

# **The Complexity of History of Reception: Hegel, Heiberg, and the Nature of Philosophical Inquiry**

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## **Abstract**

Johan Ludvig Heiberg was Hegel's most important Danish student. He attended Hegel's lectures in Berlin in 1824 and, upon his return to the Kingdom of Denmark, embarked upon an active campaign to disseminate Hegel's ideas, which he took to have great relevance for his age. The article demonstrates that Heiberg is inspired by Hegel's critical account of his time. Moreover, it shows that, although he disagreed with Hegel's view of the role of philosophy vis-à-vis the crisis of the age, he refrained from criticising Hegel's account explicitly. This serves as the occasion, at the end of the article, for some reflections about the complexities of the history of reception. While Heiberg is known as the leading Hegelian in Denmark during the age, he paradoxically departs from Hegel on the key issue of the concept and role of philosophy.

## **Keywords**

Johan Ludvig Heiberg, Hegel, Danish Golden Age, crisis, nature of philosophy

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Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860) was Hegel's most important Danish student. He attended Hegel's lectures in Berlin in 1824 and, upon his return to the Kingdom of Denmark, embarked upon an active campaign to disseminate Hegel's ideas, which he took to have great relevance for his age. Heiberg was not merely or primarily a philosopher; instead, his academic profile was varied and complex. In addition to philosophy, his *oeuvre* consists of poetry, drama, literary criticism, aesthetics, linguistics, and works on the natural sciences. He was a dominant figure in Danish cultural life during the 1830s and 1840s. His dramatic works were highly popular at the Royal Theatre, and his literary journals were widely read and discussed. In his so-called 'Autobiographiske Fragmenter' ('Autobiographical Fragments') (Heiberg 1861-62: 500f.; Heiberg 2005a: 65), he describes his encounter with Hegel's philosophy in Berlin as a kind of revelation that changed his life, giving him a sense of purpose and direction in his many academic and artistic endeavours.

While Heiberg was influential in the Nordic countries, he never enjoyed a wide reception in Continental Europe. With this said, Heiberg did have contacts in Prussia and the German states, and Karl Rosenkranz mentions him in his well-known biography of Hegel.<sup>1</sup> Presumably Heiberg's lack of a broader influence is due in large part to the fact that most of his *corpus* is written in Danish, and his most important writings have only begun to be translated fairly recently. His work was important for Kierkegaard, who dedicated many pages to criticising and satirising him. In fact, it seems unfair that today Heiberg's thought is known primarily through the distorted lens of Kierkegaard's satire.

Heiberg was particularly interested in Hegel's understanding of the age. While Hegel is generally understood as an optimist who celebrates the culmination of Western Civilisation and the realisation of human freedom in his own day, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* he describes what he takes to be the confusion and disharmony of the present. In Berlin Heiberg listened to this with fascination and found himself in complete agreement with Hegel's assessment of the spirit of the times. The question then naturally arose about what should be done to solve the problem that Hegel portrayed. Hegel conceived of philosophy as contemplative in the sense that its goal is simply to discover and understand the truth. According to Hegel, philosophy cannot be used to predict the future or to remedy the problems of the world. Philosophy's job stops with understanding. This view was dissatisfying to many of Hegel's students and others of Heiberg's generation, such as Heinrich Heine, Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Karl Marx, Mikhail Bakunin, and Friedrich Engels (Stewart 2021). These figures took Hegel's philosophy to be the basis for a call to revolution and radical social transformation. To their minds this was the only solution to the ills of the age. In contrast to Hegel's vision of philosophy as something purely contemplative, they conceived of it as a tool for change in the world. This is captured succinctly by Marx's well-known claim, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx 1956-2018: vol. 3, 7; Marx 1978: 145). According to the new generation, philosophy should serve some concrete purpose in actuality, and one should not just be satisfied with understanding it. This disposition is understandable given that this was a dynamic and fast changing period, which witnessed the July Revolution of 1830 and the Revolutions of 1848. In the wake of the Restoration, there was general sense of urgency to take action against the many forms of injustice and oppression.

While Heiberg was by no means a revolutionary or a radical, he shared with these thinkers the view of philosophy as something more practice-oriented than Hegel's conception allowed. Heiberg thus also parts company with Hegel on the question of the proper role of philosophy. Three of Heiberg's works are particularly important for these issues: his *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik. Som Ledetraad ved Forelæsninger paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole* (Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic as Guide to Lectures at the Royal Military College) (Heiberg 1832; Heiberg 2006), his *Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Cursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole* (Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course that Began in November 1834 at the Royal Military College) (Heiberg 1835; Heiberg 2007), and his most important philosophical text, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid. Et Indbydelses-Skrift til en Række af filosofiske Forelæsninger* (On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age: An Invitation to a Series of Lectures on Philosophy) (Heiberg 1833; Heiberg 2005b). In these works, he sketches a picture of philosophy that is active in

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenkranz, K. 1844: 395-396: 'Indeed, Hegel saw his philosophy and its language expand to European dimensions....In The Hague Dr. Kiehl edited a journal for Hegel's philosophy in Dutch; in Kiel, and later in Copenhagen, was Heiberg, who had made the acquaintance of Hegel personally in Berlin.'

reforming the cultural ills of the day, an idea that is clearly at variance with Hegel's view of the office of philosophy.

In the present study I wish to examine this question of Heiberg's departure from Hegel on the question of the role of philosophy. I will demonstrate that Heiberg was inspired by Hegel's critical account of his age. In the literature this has not been done before.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, I will show that, although Heiberg disagreed with Hegel's view of the role of philosophy vis-à-vis the crisis of the age, he refrained from criticising Hegel's account explicitly. This will be the occasion, at the end of the article, for some reflections about the complexities of the history of reception. While Heiberg is known as the leading Hegelian in Denmark during the age, he paradoxically departs from Hegel on the key issue of the nature and goal of philosophical inquiry.

## I. Heiberg and Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*

When Heiberg was in Berlin in 1824, Hegel was teaching two courses: one entitled 'Philosophy of Religion' and the other 'Logic and Metaphysics'.<sup>3</sup> The latter was presumably based on Hegel's book the *Science of Logic*, and this would explain Heiberg's enduring interest in this aspect of Hegel's thought. However, the course on the philosophy of religion was the key for Heiberg's *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. These lectures were published posthumously in 1832 by Philipp Marheineke (Hegel 1832), just a year before the appearance of Heiberg's book.<sup>4</sup>

In order to make his edition, Marheineke gathered together various lecture notes from Hegel's students and created a single running text from them. However, this is rather distorting since Hegel gave his lecture course on the philosophy of religion four times, specifically in 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831 (Hegel 1956: 743-749). Understandably, his views changed during this fairly long period as he continued to read on the subject and work with the material. These changes are reflected in the different courses, where rather significant variations occur. In contrast to Marheineke's older edition, the new edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* by Walter Jaeschke usefully divides the individual lecture courses into the individual years in which Hegel presented them (Hegel 1983-85). This feature makes it possible to see more precisely the version of the lectures that Heiberg heard in 1824 (see Stewart 2018).

Hegel ends his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* with the claim that the age suffers from a malaise that he describes as a kind of disharmony or discord. He believes that people generally feel a sense of alienation from the existing spheres of culture. Sitting in Hegel's lecture hall, Heiberg was attentive to this diagnosis, and when he returned to Denmark, he made it the central motif of *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*. In the final pages of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where, after having given a long overview of the development of the world religions historically, Hegel assesses the state of religion in his own time. Somewhat surprisingly, he ends these lectures not with a celebration of the present age but rather with a depiction of it as being in a state of crisis and alienation.

He portrays the development of religious thinking in three broad steps. First, there is the simple unreflective piety of the religious believer, unencumbered by doubt or sceptical thought (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 168; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 238). The religious believer is dominated by feelings, emotions and visual images, and there is nothing sophisticated or intellectual about this belief. This corresponds to what Heiberg in his text regards as the simple religious belief of the past, which he takes to be a surpassed stage of cultural development. The view of naïve piety is problematic since, lacking any real doctrinal content, it reduces to a relativism, with each individual having his or her personal relation to the divine depending on their own subjective feeling.

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<sup>2</sup> While Heiberg is known for his claim about the crisis of the age, it has not been recognised before that he was inspired on this point by Hegel. The reason for this is that most scholars associate Hegel with an overly positive assessment of his own time. For Heiberg's complex relation to Hegel, see Koch 2004; Stewart 2003, 2007a, 2009; Thompson 2008; Thulstrup 1967, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Übersicht über Hegels Berliner Vorlesungen' in Hegel 1956: 745.

<sup>4</sup> We know that Heiberg was familiar with this work since he quotes from it directly in his text. Heiberg 1833:10; Heiberg 2005b: 91.

Second, there is the stage of what Hegel calls 'reflection,' which is represented by the Enlightenment (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 168-174; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 238-245). This stage introduces to religion the element of thoughtful, rational consideration. Thinkers from the Enlightenment criticise religion since it appears to be completely irreconcilable with the facts of modern science. The notion of miracles and the dogmas of Christianity seem to contradict everything that science teaches about the way the world works. The Enlightenment thinker demands of religion a justification in terms of the methodology of science. When religion cannot provide this, it is rejected as superstition or mythology: '...was den festen Bestimmungen widerspricht, gilt nicht; Präentionen, Anordnungen der Kirche, die widersprechen, gelten ihm nicht.' ('Whatever contradicts these fixed determinations [of science] is invalid; pretensions and ordinances of the church that run counter to them have no validity') (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 170; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 240). Enlightenment thinking destroys all absolute truth by reducing everything to the empirical. It cannot accept the idea of an incarnated God, which it takes to be an anthropomorphism, and so this is replaced by the idea of a supreme being found in Deism. It was thought that this idea of a transcendent, creator God, indifferent to human affairs, was the only conception of the divine that was reconcilable with modern science. This collapse of traditional religious belief, caused by the rise of science, squares precisely with the cultural crisis of the age that Heiberg describes in *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*.

Finally, these two stages are *aufgehoben* or sublated in philosophical thinking, which is able to take into account the immediate feeling of the believer and the reflection of the scientist or critical thinker, in order to end up with a genuine conception of truth (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 174-176; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 245-247). While the faith of immediate piety is grounded in the particular, and the faith of the Enlightenment in the universal (that is, the abstract God of Deism), the goal of speculative philosophy is to reconcile these two and to demonstrate the unity of universal and particular (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 174-5; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 246). This third stage is clearly the inspiration for Heiberg's proposal for a solution to the current cultural crisis. His readers, he argues, need to understand Hegel's speculative philosophy, and this will put religion back on a solid footing.

The religious crisis of the day, as portrayed by Hegel, consists of the fact that immediate, unreflective piety lacks any common faith or doctrine since it is devoid of fixed, concrete content: it splits religious believers 'in Atome..., jedes von eigener Weltanschauung' ('into atoms, each with its own world-view') (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 174; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 246), and thus undermines the idea of the Christian community. The solution offered by the Enlightenment—the supreme being of Deism—fails to resolve the problem since this conception of the divine is also empty of content. Given the abstract and transcendent nature of this conception of the divine, it is said that nothing can be known about God. The task of philosophy is to restore the concrete content to the conception of the divine in such a way that it is satisfactory for both the immediate believer and the follower of the Enlightenment.

What is surprising about Hegel's account is that one would expect him to praise the development of the world religions for having reached the third stage and having been fulfilled in it, specifically in Christianity. However, this is not what he says. In fact, he claims that this third, philosophical stage has only been attained by the intellectuals, but the large mass of people, and even the followers of the Enlightenment, have all been left behind. Thus, the reconciliation that has taken place is in a sense only a theoretical one in the minds of the leading intellectuals of the time. But it has not been realised in actuality.

The idea of a spiritual crisis of the age comes out most clearly at the end of Marheineke's edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In the first edition, Hegel is presented as ending the course with a simple overview of the three stages that were just sketched: immediate faith, reflection, and their reconciliation in philosophical thought. But then in the second edition (Hegel 1840; Hegel 1962), published in 1840, two extra pages of text are added, which are very telling (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 354-356; Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 149-151). Here Hegel addresses his auditors in a dramatic fashion: 'Sehen wir nun aber die Realisirung der Gemeinde, nachdem wir ihr Entstehen und Bestehen betrachtet haben, in ihrer geistigen Wirklichkeit in diesen inneren Zwiespalt verfallen, so scheint diese ihre Realisirung zugleich ihr Vergehen zu

seyn.’ (‘But if now, after having considered the origin and permanent existence of the Spiritual Community, we see that in attaining realisation in its spiritual reality it falls into this condition of inner disruption, then this realisation appears to be at the same time its disappearance’) (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 354; Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 149). For the idea of reconciliation to be meaningful, it must truly exist in the world and not merely in thought. If reconciliation is only an idea with no grounding in actuality, then the very idea is undermined. Hegel then continues by asking the question of whether this is the case for the present age:

Sollte hier aber von einem Untergang gesprochen werden können, da das Reich Gottes für ewig gegründet ist, der heilige Geist als solcher ewig in seiner Gemeinde lebt und die Pforten der Hölle die Kirche nicht überwältigen werden? Vom Vergehen sprechen hieße also mit einem Mißton endigen. (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 354)

(But ought we to speak here of destruction when the Kingdom of God is founded eternally, when the Holy Spirit as such lives eternally in its Spiritual Community, and when the Gates of Hell are not to prevail against the Church? To speak of the Spiritual Community passing away is to end with a discordant note.) (Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 149f.)<sup>5</sup>

Hegel seems reluctant to finish his account of the history of the development of religious thinking in a negative manner or on a ‘discordant note’ (*Mißton*), and this was presumably the last thing that his students expected from him. Nonetheless he continues, ‘Allein, was hilft es? Dieser Mißton ist in der Wirklichkeit vorhanden.’ (‘Only, how can it be helped? This discordant note is actually present in reality’) (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 354; Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 150). Hegel thus grants that the current state of religious affairs is a negative one.

He goes on to compare his own age to the decay of religion in the Roman Empire. During that time under the tyranny of the Roman emperors, it was dangerous to participate in public life in a meaningful way, and so as a result people kept to their own private affairs and to the quiet of their own conscience. This was the period of the development of Roman Stoicism, which recommended that one withdraw from the world and cultivate the inner virtues. As is known from his criticism of Stoicism in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1807: 129-134; Hegel 1977: 119-122), Hegel believes that this solution is empty since it only amounts to a reconciliation of thought with itself and not a reconciliation with the actual world, from which the Romans felt thoroughly alienated. This ends in the figure of the unhappy consciousness, the individual who despairs of this world and feels an acute separation from the divine (Hegel 1807: 140-161; Hegel 1977: 126-138). Hegel explains this apparently in reference to his own age:

Wenn den Armen nicht mehr das Evangelium gepredigt wird, wenn das Salz dumm geworden und alle Grundfesten stillschweigend hinweggenommen sind, dann weiß das Volk, für dessen gedrunge bleibende Vernunft die Wahrheit nur in der Vorstellung seyn kann, dem Drange seines Inneren nicht mehr zu helfen. Es steht dem unendlichen Schmerze noch am nächsten.... (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 355)

(When the Gospel is no longer preached to the poor, when the salt has lost its savour, and all the foundations have been tacitly removed, then the people, for whose ever solid reason truth can exist only in a pictorial conception, no longer know how to assist the impulses and emotions they feel within them. They are nearest to the condition of infinite sorrow.) (Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 150)<sup>6</sup>

The separation from the divine means that people are left to find satisfaction in the simple pleasures of the world around them. But since these are ephemeral, they offer no deeper inward satisfaction.

Addressing his students, Hegel then says, ‘Statt Vernunft und Religion sich widersprechen, diesen Mißton auflösen auf diese Weise für uns—Versöhnung in der Philosophie. Wie sich die zeitliche Gegenwart herausfindet, ist ihr zu überlassen. In der Philosophie selbst partiell...’ (‘Instead of allowing reason and

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the reference to the ‘Gates of Hell’ is an allusion to Matthew 16:18.

<sup>6</sup> The reference to the salt losing its savour is an allusion to Matthew 5:13.

religion to contradict themselves, we must resolve the discord in the manner appropriate to us—namely, reconciliation in the form of philosophy. How the present day is to solve its problems must be left up to it. In philosophy itself the resolution is only partial’) (Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 96; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 161f.). The point seems to be that educated people, especially philosophers, who can grasp the speculative concept of religion can enjoy a form of religious reconciliation. But, alas, as in Stoicism, this reconciliation remains incomplete, existing only in thought, which is contradicted by the actuality of the real world. Philosophers thus live like monks separated from the tumult of the real world, and in their own sphere they can find the peace and reconciliation that they seek in the life of the mind. But the world itself will run its course on its own, and this, at the time, is sadly characterised by alienation and a lack of reconciliation. Hegel finishes his lectures by telling his students, ‘Wie sich die zeitliche, empirische Gegenwart aus ihrem Zwiespalt herausfinde, wie sie sich gestalte, ist ihr zu überlassen und ist nicht die unmittelbar praktische Sache und Angelegenheit der Philosophie.’ (‘How the actual present-day world is to find its way out of this state of disruption, and what form it is to take, are questions which must be left to itself to settle, and to deal with them is not the immediate practical business and concern of philosophy’) (Hegel 1840: vol. 2, 356; Hegel 1962: vol. 3, 151). This must have been little consolation for the students of the day who were looking for a voice of hope in oppressive times.

These passages at the end of Hegel’s lectures seem clearly to be Heiberg’s source of inspiration.<sup>7</sup> Here we can find the background for the key elements in Heiberg’s *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*: the historical development of religion and its current state of crisis. Hegel’s portrayal of the people of the present age as despairingly trying to find pleasure in the trivialities of the finite realm squares perfectly with Heiberg’s frequent criticism of his contemporaries in, for example, his satirical poem ‘En Sjæl efter Døden’ (‘A Soul after Death’) (Heiberg 1841: 29-158).

However, as was the case for the young Marx and others of his generation, Hegel’s conclusion struck Heiberg as unsatisfying. It seemed little consolation simply to sit back and try to understand the concept of religion philosophically, while there was a great world of actuality out there that needed to be addressed. It was thus understandable that Heiberg developed his own conception of what might be called philosophical activism that was intended to have a real effect on the cultural life of the world. According to his view, the goal of the present age is to educate people about the speculative standpoint so that the idea can gradually become something real and existing in actuality. The solution to the present crisis is to embrace Hegel’s philosophy and to transfer that knowledge into the different cultural spheres. This is the explicit message that Heiberg imparts in *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*, and it clearly informs his entire Hegelian campaign.

## II. Heiberg’s Diagnosis of the Times: The Crisis of the Age

Inspired by Hegel, Heiberg makes the leading motif of *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age* the idea that there is a great crisis in Europe, which encompasses all the spheres of culture. At the beginning

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<sup>7</sup> While it seems clear that Heiberg, when he was writing *On the Significance of Philosophy* in 1833, knew Hegel’s assessment of the modern crisis, his actual source is not so straightforward as it might seem. Some of the key passages in Hegel’s text come not from the 1824 lectures that Heiberg heard nor from Marheineke’s 1832 edition of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that Heiberg clearly read. Instead, they were added to the second edition which only appeared in 1840, that is, several years after the publication of Heiberg’s text. However, this problem can be resolved since the passage in question can be found in ‘Hegel’s Lecture Manuscript’ from 1821, under the heading ‘The Passing Away of the Community,’ which appears at the end. This text is very similar to the passage in the second Marheineke edition and is clearly the basis for it. (See Hegel, ‘The Consummate Religion: Hegel’s Lecture Manuscript,’ in Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 93-97; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 158-162.) This material appeared in Hegel’s notes from 1821, and the editors logically infer that Hegel presumably used this material again when he gave these lectures subsequently. (See Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, editorial note 260, p. 162.) Thus, Hegel in all probability presented this material again in 1824, with Heiberg in attendance. See also ‘Loose Sheets Relating to Hegel’s Lecture Manuscript,’ in Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 302; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 384: ‘Vergehen der Gemeinde[.] mit Mißton endigen—in die Philosophie flüchten[.] Wie zur Zeit der römischen Kaiserwelt[.] den Armen das Evangelium gepredigt[.]’ (‘Passing away of the community. Ending on a note of discord—take refuge in philosophy. As in the time of the Roman Empire. Preaching the gospel to the poor.’) Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 302; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 385: ‘Mißton endigen[.] Zeit der römischen Kaiser[.]’ (‘Ending on a note of discord. Age of Roman Emperors.’)

of the work, Heiberg describes the present period as a transitional phase in historical and cultural development, where the old values, customs, and guiding ideas fall into doubt, and people cast around for new ones with which to replace them. He writes, 'En saadan Tilstand er egenlig ingen Tilstand; den er kun en Overgang fra en foregaaende til en tilkommende; den er ingen Tilværen, men kun en Vorden, hvori det Gamle ender og det Nye begynder; et Skin af Tilværen, bestemt til at vige Pladsen for en virkelig Tilstand; med andre Ord: den er en Crisis.' ('A condition of this kind is actually no condition; it is only a transition from a previous condition to one that is yet to come. It is not a fixed existence but only a becoming, in which what is old ends and what is new begins, an appearance of existence, destined to take the place of a real condition; in other words, it is a crisis.') (Heiberg 1833: 3-4; Heiberg 2005b: 87). With this, Heiberg sounds the alarm about the current state of culture in his time. The crisis has arisen due to the undermining of traditional values in recent times. Here he seems to imply that this is a result of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. These movements have brought into circulation new ideas that have called into question traditional ways of thinking about art, religion, and philosophy. The age is thus struggling to make sense of the new situation where the old beliefs are no longer plausible, yet a definitive new paradigm of thought has yet to establish itself. People thus feel that they have lost their anchorage and are cast adrift, not knowing what to believe any longer.

The Enlightenment undermined traditional religious beliefs by demanding that they stand the test of science and reason. Educated people of the day, familiar with the developments of modern science, says Heiberg, have in effect ceased to be believers. Some of them continue to keep up the appearance of being religious, but this is generally hypocrisy (Heiberg 1833: 14-18; Heiberg 2005b: 94-96). Romanticism reduced religion to a matter of personal faith with no contact to external truth or fact. Like the adherents of the Enlightenment, the followers of Romanticism also criticise the church and its doctrines since they believe that true religion is found only in the heart of the individual and not in a large institution. They conclude that God cannot be known and claim that religion is a matter of inward piety, which individuals can choose as they wish. For Heiberg, these are all signs that religion no longer plays the fundamental role that it once did and that people have ceased to regard it as a vessel of truth.

Given this assessment, Heiberg believes that the cultural crisis of the day is a form of relativism or nihilism. People have ceased to believe in an objective truth. Plagued by doubts, they no longer can follow religion in an immediate way. In the sphere of art things have become a free-for-all, as poets, writers and artists are caught between the past and the future. Some try to stick to old forms, but these are no longer satisfying to the audience. Others try to strike out in new experimental directions, but these lack a deeper meaning and truth, and thus prove to be ephemeral. In the past, art played a central role in the lives of people. It was an important part of who they were. But now, Heiberg claims, it has been reduced to a simple leisure time activity (Heiberg 1833: 20f.; Heiberg 2005b: 97f.). People fail to see any deeper value or importance in it.

While Heiberg does not use the word *fremmedgørelse* (alienation), this is clearly the idea that he has in mind. He believes that the people of his time feel alienated from art, religion, and philosophy. They have ceased to believe that these spheres of human thought and activity contain any truth. But there seems to be nothing new to replace these traditional spheres, and so people are left to wallow in scepticism and relativism.

Heiberg believes that a part of the problem can be found in the rise of the empirical sciences, which has led to a myopic fixation on the objects of perception. What is true is thought to be only what is immediately seen and perceived. But the objects of sense are fleeting and offer no enduring truth. The person fixated on the immediate external world is what Kierkegaard refers to as the bourgeois philistine and what Heiberg beautifully caricatures as the deceased Copenhagener in his poem 'A Soul after Death.' Heiberg regularly rails against those who dwell in the realm of the empirical and fail to see the higher truth of the speculative idea. This comes out clearly in his prefatory remarks 'Til Læserne' ('To the Readers') in the first issue of his Hegelian journal *Perseus* (Heiberg 1837: v-xiv; Heiberg 2011: 75-79).

Heiberg also notes that people feel a sense of alienation with the external world that is similar to that felt during the early Roman Empire. Here he takes up the comparison that Hegel made:

Dette Stof var det romerske Riges Cultur, der...havde tabt al Betydning i det Nærværende, og...just derved viste sig som tilhørende det Døde. Ved at forgude det Endelige, havde den romerske Religion lidt efter lidt afsondret det Uendelige derfra, og skilt det Guddommelige fra det Menneskelige; Ideen, Fornuften, Sandheden bleve til et hiinsides liggende Land; og den deraf følgende trøstesløse Fordring var at erkjende Intetheden af alt det Endelige og Menneskelige, eftersom dette var adskilt fra det Guddommelige.... (Heiberg 1833: 9)

(the culture of the Roman Empire...had lost all meaning in the present, thus demonstrating that it belonged with the dead. The Roman religion, by idolizing the finite, little by little set it apart from the infinite and set the divine apart from the human. The Idea, reason and truth became a land which lay beyond. The hopeless demand which resulted from this was that one was supposed to recognize that everything finite and human amounted to nothing since it was separated from the divine.) (Heiberg 2005b: 90)

This fits with Hegel's account of the Roman religion as fixed on the practicality of particular ends, while lacking a universal element. Here Heiberg describes a picture that closely resembles Hegel's account of the unhappy consciousness that dwells in the meaningless mundane sphere, while yearning for an unattainable God in the transcendent realm. Heiberg defines the crisis as one of separation or alienation, characteristic of the unhappy consciousness: 'Den voldsomme Adskillelse af det Guddommelige fra det Menneskelige, denne Crisis, hvori Mennesket følte sig forladt af alle Guder, og det af gode Grunde, da ikke blot den store Pan, men hele Gudeverdenen var død, indeholdt i sig selv Nødvendigheden af at det Guddommelige maatte vende tilbage til Mennesket, og saaledes det Endelige forsones med et Uendelige....' ('The violent separation of the divine from the human—this crisis, in which man felt abandoned by all gods, and for good reason since not only the great Pan but the entire world of gods was dead—contained in itself the necessity of the divine returning to man, thus reconciling the finite with the infinite') (Heiberg 1833: 9f.; Heiberg 2005b: 91). With this striking anticipation of Nietzsche's famous statement about the death of God, Heiberg portrays the loss of religion in the Roman world. Following Hegel, he claims that this separation played a key role in the rise of Christianity, which caught on so quickly since it answered the spiritual need of the time.

Heiberg also picks up on Hegel's idea that philosophers have a special insight into the age since they can discern the deeper connections of reason in contrast to those followers of the Enlightenment who constantly see things as separate. In fact, Heiberg develops this point further and expands this group beyond the philosophers to include other kinds of scholars and artists. He explains,

Men ikke desmindre har Menneskeheden sine Repræsentanter, nemlig saadanne Individuer, hos hvilke dens Bevidsthed er vaagnet til den høiere Klarhed, medens den endnu mere eller mindre slumrer hos Mængden. Disse Repræsentanter kalde vi Kunstnere, Digtere, Religionslærere, Philosopher; vi kalde dem ogsaa Menneskehedens Lærere og Opdragere.... (Heiberg 1833: 11)

(But humanity does have its representatives, those individuals among whom the consciousness of humanity is awakened to a higher clarity, while it remains more or less asleep among the masses. These representatives we call 'artists,' 'poets,' 'teachers of religion,' 'philosophers.' We also call them 'humanity's teachers' and 'educators.')

 (Heiberg 2005b: 92)

These representatives of humanity run ahead of the uneducated masses in their perception both of the crisis of the age and its solution. Here we can catch a glimpse of Heiberg's broader transformation of Hegel's programme. Heiberg believes that the basic principles and methodology of speculative philosophy can be used in different contexts. Hegel, of course, also grants this, and in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* he himself develops his philosophy in a way that covers the fields of the natural and social sciences. But there is no expectation that practicing scientists will understand things in the same way. Hegel's approach to these fields is philosophical. By contrast, Heiberg continually makes an appeal to his



readers and auditors to apply Hegel's principles in the concrete spheres where they happen to be working. With this extension of philosophical principles to those people whose main area is not philosophy, Heiberg thus assumes a missionary stance towards the role of philosophy in the present crisis.

Heiberg believes that these representatives of humanity help the masses to understand themselves in their current situation. These representatives present 'det Speil, hvori Menneskeheden seer sig selv, og bliver sig bevidst som sin egen Gjenstand.' ('the mirror in which humanity sees itself and becomes conscious of itself as its own object') (Heiberg 1833: 11; Heiberg 2005b: 92). The image of the mirror recalls Hegel's theory of the nature of self-consciousness which goes out of itself and sees itself, as if in reflection, through the eyes of the other. Heiberg's description also corresponds to Hegel's notion that his own age has reached the key historical moment when spirit has become aware of itself.

### III. Heiberg's Solution to the Crisis: Philosophy

Since the focus on the empirical is at the heart of the problem, Heiberg argues that the solution to the crisis of the day lies in Hegel's idealist philosophy. Demonstrating the higher truth in ideas, it is able to transcend the problems of relativism that are bound up with the empirical sphere that is unable to see anything higher. Heiberg dramatically states his thesis as follows:

Hvad er det da, som vil ordne det nuværende Chaos? eller...hvilket er det Maal, hvorhen den nuværende Forvirring stræber? hvilken er den Eenhed, hvortil den nuværende Differens vil udvikle sig? — Svaret er, efter alt det Foregaaende, let: Det er *Philosophien*, som skal gjøre Ende paa Forvirringen: det er mod den, at de stridende Kræfter ere henvendte. (Heiberg 1833: 21-22)

(What is it then that will bring order to the present chaos? Or...what is the goal towards which the present confusion strives? What is the unity towards which the present difference will be developed? The answer is easy after all the preceding considerations: it is philosophy which will put an end to the confusion. It is towards this that the conflicting forces are directed.) (Heiberg 2005b: 98)

Truth in the deeper sense must be something enduring (in contrast to the ever-changing world of the senses). Thus, the truth of philosophy, religion and art can be found in the ideas, that is, concepts of philosophical thought. Once these are established, they are true forever and do not change and decay like the objects of sense. While Hegel is not mentioned explicitly in this passage, it is clear from what Heiberg goes on to say that Hegel's philosophical idealism is what is meant here. Hegel is thus the key cultural figure of the day who has the tools to lead the present age out of its cultural crisis. What is needed is simply to understand and embrace his idealism.

Heiberg attempts to offer a refutation of the different forms of relativism that he sees as flourishing in the current crisis, as people, in despair, abandon the idea of ever establishing anything as certain. He argues that the positions of the relativist or sceptic fail to recognise that they too are predicated on the concept of truth. He explains,

Philosophien er Sandheden selv, og intet Andet end den; og Sandhed er til alle Tider den eneste uanfægtede Magt. Man kan tvivle paa Gud; man kan, som Atheist, fuldkommen benægte ham; alt dette er muligt, men Sandheden kan man hverken betvivle eller benægte. Hvis man benægter Gud, saa skeer det, fordi man sætter Sandheden i denne Negation. Man kan handle slet; man kan, som Forbryder, opoffre det Gode for det Onde; det skeer da ligeledes under Sandhedens Anerkjendelse, idet man sætter Sandheden eller det Gode i det, som Loven kaldet det Modsatte. Man kan paastaae, at Mennesket Intet kan erkjende, at Sandheden følgelig ikke er for Mennesket; men selv da maa man betragte denne Sætning ikke blot som en Sandhed, men som den eneste Sandhed, d. e. som Sandheden selv. (Heiberg 1833: 22)

(Philosophy is truth itself and nothing else; and truth is for all times the only unchallenged power. One can doubt God; as atheist, one can completely deny Him. All this is possible, but one can neither doubt nor deny the truth. If one denies God, then it is because one regards the truth to be in this negation. One can act badly; like the criminal, one can sacrifice good for evil. But even this happens with the recognition of the truth in the sense that one posits the truth or the good in that which the law calls the opposite. One can claim that man can know nothing, that the truth, therefore, is not for man; but even then one must regard this proposition not only as a truth but as the only truth, i.e., as truth itself.) (Heiberg 2005b: 98f.)

In all these cases, of the atheist, the immoralist, and the sceptic, an implicit appeal to the truth is still present. Despite appearances to the contrary, these tendencies still recognise the absolute nature of truth. Given that philosophy itself has the truth as its object, this implies that philosophy holds the key to transcending these negative tendencies and re-establishing stability in the current crisis.

Despite Heiberg's animated plea for philosophy as the solution to the current cultural crisis, in this text he does not go into any further detail about what specifically this is supposed to mean. However, at the end of the work he gives a hint:

Det gjælder her blot om at aabne vore Øine for det, som vi allerede see, uden at vide det; at udfolde vor Bevidsthed, og vise os hvad den indeholder. Den Kunst, hvoraf man maa betjene sig, som Middel til dette Øiemed, er at knytte de filosofiske *Begreber* til vore *Forestillinger*, eller ligesom oversætte hine i det Sprog, som disse tale.... (Heiberg 1833: 51f.)

(Here it is merely a matter of opening our eyes to that which we already see without knowing it, of unfolding our consciousness and showing ourselves what it contains. The art, which one must use as the means to this end, is to tie the philosophical concepts to our representations, or, so to speak, translate the latter into the language spoken by the former.) (Heiberg 2005b: 117)

But this remains in need of explanation. Heiberg explores more clearly the important role that philosophy is to play in the salvation of the age in his works on metaphysics, or what he, following Hegel, calls 'logic,' namely, his *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic* and the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course*. It is to these that we now turn.

#### IV. Logic as the Solution to Alienation

In Hegel's account of self-consciousness from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he gave an analysis of the individual's immediate relations to objects in the world, which confront the individual as something other and different. Hegel's claim was that our immediate relation to such objects is desire, and we thus seek to destroy and consume them to satisfy our basic needs. Heiberg takes up this analysis of our relation to the external world and its individual objects. His claim is that the object stands over and against us as something negative and other. In short, it is something towards which we feel an immediate sense of alienation. In the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course* he writes, 'Gjenstanden er nemlig udvortes og fremmed for Tanken.' ('The object is external and foreign to thought.') (Heiberg 1835: 8; Heiberg 2007: 47). Similarly, at the beginning of his *Speculative Logic*, we read, 'men Gjenstanden selv, idet den er os given, er os fremmed og ubekjendt.' ('The object, as it is given to us, is something foreign and unknown.') (Heiberg 1832: § 1, p. 3; Heiberg 2006: 45). External things in the world are not something that we can immediately see as reflecting a part of ourselves. They appear to be fundamentally different.

Heiberg's solution to this is what he calls 'Tilegnelse' ('appropriation'). He writes, 'Da nu enhver særskilt Videnskab har sin særskilte Gjenstand, saa er denne Gjenstand et *Stof* for *Tanken*, som stræber at tilegne sig det. Her have vi nu en bestemt Modsætning: paa den ene Side det givne *Stof*, paa den anden Side *Tanken*, som vil tilegne sig det.' ('Since now every individual science has its individual object, this object is *material* for *thought*, which strives to appropriate it. Here we have a determinate opposition: on the one

hand, the given *material* and, on the other hand, *thought*, which will appropriate it.'). (Heiberg 1835: 6; Heiberg 2007: 45). Heiberg then explains what he means by appropriation in this context. He claims, 'Tanken bringer følgelig sine *egne* Bestemmelser ind i det *fremmede Stof*, og forsaavidt ophører Stoffet at være fremmed, thi forsaavidt optages det i Tanken.' ('Thought, therefore, brings its *own* determinations into the *foreign* material, and to this degree the material ceases to be foreign, for to this degree it is taken up in thought.'). (Heiberg 1835: 7; Heiberg 2007: 46). Heiberg's *Speculative Logic* is a detailed theory of categories, and here we can see why this is so important for him. He follows the Kantian view that the categories are what structure our human conceptual apparatus (Heiberg 1832: § 4, p. 4; Heiberg 2006: 46). They make it possible for us to perceive determinate objects at all. We are used to seeing simply objects in the world, but philosophy teaches us to see the hidden structure of the categories that these contain. The categories are what is most fundamental for any kind of determinate thought, and thus while they are operative in the spheres of both nature and spirit, it is logic that is the most fundamental of the scholarly fields (Heiberg 1832: §§ 9-11, pp. 5f.; Heiberg 2006: 48f.).

This understanding of the role of the categories holds the key to overcoming our sense of alienation from the objects in the world. When we see the categories in the objects, then we can recognise a part of ourselves. We thus see ourselves reflected in the object, and it no longer strikes us as something foreign and strange. What Heiberg calls 'appropriation' is simply this process whereby we move from a sense of alienation from foreign things to a sense of identification and understanding with a thing that displays the categories of the human mind. In the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course* Heiberg writes

Vi finde altsaa, at Tanken, idet den vil tilegne sig en udvortes Gjenstand, først opnaaer denne Hensigt, naar den istedenfor Gjenstanden finder sig selv....men til dens Erkjendelse udfordres, at den optages i Tanken, men naar Dette er skeet, er den ikke længere udvortes eller fremmed for denne. Stoffet er det Modsatte af Tanken, men idet Tanken bemægtiger sig Stoffet, er dette den ikke længere modsat; men følgelig har det tabt sin Selvstændighed og dermed sin *Tilværelse* som Stof; altsaa *er det ikke mere*; først idet Tanken tilintetgjør det, erkjender den det. (Heiberg 1835: 8)

(We thus find that thought, wanting to appropriate an external object, only succeeds when it finds itself instead of the object....But what is required for knowledge of it is that it be taken up in thought, after which it is no longer external or foreign. The material is the opposite of thought, but once thought takes possession of the material, it is no longer opposed to thought. Consequently, the material has lost its independence and therefore its *existence* as material; thus *it is no more*. Only because thought negates it, does thought know it.) (Heiberg 2007: 46f.)

The object thus loses its character as being external and foreign and enters into the familiar sphere of human thought.

Heiberg thus presents his own theory of overcoming otherness and alienation. The key lies in understanding the role of the categories in human thought. The categories represent an immanent sphere that includes everything. This corresponds to Hegel's idea of everything being an object 'for consciousness'. What initially appears as independent must be brought into the sphere of consciousness. In this process the connection of the individual to the other, whether an object or a self-conscious subject, ceases to be an other. Thus Heiberg concludes,

Det er et stort Fremskridt i filosofisk Indsigt, at reducere Tanken og dens Gjenstand til den fælleds Bestemmelse af det Fornuftige, thi heri ligger, som vi have seet, at Intet i Gjenstandene kan være udenfor Tanken eller uafhængigt af denne. Ordene Subject og Object udtrykke netop dette Forhold. Da altsaa begge ere den samme Fornuft—thi Fornuften er altid sig selv—saa ere Subjectet og Objectet det Samme.... (Heiberg 1835: 26)

(It is a great progress in philosophical insight to reduce thought and its object to common determinations of the rational, for herein lies the fact, as we have seen, that nothing in objects can exist outside thought or

independent of it. The words 'subject' and 'object' express precisely this relationship. Thus, since both are the same reason—for reason is always itself—the subject and the object are the same.) (Heiberg 2007: 60)

The intimate relation of all things is thus realised. The subject and the object are not two radically separate things but in fact are intimately connected in a dialectical fashion.

Heiberg concludes his account in the *Introductory Lecture* with an intriguing image of a net, which represents the categories:

Om alle vore Følelser og Forestillinger har den logiske Verdensaand ligesom vævet et Næt, som giver dem deres evige og uforanderlige Form. Det er dette, som vi kalde Categoriene. Hverdagsøiet seer kun de af Nættet omfattede Gjenstande, men ikke Nættet selv. Philosophen seer begge Dele, men som Logiker begynder han med at udtømme Nættet, for ei at lade sig forstyrres af dets Indhold, og betragter nu det selv i alle dets Sammenslyngninger. (Heiberg 1835: 41)

(Around all our feelings and representations the world spirit of logic has, so to speak, woven a net which gives them their eternal and immutable form. It is this which we call "the categories". The eye of everyday life sees only the objects encompassed by the net, but not the net itself. The philosopher sees both, but as logician he begins to empty the net in order not to let himself be disturbed by its content, and then he observes the net itself in all its interweavings.) (Heiberg 2007: 71)

With this he emphasises the importance of logic and understanding the categories of thought on their own terms. They hold the key to overcoming the alienation that characterises the crisis of the day.

## V. Heiberg's Plea for Understanding the Infinite in the Finite

Heiberg reflects on the importance of Hegel's philosophy for his intellectual growth, and in this context he makes an odd comment about the role of the finite and the infinite that is not immediately obvious. He explains:

Saaledes...ville jeg aldrig være kommen til at skrive mine Vaudeviller, og i det Hele aldrig være bleven Theaterdigter, dersom jeg ikke ved den hegelske Philosophie havde lært at indsee det Endelige Forhold til det Uendelige, og derved faaet en Respect for de endelige Ting, som jeg forhen ikke havde, men som den dramatiske Digter umulig kan undvære, og dersom jeg ikke fremdeles ved samme Philosophie havde lært at fatte Begrænsningens Betydning, thi uden Dette vilde jeg hverken have begrændset mig selv eller valgt smaa og begrændsede, tilforn af mig selv foragtede Rammer til min Fremstilling. (Heiberg 1861-62: 501f.)

(I would never have come to write my vaudevilles and in general would never have become a poet for the theatre if I had not learned, by means of the Hegelian philosophy, to see the relation of the finite to the infinite and had not won thereby a respect for the finite things which I previously did not have, but which it is impossible for the dramatic poet to do without. If, further, I had not, with the same philosophy, learned to understand the meaning of limitation, I would neither have limited myself nor chosen for my presentation small and limited frameworks, which I had previously disdained.) (Heiberg 2005a: 66)

Heiberg refers to the empirical world of the senses, which presents to us a number of concrete finite things. These things can all seem trivial and meaningless since they are only finite and transitory. A part of the crisis of the age is that since people have ceased to believe in anything higher, they are simply left with the sphere of the finite. This then leads to relativism and nihilism, as was discussed above.

Heiberg's claim is that Hegel's philosophy taught him to see the relation between the finite and the infinite or, put differently, the particular and the universal.<sup>8</sup> According to Hegel's dialectical methodology,

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<sup>8</sup> See Stewart 2008. See Heiberg's account of Hegel's speculative methodology in Heiberg 1832: §§ 13-25, 6-10; Heiberg 2006: 49-54.

there is a movement of thought which begins with something abstract, and then this is 'externalised' and made concrete. The first stage is that of the infinite or the universal, and the second that of the finite and the particular. This all sounds very abstract, but in reality it is something that we are all very familiar with. In fact, it is a process that we go through on a daily basis. We always begin with ideas in our head about things that we want to do. These can be important projects or trivial daily activities. Then we go to work to try to realise these ideas by means of our activity in the world. In this way our abstract ideas become concrete objects or actions in the world. This is the movement of externalisation from the universal to the particular. The ideas or plans in our head are infinite in the sense that they are not yet fixed or determined in any specific way; instead, they could potentially result in an infinite number of different things. Only when they are realised in the real world do they become determinate and thus finite.

Sometimes when we try to act on our ideas, things do not go as we imagined, and the result is not what that we hoped and thought it would be. Thus, we might have had a clear idea of the house we wanted to build, but when it was built, things went wrong. As a result, there arises a great sense of dissatisfaction caused by the fact that the concrete house does not match up to the planned one that we wanted. So the empirical object is measured by the idea. Once again, this is a common experience that we are all familiar with. Given this, there can be a tendency to disdain the empirical world and the objects in it since they seem to fall short of the ideas in our minds. The empirical objects are thus thought to be flawed and limited. Here there is a separation of the universal and the particular.

But sometimes things do work out, and the object created corresponds to the original idea that we had of it. In this case the particular matches the universal, or the finite object matches the infinite idea. For Heiberg, this is what happens when artists produce great works. In these works we can discern that there is something that transcends the simple empirical material. Instead, in that material something absolute shines through. The artist has managed to capture the universal in the finite, particular object. This is the insight that Heiberg claims Hegel's philosophy led him to. With this he realised that the finite world around us is not just something meaningless and trivial, as the unhappy consciousness believed. On the contrary, it can be the very vehicle of truth and beauty. The universal is not something elusive or transcendent, but rather it is present here and now in our world. We must merely learn how to recognise it. This constitutes an important point in Heiberg's proposal for how to overcome the crisis of relativism and nihilism in the present age.

## **VI. Heiberg's Criticism of Hegel's View of Philosophy as a Kind of Cloister**

It clear that Heiberg was inspired by Hegel's portrayal of the age as being in a state of crisis. But Heiberg then departs from Hegel's analysis in the conclusion that he draws from this. As we saw above, Hegel claimed that it was not the task of philosophy to reform the world. Instead, he used the image of a cloister or monastery. In his lecture notes, Hegel writes that philosophy represents a 'Priesterstand isoliert—Heiligtum. Unbekümmert, wie es der Welt gehen mag; mit ihr nicht zusammengehend. Dieses Besitztum der Wahrheit. Wie sich gestalte ist nicht unsere Sache.' ('an isolated order of priests—a sanctuary—who are untroubled about how it goes with the world, who need not mix with it, and whose work is to preserve this possession of truth. How things turn out in the world is not our affair.')(Hegel 1983-85: Part 3, vol. 5, 97; Hegel 1984-87: vol. 3, 162). Hegel's point is that it is not philosophy's job to concern itself with the practical affairs of the world. Its sole mission is merely understanding and determining the truth. This recalls the famous passage from the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* about the Owl of Minerva. There Hegel explains,

Als der *Gedanke* der Welt erscheint sie erst in der Zeit, nachdem die Wirklichkeit ihren Bildungsproceß vollendet und sich fertig gemacht hat. Diß, was der Begriff lehrt, zeigt nothwendig ebenso die Geschichte, daß erst in der Reife der Wirklichkeit das Ideale dem Realen gegenüber erscheint und jenes sich dieselbe Welt, in ihrer Substanz erfaßt, in Gestalt eines intellectuellen Reichs erbaut. Wenn die Philosophie ihr Grau in Grau mahlt, dann ist eine Gestalt des Lebens alt geworden, und mit Grau in Grau läßt sie sich nicht verjüngen,

sondern nur erkennen; die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug. (Hegel 1821: xxiii and f.)

(As the *thought* of the world, [philosophy] appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state. This lesson of the concept is necessarily also apparent in history, namely that it is only when actuality has reached maturity that the ideal appears opposite the real and reconstructs this real world, which it has grasped in its substance, in the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized by the grey in grey of philosophy; the Owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk.) (Hegel 1991: 23)

Here Hegel claims that philosophy's job is to understand what has happened and what exists in the present. It should refrain, however, from prediction or from trying to look into the future since this goes beyond mere understanding. This passage has been read as a form of quietism, which encourages people simply to accept whatever injustices exist in the present and not to try to change things for the better. Heiberg is aware of this issue in Hegel and quotes this passage directly in *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age* (Heiberg 1833: 7f.; Heiberg 2005b: 90).<sup>9</sup>

While Hegel is happy to recommend to his students that they just satisfy themselves with a philosophical understanding of things, this is not enough for Heiberg. The cultural crisis of the age is a call to action for him. The solution is to reform the world in its different cultural spheres: religion, philosophy, literature, theatre, politics, aesthetics, etc. This explains the somewhat missionary tone that is present in *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age* and Heiberg's other works. In the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course* Heiberg takes up directly the image that Hegel used at the end of his lectures about philosophers being like monks sequestered in a monastery. Heiberg explains,

Skal Individet indskrænke sig til blot at lære at kjende sig selv og Gjentagelsen af sig selv i andre Individualiteter, skal baade Natur og Stat, baade Videnskab og Kunst, baade Gud og Verden være adskilte fra dets Kundskab, da er det ikke at vente, ja ei engang at haabe, at Andre, end nogle faa Personer, hvilke man pleier at kalde Philosopher af Profession, ville finde sig tilfredstillede ved det Klosterliv, hvori den philosophiske Betragtning bestaaer, og hvis uoverstigelige Muur skal adskille os fra alt Det, som er Maalet for Menneskets Attraa eller Gjenstanden for dets Længsel. (Heiberg 1835: 23)

(If nothing more were entailed than simply getting to know oneself and the repetition of oneself in others, if both nature and state, both science and art, both God and world were separated from one's knowing, then we could not expect or even hope that any more than the few people, who are usually called 'philosophers by profession,' would find themselves satisfied with the life of the cloister of philosophical observation whose insurmountable wall is supposed to separate us from all the goals of humanity and all the objects of its longing.) (Heiberg 2007: 57f.)

Heiberg then goes on to assure his students as follows:

Men saaledes forholder det sig heller ikke. Om vi end ville indrømme, at den philosophiske Betragtning er en Art af Klosterliv, saa maae vi tillige erindre, at i den nyere Tid ere mange Klostre forandrede til Opdragelses-Anstalter, hvilke, om de end for en Tid afsondre fra Verden, dog ikke gjøre denne Afsondring til deres vedvarende Øiemed, men tvertimod kun til et Middel, hvorved Eleven skal sættes istand til lettere at forstaae Livet og Virkeligheden, naar han forlader Skolen, og ombytter denne med hine. (Heiberg 1835: 23)

(But this is not the way it is. Although it must be admitted that philosophical observation is a kind of cloister life, we must recall, however, that in the modern age many cloisters have been converted into institutions of education, which, although they may for a time separate themselves from the world, nevertheless do not make

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<sup>9</sup> See also Heiberg 1827: 281.

this separation their ultimate goal but, on the contrary, only a means by which the pupil can be made capable of more easily understanding life and reality when he leaves school and replaces the latter with the former.) (Heiberg 2007: 58)

Heiberg thus ventures to revise Hegel's statement on the issue. While he grants that it is true that philosophy can constitute a form of monastery or cloister, it is more than just this. Philosophy prepares people for life, and to do this it must remove them from the hustle and bustle of the world for a time. But this is not an end in itself; instead, when their education is completed, the students return to the world in order to apply what they have learned. Heiberg concludes:

Denne Tjeneste skal Philosophien vise den unge Mand, som stræber efter at naae Dannelsens Krone: den skal føre ham til de stille Regioner, hvor han, uforstyrret af den ydre Verdens Bevægelser, kan vende Synet mod sig selv; men naar den saaledes har klaret hans Blik og forhøiet hans Energie, skal den sende ham tilbage til den Virksomhed, som har Krav paa ham.... (Heiberg 1835: 23)

(Philosophy provides this service to the young man who strives to gain the crown of education: it leads him to the quiet regions where, undisturbed by the vicissitudes of the outer world, he can turn his glance toward himself. But when it thus has made his view clear and raised his energy, it should send him back to the activity which has a claim on him.) (Heiberg 2007: 58)

Heiberg makes an appeal to his own students to go out into the world and to work for the cause. With people labouring in this way in the many different spheres, the cultural crisis can be overcome. Heiberg writes,

Saaledes lyder Tidsalderens Opfordring til Alle, men dobbelt til de Udvalgte, hvis Bestemmelse det er at ile forud for Mængden, hver i sin særskilte Virkekreds, og plante Culturens Banner i en hidtil ubetraadt Jordbund. At sige Mere til den filosofiske Erkjendelses Anbefaling, anseer jeg, idetmindst i denne Kreds, for unødvendigt. (Heiberg 1835: 35)

(Thus, the demand of the age calls to all but doubly to the chosen, whose destiny it is to hasten ahead of the masses, each in his individual circle of activity, and plant the flag of culture in a heretofore untrodden soil. To say more as a recommendation for philosophical knowing I take to be unnecessary at least in this group.) (Heiberg 2007: 66).

Since they are cultured and educated, Heiberg's students have an obligation to lead the uncultured forward. Søren Kierkegaard seizes on this as a point of criticism and satire of Heiberg's Hegelian program. The idea of 'Tidsalderens Opfordring' ('the demand of the age') becomes a slogan of ridicule that is repeated in different variations throughout his work.<sup>10</sup>

## VII. The Question of Heiberg's Hegelianism and the Hegel Reception

Heiberg's use of Hegel offers an instructive example of the complexity of issues concerning the history of reception. While *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*, as a whole, has always generally been understood to have been inspired by Hegel, it has not been easy to pinpoint the exact points of inspiration. While it is clear that Heiberg read Hegel and was interested in promoting speculative philosophy, the picture that emerges varies at key points from what is actually found in Hegel's primary texts. This opens up the question of whether Heiberg actually understood Hegel correctly or whether he consciously modified Hegel's thought where he found it to be problematic. While Heiberg's critics accused him of misunderstanding Hegel, there are certainly places where he clearly indicates that he will strike out on his

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<sup>10</sup> See 'Explanatory Notes,' in Heiberg 2007: 168-170.

own when he perceives Hegel to be in error.<sup>11</sup> In many cases it seems that Heiberg is more inspired by his own agenda in aesthetics and literary criticism and then simply makes use of individual ideas from Hegel here and there as it suits him. But the precise Hegelian elements in his thought are not always so easy to distinguish unambiguously from Heiberg's own agenda.

So the question of whether *On the Significance of Philosophy* and the other texts treated here are truly Hegelian cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no.' They clearly contain ideas and elements of inspiration from Hegel, but yet they also contain more and, indeed, in places set off in a direction that Hegel himself would presumably have disapproved of. This is typical of the nature of reception in general. Hegel was a thinker who inspired many others, but this does not mean that those whom the historians of philosophy have labelled 'Hegelians' are unoriginal thinkers, whose academic agenda consists merely in repeating what Hegel said. On the contrary, their use of Hegel is diverse and complex. Each of them came to Hegel with a certain background and specific philosophical intuitions. After learning from Hegel, they attempted to apply his thought to the different spheres of their own interest. This produced very different kinds of results. While many of the thinkers in Heiberg's generation were inspired in some fundamental way by Hegel, they naturally often chose to emphasise their own originality by focusing on the points where they departed from him. Thus, instead of assuming the role of a loyal follower by highlighting the points of commonality, they placed themselves in the role of a critic, despite the fact that they nonetheless made use of basic Hegelian ideas.

This complex set of interpretative issues concerning the history of reception of Hegel's philosophy is particularly muddled when it comes to Heiberg. He is of course known in Danish intellectual history as a key figure in the promotion of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark in the 1830s and 1840s (Stewart 2007a, 2007b). He is also known as the object of Kierkegaard's criticism (Schweppenhäuser 1967; Thulstrup 1967, 1980; Taylor 1980). The conclusion from these two premises has almost invariably been that Kierkegaard was highly critical of Hegel's philosophy since this was what Heiberg was promoting. This is, however, an overly simplistic understanding of a much more complex interpretative issue (Stewart 2003). While both of the premises are true, the conclusion is false. First, Kierkegaard satirised many different aspects of Heiberg's thought that had nothing to do with Hegel's philosophy, for example, Heiberg's missionary program, which, as we have seen, marks a direct deviation from Hegel's own explicit statements about the nature of philosophy. Second, Kierkegaard often referred to Heiberg's Hegelian campaign, and this has led readers to assume that what he is criticising ultimately has something to do with Hegel since this would seem to make the criticism more important in terms of the history of philosophy. But this is not the case since Kierkegaard referred to Heiberg in this way for the simple reason that Heiberg was readily identifiable to the contemporary reader by means of this association. Once Heiberg was thus identified to the readers, Kierkegaard was free to criticise any element of his work that he wished, whether it had something to do with Hegel or not.

With regard to the reception of Hegelianism in Denmark, Heiberg was simply one figure among a number of Danish intellectuals who found inspiration in Hegel's thought (Stewart 2007a, 2007b). There were in fact several Danish students besides Heiberg who attended Hegel's lectures in Berlin. One of them was Kierkegaard's elder brother Peter Christian Kierkegaard (1805-88), who spent over a year in Berlin in 1828 and 1829 (Stewart 2007a: 327-331). Søren Kierkegaard himself made use of many of Hegel's ideas in a positive manner, especially in his early works such as *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer* (From the Papers of One Still Living) (Stewart 2003: 115-131) and *Om Begrebet Ironi* (The Concept of Irony) (Stewart 2003: 132-181). Certainly, a part of Kierkegaard's interest in Hegel came from Heiberg (Stewart 2003, 2009; Pattison 1983). So there can be no doubt that Heiberg played an important role in shaping the history of Danish philosophy in the nineteenth century, but his precise relation to Hegel is more complex than has been recognised.

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Heiberg 1833: 49; Heiberg 2005b: 115f. Perhaps his most outspoken modification of Hegel's thought can be found in his 'The System of Logic' (Heiberg 1838: 1-45). There he criticises the first triad of Hegel's logic as in error and presents his own alternative account.



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