

Kierkegaard and His
Danish Contemporaries
Tome I: Philosophy, Politics
and Social Theory

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Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Kierkegaard's Criticism of Hegel's Danish Apologist

Jon Stewart

There can be no doubt that Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860) was a very important figure for the development of Kierkegaard's thought. Heiberg's criticism dominated an entire generation of literary scholarship and was profoundly influential on the young Kierkegaard. His dramatic works and translations are also frequently referred to and quoted by Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms. These are the sides of Heiberg as critic, dramatist, and poet that are generally well known to people today.

However, Heiberg was also a philosopher, and this dimension of his authorship has until very recently been significantly neglected. Heiberg was one of the main proponents of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark in the two decades after the latter's death.¹ His philosophical profile is clearly that of a Hegelian, and, not least of all due to Kierkegaard's influence, this has led to him being unfairly dismissed and pigeonholed as an unoriginal parrot. However, Heiberg's use of Hegelian philosophy is far from a simple, mechanical repetition. Rather, he tried to apply some of the basic principles of Hegel's thought to his own agenda in the context of criticism, aesthetics, and poetry, and it is here that his originality lies.

In the present article I will confine myself for the most part to Heiberg's philosophical production, loosely understood. I will begin with a brief account of the main stations in his biography. Then, in the second section I will provide a work-by-work overview of Heiberg's main philosophical writings, drawing attention in each case to their relevance for Kierkegaard. Finally, I will attempt a general interpretation of Kierkegaard's understanding of Heiberg as a philosophical author. I wish to argue that although he is genuinely inspired by Heiberg's aesthetics and critical works, he develops an increasingly negative disposition towards Heiberg's Hegelian philosophy over the course of time. This led to his famous anti-Hegel

¹ See Jon Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome I, *The Heiberg Period: 1824–1836*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 3); Carl Henrik Koch, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg," in his *Den danske idealisme 1800–1880*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2004, pp. 225–48; and Robert Leslie Horn, "The Hegelianism of Johan Ludvig Heiberg," in his *Positivity and Dialectic: A Study of the Theological Method of Hans Lassen Martensen*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 2), pp. 97–104.

campaign, which had Heiberg as one of its main targets. The key to understanding this campaign is to be able to distinguish Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel himself from that of Heiberg and his other Danish and German followers.²

I. Heiberg's Life

Johan Ludvig Heiberg was born in Copenhagen on December 14, 1791.³ His father Peter Andreas Heiberg (1758–1841) was a writer of dramas and political satires.⁴ A true child of the Enlightenment, the elder Heiberg was an avid supporter of the French Revolution and everything francophone. He was highly critical of what he regarded as the reactionary political life in Denmark. Due to his outspoken views, he was repeatedly fined and in 1800 ultimately exiled. He went to France where he lived for the rest of his life. Heiberg's mother Thomasine Buntzen, known as Fru Gyllembourg (1773–1856), fell in love with one of her husband's pro-Enlightenment friends, the Swedish Baron Carl Frederik Gyllembourg-Ehrensward (1767–1815), who was living in exile in Denmark. In a move unheard of at the time, she divorced her exiled husband and married the baron. This created a scandal that sent tremors through polite society in Copenhagen.

The young Johan Ludvig Heiberg was a victim of this course of events. After seeing that he could do nothing to prevent it, Heiberg's father, reluctantly agreed to the divorce, but insisted that his son be removed from the home of his mother and her new husband. This condition was granted. Thus Peter Andreas Heiberg decided to hand over his son to his entrusted friends, the literary scholar Knud Lyne Rahbek (1760–1830) and his wife Karen Margrethe Heger (1775–1829). The young Heiberg spent two years in the Rahbeks' famous literary salon, known as the Bakkehus, which was frequented by poets, writers, and scholars of any number of different fields. The young Heiberg was profoundly unhappy with the Rahbeks, and in time it was decided that he was to be sent to one of his aunts, where he spent two more

² This is one of the central theses in my *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2003.

³ For Heiberg's biography and thinking, see Arthur Aumont, *J.L. Heiberg og hans Slægt paa den danske Skueplads*, Copenhagen: Jørgensen 1891; Morten Borup, *Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, vols. 1–3, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1947–49; Henning Fenger, *The Heibergs*, trans. by Frederick J. Marker, New York: Twayne Publishers Inc. 1971; Johanne Luise Heiberg, *Et liv genoplevet i erindringen*, vols. 1–4, 5th revised ed., Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1973; Bruce H. Kirmmse, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg," in his *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1990, pp. 136–68; Paul V. Rubow, *Heiberg og hans Skole i Kritiken*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1953; Vibeke Schrøder, *Tankens Våben. Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 2001; Niels Birger Wamberg, *H.C. Andersen og Heiberg*, Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag 1971.

⁴ For the works of Peter Andreas Heiberg, see C.J. Ballhausen, *Peter Andreas og Johan Ludvig Heiberg. En annoteret bibliografi*, Copenhagen: Dansk Bibliofil-Klub and C.A. Reitzel 2000. For his life, see his autobiography, P.A. Heiberg, *Erindringer af min politiske, selskabelige og litterære Vandel i Frankrig*, Christiania: P.J. Hoppes Forlag 1830; see also Fenger, *The Heibergs*, pp. 23–37; Povl Ingerslev-Jensen, *P.A. Heiberg. Den danske Beaumarchais*, Herning: Poul Kristensen 1964.

years. His mother lived with her new husband on a farm near Sorø, at a safe distance from the gossip in the capital.

Heiberg was given private instruction by tutors until he entered the University of Copenhagen in 1809. At this time he was reunited with his mother, who moved back to the capital. During these years he enjoyed the company of Copenhagen's intellectual elite. The home of his mother and her new husband became a literary meeting place for all the leading scholars and writers of the day. In this context Heiberg developed his own cosmopolitan view of the world that would be one of his trademarks throughout his life. In 1812 he took a trip to Stockholm, where he met a number of Swedish nobles.⁵ He ultimately graduated from the university with a doctoral degree in 1817, which he was awarded for a dissertation on Calderón and Spanish drama.⁶

In 1819 Heiberg, with a royal travel stipend, went to Paris where he was reunited with his father.⁷ He enjoyed great freedom in the French capital, although his tight financial situation obliged him to take work as a journalist and a guitar teacher. Heiberg frequented the different Parisian theaters and carefully studied the latest dramaturgical techniques and trends. This knowledge kept him in good stead some years later when he introduced some of these trends into the Royal Theater in Copenhagen, creating a great stir in the process.

In 1822 he was appointed as Lecturer of Danish Language and Literature at the University of Kiel.⁸ Although he was unhappy with his position there, it was during this time that he first became aware of Hegel's philosophy. In the summer of 1824, Heiberg traveled to Berlin, where he attended Hegel's lectures and met many of the latter's leading students and associates including Philipp Marheineke (1780–1846), Leopold von Henning (1791–1866), Eduard Gans (1798–1839), and Heinrich Gustav Hotho (1802–73), all of whom were later to play instrumental roles in the creation of the first collected works edition of Hegel's writings.⁹ According to Heiberg's own account in the "Autobiographical Fragments," it was in Hamburg, on his way from Berlin back to Kiel, that he had a kind of revelation that showed him the key to Hegel's thought. From that moment onward he became a convinced Hegelian, making use of different elements of Hegel's thought in his own works in different fields.

⁵ See *Brevvexling fra J.L. Heibergs Reise til Sverige i Efteraaret 1812*, ed. by A.D. Jørgensen, Copenhagen: I. Cohens Bogtrykkeri 1890.

⁶ Johannes Ludovicus Heiberg, *De poëseos dramaticae genere hispanico, et praesertim de Petro Calderone de la Barca, principe dramaticorum*, Copenhagen: Popp 1817. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vols. 1–11, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1861–62, vol. 11, pp. 1–172.)

⁷ See Henning Fenger, "Jean-Louis Heiberg et son premier séjour à Paris," in *Rencontres et courants littéraires franco-scandinaves, Actes du 7e Congrès International d'Historie des Littératures Scandinaves (Paris 7–12 juillet 1968)*, Paris: Lettres Modernes Minard 1972, pp. 129–43. See also H. Schwanenflügel, *Peter Andreas Heiberg. En biografisk Studie*, Copenhagen: Schuboths 1891, pp. 566–70.

⁸ See Heinrich Detering, "Heibergs Kieler Glück und Elend," in his *Andersen und andere. Kleine dänisch-deutsche Kulturgeschichte Kiels*, Heide: Boyens 2005, pp. 45–59.

⁹ *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols. 1–18, ed. by Philipp Marheineke et al., Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1832–45.

Heiberg returned to Copenhagen in 1825 and had remarkable success with a series of new dramatic works at the Royal Theater. This led to a permanent appointment in 1829 as official Poet and Translator of the Royal Theater. It was also during this time that he founded his famous *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*,¹⁰ a widely read literary journal that featured works by many of the leading names in Golden Age culture. A number of the most important literary disputes were carried out in its pages. The *Flyvende Post* ran regularly from 1827 to 1828, and then off and on from 1830 to 1837. It was a drain on Heiberg's energies to constantly supply the journal with new material, and so in order to help her son, his mother, Thomasine Gyllembourg, decided to write some fictional stories that could be published a few pages at a time in the journal.¹¹ With these popular novels, she thus became one of Denmark's most celebrated female authors and one of the founders of prose fiction in Danish.

In 1830 Heiberg was appointed as a lecturer in Logic, Aesthetics and Danish Literature at the Royal Military College. In the context of this position, which lasted until 1836, he gave courses in Hegel's logic and attempted to develop an aesthetics based on Hegel's system. This appointment provided him with a stimulus to pursue his philosophical interests. Moreover, due to the rules for instructors at the College, Heiberg was obliged to write out his lectures and publish them for internal use for his students. This external pressure doubtless helped him to produce a number of his philosophical works, since otherwise he would presumably have simply taught the courses and left behind no other record or documentation of his treatment of the material.

In 1831, Heiberg married Johanne Luise, *née* Pätges (1812–90), known later as Fru Heiberg. She was a young actress who garnered the attention of generations of Copenhagen theatergoers. Her exalted career is the object of analysis in Kierkegaard's appreciative article "The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress."¹² In 1837

¹⁰ See Christian Molbech, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg," in his *Dansk poetisk Anthologie*, vols. 1–4, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1830–40, vol. 4, pp. 287–9; pp. 293–4; Uffe Andreasen, "Efterskrift," in the photomechanical reproduction of Heiberg's journal, *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, vols. 1–4, ed. by Uffe Andreasen, Copenhagen: Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab 1980–84, vol. 4, pp. 549–76; Peter Vinten-Johansen, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg and his Audience in Nineteenth-Century Denmark," in *Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Berlin and New York: Verlag Walter de Gruyter 2003 (*Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series*, vol. 10), pp. 343–55; see also Fenger, *The Heibergs*, pp. 118–32; Borup, *Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, vol. 2, pp. 93–132; Christian Kirchoff-Larsen, *Den danske presses historie*, vols. 1–3, Copenhagen: Berlinske Forlag 1942–62, vol. 3, pp. 5–32.

¹¹ Thomasine Gyllembourg made her literary debut with an anonymous letter to the editor, which was continued in such a way that it told a story. This work appeared originally in *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, nos. 4, 6, 9, 12–19, 42–3, 58–9, 1827 [no page numbers]. It later appeared as "Familien Polonius" in later editions of her collected writings.

¹² Søren Kierkegaard, "Krisen og en Krise i en Skuespillerindes Liv, af Inter et Inter. En Artikel i Anledning af 'Romeo og Julies' Gjenoptagelse paa Repertoiret ved Nytaarstid 1847," *Fædrelandet*, vol. 9, no. 188, July 24, 1848, columns 1485–90; no. 189, July 25, 1848, columns 1493–1500; no. 190, July 26, 1848, columns 1501–6; no. 191, July 27, 1848, columns 1509–16. (In English: *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997.)

Heiberg launched his Hegelian journal, *Perseus*, which was influential in its own way despite the fact that it only saw two issues. Heiberg continued his editorial work into the 1840s with the *Intelligensblade* (1842–44), and *Urania* (1844–46), the latter of which was dedicated to his interest in astronomy and the natural sciences. Heiberg's most celebrated poetic work appeared in 1841, a collection called simply *New Poems*,¹³ which included his satirical classic "A Soul after Death."

In 1839 Heiberg took on a number of administrative duties, and in 1849 he was ultimately appointed managing director of the Royal Theater. This position, which lasted until 1856, was marred by internal disputes with writers and actors. Despite these conflicts, Heiberg was regarded, in the twilight of his career, as a major authority in the fields of criticism and drama. Indeed, the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) came to Copenhagen in 1852 to learn from Heiberg about directing and theater management.

Heiberg died on August 25, 1860, and after his death his wife helped to put together the most extensive collected works edition of his writings, divided into three parts: prose writings, poetic writings, and letters.¹⁴ Since then a number of Heiberg's individual works or collections of his poetry have been reprinted, but to date there has been no new collected works edition that compares with this one. Only the more recent edition of Heiberg's letters has surpassed the work done in this edition.¹⁵

By the time Heiberg died, he was a major cultural figure on the Danish landscape, although it is probably fair to say that he outlived the period of his greatest influence, which was from the mid-1820s to the 1840s. In Danish literary history he is known for founding his own school of criticism and for his brilliant polemics against some of the greatest literary figures of the age. He was clearly Denmark's most dominant literary critic during the so-called Golden Age. In the history of Danish theater he is also a major figure, regarded as an eclectic and an innovator, who introduced foreign elements, such as French vaudeville, to the Danish stage and with the resulting synthesis helped to create, somewhat paradoxically, a national theater. Heiberg's success in so many different fields during such a rich cultural period is truly remarkable.

His reputation as a Hegelian philosopher has never reached the heights of his reputation in these other fields. However, his philosophical writings should not be underestimated. He penned both monograph-length works and a number of articles that treat a manifold of different philosophical themes, including works on most all the major philosophical subdisciplines: metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, philosophy of history, philosophy of nature, philosophy of education, and philosophy of language. His treatises on Hegelian philosophy were among the earliest and the most extensive in the Danish language.

¹³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Nye Digte*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1841 (ASKB 1562). For a partial translation of "A Soul after Death," see Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *A Soul After Death*, trans. by Henry Meyer, Seattle: Mermaid Press 1991.

¹⁴ *Samlede Skrifter* (edited by Johanne Luise Heiberg and Andreas Frederik Krieger), consisting of *Poetiske Skrifter*, vols. 1–11, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1862; *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vols. 1–11, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1861–62; *Breve fra og til J.L. Heiberg*, ed. by Andreas Frederik Krieger and Carl Christopher Georg Andræ, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1862.

¹⁵ *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, vols. 1–5, ed. by Morten Borup, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1946–50.

II. Heiberg's Philosophical Works

In what follows I will give a brief overview of Heiberg's philosophical works with an eye towards their influence on Kierkegaard. I will confine myself to his main monographs and treatises, thus omitting a number of essays, reviews and shorter works, which also in some cases contain substantial philosophical content. I will also include in this account some of Heiberg's poetic works when they are relevant for understanding his philosophy.

A. On Human Freedom and Der Zufall (1824–25)

Heiberg's first philosophical works begin to appear very shortly after his first-hand encounter with Hegel in Berlin. Immediately after his return to Kiel, Heiberg set to work on a treatise entitled *On Human Freedom: On Occasion of the Latest Disputes about this Issue*,¹⁶ which was published in December 1824, that is, only a few short months after he returned from Berlin. Heiberg himself emphasizes the speed with which he appropriated Hegel's philosophy:

When one considers that this work [sc. *On Human Freedom*] appeared in December 1824 and that in the month of May of the same year I had hardly known that there was a philosopher by the name of Hegel, then the fact that in such a short time I could achieve so much which this admittedly imperfect work contains, will best be able to show with what voracity I had devoured the new wisdom.¹⁷

This is the work that most interpreters point to as the introduction of Hegel's philosophy in Denmark. This claim must, however, be regarded with some caution since many Danish scholars were quite familiar with Hegel prior to this and a number of them had also attended his lectures in Berlin prior to Heiberg.¹⁸ *On Human Freedom* attempts to give a Hegelian interpretation to the then current debate about free will surrounding the provocative claims made for a form of materialist determinism by Heiberg's friend Frantz Gotthard Howitz (1789–1826).¹⁹ This was an important interdisciplinary debate that involved important figures such as the philosopher Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785–1872), the jurist Anders Sandøe

¹⁶ Dr. J.L. Heiberg, *Om den menneskelige Frihed. I Anledning af de nyeste Stridigheder over denne Gjenstand*, Kiel: Universitets-Boghandlingen 1824. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 1, pp. 1–110.)

¹⁷ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Autobiographiske Fragmenter," in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 11, p. 501. (In English in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2005 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 1), p. 66.)

¹⁸ See Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome I, *The Heiberg Period: 1824–1836*, Chapter 1, pp. 69–114.

¹⁹ See Oluf Thomsen, *F.G. Howitz og hans Strid om Villiens Frihed*, Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaards Forlag 1924; O. Waage, "Strid om den menneskelige Villies Frihed og Sædelærens Grundlag," in his *J.P. Mynster og de filosofiske Bevægelser paa hans Tid i Danmark*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1867, pp. 39–104; Koch, "A.S. Ørsted og striden om viljens frihed," in his *Den danske idealisme 1800–1880*, pp. 177–208.

Ørsted (1778–1860), and the theologian Jakob Peter Mynster (1775–1854). In his treatise Heiberg attempts to mediate the different positions in a Hegelian manner by demonstrating how freedom and necessity are not distinct but rather constitute two sides of the same concept. While some attempts have been made to find a connection, there is no unambiguous documentation that Kierkegaard read this work by Heiberg.²⁰ When this discussion was taking place in 1824–25 Kierkegaard was still very young, and it is extremely unlikely that he would have followed the debate at this time. The open question is whether it came to be of interest to him at some later point when the debate proper was over.

Heiberg returned to Copenhagen in April 1825. At this time he set about publishing a short work that he had written in German while he was in Kiel: *Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet. Als Einleitung zu einer Theorie des Zufalls*.²¹ In this work Heiberg attempts to apply a Hegelian dialectical analysis to the concepts of contingency, necessity, and freedom. Although *Der Zufall* is only a 30-page pamphlet that is somewhat superficial, Heiberg goes on to develop his ideas on this topic in later works.²² Although Kierkegaard took an interest in these categories in texts such as *Philosophical Fragments*, there is no clear evidence or documentation that he read this work.

B. Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic (1832)

During the second half of the 1820s Heiberg was primarily occupied with writing works for the theater and with the cumbersome job of editing his journal, *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*. For this reason his philosophical interests were to a certain extent put aside during this period. This changed when he received the aforementioned appointment at the Royal Military College, which provided him with a new forum in which he could develop his Hegelian philosophy. The first fruit of this position was a work on Hegel's speculative logic that appeared in 1832 under the title *Outline of the*

²⁰ See Isak Winkel Holm, "Angst og utilregnelighed. Kierkegaard og Howitz-fejden: angstbegrebet mellem lægevidenskab og idealisme," *Spring*, vol. 8, 1995, pp. 100–16.

²¹ Dr. J.L. Heiberg, *Der Zufall, aus dem Gesichtspunkte der Logik betrachtet. Als Einleitung zu einer Theorie des Zufalls*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1825. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 11, pp. 325–359.) (In English in *Heiberg's Contingency Regarded from the Point of View of Logic and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2008 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 4), pp. 53–75.)

²² See Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Nemesis. Et populair-philosophisk Forsøg," *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, I, no. 41, May 21, 1827; II, no. 43, May 28, 1827; III, no. 44, June 1, 1827; IV, no. 45, June 4, 1827 [no page numbers]. (In English in *Heiberg's Contingency Regarded from the Point of View of Logic and Other Texts*, pp. 101–25.) See also *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik. Som Ledetraad ved Forelæsninger paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, Copenhagen: Andreas Seidelin 1832; see § 103, § 107, and § 111. (In English in *Heiberg's Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2006 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 2), pp. 116–19; pp. 123–8; pp. 130–5.)

Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic.²³ This work was originally written as a compendium for his students and was intended to be used to supplement his lectures that took place at the College in 1831–32. It was then subsequently printed in a limited number of copies so that it could be made available to a wider audience. It can be said in fairness that this is not an original work but rather a paraphrase of Hegel's masterpiece in the field, that is, *The Science of Logic*.²⁴ Heiberg's effort is, however, a quite substantial work in its own right and, relatively speaking, a quite early one that paved the way for later works on Hegel's logic by Danish authors.

Heiberg's *Speculative Logic* addresses itself to a number of issues that were of profound interest to Kierkegaard. One of these is the question of the beginning of philosophy. At the outset of the work, Heiberg makes the case for the primacy of philosophy as the first, most fundamental discipline of all the sciences. His argument is that while the other scholarly disciplines presuppose certain of their objects uncritically, philosophy explores the most basic building blocks of thought itself. For this reason, philosophy can take absolutely nothing for granted.²⁵ Heiberg explains, "Philosophy then can almost be regarded as the *science without presuppositions*. It must thus begin with *nothing*."²⁶ This explains the infelicitous title of the work: *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy*. If one takes "philosophy" in the older sense of the general pursuit of knowledge in any given field, then logic is understood as a metalevel discipline that explores the basic forms of thought common to all of them. Thus, logic is a discipline that necessarily precedes all the others, critically examining the human faculty of thought or critical examination used in all the other fields: "Since thought is the common root of nature and spirit...logic is not only *the first part of philosophy*, but it is also *philosophy itself* in its deepest root and most abstract presentation. It is *the philosophy of philosophy*."²⁷

²³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik. Som Ledetraad ved Forelæsninger paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, Copenhagen: Andreas Seidelin 1832. (Reprinted as *Ledetraad ved Forelæsninger over Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik ved den kongelige militaire Høiskole in Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 1, pp. 111–380.) (In English in *Heiberg's Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, pp. 39–213.)

²⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band. Die objective Logik*, Nürnberg: Johann Leonard Schrag 1812; *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band. Die objective Logik. Zweytes Buch. Die Lehre vom Wesen*, Nürnberg: Johann Leonard Schrag 1813; *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Band. Die subjective Logik oder Lehre vom Begriff*, Nürnberg: Johann Leonard Schrag 1816.

²⁵ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *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, § 1; *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe in 20 Bänden*, ed. by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag 1928–41, vol. 8, pp. 41–2.

²⁶ Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik*, § 5. (*Heiberg's Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, p. 47.)

²⁷ Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik*, § 11. (*Heiberg's Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, p. 49.) See also § 193. (*Heiberg's Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, pp. 212–13.)

In order to make a beginning with this field, one must abstract from all determination and start from the most abstract categorical structure, the category of pure being. The claim that philosophy begins with nothing or without presuppositions is one that Kierkegaard frequently returns to. For example, at the beginning of his first book, *From the Papers of One Still Living*, from 1838, he refers to “Hegel’s great attempt to begin with nothing,” which

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.²⁸

This is not in itself unambiguous evidence, but this strikingly positive formulation does recall that found in Heiberg’s treatise. This connection becomes even more compelling when one considers that Kierkegaard originally wrote this work with the intention of publishing it as a review article in Heiberg’s journal *Perseus*,²⁹ and thus had every reason to cast the piece in a way that reflected a positive disposition towards specific aspects of Hegel’s thought.

As noted, the key to beginning without presuppositions lies in the category of pure being, which is regarded as the most abstract idea that can be thought. Following Hegel, Heiberg argues for this as follows:

If one abstracts from every determination in *everything*—which is necessary in order to exclude all presuppositions, for here it is a matter of reaching a *beginning* which is abstract immediacy—then only one thing remains from which one cannot abstract further because it is itself without presupposition and is consequently the abstract immediacy or beginning. This one thing is *being* in general or abstract or absolute being, the utmost abstraction from everything.³⁰

Once the category of being is established, the dialectical analysis can get started. Being can only be thought with its opposite, nothing. If there were no nothing, there would be no being. The two are necessarily related. Heiberg writes, “To abstract further from being would be to remove the utmost (last) abstraction and consequently leave nothing. But since one *cannot* abstract from being...the utmost abstraction has already been effected to arrive at it, and *being* is thus the same as *nothing*.”³¹ At times Heiberg enjoys playing on words by referring to this as philosophy’s beginning with nothing in the double sense of beginning with the category of nothingness and beginning with no presuppositions.

²⁸ SKS 1, 17 / EPW, 61.

²⁹ See Johnny Kondrup, “Tekstregørelse” to *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer*, in SKS K1, 68–72.

³⁰ Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik*, § 26. (*Heiberg’s Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, p. 55.)

³¹ Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik*, § 27. (*Heiberg’s Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, p. 55.)

Kierkegaard is also attentive to this point. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, for example, he has his pseudonym write, “Hegelian logicians...define the immediate, with which logic begins, as follows: the most abstract remainder after an exhaustive abstraction.”³² Similarly in his papers one reads the following: “An abstract beginning is neither something nor nothing, for, if it were nothing, then it would not have begun, and if it were something, it would be more than a beginning.”³³ There were other works on Hegel’s logic in both Danish and German where Kierkegaard might have read about this.³⁴ But in any case Heiberg’s *Speculative Logic* is certainly a good candidate for the source of these kinds of passages.

Following Hegel, Heiberg spends a fair amount of time in his treatise elucidating the different forms of judgment. In this context he refers to negative judgments as follows:

The negative judgments are therefore positive. This is the case with respect to so-called “infinite judgments,” where subject and predicate belong to mutually exclusive spheres, and therefore no subsumption or judgment can take place but only a proposition, and a meaningless one at that (for example, the proposition mentioned in connection with the law of contradiction: “An elephant is not a cube root”).³⁵

In his papers Kierkegaard refers to this passage when he writes, “Every negation implies an affirmation, since otherwise it would itself be completely meaningless—this is what Heiberg calls infinite judgments.”³⁶ This is the only unambiguous proof identified so far that Kierkegaard read this work by Heiberg. Nowhere else in his *corpus* does Heiberg refer to or define “infinite judgment,” and thus it can only be from this text that Kierkegaard knows it.

Heiberg also discusses other issues that are of interest to Kierkegaard such as the notion of mediation, the sublation of the law of excluded middle, and the relation of philosophy to religion, but Kierkegaard’s scattered comments on these issues seem to refer to later works by Heiberg. On the whole it is probably fair to say that *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic* was important more with respect to the many issues in later discussions that it anticipated than it was as a source in and of itself for Kierkegaard’s thought.

³² SKS, 7, 110 / CUP1, 114.

³³ Pap. II C 37 / JP 1, 193.

³⁴ In German there were, for example, Karl Werder, *Logik. Als Commentar und Ergänzung zu Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*, Berlin: Verlag von Veit und Comp. 1841 (ASKB 867); Johan Eduard Erdmann, *Grundriß der Logik und Metaphysik*, Halle: Johann Friedrich Lippert 1841 (ASKB 483); Christian Hermann Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik*, Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes 1835. In Danish there were Adolph Peter Adler, *Populaire Foredrag over Hegels objective Logik*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1842 (ASKB 383); Rasmus Nielsen, *Den speculative Logik i dens Grundtræk*, Copenhagen: n.p. 1841–44. Peter Michael Stilling, *Philosophiske Betragtninger over den speculative Logiks Betydning for Videnskaben*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1842; Rasmus Nielsen, *Den propædeutiske Logik*, Copenhagen: P.G. Philipsen 1845 (ASKB 699).

³⁵ Heiberg, *Grundtræk til Philosophiens Philosophie eller den speculative Logik*, § 144, Remark 3, α. (Heiberg’s *Speculative Logic and Other Texts*, p. 165.)

³⁶ Pap. II C 37 / JP 1, 193.

C. On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age (1833)

Perhaps Heiberg's most read philosophical work was his treatise *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*, published in 1833.³⁷ While Heiberg's philosophical works up until this time were more or less ignored by Danish scholars, this one created a controversy due to its provocative claims about the status of religion. In this text Heiberg presents his view of the crisis that the present age finds itself in. He believes people have become alienated from their own culture. They have ceased to believe in the traditional values and institutions that were once taken for granted. As a result, art is no longer thought of as the vessel of beauty but is rather regarded as a light diversion or pastime. Similarly, educated people no longer take religion seriously; they have either ceased believing in God altogether or have ended up believing that God is a wholly mysterious entity that cannot be known. Finally, people in the present age have lost faith in philosophy and have become relativists or nihilists, denying that there is any final truth or meaning.

Heiberg attempts, with this work, to show his contemporaries the way out of the crisis. His thesis is that people must embrace philosophy, that is, Hegel's philosophy, which will put beauty, God and truth back in their proper place. Thus, philosophy is urgently needed if the present age is to stop the process of alienation that is becoming ever more acute. Hegel's idealist philosophy can serve this function since it has the ability to see through the manifold of conflicting appearances and discern the deeper truth lying within them. Once this truth is identified, it can be used to shore up the breaks in the modern world-view. People working in any given field can thus apply a philosophical methodology to restore truth to their currently disoriented and confused endeavors. However, at the same time this clearly implies that philosophy is in some significant way elevated above the other fields, for example, art and religion.

Heiberg's claim that philosophy is higher than religion or theology was the central point in the ensuing debates. This work was met by highly critical responses and reviews from Frederik Ludvig Zeuthen (1805–74),³⁸ Eggert Christopher Tryde (1781–1860),³⁹ and Mynster.⁴⁰ Uncomfortable with the idea that religion was just a

³⁷ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1833 (ASKB 568). (English translation in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 85–119.)

³⁸ Frederik Ludvig Zeuthen, "Oplysninger til Prof. J.L. Heibergs Skrift: *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nærværende Tid*," *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, vol. 7, no. 76, April 18, 1833, pp. 301–2; no. 77, April 19, 1833, pp. 305–6. (English translation in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 121–30.)

³⁹ Anonymous [Eggert Christopher Tryde], "Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid. Et Indbydelses-Skrift til en Række af filosofiske Forelæsninger. Af Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Kbhavn. 54 S. 8°," *Dansk Litteratur-Tidende* for 1833, no. 41, pp. 649–60; no. 42, pp. 681–92; no. 43, pp. 697–704. (English translation in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 167–90.)

⁴⁰ Kts. [Jakob Peter Mynster], "Om den religiøse Overbeviisning," *Dansk Ugeskrift*, vol. 3, nos. 76–7, 1833, pp. 241–58. (Reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, vols. 1–6, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1852–57, vol. 2, pp. 73–94.) (English translation in *Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 139–59.)

part of the philosophical system or the Idea, they disputed the claim that philosophy was needed to come to the aid of religion. The critics invariably tried to carve out some special space for religion or theology that was separate from philosophy.

Although Kierkegaard owned a copy of *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*,⁴¹ it is not so easy to identify unambiguous references to it in his writings. One possibility in this regard is Heiberg's attempt to refute the relativist view of philosophy, where he writes,

But, one objects, "there are so many philosophies; the one system contradicts and negates the other; in which of these can one find the truth?" To this one can answer that the different philosophical systems—assuming that they really are philosophical, i.e., that they are penetrated by the speculative Idea, for otherwise they cannot be considered—all contain the same philosophy, only seen from different levels of culture in the development of humanity.⁴²

Here Heiberg echoes Hegel's claim that philosophy represents a single, developing system and not isolated, episodic units. In *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus dubitandum est* Kierkegaard refers to this view as follows:

modern philosophy must become conscious of itself as an element in a prior philosophy, which in turn must become conscious of itself as an element in the historical unfolding of the eternal philosophy. Thus the philosopher's consciousness must encompass the most dizzying contrasts: his own personality, his little amendment—the philosophy of the whole world as the unfolding of the eternal philosophy.⁴³

Along these same lines, he writes that Johannes Climacus "one day heard one of the philosophers apropos of that thesis, say 'This thesis does not belong to any particular philosopher; it is a thesis from the eternal philosophy, which anyone who wishes to give himself to philosophy must embrace.'"⁴⁴ These statements seem clearly to be based on the same thought found in Heiberg if not the same text.

Towards the end of his treatise, Heiberg explains that this work is an invitation to a series of lectures on philosophy that interested parties can sign up for. In this context, he makes the, at the time unconventional, move of inviting women to participate as well. He explains that he "dares to believe that cultured *ladies* will also be able to participate in the lecture's serious investigations."⁴⁵ Kierkegaard seems to refer to this in an article that he wrote for Heiberg's *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, under the title "Another Defense of Woman's Great Abilities."⁴⁶ Here he writes ironically, apparently in reference to Heiberg, "Thanks, therefore, to you great men, who help

⁴¹ See ASKB 568.

⁴² Heiberg, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, p. 6. (Heiberg's *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 88–9.)

⁴³ *Pap. IV B 1*, p. 123 / *JC*, 140.

⁴⁴ *Pap. IV B 1*, p. 129 / *JC*, 147.

⁴⁵ Heiberg, *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, p. 53. (Heiberg's *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, p. 118.)

⁴⁶ "Ogsaa et Forsvar for Qvindens høie Anlæg," *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post, Interimsblad*, no. 34, December 17, 1834, see *SVI XIII*, 5–8 / *EPW*, 3–5.

them [sc. women] up to the peaks of knowledge but nevertheless do not forget the other sex. Therefore, it is so lovely to see that the man who *especially* wishes to have an effect upon the ladies does not, however, forget *the men* and finally extends his philanthropic enthusiasm to *all*.⁴⁷ This jab does not, however, have anything to do with the substantive issues of Heiberg's treatise. While *On the Significance of Philosophy* was an important work in its day, its influence on Kierkegaard remains to be determined.

D. Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course (1835)

Heiberg continued his argument for the importance of philosophy in his short work, the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course that Began in November 1834 at the Royal Military College*.⁴⁸ As is clear from the title, this work arose in the context of Heiberg's instruction for the young officers. It was published in 1835. Although Kierkegaard did not own a copy of this text, it is clear that he has read it and was at least to some degree exercised by it.

In this most sophisticated of all of Heiberg's philosophical works, he makes the argument for the truth of idealism based on the priority of the categories for all thinking. Since the course that he was going to teach was on logic, Heiberg explains that this field is concerned with examining the fundamental structures of thought. These are the categories: that is, being and nothing, cause and effect, force and expression, etc. We must examine these basic constitutive elements of thought to understand how things appear to us in experience since every idea or impression that we receive is full of categorical determinations. Thus there is nothing more fundamental than the categories. Even religious concepts such as God, reconciliation, and heaven all ultimately contain the categories of thinking; otherwise, we could not think them. Therefore, argues Heiberg, religion, which has as its subject matter things such as this, is something secondary since it necessarily relies on the categories, which are the subject matter of philosophy or specifically logic. Logic is therefore the most primary of all the fields of study since it examines the most fundamental forms of thought, which are simply presupposed in all the other fields.

In daily life we are confronted with a confused array of impressions and experiences that seem to be arbitrary and to have no deeper meaning. This conception is a mistake that comes from a fixation on the empirical. Heiberg claims that we must learn how to recognize the truth of the Idea in the empirical phenomena. Towards the end of his treatise, he addresses his students and encourages them to pursue their different vocations with an eye towards bringing to light the ideal structure of reality. He writes:

⁴⁷ "Ogsaa et Forsvar for Qvindens høie Anlæg," *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post, Interimsblad*, no. 34, December 17, 1834, see *SVI XIII*, 7 / *EPW*, 4.

⁴⁸ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, *Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Cursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, Copenhagen: J.H. Schubothes Boghandling 1835. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 1, pp. 461–516. (In English in *Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, ed. and trans. by Jon Stewart, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 2007 (*Texts from Golden Age Denmark*, vol. 3), pp. 41–72.)

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. Though I thus now invite you, gentlemen, to follow me to the separate domain, in which abstract thought, set at a distance from the world's movements and the bustle of the moment, makes its invisible dominion secure, I do not forget that my honored listeners are destined to participate in these movements and bustle, to step out into life and actuality, and to give these their best abilities and powers.⁴⁹

Heiberg's claim that it was the demand of the age to pursue philosophy in this way quickly became one of Kierkegaard's favorite hobbyhorses.

For example, in *Prefaces*, his most polemical work against Heiberg, he writes "To take a single example, is it not again and again proclaimed by the priests of philosophy 'that in our age it is a necessity for the theologian to be a philosopher in order to be able to satisfy the demand of the times?'"⁵⁰ This presumably refers to Heiberg's claims that for religion to be understood correctly, it must be given a philosophical analysis. Theologians must thus become speculative philosophers in order to grasp the true essence of their field. Also in *Prefaces* we read the following:

If a person wants to publish a book, he should next make sure it will be of benefit. To that end he asks a publisher or a philosophical fellow or his barber or a passerby what it is the age demands. Lacking this, he himself comes up with something, about which he does not forget to say that it is what the age demands. Not everyone, of course, is given the mental capacity to understand the demand of the age, so much the less when to the doubtful it may seem that the age's demand is multifarious and that the age, although one, can have...several voices.⁵¹

Here Kierkegaard takes aim at Heiberg's claim that the vocation of philosophy is only for a few; in his address to his students as "honored listeners," Heiberg flatters his audience by giving them the impression that they are among the select few who have a calling to promote philosophy in the present age. Kierkegaard seems to find this a form of objectionable elitism. The other objection seems to be against the idea that there is a single demand of the age; the idea is that the age is complex and that there are thus several different demands that need to be addressed and not just the one that Heiberg is interested in.

In *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard refers to the statement about the demand of the times explicitly in connection with Heiberg's Hegelian campaign. He refers to Heiberg's two great heroes—Goethe and Hegel:

I have not with the smallest fraction of the capacities granted me striven to express...that the world is good, loves the true, wills the good, that the demand of the times is the truth,

⁴⁹ Heiberg, *Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Coursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, p. 35. (*Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, p. 66.)

⁵⁰ SKS 4, 510–11 / P, 50.

⁵¹ SKS 4, 477–8 / P, 13. (Translation slightly modified.)

that the human race is the true or presumably even God, and therefore the task (Goethean and Hegelian) is to satisfy the age. On the contrary, I have tried to express that the world, if it is not evil, is mediocre, that "the demand of the times" is always foolishness and fatuousness.⁵²

What is interesting about this passage is the way in which Kierkegaard seems to portray his own mission as in direction opposition to that of Heiberg. Kierkegaard's concern is with the single individual and not with the race or the generation as a whole. He seems, moreover, to find it pretentious of Heiberg to try to take it upon his own shoulders to provide the solution to the problem of the age and thus answer the demand of the times.

This motif comes up several times in *Stages on Life's Way*. In " 'Guilty' / 'Not Guilty' " reference is made to the Latin saying *Mundus vult decipi*, that is, "The world wants to be deceived." Then one reads, "In fact, I believe that in a wider sense it is the best that has been said about the world. Thus, speculators should not cudgel their brains trying to fathom what the times demand, for it has been essentially the same since time immemorial."⁵³ It is fruitless to try to figure out what the age demands since it is already clear: people do not want the truth but rather to live in deception. The "demand of the age" is also a recurring motif in Kierkegaard's review of Thomasine Gyllembourg's *Two Ages*.⁵⁴ In short, references to this motif can thus be found scattered throughout Kierkegaard's *corpus*.⁵⁵ What seems to be consistent

⁵² *SVI* XIII, 572, note / *PV*, 88, note. See also: "I see that all these real people furnish an essential appurtenance, a chorus, a priceless market-town chorus, which took its stand on what it understood, his trousers, which became 'the demand of the times,' or even more precious, a chorus that wanted to ironize—the ironist" (*SVI* XIII, 581 / *PV*, 96).

⁵³ *SKS* 6, 316 / *SLW*, 340. See also: "Incapable as I am of understanding such tasks as the future of all mankind or what it is that the times demand, I have concentrated entirely on myself" (*SKS* 6, 322 / *SLW*, 346). "Someone who pins his hope on speculative drama serves poetry only insofar as he serves the comic. If a witch or a wizard succeeds in bringing about such a thing, if by means of a speculative thaumaturgist (for a dramatist would not suffice) it would satisfy the demand of the age as a poetic work, this event would certainly be a good motif for a comedy, even though it would achieve the comic effect through so many presuppositions that it could not become popular" (*SKS* 6, 382 / *SLW*, 412). *SKS* 6, 97 / *SLW*, 101: "What do the times demand? For me it is of importance only to dare to use these words, *τελειος* and *τελεια*, about married people; I leave Jupiter and Juno out of this, not wishing to make a fool of myself by wanting to solve the historical-philological problem." (Translation slightly modified.)

⁵⁴ *SKS* 8, 13 / *TA*, 9. *SKS*, 8, 24–5 / *TA*, 21–2.

⁵⁵ *SKS* 1, 251 / *CI*, 207. *SKS* 1, 285 / *CI*, 246. *Pap.* IV B 101 / *R*, Supplement, p. 281. *Pap.* IV B 127, p. 317 / *P*, Supplement, pp. 101–2. *Pap.* IV B 135, p. 321 / *P*, Supplement, p. 105. *SKS* 2, 141 / *EOI*, 140. *SKS* 6, 19 / *SLW*, 11. *SKS* 6, 454 / *SLW*, 493. *Pap.* V B 148.2 / *SLW*, Supplement, p. 625. *Pap.* VII–1 B 55, p. 228 / *COR*, Supplement, p. 181. *Pap.* VII–1 B 55, p. 236 / *COR*, Supplement, p. 188. *SKS* 10, 177 / *CD*, 165. *SKS*, 11, 85 / *WA*, 81. *SVI*, vol. XIII, p. 590 / *PV*, 104. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 8 / *BA*, 9. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 23 / *BA*, 24. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 24 / *BA*, 25. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 45 / *BA*, 153. *Pap.* IX B 10, p. 308 / *BA*, Supplement, p. 229. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 27 / *BA*, Supplement, p. 237. *Pap.* VII–2 B 235, p. 56 / *BA*, Supplement, p. 245.

in all of these passages is a satirical tone that mocks Heiberg's enthusiasm and zeal. Kierkegaard apparently finds objectionable what he perceives to be the arrogance behind Heiberg's philosophical prescription for the present age in order to help it to progress further. More interpretive work needs to be done to determine if there is a reasoned philosophical objection to Heiberg's position in the midst of this satire.

In the *Introductory Lecture*, Heiberg also sketches his aesthetic system, establishing a hierarchy of different forms of poetry. He presents the scheme of lyric, epic, and dramatic, that he had originally set out in his review of Oehlenschläger.⁵⁶ In his journals Kierkegaard notes this taxonomy as follows:

I now perceive also that when Heiberg transferred Hegelianism to aesthetics and believed that he had found the triad: lyric—epic—lyric—epic (dramatic), he was right; but it is doubtful that this can be carried through on a far greater scale: classical—romantic—absolute beauty, and in such a way that precisely the Heiberg-triad becomes meaningful, since the classical, as well as the romantic and absolute beauty, has its lyrical—its epic—its dramatic. To what extent, for that matter, is it right to begin with the lyrical; the history of poetry seems to indicate a beginning with epic.⁵⁷

Although it is unclear whether or not Kierkegaard has his information from this text and not another one from Heiberg's hand, there can be no doubt that he was interested in this dimension of Heiberg's aesthetics. Moreover, the young Kierkegaard does not seem to object to Heiberg's attempt to systematize aesthetics in a Hegelian fashion.

E. *The First Volume of Perseus: Journal for the Speculative Idea (1837)*

In 1837 Heiberg published the first volume of his Hegelian journal, *Perseus: Journal for the Speculative Idea*.⁵⁸ This journal only appeared in two issues, one in 1837 and the other the following year. Kierkegaard owned a copy of this work⁵⁹ and seems at least for a time to have been positively inclined towards it. What is significant about this journal is its clear pro-Hegelian line. The first issue is inaugurated with a statement "To the Readers," in which Heiberg describes the context and profile of the new journal. He explains that the current age is being swept away by a bad empiricism that needs to be resisted. He then declares it to be the goal of his new

⁵⁶ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Svar paa Hr. Oehlenschlägers Skrift: 'Om Kritiken i Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post, over Væringerne i Miklagard,'" *Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post*, 1828 (I, no. 7, January 25; II, no. 8, January 28; III, no. 10, February 4; IV, no. 11, February 8; V, no. 12, February 11; VI, no. 13, February 15; VII, no. 14, February 18; VIII, no. 15, February 22; IX, no. 16, February 25, [no page numbers]). (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 3, pp. 194–284.)

⁵⁷ *Pap.* I A 225 / *JP* 2, 1565. Cf. also *SKS*, vol. 17, 113, BB:23 / *KJN* 1, 107. *Pap.* I A 212. *SKS* 1, 26–7 / *EPW*, 70.

⁵⁸ *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, ed. by Johan Ludvig Heiberg, no. 1, 1837, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1837.

⁵⁹ See *ASKB* 569. Kierkegaard's name appears on the list of subscribers that appears in the second issue of the journal. "Fortegnelse over Subscriberterne paa *Perseus*," *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, no. 2, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1838, p. vii.

journal to battle this tendency and secure the truth of idealist philosophy. The image that he uses is that of the Greek god Perseus who battles the Medusa (sc. empiricism) in order to free Andromeda (the speculative truth). He invites interested readers to contribute articles to this journal in any given discipline, with the condition that they attempt to make clear the Idea in their field of inquiry.

Kierkegaard was one of Heiberg's readers who hearkened to the call. As noted above, he apparently submitted his review of Hans Christian Andersen's *Only a Fiddler* to Heiberg as a candidate for publication in the second issue in 1838. Evidence for this comes, among other things, from a statement by Kierkegaard's friend, Emil Boesen (1812–81), who writes on July 20, 1838: "Søren Kierkegaard... has recently written a piece on Andersen which will go into Heiberg's *Perseus*; it is written in a rather heavy style, but otherwise it is quite good."⁶⁰ This is clear indication that Kierkegaard intended to publish his review there and perhaps that by this time he had already submitted it to Heiberg's judgment. Kierkegaard's intent is confirmed by an extant letter that he addressed to Heiberg on July 28, 1838, where he writes:

Honored Professor,

I received your letter last night. Only one point in it troubles me somewhat. I am afraid that it may seem in some way as if I almost tried to get around that warning contained in your first letter by employing those same ordinary and imprecise phrases in which you orally stated your stylistic requirements. On this occasion, I cannot refrain from asking you, sir, to remember, as far as you are able to do so, those remarks I then made, which I think contained an Amen that was modified in several ways.—Unless, that is, I have been so unfortunate as to have expressed myself incomprehensibly, just as I see from your letter that I must have misunderstood you.

As for my essay and its fate, I will, sir, take the liberty of visiting you in this connection very soon.⁶¹

This is clearly a part of an ongoing conversation that Kierkegaard was having with Heiberg about the infelicitous style of the piece. While there are certainly some gaps in our knowledge, it seems safe to conclude that Heiberg rejected the review for publication (presumably due to stylistic concerns), and Kierkegaard then decided to publish the work on his own as an independent monograph under the title, *From the Papers of One Still Living*. What is striking about this episode is that it indicates that Kierkegaard in 1838 had no objections of principle to publishing his work in a Hegelian journal. At this early stage he seems not to have had any particular problem with Hegel or with Heiberg's Hegelianism.

The first article in the journal is Heiberg's book review of Valdemar Henrik Rothe's (1777–1857) *Doctrine of the Trinity and Reconciliation*.⁶² This review is important because it takes up a number of issues that had been raised against

⁶⁰ Carl Weltzer, "Stemninger og Tilstande i Emil Boesens Ungdomsaaar," *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger*, seventh series, vol. 1, 1951–53, pp. 408–14.

⁶¹ *B&A*, vol. 1, p. 43 / *LD*, Letter 9, pp. 54–5.

⁶² Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Recension over Hr. Dr. Rothes *Treenigheds- og Forsoningslære*," *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, no. 1, 1837, pp. 1–89. (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 1–112.)

Hegel's philosophy by Hans Lassen Martensen (1808–84) in his review of Heiberg's *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course*.⁶³ In this context Heiberg returns to a number of the points mentioned above, including the presuppositionless beginning. Here he argues:

As is known, the Hegelian system moves through nothing but triads. In every one, the first moment is immediate...the second is the mediation or development of the first, and finally the third is the new and synthetic unity, which is no longer immediate, but rather produced by mediation. But every first or immediate moment is *given* by the last previous triad, whose result or not immediate unity it was. If in this way we now go further and further back, then we come to the very first moment, to the immediacy which is no longer relative but rather absolute, which is itself the system's absolute beginning.⁶⁴

Kierkegaard seems to refer to this passage in the *Postscript*, where he writes, "The system begins with the immediate and therefore without presuppositions and therefore absolutely, that is, the beginning of the system is the absolute beginning."⁶⁵ There is another reference to the absolute beginning in *De Omnibus*: "The *absolute* beginning is that concept which is also the end of the system, the concept of absolute spirit."⁶⁶

Heiberg continues his explanation of the beginning of philosophy in Hegel's system. He argues that the first triad, which is presupposed by the subsequent ones, is the most fundamental and thus has itself no presuppositions. He reasons as follows:

Should we now say of this first unit, being = nothing, that it is given or not given, that it is a presupposition or not? Admittedly, it is not given in the same manner as all of those following the first moment in every triad, for these have come from a previous cycle, and prior to the first cycle there is no previous one, and therefore there is nothing that can be surpassed. The most obvious answer is that the absolute first moment is not given. One must necessarily admit this; one must recognize that the system really delivers what it promises: a presuppositionless beginning.⁶⁷

The key term here is the expression "presuppositionless beginning," which comes to be one of the focal points of Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegelian logic. For example, in *The Concept of Anxiety*, he has his pseudonym write:

⁶³ Hans Lassen Martensen, "Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Cursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole. Af J.L. Heiberg, Lærer i Logik og Æsthetik ved den kgl. militaire Høiskole," *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, vol. 16, 1836, pp. 515–28. (In English in *Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, pp. 75–86.)

⁶⁴ Heiberg, "Recension over Hr. Dr. Rothes Treenigheds- og Forsoningslære," *Perseus*, no. 1, 1837, pp. 35–6. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 45.) (*Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, p. 92.)

⁶⁵ *SKS* 7, 108 / *CUP1*, 111.

⁶⁶ *Pap.* IV B 1, p. 131 / *JC*, p. 149.

⁶⁷ Heiberg, "Recension over Hr. Dr. Rothes Treenigheds- og Forsoningslære," *Perseus*, no. 1, 1837, p. 36. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 45–6.) (*Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, p. 92.)

The term [transition] is freely used without any ado, and while Hegel and the Hegelian school startled the world with the great insight of the presuppositionless beginning of philosophy, or the thought that before philosophy there must be nothing but the most complete absence of presuppositions, there is no embarrassment at all over the use in Hegelian thought of the terms "transition," "negation," and "mediation," i.e., the principles of motion, in such a way that they do not find their place in the systematic progression. If this is not a presupposition, I do not know what a presupposition is.⁶⁸

The objection here is clear: the methodology of Hegel's speculative philosophy contains within itself a number of unacknowledged presuppositions, while ostensibly claiming to begin with no presuppositions.

There is an extended discussion of this issue in the *Postscript*, where Johannes Climacus considers the relation between the conscious decision on the part of the person thinking and the movement of thought itself. He writes, "But if a resolution is required, presuppositionlessness is abandoned. The beginning can occur only when reflection is stopped, and reflection can be stopped only by something else, and this something else is something altogether different from the logical, since it is a resolution."⁶⁹ Here he points out that a conscious resolution or decision is always required to make the beginning, but this decision can be based on any number of things, all of which amount to presuppositions in one form or another. The difficulty of beginning without presuppositions is also satirized in *Works of Love*.⁷⁰

In an insightful passage from a loose paper, Kierkegaard anticipates much of later philosophy of language by pointing to the fundamental nature of language as the presupposition of thought and reasoning. He writes:

If it were the case that philosophers are presuppositionless, an account would still have to be made of language and its entire importance and relation to speculation, for here speculation does indeed have a medium which it has not provided itself, and what the eternal secret of consciousness is for speculation as a union of a qualification of nature and a qualification of freedom, so also language is [for speculation] partly an original given and partly something freely developing.⁷¹

In so far as speculative philosophers make use of language to articulate the beginning of philosophy, they have presupposed something for which they have given no account. In the *Journal JJ* he writes:

Danish philosophy—should there ever be talk of such a thing—will differ from German philosophy in that in no wise will it begin with nothing or without any presuppositions, or

⁶⁸ SKS 4, 384 / CA, 81.

⁶⁹ SKS 7, 110 / CUP1, 113.

⁷⁰ SKS 9, 220–1 / WL, 218: "If it is usually difficult to begin without presuppositions, it is truly most difficult of all to begin to build up with the presupposition that love is present and to end with the same presupposition—in that case one's entire work is made into almost nothing beforehand, inasmuch as the presupposition first and last is self-denial, or the builder is concealed and is as nothing."

⁷¹ Pap. III A 11 / JP 3, 3281.

explain everything by mediating, since it begins, on the contrary, with the proposition that there are many things between heaven and earth which no philosophy has explained.⁷²

There can be no doubt that this was one of Kierkegaard's favorite criticisms. Although there are some satirical elements in these passages, he does seem to have a reasoned philosophical objection to the position that Heiberg is arguing for. Kierkegaard seems to be keen to point out that the idea of a presuppositionless beginning in thought is absurd since it always presupposes a more fundamental sphere of existence that it fails to acknowledge. Thus, he spills much ink articulating that sphere in order to contrast it to what he regards as the purely cognitive enterprise of modern philosophy.

There is clear evidence that Kierkegaard was also familiar with the second article in *Perseus*, namely, Martensen's "Observations on the Idea of Faust with Reference to Lenau's *Faust*."⁷³ As is known, the young Kierkegaard was profoundly interested in the figure of Faust and even planned to write something on this topic.⁷⁴ This is seen most clearly from his section in the *Journal BB* entitled "Literature on Faust."⁷⁵ Here Kierkegaard collected his notes and bibliographical information on the works about Faust that he was reading. He laments as follows when he sees Martensen has written on the same topic in *Perseus*: "Oh, how unlucky I am—Martensen has written a treatment of Lenau's *Faust*!"⁷⁶ In his journals he writes satirically about Martensen often appealing to some motif in the Faust story.⁷⁷

⁷² SKS 18, 217, JJ:239 / *KJN* 2, 199.

⁷³ Hans Lassen Martensen, "Betragtninger over Ideen af Faust med Hensyn paa Lenaus *Faust*," *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, no. 1, 1837, pp. 91–164.

⁷⁴ See SKS 17, 19, AA:11 / *KJN* 1, 13. *Pap.* I A 88. *Pap.* I A 104. *Pap.* I A 122. *Pap.* I A 150. *Pap.* I A 154. *Pap.* I A 274. *Pap.* I A 292. *Pap.* I A 333. *Pap.* I C 46. *Pap.* I C 47. *Pap.* I C 48. *Pap.* I C 49. SKS, vol. 19, p. 94, Not2:7. SKS 19, 94f., Not2:10. *Pap.* I C 61. *Pap.* I C 102. *Pap.* I C 114. See Carl Roos, "Kierkegaard og Faust," in his *Kierkegaard og Goethe*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1955, pp. 56–157; Knud Jensenius, *Nogle Kierkegaardstudier*, Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, Arnold Busck 1932, pp. 36–63; Sejer Kühle, *Søren Kierkegaards Barndom og Ungdom*, Copenhagen: Aschehoug 1950, pp. 113ff. Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins*, trans. by George C. Schoolfield, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1980, pp. 84–6; Alastair Hannay, "A Faustian Phase," in his *Kierkegaard. A Biography*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2001, pp. 58–87.

⁷⁵ SKS 17, 92–106, BB:12–15 / *KJN* 1, 85–99.

⁷⁶ *Pap.* II A 587. See also *Pap.* II A 588.

⁷⁷ SKS, vol. 17, p. 49, AA:38 / *KJN* 1, 43: "In connection with a little essay by Johannes M.....(Martensen) on Lenau's *Faust*, in which it is told that the piece ends with Faust killing himself and Mephistopheles' giving an epilogue, I began to ponder to what extent, after all, it is appropriate to let a work of this kind end in such a way. And here I believe that Goethe was right in ending Part One with Mephistopheles' "Heinrich! Heinrich!" A suicide would make too much of a character out of the idea: it should be the counter-weight of the whole world that crushes him, as with D. Juan.—Or end in despair (the Wandering Jew). Despair is romantic—not punishment, as it was in the case of Prometheus." SKS, vol. 18, p. 83, FF:38 / *KJN* 2, 76: "The Don Juanian life is truly musical, and that is why it is so fitting that in his *Faust* Lenau has Mephistopheles strike up a tune at the moment that Faust is to portray Don Juan. Marthensen has not seen the deeper significance of this situation."

F. *The Second Volume of Perseus: Journal for the Speculative Idea (1838)*

There is also strong evidence that Kierkegaard was familiar with the second issue of *Perseus* from 1838. The most important article in this issue was Heiberg's essay, "The System of Logic."⁷⁸ Here he continues his work in speculative logic. The essay presents the first 23 paragraphs of a system of logic, and thus overlaps with his previous treatise, *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic*. The point of repeating this material in a new treatise is to respond to critics of Hegel's claims to make an absolute beginning with the concept of pure being. This had been criticized by Sibbern in his extended review of the first issue of *Perseus*, where he took his point of departure in Heiberg's book review of Rothe's work.⁷⁹ In this context Heiberg refers to the familiar terms that he used before, such as "the absolute beginning"⁸⁰ or the abstract beginning with no determinate content.⁸¹

In his introduction Heiberg explains his motivation for the present piece and gives the reader reason to expect that further installments will follow:

The author allows himself to present herewith the first contribution to the working out of a long cherished plan, namely, to expound the system of logic...Furthermore, he has the goal with the present exposition and its continuation to clear the way for an aesthetics, which he has wished to write for a long time, but which he cannot send out into the world without first having given it the support in logic upon which it can rest.⁸²

The reader is thus given the impression that this will be the beginning of an elaborate system that extends into other fields as well. Kierkegaard was attentive to this and refers to it critically in a couple of places. For example, in a draft to *The Concept of Anxiety*, one reads:

In his "The System of Logic," which despite all movement, does not come further than to § 23...and despite its proud title, was not able to emancipate itself from a very subordinate existence in a periodical, Professor Heiberg nevertheless succeeded in making everything move—except the system, which comes to a halt at § 23, although one might have believed that the system would have moved by itself through an immanent movement, and the more so because the author indicated in the "Preface" the

⁷⁸ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Det logiske System," *Perseus, Journal for den speculative Idee*, no. 2, 1838, pp. 1–45. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 113–66.)

⁷⁹ Heiberg, "Recension over Hr. Dr. Rothes Treenigheds- og Forsoningslære," *Perseus*, no. 1, 1837, p. 36. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 46.) Heiberg's *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, p. 92: "one must recognize that the system really delivers what it promises: a presuppositionless beginning."

⁸⁰ Heiberg, "Det logiske System," *Perseus*, no. 2, 1838, § 3, p. 10. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 124.)

⁸¹ Heiberg, "Det logiske System," *Perseus*, no. 2, 1838, § 2, p. 9. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 122–3.)

⁸² Heiberg, "Det logiske System," *Perseus*, no. 2, 1838, p. 3. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 115–16.)

course of development, namely, that the published essay was “the first contribution to a long-cherished plan to expound the system of logic.”⁸³

The point of this satire seems to be that, despite Heiberg’s grand plans, he never managed to build the monument of thought that he had intended. In fact, he never even managed to get past § 23 in what was intended to be a system of logic, let alone to develop the system into other fields, such as aesthetics. This criticism is, of course, not entirely fair since Kierkegaard knew full well that Heiberg had written a complete work on logic previously and that he had also authored quite extensive works on aesthetics in different contexts. The other point of the satire is clearly that of movement in logic, which is a feature of Hegel’s speculative logic that Kierkegaard rejects with the claim that movement is a characteristic of existence and not of thought in the sense of logical forms.

Along the same lines Kierkegaard has his pseudonymous author write the following in *Prefaces*: “Therefore I vow: as soon as possible to realize a plan envisaged for thirty years, to publish a system of logic, and as soon as possible to fulfill my promise, made ten years ago of a system of aesthetics; furthermore, I promise a system of ethics and dogmatics, and finally *the system*.”⁸⁴ Finally, in a draft to *Repetition*, we read, “Of late [Heiberg] has turned his gaze to the far-flung yonder, where, staring prophetically ahead like a brooding genius, he beheld the system, the realization of long contemplated plans.”⁸⁵ The upshot of these two passages seems to be that Heiberg is pretentious in stating his plans to create a complete system of philosophy in this way. Unlike the passage above, these tend more in the direction of the *ad hominem* than the philosophical.

Also in his introduction Heiberg explains that his method will involve a rigorous, step-by-step demonstration of the dialectical relation of the categories such that there will be no gaps in the reasoning or the categorical system. He writes:

Moreover, every point in logic will not be treated with equal elaborateness. After a judicious choice, the more interesting points should have preference; but the light which these throw on the surroundings should show the whole in uninterrupted continuity, so that no leap will take place.⁸⁶

What is intriguing here is Heiberg’s use of the term “leap.” Kierkegaard seems to make a note to himself with regard to precisely this passage when he jots down the following, somewhat cryptic line in his papers: “Heiberg’s *Perseus* cf. a pencil mark in the margin to the first §§ of the logic.”⁸⁷

⁸³ *Pap. V B 49:5 / CA*, Supplement, p. 180. (Translation slightly modified.) See also *SKS 4*, 478 / *P*, 14.

⁸⁴ *SKS 4*, 478 / *P*, 14. (Translation slightly modified.)

⁸⁵ *Pap. IV B 116*, p. 278 / *R*, Supplement, p. 299.

⁸⁶ Heiberg, “Det logiske System,” *Perseus*, no. 2, 1838, p. 7. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 120.)

⁸⁷ *Pap. V C 4*. See Koch’s discussion of this passage: Carl Henrik Koch, *En flue på Hegels udødelige næse eller om Adolph Peter Adler og om Søren Kierkegaards forhold til ham*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1990, pp. 190ff.

In the second to last paragraph of the treatise Heiberg tries to explain the transition from quality, which he has just treated, to quantity, which he intends to treat. He writes:

Therefore, it would not be sufficient to define quantity by being in general which lacks qualities, but it must, as happened in the foregoing, be defined expressly in terms of *sublated* quality, that is, quantity is not the first, presuppositionless being, but it is the being, which, after having presupposed and then sublated quality, returns to the same indeterminacy.⁸⁸

Heiberg discusses the movement of the initial triads of logic. While the system begins with the most abstract concept, pure being, it works towards concretion as the categories gradually develop. In a draft to *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard refers explicitly to this passage as follows:

Just an example: the Professor explains to us that in order to form the transition from quality to quantity “it is not sufficient to define quantity as being in general which lacks qualities; it is the *sublated* quality; that is, quantity is not the first presuppositionless being, but it is the being which, after having presupposed and then sublated the quality, returns to the same indeterminacy.” Now this may be quite correct, but the difficulty lies in the fact that both being and quality are treated as identical. But being is no quality; logically speaking, it is rather the empty, the contentless, whereas even according to Hegel’s definition, quantity is *einfache Bestimmtheit*, and therefore it is not essentially being but essentially determinateness. Thus when one proceeds from being and annuls this in order to return to it again, one will never arrive at quality, and much less a new quality.⁸⁹

Kierkegaard is clearly skeptical of this transition in the system. He points out that the first three triads, which are initiated with the category of being, all fall under the general rubric of quality. The transition to be made is then to the next set of three triads that fall under quantity. Kierkegaard’s point is that pure being is supposed to be without any form of further determination, and thus it cannot be properly characterized as “quality.” Ultimately this can be understood as in continuation with Kierkegaard’s objections to the presuppositionless beginning since he clearly wants to question the status of the category of being as lacking all determination.

Heiberg’s “The System of Logic” seems to have been the inspiration for the section “A System of Logic Can be Given” in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.⁹⁰ Johannes Climacus takes up a number of the issues discussed here—the beginning of philosophy, movement in logic, mediation—in this analysis and a parallel one entitled, “A System of Existence Cannot be Given.”⁹¹ Much of Climacus’ discussion aims to distinguish the sphere of objective thinking from that of the subjective and individual existence. He thus incorporates Heiberg’s analysis in order to help to

⁸⁸ Heiberg, “Det logiske System,” *Perseus*, no. 2, 1838, § 22, p. 43. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 164–5.)

⁸⁹ *Pap. V B 49:5 / CA*, Supplement, pp. 180–1. (Translation slightly modified.)

⁹⁰ *SKS 7*, 106–14 / *CUP1*, 109–18. (Translation slightly modified.)

⁹¹ *SKS 7*, 114–20 / *CUP1*, 118–25. (Translation slightly modified.)

develop his own views and primarily the distinction that he finds too often blurred, namely, that between subjective and objective thinking.

G. Fata Morgana (1838)

Although it is not a philosophical treatise, Heiberg's drama *Fata Morgana* from 1838 is also worthy of mention in this context, not least of all due to the fact that Kierkegaard owned a copy of it.⁹² Heiberg was commissioned to write this work for a special birthday celebration for the Danish King Frederik VI (1768–1839). The comedy had its premier on January 29, 1838 with the king present. With this work Heiberg attempts to develop a new genre, the so-called "speculative comedy"; or, put differently, he attempts to give some elements of Hegel's philosophy a dramatic expression. Although the performance was an utter failure, the work does contain some intriguing elements that are relevant for Heiberg's understanding of philosophy.

The main theme in the work is that of sense illusion and truth. The title of the piece comes from a meteorological phenomenon known in Sicily, which appears in the form of a fog and creates mirages. Local legend attributes this to the work of minor deities. Heiberg thus presents the deity Fata Morgana as the goddess of illusion whose main goal is to deceive humans. The allegorical dimension of the story involves the gradual coming to awareness of these illusions. Once this has become clear, the people make a violent revolt against the goddess and, with the help of poetry, liberate humanity, which, then free from all illusion, can gaze upon the truth in its own form. This can be regarded as continuous with Heiberg's previous attempts to combat what he regards as the bad empiricism with the truth of idealism. The key is to educate the mind to see the truth in the appearances and not to imagine that it has been exiled somewhere beyond them in a sphere that is unattainable by human cognition. Heiberg is convinced that his contemporaries suffer from a myopic fixation on empirical particulars that transfix the mind momentarily; but these are only transient, and while one is fixated on them, one fails to see the deeper truth.

The main character Clotaldo is initially fixated by the illusory beauty of the pearl of Fata Morgana. But when he sees his beloved princess, he realizes that its beauty is only an illusion: "He who sees the true object, / No longer praises the image."⁹³ This experience leads him to free his mind from the illusions that he formerly dwelt in. Clotaldo declares, "I feel my mind liberated, / When I sacrifice the image of the illusion / for the true appearance."⁹⁴ In this way Heiberg makes a Hegelian case for the truth of the Idea, not as something otherworldly, but as present among the world of appearances.

⁹² Heiberg, *Fata Morgana, Eventyr-Comedie*, Copenhagen: Schubothé 1838 (ASKB 1561). (Reprinted in *Poetiske Skrifter*, vols. 1–11, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1862, vol. 2, pp. 93–226.)

⁹³ Heiberg, *Fata Morgana*, p. 44. (*Poetiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 140.) "Hvo den sande Gjendstand seer, / Hylder Billedet ei meer."

⁹⁴ Heiberg, *Fata Morgana*, p. 45. (*Poetiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 141.) "Frigjort føler jeg mit Sind, / Naar jeg offerer Illusionens / Blendværk for det sande Skin."

H. Heiberg's Article on the Law of Excluded Middle (1839)

Another piece worthy of mention is Heiberg's article in the context of the debate about mediation that took place in 1839. This debate had its origin in an enthusiastic review of Martensen's dissertation, *On the Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness*,⁹⁵ that was written by one of his friends, Johan Alfred Bornemann (1813–90).⁹⁶ This review was anxious to acknowledge Martensen's great merits for introducing Hegel and speculative theology to the University of Copenhagen. Bornemann apparently took it for granted that "In theology both rationalism and supernaturalism are antiquated standpoints which belong to an age which has disappeared."⁹⁷ By this Bornemann meant that finite standpoints of this kind have been demonstrated to be one-sided and thereby false by Hegel's speculative philosophy, which sees the conceptual truth of opposites.

Mynster found this remark too much to countenance, and so he responded with an article shortly thereafter entitled, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism."⁹⁸ Mynster was particularly incensed by the fact that Bornemann seemed to take it for granted that Hegel's speculative logic had established that all finite standpoints are in this way *aufgehoben*. He then tries to make a case for the law of excluded middle from classical logic in order to show that opposing positions cannot logically be conceived as a single position with contradicting properties. In this way Mynster in effect launches an attack on Hegel's doctrine of speculative mediation.

Heiberg's article, entitled "A Remark on Logic in Reference to the Right Reverend Bishop Mynster's Treatise on Rationalism and Supernaturalism," then addresses itself to Mynster's objections.⁹⁹ Heiberg feels called upon to defend Hegel's position on this point against the attacks made on it by both Sibbern (in his review of the first issue of *Perseus*)¹⁰⁰ and Mynster in his article. He sees these critics as denying the

⁹⁵ Hans Lassen Martensen, *De autonomia conscientiae sui humanae in theologiam dogmaticam nostri temporis introducta*, Copenhagen: I.D. Quist 1837 (ASKB 648). (Danish translation: *Den menneskelige Selvbevidstheds Autonomie*, trans. by L.V. Petersen, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1841 (ASKB 651). English translation: *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology*, in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997, pp. 73–147.)

⁹⁶ Johan Alfred Bornemann, "Af Martensen: *de autonomia conscientiae. Sui humanae*," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1839, pp. 1–40.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 3.

⁹⁸ Jakob Peter Mynster, "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1839, pp. 249–68. (Reprinted in Jakob Peter Mynster, *Blandede Skrifter*, vols. 1–6, ed. by J.H. Paulli, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1852–57, vol. 2, pp. 95–115.) (English translation: "Mynster's 'Rationalism, Supernaturalism,'" trans. and introduced by Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2004, pp. 565–82.)

⁹⁹ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "En logisk Bemærkning i Anledning af H. H. Hr. Biskop Dr. Mynsters Afhandling om Rationalisme og Supranaturalisme i forrige Hefte af dette Tidsskrift," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1839, pp. 441–56. (Reprinted in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 167–90.)

¹⁰⁰ Frederik Christian Sibbern, "Om den Maade, hvorpaa Contradictionsprincippet behandles i den hegeliske Skole, med Mere, som henhører til de logiske Grundbetragtninger,"

rightful advance of Hegel's philosophy in science generally, and he claims to want to set the record straight by clearing up what he takes to be obvious and straightforward points of scholarly progress in Hegel's refutation of the laws of contradiction and excluded middle.

Heiberg attempts to explain Hegel's view by demonstrating that in Hegel's system the laws of logic apply at certain levels but not at others. For example, in the "Doctrine of Essence" from the *Science of Logic* things are conceived as dualistic, with categories such as essence and accident, cause and effect, substance and property, etc.: "Examples of where the *principium exclusi medii* finds application, may be found in this sphere."¹⁰¹ By contrast, at the third level, "The Doctrine of the Concept," speculative thought enters and unites the opposites into a higher unity: "In the same fashion the *principium exclusi medii* is sublated everywhere, where one takes up the standpoint of the Concept and the Idea, for this standpoint's entire activity aims at mediating opposites."¹⁰² Thus, argues Heiberg, the misunderstandings arise when these spheres are confused.

What was perhaps most provocative about Heiberg's article was his claim that key Christian doctrines are based on mediation. He argues:

But if the *principium exclusi medii* were itself not excluded from the Idea, then man, as a unity of soul and body, would be impossible; the state could not be a unity of opposing forces; Christ would be *exclusus* as *medium* between God and man; no religion, art, poetry or philosophy could exist, for everywhere it would be apparent that the *principium exclusi medii* was the *principium exclusi Dei*.¹⁰³

Heiberg thus argues that the incarnation or the person of Christ requires that there be no law of excluded middle since it states that Christ is both human and God at the same time. If the law of excluded middle were to be valid in this case, then one would have to deny either that Christ is human or that he is divine.

This debate continued with an article by Martensen¹⁰⁴ and a rejoinder by Mynster in the form of a book review.¹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard apparently read the main articles in this

Maanedsskrift for Litteratur, vol. 19, no. 5, 1838, pp. 424–37. Corresponds to Sibbern's *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser fornemmelig betræffende Hegels Philosophie, betragtet i Forhold til vor Tid*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1838 (ASKB 778), pp. 79–92.

¹⁰¹ Heiberg, "En logisk Bemærkning," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, p. 444. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 172–3.)

¹⁰² Heiberg, "En logisk Bemærkning," p. 445. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 175.)

¹⁰³ Heiberg, "En logisk Bemærkning," pp. 445–6. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 175.)

¹⁰⁴ Hans Lassen Martensen, "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme og *principium exclusi medii* i Anledning af H. H. Biskop Mynsters Afhandling herom i dette Tidsskrifts forrige Hefte," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1839, pp. 456–73. (English translation: "Martensen's 'Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*,'" trans. by Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2004, pp. 583–98.)

¹⁰⁵ Jakob Peter Mynster, "*De principio logico exclusi medii inter contradictoria non negligendo commentatio, qua ad audiendam orationem. invitat. Jo. Fr. Herbart. Gottingae 1833. 29 S. 8°*, *De principiorum contradictionis, identitatis, exclusi tertii in logicis dignitate et ordine commentatio*. Scripsit I.H. Fichte. Bonnae 1840. 31 S. 8°," *Tidsskrift for Litteratur*

debate in 1839 as is evidenced by an entry in his *Journal JJ*.¹⁰⁶ In the *Postscript* he also refers to it, when he writes:

As is well known, Hegelian philosophy has canceled the law of contradiction, and Hegel himself has more than once emphatically held judgment day on the kind of thinkers who remained in the sphere of understanding and reflection and who have therefore insisted that there is an either/or. Since that time, it has become a popular game, so that as soon as someone hints at an *aut/aut*, a Hegelian comes riding trip-trap-trap on a horse like... and wins a victory and rides home again. Among us, too, the Hegelians have several times been on the move, especially against Bishop Mynster, in order to win speculative thought's brilliant victory.¹⁰⁷

In drafts of this passage Kierkegaard had initially written the names of Heiberg and Martensen in this passage but then he later omitted them, replacing them with "the Hegelians."¹⁰⁸ Thus, there can be no doubt that Kierkegaard was familiar with this debate. Moreover, this question of mediation can be said to be one of the central issues in Hegel's philosophy (largely via Heiberg) that exercised him.

Kierkegaard takes up this discussion explicitly in a couple of places in his mature authorship. Most obviously, *Either/Or* seems to be profoundly inspired by this discussion. The title of the work itself is a shorthand version of the law of excluded middle.¹⁰⁹ The work sets out two conflicting world-views, the aesthetic and the ethical. The reader is left to choose between these; they represent a dichotomy that precludes any mediation. (This was not lost on Heiberg, who refers to this in his review of *Either/Or*.¹¹⁰) There is a play on the form of the law of excluded middle in the "Diapsalmata," where the aesthete writes, "Marry, and you will regret it. Do not marry and you will also regret it. Marry or do not marry, you will regret it either

og Kritik, vol. 7, 1842, pp. 325–52. (Reprinted as "Om de logiske Principer," in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, vol. 2, pp. 116–44.)

¹⁰⁶ SKS 18, 34–5, EE:93 / *KJN* 2, 30: "In truth, we didn't need Hegel to tell us that relative contradiction can be mediated, since it is found in the ancients that they can be distinguished; personality will for all eternity protest against the idea that absolute contradictions are susceptible of mediation (and this protest is incommensurable with what mediation asserts) and it will for all eternity repeat its *immortal* dilemma: to be or not to be, that is the question (Hamlet)."

¹⁰⁷ SKS 7, 277 / *CUP1*, 304–5.

¹⁰⁸ See *Pap. IV B 54.4 / CUP2*, Supplement, p. 72. *Pap. IV B 98.58 / CUP2*, Supplement, p. 72.

¹⁰⁹ *B&A*, vol. 1, p. 107 / *LD*, Letter 68, p. 138: "Either/Or is indeed an excellent title. It is piquant and at the same time also has a speculative meaning." Cf. also SKS 7, 229 / *CUP1*, 252: "*Either/Or*, the title of which is in itself indicative, has the existence-relation between the esthetic and the ethical materialize into existence in the existing individuality. This to me is the book's indirect polemic against speculative thought which is indifferent to existence."

¹¹⁰ Johan Ludvig Heiberg, "Litterær Vintersæd," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 2, no. 24, March 1, 1843, p. 292: "But what does the title of the book mean? The second volume is absolute, here there can be no question of an Either/Or, and the book, far from refuting the proposition that the law of contradiction is sublated (p. 176), only the contrary is a proof more for its correctness."

way.”¹¹¹ This kind of dichotomy or disjunctive pair is intended to represent the opposite of mediation. The aesthete continues, “It is not merely in isolated moments that I, as Spinoza says, view everything *aeterno modo*, but I am continually *aeterno modo*. Many believe they, too, are this when after doing one thing or another they unite or mediate these opposites. But this is a misunderstanding, for the true eternity does not lie behind either/or but before it.”¹¹² The aesthete’s suggestion seems to be that the true eternity appears when one is confronted with choices, that is, when one stands opposite conflicting possibilities and is obliged to make a decision. The Hegelians, by contrast, find eternity in the circular movement of uniting opposites and thus overcoming dualisms and dichotomies. In any case, the principle of the either/or is clearly juxtaposed to that of mediation.

There is a more extended discussion of the issue of Hegelian mediation in Part Two, in the chapter “The Balance Between the Esthetic and the Ethical.”¹¹³ Here the Judge ascribes to the aesthete a Hegelian view: “You mediate opposites in a higher madness, philosophy mediates them in a higher unity...you say, ‘I can either do this or that, but whichever of the two I do is equally mad, ergo I don’t do anything at all.’”¹¹⁴ Despite the aesthete’s own apparent advocacy of the either/or, the Judge sees him as subscribing to a form of mediation. His point is that the decisions that the aesthete points out are ultimately indifferent to him. Due to his indifference, lack of commitment or aestheticism, he resembles the Hegelians who regard things, as it were, from the outside and observe the different instances of mediation in an indifferent manner.

The Judge proposes a solution to the problem of mediation that resembles that set forth by Heiberg, namely, to distinguish different spheres and then assign the law of contradiction to one of them and mediation to another. Specifically, the Judge distinguishes between “the sphere of thought” and “the sphere of freedom.”¹¹⁵ He claims that there can certainly be mediation in the sphere of thought, which is abstract and divorced from empirical actuality. This is the sphere of pure contemplation and abstraction. By contrast, there can be no mediation in the sphere of freedom; here the either/or and the laws of contradiction and excluded middle have their validity. The sphere of freedom is the empirical realm, where one is obliged to make choices and act in the real world. Here there can be no mediation. While speculative thought is characterized by necessity, actuality is characterized by freedom.

This discussion from *Either/Or* anticipates a couple of different treatments of this issue in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. One appears in the chapter “Actual Subjectivity, Ethical Subjectivity; the Subjective Thinker,”¹¹⁶ and the other in the chapter “The Issue in *Fragments*.”¹¹⁷ Here Kierkegaard under a different pseudonym seems to confirm many of the conclusions that were reached in *Either/Or*. The key

¹¹¹ SKS 2, 47 / EO1, 38. Cf. also SKS 3, 156–7 / EO2, 158–9.

¹¹² SKS 2, 48 / EO1, 39.

¹¹³ SKS 3, 166–72 / EO2, 170–6.

¹¹⁴ SKS 3, 166–7 / EO2, 170. (Translation slightly modified.)

¹¹⁵ SKS 3, 169 / EO2, 173.

¹¹⁶ SKS 7, 277–82 / CUP1, 304–10.

¹¹⁷ SKS 7, 363–84 / CUP1, 399–422.

to the solution of the problem is to distinguish between different spheres and then to assign mediation to its proper place. Johannes Climacus explains:

Hegel is completely and absolutely correct in the claim that, seen eternally, *sub specie aeterni*, in the language of abstraction, in pure thought and in pure being, there is no *aut/aut*; where in the hell would it be since abstraction precisely takes away contradiction? Thus, Hegel and the Hegelians should rather take the trouble of explaining what is meant by the shadowboxing of bringing contradiction, movement, transition, etc. into logic. The defenders of the *aut/aut* are wrong, if they push their way into the realm of pure thought and want to battle for their cause there....On the other hand, Hegel is just as wrong, when he, forgetting the abstraction, crashes down from it into existence with violence and force in order to sublimate the double *aut*. This is to do something that is an impossibility in existence, for he then also sublimes existence.¹¹⁸

The problem thus lies not in the principle of mediation or in the principle of the either/or but rather in the misguided attempts to transfer the one principle into the sphere of the other. One should keep these spheres radically separate and thus appreciate the validity of each principle in its own context, recognizing its own strengths and limitations.

In this context, Climacus takes up the implications of this account for Christianity. He underscores that Christianity clearly operates in the sphere of actuality, and for this reason it is characterized by the principle of either/or: "It probably is due to this that Christianity has proclaimed eternity as the future because it was proclaimed to existing people, and therefore it also assumes an absolute *aut/aut*."¹¹⁹ Christianity is a religion that is about personal choice and commitment, things which are absent in mediation. Here Climacus argues against Heiberg's (and Martensen's) claim that mediation is the principle of Christianity, and that dogmas such as the Incarnation and the Trinity cannot be made sense of without it. Climacus' central plea is to avoid confusing the two spheres and attempting to apply the principle of mediation to the sphere of actuality or Christian faith.

While the three most extended discussions of mediation appear in *Either/Or* and the *Postscript*, scattered references to it appear throughout Kierkegaard's authorship. There is clear evidence that, for example, his concept of repetition is intended as a criticism of Hegelian mediation.¹²⁰ Similarly his conception of the divine as something absolutely other or different from the human can also be interpreted as an affirmation of the principle of the either/or.¹²¹ There can be no doubt that Heiberg's article along with the others in the debate played a central role in the development of Kierkegaard's position on this issue.

¹¹⁸ SKS 7, 277–8 / CUP1, 305.

¹¹⁹ SKS 7, 280 / CUP1, 307.

¹²⁰ See SKS 4, 25 / R, 148–9. *Pap.* IV B 117, pp. 288–9 / R, Supplement, p. 308.

¹²¹ SKS 4, 249 / PF, 44–5.

I. "Autobiographical Fragments" (1840)

Heiberg's so-called "Autobiographical Fragments" do not belong to his philosophical texts, strictly speaking; however, this is an important text for Kierkegaard's understanding of Heiberg's philosophical disposition. Most people today know this text from its printed version in Heiberg's collected prose writings from 1861–62.¹²² Kierkegaard, however, was familiar with it in a somewhat different form. In 1839 the Danish literary scholar Christian Molbech (1783–1857) requested some biographical information from Heiberg that he could use in a work he was writing on Danish poets. Heiberg complied with the request, and Molbech then made use of the short text that he received by interspersing it in his own narrative in the chapter dedicated to Heiberg.¹²³ The fourth volume of Molbech's work, where this chapter appears, was published in 1840, and this is where Kierkegaard read it.

Heiberg's text is significant since here he gives his firsthand account of his encounter with Hegel's philosophy. He tells the story about how he came to learn of it from his colleagues in Kiel and how he embarked on a trip to Berlin in 1824 in order to meet Hegel and to learn more about his philosophical system. Most striking is his enthusiastic description of how, after much struggle, he came to understand Hegel's difficult thought. He writes:

While resting on the way home in Hamburg, where I stayed six weeks before returning to Kiel, and during that time was constantly pondering what was still obscure to me, it happened one day that, sitting in my room in the König von England with Hegel on my table and in my thoughts, and listening at the same time to the beautiful hymns which sounded almost unceasingly from the chimes of St. Peter's Church, suddenly, in a way which I have experienced neither before nor since, I was gripped by a momentary inner vision, as if a flash of lightning had illuminated the whole region for me and awakened in me the theretofore hidden central thought. From this moment the system in its broad outline was clear to me, and I was completely convinced that I had grasped it in its innermost core, regardless of however much there might be in the details which I still had not made my own and perhaps never will.¹²⁴

The tone of this passage has reminded some readers of a religious conversion scene.¹²⁵ Heiberg goes on to explain retrospectively the importance of this experience for his life and later work: "It is certain that the new light which dawned on me has had a

¹²² Heiberg, "Autobiographiske Fragmenter," *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 11, pp. 485–504. (*Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, pp. 55–68.)

¹²³ Molbech, *Dansk poetisk Anthologie*, vol. 4, pp. 243–300.

¹²⁴ Heiberg, "Autobiographiske Fragmenter," in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 11, pp. 500–1. (*Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, p. 65.)

¹²⁵ See Fenger, *The Heibergs*, p. 73; Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. by George L. Stengren, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980, pp. 14–17; Grete Børsand Heyerdahl, "Den filosofiske omvendelse, eller: Hvordan blir man hegelianer, eller: Idéhistorie i praksis," in her *Idéhistoriske smuler*, Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag 1979, pp. 116–33.

definite influence on all my subsequent undertakings, even those where one would not suspect a connection."¹²⁶

Kierkegaard was attentive to this passage and returns to it satirically in a number of different contexts both in his journals and in his published writings. In one passage he writes, "Heiberg himself is a diplomat, before that miracle in Hamburg, where through a miracle he gained an understanding of and became an adherent of a philosophy that (remarkably enough) does not accept miracles."¹²⁷ Similarly, he writes, "Who has forgotten the beautiful Easter morning when Prof. Heiberg arose to understand Hegelian philosophy, as he himself has so edifyingly explained it—was this not a leap? Or did someone dream it?"¹²⁸

In the published writings a vague reference to this appears in *The Concept of Anxiety*, where he has his pseudonym write, "The system is supposed to have such marvelous transparency and inner vision that in the manner of the *omphalopsychoi* [navel souls] it would gaze immovably at the central nothing until at last everything would explain itself and its whole content would come into being by itself. Such introverted openness to the public was to characterize the system."¹²⁹ The most famous reference appears in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, where Kierkegaard has Johannes Climacus write, "But I have no miracle to appeal to; ah, that was Dr. Hjortespring's happy fate! According to his own very well-written report, he became an adherent of Hegelian philosophy through a miracle at Streit Hotel in Hamburg on Easter morning...an adherent of the philosophy that assumes that there are no miracles. Marvelous sign of the times!"¹³⁰ In the original draft Kierkegaard first wrote Heiberg's name and then subsequently replaced it with the comic name "Dr. Hjortespring."¹³¹ While, to be sure, most of this criticism is more of a personal than a philosophical nature, it does seem clear that Kierkegaard wishes to point out the incongruity of this kind of overly zealous conversion with respect to a sober philosophical system like that of Hegel.

J. New Poems (1841)

Heiberg's most successful work was the collection *New Poems* from 1841.¹³² Although this is a literary and not a philosophical text, it incorporates many Hegelian elements in a way not unlike *Fata Morgana*. The new collection consists of a series of four poetic works, but clearly the most popular was the piece entitled "A Soul after

¹²⁶ Heiberg, "Autobiographiske Fragmenter," in *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 11, p. 501. (*Heiberg's On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, p. 66.)

¹²⁷ *Pap.* IV B 124, in *Pap.* XIII, p. 364 / *FT*, Supplement, p. 324.

¹²⁸ *Pap.* V C 3 / *JP* 3, 2347.

¹²⁹ *SKS* 4, 384 / *CA*, 81.

¹³⁰ *SKS* 7, 169 / *CUP* 1, 184.

¹³¹ *Pap.* VI B 98.38 / *CUP* 2, 44.

¹³² Heiberg, *Nye Digte*, Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1841 (*ASKB* 1562). (Reprinted in *Poetiske Skrifter*, vol. 10, pp. 163–324.)

Death: An Apocalyptic Comedy.”¹³³ Kierkegaard owned a copy of this collection and refers explicitly to it.

In this work Heiberg again criticizes what he regards as the cultural crisis of the age. It is the story of a respected resident of Copenhagen who has died and tries to find his way in the afterlife. He is rejected by St. Peter at the gates of heaven because he is utterly ignorant of Christianity, although he believes he is a Christian. So also he is driven away from the entrance to Elysium by Aristophanes because he is equally ignorant of classical culture, art or the humanities. As in his previous works, Heiberg highlights the contemporary crisis of art and religion by showing, this time in a humorous manner, that people have become alienated and subsequently ignorant of what were traditionally fixed points in culture.

Finally, the soul makes his way to hell, where he is convinced by Mephistopheles to enter. The souls in hell symbolically labor endlessly to fill with water a basin that has a hole in the bottom. Thus, try though they may, they do not manage to get anywhere with their efforts. The soul, the representative of Copenhagen of the age, is a victim of the bad empiricism. He is focused solely on the empirical and the individual entities. As a result he cannot see anything deeper or more meaningful beyond them. Like his contemporaries, he is under the spell of the bad infinity of finite particulars. Copenhagen thus dwells in triviality and meaningless finite pursuits. Again Heiberg’s message is that one needs to break out from under this spell and see the truth of the speculative Idea. The humorous element arises from the soul’s repeated failure to see that there is something beyond the trivialities that constitute his life. While this work has a poetic form, it also has a clearly intended philosophical message that is in line with Heiberg’s general program to reform his contemporary age by means of Hegel’s philosophy.

In the context of a brief discussion about immortality, Kierkegaard makes reference to “A Soul after Death” in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.¹³⁴ From his brief comments there it is, however, difficult to determine if he is appreciative or critical of Heiberg’s work.

K. Heiberg’s Discussions of Either/Or and Repetition (1843–44)

An important episode in Heiberg’s relation to Kierkegaard was the former’s dismissive review of *Either/Or* that was published on March 1, 1843.¹³⁵ There Heiberg uses one of Kierkegaard’s favorite tools—sarcasm. He imagines a reader who, after being left cold by the first part of the work, “closes the book and says, ‘Enough! I’ve had enough of *Either*, and I’ll have no *Or*.’”¹³⁶ Kierkegaard never forgave Heiberg for this. The immediate response was his polemical article “A Word of Thanks to

¹³³ Heiberg, “En Sjæl efter Døden,” in *Nye Digte*, pp. 29–158. (Reprinted in *Poetiske Skrifter*, vol. 10, pp. 183–263.) (A partial English translation appears in *A Soul after Death*, trans. by Henry Meyer, ed. by Sven H. Rossel, Seattle: Mermaid Press 1991.)

¹³⁴ *SKS* 7, 159 / *CUP1*, 171–2.

¹³⁵ Heiberg “Litterær Vintersød,” *Intelligensblade*, vol. 2, no. 24, March 1, 1843, pp. 285–92 (*ASKB* U 56).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 290–1.

Professor Heiberg.¹³⁷ There are also satirical references to it in *Prefaces*.¹³⁸ There is, however, nothing of philosophical relevance in Heiberg's criticism of *Either/Or*.

Heiberg published an article in the first issue of his journal *Urania* (the number for 1844) entitled, "The Astronomical Year."¹³⁹ In this article he comes to discuss another of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works: *Repetition*. The subject matter of Heiberg's journal *Urania* is the natural sciences and especially astronomy. The article "The Astronomical Year," treats the different regularities and repetitions in the heavens and in the natural world generally. Heiberg tries to place the individual in the context of these changes and understand their meaning for the modern context. His observation is that modern life has blinded us to these regular changes in the natural world, and he argues that we should attempt to get more in touch with them. In this context he mentions Kierkegaard's work for the obvious reason that it too treats the concept of repetition, albeit not exactly in Heiberg's sense:

In a recently published work, which even has the word "repetition" as its title, something very beautiful and fitting is said about this concept, but the author has not distinguished between the essentially different meanings which repetition has in the sphere of nature and in the sphere of spirit. Thereby he has come into the error that repetition should play the same role in a future philosophy as "that which one by an error has called *mediation* plays in the present one."¹⁴⁰

The last line is, of course, a quotation from *Repetition* itself.¹⁴¹ Since Heiberg, as a Hegelian, is invested in the notion of mediation, he is critical of Constantin Constantius' suggestion that the concept of repetition will replace it.

Heiberg focuses on a single critical point. He believes that Kierkegaard's work has confused the spheres in which repetition is operative. He explains:

Indeed, one can say of nature that it is itself mediated by lawful repetitions, but in the sphere of spirit mediation also encompasses something more than simple repetition, something which has already been sufficiently noted in the above remarks. The fact that the author really, in the renown he attributes to repetition, primarily has had in mind the categories of nature and perhaps, without knowing it, has extended the validity of the concept outside its rightful limits, seems to be obvious in part by the fact that he precisely has applied it to a concept of philosophy of nature, namely *movement*, in that he means that the concept of repetition would be able to provide a reconciliation between the Eleatics and Heraclitus, that is, between the two opposed philosophical schools, of which the one denied all movement, and the other by contrast saw everything in movement.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Victor Eremita, "Taksigelse til Hr. Professor Heiberg," *Fædrelandet*, vol. 4, no. 1168, March 5, 1843, columns 9373–6, see *SVI XIII*, 411–15 / *COR*, 17–21.

¹³⁸ *SKS* 4, 486–7 / *P*, 23–4. See also *Pap.* IV B 51.

¹³⁹ Heiberg "Det astronomiske Aar," *Urania*, 1844, pp. 77–160 (*ASKB U* 57). (Reprinted in Heiberg's *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 9, pp. 51–130.)

¹⁴⁰ Heiberg "Det astronomiske Aar," p. 97. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 9, p. 70.)

¹⁴¹ *SKS* 4, 25 / *R*, 148.

¹⁴² Heiberg "Det astronomiske Aar," pp. 97–8. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 9, pp. 70–1.)

Heiberg clearly wishes to distinguish Hegelian mediation from the mechanical repetition of nature. He has the impression that the kind of repetition that Constantin Constantius discusses belongs to the realm of nature; however, Constantin Constantius mistakenly attempts to understand it to the sphere of spirit, where Hegelian mediation is the operative concept.

Predictably, Kierkegaard was angered by Heiberg's brief discussion of his book. Among his papers one finds drafts of a couple of different critical responses, one entitled "Open Letter to Professor Heiberg, Knight of Dannebrog from Constantin Constantius,"¹⁴³ and one entitled "A Little Contribution by Constantin Constantius, Author of *Repetition*."¹⁴⁴ Neither of these, however, was ever published. Instead Kierkegaard seems to have opted to criticize Heiberg with his short work *Prefaces*. This work, however, is more satirical than philosophical, and for this reason it is difficult to glean genuinely philosophical discussions and criticisms from it.

III. Heiberg and Kierkegaard: A General Assessment

There can be no doubt that Kierkegaard was familiar to a greater or a lesser degree with many of Heiberg's philosophical works. However, to evaluate his views on Heiberg as a philosopher is not a straightforward matter. Although there is no shortage of passages in both the published and the unpublished writings that refer to this part of Heiberg's authorship, most of these are clouded by the soured personal relation between the two men, and many of Kierkegaard's comments are not philosophically interesting since they go in the direction of the *ad hominem*.

This interpretive difficulty is further increased by the fact that Kierkegaard's view towards Heiberg's philosophical efforts changed over time and his assessment was significantly influenced by the deterioration of their personal relationship. In his early work, *From the Papers of One Still Living*, Kierkegaard seems quite positively disposed towards Heiberg's Hegelian campaign, explicitly referring to Hegel's beginning of philosophy in a positive manner. Similarly, the young Kierkegaard seems to have no objections to Heiberg's attempts to construct a system of aesthetics along Hegelian lines, by setting up hierarchies and taxonomies of the different arts or forms of poetry. These positive views clearly change in the subsequent years, and what was once an object of praise later becomes an object of satire. Despite this, one can nonetheless draw some general conclusions about Kierkegaard's relation to Heiberg, the philosopher.

(1) One clear issue from Heiberg's Hegelian philosophy that comes up again and again in Kierkegaard's authorship is that of the beginning of philosophy. Although this was a topic of general philosophical discussion at the time, there is substantial evidence that Kierkegaard's allusions to the terms "absolute beginning" or "presuppositionless beginning" are references to Heiberg's repeated attempts to treat this issue and to defend Hegel's position.

¹⁴³ Pap. IV B 110–11, pp. 258–74 / R, Supplement, pp. 283–98.

¹⁴⁴ Pap. IV B 116–17, pp. 278–300 / R, Supplement, pp. 299–319.

(2) Another clearly influential issue was that of mediation, which was an important inspiration for Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, for the concept of repetition, and for some important analyses in the *Postscript*. Although Heiberg likewise cannot be given all the credit for this since his statements on this topic appear in the context of larger discussions and not least of all are inspired by Hegel himself, nonetheless there can be no doubt that Heiberg is one of Kierkegaard's most important sources on this issue. From this one can conclude that it was Heiberg as a speculative logician who played the most significant role for Kierkegaard's development, since it was the key points in Heiberg's speculative logic that caught Kierkegaard's eye and that he returned to again and again.

(3) Finally, Kierkegaard seems profoundly critical of Heiberg's zealous attempt to promote Hegel's philosophy in Denmark. This comes out clearly in *Prefaces*, which can be seen as Kierkegaard's crowning achievement in anti-Heiberg polemics. With Kierkegaard having been thoroughly alienated by Heiberg's negative discussions of *Either/Or* and *Repetition*, this work pokes fun at many different aspects of Heiberg's activities and not just his Hegelian philosophy. The final Preface can be regarded as a satire on Heiberg's attempt to establish a Hegelian journal.¹⁴⁵ Here Nicolaus Notabene explains his plans to launch a new philosophical journal in order to promote the study of philosophy in Denmark. This statement seems to echo Heiberg's repeated statements about the need to make philosophy popular. Notabene explicitly compares his journal with that of Heiberg's *Perseus*. The satirical point lies in his statement that while Heiberg's journal set out to teach his readers about Hegelian philosophy, Nicolaus Notabene's journal will, by contrast, explicitly state its ignorance and solicit its readers to explain philosophy to him. Thus Notabene assumes a Socratic stance and asks his readers for instruction, while claiming to know nothing himself.¹⁴⁶ He requests specifically that his readers explain Hegel's philosophy to him:

There is one thing that I do desire of my contemporaries: it is an explanation. Consequently I do not deny that Hegel has explained everything; I leave that to the powerful minds who will also explain what is missing. I keep my feet on the ground and say: I have not understood Hegel's explanation. From this, in turn, I draw no other conclusion than that I have not understood him. I leave further conclusions to the powers that be who find authorization for this in their personalities.¹⁴⁷

This is clearly a jab at Heiberg's self-appointed Hegelian campaign. Nicolaus Notabene refers to Heiberg's address to his students in the *Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course* where the latter states that only a few are called to philosophy and encourages his students to pursue the speculative Idea in their different realms of

¹⁴⁵ SKS 4, 508–26 / P, 47–67.

¹⁴⁶ SKS 4, 512 / P, 51: "Is this not a good purpose, and is it not one different from the purpose of those who previously have attempted to publish a philosophical journal, even though in it there is agreement with their purpose: to want to serve philosophy. Yet the services are different: the one serves it through his wisdom, the other through his obtuseness."

¹⁴⁷ SKS 4, 516–17 / P, 56.

activity.¹⁴⁸ Nicolaus Notabene then satirically plays the role of one who is not among the chosen, and who therefore is excluded from understanding philosophy.

Another significant point of criticism is Nicolaus Notabene's claims that the Hegelian philosophers are unoriginal and that they attempt to win fame by parroting what Hegel has written. He writes:

I have read philosophical treatises in which nearly every thought, almost every expression, was from Hegel. After having read through them, I have thought: Who, now, actually is the author? Hegel, I have then said to myself, is the author; the one who has written the treatise is his reporter and as such he is dependable and accurate. This I could understand. But look! This was not the way it was; the author was a man who had gone beyond Hegel.¹⁴⁹

In this context it seems clear that Nicolaus Notabene has Heiberg specifically in mind. He alludes to Heiberg's article, "The System of Logic," where Heiberg believes that he has discovered an error in Hegel's reasoning and proposes a solution that modifies the categorical analysis that he has been following. Heiberg writes:

By way of excursus it can still be noted (for those who are interested), to what degree the exposition given heretofore is different from that of Hegel. (1) For Hegel absolute being is expounded with the categories: a) being, b) nothing, c) becoming. But this order must be seen as a slight oversight, for it is in conflict with the rest of the system's entire structure.¹⁵⁰

Heiberg then modifies this first triad by combining the first two categories into a single one: being and nothing, becoming, determinate being.

Nicolaus Notabene finds this absurd since Heiberg, in this essay and in his *Outline of the Philosophy of Philosophy or Speculative Logic*, has followed Hegel's analysis almost slavishly; but now he claims originality by modifying a single point. Notabene writes:

Hegel knew how to formulate the whole of modern philosophy in such a way that it looks as if he brought everything to an end and everything previous tended toward him. Someone else now makes a similar presentation, a presentation that to a hair is inseparable from Hegel's, that consequently is pervaded at every point by this final thought, and to this is added a concluding paragraph in which one testifies that one has gone beyond Hegel.¹⁵¹

The criticism is clearly of the attempt to claim originality in this rather inauthentic manner. From criticisms such as these it is clear that much of what has previously been seen as a part of Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel in fact lands more on Heiberg than on Hegel himself. While he may, to be sure, have some problems with specific

¹⁴⁸ Heiberg, *Indlednings-Foredrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Coursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole*, p. 35. (*Heiberg's Introductory Lecture to the Logic Course and Other Texts*, pp. 66–7; quoted in full above.)

¹⁴⁹ SKS 4, 517 / P, p. 57. (Translation slightly modified.)

¹⁵⁰ Heiberg, "Det logiske System," § 23, p. 44. (*Prosaiske Skrifter*, vol. 2, p. 165.)

¹⁵¹ SKS 4, 517–18 / P, 57.

aspect of Hegel's philosophy, much of the polemics is not about this but rather about Heiberg's efforts to promote it in Denmark.

It is difficult to evaluate the actual philosophical merits of *Prefaces*, which is, after all, designated as "light reading." Heiberg has often been identified as a character in Kierkegaard's unpublished satirical works, *The Battle between the Old and the New Soap-Cellars* and the satirical *Johannes Climacus, or De Omnibus dubitandum est*. Thus it seems safe to conclude that Kierkegaard believed that the best way to combat Heiberg's Hegelianism was not with straightforward counterargument but rather with humor and satire.

In any case there can be little doubt that what irritated Kierkegaard the most was Heiberg's repeated zealous attempts to make Hegel's philosophy popular in Denmark. While Kierkegaard still maintained some degree of respect for Hegel himself, Heiberg, as Hegel's apologist, is subject to the most energetic satire and sarcasm.

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