with Kierkegaard. A Life as Seen By His Contemporaries*, trans. and ed. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996, p. 28. Similarly, Hertz warns, "Those who have picked up on the German philosophy are completely incapable of practicing it in Danish. Their text teems with words of which no Dane knows the meaning. [Kierkegaard's] work on Andersen shows what language we can expect from this philosophy." Ibid., p. 218.

²⁷ SKS 1, 18 / EPW, 62. Kierkegaard refers to Hegel again somewhat cryptically in a footnote to this passage: SKS 1, 18n / EPW, 62n: "The Hegelians, however, must not be taken altogether literally when they mention their relation to actuality, for when in this respect they refer to their master's immortal work (his *Logic*), it seems to me to be like the rules

Particularly striking here is Kierkegaard's laudatory assessment of "the great richness" of actuality in Hegel's system. Usually, Kierkegaard is known for his criticism of Hegel's thought for being too abstract or for forgetting actuality and existence. Here he lauds him for just the opposite.

The same two points—Hegel's account of the beginning of philosophy and his immanent dialectic—are referred to again in another passage a few pages later. Kierkegaard again favorably contrasts Hegel to a modern view he wishes to criticize. The modern view under scrutiny is characterized thus:

A sorrier form of the same delusion...is to be seen in the main trend of the age in the political sphere. This form misunderstands the deeper significance of historical evolution and clings curiously enough, as if in a fight for its life, to the cliché that the world always becomes wiser, understood, please note, with a reasoning favorable to this moment but parodic.²⁸

The point seems to be that the modern age holds the past in contempt, arrogantly ascribing to itself a knowledge superior to that of past ages; however, it fails to see that its own achievements are in fact built on the failures of past ages. Kierkegaard then adds: "Like Hegel, it [the tendency] begins, not the system but existence, with nothing, and the negative element, through which and by virtue of which all the movements occur (Hegel's immanent negativity of the Concept), is distrust, which undeniably has such a negative force that it...must end by killing itself."²⁹ Kierkegaard refers to Hegel's dialectical method according to which the positive is produced from the negative and vice versa. Thus, Hegel is more even-handed in his assessment of the past since he realizes that past ideas which are now discredited were necessary for the evolution of the current views which refute them. There is value in the past, which the modern age, in its rush towards improvement and innovation, fails to see.

The references to Hegel in the text focus on issues from the *Science of Logic*, but these issues—the beginning of philosophy and the immanent dialectic—were generally familiar to most students of theology or philosophy at the University of Copenhagen at the time and thus do not necessarily presuppose any profound knowledge of Hegel's work. Yet if these references to Hegel evince no close study of his primary texts, they do nonetheless evince a general interest in his thought, especially given that they have little to do with the actual subject matter of *From the*

governing rank and precedence, in which, beginning with secretaries (*Seyn*, pure being), one then through 'other secretaries' (*das Andre, das Besondere, Nichts*—therefore it is also said that other secretaries *sind so viel wie Nichts*)—lets the category 'actual secretaries etc.' appear, without therefore being entitled to conclude that there is in actuality a single 'actual secretary.'" For an explanation of this complicated reference, see the commentary to this passage in SKS K1, 83, "Rangforordning." A precursor to this passage is SKS 17, 49, AA:37. This is as close as Kierkegaard comes to a direct textual reference in this work. But even here it is not clear if by the "immortal work" he means to refer to the *Science of Logic* or the first volume of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, which is of course also dedicated to logic.

²⁸ SKS 1, 18f. / EPW, 63. Translation slightly modified.

²⁹ SKS 1, 20 / EPW, 64. Translation slightly modified.

Papers of One Still Living. In addition to these direct references to Hegel, it has often been noted that much of the language of the work itself is Hegelian.

III. The Concept of Irony

Søren Kierkegaard's 1841 master's thesis, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, directly cites and makes extensive use of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,³⁰ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,³¹ *Lectures on Aesthetics*,³² the *Philosophy of Right*³³ and Hegel's review of Solger's posthumous writings.³⁴ Much of the language of *The Concept of Irony* is Hegelian, and many of the analyses closely follow those found in the aforementioned works.

Kierkegaard's short Introduction is clearly indebted to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Although Kierkegaard is usually associated with criticisms of abstraction, his Introduction calls for balancing the abstract and the empirical: "If there is anything that must be praised in the modern philosophical endeavor in its magnificent manifestation, it certainly is the power of genius with which it seizes and holds on to the phenomenon."³⁵ This encomium contrasts noticeably with his later criticisms that it is precisely the concrete phenomenon which speculative philosophy at best fails to grasp and at worst simply forgets or ignores.

The Introduction begins by discussing the respective roles of philosophy and history *vis-à-vis* one another. In this context he likens philosophy to a confessor, who hears the confession of history.³⁶ But this image does not necessarily indicate that he believes philosophy is superior to history. He ultimately argues for the importance of

³⁰ *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Eduard Gans, Berlin 1837, vol. 9 in *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, Carl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schulze, Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot 1832–45.

³¹ *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, I–III, ed. by Carl Ludwig Michelet, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1833–36, vols. 13–5 (ASKB 557–559) in *Hegel's Werke*, op. cit.

³² *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, I–III, ed. by Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot 1835–38, vols. 10–1, 10–2, 10–3 (ASKB 1384–1386) in *Hegel's Werke*, op. cit.

³³ *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, ed. by Eduard Gans, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1833 (2nd ed., 1840), vol. 8 (ASKB 551) in *Hegel's Werke*, op. cit.

³⁴ "Über Solger's nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel. Herausgegeben von Ludwig Tieck und Friedrich von Raumer. Erster Band 780 S. mit Vorr. XVI S. Zweiter Band 784 S. Leipzig, 1826," *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Erster Artikel (March 1828), nos. 51–2, pp. 403–6, nos. 53–4, pp. 417–28; Zweiter Artikel (June 1828), nos. 105–6, pp. 838–48, nos. 107–8, pp. 849–64, nos. 109–10, pp. 865–70. Reprinted in *Vermischte Schriften*, I–II, ed. by Friedrich Förster and Ludwig Boumann, Berlin 1834–35, vols. 16–17 in *Hegel's Werke*, op. cit., vol. 16 (1834), pp. 436–506 (ASKB 555–556). In *Jub.* vol. 20, pp. 132–202.

³⁵ SKS 1, 71 / CI, 9. Translation slightly modified.

³⁶ SKS 1, 72 / CI, 10.

both, the abstract idea and the concrete historical event, and the need for both sides of this dialectical relation to receive their due:

[philosophy and history] ought to have their rights so that, on the one hand, the phenomenon has its rights and is not to be intimidated and discouraged by philosophy's superiority, and philosophy, on the other hand, is not to let itself be infatuated by the charms of the particular, is not to be distracted by the superabundance of the particular. The same holds for the concept of irony: philosophy is not to look too long at one particular side of its phenomenological existence and above all at its appearance but is to see the truth of the concept in and with the phenomenological.³⁷

Here Kierkegaard in effect states that he wishes to employ Hegel's dialectic in his approach to the historical concept of irony. What is surprising is that this champion of concrete actuality and existence warns against becoming too fixated on the empirical and the particular and urges that the investigation keep to the abstract or, more specifically, that it see the abstract concept in the actual empirical entities. This could hardly be said better by Hegel himself.

In the first chapter, "The View Made Possible," Kierkegaard plays the role of the philologist, examining and comparing the different portrayals of Socrates with an eye towards the characterization of his use of irony. Generally speaking, Hegel plays a rather minimal role in this chapter, although his doctrine of the bad infinity³⁸ and his characterization of irony as "infinite, absolute negativity"³⁹ are mentioned. Nonetheless Kierkegaard demonstrates a keen awareness and understanding of his dialectical method. In one passage he contrasts Plato's dialectic unfavorably with Hegel's speculative method:

At this point I cannot elaborate on the relation between a dichotomy as found in Plato and the kind of trichotomy the modern and in a stricter sense speculative development insists on...Presumably the Socratically disciplined dialogue is an attempt to allow the thought itself to emerge in all its objectivity, but the successive conception and intuition, which only the dialectical trilogy makes possible, is, of course, lacking.⁴⁰

Kierkegaard thus reiterates Hegel's criticism that the Platonic dialectic stops with the negative and contains no positive element. Kierkegaard later draws an analogy between the Socratic *ἐλεγχος* and the negative dimension in the Hegelian dialectic and praises the immanent nature of Hegel's dialectical method,⁴¹ which requires

³⁷ SKS 1, 72f. / CI, 10f. See also SKS 1, 71 / CI, 9: "Therefore, even if the observer does bring the concept along with him, it is still of great importance that the phenomenon remain inviolate and that the concept be seen as coming into existence through the phenomenon."

³⁸ SKS 1, 82 / CI, 21. SKS 1, 83 / CI, 22. SKS 1, 85 / CI, 23. See also SKS 2, 281 / EO1, 292. SKS 3, 34 / EO2, 26. SKS 7, 109f. / CUP1, 112f. SKS 7, 309 / CUP1, 338. SKS 18, 17, EE:35 / JP 2, 1577. SKS 18, 45, EE:119 / JP 2, 1579. SKS 20, 67, NB:76 / JP 3, 2811. SKS 17, 247, DD:77 / JP 4, 3857.

³⁹ SKS 1, 87 / CI, 26. See also SKS 1, 297 / CI, 259. SKS 1, 299 / CI, 261.

⁴⁰ SKS 1, 93f. / CI, 32.

⁴¹ SKS 1, 96 / CI, 35: "In this sense, Socratic questioning is clearly, even though remotely, analogous to the negative in Hegel, except that the negative, according to Hegel, is a necessary

nothing external. Kierkegaard makes it clear that he prefers Hegel's dialectic to Plato's. For example, he writes,

In the second case [sc. of Socratic dialectic], the subject is an account to be settled between the one asking and the one answering, and the thought developed fulfills itself in this rocking gait (*alterno pede*), in this limping on both sides. This, too, is of course a kind of dialectical movement, but since the element of unity is lacking, inasmuch as every answer contains a possibility of a new question, it is not the truly dialectical evolution. This understanding of questioning and answering is identical with the meaning of dialogue, which is like a symbol of the Greek conception of the relation between deity and man, where there certainly is a reciprocal relation but no element of unity (neither an immediate nor a higher unity), and genuine duality is really lacking also....⁴²

Truly dialectical progress requires negations or oppositions to be generated immanently by the original position; when they come from the outside, there is no necessary relation between the original position and the contradiction that arises. Hegel's dialectic, unlike Plato's, can continue to advance without outside assistance.⁴³

This initial chapter also contains two direct references (both in Kierkegaard's account of Aristophanes) to Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In the first he quotes Hegel presumably to support his point that one should resist the temptation to interpret the past in terms of the issues and categories of one's present age, which in the case at hand would presumably lead to a critical condemnation of the Sophists.⁴⁴ One of Kierkegaard's central theses is that Socrates had no positive

element in thought itself, is a determinant *ad intra*; in Plato, the negative is made graphic and placed outside the object in the inquiring individual. In Hegel, the thought does not need to be questioned from the outside, for it asks and answers itself from within; in Plato, thought answers only insofar as it is questioned, but whether or not it is questioned is accidental, and how it is questioned is not less accidental."

⁴² SKS 1, 97 / CI, 35f. See also his account of "the negative element" which is "the propelling element in thought" (SKS 1, 159 / CI, 106).

⁴³ Later Kierkegaard underscores the same point again when he writes, "We have not, therefore, a genuinely Platonic dichotomy, which, as noted earlier, suffers from all the troubles of a dichotomy because it has the negative outside itself and the unity achieved can never hypostasize itself." SKS 1, 160 / CI, 107. See also: "...while the essentially philosophical dialectic, the speculative, unites, the negative dialectic, because it relinquishes the idea, is a broker who continually makes transactions in a lower sphere; that is, it separates." SKS 1, 200f. / CI, 151.

⁴⁴ SKS 1, 186n / CI, 135n: "In this exposition I have mainly focused on the intellectual aspect, because this obviously is closest to Greek culture. To be sure, a similar dialectic, the arbitrary, manifests itself in an even more lamentable form in the ethical sphere, but in this respect I also believe that the characteristic features of one's own age are sometimes given too much attention in interpreting the transitional period of Greek culture in Aristophanes' day. Hegel is quite correct in saying (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, p. 70): 'We must not blame the Sophists because, in the aimlessness of their time, they did not discover the principle of the good.'" Kierkegaard quotes Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, op. cit., vol. 14, p. 70. See *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 406 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 70. (*Hist. of Phil.* I–III =

doctrine but rather represented sheer negativity. He cites the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* in support of his position:

Hegel, after having shown how the Socratic dialectic destroys all the concrete qualifications of the good at the expense of the good itself as the empty, contentless universal, and with the aid thereof, also notes that it is Aristophanes who has understood Socrates' philosophy merely from its negative side (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, p. 85). But, of course, if there had been a Platonic positivity in Socrates, then, however much freedom the Greeks allowed their comedy writers, Aristophanes undeniably has overstepped the boundary, the boundary the comic itself possesses, the requirement that it must be true to the comic point of view.⁴⁵

Here Kierkegaard refers again to Hegel's account of Socrates, where one reads, "Aristophanes regarded the Socratic philosophy from the negative side, maintaining that through the cultivation of reflecting consciousness, the idea of law had been shaken, and we cannot question the justice of this conception."⁴⁶ Kierkegaard thus agrees with Hegel's judgment that Aristophanes was correct to characterize Socrates as wholly negative. He then interprets the absence of protests against Aristophanes' characterization as evidence that it (and Hegel) are correct.

In his second chapter, entitled, "The Actualization of the View," Kierkegaard departs from his philological analysis of the various depictions of Socrates and focuses on the content of those portrayals. While, for obvious reasons, Hegel played little role in the philological considerations in the first chapter, Kierkegaard's interpretation of the meaning of the historical Socrates draws freely on Hegel's accounts of Socrates in particular and the Greek world in general.

Kierkegaard's analysis of Socrates' daimon⁴⁷ amounts to little more than stringing together quotations from Hegel's texts. He quotes directly the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*⁴⁸ and from the *Philosophy of Right*.⁴⁹ Most importantly, however, his account is largely derivative from Hegel's treatment of the same issue in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, which are also quoted several times.⁵⁰ Kierkegaard introduces Hegel into this discussion with a quotation from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*:

One of Hegel's statements expresses in a general sense and yet very pregnantly how to understand the daimon: "Socrates, in assigning to insight, to conviction, the determination

Lectures on the History of Philosophy, vols. 1–3, trans. by E.S. Haldane, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1995.)

⁴⁵ SKS 1, 202n / CI, 152n and f.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, op. cit., vol. 14, p. 85. See *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 426 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 85.

⁴⁷ SKS 1, 207–15 / CI, 157–67.

⁴⁸ SKS 1, 211 / CI, 161. Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, vol. 1, pp. 269–70 / *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 350–351.

⁴⁹ SKS 1, 211 / CI, 162. Hegel, *PR*, § 279, Remark / *Jub.*, vol. 7, pp. 385–6. (*PR* = *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by H.B. Nisbet, ed. by Allen Wood, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1991.)

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 421–5 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 89–100.

of men's actions, posited the individual as capable of a final moral decision, in contraposition to country and customary morality, and thus made himself an oracle in the Greek sense. He said that he had a δαίμόνιον within himself, which counselled him what to do, and revealed to him what was advantageous to his friends."⁵¹

Also by way of introduction to Hegel's treatment of the issue, the *Philosophy of Right* is quoted as follows:

In the *Philosophy of Right* also, Hegel discusses this daimon of Socrates. See § 279: "In the daimon of Socrates, we can see how the will which in the past had simply projected itself *beyond* itself began to turn in upon itself and to recognize itself from within, which is the beginning of a self-knowing and hence genuine freedom."⁵²

Kierkegaard quotes these two texts here at the outset and then goes on to make extensive use of Hegel's most detailed treatment of this issue in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.⁵³

Kierkegaard follows Hegel by interpreting the Socratic daimon as a new and destructive influence on traditional Greek morality and religion. According to Hegel, prior to the appearance of Socrates and critical reflection, the Greeks lived in a state of pure immediacy, regarding their customs and traditions as the natural order of things. The web of religious belief, cultural values, and tradition, which Hegel designated by the term "*Sittlichkeit*," so thoroughly enveloped the individual that it never occurred to anyone to question it. Kierkegaard quotes Hegel, as follows, "the standpoint of the Greek mind was natural morality, in which man did not yet determine himself."⁵⁴ People simply obeyed traditional laws and customs without reflection and thereby displayed no subjective element of personal freedom.

One manifestation of traditional religion and morality is the oracle, which represents an absolute, objective truth. Kierkegaard again quotes from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

This element, the fact that the people had not the power of decision but were determined from without, was a real factor in Greek consciousness; and oracles were everywhere essential where man did not yet know himself inwardly as being sufficiently free and independent to take upon himself to decide—and this is a lack of subjective freedom.⁵⁵

The Greeks allowed nature or the external world as interpreted in the form of the statements of the oracle to determine their actions, individuals not daring to make a decision and to act on their own accord. By contrast, Socrates represented the incipient force of subjective freedom. His relentless questioning of his contemporaries called into question traditional notions of truth and justice. He asked for rational and

⁵¹ SKS 1, 211 / CI, 161. Hegel, *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 269f. / *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 350f. Translation slightly modified.

⁵² SKS 1, 211 / CI, 162. Hegel, *PR*, § 279, p. 320 / *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 385.

⁵³ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 421–5 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 89–100.

⁵⁴ SKS 1, 212 / CI, 163. Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 422f. / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 96.

⁵⁵ SKS 1, 212f. / CI, 163. Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 423 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 97. Translation slightly modified. See *PhS*, pp. 340–342 / *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 542–4.

discursive justifications for the truth of the established state religion and traditional morality. A new principle of reason was introduced in the sense that an individual could attain truth on his own with the use of critical reason and thus free himself from the state of culturally determined immediacy.

Socrates' daimon represented a private version of the traditional oracles. Just as the gods speak to human beings through the oracle, so also Socrates' private god, the daimon, speaks to him directly. The oracle required a priest or priestess to proclaim the will of the gods; however, Socrates received this information directly from his daimon without the intermediary of a priest. In addition, the oracle was the organ of the universal; it addressed the people as a whole, and it was asked questions in the name of the people. By contrast, Socrates' daimon was purely particular. It told him personally how to manage his own personal affairs. The oracle was external; it existed outside in the world. By contrast, Socrates' daimon dwelt in his body and revealed itself directly to his mind.

While the daimon was clearly antagonistic to traditional morality, it did not represent modern radical individualism. It was different from Socrates' own will and to that extent still represented a principle of objectivity like the oracle. It often discouraged Socrates from doing things he wanted to do, and he respected its counsels as coming from a foreign principle in the same way that the people subjected themselves to the will of the oracle. In a passage quoted by Kierkegaard, Hegel expresses this as follows: "the daimon of Socrates stands midway between the externality of the oracle and the pure inwardness of the mind."⁵⁶

Kierkegaard thus follows Hegel's account of the daimon by means of a long string of quotations. His addition to this discussion is to interpret the daimon as a manifestation of Socratic irony. For this reason he must defend the view that the daimon is purely negative and never positively commands or enjoins action but instead warns and forbids. A positive element would undermine his conception of irony as purely negative. Thus, Kierkegaard can fully embrace Hegel's account of the daimon as an incipient form of what will later become full-blown subjective freedom. The daimon is a negative and destructive force for Hegel just as irony is for Kierkegaard. This point of agreement is doubtless the reason why Kierkegaard is so positively disposed towards Hegel's analysis.⁵⁷ Hegel is clearly Kierkegaard's most important source for the account of the daimon in Socrates. On this interpretive point Kierkegaard agrees with Hegel without qualification.

The second half of this chapter draws on Hegel's account of Socrates' trial in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Two references are of particular interest. In the first of these Kierkegaard praises Hegel's treatment of the charge that Socrates

⁵⁶ SKS 1, 213 / CI, 164. Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 425 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 99. Translation slightly modified.

⁵⁷ See SKS 1, 214 / CI, 165: "This concludes my exposition of Hegel's presentation, and, here as always when one has Hegel along...I have thereby acquired a footing from which I can safely start out on my own excursion to see whether there might be some particular worthy of note to which I can safely return whether or not I have found anything."

seduced the Athenian youth,⁵⁸ and paraphrases Hegel's lectures.⁵⁹ Hegel argues the relation between parent and child is sacred:

The worst thing which can happen to children in regard to their morality and their mind, is that the bond which must ever be held in reverence should be loosened or even severed, thereby causing hatred, disdain, and ill-will. Whoever does this, does injury to morality in its truest form. This unity, this confidence, is the mother's milk of morality on which man is nurtured; the early loss of parents is therefore a great misfortune.⁶⁰

Then turning to Socrates' particular case with the son of Anytus, Hegel continues,

We may very well conjecture that if Socrates had to do with him [sc. Anytus' son], he strengthened and developed in him the germ of the feeling of incongruity. Socrates remarked on the subject of his capacities, saying that he was fit for something better, and thus established a feeling of dissatisfaction in the young man, and strengthened his dislike to his father, which thus became the reason of his ruin. Hence this accusation of having destroyed the relationship of parents and children may be regarded as not unfounded, but as perfectly well established.⁶¹

Kierkegaard generally agrees with this, noting that Socrates' argument about some people being more competent than others to judge does not give him license to appoint himself to this position as he wishes, especially when it contravenes the rights of the parents.

Kierkegaard later gives a brief account of Hegel's critical treatment of Socrates' refusal to propose a serious punishment, as was his option, once he had been found guilty of the charges. He writes,

Hegel relates in detail what was wrong with Socrates' conduct. He shows that Socrates was deservedly condemned to death, that his crime was refusing to recognize the sovereignty of the nation and asserting instead his subjective conviction over against the objective judgment of the state. His refusal in this respect may very well be regarded as moral greatness, but he nevertheless brought his death upon himself; the state was just as

⁵⁸ SKS 1, 231f. / *CI*, 184: "Hegel's treatment of this particular charge is so excellent that I shall be as brief as possible about everything on which we can agree, lest I bore the more knowledgeable readers with what they already know from him. Against Meletus' general charge that he seduced the youths, Socrates stakes his whole life; the charge is then made more specific—that he weakened children's respect for their parents. This is elucidated further by a special exchange between Socrates and Anytus with respect to Anytus' son. Socrates' defense essentially ends up with the general thesis that the most competent ought to be preferred to the less competent. For example, in the choosing of a general, preference would be given not to the parents but to the experts in warfare. Thereupon Hegel propounds as indefensible in Socrates' conduct this moral interference of a third party in the absolute relation between parents and children, an intrusion that seems to have prompted...the young man mentioned above, Anytus' son, to become dissatisfied with his position. This is as far as Hegel goes and we with him, for we have actually come quite far with this Hegelian view."

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 436–8 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 109–11.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 437 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 110.

⁶¹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 438 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 110f.

justified in condemning Socrates as he was in emancipating himself, and Socrates thereby became a tragic hero. So far Hegel.⁶²

In a footnote to this passage Kierkegaard cites a particular lecture⁶³ in which Hegel claims that, given the historical development at the time, the Athenians were perfectly correct to condemn Socrates.⁶⁴ The jury had to react as it did in response to Socrates' introduction of the principle of subjective freedom.

Chapter 3, entitled "The View Made Necessary,"⁶⁵ explores the role of Socrates in relation to other Greek philosophical movements. Following Hegel's assessment of the profound impact of Socrates on the development of world history, Kierkegaard designates him "a turning point"⁶⁶ and compares Greek culture before and after Socrates. In his introductory comments Kierkegaard quotes Hegel twice. The first is a simple anecdote that caught his eye in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,⁶⁷ which he quotes without referring to him by name or giving any textual reference:

"But Socrates did not grow like a mushroom out of the ground; on the contrary, he stands in definite continuity with his time," a certain man says; but despite this continuity, one must remember that he cannot be completely explained by his past, that if we in one sense regard him as a logical conclusion to the premises of the past, there is more in him than was in the premises, the *Ursprüngliche* that is necessary if he is truly to be a turning point.⁶⁸

Here "a certain man" is Hegel.⁶⁹ The point is the same methodological caveat issued in the Introduction to the book, namely that in exploring a historical phenomenon like Socrates, one should avoid, on the one hand, tearing the phenomenon out of its immediate historical context and reducing it to a mere abstract idea, and, on the other hand, focusing fixedly on the concrete historical circumstances at the expense of any general understanding. The methodological goal lies, as with Hegel, in finding the idea in the empirical and in keeping the balance between the two elements.

After these brief introductory comments, Kierkegaard, turning to his actual analysis, notes that he will confine his discussion of Greek philosophy before Socrates to the Sophistic movement. In a long footnote he states:

⁶² SKS 1, 240 / *CI*, 193.

⁶³ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 440–448 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 113–21.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 444 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 117: "Now because...this new principle [sc. of subjective freedom] by effecting an entrance into the Greek world, has come into collision with the substantial spirit and the existing sentiments of the Athenian people, a reaction had to take place, for the principle of the Greek world could not yet bear the principle of subjective reflection. The Athenian people were thus, not only justified, but also bound to react against it according to their law, for they regarded this principle as a crime."

⁶⁵ SKS 1, 244–62 / *CI*, 198–218.

⁶⁶ SKS 1, 245 / *CI*, 200.

⁶⁷ SKS 1, 245 / *CI*, 199.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 384 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 42.

Here again Hegel has provided excellent expositions. Yet it seems to me that the more prolix study in his *Geschichte der Philosophie* does not always hang together and at times has the character of a collection of random comments that frequently do not quite fall under the stated rubrics. But to the short sketch (in his *Philosophie der Geschichte*), as related to the more prolix presentation, a remark Hegel himself made somewhere is applicable: the mind is the best epistomiser. This sketch is so pertinent and clear that I shall quote it.⁷⁰

Kierkegaard's complaint about the poor organization or discontinuity of Hegel's lectures was a common one, since the lectures in their published form were cobbled together by Hegel's editors from student notes from different courses from different years.

Kierkegaard follows Hegel in characterizing the Sophists as a negative force, which tore down established customs and values. They thus helped to set into motion the critical assessment of customary ethics and long-held religious beliefs. However, he disagrees with Hegel, who regards the Sophists as a wholly negative and destructive force. This is a problem for Kierkegaard since, given his own thesis that Socrates is purely negative, it makes it difficult for him to distinguish Socrates from the Sophists. Thus, Kierkegaard is anxious to point out the second, positive

⁷⁰ SKS 1, 247n / CI, 201n. Kierkegaard then goes on to quote the following long passage from Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: "With the Sophists began the process of reflection on the existing state of things, and of ratiocination. That very diligence and activity which we observed among the Greeks in their practical life, and in the achievement of works of art, showed itself also in the turns and windings which these ideas took; so that, as material things are changed, worked up and used for other than their original purposes, similarly the essential being of Spirit—what is thought and known—is variously handled; it is made an object about which the mind can employ itself, and this occupation becomes an interest in and for itself. The movement of thought—that which goes on within its sphere [without reference to an extrinsic object]—a process which had formerly no interest—acquires attractiveness on its own account. The cultivated Sophists, who were not erudite or scientific men, but masters of subtle turns of thought, excited the admiration of the Greeks. For all questions they had an answer; for all interests of a political or religious order they had general points of view; and in the ultimate development of their art, they claimed the ability to prove everything, to discover a justifiable side in every position. In a democracy it is a matter of the first importance, to be able to speak in popular assemblies—to urge one's opinions on public matters. Now this demands the power of duly presenting before them that point of view which we desire them to regard as essential. For such a purpose, intellectual culture is needed, and this discipline the Greeks acquired under the Sophists. This mental culture then became the means, in the hands of those who possess it, of enforcing their views and interests on the Demos: the expert Sophist knew how to turn the subject of discussion this way or that way at pleasure, and thus the doors were thrown wide open to all human passions. A leading principle of the Sophists was that 'Man is the measure of all things'; but in this, as in all their apophthegms, lurks an ambiguity, since the term 'man' may denote Spirit in its depth and truth, or in the aspect of mere caprice and private interest. The Sophists meant 'man' simply as subjective, and intended in this dictum of theirs, that mere liking was the principle of right, and that advantage of the individual was the ground of final appeal." Kierkegaard quotes Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 2nd edition (1840), op. cit., pp. 327f. *Phil. of Hist.*, pp. 268f. / *Jub.*, vol. 11, pp. 349f.

step in the Sophists' program, namely the reestablishment of beliefs and customs. In the context of this same discussion,⁷¹ Kierkegaard again quotes at length from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

The Notion, which reason has found in Anaxagoras to be real existence is the simple negative into which all determination, all that is existent and individual sinks. Before the Notion nothing can exist, for it is simply the predicateless absolute to which everything is clearly a moment only; for it there is thus nothing so to speak permanently fixed and sealed. The Notion is just the continual change of Heraclitus, the movement, the causticity, which nothing can resist. Thus the Notion which finds itself, finds itself as the absolute power before which everything vanishes; and thereby all things, all existence, everything held to be secure, is now made fleeting. The firm ground—whether it be a security of natural being or the security of laws—becomes vacillation and loses its stability. As universal, such principles, etc., certainly themselves pertain to the Notion, yet their universality is only their form, for the content which they have, as determinate, falls into movement. We see this movement arising in the so-called Sophists.⁷²

Like Socrates, the Sophists tear down without building up again afterwards. Kierkegaard comments on the passage as follows:

It seems, however, that Hegel makes the Sophistic movement too grandiose, and therefore the distrust one may have about the correctness of his view is strengthened even more by the presence, in his subsequent discussion of Sophistry, of various points that cannot be harmonized with it; likewise, if this were the correct interpretation of Sophistry, there is much in his conception of Socrates that would make it necessary to identify Socrates with them.⁷³

Insofar as he interprets both as wholly negative, Hegel's interpretation makes Socrates look too much like the Sophists. Kierkegaard cannot square this interpretation with Plato's portrayal of Socrates as diametrically opposed to the Sophists. To distinguish them, Kierkegaard must identify some positive element in the Sophists, which is not present in Socrates.

Kierkegaard interprets Socratic irony as the key to his purely negative disposition. It played an important role in the development of world history since it signaled the introduction of a new principle of subjective freedom and the collapse of the old order of traditional values and customs: "But irony is the very incitement of subjectivity, and in Socrates irony is truly a world-historical passion. In Socrates, one process ends and with him a new one begins."⁷⁴ For Kierkegaard the "world-historical validity"⁷⁵ of irony is what distinguishes Socrates from the Sophists. It will be noted that this is an elaboration of Hegel's own thesis about the role of Socrates in the development of history. Kierkegaard seems to wholly agree with Hegel's assessment that Socrates represents the principle of subjective freedom; he elaborates on it in a

⁷¹ SKS 1, 251 / CI, 206f.

⁷² Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 352 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 5.

⁷³ SKS 1, 251 / CI, 207.

⁷⁴ SKS 1, 256 / CI, 211.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

slightly different way by emphasizing irony, which, although treated by Hegel, does not play the central role for him. What Kierkegaard understands by Socratic irony is part of what Hegel calls the principle of subjective freedom. Thus, there is room for debate about the significance of Kierkegaard's modification here.

Having completed his account of the Sophists, Kierkegaard investigates how it could be possible for so many later schools to claim Socrates as their forerunner if in fact he had no positive doctrine. He again starts with Hegel's view of the matter: "Hegel (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, p. 126) notes that Socrates had been reproached for the derivation of so many diverse philosophies from his teaching; he replies that this was an account of the indefiniteness and abstraction of his principle."⁷⁶ Kierkegaard's commentary to this is as follows:

To upbraid Socrates for this simply indicates the desire that he should have been different from what he actually was. In other words, if the Socratic position had included the limitation that every intermediate positivity must necessarily have, then it most certainly to all eternity would have been impossible that so many descendants could try to claim their right of primogeniture. If, however, his position was infinite negativity, then it is easily explained, since this contains within itself the possibility of everything, the possibility of the whole infinity of subjectivity.⁷⁷

Kierkegaard thus agrees with Hegel that the absence of any determinate positive doctrine in Socrates opened the door to numerous schools finding inspiration in him for their own doctrines. This would not have been possible if Socrates had a clearly defined set of principles which would exclude other ones. Since his indeterminacy rules out nothing, differing or even contradictory positions can claim to trace their lineage back to him.

Kierkegaard then continues his discussion of Hegel's view by noting that Hegel seems to be in agreement with him with respect to the negativity of Socrates:

In discussing the three Socratic schools (Megaric, Cyrenaic, and Cynic), Hegel notes (p. 127) that all three schools are very different from one another and adds that this alone clearly shows that Socrates had no positive system. Not only did he have no positive system, but he was also devoid of positivity. I shall try to show this later in connection with the way in which Hegel reclaims for him the idea of the good; here it suffices to say that even the good he had only as infinite negativity. In the good, subjectivity legitimately possesses an absolutely valid goal for its striving, but Socrates did not start from the good but arrived at the good, ended with the good, which is why it is entirely abstract for him.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ SKS 1, 260 / CI, 215. Here Kierkegaard refers to the following passage in Hegel: "The most varied schools and principles proceeded from this doctrine of Socrates, and this was made a reproach against him, but it was really due to the indefiniteness and abstraction of his principle." Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 449 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 125.

⁷⁷ SKS 1, 260 / CI, 215.

⁷⁸ SKS 1, 260 / CI, 216. In a footnote to this passage Kierkegaard quotes Hegel directly: "Hegel, too, seems to agree, but he is not always consistent (p. 124): 'Socrates himself did not come so far that he expressed for consciousness generally the simple essence of self-thought, the Good, and investigated the determinate concepts of the Good, whether they properly expressed that of whose essence they should express, and whether the matter was determined

Kierkegaard argues that Hegel's view is self-contradictory since it simultaneously attributes and denies positive content in Socrates. Kierkegaard does not straightforwardly disagree with Hegel but rather regards his account as incomplete:

But if Hegel's comments are restricted in this way, they must be extended by stressing the prodigious elasticity inherent in this infinite negativity. It does not suffice to say that from the heterogeneity of the Socratic schools the conclusion may be drawn that Socrates had no positive system; but it must be added that by its pressure the infinite negativity has made all positivity possible and has been an infinite incitement and stimulation for positivity.⁷⁹

Kierkegaard here seems to argue that it was the very negativity of Socrates which compelled the later schools to work out a positive doctrine. His argument presupposes that history operates according to the Hegelian dialectic with each concept evolving into its opposite. But since Socrates' position was an indeterminate negativity, there was no single determinate opposite, and thus he produced not one but "a multiplicity of beginnings."⁸⁰

Hegel plays a pivotal role in "The View Made Necessary." Kierkegaard clearly takes his account as the model and point of departure for his own analysis. Even when he disagrees on points such as Hegel's portrayal of the Sophists as wholly negative and his portrayal of Socrates as containing a positive element, he tends to overstate his case in order to distinguish his view from that of Hegel. He agrees with Hegel's interpretation of the role of Socrates in world history and in a sense can be seen as expanding Hegel's analysis by further developing Hegel's account of Socratic irony and understanding it in terms of the Hegelian principle of subjective freedom.

A special appendix following Part One, entitled "Hegel's View of Socrates," discusses Hegel's methodology in a way that recalls the Introduction to the book as a whole. This is followed by a general assessment of Hegel's interpretation, which is discussed under the heading, "In What Sense Is Socrates the Founder of Morality." He explains,

Hegel clearly provides a turning point in the view of Socrates. Therefore, I shall begin with Hegel and end with Hegel, without giving attention to his predecessors, since they, insofar as they have any significance, have been corroborated by his view, or to his successors, since they have only relative value in comparison with Hegel. Just as his presentation of the historical usually cannot be charged with wasting time on wrangling about minutiae, so it focuses with prodigious intellectual intensity upon specific, crucial, central battles. Hegel apprehends and comprehends history in its large formations. Thus Socrates is by no means permitted to stand still like *ein Ding an sich*, but must step forth whether he wishes to or not.⁸¹

by them. The Good was made the end of the man acting. He thereby left the whole world of idea, objective existence in general, resting by itself, without seeking a passage from the Good, from the essence of the conscious as such to the thing, and without recognizing the essence as the essence.'" SKS 1, 260n / CI, 216n. Kierkegaard quotes *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 449 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 124.

⁷⁹ SKS 1, 260f. / CI, 216. Translation slightly modified.

⁸⁰ SKS 1, 261 / CI, 217.

⁸¹ SKS 1, 264 / CI, 220f.

However, Kierkegaard's approbation is apparently qualified, for he goes on to criticize Hegel for not being as philologically exacting as he should have been. Kierkegaard explains,

The difficulty implicit in the establishment of certainty about the phenomenal aspect of Socrates' life does not bother Hegel. He generally does not acknowledge such trivial concerns....Although he himself observes that with respect to Socrates it is a matter not so much of philosophy as of individual life, there is nothing at all in his presentation of Socrates in *Geschichte der Philosophie* to illuminate the relations of the three different contemporary views of Socrates. He uses one single dialogue from Plato as an example of the Socratic method without explaining why he chose this particular one. He uses Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and *Apology*, and also Plato's *Apology*, quite uncritically. On the whole, he does not like much fuss, and does not cast a benevolent eye even upon Schleiermacher's efforts to order the Platonic dialogues so that one great idea moves through them all in successive development.⁸²

Hegel is thus too quick to reach sweeping conclusions based on highly selective data. He is thus operating at a level which is too abstract and thereby fails to capture the truth of actuality and existence. Kierkegaard sees his role as correcting these oversights by exploring the actual historical phenomena in more detail. After excerpting a handful of quotations from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he notes simply, "These separate observations are in complete agreement with what I tried to point out in the first section of this study. But since they are such casual remarks, I cannot appeal to them."⁸³

Everything in the appendix up to this point can be regarded as introductory. Kierkegaard now begins his actual analysis of Hegel's treatment of Socrates in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. After quoting a few passages from Hegel that touch on themes such as the daimon and the role of the subject in the determination of morality, Kierkegaard gets to what he regards as the main issue:

However, when I consider the Hegelian account in its totality and consider it in relation to the modification I have advanced, I believe that it all can best be dealt with under one rubric: In what sense is Socrates the founder of morality? Under this rubric, the most important elements of Hegel's view will be discussed.⁸⁴

It is significant that Kierkegaard refers not to his criticism of Hegel but to his "modification" of him. The rubric that he chooses is itself in fact a quotation from Hegel. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, 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,

⁸² SKS 1, 265f. / CI, 221f.

⁸³ SKS 1, 267 / CI, 223. Translation slightly modified.

⁸⁴ SKS 1, 268 / CI, 225.

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*.⁸⁵

Here Hegel of course does not mean that the Greeks had no morality prior to Socrates since they clearly had customary morality or *Sittlichkeit*.⁸⁶ What he means is rather that Socrates introduced the principle of modern morality by placing the locus of ethical action and decision in the individual subject.

Kierkegaard explains the well-known distinction in Hegel⁸⁷ between customary ethics or *Sittlichkeit* and modern ethics of the individual, called by Hegel, "morality":

[Hegel] distinguishes between morality [*Moralität*] and ethics [*Sædelighed*]. But ethics is in part unreflected ethics such as ancient Greek ethics, and in part a higher determination of it such as manifests itself again after having recollected itself in morality. For this reason, in his *Philosophie des Rechts* he discusses morality before proceeding to ethics. And under morality he discusses in the section "The Good and Conscience" the moral forms of evil, hypocrisy, probabilism, Jesuitism, the appeal to the conscience and irony. Here the moral individual is the negatively free individual.⁸⁸

Kierkegaard refers to the section, "The Good and Conscience," where Hegel treats different forms of subjectivity or relativism, which he regards as characteristic of the modern world. Kierkegaard goes on to quote from it and then gives the following commentary:

In the old Greek culture, the individual was by no means free in this sense but was confined in the substantial ethic; he had not as yet taken himself out of, separated himself from, this immediate relationship, still did not know himself. Socrates brought this about, but not in the sense of the Sophists, who taught the individual to constrict himself in his own particular interests; he brought the individual to this by universalizing subjectivity, and to that extent he is the founder of morality. He maintained, not sophistically but speculatively, the importance of consciousness. He arrived at being-in-and-for-itself as the being-in-and-for-itself for thought; he arrived at the definition of knowledge that made the individual alien to the immediacy in which he had previously lived. The individual should no longer act out of fear of the law but with a conscious knowledge of why he acted. But this, as we

⁸⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 2nd ed., op. cit., p. 328. *Phil. of Hist.*, p. 269 / *Jub.*, vol. 11, p. 350.

⁸⁶ See Hegel's account of customary ethics: "But if it is simply *identical* with the actuality of individuals, the ethical [*das Sittliche*], as their general mode of behavior, appears as *custom* [*Sitte*]; and the *habit* of the ethical appears as a *second nature* which takes the place of the original and purely natural will and is the all-pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence." *PR*, § 151 / *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 233.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *PR*, § 33, Remark / *Jub.*, vol. 7, p. 85: " 'Morality' [*Moralität*] and 'ethics' [*Sittlichkeit*], which are usually regarded as roughly synonymous, are taken here in essentially distinct senses. Yet even representational thought seems to distinguish them; Kantian usage prefers the expression 'morality,' as indeed the practical principles of Kant's philosophy are confined throughout to this concept, even rendering the point of view of *ethics* impossible and in fact expressly infringing and destroying it." Translation slightly modified.

⁸⁸ *SKS* 1, 270 / *CI*, 228.

shall see, is a negative definition, negative toward the established order as well as negative toward the deeper positivity, which, as speculative, conditions negatively.⁸⁹

This must be regarded as a straightforward appropriation of Hegel's view. In addition to the Hegelian content of the passage, Kierkegaard also freely avails himself of Hegelian jargon to describe the view.

Kierkegaard then extensively quotes Hegel's assessment of Aristotle's account of Socrates to show that Socrates determined virtue in terms of reason or reflection, and he thus eliminated the passions, impulses or other empirical elements.⁹⁰ The result was that the good was determined as something wholly abstract. It became a formal principle, lacking concrete content. Kierkegaard quotes Hegel as follows:

but the main point with Socrates is his knowledge for the first time reached this abstraction. The good is...the universal....It is a principle, concrete within itself, which, however, is not yet manifested in its concrete development, and in this abstract attitude we find what is wanting in the Socratic standpoint, from which nothing that is affirmative can, beyond this, be adduced.⁹¹

This principle cannot be made real without taking on some particular content; but whatever content it assumes will be subject to merciless rational scrutiny. Socrates differed from the Sophists in that his principle was a universal one, whereas the Sophists were mere relativists arguing for finite, particular ends. However, Socrates' principle was defective since it is purely abstract and empty of content. As Kierkegaard puts it, "Socrates had advanced the universal only as the negative."⁹² The result is in many ways the same as with the Sophists. An abstract, formal principle must be filled with some concrete content if it is to be actualized. Since the individual is given no clear determination about this content the vacuum is often filled with his arbitrary impulses and desires.⁹³ Thus the Socratic principle of the good reduces to arbitrariness in practice. This analysis is important for Kierkegaard since it demonstrates that Hegel did in fact ascribe something positive to Socrates, namely an abstract principle.

Kierkegaard rounds off this discussion by indicating how his account of Socratic irony is wholly consistent with Hegel's account, with the implication being that his account can be regarded as a supplement to Hegel's. He writes,

⁸⁹ SKS 1, 270f. / CI, 228.

⁹⁰ SKS 1, 271 / CI, 229: Socrates "places all the virtues in judgment (cognition). Hence it comes to pass that he does away with the irrational-feeling part of the soul, that is, inclination and habit." Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 412 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 77.

⁹¹ SKS 1, 274 / CI, 232. Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 406–7 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 70–71. Translation slightly modified.

⁹² SKS 1, 275 / CI, 233.

⁹³ SKS 1, 275 / CI, 234. See also SKS 1, 270 / CI, 228: "He is free because he is not bound by another, but he is negatively free precisely because he is not limited in another. When the individual by being in his other is in his own, then for the first time he is in truth (that is, positively) free, affirmatively free. Therefore, moral freedom is arbitrariness; it is the possibility of good and evil."

We see, therefore, how Socrates can very well be called the founder of morality in the sense Hegel thinks of it, and that his position still could have been irony. The good as task, when the good is understood as the infinitely negative, corresponds to the moral, that is, the negatively free subject. The moral individual can never actualize the good; only the positively free subject can have the good as the infinitely positive, as his task, and fulfill it. If we wish to include the qualification of irony, which Hegel so frequently stresses, that for irony nothing is a matter of earnestness, then this can also be claimed for the negatively free subject, because even the virtues he practices are not done with earnestness, provided that—and Hegel would certainly agree with this—true earnestness is possible only in a totality in which the subject no longer arbitrarily decides at every moment to continue his imaginary construction but feels the task to be something that he has not assigned himself but that has been assigned to him.⁹⁴

Here Kierkegaard rightly points out that what he refers to as irony Hegel refers to as a lack of earnestness or “dissemblance” and “duplicitry.”⁹⁵ Even if one knows full well that one is acting arbitrarily in accordance with one’s personal impulses, an attempt is made to keep up the facade of acting in accord with the abstract principle of the good. There is thus a kind of dishonesty at work in the discontinuity between the abstract principle that the individual ostensibly claims to be following and the purely subjective actions that he in fact performs. This anticipates Kierkegaard’s account of the modern ironic subject, for whom no action is really taken seriously.

Kierkegaard’s most straightforwardly critical passage comes toward the end of the appendix. While Hegel ascribes to Socrates an abstract conception of the good and thereby something positive, Kierkegaard argues that he misconceives this. He writes,

The real difficulty with Hegel’s view of Socrates is centered in the continual attempt to show how Socrates interpreted the good, and what is even more wrong in the view, as I see it, is that it does not accurately adhere to the direction of the trend in Socrates’ life. The movement in Socrates is toward arriving at the good. His significance in the world development is to arrive there (not to have arrived there at some time).⁹⁶

Hegel is too focused on the metaphysical Socrates who stands fixedly with some abstract concept of the good. The real Socrates, for Kierkegaard, was dynamic. He was not static and fixed on an abstract principle but rather was always trying to move with his interlocutors towards it, though never reaching it. Once he had brought his interlocutors out of their complacency and immediacy, his job was done. Thus, Kierkegaard’s Socrates is a nihilist, and his main objection to Hegel is that he makes Socrates into a tame metaphysician by ascribing to him the abstract idea of the good. Hegel thus deprives Socrates of his radicality.

Kierkegaard begins Part Two by explaining that he has completed his account of the historical sources of Socrates. Now his analysis will switch to a more philosophical or conceptual account of irony itself. He begins by listing a series of modern thinkers who have made use of irony or helped to introduce it as a concept:

⁹⁴ SKS 1, 275f. / *CI*, 235.

⁹⁵ See Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 374–83 / *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 471–84.

⁹⁶ SKS 1, 276 / *CI*, 235.

Kant, Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck and Solger.⁹⁷ At the end of this series, he writes, "Finally, here irony also met its master in Hegel. Whereas the first form of irony was not combated but was pacified by subjectivity as it obtained its rights, the second form of irony was combated and destroyed, for inasmuch as subjectivity was unauthorized it could obtain its rights only by being annulled."⁹⁸ Here Kierkegaard seems to acknowledge Hegel's services in criticizing the excesses of modern irony. He further foreshadows his claim that while Socratic irony had a certain legitimacy and was historically justified, Romantic irony, by contrast, was "unauthorized."

Kierkegaard then observes that although irony has become something of a fashion in modern Romantic circles, its meaning in the different authors is very diffuse. Noting that other authors have made similar complaints, he quotes, in a footnote,⁹⁹ from Hegel's review of Solger's posthumous writings:

Solger has met up with the same: he does not mention irony at all in the speculative expositions of the highest Idea, which he presents in the aforementioned treatise with the innermost mental seriousness, irony which joins itself most intimately with enthusiasm and in which depths art, religion, and philosophy are to be identical. There especially, one would have believed, must be the place where one would find cleared up what the philosophical case might be with the noble secret, the great unknown—irony.¹⁰⁰

What seems to have caught Kierkegaard's eye here is simply the characterization of irony as "the great unknown" and Hegel's complaint that Solger did not make an effort to explain or define irony in the work in question, which otherwise is so sober.

Kierkegaard then continues by discussing those who have complained about the lack of clarity in the use of the term "irony" among Romantic authors:

Since they all lament, why should I not also lament? My lament is that it is just the reverse with Hegel. At the point in all his systems where we could expect to find a development of irony, we find it referred to. Although, if it all were copied, we would have to concede that what is said about irony is in one sense not so inconsiderable, in another sense it is not much, since he says just about the same thing on every point.... Yet I am far from being able to lament justifiably over Hegel as Hegel laments over his predecessors. There are excellent observations especially in his review of Solger's posthumous writings.... And even if the presentation and characterization of negative positions...are not always as exhaustive, as rich in content, as we could wish, Hegel knows all the better how to deal with them, and thus the positivity he asserts contributes indirectly to his characterization.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ SKS 1, 282 / CI, 242.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ SKS 1, 283f. / CI, 243n and f.

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, "Über Solger's nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel. Herausgegeben von Ludwig Tieck und Friedrich von Raumer. Erster Band 780 S. mit Vorr. XVI S. Zweiter Band 784 S. Leipzig 1826," *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Zweiter Artikel (June 1828), no. 107–8, p. 858. Reprinted in *Vermischte Schriften*, op. cit., vol. 16, (1834) p. 492. *MW*, pp. 389f. / *Jub.* vol. 20, p. 188. (*MW* = *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2002.)

¹⁰¹ SKS 1, 283f. / CI, 244.

Kierkegaard seems to view Hegel as an authority on the new form of irony just as he was an authority on Socratic irony. As before, he simultaneously lauds Hegel for his scattered flashes of insight while at the same time criticizing him for not offering more detailed analyses. Kierkegaard then explains Hegel's significance in the discussions about Romantic irony as follows:

While the Schlegels and Tieck had their major importance in the polemic with which they destroyed a previous development, and while precisely for this reason their position became somewhat scattered, because it was not a principal battle they won but a multitude of skirmishes, Hegel, on the other hand, has absolute importance by defeating with his positive total view the polemic prudery, the subjugation of which, just as Queen Brynhild's virginity required more than an ordinary husband, required a Sigurd.¹⁰²

This passage clearly suggests that Kierkegaard is highly sympathetic to Hegel's criticism of the Romantics.

The first substantial chapter in Part Two, "The World-Historical Validity of Irony, the Irony of Socrates,"¹⁰³ continues the discussion of the methodological issues that were raised in the Introduction. The main issue in this chapter is a comparison of Socratic irony with Romantic irony according to the criterion of what Kierkegaard calls their historical "validity." While Socratic irony was directed against specific truth claims, Romantic irony, by contrast, is universal and thus directed indiscriminately against the entire existing order, which Kierkegaard refers to as "actuality."¹⁰⁴ While the former is "world-historically justified"¹⁰⁵ insofar as there are always institutions and practices deserving of irony's criticism, the latter is indiscriminate and thus never justified.

In order to capture the purely negative disposition of the ironist, Kierkegaard avails himself of the concept of "infinite absolute negativity," which he borrows from the Introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*.¹⁰⁶ There one reads, "In this process [Solger] came to the dialectical moment of the Idea, to the point which I call 'infinite absolute negativity.'"¹⁰⁷ According to Hegel, Solger, who is treated with more sympathy than the other Romantics, denied all truth and beauty. He has negated the idea of truth in history and has put his own private whim on a par with the most sacred beliefs. The Romantic ironist continually recreates truth and beauty

¹⁰² SKS 1, 284 / CI, 244.

¹⁰³ SKS 1, 297–308 / CI, 259–71. In this section Kierkegaard refers primarily to *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 397–406 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, pp. 58–70.

¹⁰⁴ SKS 1, 297 / CI, 259.

¹⁰⁵ SKS 1, 308 / CI, 271.

¹⁰⁶ SKS 1, 299 / CI, 261. Here it is defined as follows: "It is negativity because it only negates; it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not." This is a formulation that appears repeatedly in *The Concept of Irony*: SKS 1, 87 / CI, 26. SKS 1, 292 / CI, 254. SKS 1, 297 / CI, 259. SKS 1, 299 / CI, 261. SKS 1, 307 / CI, 271. SKS 1, 309 / CI, 273. SKS 1, 343 / CI, 312. SKS 1, 352 / CI, 323.

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Aesthetics* I, p. 68 / *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 105. (*Aesthetics* I–II = Hegel's *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, vols. 1–2, trans. by T.M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975, 1998.)

only in order to destroy it and start over again. For Hegel, as for Kierkegaard, this amounts to pure flippancy and has no justification, world – historical or otherwise.

The historical significance of irony has to do with the fact that it is a characteristic of the principle of subjectivity, which first entered the world stage with the Greeks. Kierkegaard explains, "But if irony is a qualification of subjectivity, then it must manifest itself the first time subjectivity makes its appearance in world history. Irony is, in fact, the first and most abstract qualification of subjectivity. This points to the historical turning point where subjectivity made its appearance for the first time, and with this we have come to Socrates."¹⁰⁸ Needless to say, this claim about the historical import of irony is a simple extension of Hegel's account of the introduction of the principle of subjective freedom in history. As if to acknowledge this, Kierkegaard quotes directly Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

But by destroying actuality by means of actuality itself, he [sc. the ironist] enlists in the service of world irony. In his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (II, p. 62), Hegel says, "All dialectic allows as valid that which is to be valid as if it were valid, allows the inner destruction to develop in it—the universal irony of the world," and in this the world irony is correctly interpreted.¹⁰⁹

The passage quoted comes from Hegel's discussion of Socratic irony where he then suddenly refers to Schlegel and modern irony in a polemical manner. Kierkegaard seems to laud Hegel's characterization of the historical role of irony.

Up to this point in the chapter Kierkegaard has made very positive use of Hegel. The second half of the chapter, however, contains his criticism. After summarizing the results of his own analysis of Socratic irony in Part One of the book, Kierkegaard contrasts this to Hegel's view:

Hegel always discusses irony in a very unsympathetic manner; in his eyes, irony is anathema. Hegel's appearance coincides with Schlegel's most brilliant period. 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.¹¹⁰

Kierkegaard's assessment is thus mixed. He lauds the criticism of the Romantics as one of Hegel's "great merits," but he notes that Hegel's polemical disposition shaded his criticism and blinded him from correctly understanding the legitimate use of irony:

But the fact that Hegel became irritated with the form of irony closest to him naturally impaired his interpretation of the concept....In no way does this mean that Hegel was not right about the Schlegels and that the Schlegelian irony was not on a very dubious wrong road. All that it says is that Hegel has surely conferred a great benefit through the

¹⁰⁸ SKS 1, 302 / CI, 264.

¹⁰⁹ SKS 1, 300 / CI, 262. Hegel, *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 62. This sentence has been omitted in the English translation of *Hist. of Phil.* where it should appear in vol. 1, p. 400.

¹¹⁰ SKS 1, 302 / CI, 265.

earnestness with which he takes a stand against any isolation, an earnestness that makes it possible to read much that he has written with much invigoration and considerable edification. But, on the other hand, it must be said that by his one-sided attack on the post-Fichtean irony he has overlooked the truth of irony, and by his identifying all irony with this, he has done irony an injustice.¹¹¹

Again Kierkegaard's ambivalence is evident. Although he regards Hegel's polemic against the Romantics as justified, the unfortunate result is that this polemic has prevented Hegel from understanding the phenomenon of irony in a more nuanced manner and has led him to reject it *tout court*. What is behind this criticism is of course Kierkegaard's own conception of "controlled irony," which he presents at the end of the book as the solution to the problem.

Kierkegaard then addresses the question of the abstract and the concrete in Socrates and argues that Hegel has misunderstood Socratic irony and reversed these terms. He continues,

Hegel then points out that this Socratic irony seems to contain something false but thereupon shows the correctness of his conduct. Finally he shows the real meaning of Socratic irony, the greatness in it—namely, that it seeks to make abstract conceptions concrete and developed. He goes on to add (p. 62): "In saying that I know what reason is, what belief is, these remain but quite abstract conceptions; in order to become concrete, they must indeed be explicated and presupposed to be unknown in terms of what they really are. Socrates effected the explication of such conceptions, and this is the truth of Socratic irony."¹¹²

For Hegel the service Socratic irony performs is the movement from abstract idea to the concrete instantiation. Kierkegaard's objection to this is that it fails to appreciate the historical significance of Socratic irony. Further, Hegel seems to transfer his antipathy towards Romantic irony to Socratic irony:

But this confuses everything; the description of Socratic irony completely loses its historical weight, and the passage quoted is so modern that it hardly reminds us of Socrates. To be specific, Socrates' undertaking was by no means one of making the abstract concrete, and the examples cited are certainly very poorly chosen because I do not think that Hegel would be able to cite analogies of this unless he were to take the whole of Plato and plead the continual use of Socrates' name in Plato, whereby he would come into conflict with both himself and everyone else. Socrates' undertaking was not to make the abstract concrete but to let the abstract become visible through the immediately concrete.¹¹³

The claim that Socratic irony involves a movement from the abstract to the concrete gives Socrates a positive dimension insofar as he helps arrive at a positive result, that is, the concrete. Given Kierkegaard's investment in the claim that Socrates is pure negativity, he is anxious to argue that Hegel's examples of this may well be representative of Plato's view, but they cannot be regarded as stemming from

¹¹¹ See SKS 1, 303 / CI, 265.

¹¹² SKS 1, 304 / CI, 266f. Hegel, *Hist. of Phil.*, vol. 1, p. 400 / *Jub.*, vol. 18, p. 62. Translation slightly modified.

¹¹³ See SKS 1, 304 / CI, 267.

Socrates. On the contrary, the movement in Socrates is from the concrete to the abstract.

Ever the conscientious student, Kierkegaard is careful to locate the different places in Hegel's *corpus* where these questions are treated. He writes,

In his review of the works of Solger, Hegel again points out on page 488 the difference between Schlegelian irony and Socratic irony. That there is a difference we have fully conceded and shall point out in more detail in the appropriate place, but it is by no means to be concluded from this that Socrates' position was not irony. Hegel upbraids Friedrich Schlegel because, with his lack of judgment with regard to the speculative and his neglect of it, he has wrenched the Fichtean thesis on the constitutive validity of the ego out of its metaphysical context, wrenched it out of the domain of thought, and applied it directly to actuality, "in order to deny the vitality of reason and truth and to relegate these to an illusory status in the subject and to illusion for others."¹¹⁴

Here Kierkegaard follows Hegel's account, according to which Romantic irony has misappropriated Fichte's doctrine of the self-positing "I" and applied it to actuality and everyday life. In short, for Kierkegaard, Socratic irony, while radically different as a historical phenomenon, nonetheless has some things in common with Romantic irony. This is what Hegel denies.

In the penultimate chapter of the book, entitled, "Irony after Fichte,"¹¹⁵ Kierkegaard treats in order, the origins of Romantic irony in Fichte's account of the self-positing "I," and its appropriation by Friedrich von Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck and Solger. Both Kierkegaard's understanding of the Romantic movement and his criticisms of the individuals who comprised it are indebted to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*.¹¹⁶

Kierkegaard begins by tracing the connection between Fichte's theory of the subject and Romantic irony. He states:

The producing "I" is the same as the produced "I." "I = I" is the abstract identity. By so doing [Fichte] infinitely liberated thought. But this infinity of thought in Fichte is, like all Fichte's infinity (his ethical infinity is ceaseless striving for the sake of this striving itself; his esthetic infinity is ceaseless producing for the sake of this producing itself; God's infinity is ceaseless development for the sake of the development itself), negative infinity, an infinity in which there is no finitude, an infinity without any content.¹¹⁷

Here Kierkegaard explains Fichte's theory of the self-positing "I" as an attempt to resolve the paradoxes that resulted from the Kantian model of appearance and thing-in-itself. Fichte eliminates the alien, external other, and draws everything into the sphere of the subject. Nothing outside the subject has any independent existence. The language of Kierkegaard's description is Hegelian. He characterizes Fichte's conception of infinity as the "negative infinity" which does not have finitude as its contrastive term. This is, of course, the way in which Hegel talks of the bad

¹¹⁴ SKS 1, 305 / CI, 268. Hegel, *MW*, p. 387 / *Jub.*, vol. 20, p. 184. Translation modified.

¹¹⁵ SKS 1, 308–52 / CI, 272–323.

¹¹⁶ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 64–9 / *Jub.*, vol. 12, pp. 100–6.

¹¹⁷ SKS 1, 309 / CI, 273.

God.”¹²⁷ Kierkegaard then draws an analogy between this divinely given essence and the Kantian thing-in-itself:

But just as commonplace people do not have any *an sich* but can become anything, so also the ironist has none. But this is not simply because he is merely a product of his environment, but in order really to live poetically, really and thoroughly to be able to create himself poetically, the ironist may have no *an sich*.¹²⁸

If the ironist is completely free to create himself, he has no permanent character. Thus, the ironic view reduces to a play of moods: “As the ironist poetically composes himself and his environment with the greatest possible poetic license, as he lives in this totally hypothetical and subjunctive way his life loses all continuity. He succumbs completely to mood. His life is nothing but moods.”¹²⁹ Kierkegaard acknowledges his debt to Hegel in this analysis by noting, “It is especially for this that Hegel criticizes Tieck, and it is also present in his correspondence with Solger. At times he has a clear grasp of everything, at times he is seeking; at times he is a dogmatician, at times a doubter, at times Jacob Böhme, at times the Greeks, etc.—nothing but moods.”¹³⁰

While Hegel plays only a minor role in Kierkegaard’s analysis of Schlegel and Tieck, he figures prominently in the discussion of Solger. Here Kierkegaard makes use of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* and Hegel’s book-review of Solger’s posthumous writings in the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. Both texts are quoted directly at the outset of Kierkegaard’s discussion.¹³¹

Kierkegaard follows Hegel in seeing Solger as understanding irony as an abstract principle of negation, in contrast to the other Romantics who sought in it an active principle for life. As is well known, Hegel’s dialectical methodology makes use of the negative as a productive force to propel the analysis forward. First, something is posited; then it is negated; and then the negation itself is negated and something positive results. His criticism of Solger is that he stops at the second step and never arrives at the speculative truth of negation. In the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, he states, “To this negativity Solger firmly clung, and of course it is *one element* in the speculative Idea, yet interpreted as this purely dialectical unrest and dissolution of both infinite and finite, only *one element*, and not, as Solger will have it, the whole Idea.”¹³² Kierkegaard takes up this same point in his characterization of Solger’s account of irony. He begins by complaining, “Solger has gone completely

¹²⁷ SKS 1, 316 / CI, 280.

¹²⁸ SKS 1, 317 / CI, 281. Translation slightly modified.

¹²⁹ SKS 1, 319 / CI, 284.

¹³⁰ SKS 1, 320 / CI, 285. See also SKS 1, 318f. / CI, 283: “Here we have come to the point that has been the particular object of Hegel’s attack. Everything established in the given actuality has nothing but poetic validity for the ironist, for he, after all, is living poetically. But when the given actuality loses its validity for the ironist in this way, it is not because it is an antiquated actuality that must be replaced by a truer actuality, but because the ironist is the eternal I for which no actuality is adequate.”

¹³¹ SKS 1, 340 / CI, 308.

¹³² Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 68f. / *Jub.*, vol. 12, p. 106.

astray in the negative.”¹³³ When, some pages later, he expands on this criticism, he unmistakably follows Hegel's analysis: “Throughout this whole investigation, Solger seems to have a dim notion of the negation of the negation, which in itself contains the true affirmation. But since the whole train of thought is not developed, the one negation erroneously slips into the other, and the true affirmation does not result.”¹³⁴ He continues, “[Solger] does have the negation of the negation, but still there is a veil in front of his eyes so that he does not see the affirmation.”¹³⁵ If it were not already obvious that Kierkegaard has borrowed this criticism from Hegel, he indicates this himself directly.¹³⁶

Given these points of influence, there can be little doubt that Kierkegaard used the Introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* as his point of departure in “Irony after Fichte” and expanded on Hegel's compact analysis on certain points. Kierkegaard himself acknowledges as much. Moreover, his discussion of the German Romantics does little more than repeat Hegel's critique. With respect to the Romantics' flippant irony, he writes, “We also perceive here that this irony was totally unjustified and that Hegel's hostile behavior toward it is entirely in order.”¹³⁷ Thus, Hegel's accounts of these two phenomena serve as Kierkegaard's primary model for both main parts of the work, on Socratic irony and on Romantic irony respectively.

IV. The Notebooks 8–15

Notebook 8 (from 1841) and *Notebook 10* (from 1841–42) contain extensive reading notes to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*. They address two main themes: the relation of philosophy to what Kierkegaard calls “actuality” and Hegel's theory of drama. In the first passage, Kierkegaard notes: “An observation which contributes to the question of the relation of philosophy to actuality according to Hegel's thought, which one frequently grasps best in his occasional utterances, is found in his *Æsthetik*, III, p. 243.”¹³⁸ Here Kierkegaard refers to the following passage in Hegel:

Thinking, however, results in thoughts alone; it evaporates the form of reality into the form of the pure Concept, and even if it grasps and apprehends real things in their particular character and real existence, it nevertheless lifts even this particular sphere into the element of the universal and ideal wherein alone thinking is at home with itself. Consequently, contrasted with the world of appearance, a new realm arises which is indeed the truth of reality, but this is a truth which is not made manifest again in the real world itself as its formative power and as its own soul. Thinking is only a reconciliation between reality and truth within thinking itself. But poetic creation and formation is a reconciliation in the form of a real phenomenon itself, even if this form be presented only spiritually.¹³⁹

¹³³ SKS 1, 341 / CI, 309.

¹³⁴ SKS 1, 348 / CI, 317.

¹³⁵ SKS 1, 352 / CI, 323.

¹³⁶ SKS 1, 348 / CI, 317: “Hegel perceived this very clearly and therefore articulates it explicitly on page 470.”

¹³⁷ SKS 1, 311 / CI, 275.

¹³⁸ SKS 19, 245, Not8.51 / JP 2, 1592.

¹³⁹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 976 / *Jub.*, vol. 14, pp. 242f.

This passage presumably drew Kierkegaard's attention because Hegel seems to recognize that something significant is lost in the attempt to reduce reality to the Concept. Further, he seems to acknowledge that art and poetry can reconcile truth and reality in a way that philosophy or conceptual thinking cannot.

In another entry, Kierkegaard notes a similar passage from Hegel's lectures: "A passage where Hegel himself seems to suggest the deficiency of pure thought, that not even philosophy is alone the adequate expression for human life, or that consequently personal life does not find its fulfillment in thought alone but in a totality of kinds of existence and modes of expression. Cf. *Æsthetik*, III, p. 440, bottom of page."¹⁴⁰ The passage Kierkegaard has in mind comes at the end of Hegel's discussion of lyric poetry, entitled "The General Character of Lyric." After extolling the virtues of lyric poetry, Hegel compares it with philosophical thinking:

But thirdly, there is a form of the spirit which, in one aspect, outsoars the imagination of the heart and vision because it can bring its content into free self-consciousness in a more decisively universal way and in more necessary connectedness than is possible for any art at all. I mean philosophical thinking. Yet this form, conversely, is burdened with the abstraction of developing solely in the province of thinking, that is, of purely ideal universality, so that man in the concrete may find himself forced to express the contents and results of his philosophical mind in a concrete way as penetrated by his heart and vision, his imagination and feeling, in order in this way to have and provide a total expression of his whole inner life.¹⁴¹

Art presents the Concept to the faculty of sensibility or perception. This stands in contrast to philosophical cognition, which eliminates the sensible aspect and grasps the structure of the Concept on its own. But, this said, Hegel seems here to recognize the irreducibility of certain aspects of sensible intuition and grant them their due.

Another entry in *Notebook 8* concerns the question of passion. Most Kierkegaard readers will immediately be reminded of the criticisms in the *Postscript* of the speculative thinker for lacking passion.¹⁴² Here, however, Kierkegaard praises Hegel's aesthetics for directing attention to the element of passion. At first he writes, "Passion is still the main thing; it is the real dynamometer for men. Our age is so shabby because it has no passion."¹⁴³ Then in a note to this entry he writes, "How beautifully Hegel says it in his *Æsthetics*, III, p. 362: 'For the chief right of these great characters consists in the energy of their self-accomplishment, because in their particular character they still carry the universal, while, conversely, commonplace moralizing persists in not respecting the particular personality and in putting all its energy into this disrespect.'"¹⁴⁴ Here Kierkegaard quotes from Hegel's account of epic,¹⁴⁵ apparently lauding Hegel's description of the substantiality and moral

¹⁴⁰ SKS 19, 246, Not8.53 / JP 2, 1593.

¹⁴¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, pp. 1127f. / *Jub.*, vol. 14, pp. 440f.

¹⁴² For example, SKS 7, 182–187 / *CUP1*, 199–204. SKS 7, 522–5 / *CUP1*, 575–8.

¹⁴³ See SKS 19, 237, Not8:39 / JP 1, 888.

¹⁴⁴ See SKS 19, 237, Not8:39.1 / JP 2, 1591.

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, p. 1068 / *Jub.*, vol. 14, p. 362.

fiber of the characters in epic poetry (in contrast to the moral lassitude of his contemporaries).

The first entry in *Notebook 10* contains rather detailed reading notes to Hegel's sections on epic, lyric and dramatic poetry.¹⁴⁶ It appears along with references to other works which treat Sophocles' *Antigone*. Kierkegaard's interest in this text can be explained by the fact that he was writing *Either/Or* at the time. While working on his analysis of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, which was to appear in the chapter, "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic of Modern Drama," Kierkegaard decided to have a look at Hegel's interpretation of the work. The notes in this journal are generally limited to the section in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* where Hegel treats *Antigone*. Thus, this chapter of *Either/Or* was Kierkegaard's immediate occasion to read Hegel's lectures.

Hegel also appears in Kierkegaard's lecture notes to the courses he attended in Berlin. *Notebook 9* and *Notebook 10* contain his extensive notes to Marheineke's lectures, where reference is made to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.¹⁴⁷ *Notebook 11* contains his notes to Schelling's celebrated lectures entitled, *The Philosophy of Revelation*. Here, as is well known, Schelling treats Hegel extensively.¹⁴⁸ These entries, however, reflect primarily the ideas of Marheineke and Schelling rather than Kierkegaard.

Finally, *Notebook 13* (from 1842–43), entitled "Philosophica," contains several references to Hegel, most of which are concerned with his treatment of the different metaphysical categories. In a passage which foreshadows his criticism of necessity in history in *Philosophical Fragments*,¹⁴⁹ Kierkegaard mentions Hegel's account of possibility and necessity.¹⁵⁰ In a quite complex entry he refers to Hegel's understanding of the differing nature of the categories at the three different stages of logic (Being, Essence and the Concept);¹⁵¹ and in a passage which foreshadows the

¹⁴⁶ SKS 19, 285f., Not10:1 / JP 5, 5545. It should also be noted that in *Notebook 12*, entitled "Aesthetica," Kierkegaard makes a fleeting reference to Hegel's account of comedy. SKS 19, 375, Not12:7 / JP 2, 1738.

¹⁴⁷ SKS 19, 255, Not9:1. SKS 19, 296, Not10:9.

¹⁴⁸ SKS 19, 312–22, Not11:9–15. SKS 19, 338–40, Not11:24. SKS 19, 346–8, Not11:29.

¹⁴⁹ SKS 4, 275–84 / PF, 75–88.

¹⁵⁰ SKS 19, 405, Not13:40 / JP 2, 1245: "Is the past more necessary than the future? This can be significant with respect to the solution of the problem of possibility—how does Hegel answer it? In logic, in the doctrine of essence. Here we get the explanation that the possible is the actual, the actual is the possible. It is simple enough in a science, at the conclusion of which one has arrived at possibility. It is then a tautology. This is important in connection with the doctrine of the relation between the future and God's foreknowledge. The old thesis that knowledge neither takes away anything nor adds. See Boethius, pp. 126–27, later used by Leibniz."

¹⁵¹ SKS 19, 415, Not13:50 / JP 2, 1602: "In the doctrine of being everything *is* which does not change. (This is something which even Werder admitted. See the small books.) / In the doctrine of essence there is *Beziehung*. —The irregularities in Hegel's logic. Essentially this segment is only dichotomies—cause-effect—ground-consequent—Reciprocal effect is a problem, perhaps belongs somewhere else. / The concept is a trichotomy. / Being does not belong to logic at all. / It ought to begin with dichotomy." Translation slightly modified.

analysis of motion in *Repetition*,¹⁵² reference is made to Hegel's account of mediation and the transition of one category to another.¹⁵³ There is also a fleeting reference in Kierkegaard's reading notes to a German translation of Leibniz's *Theodicy*,¹⁵⁴ where he notes that Hegel probably misunderstood the debate between Leibniz and Bayle.

Notebook 13 contains direct references to two primary texts, the first of which is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Kierkegaard writes: "The secret of the whole of existence, movement, Hegel explains easily enough, for he says somewhere in the *Phenomenology* that something goes on behind the back of consciousness (see Introduction, p. 71)."¹⁵⁵ He refers to the following passage where Hegel explains his dialectical methodology: "But it is just this necessity itself, or the *origination* of the new object, that presents itself to consciousness. Thus in the movement of consciousness there occurs a moment of *being-in-itself* or *being-for-us* which is not present to the consciousness comprehended in the experience itself."¹⁵⁶

The other primary text that Kierkegaard refers to is Hegel's *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, published posthumously in Karl Rosenkranz's edition. Kierkegaard writes:

What is a category?

As far as is known, modern philosophy has not supplied any definition, at least not Hegel. With the help of his inverse process he always leaves it to the reader's virtuosity to do what is most difficult, to gather multiplicity into the energy of one thought.

The only place in Hegel I have found anything is in the little encyclopaedia published by Rosenkranz, p. 93; he is completely arbitrary in his terminology, which is quite obvious in the classification he makes. Category has thus obtained a place it should not have, and the next question to be asked is: What is it, now, which encompasses this tripartition?¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² SKS 4, 25 / R, 148. SKS 4, 56–7 / R, 186.

¹⁵³ SKS 19, 415, Not13:50 / JP 1, 260: "Hegel has never justified the category of transition. It could be of importance to compare the Aristotelian doctrine of κίνησις with this. / In mediation the zero point, or is it a third? Does the third itself emerge through the immanent motion of the two, or how does it emerge?—The difficulty appears especially when one seeks to transfer it to the world of actuality." Translation slightly modified.

¹⁵⁴ SKS 19, 391, Not13:23 / JP 3, 3074. In another entry he writes the following note about Hegel: "Despite all the assurances about the positivity which lies in Hegel's system, he still had arrived only at the point where in olden days they began (for example, Leibniz)." SKS 19, 409, Not13:44 / JP 2, 1601.

¹⁵⁵ SKS 19, 399, Not13:34 / JP 2, 1594.

¹⁵⁶ Hegel, *PhS*, p. 56 / *Jub.* vol. 2, pp. 79f.

¹⁵⁷ SKS 19, 406, Not13:41 / JP 2, 1595–96. The entry continues: "Is being, then, a category? It is by no means what quality is, namely, determinate being, determinate in itself; the accent lies on determinate, not on being. Being is neither presupposed nor predicated. In this sense Hegel is right—being is nothing; if, on the other hand, it were a quality, then one could wish enlightenment on how it becomes identical with nothing. The whole doctrine about being is a fatuous prelude to the doctrine of quality. / Why did Kant begin with quantity, Hegel with quality?" SKS 19, 406, Not13:41 / JP 2, 1598 and 1600. In the margin below this there is a reference to "Hegel's *Propedeutic* p. 96. 97." SKS 19, 406, Not13:41a / JP 2, 1598.

Here reference is made to a passage in which a distinction is made between (1) categories, (2) determinations of reflection and (3) concepts in accordance with the three main parts of Hegel's logic (Being, Essence and the Concept). Kierkegaard seems to regard these divisions as artificial. The common theme of these various entries about the logical categories seems to be the question of movement and transition, which is of course related to the question of immanence and transcendence. These are issues that would exercise Kierkegaard in many of his pseudonymous works in the years to come.

V. Either/Or

While Hegel is mentioned a handful of times in *Either/Or*,¹⁵⁸ there are only two direct references to his primary texts. The first of these appears in the chapter, "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic of Modern Drama," from Part One. As was seen in the previous section, Kierkegaard's notebooks evidence a study of Hegel's account of tragedy while writing *Either/Or*.

In his discussion Kierkegaard's esthete quotes directly from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* in order to explore Hegel's view of the role of compassion in tragedy:

It is well known that Aristotle maintains that tragedy should arouse fear and compassion in the spectator. I recall that Hegel in his *Aesthetics* picks up this comment and on each of these points makes a double observation, which, however, is not very exhaustive...Hegel notes that there are two kinds of compassion, the usual kind that turns its attention to the finite side of suffering, and the truly tragic compassion. This observation is altogether correct but to me of less importance, since that universal emotion is a misunderstanding that can befall modern tragedy just as much as ancient tragedy. But what he adds with regard to true compassion is true and powerful: "*das wahrhafte Mitleiden ist im Gegenteil die Sympathie mit der zugleich sittlichen Berechtigung des Leidenden.*"¹⁵⁹

The esthete continues by contrasting his own approach to that of Hegel: "Whereas Hegel considers compassion more in general and its differentiation in the difference of individualities, I prefer to stress the difference in compassion in relation to the difference in tragic guilt."¹⁶⁰ He seems to want to supplement or modify Hegel's account rather than to criticize it.

Hegel's section, "The Difference Between Ancient and Modern Drama,"¹⁶¹ from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* seems to be the main source of the analysis of tragedy in *Either/Or*. The essential difference is, according to Hegel, that the ancient world lacks subjective reflection or subjective freedom. The esthete follows closely Hegel's description of the Greek world: "the ancient world did not have subjectivity reflected in itself. Even if the individual moved freely, he nevertheless rested in substantial determinants, in the state, the family, in fate. This substantial determinant is the

¹⁵⁸ For example, *SKS* 2, 58 / *EOI*, 50. *SKS* 2, 61 / *EOI*, 53.

¹⁵⁹ *SKS* 2, 146f. / *EOI*, 147.

¹⁶⁰ *SKS* 2, 147 / *EOI*, 147.

¹⁶¹ Hegel, *Aesthetics* II, pp. 1205–8 / *Jub.*, vol. 14, pp. 540–4.

essential fateful factor in Greek tragedy and is its essential characteristic.”¹⁶² Hegel had identified the institutions of family and state (represented by Antigone and Creon) as among those which came into conflict in Greek tragedy and civilization. The esthete likewise follows Hegel’s characterization of tragedy in the modern world: “in the modern period situation and character are in fact predominant. The tragic hero is subjectively reflected in himself, and this reflection has not only reflected him out of every immediate relation to state, kindred, and fate but often has even reflected him out of his own past life.”¹⁶³ While ancient tragedy lacks reflection, modern tragedy is characterized by it. Hegel takes Hamlet as the modern parallel to Antigone; obsessed with reflection, he is the modern tragic figure *par excellence*. Characters in modern drama have a sense of individuality, whereas those of ancient drama are less individuals than embodiments of general forces or principles.

The esthete takes this characterization of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy as the point of departure for his discussion. His goal is to modify Sophocles’ *Antigone* in order to turn it into a modern tragedy in accordance with Hegel’s definition. His primary modification entails shifting the tragic conflict from an external one to an internal one. Whereas the conflict in the ancient *Antigone* was, according to Hegel’s famous analysis, between the family and the state, the esthete removes the conflict from the external world and places it in the mind of Antigone herself.

The esthete’s simple modification of the plot is merely that Oedipus’ crimes of killing his father and marrying his mother are known only to his daughter Antigone, while the rest of Thebes believe his rule and his marriage to be legitimate. The esthete’s Antigone is thus characterized by the modern emotion of anxiety. He follows Hegel in referring to Hamlet as the paradigm case of a modern tragic figure characterized by this emotion.¹⁶⁴

In the chapter entitled, “The Unhappiest One,” also from *Either/Or*, Part One, reference is made to Hegel’s analysis of the unhappy consciousness in the “Self-Consciousness” chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹⁶⁵ One reads, “In all of Hegel’s systematic works there is one section that discusses the unhappy consciousness.”¹⁶⁶ Much of Kierkegaard’s analysis is concerned with the temporal dimensions of unhappiness. One can be unhappy with respect to the past by obsessively recollecting what has been and what one either regrets or longs to return to. Or one can be unhappy with respect to the future by obsessively hoping for a time to come in which events are more favorable. In either case one forgets to live in the present. Kierkegaard acknowledges Hegel’s analysis as the source of this idea:

The unhappy one is the person who in one way or another has his ideal, the substance of his life, the plenitude of his consciousness, his essential nature, outside himself. The unhappy one is the person who is always absent from himself, never present to himself. But in being

¹⁶² SKS 2, 143 / EO1, 143. See also SKS 2, 148 / EO1, 149. SKS 2, 152 / EO1, 154. SKS 2, 154f. / EO1, 155–6.

¹⁶³ SKS 2, 143 / EO1, 143.

¹⁶⁴ SKS 2, 154 / EO1, 155.

¹⁶⁵ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 126–38; *Jub.* 2, pp. 166–81.

¹⁶⁶ SKS 2, 215f. / EO1, 222.

absent, one obviously can be in either past or future time. The whole territory of the unhappy consciousness is thereby circumscribed. For this firm limitation, we thank Hegel....¹⁶⁷

Here reference is made to Hegel's portrayal of the source of the unhappy consciousness' unhappiness in its separation from the divine. The unhappy consciousness longs for the past since it wishes to see Christ with its own eyes and follow in his footsteps. This, however, remains an impossibility, and the unhappy consciousness is ridden with guilt and sin for the way in which humanity persecuted its savior. Similarly, the unhappy consciousness longs for the second coming of Christ in the future and a communion with the divine in heaven. But these events lie similarly in a distant time, and the unhappy consciousness is obsessed with the thought of this future and regrets that it must live out its life in the corrupt and sinful world of the present. These temporal aspects of Hegel's analysis are taken up by Kierkegaard and generalized from Hegel's strictly religious account. Some years later Kierkegaard returned to Hegel's analysis in his own phenomenological account of the forms of despair in *The Sickness unto Death*.¹⁶⁸

VI. Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus dubitandum est

Kierkegaard's fragmentary story, *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus dubitandum est*, concerns issues such as the proper beginning of philosophy and skeptical doubt, which were much discussed in Hegelian contexts at the time. But Hegel's name appears just once in a footnote which refers to the "Consciousness" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the footnote, Kierkegaard writes,

The terminology of modern philosophy is often confusing. For example, it speaks of *sinnliches Bewußtsein*, *wahrnehmendes B[ewußtsein]*, *Verstand*, etc., although it would be far preferable to call it "sense perception," "experience," for in consciousness there is more. It would be interesting to see how Hegel would formulate the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, from self-consciousness to reason. When the transition consists merely of a heading, it is easy enough.¹⁶⁹

The words Kierkegaard writes in German are references to the three parts of the "Consciousness" chapter, that is, "Sense-Certainty," ["*Die sinnliche Gewißheit*"], "Perception," ["*Die Wahrnehmung*"], and "Force and the Understanding" ["*Kraft und Verstand*"]. The references in the second part of the passage are to the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*, that is, "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness" and "Reason."

Kierkegaard's subsequent analysis is indebted to the "Sense-Certainty" section from the "Consciousness" chapter.¹⁷⁰ Hegel's analysis in "Sense-Certainty" is a

¹⁶⁷ SKS 2, 216 / EO1, 222.

¹⁶⁸ In a draft Kierkegaard says of sections A and B of *The Sickness unto Death*, "Both forms are forms of an unhappy consciousness" (Pap. VIII-2 B 150.8 / SUD, Supplement, p. 150).

¹⁶⁹ Pap. IV B 1, p. 148n / JC, 169n. See Pap. IV B 10.12 / JC, Supplement, p. 258.

¹⁷⁰ Hegel, *PhS*, pp. 58-66 / *Jub.* vol. 2, pp. 81-92.

refutation of common sense realism, which claims that what is immediately given is true. This view is refuted by the realization that one must appeal to a universal, that is, an object of thought, every time one wishes to describe the purportedly predetermined external object. Hegel concludes that the external object cannot be independent or predetermined but rather is determined in part by the human mind. In *De Omnibus*, Kierkegaard's protagonist, Johannes Climacus, follows just this reasoning. He writes,

He [Johannes Climacus] asked what the nature of consciousness would be when it had doubt outside itself. There is consciousness in the child, but it has doubt outside itself. How, then, is the child's consciousness qualified? It is actually not qualified at all, which can also be expressed by saying that it is immediate. *Immediacy* is precisely *indeterminateness*. In immediacy there is no relation, for as soon as there is a relation immediacy is cancelled. *Immediately, therefore, everything is true*, but this truth is untruth the very next moment, *for in immediacy everything is untrue*.¹⁷¹

This recalls Hegel's discussion of immediacy in terms of the category of pure being. At first, it appears this category is the most abstract and the most basic thing that can be thought. It is immediately given to the knowing subject. However, without further determination, it remains an empty indeterminate concept. To overcome this indeterminacy, it must interact with other categories. Only in this way can it become more determinate and more concrete, but the mediation of the other categories undermines the claim that it is absolutely primary and immediately given.

In Hegel's analysis the contradiction is, as always, between the particularity of experience and the universality of thought. The contradiction comes to the fore when one attempts to articulate a particular, for in order to do so, one must appeal to the universals of language. Kierkegaard 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."¹⁷² He continues,

Therefore, it is language that cancels immediacy; if man could not talk he would remain in the immediate. This could be expressed, he [Johannes Climacus] thought, by saying that the immediate is reality, language is ideality, since by speaking I produce the contradiction. When I seek to express sense perception in this way, the contradiction is present, for what I say is something different from what I want to say. I cannot express reality in language, because I use ideality to characterize it, which is a contradiction, an untruth.¹⁷³

Kierkegaard clearly makes use of Hegel's analysis in this passage. Hegel speaks of the contradiction of consciousness involved in meaning one thing (the particular) and saying another (the universal). Both Kierkegaard and Hegel agree that language cannot capture the particular. Here again Kierkegaard incorporates a part of Hegel's philosophy, reworks it and places it into his own context.

¹⁷¹ Pap. IV B 1, pp. 145f. / JC, 167. Translation slightly modified.

¹⁷² Pap. IV B 1, p. 147 / JC, 168.

¹⁷³ Pap. IV B 14.6 / JC, Supplement, p. 255.

VII. Fear and Trembling

Hegel is alluded to at the beginning of each of the three “problemata,” which constitute the main body of *Fear and Trembling*. In “Problema I,” Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous author refers directly to a section in the *Philosophy of Right* as the object of his criticism.¹⁷⁴ (The importance of this text for Kierkegaard is evidenced by the fact that he mentions it earlier in *The Concept of Irony*, where he quotes from it seemingly with approval,¹⁷⁵ and later in *Practice in Christianity*.¹⁷⁶) Johannes de silentio explains Hegel’s ethics as focused on the universal and then writes, “If this is the case, then Hegel is right in ‘The Good and Conscience,’ where he defines man only as a ‘moral form of evil’ (see especially *The Philosophy of Right*), which must be sublated in the teleology of the moral in such a way that the single individual who remains in that stage either sins or is immersed in spiritual trial.”¹⁷⁷ An ethics founded on the universal must disregard the moral judgment of the individual which is dismissed as arbitrary. This is significant when one recalls the famous thesis of this problema about the so-called “teleological suspension of the ethical,” according to which the individual recipient of a divine revelation is placed above the universal, understood as social ethics or the accepted laws and practices of a people. Johannes de silentio argues that Hegel’s universal ethics leaves no room for the teleological suspension of the ethical. The logical conclusion of the Abraham and Isaac story would, on Hegel’s view, be to regard Abraham as a criminal because his action violates accepted custom and law: “But Hegel is wrong in speaking about faith; he is wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against Abraham’s enjoying honor and glory as a father of faith when he ought to be sent back to a lower court and shown up as a murderer.”¹⁷⁸ Hegel’s view is too inflexible to see that an act which must be condemned from the perspective of universal ethics and civil law can at the same time be a sign of the highest faith. Hegel’s account of the moral conscience in “The Good and Conscience” is too one-sided in its criticism of the different forms of Romantic individualism or subjectivity. In the *Journal NB2* from 1847 Kierkegaard writes,

¹⁷⁴ Hegel, *PR*, §§ 129–41 / *Jub.* 7, pp. 187–225.

¹⁷⁵ *SKS* 1, 270 / *CI*, 227f. Quoted above.

¹⁷⁶ *SVI* XII, 83 / *PC*, 87: “Why has Hegel made conscience and the state of conscience in the single individual ‘a form of evil’ (see *Rechts-Philosophie*)? Why? Because he deified the established order. But the more one deifies the established order, the more natural is the conclusion: ergo, the one who disapproves of or rebels against this divinity, the established order—ergo, he must be rather close to imagining that he is God. Very likely it is by no means the person in question who declares something blasphemous about himself (and if he is a true witness to the truth, then it certainly is not that person). No, the blasphemy is actually a projection from the impiety with which one venerates the established order as the divine, an acoustic illusion occasioned by the established order’s tacitly saying to itself that it is the divine, and now through the witness to the truth comes to hear this, but hears it as if it were he who said he was more than human.”

¹⁷⁷ *SKS* 4, 148f. / *FT*, 54. Translation slightly modified.

¹⁷⁸ *SKS* 4, 149 / *FT*, 54f.

"The impiety (the abolition of the relationship of conscience) is the fundamental damage done by Hegelian philosophy."¹⁷⁹

This affords another example of the way in which Kierkegaard takes specific points from Hegel's analysis in one context (political philosophy) and uses them in a quite different context in his own work. He is interested in and sympathetic to Hegel's criticism of the abuses that Romantic individualism can lead to and attempts to steer the difficult middle course between the Scylla of Romantic relativism and the Charybdis of Hegelian universalism. He wants to defend a form of individualism in the sphere of religion, but he is acutely aware of the dangers of slipping into relativism that this presents. There are a number of parallelisms between the moral conscience analyzed by Hegel and the picture of Abraham presented by Kierkegaard. Each must reject accepted custom and law, the Romantic due to arbitrary egoism and Abraham due to the teleological suspension of the ethical. Each must regard his individual conscience as absolute, the Romantic again due to arbitrary egoism and Abraham due to the divine revelation. Kierkegaard's task is thus to distinguish Abraham as a legitimate form of individualism from the numerous illegitimate forms found in then recent Romanticism.

Johannes de silentio wants to make room for the individual to deviate from social norms and act subjectively without this being condemned as arbitrary and illegitimate. He writes,

For if the ethical—that is, social morality—is the highest and if there is in a person no residual incommensurability in some way such that this incommensurability is not evil (that is, the single individual, who is to be expressed in the universal), then no categories are needed other than what Greek philosophy had or what can be deduced from them by consistent thought. Hegel should not have concealed this, for after all, he had studied Greek philosophy.¹⁸⁰

In this admittedly difficult passage Johannes de silentio seems to suggest that, for Hegel, there is always a transparency between the individual and the universal. This view eliminates the possibility of someone like Abraham, who has inwardly been blessed by a revelation and the paradox of faith which he cannot communicate outwardly. This foreshadows the allusion to Hegel in the next chapter.

Johannes de silentio begins "Problema II" first by granting that Hegel's view is appropriate from the perspective of a universal conception of ethics and then by

¹⁷⁹ SKS 20, 207, NB2:166 / JP 2, 1613. Cf. SKS 21, 229f., NB9:51 / JP 1, 684: "It is presupposed and stated that every human being has a conscience—yet there is no accomplishment (neither in the physical, like dancing, singing, etc., nor in the mental, such as thinking and the like) which requires such an extensive and rigorous schooling as is required before one can genuinely be said to have a conscience. Just as gold in its original state is found alloyed with all sorts of worthless and miscellaneous components, so it is with conscience in its immediate state, which contains elements which are the very opposite of the conscience. / Herein lies the truth of what Hegel says about conscience being a form of the evil. But in another sense Hegel says this without justification. He ought rather have said: What many, indeed most, people call conscience is not conscience at all, but moods, stomach reflexes, vagrant impulses, etc.—the conscience of a bailiff."

¹⁸⁰ SKS 4, 149 / FT, 55.

criticizing this view in connection with the story of Abraham and Isaac. He writes, "if there is nothing incommensurable in a human life, and if the incommensurable that is present is there only by an accident from which nothing results insofar as existence is viewed from the idea, then Hegel was right."¹⁸¹ According to the universal view, there is always a harmony between the universal and the particular, and thus there is no incommensurability between the two spheres. But Johannes de silentio continues,

But [Hegel] was not right in speaking about faith or in permitting Abraham to be regarded as its father, for in the latter case he has pronounced judgment both on Abraham and on faith. In Hegelian philosophy, *das Äußere (die Entäußerung)* is higher than *das Innere*.... But faith is the paradox that interiority is higher than exteriority, or, to call to mind something said earlier, the uneven number is higher than the even.¹⁸²

Kierkegaard previously touched Hegel's view of the dialectical relation between the outer and the inner in the opening line of *Either/Or*: "It may have occurred to you, dear reader, to doubt somewhat the accuracy of that familiar philosophical thesis that the outer is the inner and the inner is the outer."¹⁸³ This portrayal of the concepts as being in a necessary dialectical relation to one another is probably a more accurate account of Hegel's actual view than the one presented in *Fear and Trembling*, which attributes to Hegel a preference for the outer. In any case, the point for Johannes de silentio is that the two categories are sometimes incommensurable. Abraham's inward revelation simply cannot be understood from without. Johannes de silentio accuses Hegel of overlooking the crucial inward components of religious life.

Here again Kierkegaard makes use of Hegel's categories, the inner and outer, in a context quite foreign to that which Hegel intended. Hegel is concerned with them as, for example, categories of reflection in logic,¹⁸⁴ or as terms to describe the human body in the philosophy of nature,¹⁸⁵ but not in the context of religious faith. To his credit, Kierkegaard makes no mention of any particular text by Hegel in this connection, and thus seems to be addressing what he perceives as a general Hegelian principle.

The third "Problema" deals with how one can justify oneself to others. The personal nature of the revelation permits only inward justification, and Abraham would not be able to justify his actions by discursive argumentation. Johannes de silentio writes, "The ethical as such is the universal; as the universal it is in turn the disclosed. The single individual, qualified as immediate, sensate, and psychical, is the hidden. Thus his ethical task is to work himself out of his hiddenness and to become disclosed in the universal."¹⁸⁶ A universal ethic can be justified with

¹⁸¹ SKS 4, 160f. / FT, 68.

¹⁸² SKS 4, 161 / FT, 68f.

¹⁸³ SKS 2, 11 / EO1, 3.

¹⁸⁴ Hegel, *SL*, pp. 518–28 / *Jub.*, vol. 4, pp. 648–61. *EL*, §§ 138–41 / *Jub.*, vol. 8, pp. 313–9. (*SL* = *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. by A.V. Miller, London: George Allen and Unwin 1989.) (*EL* = *The Encyclopaedia Logic. Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. by T.F. Gerats, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett 1991.)

¹⁸⁵ *PhS*, pp. 160–72 / *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 208–23. See also his criticism of physiognomy and phrenology: *PhS*, pp. 185–210 / *Jub.*, vol. 2, pp. 239–71.

¹⁸⁶ SKS 4, 172 / FT, 82.

discursive, reasoned arguments. For the subjective believer, however, this is not possible since faith entails an inward element which cannot be made the object of reasoned discussion. Johannes de silentio then mentions Hegel again:

If there is no hiddenness rooted in the fact that the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal, then Abraham's conduct cannot be defended, for he disregarded the intermediary ethical agents....The Hegelian philosophy assumes no justified hiddenness, no justified incommensurability. It is, then, consistent for it to demand disclosure, but it is a little bemuddled when it wants to regard Abraham as the father of faith and to speak about faith.¹⁸⁷

Since the outer is equivalent to the inner for Hegel, there is no incommensurability and thus, in principle, nothing that cannot be articulated and discussed. For Kierkegaard, however, the inner paradox of faith cannot be articulated.

In this text Hegel is continually reintroduced as a contrasting point of view to the one Johannes de silentio wishes to set forth. The reference to Hegel's "The Good and Conscience" is the key to understanding the parameters of the entire text. There Hegel sets forth his own universal ethic while criticizing relativism and subjectivism. Kierkegaard's goal is to steer a middle course between these two positions and carve out an independent sphere for a religiosity that is subjective but not arbitrary or relativist.

VIII. Hegel in the Authorship after 1843

Although the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* from 1846 is generally understood to represent the apex of Kierkegaard's Hegel critique, there is no evidence that Kierkegaard ever returned to Hegel's primary texts after 1843. Works such as *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) and *Prefaces* (1844), occasionally mention Hegel's name directly or contain Hegelian elements, but do not quote or refer explicitly to any of his primary texts. But in the absence of direct textual references, the interpretive challenge becomes considerably more difficult.

After 1846 Hegel all but disappears from the authorship. If we ignore for the moment *The Book on Adler* due to its special status as a posthumous work, Hegel is almost never mentioned after the *Postscript*. He appears in only scattered entries in the NB journals, that is, the journals Kierkegaard kept during the second half of his authorship from after 1846, and most of those references are either wholly incidental or refer to figures in the Danish Hegel reception and not Hegel's own texts.¹⁸⁸ Although *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) follows a dialectical pattern that

¹⁸⁷ SKS 4, 172 / FT, 82.

¹⁸⁸ SKS 20, 39, NB:36 / JP 5, 5937. SKS 20, 44, NB:42 / JP 2, 1611. SKS 20, 46f., NB:47 / JP 5, 5944. SKS 20, 89f., NB:128 / JP 2, 1612. SKS 20, 207, NB:166 / JP 2, 1613. SKS 20, 262, NB:34 / JP 1, 184. SKS 20, 264, NB:38 / JP 5, 6079. SKS 21, 76, NB:73 / JP 2, 1375. SKS 21, 189f., NB:108 / JP 1, 224. SKS 21, 225, NB:42 / JP 6, 6310, p. 95. SKS 21, 229f., NB:51 / JP 1, 684.

has much in common with many of Hegel's analyses, there is no evidence of a renewed study of any of Hegel's primary texts during the time of its writing.

Kierkegaard's use of Hegel can perhaps be characterized as divided into four periods. The first period runs from the earliest journal entries and newspaper articles in 1834 until around 1840 when Kierkegaard began serious work on *The Concept of Irony*. During this period Kierkegaard appears to have had some awareness of Hegel's philosophy but not yet to have made any serious study of it. His writings from this period contain general discussions of certain Hegelian ideas but no references to actual texts.

The second period begins with *The Concept of Irony* in 1841 and runs through *Fear and Trembling* in 1843. This period is characterized by a thorough study of carefully selected texts by Hegel, such as the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which are used extensively in *The Concept of Irony*, the section of tragedy from the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, which is used in *Either/Or*, the sections on the "Unhappy Consciousness" and "Sense-Certainty" from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which are used in *Either/Or* and *De Omnibus* respectively, and the section "The Good and Conscience" from the *Philosophy of Right*, which is used in *Fear and Trembling*.

The third period, running from 1844 through 1846, is characterized by an ongoing interest in Hegel but with no renewed study of any of his primary texts. Kierkegaard's polemics during this period are aimed less at Hegel *per se* than at the Danish Hegelians such as Johan Ludvig Heiberg, Hans Lassen Martensen and Adolph Peter Adler. The references to Hegel during this period tend to repeat the same basic ideas, which can again be taken as evidence that Kierkegaard was then working with his prior knowledge of Hegel's thought without revisiting the primary texts.

The fourth period covers the entire second half of the authorship, from 1847 until Kierkegaard's death in 1855. Kierkegaard's interest in Hegel clearly dried up by this point. Hegel is rarely mentioned, and there are no new references to any of the primary texts. Kierkegaard's actual study of Hegel was thus limited to a fairly short period of time from his dissertation in 1841 to *Fear and Trembling* in 1843.

In this context it is somewhat surprising that there is no evidence that he ever studied the text from Hegel's *corpus* which would seem to have been the most relevant for his interests, namely the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Although Kierkegaard owned a copy of this work, which was much discussed and debated at the time, he seems not to have taken the time to make a study of it. One could also mention Hegel's early essay "Faith and Knowledge," which would certainly have been of great interest to Kierkegaard, but there is no evidence that he was familiar with it, although he owned a copy of it in Michelet's edition of Hegel's *Philosophische Abhandlungen* (1832).

Kierkegaard's readings of Hegel were highly selective and almost always dictated by his own interests. His study of Hegel seems to be *ad hoc* in the sense that instead of reading entire books from cover to cover, he went directly to the individual chapters and analyses that he could use for his own purposes: Hegel's analysis of Socrates and the Greek world, his criticism of Romanticism, the moral conscience and irony, his discussion of *Antigone* and Greek tragedy, and his treatment of common sense

realism under the heading of “Sense-Certainty.” This *ad hoc* use clearly indicates a receptive disposition towards Hegel since it shows that, with his own agenda more or less set ahead of time, Kierkegaard consciously and actively sought inspiration in Hegel’s works.

If Kierkegaard looked to Hegel for inspiration, he rarely confined himself to merely parroting him. Instead, he appropriated Hegel’s ideas for his own purposes by changing them slightly and placing them in new contexts. Thus, Kierkegaard was by no means an uncritical follower of Hegel—indeed, this tendency is what he so often criticized among his contemporaries—but by the same token he was no rabid anti-Hegelian. Instead, Kierkegaard, like most all scholars from the period, was in a critical and indeed probably more or less inevitable dialogue with the towering philosophical figure of the age.

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